



**Comprehensive Plan Update
Opening Workshop
May 6, 2015
7:00 – 9:00 pm
Cross Cultural Solutions Auditorium, 2 Clinton Place**

BREAKOUT SESSION NOTES

Compiled by the Land Use Law Center

Housing & Neighborhoods

Facilitator: Sarah Yackel (BFJ)

Recorder: Sarah Yackel (BFJ)

1. Lack of affordability in housing; high taxes; seniors can't stay; millennials leave – segregation between downtown and rest of city.
2. Provide / protect true middle income / low income housing so that residents are not replaced (*input from index card*)
3. Need homeownership opportunities and opportunities for affordable housing in downtown.
4. How does city address inequality?
5. Home ownership opportunities, at all income levels, is key to addressing inequality.
6. Potential opportunities for increased housing density outside the downtown – spread out development.
7. Construction of workforce and affordable housing throughout city.
8. New Rochelle requirement for affordable housing is 10%. New York City is 20-25%. New Rochelle should increase requirement. Should also provide ownership opportunities throughout the city. The zoning code should be amended to remove the provision that allows a developer to pay into a fund for off-site affordable housing in lieu of providing it on-site.
9. Apartments aren't maintaining value. There are significant vacancies.
10. Intergenerational New Rochelle – New Goal.
11. Better Code enforcement is needed to maintain the City's neighborhoods.
12. Walkability around schools is an issue that needs to be addressed. Pedestrian safety enhancements would allow children to safely walk to school (i.e. Quaker Ridge Road)
13. There needs to be open and honest communication between the City and residents about problems.
14. Preservation of historic homes. City needs to better advertise its existing assets to those both living and visiting New Rochelle.
15. Don't want new development outside downtown. Also, don't need more residents in city. Need increased economic base. More businesses, better services, don't need

- high density anywhere. Too much over development. Don't block breeze from water. Limit development at Echo Bay. Need Waterfront Park.
16. Need to plan for the eventuality that Monroe College may become a non-profit (currently a for profit college); fear this will erode tax base downtown.
 17. Sidewalks in the North End should be paid for by homeowner/property owner. City shouldn't pay. (South End had to pay for their own sidewalks)
 18. Bus stops with bus shelters and seats are needed throughout the City to encourage residents, especially seniors, to use mass transit.
 19. Don't allow over building or existing neighborhoods; need to maintain existing block/lot integrity.
 20. Limit tax abatements to high rise/dense development – tax abatements effect/harm all taxpayers.
 21. There should be free parking in the City after 5-6 P.M.
 22. The parking lanes along Huguenot Street, Main Street, and North Avenue should be removed to accommodate dedicated bike lanes.
 23. The East End should be included in the Comprehensive Plan as a standalone neighborhood – not lumped in with Downtown or Central New Rochelle.
 - People stay in the East End
 - Real Neighbors; homeowners
 - Small business in area
 - Have church
 24. Need representation of all New Rochelle residents not just politically connected.
 25. Potential opportunities for additional development.
 - 5th Avenue
 - Union Avenue
 - Quaker Ridge Shopping Center, mixed use.
 26. Support and enhance other neighborhoods outside downtown.
 27. Stores, retail along Quaker Ridge Road and North Avenue, help these areas remain viable.
 - Haven't recovered from downturn.
 - Need neighborhood retail in neighborhoods.
 - Local shops – too many vacancies.
 - No longer walkable – need retail
 28. Better stewardship and maintenance of parks is needed.
 29. There is no reason to go downtown; need to provide better opportunities.
 30. The City's colleges have not developed to create neighborhoods. City has facilitated the overgrowth of Iona, but no obvious benefit to the community or in terms of community character has resulted.
 31. Colleges are not "college" like, no college town feel, no benefit or sense within neighborhood.
 - Why no incentive for business?
 - Focus on North Avenue as gateway/connection between North End and Downtown.
 - Leverage local colleges to attract new businesses.
 32. Food options in area are run by Iona, not adding to tax base.

Economic Development

Facilitator: Ayanna Wayner (NR)

Recorder: Kathy Gilwit (NR)

Group 1

Goals & Objectives

1. Change goals and objectives: Economic viability of the City- add “increase”
2. “Preserve and strengthen existing businesses and attract new businesses”
3. Bullet # 1: Change to “existing’ economic assets and “future” opportunities
4. List assets: intellectual capital, transit center, waterfront, colleges, proximity to NYC, undeveloped space
5. Bullet #2- Create a climate to attract and retain new businesses
6. Add this bullet: Encourage and facilitate growth sectors of the economy in New Rochelle to expand employment opportunities
7. Bullet #3- Expand, diversify and strengthen tax base

Opportunities

1. Bullet #4: Add to ‘destination city’- “live, work, play”
2. Bullet #8- Edit, or add this as a separate bullet: Streamline permitting for small businesses

Group 2

Goals & Objectives

1. Bullet #1- Look for where financial and intellectual economic strength of New Rochelle is.
2. Add Bullet- Honesty and objectivity in development processes (ie branding updates)

Opportunities

1. Create New Rochelle economic fund to foster/support local talent
 - Credit union/ loan fund
 - Incubator
2. Move City Hall downtown or spread offices throughout business areas
3. City-wide trolley
4. Require municipal employees to live in the City, to spur economic support of the community

Group 3

Goals & Objectives

1. Bullet #1- Define income as “tax base”
2. Add these bullets:
 - Create zoning that manages/controls non-taxable real estate (house of worship, diplomats home)
 - Identify gentrified areas ripe for development to attract (larger) upscale businesses (such as Fairway and the Pelham Manor cluster)

Opportunities

1. Attract metro-NYC based businesses
2. Communicate benefit of economic development projects

Group 4

Goals & Objectives

1. Add “expand” to overall Economic Development goals and objectives
2. Put bullet point #2 and #1

Opportunities

1. Encourage “buy local” campaign- with a parking incentive?
2. Identify retail store “gaps” in the area and attract them to New Rochelle (what’s not in Yonkers or Bronx)
3. Get a retail recruiter to “sell” the City
4. Move City Hall to downtown
5. Attract retail chains (Starbucks, Trader Joes)
6. Increase job training for un/under employed New Rochelleans
7. Create tech center on Garden Street lot
8. Transparency in development processes to increase community understanding and engagement
9. For RDRXR project specifically, and then for future projects to include:
 - Livable wage
 - Local training and hiring
 - Academic and construction training program
 - MWBE clause
10. Leverage underutilized vacant City properties to get economic return. Preservation of historic properties (Armory, Ward Acres).
11. Eliminate tax abatements
12. Take out #8 or change “flexible” to “fair”
13. #9- to alleviate cultural exodus to New York City
14. Educate and inform New Rochelleans of good stuff to self-promote!

Index Cards

1. IDA – No tax abatement
2. Repurpose the armory – don’t let it deteriorate further – this is a key issue
3. Concern about taxes as a homeowner. Apartment houses cause tax increase among homeowners.
4. Opportunity: Gambling casino on Davids Island
5. Per dwelling unit school taxes

Open Space & Community Resources

Facilitator: Nina Arron (NR)

Recorder: Suzanne Reider (NR)

Group One

1. Omni card is dysfunctional (Hudson, Five Islands, Davenport Parks).
 - Limits accessibility. Since tiki bar was put in place access has also become even more limited with the gate locked in the evenings so no one can use the park after work.
 - Would like coordination between city and county for parks fees
 - Ownership of parks = residents
2. Protect historic/cultural resources on the waterfront
 - Include in the LWRP
3. Tennis fee – prohibitive / affordability for parks generally is an issue
4. Inventory / Analysis of open space
 - Where can we create additional open space
 - Include in the Comp Plan
 - Turn spaces into park / open space
 - “Pocket Parks of joy”
5. Purchase private lands to create parks in residential areas

Group Two

1. Affordability of the Omni Card
 - There is currently no cost differential between residents and non-residents
2. Open House of Parks at beginning of season to learn about the facilities offered at each park
3. No room for spontaneous play / use due to permitted park uses.
4. Improve access to all parks, not only waterfront areas
5. Dog friendly parks (currently not enough of them)
6. Hudson Park Greenhouse
 - Open to community
 - Community garden opportunity
7. Marina slips are not available
8. Davenport Park seems private
 - Allow uses in the park
9. Conservancy of parks
 - Create advocacy group

Group Three

1. Create healthy neighborhoods
 - No new development
 - Increase public transportation
2. Create pocket park on Main
 - Examples: downtown Boston Urban Park; space between Davenport Lofts and adjacent building

3. County Waste Treatment Facility – Promenade – connection to Echo Bay
4. Community gardens in downtown
5. Pedestrian precincts
6. Cannot wait....start now! There are things that can be done without \$\$
7. Open Armory to the public as a resource
8. Partnerships with commerce
 - Benefit of aesthetics
9. Less vehicular traffic
10. Deck over I-95 (plaza over highway)

Group Four

1. Boating destination (Municipal Marina)
 - Need amenities at waterfront
 - Restaurants
 - Rowing club location – use
 - Rental of kayaks, canoes, etc. at waterfront parks
2. Development of Echo Bay
3. Better monitoring of parks
 - Maintenance
 - Safety
4. Facilitate connections between parks
 - Activities
 - Multi-cultural
 - Draw for local residents
5. Bike Lanes
 - Connect communities
 - Enhance options to get to waterfront
6. Slow steady change...lay groundwork
7. Visibility of waterfront
8. Involve school district
9. Resources / service provided
10. Engage private sector
11. Davids Island....swap for Glen Island with county
12. Lobby state to “cover up” County Waste Treatment
13. Simplify park card (Omni card) – online instead of having to come during business hours to City Hall

Index Cards

1. Dog park , bike, and walking paths
2. Should have a food coop urban farm where local residents can grow produce for themselves perhaps with an eye to commercializing (maybe canning the produce?) selling to local merchants and restaurants
3. Parks are underutilized – how to use them better
4. Thomas Paine’s _ is excellent. No way to pay for additional museums.

Land Use & Zoning

Facilitator: John Nolon (LULC)

Recorder: Kevin Kain (NR)

Group 1

1. Regarding the potential zoning changes to the Light Industrial – Fifth Avenue Overlay the City should seek input from property owners in that neighborhood.
2. In that same neighborhood, perhaps artist live/work spaces would be appropriate and should be encouraged.
3. There is a concern regarding hi-rise development and its potential negative impacts.
4. There is a concern regarding the increase in population due to new development.
5. There is a concern about the cleanliness of the City, and the need to clean streets and public spaces.
6. There is a lack of infrastructure for additional people.
7. There is a need to increase walkability. New Rochelle should look at examples from New York City.
8. The City should not convert Main Street to two-way.

Group 2

1. Because we are only looking at growth in 5-percent of the City, we need to be creative about land use, and need developers and personnel that are creative.
2. No more New Roc City! It creates an unwalkable environment and segregates the community. There are opportunities to improve New Roc City.
3. There are concerns about affordable housing. Affordable workforce housing should be included in the rezoning of Light Industrial – Fifth Avenue Overlay zone.
4. The City should find other tools besides the comprehensive plan to achieve goals and objectives.
5. Perhaps some change in the “preservation” areas could be okay.
6. The hospital should be part of the growth of the City?
7. Need to capitalize on colleges in terms of their potential economic benefit to the community.
8. Need to follow the plan we create.

Group 3

1. There is a concern with putting industrial development near residential communities. If proposed, the City needs input from the community.
2. The City needs to focus on good connections for people coming to New Rochelle from other communities.
3. The City needs to zone in a comprehensive and cohesive manner, taking into consideration transportation and parking needs.
4. The IDA is abusing its power.
5. The City needs to give consideration to the East End.
6. IDA decisions should be approved by the City Council.
7. The citizen boards need to be de-politicized. New Rochelle should consider creating community boards like New York City.

8. Zoning and land use regulations need to increase affordable housing requirements.

Group 4

1. The City should formalize community benefits agreements.
2. Zoning amendments need to address incompatible land uses.
3. The City needs to encourage access to the waterfront.
4. The City needs to encourage mixed-uses.
5. Moving the City yard away from the waterfront is a good idea.
6. The City should consider decking over the sunken portions of I-95.
7. The comprehensive plan should recommend incentives that provide public benefits.
8. The City needs to assess the pros and cons of each zoning tool.
9. There is a need to implement GreeNR through land use regulations. What actions can be taken?
10. There is a need for commercial development, not just residential.
11. The City needs to consider mid-rise, not just hi-rise development.

Index Cards

1. Encourage renewable energy

Mobility & Infrastructure

Facilitator: Jeff LeJava (LULC)

Recorder: Jeff LeJava (LULC)

2. Parking
 - How users are charged for parking
 - Parking penalties not commensurate with crime
 - Street parking – short-term free parking for commercial establishments
3. Bike lanes
 - North to south connection not easy to connect without car
 - Memorial Highway underutilized – move traffic there from North Avenue
4. Street connectivity and traffic flow
5. Streetscape aesthetics need to be improved.
 - Visual continuity of storefronts and signage
6. Bike lanes need to be widened
7. East end BID?
 - Larger geographic area covered by BID
8. Businesses need to have free parking with time limits
9. Traffic congestion, public transit, parking must be approached as a comprehensive system – not individual issues
10. Road connections/connectivity to cross county parkway would aid commercial development
11. New Rochelle needs destination shopping
12. No infrastructure to support residential growth downtown
 - No adequate parking
 - No schools
13. Streets not wide enough (eg. Route 1 thru Home depot)
 - Want convenient on street parking for commercial
14. Metro Card and metro-North card – (Bus)
 - Cards, fees
15. Reliance on county bus system is difficult
16. More frequent busing would be a huge win for NR (*input from index card*)
17. Develop West Main Street – add parking somehow (*input from index card*)
18. Offer a free downtown jitney bus loop and a free North-South jitney bus loop (*input from index card*)
19. Need for better and safer bike lanes and bike parking
20. Parking difficulties in neighborhoods with colleges
 - Neighborhood passes?
21. Clear parking signage for residential neighborhoods
22. There is a need for a local bus system
23. Better traffic/roadway enforcement
 - To eliminate drag racing
24. Transportation issues vary with different areas of New Rochelle
25. Memorial Highway- could be great pedestrian/bike way into downtown
26. Connector between downtown and Montifiore Hospital and lower North Avenue

27. Need to provide opportunity to get kids to school on their own
28. Bike connectivity to Manhattan
29. Better bus connection from North New Rochelle to other areas of Westchester, eg. White Plains
30. New Rochelle should not subsidize Pelham parking needs
31. Deck over 95 and train tracks to create more space

Urban Design, Historic Preservation & Cultural Resources

Facilitator: Simon Kates (BFJ)

Recorder: Simon Kates (BFJ)

1. Comments on Public Outreach
 - Outreach Survey – Only 1,300 responses out of 70K residents.
 - Disconnect of Communication—Many residents are not adept with technology and there are no local newspapers
 - Potential Outreach Strategies: Send information home with school children; trolley tours; church groups, newsletters, co-ops, neighborhood associations, neighborhood announcement boards; realtors.
2. I-95 divides city.
 - Challenge to cohesive visual image.
 - Build underground tunnel for I-95 from Memorial to North Avenue?
3. Cultural Tourism
 - Walking tours
 - New Rochelle Arts.
4. Name of Category
 - Change from “Urban Design and Historic Preservation” to “Historic Preservation and Cultural Resources.”
5. Memorial highway – Initially conceived as extension of Cross County Parkway; should it be redesigned?
6. Need a preservation plan
 - Review of demolition permits.
 - Tear-down protections.
 - Preserve character of neighborhoods.
7. Complete Cultural Resource Survey
 - Need grant funding.
8. Visual Image Important
 - Signage
 - Need for architectural review
 - Could develop two visual concepts/images for neighborhoods and downtown that work together.
9. Repurpose city buildings – e.g., Greenhouse, Band shell
10. Branding
 - Target new residents and young people.
 - New residents don’t know what we have.
11. Better marketing of historic/cultural resources and events.
12. Aesthetic of signage can create continuity.
13. Take care of trees:
 - New Rochelle used to be known as the City of Trees
 - Historic trees
 - Rosehill Nursery
 - Need to conduct a Historic Tree Inventory
 - Larchmont Woods – Many old trees that are vulnerable to damage

14. City should take care of what it has
 - Focus on presentation first before new development.
15. Feasibility
 - Cost of infrastructure downtown—does capacity exist for new development?
16. Design – Not lowest common Denominator
 - Clash between architectural styles is good--Specifically downtown.
 - Not cookie cutter.
 - Adaptive Reuse of existing buildings can help preserve architectural variety
 - One example of new building that creates interesting architectural juxtaposition is the bank on North Ave and Huguenot.
17. Need to weight the balance of Traffic movement versus pedestrians.
18. Need to evaluate wind impacts of new buildings
 - On windy days, the gusts coming off of tall buildings is extreme.
 - Should require wind study of tall buildings.
19. New Rock City – Negative Precedent
 - Doesn't add to the pedestrian experience.
20. Interconnected midsize.
21. Trees are important to the image of the City
22. Creation of a History museum could be one strategy to preserve an existing building while also educating people about the City with a learning and resource center.
23. Accessibility
24. Incorporation of trees in discussion of green space
 - Loss of heritage trees
25. Residence Park
 - Pocket Parks

Downtown Development

Facilitator: Frank Fish (BFJ)

Recorder: Stephanie Tomei (CP Committee)

1. Retain character of Main Street with architectural integrity maintained.
2. Preserve a section of downtown similar to Bedford Street in Stamford. Zoning should maintain ground floor character and provide setback at four (4) to five (5) stories in height.
3. Parking/mobility options.
4. Don't make it easy to pass through downtown.
5. Free parking in evening after 5 P.M.
6. Destinations needed for downtown including event spaces and cultural uses.
7. Loewe's Theatre should be preserved.
8. Incubator fund for New Rochelle, small business innovators.
9. Small businesses should not be displaced.
10. Good design is needed: attractive and friendly.
11. High amenity, affordable workforce housing should be provided.
12. Mixed income/low income developments.
13. High quality construction (complaints about quality of Avalon buildings).
14. Daytime activity: Businesses office space is still needed.
15. Shopping – diverse boutiques.
16. "Buy local" campaign.
17. Discourage box stores.
18. Accessible waterfront (Echo Bay).
19. Expanded library green (or other huge greenspace).
20. Community gardens.
21. Vibrant library and performance space.
22. Indoor athletic spaces (i.e. baseball, soccer)
23. Services: Upgrade post office.
24. Enliven the "wall" of New Rock city.
25. Outdoor seating.
26. More green spaces.
27. Armory as starting point to catalytic projects.
28. Long Island Sound connection – don't create wall.
29. Move City Yard.
30. Move City Hall to downtown.
31. Carless downtown.
32. Bicycle parking.
33. I 95/Cross County connectivity needed.
34. More LGBT friendly.