Cayuga Waterfront Trail

- Precedents
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- Past – Corridor & Site History
- Partnerships
- Planning & Design; Place & Placemaking
- Property Acquisition & Patience
- Participation – Volunteers & Donors
- Public Relations
- Photography
- Parks & Special Places along the Trail
PETIT TRAIN DU NORD_QUEBEC
Trail Signs
Trail would join points around lake

$55,000 grant to help start Cayuga Waterfront Trail

By DAN HIGGINS
Journal Staff

ITHACA — Ithaca has plenty of waterfront, but the Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce said access to the shores of Cayuga Lake is too fragmented and too hard to get to.

At a press conference Thursday morning, the chamber announced a $55,000 anonymous grant that would begin to help solve the problem by building a long-planned six-mile trail that would connect points of interest along Ithaca's lakefront.

If all goes according to plan, the Cayuga Waterfront Trail may be open to the public by fall 2002.

"That's a very aggressive timeline," said Fred Bonn, director of public relations for the Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce.

The trail would connect places like The Tompkins County Visitor's Center, Stewart Park, the Cascadilla Boat Club, Newman Golf Course, the Farmers' Market, Cornell University and Ithaca College bouchouses, the site of the former Old Port Harbor, as well as Inlet Island, Casu Park and Allan H. Treman State Marine Park.

"This is long overdue," said Aldermanman Susan Blumenthal, D-3rd Ward. Blumenthal is chairwoman of Common Council's Planning and Economic Development Committee.

The proposed path will be a 10-12 foot wide hard surface trail designed for use by walkers, joggers and bicyclists.

The trail would also connect to the proposed Black Diamond Trail and provide city residents with trail access to the county's four state parks: Robert S. Treman, Buttermilk Falls, Allan H. Treman and Taughannock Falls.

See TRAIL, 4A

Trail

(Continued from Page 1A)

Right now, Bonn said, visitors to Ithaca coming from north and northwest of the city via routes 89, 96 and 13 have no problem finding the water, but visitors driving from southern destinations on 13 have no clear destination if they're looking for lakefront activities.

"Access and ability to appreciate the lake is limited," he said.

Bonn noted that visitors and residents can zoom the shores of Cayuga at Stewart Park, but to gain another vantage point they are often forced back into their cars to drive to Casu Park or the Farmer's Market, for instance.

Bonn said the chamber was acting as a sort of lead agency in terms of garnering funding and community support for the trail, which is estimated to carry a price tag of about $1.5 million.

The trail would affect a number of issues important to the chamber, Bonn said, and leading the way in fund raising was a natural role for his group to fill.

"This affects quality of life issues and also economic issues, like the ability to attract visitors to this area," he said.

In August, Ithaca's Common Council endorsed undertaking a feasibility study of the proposed trail and allocated about $7,500 for the study.

At that time, the city also applied for approximately $550,000 in a matching grant from the New York State Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act. Blumenthal said the city was still waiting for the outcome of that application, and guessed the city would have news by the end of the year. The $55,000 anonymous grant, announced at Thursday's press conference, will be used to pay for design costs and surveying.

Beyond that, Blumenthal said, the city would still apply for a federal grant funded through the New York State Department of Transportation to cover the remaining $1 million in total construction costs.

Rick Manning, the landscape architect contracted by the city to design the trail, said the Cayuga Waterfront Trail was, in some ways, an old idea.

Many people in the planning field have talked over the years about a trail or series of trails connecting waterfront attractions. But, Manning said, "it just never happened."

Manning, working as a consultant for the Tompkins County Planning Department, finished a report on the city's waterfront in 1997. Through the course of that work, Manning conceived the idea for the current trail proposal.

He approached Blumenthal last spring to pitch to her the idea for the inlet trail, which had been on a shelf for years, Manning said.

"This is an important project," Manning said. "In a community like Ithaca, it seems people would expect there to be a waterfront trail."

Blumenthal agreed that the plan's time had come, for both aesthetic and economic development reasons.

"A trail like this will be useful to residents and tourists," she said. "And if we can get more people down to the waterfront, it will be a benefit to downtown businesses," she said.
Cass Park
Waterfront Trail
and Accessible
Pier Project

August 29, 2000

Submitted to:
Honorable Bernadette Castro
Commissioner of Parks,
Recreation and Historic Preservation
Agency Building One
Empire State Plaza
Albany, New York 12238

Submitted by:
Mayor Alan J. Cohen
City of Ithaca
108 East Green Street
Ithaca, New York 14850
City trail gets state grant

By VICTORIA E. FREILE
Journal Staff

ITHACA — Local and state lawmakers announced a $150,000 grant to develop a six-mile trail along the southern waterfront of Cayuga Lake during a press conference Monday afternoon at Cass Park.

Lt. Governor Mary Donohue, state Sen. James L. Seward, R-50th District, and Ithaca City Mayor Alan Cohen all noted that the trail would enhance Ithaca's waterfront and transportation, as well as create an improved tourist destination for visitors to Tompkins County.

Funding for the project will come from the state's Environmental Impact Fund, Donohue said.

The proposed trail estimated to carry a price tag of about $1.5 million.

"People aren't going to stay in Upstate New York if we only provide them with jobs," Donohue said. "We also need to enhance the quality of life for Upstate New Yorkers. The enhancement of Ithaca's waterfront access is a prime example."

The Cass Park Waterfront and Trail and Accessible Pier Project will link the City of Ithaca to the Black Diamond Trail, which is currently under development by the state Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Seward said.

The planned 10- to 12-foot-wide hard path will link all of Ithaca's waterfront destinations to each other, including the state parks, Seward said.

Those places the trail would connect include The Tompkins County Visitor's Center, Stewart Park, the Cascadilla Boat Club, Newman Golf Course, the Farmers' Market, Cornell University and Ithaca College boathouses, the site of the former Old Port Harbor, as well as Inlet Island, Cass Park and Allan H. Treman State Marine Park.

"I believe these trails will dramatically improve the quality of life for residents and create an attraction that will draw visitors to the region," Cohen said, added that the city was willing to invest approximately $300,000 to design and construct the trail project.

Seward said the $150,000 grant would fund the first phase of the trail project, a two-mile section in Cass Park. Cohen said that portion of the project would be completed during the summer. He expected the remaining four miles of the trail to be completed by the end of the year.

"It's very important to (Gov. George Pataki) to balance the environment and economics of a community," Donohue said. "We need to pay attention to the small towns and listen to what they want. Here, waterfront access is important to the people."

The trail will open up the waterfront to everyone, for hiking and biking and will be handicapped accessible, Seward said.
Cass Park Trail
2 mile loop
completed in 2003
With Your Help We're One Step Closer

The Trail Starts Here

We Need Your Help

Let's Take the Next Step
In Building the Cayuga Waterfront Trail

Phase one is done, come out and enjoy it! Phase two will connect the community to the Ithaca Farmers Market, inlet Island and Case Park. The City has received a $488,000 grant but needs to raise an additional $200,000 from the public to complete this section of the trail.

Buy a Stepping Stone, sponsor a bench, trail furnishing or overlook, or simply make a donation at www.cayugawaterfronttrail.com.
UNITED
LETHARGISTS
End-to-Enders

End-to-Enders is a trail from beginning to end.
Thank you to our Cayuga Watershed Trail funding donors shown here, who have donated a stepping stone of something at 5-mile trailhead.

A Gift of the
Finger Lakes Running
and Triathlon Company
Rail-Trail Design Recognition Awards

Honorable Mention: Interpretive Areas and Destination Points

2003

Cayuga Waterfront Trail
Northeast Greenways

Sponsored by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy and American Society of Landscape Architects
A Cultural History Survey of the Cayuga Waterfront

May 30, 2001

Produced by the Cayuga Waterfront Trail Initiative

Historic Research and Writing by Victoria Armstrong

A Project of the Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce Foundation.

Funded by the Park Foundation.

The Cass Park Area

An extensive cattail marsh, threaded with a network of creek channels, shaped the south end of Cayuga Lake before the era of white settlement. Native Americans moved through this area in canoes and on footpaths as they trapped fish and hunted waterfowl. They farmed a few miles south of here at the village of Coreorgon, which was destroyed during the American Revolution to prevent the inhabitants from siding with the British. After the war, the fertile lands of the Iroquois Federation were surveyed, subdivided, and awarded as compensation to veterans for their military service. The first Euro-American settlers arrived in the Ithaca area in 1789.

Much of the land... 

Train service to and from Ithaca began as well with the completion of the Ithaca, Cayuga & Finger Lakes Railroad. Although steam powered, the train offered an efficient and economical way to travel along Cayuga Lake in the 1880's. Steam was replaced by electric power in the 1920's, allowing the train to continue service until it was closed in the 1940's. Today, the Cayuga Lake region is accessible by bus and car, providing easy access to the natural beauty of the area.

In the 1920s, the Ithaca Ithaca and Ithaca & Ithaca and Ithaca & Ithaca Turnpike and the Ithaca & Ithaca & Ithaca Turnpike. The Ithaca & Ithaca & Ithaca Turnpike was a toll road that ran through the city and was a popular way for people to travel to and from Ithaca. The Ithaca & Ithaca & Ithaca Turnpike was removed in the 1930s and replaced with a modern road network.

The Thomas Brothers

In the 1890s, several local merchants and traders, including the Thomas Brothers, began selling goods and services in Ithaca. They were some of the first to establish permanent brick buildings in the city. The Thomas Brothers' store became a center for the local community and was a popular gathering place for residents.

Acknowledgments

This interpretive panel was prepared by the Cayuga Waterfront Trail Initiative with the assistance of the Cayuga Historical Society, the City of Ithaca's Department of Planning and Development, and the Ithaca Historical Society. For more information about the history of the Ithaca waterfront, see the Cayuga Historical Society's website at www.cayugahistoricalsociety.org. The City of Ithaca, Historical Society of Ithaca, and Historic Society of Ithaca are also contributing partners in this project.
The Cayuga Waterfront Trail

Walk through History

Experience the rich history of the Cass Park area while you enjoy the Cayuga Waterfront Trail.
**A Network of Canals**

The Erie Canal, constructed between 1817 and 1825, established the first all-water route between the Great Lakes and the Atlantic Ocean, opening up trade between New York and the upper Midwest to settlement, commercial agriculture, and industrialization. The 364-mile-long artificial waterway was so successful that communities throughout New York and the northeast clamored for canals of their own. By 1828, New York State had constructed the Champlain, Oswego, and Cayuga-Seneca canals. These four canals were enlarged several times through the 1800s to handle increased traffic.

Canals faced stiff competition from railroads by the end of the 1800s. In 1918, a reworked canal system of much enlarged and partially re-routed versions of the Erie, Cayuga-Seneca, Champlain, and Oswego canals opened as the New York State Barge Canal System and continued to provide a competitive option to the growing rail and motor industry. However, commercial traffic on the Barge Canal System fell dramatically after the St. Lawrence Seaway opened a direct route to the Great Lakes for ocean freighters in 1957.

Today, the system remains in service primarily for recreation. Boaters can travel from Ithaca to the Atlantic Ocean or into the waterways of the inner continent. In the future, who knows? There may be a prominent role yet again for the Erie Canalway and its promise of efficient, water-based sustainable transportation.

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**Ithaca on the Erie Canal?**

Many people are surprised to learn that Ithaca is part of the Erie Canal. Yet Ithaca has been a part of the Erie Canal since 1828, when the Cayuga-Seneca canal opened as part of the canal system. Steamboats towed barges on Cayuga Lake — no miles required.

Prior to the Erie Canal, Ithaca was already an integral part of commerce in the Eastern United States. Barges ferried gypsum (a key component of plaster) from Union Springs to Ithaca from the early 1800s on. Barges were transformed into wagons heading south to the Susquehanna River at Owego, then transformed back to barges for shipment to Philadelphia and Baltimore. As many as 600 wagons a day passed through. Similarly, coal was shipped from Pennsylvania via Ithaca to points north.

Ithaca was one of few off-route ports for the Erie Canal. Once connected to the canal system, trade increased dramatically for Ithaca, and boosted the local production of lumber, wheat and whiskey. Boatbuilding and lumberyard operations grew quickly along Ithaca's inlet, as well as services for the many travelers coming through Ithaca.
Phase Two: Inlet Island to the Farmers’ Market
OPINION

Connecting the community by trail

Ithacans are fortunate that our predecessors had the vision to preserve so much of our waterfront for public use. Stewart Park, Newman Golf Course, the Ithaca Farmers Market, Cass Park and Allan H. Treman State Marine Park offer remarkable opportunities for public access to Cayuga Lake and the Inlet. Waterfront projects now under construction, such as the Turtle Mound at the Ithaca Children’s Garden and the Island Health and Fitness Center on Inlet Island, offer glimpses of a new waterfront even more vital to our community’s economic and physical well-being.

We believe that the missing link on our waterfront is, well just that, a link between all of these destinations – a waterfront trail. The Cayuga Waterfront Trail will connect existing and emerging waterfront destinations with a facility designed specifically for transportation and enjoyment by people, not by cars. People walking, biking and skating, pushing strollers and in wheelchairs, young children and senior citizens all being active or relaxing by the water.

The Cayuga Waterfront Trail Initiative has enjoyed considerable success in making the Waterfront Trail a reality since 2001. The first phase of the Waterfront Trail, a 2-mile loop in Cass Park, opened in 2003. For those who use Cass Park (many baseball families seem to spend more time in Cass than at their homes these days) or even just drive by on a regular basis, it is now difficult to imagine Cass Park without the Waterfront Trail and its steady stream of delighted users.

But the Cass Park Trail is just the beginning of our community’s Waterfront Trail development plans. The city and the Chamber of Commerce have more than $700,000 in hand to construct Phase 2, the proposed 1½-mile trail between Cass Park and the Ithaca Farmers Market. When Phase 2 is complete, downtown residents and visitors to the Farmers Market will be able to easily walk, bike and skate to West End restaurants and shops and to Cass Park. As Ithacans experience the pleasure and convenience of walking, biking and skating along the inlet, more and more will choose trail travel over driving through the West End.

How is Phase 2 progressing? We are now in the design and approval stage of the project and soon to enter into right-of-way negotiations with the several landowners along the proposed trail corridor. The first phase was literally a ‘walk in the park’ because the city owned the Cass Park right of way and there were no significant design challenges or obstacles to overcome. Phase 2 is proving to be a more lengthy process due to some complex design challenges, more layers of permitting and approval requirements, and the need to acquire property or easements for the trail right of way. In addition, construction costs have increased significantly since the grant was written in November 2001, so the chamber has increased its fundraising goal from $75,000 to $200,000 to help offset the anticipated increased project cost. The city’s goal at this time is to complete the construction of Phase 2 during the 2006 construction season.

Recently, U.S. Rep. Maurice Hinchey had good news for trail advocates when he announced on March 10 that he had secured $1.2 million for Phase 3 of the Waterfront Trail in the recently passed House reauthorization of the transportation legislation. Just last week the Senate passed its own version of the transportation bill. When the House and Senate bills are reconciled in conference committee, sometime during the summer, we will know if the projected funding for Phase 3 is secure. This funding will help us make the connection between the Farmers Market, Stewart Park and the Tompkins County Visitor Center. We thank Hinchey for his leadership in securing these funds for trail development in Tompkins County.

We believe that in the near future Ithaca will have a truly remarkable Waterfront Trail and you can support trail development, visit www.cayugawaterfronttrail.com or call the Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce at 273-7080.

RICK MANNING / GUEST COLUMNIST

Waterfront trail information

For more information on the Cayuga Waterfront Trail or to find out how you can support trail development, visit www.cayugawaterfronttrail.com or call the Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce at 273-7080.

Rick Manning lives in the City of Ithaca. He is the coordinator of the Cayuga Waterfront Trail Initiative.
Waterfront backers need $200K for path

Design plans for project’s 1.6 mile Phase II explained today during City Hall open house

BY ROGER DUPLIS II
Ithaca Journal Staff

ITHACA — Supporters of the Cayuga Waterfront Trail are looking for help in taking their next step forward.

The Cayuga Waterfront Trail is a two-mile loop through Cass Park, on the west side of Cayuga Inlet. The 1.6-mile Phase II upgrade will cross the water, connecting Cass Park with Ithaca Island and the Farmers’ Market, with branches extending to Willow Avenue and Thirl Street. Organizers hope to start construction in 2005.

All of this comes with a cost.

The City of Ithaca has a $480,000 federal transportation enhancement program grant for the work, and has pledged $112,000 more. But an additional $300,000 will be necessary to complete the project. The Cayuga Waterfront Trail Initiative is a partnership between the City of Ithaca and the Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce Foundation, whose goal is to develop the entire trail.

To achieve that goal, the trail initiative is looking to raise $200,000 from the community at large, said CWWT Coordinator Rick Manning.

Phase I opened in October 2002, and was built with a $150,000 New York State Environmental Bond Act Grant, $275,000 in City of Ithaca matching funds and a $60,000 private contribution.

Manning said the new trail, like the original one, will be 10 feet wide and provide a smooth surface for pedestrians, cyclists, skaters and people using wheelchairs. And like the original trail, he expects it to be a hit with the community.

"We're working to make it the most beautiful trail in the world," Manning said. "It's a great opportunity for us to showcase our community and to bring people together."

Freelance writer Vikki Armstrong — a CWWT volunteer and trail enthusiast who has been active with bicycle trail projects in Toronto — helped create a self-guided brochure for Ithaca trail walkers.

"This area was a central area where we'd like to see new trailways," Armstrong said during an interview outside the Ithaca Farmers Market. The brochure helps trail users orient themselves to historic sites and and uses from benches along the route. Highlights include former railway lines and facilities, beaches, boat landings and Ithaca's State Park.

Manning sees the trail as a means of promoting one of the community's greatest resources.

"A lot of people don't think of this as a waterfront town," he said. "But the history of Ithaca is very water-oriented."

Representatives from the Consultant Team of Northeast Greenways and Bergmann Associates and City and Chamber staff will be available to discuss design plans for Phase II.

A 30-minute presentation will be held at 5 p.m. for paces and interested members of the public. Drawings will be posted.  

On the Net

Cayuga Waterfront Trail
We have been notified that the City of Ithaca administration plans to seize by eminent domain critical portions of properties in the West End on which our businesses are located, to construct a 10-foot-wide trail as part of the Cayuga Waterfront Trail.

The proposed route for the trail has severe design flaws, and it will damage – or end altogether – half a dozen businesses.

As currently drawn, the route would start from Cass Park, head south toward the flood control channel, cross the bridge over the channel by taking away one of the road lanes, head east toward Buffalo Street, cross the Buffalo Street bridge by adding a side extension to the bridge, go behind Instant Printing, cross between the Puddledockers kayak shop and the former Bistro Q restaurant, turn to the north and go next to the Cornell boat house, continue north in front of Andree Petroleum on the Third Street Extension, go past the DOT facility, and onto the city-owned Farmers’ Market property.

The current design

- Eliminates for use by cars the right-hand turning lane on the bridge over the former Octopus. (The trail would be 20 feet wide on the bridge, including separate lanes for pedestrians and bicyclists, and 10 feet wide everywhere else.)
- The reason for the massive reconstruction of the Octopus – at a cost to taxpayers of $27 million – was to solve the traffic bottleneck and to enable faster access to the hospital by ambulances.

These benefits would largely be undone. The design also eliminates nearly half the parking spaces that serve the Mi Casita restaurant, the Audio Hearing Aid Center, Instant Printing and the Puddledockers kayak shop.

- Puts the Puddledockers kayak shop out of business by taking away safe access to the dock, reducing the boat storage and setup area and eliminating half the shop’s parking.
- Presents serious hazards at

How can the city attract new businesses and maintain existing ones if residents and business owners feel that the city is hostile to private property?

Property ownership of any kind entails the biggest financial investment most people will ever make in their lives.

People want to live in a community that respects their property rights – and them. Ithaca is becoming a far less good place to live and conduct business because of what can only be described as predatory actions on the part of the local government. Is the trail merely the first step in condemning a large area of the West End to turn over to large developers and chain businesses?

A city planner last year mentioned the idea of inviting developers to build a hotel, condos and other upscale structures next to the Farmers’ Market. In other words, the city plans to keep pursuing the very trend that much of the community opposes: gentrification, bias toward big developers, tax rebates to developers, and higher property taxes for everyone, increasing programs and “amenities.”

There will be a Common Council meeting at 6 p.m. today, at the Holiday Inn on South Cayuga Street to discuss the city’s proposed eminent domain action. We hope that people who are concerned about what the city is doing will attend and ask questions.

Angelo DiGiacamo is the owner of Instant Printing and of the buildings that house the Puddledockers kayak shop, the Audio Hearing Aid Center, and the Mi Casita restaurant. Bob Andree is the owner of Andree Petroleum.
Setting record straight on waterfront trail

Former Mayor Alan Cohen recently wrote a surprising opinion article for The Ithaca Journal and Ithaca Times (“Playing Favorites on the Waterfront Trail,” Feb. 27). I was disappointed to find it contained unfounded inferences of wrongdoing on the part of city officials, and was not preceded by any conversations with city staff involved in the project.

Most surprising, however, was his argument that the Cayuga Waterfront Trail should not be routed around the buildings formerly housing the Bistro Q restaurant. That route has been on the drawing board since at least 2001, when Alan Cohen was mayor, and he personally signed the grant application showing this route. The trail route has not changed since then, but, for unknown reasons, apparently Alan Cohen’s position on it has.

In the late 1990s, the city received funding from the federal Coastal Corridor Initiative for public waterfront access at the Boatyard Grill and Bistro Q restaurant sites. As part of this project, the city negotiated two easements with Argyle Associates, owners of the Bistro Q property, to preserve long-term public access along the Inlet (or west) side of the site.

One easement covers the public boardwalk/dock which Argyle Associates constructed along the Inlet, just north of the restaurant, using the grant monies ($199,000). The other easement gives the city the option to extend this public boardwalk to the south, through the area now occupied by the restaurant dining room and outdoor patio and bar, to the northern boundary of the DiGiacomo (Instant Printing, Mi Casa, etc.) property. This second easement can be exercised by the city only if it acquires similar easements over the adjacent properties to the north and south. Obviously, public use of this easement can occur only if part of the Bistro Q building is demolished, and the patio eliminated or relocated.

However, even before the easements were negotiated, the Cohen administration endorsed the current proposed route of the main trail. The trail was planned for the water (west) side of the adjacent DiGiacomo parcel because bulkheading is in place, the building is set back from the water’s edge, and the potential trail corridor is already open (free of buildings), paved and easily converted to an appropriate surface. The grant application submitted in 2001, over Alan Cohen’s signature, showed the main trail route on the east side of Bistro Q with a planned boardwalk as a spur along the water’s edge (i.e., within the city’s easement). Essentially, the boardwalk (with or without the extension) was and is viewed as a pedestrian-only, parallel spur to the main Trail, serving a different function and being a different kind of facility. It provides a unique public experience of being immediately adjacent to the water and allows boats (such as the MV Manhattan) to tie up to and be accessed from it. However, the boardwalk was not designed for and cannot safely accommodate the full range of anticipated trail users, including bicyclists and inline skaters.

If the trail’s “main line” were located on the boardwalk, a continuous railing would be required, seriously complicating the docking of boats. Also, since the Bistro Q dining room and patio are built on aging piers over the edge of the Inlet, an extended boardwalk would require a retaining wall.

The city’s West End is an area in transition, one with great potential. The Cayuga Waterfront Trail is an exciting, forward-looking project with broad community support that will enhance the area, immeasurably.

Waterfront Trail hearing tonight

The city of Ithaca is conducting another public hearing on this phase of the Waterfront Trail. The hearing will take place 6 p.m. today, Monday, May 1, at the downtown Holiday Inn, 222 S. Cayuga St. More information can be found online at www.cayugawaterfronttrail.com.

Mr. Cohen’s notion that the city is providing special favors to the owners of the old Bistro Q property is simply not credible. In the last two years since I have been mayor, the director of Planning and Development has never advocated for one route or another in this area and never micro-managed the project to influence its location. Argyle Associates themselves have raised numerous concerns about the proposed route of the main trail and from time to time have indicated a preference for having it on the waterside of their property.

I certainly don’t have any problems with citizens raising reasonable questions about city projects, but I wish Mr. Cohen had tackled the facts accurately, not only by talking with current city officials, especially myself, before publishing an unwarranted attack in the newspapers.

The city’s West End is an area in transition, one with great potential. The Cayuga Waterfront Trail is an exciting, forward-looking project with broad community support that will enhance the area, immeasurably. It is important to build the trail now so it will be part of the future development mix. We think this is good planning and worth the hard work in which we are now engaged.

The city is conducting another public hearing on this phase of the Waterfront Trail at 6 p.m. today at the downtown Holiday Inn. Your participation is welcome.

Carolyn Peterson is the mayor of the City of Ithaca.
Next waterfront trail phase won’t work

Robert Andree, Philip Crimmins, Angelo DiGiacamo and William Watt / Guest Column

We propose a substitute for Phase II: a footbridge over the inlet between Cass Park and the Farmers’ Market. The footbridge would avoid the removal of the essential traffic lane, reduce traffic congestion, cost less, be safer for trail users and be far more attractive.

Phase II of the proposed trail in the West End is unworkable. Common Council needs to consider a better alternative. A westbound lane over the flood control channel would be closed for the trail, and increase traffic jams on the only direct route to the hospital for the eastern half of the county. The trail would require a 16-foot-wide easement through the parking lots and boat-launching docks of private properties. And trail users would be forced dangerously close to 18-wheel delivery trucks and propane storage tanks. Property owners have been threatened with eminent domain in two letters from the city’s transportation engineer.

The Jan. 6, 2006 and April 13, 2006 letters refer to “a proposal for the City of Ithaca to acquire right-of-way, pursuant to the Eminent Domain Procedure Law, on a portion of your land.”

To sell the idea of the trail to the public and to federal agencies, the city has claimed that the trail will be used for transportation. The West End trail is recreational. It redundantly links parks, other recreational facilities and a seasonal farmers’ market and can never — because of its location — serve as a meaningful transportation route for commuting or doing errands. People can already reach the parks and related facilities through existing infrastructure. The trail is not an essential use and does not justify the seizure of private properties. Genuine transportation alternatives for cyclists — the main group that would benefit from them — are shared-use lanes and bike lanes.

The great majority of bike lanes in cities throughout the U.S. and the world have been built without taking away private property or removing parking spaces. We propose a substitute for Phase II: a footbridge over the inlet between Cass Park and the Farmers’ Market. The footbridge would avoid the removal of the essential traffic lane, reduce traffic congestion, cost less, be safer for trail users and be far more attractive. It would be completely on public land and connect with Phase III of the trail, also on public land. A beautiful example of a footbridge is the Victoria Bridge over the River Wye in Hereford, England, which can be seen at www.ukattraction.com/heart-of-england/victoria-bridge.htm.

A footbridge overlooking the lake would be much more appealing than a trail that goes through virtual alleys in some sections and puts trail users in parking lots.

Route 13 traffic congestion that is generated by the Farmers’ Market on weekends would be reduced by allowing shoppers to park at Cass Park and walk or cycle across the footbridge. The footbridge would therefore better meet the eligibility criteria for federal transportation funding. The bridge would cost significantly less than the current Phase II design. The present design would total at least $1.75 million, of which federal transportation funds would pay $1.4 million. The footbridge would cost approximately $1 million. The distance across the inlet between Cass Park and the Farmers’ Market is 390 feet. The general cost of footbridges, according to a bridge engineer with the award-winning engineering firm W&H Pacific, is estimated by multiplying the length by width by $200. Our calculation of $1 million is based on a 10-foot-wide bridge with a total span of 500 feet, allowing extra room for the bridge abutments on the banks. Boats would be able to pass underneath. The only exceptions would be sailboats that are unusually tall, but sailboats rarely if ever go as far south as the inlet.

The footbridge would leave alone the route to the hospital, save money, avoid eminent domain and provide a safer experience for trail users. It would be superior in every way to the current Phase II design.

The authors own businesses near the Cayuga Lake Inlet.
In support of the Cayuga Waterfront Trail

Dewi Rainey / Guest Column

As a West End business owner for 7.5 years (former co-owner of Maxie’s Supper Club) and in my current location across from the Ithaca Farmers’ Market (Red Feet Wine Market), I strongly support the Cayuga Waterfront Trail and the goal to build and link all six miles of it. I have tried to put myself in the shoes of the business people along the trail who oppose it, having been a business owner in this region of the city for many years. While I understand they are upset and I am sorry for their distress, I believe they should not fear but rather embrace the trail.

I would look at hundreds of people per week going by my business as a positive thing, as it will bring more exposure to these storefronts. Waterfront trail users are not the type to throw a cigarette into Andree Petroleum; rather they are some of the most health- and environment-conscious groups in the community. The wonderful opportunity to rent canoes and kayaks at Puddledockers would more easily be discovered if passers-by were eyeing it all summer. The waterfront trail could include small gate crossings at the edges of that property and at the Cornell and Ithaca College boathouses when canoes and kayaks need to safely cross the trail. Dismount zones and simple compromise design solutions can be reached. I would rather watch our Cornell rowing team while on the trail, instead of during a few seconds driving over the bridge.

Having owned a restaurant, I would think that landlords would welcome having their restaurant tenants exposed to hundreds of people per week. The trail could create a wonderful sense of community between patio dining and trail users, heighten publicity for the restaurants and make them easier to find. While opponents insist that it will lower their property values, I believe it will raise them.

Some are worried about the 200-foot stretch of Route 96 North as one leaves the city over the inlet bridge because of the loss of that lane for the trail might hinder emergency vehicles. Route 96 in the city is a two-lane road for two miles to the hospital, except for this tiny section of bridge. Meanwhile, the public and all emergency vehicles have proven they can adapt to a five-minute neighborhood detour for the past three months due to roadwork. Let’s not re-do the studies of three years ago just because our memories have faded and some players in government have changed. The lane change was reviewed and approved as safe by both the state Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration.

Why has this become a divisive issue when it has been carefully researched and planned for more than six years? I have lived and traveled in other cities where a waterfront trail became the focal point as a beautiful, landscaped, recreational, practical pedestrian road in the city. I have seen first hand how communities come together and businesses court their positions along such trails (Boulder, Colo., and Chicago). The fact that our trail leads to our amazing Farmers’ Market, the excellent Visitors Center and Stewart Park is our jewel to discover and display to the world.

I hope Ithacans will make themselves aware of the potential that the Cayuga Waterfront Trail could bring to our tourists. Often (outside the hours of the weekend Farmers’ Market) tourists have asked me for directions by saying, “Where is the Waterfront District?” “What Waterfront District?” is what goes through my head. I direct them to the Boatyard Grill area, and they leave baffled. They want to be able to stroll along the lake, sit outside at bars and restaurants and people-watch on a boardwalk that stretches around the lake. I see this possibility in their eyes.

My heart goes out to those who feel wronged by the Cayuga Waterfront Trail, as I would never wish any ill upon a business owner. However, there will always be opposition and doubt in new projects, and it takes all of us to consider the benefits, potential and liabilities of this project and to weigh in on it.

Fire board condemns trail plan
Loss of lane would hinder emergency pass, panel says

By Raymond Drumsta
rdrumsta@ithacajournal.com
Journal Staff

ITHACA — A proposed lane alteration to the Buffalo Street Bridge, designed to accommodate a portion of the Cayuga Waterfront Trail, will hinder emergency traffic, according to a recently-drafted resolution by the Ithaca Board of Fire Commissioners.

“Be it resolved, the Ithaca Board of Fire Commissioners is going on record to oppose the removal of a traffic lane on the westbound portion of this bridge for trail usage,” the resolution, dated April 20, reads. “To reduce the number of available lanes on the Buffalo Street Bridge will increase the congestion in an already congested area as well as further impede the passage of fire, police and ambulance emergency vehicles.”

The lane alteration is an inappropriate solution for a recreational trail, said Robert Romanowski, chairman of the board of fire commissioners.

“I’ve seen emergency service vehicles having to use that lane to get by traffic tie-ups, mainly when the train comes through,” he said.

The resolution was passed in late April, and it will be sent to the mayor and Common Council soon, he said.

“It’s going to the mayor’s office as soon as the rest of the commission signs it,” Romanowski said.

The resolution adds fresh ink and a new wrinkle to the one of the debates over the Cayuga Trail.

See EMERGENCY Page 4A

EMERGENCY

CONTINUED FROM 1A

Waterfront Trail. Other issues include eminent domain by the City of Ithaca, safety and loss of space by businesses.

Throughout the debates, Trail Coordinator Rick Manning said the trail would encourage alternate modes of transportation beyond vehicles and increase human traffic along the inlet to support businesses.

A recent traffic study, including video-tape footage of traffic on the bridge, proves the proposed lane alteration will not change traffic patterns, Manning said. They propose to take seven feet of the right-hand lane, he said.

“That leaves 32 feet, or two 12-foot lanes and two 4-foot shoulders,” Manning said.

“That’s plenty of room for drivers to pull over and allow emergency traffic to go through.” Even with the change, the bridge will remain wider than most city streets, he added.

The study approximated the alteration with traffic barrels, Manning said.

“Fundamentally, it didn’t change the way people merged,” he said, adding that the New York State Department of Transportation and Federal Highway Administration also approved the proposed alteration.

Romanowski remains unconvinced, saying that an alteration to a lane on the route to Cayuga Medical Center will endanger those needing emergency services.

“I’m neutral on the Waterfront Trail itself,” he said. “If that’s what people want around here, that’s fine. But it shouldn’t interfere with emergency traffic.”

Source: Cayuga Waterfront at www.cayugawaterfrontrail.com

FUNDING THE WATERFRONT TRAIL

Phase 1
• $150,000 New York State Environmental Bond Act Grant
• $275,000 City of Ithaca matching funds
• $100,000 Private contributions — individuals, businesses and foundations

The first phase of the Cayuga Waterfront Trail, a two-mile loop trail in Cass Park, opened in the fall of 2004.

Phase 2
• $488,000 federal grant
• $112,000 City of Ithaca matching funds

$200,000 in community contributions to be raised by the Cayuga Waterfront Trail Initiative ($125,000 is in hand, $75,000 is needed.)

Phase 2 of the Waterfront Trail will be 1.5 miles in length, linking the existing trail in Cass Park to the Ithaca Farmers’ Market.

Phase 3
• $960,000 for Phase 3 design and construction secured in the 2006 Federal Transportation Bill. The City and the Cayuga Waterfront Trail Initiative are required to raise the required 20 percent in matching funds — a minimum of $240,000 — for Phase 3.

Phase 3 of the Waterfront Trail will connect the Ithaca Farmers’ Market to Stewart Park and the Tompkins County Visitors Center.

Easements

Ithaca Common Council voted to authorize $250,000 for easement acquisition at its November 2006 meeting.

Source: Cayuga Waterfront at www.cayugawaterfrontrail.com
Perspectives on the Cayuga Waterfront Trail

Editor’s note: This guest column was written in response to Robert Andree and Angelo DiGiacomo’s Sept. 21 column “City property owners treated unfairly.” Mayor Carolyn K. Peterson was given the same amount of space as the original column.

Phase 1 of the Cayuga Waterfront Trail in Cass Park is a delightful place to walk, run, bike and blade on our waterfront. It is also a safe transportation path for those traveling to and from ball games, swimming, or the theater without a vehicle. I use it regularly and greatly enjoy the people and the scenery along the trail. The trail has resulted in many improvements to the park including lovely overlooks, benches and information on waterfront history. Volunteers and Cornell University workstudy students help our city crews keep the trail and surrounding park areas clean. Phase 1 works well, and future phases will have even more positive benefits for our city as a place to live, visit and do business. This successful vision will continue with the completion of Phase 2 from Cass Park to the Farmers’ Market and Phase 3 from the market to Stewart Park.

As part of the Phase 2 design, the city has proposed that seven feet of...
PATIENCE IS NOT THE ABILITY TO WAIT BUT HOW YOU ACT WHILE YOU'RE WAITING
—JOYCE MEYER
Permanent Residents

These include some species that nest in East Park and some that nest nearby and commute daily to or through the park.

Fair Weather Friends

These birds visit us in spring and summer to breed, but they winter further south, some spending more than half the year in the tropics.
Inlet Island Trailhead Phase 2
Farmers Market Trailhead
Phase 2
Farmers Market to Stewart Park and the Visitors Center 2010
Welcome to the Waterfront Interpretive Panel donated by the Tompkins Trust Company.
Cass Park to Farmers Market 2015
“the missing link”
PARTICIPATION: TRAIL ADOPTERS
Next Steps

- Complete Neighborhood Linkages & Transit Connections
- Link to Adjacent Existing & Proposed Trails
- Update/Enhance Social & Print Media to promote trail as a destination
- Add Interpretive Panels & Furnishings to Enhance Trail
- Cultivate Trail System Sponsors – Health System
- Strengthen Trail Volunteer Maintenance
- Add Lighting & Winter Maintenance
- Paddling/Blueway Trail Improvements
- Waterfront Park Improvements & Special Places
Cayuga Waterfront Trail

• Patience & Persistence
• Precedents
• Past – Corridor & Site History
• Partnerships
• Planning & Design
• Place & Placemaking
• Property Acquisition
• Participation - Volunteers
• Public Relations
• Parks & Special Places along the Trail
Stewart Park
Rehabilitation Action Plan

December 2009

Prepared by:
Rick Manning, ASLA
Cayuga Watershed Trail Initiative Program Coordinator

Prepared for:
City of Ithaca, Strategic Tourism Planning Board, and
Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce Foundation
1921 REVITALIZE 2021 STEWART PARK
FSP’s Revitalization Partners

- City of Ithaca
- New York State
- Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce
- Park Foundation
- Tompkins County Tourism Program
- Wharton Studio Museum
- Cascadilla Boat Club
- Cayuga Bird Club
- Ithaca Garden Club
Dear sister, Home now and if you can come home let us know as home long and would like to see you that is if Mrs. Cole can get along. Let us know about and people home. If you come before you write, as you mentioned it is to tomorrow. Mother says if Mrs. Cole don’t want you, you can come home also. In love, Ed. 
Ithaca, N.Y.

Cayuga Lake Steamers at Renwick Pier.

Can you say tell which boat brought you in to Ithaca last summer? We have lots of snow here. Lovingly, Aunt Mary.
Ithaca’s Silent Movie History & The Wharton Studio 1915-1921
Trolley going over Stewart Avenue Bridge in Kiss of Blood
Stewart Park Opens to Public on July 4, 1921
1934 Master Plan
Stewart Park 1940s – 1970
Completed Projects: 2011 - 2017

- Cayuga Waterfront Trail & Trailhead
- Mayor Stewart Memorial Flagpole Garden
- Park Entry Planting
- Building & Renwick Wildwood Interpretive Signs
- Carousel Restoration
- Park Building Condition Study
- New Roof on Cascadilla Boathouse
- Paddlecraft Racks & Concession
- Carousel Restoration
- Fuertes Overlook Restoration
Cayuga Waterfront Trail
New Park Entry Planting
Park Interpretive Signs
2021 Park Revitalization Goals

As Stewart Park’s 2021 centennial approaches, Friends of Stewart Park (FSP) is focused on the following key park revitalization projects:

• Complete the new Inclusive Playground & Splash Pad (Fall 2018).
• Develop the park’s Historic Core which includes the Picnic Pavilion, the Wharton Studio Museum and Park Visitor Center, a Performance Plaza and the Cayuga Lake Overlook.
• Repair and paint Cascadilla Boathouse exterior
• Improve canoe and kayak facilities for the Cayuga Lake Blueway Trail.
• Complete Cayuga Waterfront Trail loop and a variety of other site enhancements such as signage, tennis court resurfacing and park landscape improvements.
Inclusive Playground & Splashpad
A Playground for All

Stewart Park Inclusive Playground
Conceptual Design Plan
Not to Scale
March 2018
Existing Play Equipment
"A new and inclusive playground in Stewart Park would mean my husband would not need to carry Karina, and I could bring her to the playground on my own. She could move around freely next to her peers and sisters and would not have physical barriers; she could just go to the playground and PLAY! This playground would mean no limits - just a place for Karina to be HERSELF, FREE in her own body."

- Chelsea Hill, Karina’s Mom
Friends of Stewart Park
Phase 1 Community Build
September 11-16, 2018
900+ Volunteers
Twelve 4 Hour Shifts

A Playground for All

Map showing phases I and II of the park development with areas like Cayuga Lake Overlook, Pre-School Play Area, School-Age Play Area, Pinnacle Play Area, etc.
A Playground for ALL

PHASE II

CAYUGA LAKE OVERLOOK

BATHROOMS AND STORAGE

NEW SPLASH PAD

PINCUS PLAY AREA

SCHOOL-AGE PLAY AREA

SAND GARDEN PLAY AREA

NEW PERIMETER FENCING

PHASE I

CAROUSEL COVER

COVERED SWINGS

BOULDER NET

SWINGS

PHASE II

Friends of Stewart Park
Stewart Park Inclusive Playground - Phase II Design Features

A new spray pool will be constructed at the location of the existing play area, with accessible spray features, control features, and new accessible spray zones, and in one of the Braun Figure Ladders will be installed onto the accessible slide.

Another highlight of Phase II of the Inclusive Playground is a large and highly-accessible school-age playground structure with many play events all along its extensive network of ramps and decks. The structure ties into the adjacent landscape berm which culminates at a Lake Overlook.
Restoring the Historic Core
Wharton Studio Museum & Park Visitor Center _Summer
Cayuga Waterfront Trail & Friends of Stewart Park

www.cayugawaterfronttrail.com
www.friendsofstewartpark.org

Rick Manning
rick@friendsofstewartpark.org
607-592-4647