



FACT SHEET

Spiegel Community Center Site Plan

September 14, 2017

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More information available at
<http://www.townofpittsford.org/community-center-project/q-and-a>

The site plan for the renovation of Pittsford’s Spiegel Community Center is the result of planning and public input meetings spanning more than 18 months.

The site plan, in substantially its current form, was presented for public review and comment at all public input meetings from early in 2016 and thereafter. The only difference between the current site plan and the site plan submitted for public review is that the current plan reflects changes requested by members of the public. As compared to the previous plan:

- a) the current plan reduces the number of parking places;
- b) the current plan pulls the parking closer to the building and away from the rear property line, increasing the distance from the rear property line to the parking lot from 14 feet to more than 40 feet, thus increasing the amount of green space remaining open; and
- c) the current plan relocates the dumpster pad to a less visible spot.

These changes were made in response to public comments earlier this year, including those made at a public information meeting at Village Hall on May 24th of this year and in response to comments from the Village administration.

By letter to Mayor Corby dated May 15, 2017, the Town submitted to the Village for its review a complete set of the architectural and engineering design drawings, including the site plan, for the Spiegel project, asking for the Village’s comments and suggested changes. Following this submission and following discussions among Town and Village officials regarding the plan, including a meeting among Mayor Corby, Trustee Plummer, Supervisor Smith and Town Board member Mary Doyle on May 24, 2017, the Town accommodated all of the Village’s requests involving the street-facing side of the building and the grounds, in addition to accommodating other requests by representatives of the Village.

Historic Background:

Although the Spiegel Center, formerly the Lincoln Avenue School, built in 1916, is not itself listed in the National Register of Historic Places, it is located within the Village Historic District. Preserving this historic building for public use was important to the Citizens’ Committee on the Community Center and to the Town Board, in their recommendation to our residents to renovate Spiegel rather than build a new community center elsewhere.

The renovated community center will continue as a facility for all town residents, wherever they live. Keeping it in the Village is made possible only by providing adequately for those residents who must drive to get there. Certainly that's the great majority of patrons of the facility.

No one is happy that any additional space at all must be used for parking. The Town looked diligently for a way around this trade-off. The Town and its engineers approached the determination of the number of parking places needed by multiple means. These are described below. By every method of determination, each calculation came up with a number in proximity to the others. We cannot responsibly ignore the data.

The Town and its engineers have exhausted every practical design option proposed to date for accommodating needed parking while preserving the maximum amount of contiguous green space remaining.

The Town's engineers for the Spiegel Site plan, BME Associates, have reviewed the drawing for an Alternative Plan proposed by Mayor Corby on July 24. Regrettably, it won't work. The reasons are discussed in more detail below, under the heading "Alternative Plans."

Mayor Corby and Supervisor Smith continued to discuss possibilities for leaving more of the open space in ways that are practical for the project and in a manner acceptable to the Village authorities. These discussions and additional alternative plans considered more recently, are discussed in detail below, in the section headed "Alternative Plans."

Preserving Open Space

Among the factors that favored renovating Spiegel was the Town's goal to preserve open space in Pittsford.

Building a new community center from scratch would have taken away another three to four acres of green space, at least, somewhere else in the town, with a big-box building sitting in the middle of it. Renovating Spiegel avoids that.

The Current Plan provides only one-tenth of an acre less contiguous open space than the Alternative Plan, adjusted to incorporate mandatory bufferings and stormwater provisions, most recently considered.

Points to Consider

1. There has been for some time a significant parking problem at the Spiegel Center.

- a) For at least the past 12 years, parking at Spiegel has been a problem. Program participants already depend heavily upon on-street parking at various distances from the building. This poses a problem for families with young children and many senior citizens. The lack of adequate parking was one of the reasons we moved senior programs to a separate facility in 1998. Before the Town made that change, the Spiegel site frequently had a double row of cars parked on the lawn adjacent to the existing parking lot.

- b) An additional reason more physical space is required for parking at Spiegel is because the current parking spaces are too narrow. Apparently the Town narrowed them over time in order to create more spaces. Today, especially in the era of big pickup trucks and SUVs, we must provide parking spaces of a width in accordance with engineering standards. At present, if a pickup or a big SUV parks in one of the parking places at Spiegel, it renders unusable at least one of the spaces on either side, because there's no room in the adjacent space to open the door in order to get out of the car. This can happen even with regular automobiles. Therefore, even if we kept the number of parking spaces at Spiegel the same as it is now, the parking lot would have to expand in order to provide spaces of adequate width.

2. There will major programming expansions at the Center.

- a) The Town is incorporating its Senior Center into the Spiegel building and therefore moving all of the Senior programs there. Those programs include, among others, lunches 4 days a week, Line Dancing, Zumba, Tai Chi, Yoga, Balance, Feldenkrais, Square Dancing, Crafts, Euchre and Balance classes.
- b) Beyond the Senior programs, the Town does not contemplate adding major programs. But it does expect attendance at continuing programs to increase, because they'll be offered in an attractive, modern venue rather than in a building that's well past its prime.

3. The Senior Program will be moved to the Center during the daytime, when the building will see active usage by other programs

Therefore, we have to take this into account in determining the necessary number of parking spaces. We know how many people use the Spiegel Center and the current Senior Center and when they use them. We have sign-up data for each program.

A typical day during peak hours produces on average:

- 175 people from 9am to 11am
- 180 people from 11am to 2 pm
- 160 people from 6pm to 9pm

The Senior programs take place during the day, in the hours from 9-11am and from 11am – 2pm. Yet other recreation programs, held in parts of the building that will not be used for senior activities, take place at the same time.

In addition to Senior programs, the Spiegel center will continue to offer the following programs during those same daytime hours: aerobics, child care, youth dance, adult ballet, community group reservations usually for two groups on a typical day in each of the two time periods, and gymnasium programs including pickleball and open gym for parents and tots. Based on recorded usages and enrollments, we know we can expect an average of 175 people at the Spiegel building from 9 - 11am, and 180 people from 11am – 2pm.

4. Seniors who drive, which includes all but a handful of Senior program participants, will use parking during the day in addition to participants in all of the other daytime programs and community meetings described above under item 3.

5. The Village will be adding 12 or more on-street parking spaces on Lincoln Avenue. The Town has taken this into account in its planning, thereby reducing the number of parking spaces in the rear of the building.

The Town has not merely taken into account the Village's plan to provide additional on-street parking, it is depending upon it. It's necessary for providing the number of parking places needed. It makes it possible for the Town to provide fewer additional parking spaces behind the building than would be necessary otherwise.

6. The formula used by the Town and its engineers to calculate the number of parking spots is based on hard data showing actual usage of the community center and the senior center. We know how many people use the Spiegel Center and the Senior Center and when they use them. People must sign up for each program. The model is dynamic, basing the number of spaces on the number of people in the building during each part of the day. The model then assumes that 25% of those people will arrive by means other than driving, such as by foot, by bike or by being dropped off.

- a) The Town's engineers determined the number of parking places based on the number of people actually using the building at different times of day. This is hard data, based on actual participation in our various programs. This calculation calls for 110 parking places. Our current design provides for 109.
- b) As a way of cross-checking the number of parking places based on usage, the Town and its engineers used several alternative methodologies. All resulted in a number of parking spaces within proximity to each other. The initial, usage-based, methodology resulted in the lowest number. This is the number used for the current site plan.

The methodology used takes into account usage by different times of day, parking currently provided, parking usage, anticipated ability to schedule programming so as to minimize the parking necessary, and the Village's plan to provide additional on-street parking.

7. The calculation model took into account all existing on-street parking spaces throughout the neighborhood. It took into account patterns of usage of existing on-street parking at different times of day. Parking on the street currently is used by program participants and community groups that meet at the building, including during evening hours.

8. The Town has actual data on the number of people present in Spiegel and the Senior Center during different parts of the day. Therefore, a traffic study for the purpose of trying to estimate the number of people using the building was unnecessary. Actual usage is a far more reliable guide than a traffic study, which inevitably is based on assumptions, extrapolations and rules of thumb. The most contemporary "best-practice" for determining parking is to know how many people will be present and need a place to park. This number we know.

Alternative Plans

The Town and its engineers considered seriously two alternative site plan drawings by Mayor Corby, one in late June, the other a month later. The first of these was done for us by the Mayor at our request, and we are grateful for both. We hoped that they would work. Neither provides adequate parking. Once the drawings were engineered for construction, taking into account required engineering standards, each plan yielded about 25% fewer parking places than the original drawing. The Mayor's July drawing, adapted to incorporate required engineering standards, provides just **one-tenth of an acre** more open space than the Current Plan, but cuts the number of parking places by 34 below the minimum necessary.

Rather than give up, we then asked our engineers to consider modifications of the Mayor's July drawing, adapted to include the number of parking places necessary. The first modification (Option 1) resulted in preserving the same amount of open space – 1.2 acres – as the Current Plan. The second (Option 2) resulted in less open space – 1.1 acres – than the Current Plan. Both modifications compromised safety at the building drop-off point and in the parking lot itself. Option 1 brought traffic very close to the children's playground. Option 2 repositioned the playground out of harm's way, but relocated it to a place that significantly compromised the contiguity of the open space remaining.

On Friday, August 11, the Mayor proposed another option to reduce the size of the parking lot and increase the open space remaining. The Town Board is prepared to accept the Mayor's proposal. This we have communicated. In light of the additional alternative plans discussed below, the status of the Village's continued interest in the Friday August 11 compromise is unclear.

Most Recent Alternative Plans

On August 15, Mayor Corby provided a drawing of another alternative design, which Supervisor Smith turned over to the site engineers for rendition as an actual site plan. The Mayor, the Supervisor, the engineer for BME Associates and the Town Recreation Director met to review this rendition together on Thursday, August 17. This meeting generated a number of suggestions to make the Mayor's design concept workable. The Town instructed its engineer to provide another rendition of a site plan incorporating those suggestions.

The BME site plan based on this meeting provided 105 parking places, the minimum necessary. It relocated the playground, in order to accommodate the east-west orientation of the parking lot requested by the Village. The principal drawback is that, once all the necessary setbacks and engineering standards were applied, it left an open field of only 160 x 300 feet, far smaller than desired or initially envisioned.

Thus, it fell far short of the mark aesthetically. It bisected the facility completely, placing a sea of asphalt between the building and what's left of the field. It did not leave enough of the field remaining to justify abandoning the practical advantages of the plan in the project specifications.

The plan in the project specifications ("Current Plan") provides a contiguous green field from the building to the southern end of the grounds. A person walking that length may have to look at asphalt to one side, although buffered by landscaping, but won't have to deal with asphalt, or have to cross it to get to the field.

The alternative site plan based on the Mayor’s drawing and the Town-Village meeting of August 17, would have provided roughly comparable, albeit slightly less, green space than the Current Plan. However, it failed to provide a balance of the operational, engineering and safety goals comparable to the Current Plan. The close proximity of the playground to the parking lot in the alternative plan creates legitimate concern, particularly as compared to the Current Plan, which separates the playground from parking to the extent the property allows.

In the alternative plan, the close proximity of the parking lot to the houses on Lincoln and Washington Avenues poses concern as well since it creates problems for neighbors that the Current Plan avoids.

Perhaps most significantly, the alternative design both invites and requires children and their caretakers to walk through an active parking lot to get from the building to the field. An unnecessary conflict between cars and kids that the Current Plan avoids.

Providing sufficient parking is an unavoidable consequence of keeping the community center in the Village.

The Town has worked diligently and in good faith to see if another plan can work better than what we have, to leave alone most of the existing field in its current configuration. The Town has looked for reasons why the alternatives *can* work, not why they can’t.

From this effort we’ve learned that there are no perfect solutions, only imperfect solutions. As renovation now begins, we must proceed with what we judge to be the least imperfect solution, represented by the Current Plan.

Current Plan

The Current site plan preserves 1.2 acres of contiguous open space. It represents a true compromise, born of the inevitable necessity to reconcile conflicting interests and incorporating as many public requests as practicable. It takes into account interests of the Village and the neighborhood, in

- retaining the community center in the Village;
- preserving an historic building as a public space;
- minimizing light pollution from headlights into the windows of houses surrounding the Spiegel site (the north-south orientation of the parking lot accomplishes this)

Similarly, it takes into account the interests of all other residents of the Town, most of whom must drive to the community center in order to use it.

In summary, comparing the Current Plan to the most recent Alternative Plan received to date, we are looking at no more than one-tenth of an acre at issue. All programs currently held on the field behind the Spiegel building will continue post-renovation. These include youth camps, after school programming, events such as the Village Farmers Market (if it wishes to relocate back to Spiegel) and youth soccer. In addition, there will be a full 1.2 acres of open space for neighborhood activities such as dog walking, Frisbee, family picnics, and the like.

The Spiegel Community Center is a facility for all town residents, wherever they live. Keeping it in the Village is made possible only by providing adequately for those residents who must drive to get there, not just for those who live nearby.

You can find more detailed information about the Spiegel site plan and the planning process, and in particular more detail about the data and calculations to determine the necessary number of parking places, on the Town's website at <http://www.townofpittsford.org/community-center-project/q-and-a>

9/14/17

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