

New City Hamlet Center Vision Plan

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION AND VISION STATEMENT

The New City hamlet is the community's center and a destination for work, shopping, and public gathering. The hamlet is the home to the Rockland County offices, the County Courthouse, the Clarkstown town hall, a wealth of local businesses, professional offices, eateries, service shops, a small range of housing options, parks, athletic fields and nature preserves, and great opportunities for public gathering and festivals.

The hamlet center is an important part of the community fabric. However, local residents and visitors, whether visiting the hamlet for work, entertainment, or daily shopping tasks, are often frustrated by the overall experience of being in New City. A commonly-heard statement at public workshops – “I would never bring a friend from out of town to downtown New City” – highlights the lack of pride and general sense of disappointment with the area.

For years, the New City Hamlet Center has been the focus of community concern and controversy, as well as a variety of planning and revitalization projects dating back to the 1960s. However, almost every planning initiative and strategy met significant resistance and resulted in disappointment. The Vision Plan presents and establishes a new prototype for planning in New City through an inclusive collaborative process designed to build strong consensus and a community-supported vision for the future.



Rockland County Courthouse



Residents working together to plan for New City's future

Town of Clarkstown and County of Rockland

The foundation of this plan consists of dialogue, consensus building, and a comprehensive approach to visioning. The vision plan is unique in recent history in that the county and town are close partners working together to address the range of issues facing the hamlet center and sharing project costs. Furthermore, neighborhood and civic groups have also been closely involved in the process, through participation on planning committees and workshops, and have contributed greatly to development of the plan.

PURPOSE — A PLACE TO BE PROUD OF

The primary purpose of this plan is to establish broad community consensus and illustrate the overriding vision for the New City Hamlet Center. In addition, the plan provides a short- and long-term implementation guide for government, civic groups, businesses, and resident stakeholders related to land use and zoning, transportation, design, and general renewal of the hamlet.

At the first Vision Plan workshop (March 2006), participants were asked: “What would it take for this project to be considered a success?” Initial answers generally revolved around very specific, physical improvements

– “we have got to fix up Bradlee’s” or “there’s not enough parking.” However, after continued discussion one simple statement summarized why people were

interested in the plan and participating in the meeting: “Let’s make New City a place to be proud of!”



South Main Street in New City



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PLANNING AREA

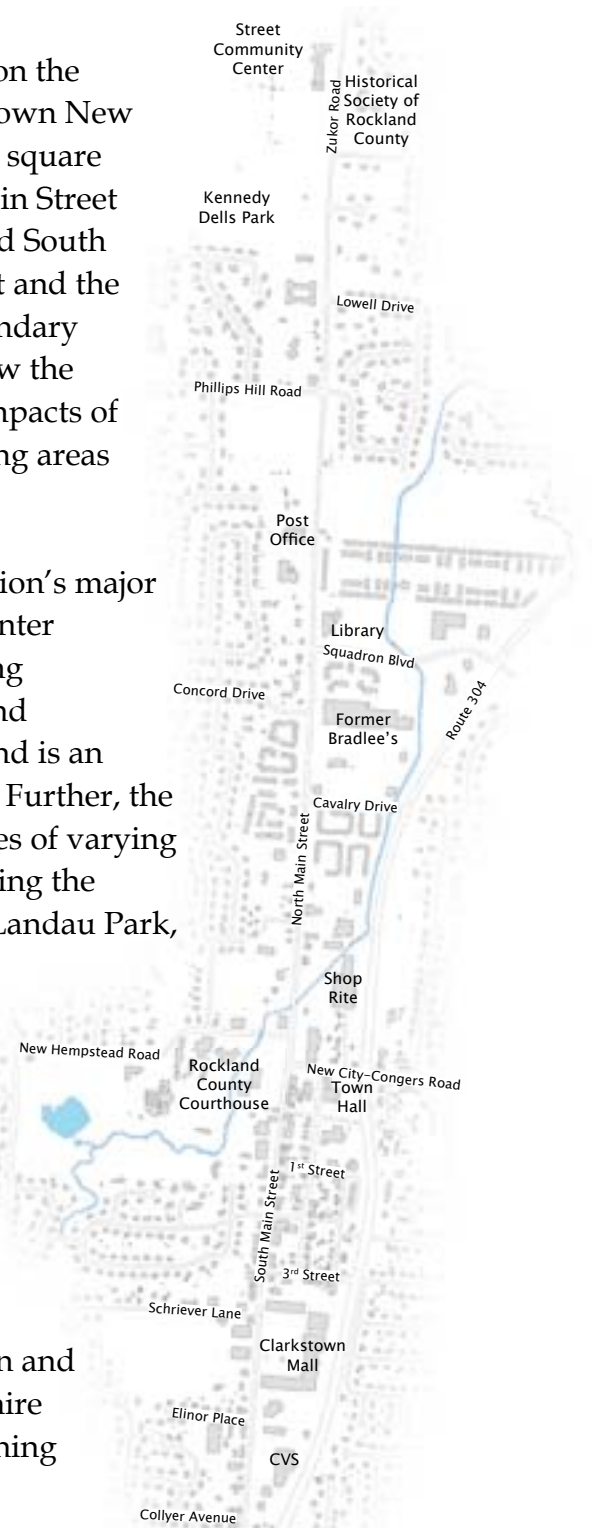
The Vision Plan boundary is generally based on the Town of Clarkstown's designation for Downtown New City and covers an area of approximately 0.63 square miles. The project area includes the entire Main Street corridor from the intersection of Route 304 and South Main Street to Zukor Road/North Main Street and the Street Community Center. However, the boundary was generally considered to be flexible to allow the community and consultants to consider the impacts of decisions within the corridor upon surrounding areas and to focus on key issues and opportunities.

The New City Hamlet Center is one of the region's major commercial and civic destinations. It is the center of municipal and county government including the Clarkstown government complex, Rockland County offices, and the County Courthouse and is an important place for commerce and shopping. Further, the study area includes a number of park resources of varying sizes for residents and visitors to enjoy including the Kennedy Dells Park, the Demarest Kill Park, Landau Park, and the historic Dutch Garden.

PLANNING PROCESS

The New City Hamlet Center Vision Plan is a collaborative effort of local residents and property owners, local and county government officials and staff, community business people, and civic groups and organizations. To ensure for the widest participation and community benefit, the town and county worked together to design the scope, hire consultants, guide the project, and share planning costs.

A steering committee consisting of key stakeholders was established to guide the consultants during development of the plan and to ensure that the project responded to the diverse needs of the community. Groups and



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organizations represented on the planning committee included the Little Tor Neighborhood Association, South Little Tor Neighborhood Association, Downtown New City Corporation, New City Chamber of Commerce, the Town of Clarkstown, County of Rockland, Clarkstown Garden Club, and the New City Civic Association. Consultants held several meetings with the steering committee to refine ideas and consider recommendations and strategies. Plan committee members also helped facilitate workshops and focus sessions and assisted with communication and outreach to the public.



Four (4) public workshops formed the foundation of the public outreach program, each of which included a brief consultant presentation, short break-out discussions by topic area, and a final summary and presentation by participants. Postcard notifications were mailed to residents within a ½ mile radius of the study area, email announcements sent to distribution lists and a community web site – www.newcityvision.net – was maintained to post schedules and draft materials and to keep the public informed on progress.

In addition to the large public workshops, a series of smaller focus group sessions were conducted to gain insight into specific issues of key concern including parking and parking management (sponsored by the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council), streetscape design, the local businesses community (opportunities for promotion and economic development), the Central Gateway area (Main Street intersection with New City – Congers and New Hempstead), and the Rockland County Campus.



Workshop participants discussing the South Main Streetscape

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DOCUMENT ORGANIZATION

This document is organized around a set of planning principles and themes – Vision; Destination New City; Circulate New City; and Form New City – with recommendations and strategies grouped under each theme. The Vision Plan outline:

Chapter 1: Introduction and Vision

- Project introduction and the overall vision for the hamlet, the desired future condition;

Chapter 2: Destination New City

- Recommendations to enhance the “Destination” areas, the features that draw people to New City;

Chapter 3: Circulate New city

- Focuses on roadway, streetscape and pedestrian concepts for Main Street;

Chapter 4: Form New City

- Details land use, zoning, and organizational strategies for realizing the vision; and

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Implementation

- Summarizes the planning concepts and highlights implementation roles.

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VISION STATEMENT

A vision statement is a consensus-building tool used to represent a community's desired future. The statement can also be used to guide the development of specific planning strategies and recommendations as well as to measure implementation and overall program effectiveness. The New City Hamlet Center vision statement represents a target by which to measure implementation and success.

NEW CITY HAMLET CENTER VISION

In the future, the New City Hamlet Center will be a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly community center with a wealth and diversity of business and job opportunities. The hamlet will include pleasant places for all ages through a mixed-use environment of entertainment, businesses, parks, and living opportunities and be strengthened by the presence of the town and county government offices whose workers shop, dine, and contribute to the overall vitality of the area.

It is envisioned that links to enhanced park and recreation facilities such as Dutch Garden and the Demarest Kill County Park will bring residents and workers closer to the natural beauty of the area while the overall design and density of the hamlet will reflect the character of a traditional small town Main Street.

Surrounding neighborhoods will benefit by renewal of the Hamlet Center by being within walking distance of shops, restaurants, businesses, the courthouse, government offices, parks and other activity centers. New development will be sensitive to the existing neighborhoods and carefully designed to minimize adverse impacts to quality of life.



Workshop participants selected these two images from other communities as their favorites during an image preference survey at the first workshop in March 2006

