

GENESEE TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL

RESOLUTION

Resolution 24-03 *Accepting the Last Mile (or less): Site Plan Review for Multimodal Transportation Report as evidence of completion of UPWP Task 5362*

WHEREAS,

1. The *FY 2023-2024 Unified Planning Work Program* includes Task 5362, The Last Mile (or less): Site Plan Review for Multimodal Transportation, for the purpose of developing an online guide and providing associated training opportunities for municipalities to use during the site plan review process when considering active transportation trips;
2. Said Task included a survey and inventory of existing municipal policies, programs, and plans related to site plan review and multimodal transportation in the Genesee-Finger Lakes Region; an analysis of municipal site plan review procedures; a discussion of community design principles; a review of multimodal transportation considerations in the site plan review process; a summary of best practices in site plan review procedures; and multimodal transportation resources for municipal officials to reference when updating their site plan review processes;
3. Said Task has been completed and has resulted in the *Last Mile (or less): Site Plan Review for Multimodal Transportation Report*, which provides resources and best practices for conducting a Site Plan Review process that supports multi-modal transportation, and provides guidance and considerations for different site development scenarios; and
4. Said Plan has been reviewed by GTC staff and member agencies through the GTC committee process and has been found to be consistent with the goals, objectives, and recommendations of the Long Range Transportation Plan.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED

1. That the Genesee Transportation Council hereby accepts the *The Last Mile (or less): Site Plan Review for Multimodal Transportation Report* as evidence of completion of UPWP Task 5362; and
2. That this resolution takes effect immediately.

CERTIFICATION

The undersigned duly qualified Secretary of the Genesee Transportation Council certifies that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of a resolution adopted at a legally convened meeting of the Genesee Transportation Council held on February 29, 2024.

Date _____

CHRISTOPHER REEVE, Secretary
Genesee Transportation Council

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Those who choose to walk or bike within the Genesee Finger Lakes Region often face the “last steps” connection challenge, this challenge exists due to the limited pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure within a parcel that safely leads a user to the front door of their destination. The lack of infrastructure in the final steps can be a deterrent for people who may choose an alternative mode of transportation and is a problem that may be a daily reality for those with limited transportation options.

Improvements to the site plan review process are only effective if the development addresses the last mile and last steps challenge and considers the context of the development site and community. Site selection is an important factor in the success of a development and for sustainable growth. Identifying sites should be based on analysis of the community wide context, the accessibility of facilities, and the capacity of the site. There are many factors that make a site unique: the culture and community, landscape and geography, infrastructure, and the built environment. Good design will respond to these factors; design that is inappropriate in its context, or which fails to enhance the character, quality and function of an area should not be approved. Site design and development proposals that are informed by good site and context analysis have several advantages:

- Value
- Environmental Sustainability
- Connectivity
- Health and Well-Being
- Sense of Place
- Cost Effectiveness
- Security

Street design and land use are closely linked, and the existing and planned land uses must be considered when planning and designing new developments. Land development that is sensitive to the context of the parcel and the surrounding community is essential to enhancing scenic, aesthetic, historic, and environmental resources, and helps maintain and enhance safety and mobility of users. Each new development should be analyzed based on the context of the neighborhood and community to ensure quality development.

Design is inherently subjective with no right or wrong answer, but good design is objective because it just works. It works because the initial design application follows a system or framework, every subsequent design decision has a reason, and every element can be explained. The following principles are meant to provide a community with a starting point to begin the discussion of what constitutes good design as it relates to both community and development contexts.

- Build to human scale
- Design for comfort and safety
- Create places to congregate
- Provide connections
- Connect buildings to streets and sidewalks
- Transitions and boundaries
- Include detail and variety
- Function
- Mixed use and compact development

Every proposed development will have to be judged by the reviewing board on its own merits within the parameters of the community's policies. The site plan review process is the forum where it is determined whether the development complies with the intent of the community. The number of development factors to be evaluated can be large, and it is necessary to determine the important elements early in the process. Generally, the review factors address five major elements: land use; circulation; utilities; public safety; and design. These factors can help to ensure equitable and realistic reviews. A number of additional factors can be added to the site plan review process to ensure that communities are receiving development applications including pedestrian and multimodal focused amenities.

Poor site plan review practices can lead to inefficient, confusing, and lengthy development review processes that frustrates applicants, increase development costs, and lead to inappropriate development in a community. A Site Plan Review process that is streamlined and easy to understand by both the applicant and the review boards will support the inclusion of projects that are better suited for the community context and are more multimodal and pedestrian friendly. Best practices fall under four categories:

- Improve communication- Collaboration and communication among municipal officials, permit applicants, consultants, developers, and code enforcement officers is vital to efficient permitting that maintains the goals and aspirations of the community. Improved communication throughout the process will lead to better projects that fit the community context and will support the inclusion of multimodal and pedestrian focused projects. By informing the applicant, developer, and review boards of the required elements that will be reviewed the community is more likely to receive complete and robust applications that meet the goals of community
- Standardize the process- Predictability and consistency of the permitting process within a municipality allows for a more efficient project review. Applicants should know what to expect from the municipal review boards, commissions, and staff they interact with through the process including the submittal requirements, plan documents, public meeting schedules, and review time frames.
- Improve performance and accountability- Adequate staffing and resources are integral to efficient planning and permitting. Utilizing tools like a municipal website or electronic permit tracking systems are effective tools for communicating information about development applications and can provide greater transparency, accuracy, and efficiency among municipal review boards, commissions, and interested citizens.
- Planning- Planning helps guide future growth and can help answer questions such as: Where and how do we build new homes, schools, businesses, roads and public infrastructure? How do we deal with parts of the community that are overbuilt, deteriorating or otherwise inappropriate? How do we preserve those parts of the community that we value? A municipality that identifies appropriate areas for commercial, residential, and industrial growth and is able to answer these questions is much better prepared to encourage desirable outcomes from proposed development.

To create accessible, well-balanced transportation options and walkable communities the site plan review process for development must adapt to accommodate all user groups including users of non-motorized forms of transportation. To support multimodal transportation communities will need to improve and update their site plan review process to accommodate the last steps to a destination by considering community and site context, and good design principles. The site plan review process should also be updated to be more transparent, efficient, and predictable.