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Many changes to Oneida zoning map

By DEANNA HORNYAK , Dispatch Staff Writer

While there are hundreds of changes throughout both the inside and outside districts of Oneida, the city is not sending out letters to residents who either have property that will be zoned differently or is next door to property that is slated for change.

Mayor Leo Matzke said that those who are concerned about the changes should let City Hall know.

"If anyone would like a copy of the new maps, don't hesitate to let us know," Matzke said. "Residents can get in touch with their councilor, the planning department or come down to City Hall if they would like the changes explained to them."

The zoning amendments were made in conjunction with the city's comprehensive plan that was passed in September. Besides zoning, the plan addresses infrastructure, housing, education and economic factors in order to provide city officials a list of actions they can take to create the changes they want.

As far as zoning, the plan guided the council when making the amendments to the zoning ordinance. It allowed them to update the city's zones to accommodate the way people live today.

Specifically, the changes to the zoning map are not concentrated in one area of the city, but are throughout the inside and outside districts. Matzke said that the biggest changes are located around the entrances to the city.

One of the changes is located east of the Route 5 and Route 46 intersection. "The area, which was previously zoned as manufacturing-industrial will now be zoned commercial," Matzke said. Changing the area east of Route 46 to commercial will only extend the commercial area that runs along Route 5. The area includes the Glenwood Shopping Plaza and most of the fast food restaurants and other businesses between Main Street and Seneca Street.

Perhaps one of the biggest changes to the zoning map is the land that is located east of Wal-Mart. The land, which sits in the outside district, includes the properties on Lenox Avenue and Route 5. Running from approximately where Stone Street intersects with Lenox Avenue to the Hershey property, the area will be zoned as neighborhood commercial. The area was previously zoned as R-1 (residential).

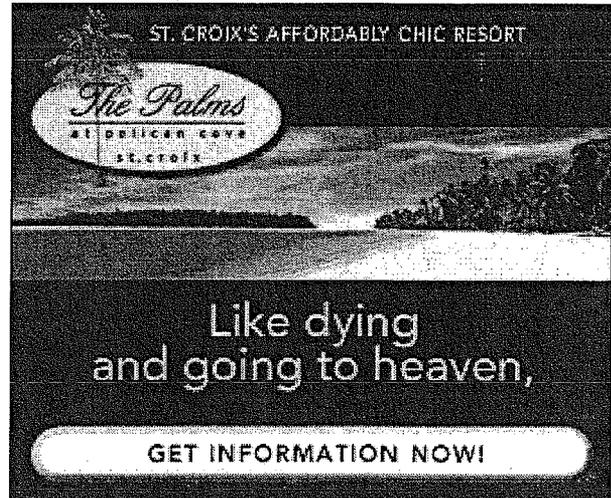
Neighborhood commercial, a new zoning classification, is designed to encourage small-scale, commercial nodes of retail and service uses adjacent to residential areas. Some uses that are not retail or service in nature, such as professional offices, are also allowed so a variety of uses may locate in existing buildings. "The area links residential and commercial properties," Matzke said. "It is an transition area."

In addition to one of the most noticeable changes made to the zoning map, the area is also one of the biggest worries for residents. "Owners in these areas are worried that their assessments will go up," Matzke said. "The advantage of living in one of these areas is that though their assessment will not go up, their property may be worth more."

Another new term on the zoning map this year is "community service." The definition states that the district provides for compatible institutional and community services in the area. It focuses on the potential expansion of the hospital and the surrounding area's public school, public safety and other community service properties.

The land was previously zoned as agricultural and business because the hospital was built on land that was once used for farming. The area in the new zone includes the hospital and the adjacent medical offices, the YMCA, the Oneida High School and the medical offices next to Valenti Estates.

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Other new zoning districts include downtown commercial and rural residential. The downtown commercial area, which includes most the downtown business, is designed to maintain the historical architecture and downtown streetscape of the city's central business district while encouraging a board range of uses that serve the local and regional community. It is pedestrian-oriented with a strong emphasis on a safe and attractive streetscape.

The rural residential district is intended to provide low density rural residential development with some agricultural uses permitted. The district, which includes most of the land in the outside district and land along West Elm Street and Cob Street, is intended to bridge the gap between agricultural and residential zones.

While some zoning changes can actually increase property value, they may also hurt property values as well. According to Janet Mautner, a broker with Kay Real Estate, zoning changes have the potential to drastically hurt a property's value. "Just imagine you had a beautiful home in a residential zoned district and the land next to you was changed to commercial," she said. "If a business moved onto that property that had junk laying around and was really noisy, your property might not be so attractive to potential buyers anymore."

The zoning amendments, which have been worked on for the past year by city officials and residents who came to voice their opinions as various workshops set up by the city, are set to have a public hearing at the next common council meeting on Dec. 6 at 7 p.m. at City Hall.

The council is scheduled to vote on the changes at the Dec. 20 council meeting.