

Project Name: Mineola New York Forward (NYF)
Subject: Local Planning Committee Meeting #2

Meeting Location: Village Hall Community Center (155 Washington Ave)
Meeting Date: June 17th, 2024
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)
Brandon Gimpelman, Empire State Development (ESD)

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

The purpose of this meeting was to review the planning process and provide community engagement updates, share research on past plans and recent investments, present State evaluation criteria, and discuss potential public project ideas and the Open Call for projects. Approximately 15 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 Susan Favate, Principal at BFJ Planning to provide the evening's agenda.
- Ms. Favate introduced Department of State representatives, LPC members, 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.
- Ms. Favate gave an overview of the NYF Code of Conduct, and the preamble was read aloud by Mayor Pereira. This reminds LPC members 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.

Planning Process & Engagement Updates

- Ms. Favate reviewed the timeline and deliverables, highlighting the team's schedule through the end of this year.
- Eshti Sookram then explained some of the recent engagement completed by the project team, including immersive engagement events such as presentations at the May Mineola Chamber of Commerce meeting and Golden Age Club, the first public workshop, and the online visioning survey which is open throughout the summer. The online visioning survey can be found [here](#).
- Upcoming engagements include Downtown canvassing in Mineola (June 20th), visibility at Village events, and the continuation of the online survey.
- Ms. Sookram explained the outcomes of Public Workshop #1, in which the public affirmed the draft vision and goals and had the opportunity to share project ideas ranging from streetscape enhancements to safety improvements to local business support.
- Since the previous LPC meeting, the NYF boundary was condensed on its western edge to prioritize key economic corridors for Downtown revitalization.

Mineola Past Plans and Recent Investments

- Ms. Sookram then briefly reviewed some of the Village's past studies and initiatives, including the Comprehensive Plan (2005), Mineola Parking Study (2016), and Downtown Overlay Districts (2022).
- It was emphasized that it is an opportune time for the NYF process to help shape a vision for Downtown.
- Recent public investments in the Downtown include the Long Island Railroad (LIRR) third track project and station upgrades, the ongoing façade improvement program, parking meters and the Harrison Avenue garage, the new Fire Department Headquarters, Main Street Sewer replacement, and ongoing updates to Downtown lighting.

- Recent private investments in the Downtown include the NYU Long Island School of Medicine, over 1,000 new residential units since 2010, and nearly 1,000 more residential units under construction or anticipated.

State Evaluation Criteria

- Mark Freker discussed eligibility requirements for NYF funding.
- Additionally, Mr. Freker 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).
- 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.
- Mr. Freker went over details about project match requirements, including sponsorship contribution requirements, project size, and the small project fund. Standalone NYF projects must be a minimum of \$75,000 total cost. The Small Project Fund Interest Form is a separate solicitation process that will occur concurrently with the Open Call for projects less than \$75,000.
- The NYF process will conclude with a consensus on recommended projects for submission to the State in the Strategic Investment Plan, and a broader vision 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, leaving the State flexibility to make final selections.

Early-Stage Public Project Ideas

The project team then led a discussion around early-stage public project ideas.

Streetscape Enhancements

- Streetscape enhancement projects could target various street locations as a package or a more robust vision for a targeted area. This might consider amenities such as lighting, benches, signage, and new trees/planting.
- Other potential ideas include widening the sidewalks and Second Street and placing retractable bollards for temporary road closures.

The LPC then chimed in with potential areas of focus for streetscape improvements. The following is a summary of their ideas:

- LPC members emphasized the importance of hosting events on Second Street to make it a focal point of Downtown. Widening the sidewalk on the north side of the street would allow for plantings and outdoor seating. This idea could also be applied to Main Street, with new developments set back to create wider sidewalks. Installing bollards would free up emergency resources and enhance pedestrian safety.

- Questions were raised about lighting conditions. The importance of lighting and signage for creating a welcoming and safe area was highlighted.
- There were suggestions to replace broken lights on Fourth Avenue (south of the tracks) to create family-friendly, walkable areas with potential pocket parks.
- Converting Second Street to one-way was suggested to improve ambulance access and pedestrian safety.
- There was support for extending sidewalk widening to Station Plaza, though concerns were expressed about the potential loss of too much parking.
- Better lighting on the south side of the railroad tracks was recommended, and a time-of-day parking study was suggested to understand parking patterns.
- Designated parking for the elderly and those in need was proposed.
- The importance of education and the opportunities for vendors and food trucks with the new sidewalks were emphasized.
- More trash bins are needed on Main and Second due to garbage problems. The need for business owners to help maintain cleanliness in front of their establishments was mentioned.
- It was highlighted that Downtown lacks greenery, which planters could help address.
- Traffic issues often arise from people searching for parking. Public education about parking resources could help address this issue.
- Overall Downtown circulation should be further studied and improved.

Second Street Pocket Park

- Future development potential and plans for the vacant property are unclear. There could be an opportunity for a privately owned public space, which could be a solution to providing more gathering places Downtown and could reinforce Second Street streetscape improvements.

The LPC then shared their thoughts about a Second Street Pocket Park. The following is a summary of their responses:

- There was an idea to acquire property between the Locksmith and Second Street Deli, creating a space that could be gated at night.
- There was a question about the possibility of a similar project near the Western Beef property. However, Second Street (between Mineola Blvd. and Main St.) was deemed a priority concept because it is more central.
- Another suggestion was to have another public space provision on the Western Beef site. However, this space is also outside of the Downtown core and the Mayor expressed the priority to try and retain a supermarket use here, along with other uses. Future development here should consider public space access as part of longer-term strategy.

Station Area Enhancements

- There is an opportunity to bolster recent investment at the LIRR station with more amenities, such as art. The idea of new seating options here has received mixed public feedback.
- The area under the bridge could also be activated but would need consistent programming to ensure positive use.

The LPC discussed potential station area enhancements. The following is a summary of their responses:

- The flow of traffic is a huge issue, particularly around the station and Downtown. When people are picking up passengers, it creates a significant traffic problem.
- People often double or triple park to drop off and pick up because the area is so wide. The area could benefit from widening the sidewalk so there is only parking/standing room for one car and one lane of traffic.
- Other station pickup points, such as the South Side area across from Davenport Press, are not as widely used. This is an underutilized access point and access here should be promoted.
- While the station itself has improved significantly, there is skepticism about encouraging other activities under the bridge.
- Enhanced wayfinding around the station could improve Downtown circulation and the overall sense of place upon arrival for visitors.

Other Public Project Ideas

- In addition to the aforementioned, there are other public projects ideas:
 - Branding / Marketing Campaign – consideration of digital and other elements such as uniformity in signage
 - Activation of Hinck Way behind Western Beef, as a possible pedestrian walkway/park
 - Public Art – focus on murals
 - Mineola Historical Society Museum
 - Potential upgrades to PAL and MAA buildings
 - Potential replacement of Memorial Park gazebo

The LPC shared some thoughts, summarized below:

- The idea was proposed to have a mini highline at Hinck Way, but this might be the only access point for the MTA to areas between the Oyster Bay line. Future development of the Western Beef site might dictate what is possible with Hinck Way.
- There was a suggestion to include pickleball courts or rentable recreation areas on the Western Beef site. It was also mentioned that since this is a private property, such facilities would not be in the Village's control.
- Another idea was to possibly take down the MAA and PAL buildings to enhance recreational offerings/amenities—one idea was a pickle ball court and space for youth to utilize as part of summer camps.

Ms. Favate and Mr. Freker explained what makes a strong slate of projects.

- Slate includes a mix of both public and private projects.
- Strong project slates align with the State's and locally established goals.
- Projects would have positive transformational impact and catalyze additional investments.
- The slate of projects will be informed by public input, such as from Public Workshop #2.
- Efforts that promote Downtown revitalization might include mixed use developments, public-private partnerships, infrastructure improvements, historic preservation, small business support enhancing the public realm, tourism development, community events, sustainability measures, and/or integrating technology.

The project team then posed the following questions to LPC members:

1. What public project ideas do you have?
2. What are the most significant community challenges that ALL projects should address?

The following summarizes LPC responses:

- There is a need for uniform storefronts on Jericho Turnpike. Jericho Turnpike should have a more uniform aesthetic, as the current signage is very busy and inconsistent.
- There should be consideration to extend the study area to include Second Street to Center Street, with a focus on streetscape improvements.
- To address the issue of homelessness downtown, NYF should consider recommendations or projects that involve social service providers. It was reiterated that NYF funding does not support operational costs.
- Figuring out incentives for vacant buildings is important.
- There was an expectation that TOD (Transit-Oriented Development) would naturally improve Downtown, but that hasn't been the case. Prioritizing walkability in Downtown and improving marketing efforts were emphasized. Looking at case study communities that have succeeded could provide valuable insights.
- There is an opportunity for the Village to better educate residents and the public about local offerings (i.e. small businesses, events) as well as parking resources.
- There is a strong desire for consistency in Village branding and signage.

Open Call for Projects

- Finally, the project team discussed the Open Call for Projects, which will be the main tool to solicit projects from public, non-profit and private project sponsors.
- This process ensures all business and property owners have an opportunity to submit a project, in a uniform format.
- Projects should be well-defined and ready to be implemented in the short term.
- Submission period will be open Thursday, June 20th through Friday, July 26th.
- The Open Call is meant to be easy and straightforward - project details can be refined after submission. The window for projects that come in late can be flexible to some degree.
- Additionally, for projects less than \$75,000, there is a Small Project Fund Interest Form which occurs at the same submission period as the Open Call.
 - Small projects are typically building façade/storefront renovations, signage and awnings, interior upgrades, and public art.
 - Project sponsors must match at least 25% of total project cost.
- Project Application forms and the Small Project Fund Interest Form are available in-person and online at www.MineolaNYF.com

Next Steps

- Upcoming Meetings and Public Outreach
 - LPC #3 – Monday, August 5th (6pm-8pm) at the Village Hall Community Center
 - Open Call Results and Downtown Profile Summary
 - LPC #4 – Monday, September 9th

- LPC #5 – Monday, October 14
- LPC #6 – Monday, November 4
- Public Workshop #2 (Fall, Date TBD)
- Open Call for Projects to launch Thursday, June 20th
- Virtual outreach on website: www.MineolaNYF.com
- Open Call Support
 - “Office Hours” via Zoom on July 8th, 3-7pm
 - E-mail project team to sign up or propose a new time: MineolaNYF@gmail.com
- Decarbonization 101: An Introduction to Better Use of Energy in Buildings
 - This webinar will provide an introduction to decarbonization and the reduction of carbon emissions by improving the design and construction of buildings and how they use energy. Key topics include an overview of decarbonization and an introduction to different types of decarbonization strategies that can be incorporated into NYF building projects.
 - Thursday, June 27 from 11-12pm
 - Thursday, July 11 from 3-4pm
 - Webinar series registration link:
<https://meetny.webex.com/webappng/sites/meetny/webinar/webinarSeries/register/bb50780d632242d697c44571f15db9a6>
- Key Stakeholder Interviews
 - Throughout the process

Public Comments and Questions

An opportunity for public comments and questions concluded the meeting:

- Consider using the Western Beef site for a health club.
- For street closure on Second Street and/or Main Steet: Consider using signage plates instead of bollards. Aesthetically appealing signs could be put up to say "road closed" and to advertise events.
- For elderly populations and those who find it difficult to walk from farther away, it would be great to have something like a golf cart to escort people from Village parking lots to Downtown.
- It would be beneficial to have digital screens or kiosks with a rotating list of updated events for the Village.