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At top is Alexandra Tramer, a director for Camoin Associates, shares the results of a recent market study of downtown Sherman. Above, Village of Sherman Mayor Colleen Meeder kicks off an open house regarding a market study done on the village

Optimistic presentation has village of Sherman thinking 'really big'

By DAVID PRENATT
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The opportunity to use downtown Sherman to generate economic development is "really big" residents were told at an open house April 25 in the Sherman Fire Hall.

Alexandra Tranmer and Tom Dworetsky, directors from Camoin Associates, based in Saratoga Springs, presented an overview of a recent market analysis the company had conducted on Sherman's downtown area. The study focused particularly on the factors that could drive investors to choose the Village of Sherman as a developmental opportunity.

Tranmer presented a snapshot of Sherman, noting the village has grown in population, while the county has lost residents. Also, the median age in the Village is 37, compared to 42 in the county. "These are things that businesses and investors look at," she said.

The study also showed that 56% of Sherman residents commute to work and 31% commute more than 50 miles, Tranmer said. Approximately 8% of the 9,400 vehicles that traverse I-86 daily exit at Sherman, she said. The goal is to capture 5% to 10% more of those, she added.

The top industries in Sherman are education, construction and agriculture, Tranmer said.

Tranmer summarized the factors which may promote investment in Sherman. They include its proximity to I-86, a seasonal population which resides in Sherman part of the year, the business community's commitment to Sherman, a growing resident population, non-chain stores and a built environment, including lighting, parking and facades, she said.

Tranmer noted Sherman has four seasons of outdoor recreational activities. Also, second seasonal homeowners, families, day travelers and historic tourism enthusiasts are the targeted consumer market, she said.

Tranmer said that every successful economic development project has three factors - market feasibility, financial feasibility and community feasibility. "We're looking at all the different pieces and where there are barriers to them," she said.

Dworetsky then spoke about three sites on Main Street that were identified as priority sites. The study projected a use for each of these buildings, but, he noted that these are simply ideas at this point. "This is a visions exercise," he said. "We're not saying that this is what has to

happen with these buildings."

The first site Dworetsky described is the Weisse Garage at 124 East Main Street. The building, which has 23,000 square feet, was created by the merger of Sherman's Main Street Theatre and the H. Buss & Sons Building.

Dworetsky proposed that the garage could be used as a marketplace for local and regional vendors on one side and as a brewery/restaurant area on the other side. "Again, I'm not saying the building has to be used this way," Dworetsky said. "We identified that this type of use would appeal to both local and regional consumers."

The second building, located at 104 West Main Street, is currently being partially used for retail and apartments, as well as some storage, Dworetsky said. He proposed that a tavern could be put on the first floor, while the upstairs could be converted into lodging or small meeting rooms.

The third building is the old Ford Garage on the west end of the Village, which has approximately 8,000 square feet, including the basement level. Dworetsky suggested that this could be used as a community center.

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During Tranmer's presentation, Sherman Mayor Colleen Meeder raised the issue of Sherman's proximity to the Chautauqua Rails to Trails System. "There is so much opportunity in terms of economic development for businesses near the trails," she said. She noted that the County Planning Board is looking into ways to organize all five

trail systems through a study, in cooperation with "The Friends of the Chautauqua County Greenways" mission.

Meeder noted there is a process to being identified as a "trail town." However, once a municipality receives this designation, it is placed on a national map. Matt Bourke, Senior Planner with the Chautauqua County

Department of Planning and Development, agreed with Meeder. "There are a lot of people in the county interested in the trails and how they can bring us together," he said.

The downtown market analysis was funded by a CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) from the NYS Office of Community Renewal. Meeder

noted, in a press release, that "the Village is excited to present what undiscovered opportunities there are for economic development in Sherman. The comprehensive plan, New York Main Street Development Project, and plans for green infrastructure all contribute to the Village's economic and community development initiative."