

**Westbury DRI
Local Planning Committee
Kick Off Meeting Notes**

Wednesday, September 21, 2016

7:00pm – 9:00pm

Westbury Community Center
360 Post Avenue
Westbury, NY 11590

Attendees

Local Planning Committee Voting Members (LPC)

- Mayor Peter Cavallaro, Village of Westbury (LPC Co-Chair)
- Dave Kapell, LIREDC (LPC Co-Chair)
- Vincent Abbatiello, Westbury Water District/Westbury BID
- Habeeb Ahmed, Islamic Center of Long Island/Nassau County Human Rights Commission
- Yanira Chacon-Lopez, St. Brigid's Church
- Steven Corte, Village of Westbury
- Lia Di Angelo-Allan, Business Owner
- Connie Locascio, Resident
- Julie Lyon, Westbury Arts Council
- Wilbur Mason, Village of Westbury
- Chester McGibbon, Resident
- Andrew Nunez, Resident
- Steven G Rudolph, Westbury BID

LPC Non-Voting Members

- Beaumont Jefferson, Village of Westbury
- William Wise, Village of Westbury
- Joan Boes, Village of Westbury
- Eric Alexander, Vision Long Island

Village of Westbury

- Ted Blach, Village of Westbury Clerk/Treasurer
- Bill Mello, Village of Westbury Superintendent of Buildings
- Gail Slotnick, Village of Westbury Special Projects Coordinator

New York State

- David Ashton, NYS Department of State
- Nancy Rucks, NYS Department of State
- Steve Ridler, NYS Department of State
- Cara Longworth, Empire State Development

Consulting Team

- Kei Hayashi, BJH Advisors
- Katie Lyon, BJH Advisors
- Sarah DeFalco, BJH Advisors
- Mark Strauss, FXFOWLE
- James Lima, James Lima Planning + Development

Meeting Goals

Kei Hayashi of BJH Advisors (KH) presented the following goals for the meeting.

- Gain an overall understanding of the Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI)
- Review program components
- Understand responsibilities
- Brainstorm vision and priorities for DRI
- Identify next steps

DRI Overview

KH explained that the DRI is a \$100M State investment to improve the urban vitality in 10 downtowns throughout the State nominated by Regional Economic Development Councils. DRI Strategic Investment Plans identify specific projects that align with a vision for revitalization that can be funded through the DRI, and ones funded by other public & private resources.

KH presented that the goals of the DRI are to:

- Prepare a Strategic Investment Plan that identifies projects to spur revitalization with a State investment of \$10M in Westbury.
- Identify opportunities to leverage additional public and private investments.
- Transform Downtown Westbury into a place where tomorrow's workforce will want to live, work and raise a family.

KH described the roles of each party in the DRI project as follows

- NYS Department of State/HCR
 - Primary contact with BJH Team
 - Ensures program documents meet program goals
 - Helps Committee through planning process
 - Facilitates assistance from other State agencies
- Local Planning Committee
 - Brainstorm ideas, Identify prioritize projects
 - Participate in public engagement sessions
 - Review draft DRI documents
 - Vote on final DRI Plan
- BJH Team
 - Research and study existing conditions and potential projects
 - Prepare revitalization strategy planning documents with input from LPC and State Planners
 - Help identify priority projects and implementation strategies

Westbury DRI Scope and Work Completed To Date

Katie Lyon of BJH Advisors (KL) presented the scope of work for the project. KL indicated that the committee members had a copy of the scope in their packets.

- Public Engagement Strategy, which will include
- Downtown Profile & Assessment – existing conditions
- Downtown Vision, Goals & Objectives – conversation about what vision should be and what goals should be
- Revitalization Strategies & Action Plan – around November, an early action plan will be developed
- Priority Projects
- Implementation Strategy – funding streams, leverage LIREDC with other funding stream
- Performance Indicators/Metrics – to help understand progress and measure success
- Downtown Revitalization Plan (Due February 2017)

KL highlighted key milestones for the DRI work including:

- September – first Local Planning Committee meeting
- October – draft vision, existing conditions analysis, key projects identified, first public engagement event
- November – downtown vision confirmed, key priority projects developed
- January – public outreach, implementation strategy developed
- February – public event, final DRI plan

James Lima with James Lima Planning and Development (JL) provided an overview of the Public Engagement Strategy, and indicated that a detailed plan was included in the committee member's packets. JL indicated that the public engagement approach seeks to gather input from key individuals, organizations, and entities. The goal is to create a communication network and maximize local participation, with the Local Planning Committee as a key local aid.

JL outlined the methods to conduct public engagement:

- Public workshops – widely advertised
- Interviews
- BID Annual Street Fair – people can sign up for future announcements and future public meetings
- Websites – DRI website, village website, etc.
- Social media – short standardized blurbs that can be posted on social media

KL presented the work completed to date by the consulting team and indicated that a summary of this work is included in the committee members' packets.

- Existing Conditions Tour
- Review of Existing Documents (*Westbury Downtown Revitalization Strategies: Retail, Marketing and Placemaking*, prepared by Vision Long Island; *Housing Profile, Current Demographic Information, Current and*

Future Household Composition, What “Affordable” Means, prepared by RPA; *Re: Village of Westbury Comment Letter to the Draft SEQRA Scoping Document issued by the MTA and the LIRR regarding LIRR Third Track Expansion Project*, written by Mayor Cavallaro; *Preliminary Sketches – Parking Lots and Garage*, prepared by the NYS Department of Transportation; *Long Island’s Future: Economic Implications of Today’s Choices*, prepared by HR&A Advisors; *Build a Better Burb: ParkingPLUS Train Terraces*, prepared by LTL Architects; *Comprehensive Plan: Village of Westbury, NY*, prepared by Saccardi & Schiff, Inc.)

- Study Area Definition – Post Avenue core (including Maple Avenue and Union Avenue), sometimes in comparison to the entire Village of Westbury, Nassau County, and/or a benchmark community that helps identify an aspirational walkable downtown
- Draft Strategic Investment Plan- Scope of Services
- Draft Public Engagement Strategy

Discussion of Westbury Village Strengths and Revitalization Opportunities

Mayor Peter Cavallaro (PC) provided an overview of revitalization work completed to date and challenges. In particular, PC highlighted the following

- Business Improvement District (BID)
- Greater Westbury Council for the Arts
- façade improvements and beautification efforts
- Piazza Ernesto Strada
- 400 units of residential housing developed downtown
- Renovation of The Space at Westbury
- Commuter parking is a major issue

PC also highlighted 10 opportunities identified to date, including

- Develop an anchor on south side to bring activity/energy to south end of town
- Encourage and incentivize additional multi-family (senior/young adult) housing options around train station and downtown (Union Avenue)
- Work on attracting a major employer to downtown to create job opportunities and bring patrons to downtown
- Develop strategies and take steps to attract young adults to live, work, recreate, dine etc. in downtown (see Farmingdale, Long Beach, Rockville Centre and other examples)
- Parking enhancements
- Streetscape improvements (public art, trees, planting boxes, bike racks, benches, etc.)
- Develop transition from train station area to downtown
- Updates to Senior Center and Community Center facilities on north end of downtown
- Upgraded LED (solar?) streetlights on Post/Maple/Union
- Explore Downtown trolley bus loop (Senior Center to St. Brigid and back w/stops in between)

Dave Kapell with the Long Island Regional Economic Development Council (DK) discussed some of the key strengths of Westbury that made Westbury a strong selection for the DRI grant, including:

- The cultural and social diversity of the community
- A long history of political stability and consensus
- Past research, plans and studies that have been done in the Village
- Commitment to housing production in the village, including the recent 800+ units
- A willingness to consider density in a way other communities are not
- Support for the Third Track project for viable reverse commuting, rather than just one way

KL opened the discussion with the Local Planning Committee members by asking them about the strengths and challenges in Westbury. Committee members shared the following ideas over the course of a one hour discussion:

- Strengths of Westbury
 - Location in Nassau – every major road cuts through Westbury, in both the North and South; located near the largest Mall in the area (Roosevelt Field)
 - People of Village – friendly, diverse, caring, community-oriented
 - Diversity of culture, income, race – people move here for this reason, and it gives the Village a unique identity
 - Strong government
- Priorities voiced during discussion
 - Preserve diversity, vibrancy, and good government
 - These are assets that attract people to Westbury
 - Maintain and establish connections between the Village and property owners/store owners/residents
 - Breed inclusivity – reach out to more of community to attend events (like those at the Piazza), find ways to get different people together in the downtown setting, make sure the grant reaches all members of the population
 - Enhance the gateways into the downtown
 - On both the North and South side
 - Bring life to Post Avenue south of Railroad Avenue, and expand downtown to Old Country Road
 - Give reason to commuters to get off the train and dine/explore Westbury
 - Add lighting
 - Security
 - Police booth at southern end of Post Avenue
 - A small building south of Maple that makes police presence known

- Lighting is important to make people feel safe walking downtown at night
 - Lighting at gates on both north and south side to add vibrancy, students walk past there to get to school
- Streetscape
 - Storefront revitalization
 - Decorations – Christmas and holiday decorations, flower decorations
 - Educate property owners/retailers about the importance of aesthetics/streetscape and encourage them not to rent to the first store that makes an offer
 - Branding/marketing for the Village
- Office
 - Create anchor employer
 - Potentially arts-oriented
 - They would frequent food establishments downtown, create demand for new businesses and retailers
 - Potential to integrate office use with retail and residential (co-working space)
- Residential
 - Multifamily housing around Union and Maple Avenue (studios and one bedrooms)
 - Housing to attract young people to live in downtown, places they can afford
 - Create density in downtown, and maintain single-family housing outside of downtown
 - Be mindful of impact on school district
 - Can contribute to growth in businesses and restaurants in downtown
- Retail
 - Nearby big box and shopping mall style retail on Old Country Road are able to offer greater variety and lower prices than stores along Post Avenue.
 - Food/drink establishments
 - Place for workers to eat, especially if a new anchor employer comes
 - Places that can be open for lunch and dinner, attract crowds throughout the day, and throughout the week (not just weekends)
 - Places that stay open late for young people to go
 - A café with Wi-Fi so people can work on computers
 - Microbreweries, bars, live music events – can place on Union Avenue
- Arts
 - A lot of artists in the community, strong ability to build off of this

- Arts-oriented events to encourage vibrancy and activity in evenings (live music, open studios, theater, etc. with food and drinks)
- Increase activity at the Space
- Work/live places for artists
- Open studio events
- The Westbury Arts Council wants to have exhibit space and classes, but hasn't had access to resources to do so
- Historic asset revitalization
- "Cork 'n' Bib" used to be a performance venue where people like Billie Holiday performed from the 1920s to 1950s
- LIRR Station
 - Add bike racks
 - Kiosk with maps, direction to the Space
 - Third-Track project has potential to bring people to downtown, so this should be capitalized on
- Transportation
 - A trolley, tram, bus, shuttle, etc. that could transport people around the Village

As a result of the discussion, the consulting team agreed that it would identify precedent projects of downtown revitalization in towns or villages that have similar characteristics and goals as Westbury. The consulting team indicated they would share this information with the Local Planning Committee in a future meeting.

Mark Strauss of FXFOWLE (MS) closed the discussion by presenting the purpose of a vision and summarizing some of the key topics we heard discussed that may be part of the vision for Westbury,

- Articulates the type of place the Village wants the Downtown to become
- Takes into consideration the unique characteristics of Westbury and surrounding region
- Builds on strengths and opportunities
- Relates to existing local and regional plans
- Makes a recognizable place
- Enhances gateways into the downtown
- Defines a walkable live/work/play environment

Next Steps

KH closed the meeting by explaining the next steps for the consulting team, including:

- Existing conditions analysis
- October Community Engagement
 - BID Annual Street Fair, October 15
 - Public Meeting, October 26 at 7pm
- Next LPC Meeting (date to be determined)

- Present existing conditions analysis
- Finalize vision statement
- Brainstorm priority projects

Adjournment

KH and PC thanked the attendees for joining the meeting and participating in a productive conversation. The meeting ended at 9:00pm.