

Streetscape Advisory Committee Report
Central Business District (CBD)
Village of Briarcliff Manor, NY

14 September 2017

To: **Mayor Sullivan and the Board of Trustees.**

From: **Ad Hoc Streetscape Advisory Committee.**

Subject: **Report to the Mayor and Board of Trustees.**

Appointment: The authority for this committee was by Village of Briarcliff Manor (VBM) Mayoral appointment and Board of Trustees (BOT) confirming resolution of 25 October 2016 wherein Village residents and/or parties of interest was established. The committee members appointed are the following: Lou Wachtel (chairman), Bryan Zirman, BOT Liaison, Brad Manganello, Liz Karp, Nancy Hertz, Fred Siegel, Matthew Yannocone, Bob Ruotolo, Doug Royce, and Larisa Wayne Paulmeno.

Purpose: By way of background and operation, 'Streetscape' is a term utilized to describe the natural and built fabric of the street and defined as its design quality. It is the overall visual effect. This concept recognizes that a street is a public place where people are able to engage in various activities, not totally commercially oriented. Streetscapes and their visual experience largely influence public places where people interact and it ultimately assists in the definition of *a community's aesthetic quality, economic activity, health, and sustainability*.

VBM's Streetscape Advisory Committee was formulated with the specific intent of encompassing the above definition and creating an actionable roadmap towards enhancing the Village's CBD. More importantly, as an extension of the broader intentions of the Village's efforts to analyze what is existing and to rethink business-district use as currently outlined in its Comprehensive Plan. Specific focus is aimed at our downtown area since it is believed to have the broadest impact on our residents and visitors. To do so, it was important to create a sub-committee to focus on its specifics.

In doing so, we'd like to have the CBD better reflect the enormous pride our residents have for the village. To achieve that, The Committee believes it is important to adopt

and expand upon the goals outlined in BFJ Planning's original *Downtown Urban Design & Planning* proposal. Specifically, we believe it is important to:

1. Create a successful CBD that has a distinct sense of place by building upon intrinsic, historic, economic, natural and cultural amenities.
2. Create a business district that is pedestrian-friendly to promote a greater sense of community, improve opportunities for social contact and interaction and enhance downtown vitality.

We have outlined and detailed our following ongoing efforts, interactions with all concerned parties, our thought process for devising a suitable enhancement plan and our recommendations for putting our plan into action.

Overview of CBD and Its Current Conditions:

VBM's CBD – Please see attached drawing for official layout of the CBD "zone" of study. Residents are familiar with defining it as "The Holbrook Cottage store at the north end of Pleasantville Road south to the Post Office". As it currently exists, there are a few categories of issues that the village must address:

1. Deterioration of Infrastructure/Utilities

- The What: While the VBM recognizes that infrastructure issues are in need of accelerated attention, it is important to focus on the specifics which includes surface and underground drainage from west to east side under the paved surface and includes aged electrical, water and sewer transmission mains, deteriorated sidewalks and curbs to highlight the obvious. Con Ed vaults for electrical are in a deteriorated state from the effects of road salt and the street lights ("King Posts") while period in style are hard to repair and energy inefficient. While well-intentioned, the existing street trees (various species of Oak) have taken over the sidewalks causing uplifting and other unsafe conditions.: all negatively impacting the current state of the CBD. We acknowledge that the costs of remedying this condition overall is in the several millions of dollars.
- The Issues – These are issues that need to be addressed before they become even larger problems. These issues fall under the authority of the VBM and need to find proper financing. Additionally, we also recognize that these same issues are acerbated by and overlap with private property lines whose owners are to be a part of the resolution. Working in

conjunction with them will take some synchronization and financial support given the shear amount of owners involved.

2. Beautification

- The What: Building to building inconsistencies, facades falling apart, signage missing, unattractive and varying conditions. Lighting, street furniture, landscaping is also sparse and inconsistent. Crosswalks and patterns are not logical creating inconsistent sidewalk plans. No consistency between east and west sides of Pleasantville Rd exist. Overall, there's a lack of a cohesive identity to the CBD. Beautification is at the center of a village's streetscape and will be paramount in giving the VBM a more welcoming appeal.
- The Issues: To date, it's been a difficult task in gaining cooperation amongst the many property owners. Many of the desired landscaping and lighting initiatives are being renewed but only as temporary fixes as the village looks to address other issues first. Many of these issues will need to be addressed cooperatively with property owners, a majority of whom are absentee owners.

3. Parking

- The What: Parking is sparse during active times of the day. Additional parking options exist, but they are poorly promoted/visual and dilapidated in their current state. Where North State Rd. & Pleasantville Rd. meet, there is some additional parking that could be better defined and utilized.
- The Issues: The parking behind the east side of Pleasantville Road, is currently under ownership of the several property owners. Given the name of separate owners involved it is obvious that a solution would be daunting and difficult to gain consensus on a way to better make use of its potential. On-street and off-street parking having differing issues and supporters.

The intention is to simultaneously address these 3 distinct "Whats". The "Issues" with each are what we're hoping to confront with an open mind and in a way that properly incentivizes all parties involved. In other words, can the VBM do its part to better the CBD, while at the same time, will the property owners be willing to do their own part to contribute to its success. Actionable steps will be laid out later in this proposal.

Meetings of the Committee: We wish to report (and take pride in the fact) that the committee members were active participants in the several meetings, "field trips" and discussion groups since its establishment.

- October 15th, 2016 - Initial meeting
- November 19th, 2016 - CBD walkthrough w/ committee members
- December 15th, 2016 - Reviewing walkthrough
- January 15th, 2017 – Action Plan Discussion
- April 3rd, 2017 – Presentation to the Rotary
- May 11th, 2017 - CBD walkthrough w/ Sarah Yackel of BFJ Planning
- June 26th, 2017 – Discussed plans for *Streetscape Advisory Committee Report*

Meeting Highlights:

- Committee Members, along with Village Manager Zegarelli and Mayor Sullivan, toured the CBD, met with many of the local shop owners. Created extensive listed of all potential areas of improvement.
- Toured other surrounding village CBD's. Looking to gather ideas and inspiration for what we could be integrated into our plans. (Village included Chappaqua, Katonah Pleasantville, Hartsdale, Bedford, Tarrytown, Ossining, Irvington, etc.)
- Surveyed the village residents for their input. Gathered valuable feedback from those that took the online survey regarding their likes and dislikes with current store mix (and specific surrounding-town store suggestions), their personal suggestions for improvement, and info regarding their tenure in Briarcliff. Results were also presented to the Rotary. (More details below)
- Spoke to business owners about their problems, concern's and suggestions
- Meetings with Sarah Yackel of BFJ Planning and VM Phil Zegarelli.

Recommendations: We have outlined and separated our plans into three stages: Short-Term, Medium-Term and Long-Term timeframes.

- Short-term recommendations are intended to be cosmetic, low-cost, and oriented to create the initial momentum needed to confidently move forward with all other stages. Most of these actions will be performed on behalf of the village in a six month timeframe.

- Medium-term recommendations are intended to create consistency, further address beautification (beyond “window dressing” being done in the shorter-term) and actively engage our CBD’s Property Owners and Merchants to work cooperatively with the village. “New Face Ordinance” being discussed to initiate commitment from Property Owners. (1 year). Success can only be achieved by the fixed commitments from the property owners.
- Long-term recommendations include broader, mostly costly infrastructure projects. The VBM must upgrade infrastructure such as gas, water, sewer, electrical all need to be upgraded. (Ex. Water leaking under street). In most cases, these items take time to plan and approve the significant long term financing necessary for this to be a viable project. For this reason they are to be addressed as part of the short-term so that they will be ready in a reasonable timeframe: estimated to be between 3 to 5 years). The VBM infrastructural upgrades require the commitment of the VBM.

1. Short-Term: The purpose is to achieve recognizable results and monitor progress.
 - Monthly maintenance schedule and village walkthrough
 - Trim trees lining East side of street. (Until we retain easement, please see Long Term)
 - Route 9A/North State Road Intersection & Pleasantville Rd/North State Rd. Improvements (in progress)
 - New planters
 - New trashcans/recycle bins
 - Address needs for additional parking
 - New and improved parking signs to improve parking
 - Repair, clean, and repaint light posts
 - Improve Tivoli lights on light posts
 - Fix/patch dangerous spots on sidewalks (until full replacement is approved)
 - Enforce rules and regulations regarding merchandise and furniture on sidewalks.
 - Enforce parking rules & Address need for potential express parking options
2. Medium-Term: Second step of achievable results with unified participation of property owners
 - Fix and preferably upgrade Facades
 - Paint store fronts
 - Replace signage
 - Pave and upgrade vacant property next to March (whose ownership?)

- Meet with landlords and merchants to discuss costs, share of costs, timeframes and penalties for not complying with agreements.

3. Long-Term: Heavy input and responsibility of the VBM but also linkages to property owners where appropriate.

- CBD Infrastructure
- Request easements for sidewalks and parking in rear of buildings. This will allow for the removal of the trees and for the village to better address a smoother traffic pattern
- Redo sidewalks
- Research actual viability of new building of apartments over existing stores and more in keeping with the recommendations of the VBM's planning advisors, BFJ and their *Downtown Urban Design & Planning* proposal.

Incentives: What mix can be established and what could be utilized to achieve even modest results?

How do we fund the Façade Program?

- Fund raising, via online Group-funding sites or through village events?
- 50/50 split?
- Match-Funding (future SVP to have \$\$\$ requirement to target CDB upgrades). Private funding, WC, NYS or Federal or others (corporate)?

How are the short-term items funded?

- Committed by the village, through appropriate budgeting

How do we address current parking issues?

- Mandate owner parking in back or in designated parking area (near Wells Fargo for instance). Can parking be extended south from the lot to the bus stop?

How to incentivize Property Owners to commit to the longer-term all-encompassing plan?

- Phase in revaluation of properties that experience increased tax assessments?
- The Village is committing millions of dollars to upgrade the infrastructure and parking to allow for better foot traffic.
- Incentivize consolidation of properties?

Implementation: Commitments from the Committee, The Board, Village Managers Office, The Property Owners, Store Owners and the Residents themselves are all imperative. Guidelines should be specific and enforced.

There is no doubt that communication will be key. Many of these changes to the village will create short term headaches and dislocations for the residents and store owners. Everyone will need to be aware of the long-term positives associated with implementing change in stages. There needs to be a concerted effort to pull all sides together and respect the needs and limitations of all parties. The goal is to achieve marked stages of changeable improvements.

In Conclusion: The Streetscape Advisory Committee is wholeheartedly committed to making this a success. To that end, we intend to be pragmatic about our approach, err on the side of over-communication, and think outside-the-box to make sure all parties are pleased with the outcomes.

We understand that patience is key. But we hope this proposal serves as a catalyst towards immediate action. We believe that putting this plan into motion is paramount and will us to build upon the positive momentum we know this will create.

The enormous pride our residents have for its village is the driving force behind this initiative and we look forward to enjoying the wonderful outcomes of this plan.