

Project Name: May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2024  
Subject: Local Planning Committee Meeting #1

Meeting Location: Village Hall Community Center (155 Washington Ave)  
Meeting Date: May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
Meeting Time: 6:00-8:00 PM

Participants: **Local Planning Committee**  
Mayor Paul Pereira, Co-Chair  
Resi Cooper, Co-Chair  
Carol Giordano  
Gina Buongiovanni  
James Sherry  
Manuel Norona  
John Doyle  
Maria “Cina” Ahostinho Palumbo  
Michael Spae  
*Not present: Fatima Carlos*

**New York State**

Rachel Bruce, Department of State (DOS)  
Amanda Bearcroft, Department of State (DOS)  
Cara Longworth, Empire State Development (ESD)  
Brandon Gimpelman, Empire State Development (ESD)  
Stevens Martinez (Chamber/Governor’s Office)

**Consultant Team**

Susan Favate, Principal, BFJ Planning  
Mark Freker, Associate, BFJ Planning  
Eshti Sookram, Planner, BFJ Planning

The purpose of this meeting was to introduce the Local Planning Committee (LPC) and members of the project team, the New York Forward (NYF) process and timeline, introduce strategies for public outreach, and discuss goals and priorities for the Mineola NYF. Approximately 40 members of the public joined the meeting as attendees. The presentation is posted on the [Mineola NYF website](#) and can be referred to for additional details.

#### Welcome and Introductions

- Mayor and LPC Co-Chair, Paul Pereira, gave opening remarks and introduced Rachel Bruce, representative from the New York Department of State (DOS) NY Forward Program.
- Rachel Bruce introduced additional State representatives and the Consultant Team, BFJ Planning. BFJ Planning is the lead consulting firm, supported by a team of subconsultants with specialties that include economic development, urban design, sustainability, and engineering. The consulting team will work together to develop content for the Strategic Investment Plan.
- LPC members then introduced themselves, including their connections to the Village.

#### NYF Code of Conduct

- Ms. Bruce gave an overview of the NYF Code of Conduct, which all LPC members must sign, and explained that any potential conflict of interest must be disclosed at the earliest possible time. LPC members must complete and submit a formal Recusal form when a potential conflict is identified. She concluded with an overview of how LPC members will vote on a slate of projects to be recommended to the state for NYF funding.

#### NYF Program Overview

- Ms. Bruce explained the roles and responsibilities of the State Agency Team, including those from DOS, Empire State Development (ESD), NYS Homes and Community Renewal (HCR), the Chamber/Governor's Office, NYS Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) and the Consultant Team.
- Ms. Bruce described the overarching goal of the NYF program: to revitalize downtown areas; Encourage the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions; Grow the local property tax base; Create diverse housing options for all income levels; Create an active downtown with a mix of uses; Provide diverse employment opportunities for a variety of skill sets and salary levels; Provide enhanced public spaces that serve those of all ages and abilities; Enhance downtown living and quality of life.

The following is a summary of questions asked about the NYF project:

- Are there reimbursements for projects once they are accepted?
  - If a project is selected, project sponsors will go into contracting with the State. The executed contract will include reimbursable costs. Reimbursements occur only after sponsors front the costs.
- How does ineligibility status work for property acquisition for potential sites/locations?
  - Property acquisition could be part of listed project costs, but it is not eligible for NYF funding.
- Can the timeframe for the Open Call be extended from 6-8 weeks onwards if that time is too short?

- The Open Call is meant to be easy and straightforward - project details can be refined after submission. The LPC can discuss/establish the duration of the Open Call. The window for projects that come in late can be flexible to some degree.
- During LPC #3, the LPC will evaluate responses received.
- What variety of projects can be implemented with this grant (i.e., those with multiple funding sources)?
  - Communities might receive multiple grants that can work in concert with one another. Examples include communities that might have CDBG funding for different projects. We need to look at \$4.5 million and see how this can best be invested in the community. Other grants can be considered part of matching funds for NYF projects.
- How can we work with different State officials?
  - Different agencies take on different projects. For example, DOS does streetscape improvements.

#### NYF Planning Process

- A summary of the timeline and deliverables was given, highlighting an 8–9-month timeframe.
- Additionally, Ms. Bruce gave an overview of the eligible project types (public improvement projects, new development and/or rehabilitation of existing downtown buildings, small project grant funds, branding and marketing) and ineligible project types/activities (planning activities, operations and maintenance, pre-award costs, property acquisition, training and other program expenses, expenses related to existing projects).
- Ms. Bruce went over details about project match requirements, including sponsorship contribution requirements, project size, and the small project fund.
- Projects are evaluated based on their alignment with local and state goals, catalytic effect on downtown revitalization, project readiness, eligibility, cost-effectiveness, and the co-benefits they provide to the community, such as additional economic activity and improved quality of life.
- The process will conclude with a consensus on recommended projects for implementation, the compilation/submission of the Strategic Investment Plan, and a direction for the Village's downtown revitalization.
- The final slate of recommended projects, finalized by the LPC, incorporates public feedback and includes requested NYF funds exceeding the awarded amount.
- After the planning process ends, State agencies evaluate recommended projects, announce funding, execute contracts with project sponsors, and begin implementation and reporting.
- Project implementation involves reimbursement grants requiring project sponsors to complete work before receiving funds, likely necessitating bridge financing, and must adhere to State requirements, including MWBE goals and competitive procurement.

#### Your Role as the LPC

- The LPC, nominated by the municipality and confirmed by NYS, serve as ambassadors of the NYF program, led by co-chairs, to ensure the community vision is met and the public interest is served.
- The LPC's key responsibilities are to identify effective communication and engagement methods with the community, recommend key stakeholders, provide guidance on documents, help identify potential projects for funding, and assist with project evaluation and selection.
- LPC members should expect monthly meetings, regular correspondence with the State and consultants, assistance and participation in public engagement, and input on materials prepared by consultants.

### Public Engagement

- Public engagement is a critical component of NYF. It is led by the consultant team and occurs throughout the process. Activities should encourage participation from broad and diverse populations.
- The public helps refine the goals, vision and strategies, provides input, and offers feedback on proposed projects.
- The public will be engaged through LPC meetings, open call for projects, 2 public workshops, local outreach activities, and online engagement.

Ms. Bruce asked LPC members if they have any community groups or stakeholders in mind for outreach or any other suggestions. The following is a summary of feedback:

- Mailing and handing out paper copies of outreach materials to residents/business owners in the NYF area could be beneficial.
- Is the MTA or NICE bus part of the process?
  - The project team will work closely with the MTA and Nassau County as needed throughout the process, including meetings to obtain information.
- It would be helpful to have a NYF one-pager/info sheet that could be handed out at community events, including information about the Open Call.

Ms. Bruce then went over information regarding the Open Call for Projects, noting that private, non-profit, and public entities can submit well-defined, short-term project applications.

The following is a summary of questions raised about the Open Call for Projects:

- Is there any technical assistance for applicants for the open call?
  - The project team offers assistance and will have “office hours” after the Open Call launches. Even if an idea is not fully formed, we encourage people to apply, and we can help them fully form project ideas.
- State legislators send out newsletters (it's an election year); maybe they can include a content directing people to the NYF website.
- Are churches or schools allowed to submit a proposal?
  - Yes, to both. For example, a school in a previous round applied for solar panels. A church is harder because it has to have a physical aspect and connect to Downtown revitalization.
- How many projects can one developer submit?
  - There is no limit, but we want to encourage a diverse set of projects. We want to make sure projects have benefit for the community. Ultimately, the LPC must approve projects before they are sent to the State for final approval.
  - Projects in the Strategic Investment Plan (SIP) will request an amount higher than \$4.5M to give the State flexibility in the selection process.
  - Projects should strengthen and enhance each other.

### Mineola's NYF Application

- Susan Favate (BFJ Planning) went into further details about the Village's NYF application, focusing on the boundary of the study area and refining the vision statement initially submitted.

The following comments were made about the vision statement:

- The word “walkable” is included in this paragraph and should be included going forward as a goal.
- It was discussed that there are a lot of good descriptors in the application vision statement, but it needs to be shortened and reworded. The consultant team will work on revising this for further community input.

#### Assets/Opportunities and Challenges:

- Mark Freker (BFJ Planning) discussed downtown assets and opportunities, highlighting themes of enhancing local quality of life, population and job growth, multimodality, recent infrastructure investments, local policies, and a diverse range of small businesses.
- Downtown challenges include limited public space, lack of cohesive branding and wayfinding, visual and physical barriers, and a small business environment that includes some vacancies and competition to neighboring areas.
- Initial project ideas include redevelopment of vacant, non-conforming/underutilized properties in the Downtown, creating an open space, continuing to expand the commercial façade rehabilitation program, improving lighting, improving walkability and the public realm, improving public and wayfinding signage, and implementing a downtown marketing and business campaign.

The following is a summary of questions and comments made in response to the assets, opportunities, challenges, and potential public projects discussed:

- The LPC affirmed an interest to improve pedestrian conditions (walkways, seating options, etc.).
  - It was explained that the consultant team will explore such challenges in-depth, including with urban design approaches. The project team will also coordinate with relevant entities such as County Public Works in the instance of County-owned roadways.
- In terms of improving public spaces/the public realm, the Village is considering an appraisal for certain properties Downtown. There is an interest to better understand opportunities for purchasing potential sites. Other streetscape improvement ideas include widening sidewalks, bumping out corners, and having retractable street barriers (something more permanent, something safer). First, Second, Willis, and Main Streets are all County roads. One of the reasons why the NYF boundary is so large is to include more areas for façade improvements in locations that are not eligible for CDBG funding.
- We have to embrace the downtown environment and opportunities to elevate developments.
  - A project idea for further thought: Hinck Way is obsolete because of the underpass, so it is no longer accessible or usable. The roadway could be turned into a “Highline” style park or public space.

#### Next Steps

- The LPC should review the following documents: NYF Guidance Document, the NYF application, and sign the Code of Conduct.
- Upcoming Meetings and Public Outreach
  - LPC #2 – Monday, June 17th (6pm-8pm) at the Village Hall Community Center
  - LPC #3 – August
  - Public Workshop #1: Thursday, May 23<sup>rd</sup> (6pm-8pm) at the Village Hall Community Center
  - Additional, tentative, outreach activities include Chamber of Commerce Meeting, High School Student Outreach, Senior Center/Golden Age Club, First Responders, NYU.
  - Virtual outreach on website: [www.MineolaNYF.com](http://www.MineolaNYF.com)

### Visioning Exercise

The meeting ended with the visioning exercise, which was introduced to LPC members at the beginning of the evening's meeting. These questions were:

#### **From your perspective, where is the heart of downtown Mineola?**

What are your favorite community gathering places? What public spaces (streets, sidewalks, plazas, etc.) do you think need improvement?

#### **What is your vision for Mineola in the short-term and the long-term?**

What do you see as the highest priorities to address in the downtown?

The following summarizes LPC responses:

- The heart of Downtown Mineola is the Historic Downtown area, particularly Harris Ave to the Railroad, which is in the most need. Key projects in this area could significantly change the dynamic of Downtown.
- The building on the corner of Second and Main needs attention and could include a potential project.
- Prioritize areas that provide the biggest impact.
- Make Downtown Mineola a destination, with an emphasis on walkability, greenspace, and nighttime activities.
- Recognize the organically grown nature of Downtown, particularly the area from Harrison to the railroad.
- Address challenges such as tight sidewalks, difficult signage, and vacancies.
- Foster a sense of community by creating more opportunities for residents to connect.
- 7th Street in Garden City is lively on Friday nights, attracting food vendors and creating a vibrant atmosphere where kids can bike, and restaurants can expand outdoors. Some LPC members were in favor of similar revitalization measures, whereas others noted this could raise potential conflicts.
- Focus of the Downtown revitalization should not extend all the way to Willis; the eastern edge of the LIRR should be the boundary.
- Include the Western Beef property in future development plans. Contrary to popular belief, NYU is not moving there, presenting an opportunity for new proposals.
- Improve aesthetics by widening sidewalks on Main and Second Streets to enhance walkability and safety. Current narrow sidewalks force pedestrians into the street when passing each other.
- Prioritize creating family-friendly spaces, not just restaurants and bars. Include amenities that cater to children and families to make Downtown more inclusive.
- Ensure safe street crossings Downtown.
- Focus on fixing problematic intersections, which are significant pain points.
- Improve the visibility and identification of Downtown areas for visitors to make navigation easier (i.e. wayfinding).
- Create areas for kids and teenagers, and attract businesses and nightlife, such as live music venues.
- Update the outdated lighting infrastructure to enhance safety, particularly at night and during winter months.
- Improve pedestrian safety near the courts

- Create amenities for children near the baseball field to encourage family activities.
- Address the lack of a local supermarket, which is a challenge for residents without cars.
- Repurpose fixed-up factories, such as those on East 2nd Street, for new uses like a brewery, where noise and traffic are not significant issues.

#### Public Comments and Questions

An opportunity for public comments and questions concluded the meeting:

- How does the Village Board tie in projects with the LPC? Is the village involved at all (in terms of approval)?
  - It is anticipated that the Board of Trustees will be engaged throughout the NYF planning process. The final decision for the slate of projects is made by members of the LPC. Anything proposed that needs a site plan or zoning change would require Village approval. While the LPC recommends a slate of projects that are sent to the State, ultimately, it is the State's decision to choose which projects get implemented.
- I'm surprised that there was no consideration of zoning/variances when considering project feasibility.
  - Zoning is considered in the feasibility evaluation of the projects. The overview of project feasibility provided during this meeting did not include all components.
- I want to extend to the board our appreciation. Mineola has been a wonderful Village. The Village's Comprehensive Plan could be referred to for leads on potential projects.
- There has been significant investment north of the tracks, but I would like money to be invested on the other side—projects such as lighting enhancements would enhance walkability in this area, around the station.
- We want Mineola to be a viable area. Think about the people who have to drive. It is much easier to go to Williston Park instead of shopping in Downtown Mineola. They have restrictions to park, but you don't have to pay for park. Where do we park in Mineola? How can you make a viable Downtown if you can't get there?
  - Mineola has ample parking, but many prefer to park directly in front of stores. Maybe we need better wayfinding signs to guide people to parking spots.
- We would like input from residents of the Downtown area, rather than someone from an organization, to share perspective on daily issues.
  - We can consider organizing a roundtable with local Downtown residents.
  - The State selected members for the LPC, ensuring a balanced representation from all areas of the Village, including Downtown.