



## Summary

The Town of Mount Pleasant Public Engagement Summary presents comments received at the October 9, 2018 Public Workshop. This was the second public workshop to inform the Town's Comprehensive Plan update process. The report documents the participants' goals, objectives, and vision for the three hamlets. The consulting team consists of Cleary Consulting, the Land Use Law Center, Sullivan Architecture, and Adler Consulting. To promote attendance at the meetings, Town staff, including the Town's Steering Committee, solicited participation using several advertisement methods, including flyers, online outreach and social media.

## Overview

The consulting team held its second public meeting on October 10, 2018 at the Mt. Pleasant Community Center from 7:00 – 9:00 pm. The Consulting Team, along with Steering Committee members, facilitated the meetings. At the meeting, Patrick Cleary from Cleary Consulting presented a summary of the Comprehensive Plan goals. The goals were based on the input received from residents of Mt. Pleasant during a spring public workshop and at various summer outreach events. During the workshop, participants placed themselves into small groups based on the hamlet of their choice. A trained facilitator led each small group of 15-20 participants. The facilitator asked participants to map the areas in each hamlet that they identified as "strong" and areas they identified as "challenged." In the exercise participants then identified strengths and weaknesses within the hamlets, linking them directly to specific hamlet locations. They marked the strong places with green dots and the challenged places with red dots. They then brainstormed about what makes a challenging place and what makes a strong place. Strong places were identified as places that people enjoy in the hamlet, find necessary and are attractive places to visit, while challenging places were identified as being places that people do not enjoy, are undesirable or that people believe need to be fixed. The small groups then discussed strategies for overcoming the hamlet challenges and discussed big ideas for the area. A recorder documented all responses using a large paper flip-chart, markers, and easels.



After participants concluded their small group hamlet discussions, each hamlet group presented their findings to the full group. Below is a summary of the input received.

## Valhalla

### Strong Areas Summary

#### *Train Station*

*The Valhalla station is a commuter rail stop on the Metro-North Railroad's Harlem.*

Participants discussed the Valhalla Train Station as being an essential location within the downtown of Valhalla. Participants noted the convenience and easy access into NYC and the Hudson Valley region. It is a transportation hub and within walking distance to downtown.



#### *Kensico Dam/Dam Plaza*

*The Kensico Dam Park is a County Park situated on the border of the Kensico Reservoir. It provides a unique setting for a wide variety of activities including cultural heritage celebrations and concerts, fitness classes and a fitness course, as well as areas for picnicking, in-line skating, walking and nature study.*

Participants discussed that even though this “strong area” in Valhalla is located outside of the Central Business District, it offers a green space connection to downtown Valhalla, social events, concerts, and public gathering that would draw people into downtown Valhalla. Other reasons for selecting this site, included walkability, recreational value, and open space.

#### *Local Restaurants on Broadway (Village Creamery/Deli/Espositios/Mughal)*

*The restaurants that are located on Broadway Avenue positioned across the street from the Valhalla Train Station.*

Participants selected this site noting the variety of restaurants, walkability, and public gathering opportunity. This was recognized as the core of downtown.

### Challenge Areas Summary

*Train Parking Lot Access/Dangerous Crosswalk on Cleveland Street:* Participants selected the train station parking lot as a weak area within Valhalla noting its difficulty in both vehicular and pedestrian access. Participants also discussed the dangerous nature of the crosswalk directly from the Valhalla train station across the Taconic State Parkway and again across Broadway Avenue.



*Kensico Dam Road/Bridge Closure:* Participants noted that the closure of the Kensico Dam Road was a weak area in Valhalla due to the increase in traffic and congestion.

*Retaining Wall on Columbus Avenue:* Of noted concern was the retaining wall on Columbus Avenue due to safety issues.

## **Opportunities for Downtown Valhalla**

The following is a list of ideas collected from a questionnaire form that asked the following question, "What would you like to see in the Hamlet that will make the Hamlet and Mt. Pleasant better?" Comments have been grouped into categories, but remain in verbatim.

### *Transportation, Walkability & Infrastructure Improvements*

- Path from Dam Plaza to Town Center
- Better/Safe Pedestrian Access to the Train
- Stairwell from Legion Drive to the Train
- Easier access to Dam Plaza
- Repave pathway in front of the restaurant Valhalla Crossing
- Attract a new bar on the east side of Columbus Ave as an alternative to Valhalla Crossing
- Better Coordination of Facilities to provide a "Walking Town"
- Fix the retaining wall
- Cut down trees that are pushing out the rock wall on Columbus Avenue
- More/Safer Ways to Enter the Train
- Fix potholes in front of Valhalla Crossing
- More of a Town Center
- Sidewalks
- Additional housing, condos for downsizing
- Keep a flavor of a small town. Development will only create more chaos and overcrowding with demand for paid fireman and EMS workers. You want stores, entertainment, etc. – move to White Plains.
- Increase access to delis and local businesses

### *Residential & Commercial Development*

- Room for more restaurants/townhouses
- Change Vacant Commercial Space into Housing
- Keep the Flavor of a Small Town

### *Open Space*

- Tax incentives for ecological improvements



- With air pollution such an important problem – the more open space that can be maintained the better for all who live here
- Increase the recreation opportunities

## Thornwood

### Strong Areas Summary

#### *Town Center/Shop Rite Shopping Center*

*Located off of Franklin Avenue, this Center has various grocery stores, dry cleaners, banks, restaurants, and service type businesses.*

Participants selected the Town Center as a strong area in Thornwood. Reasons for selecting the site included its stores, variety of shopping options, cleanliness, convenience, and lack of vacancies. People noted its “one-stop” shopping benefits.

#### *Four Corners*

*Located at the intersection of Franklin and Kensico Road.*

Participants’ reasons for selecting the 4 corners location was due to its vehicular safety, its physical layout, and its recognition in Town.

#### *Soccer Field/Park/Ballfield*

*Located off of Garrigan Avenue and Franklin Avenue across from the Shop Rite Shopping Center.*

Participants noted the open space and recreational benefits of this area in Thornwood, including the Nanny Hagen Brook. Reasons also included the park’s multi-use nature for entertainment and community gathering.

#### *Old Train Station/Firehouse/Post Office*

*Located on Commerce Street, including various restaurants, the Town’s Firehouse, and Post Office.*

This site was noted as a second commercial district in Thornwood noted its easy access to the post office, diverse restaurants and small Town feel.

#### *Barley House*

*Located on 665 Commerce Street, this is a local restaurant in Thornwood*



Noted by many participants as a great meeting place, ideal for outdoor seating, good food, family-friendliness, great architecture, and community-oriented business.

## Challenge Areas Summary

### *Four Corners*

Participants noted the Four Corners area as a challenge in the downtown of Thornwood discussing its extremely dangerous traffic patterns, congestion and lack of crosswalks. Comments were also made about the traffic diversion into residential streets, no left turn lane from Franklin Avenue to Kensico, and the two gas stations on two corners of the main street.

### *Franklin Street Strip Center*

Noted as an eyesore with undesirable stores, no “downtown” feel, no sidewalks, crosswalks, and lack of parking. Many noted it has having tired looking buildings.

### *Commerce Street near Barley House*

Participants discussed various shops near and around the Barley Shop as feeling run-down, old and not friendly looking. Others noted the lack of sidewalks and crosswalks.

### *Ballfield*

Participants noted the flooding concerns in and around the Ballfield.

## Opportunities for Downtown Thornwood

### *Mixed Use/Housing & Commercial Development*

- Planning for senior housing
- A better selection of retail/restaurants
- More places to go to and want to go to (Cafes, Trader Joes, curb appeal restaurants). Encourage more diverse businesses and business owners that attract pedestrian traffic.
- Create a TOD around the old Thornwood train station to encourage development (multi-use, residential, commercial, etc.)
- New family-oriented businesses at the Four Corners
- Themed restaurants
- Build a few small apartment buildings for singles/seniors
- Revitalization of existing buildings and storefronts
- New businesses that attract more family shopping/eateries
- Mixed use along Franklin Avenue and Commerce Street



- Health and wellness oriented retail and fitness studios
- Make Town more visually appealing and safe – very run down, eye sore – clean up the storefronts.
- Enforce the Town codes especially for the hundreds of signs placed throughout town
- Plan for Senior apartments similar to the Clinton Center in Pleasantville
- Outdoor dining along Commerce/Franklin

#### *Mobility*

- Desperately need sidewalks all the way down Commerce Street to the train station
- More pedestrian-friendly retail areas
- Sidewalks are critical to ensure safety of the community
- Sidewalks along Commerce
- Fix the Saw Mill Parkway entrance
- Fix the traffic pattern at the 4 corners so it is not congested and prevent cars from diverting thru the neighborhood streets.
- Enforce speed limits on Commerce/Franklin and in neighborhoods.
- Corridor of public transportation options
- Bike paths, walking paths, walkabout sidewalks
- Widen Franklin Avenue
- Better transportation options between core areas – shuttles
- Reopening of Thornwood train station. Could be hub of TOD
- Create more parking areas
- Walkway through Thornwood and Hawthorne

#### *Open Space/Public Space*

- Greenspace “state of the art” – flood proof, etc. for multi-use purposes – park use, festivals, sporting events
- Pubic Commons/Open Space for Gathering
- Provide and plan for open space – concentrate on planting and caring for native plants that provide for pollinator and wildlife in the area
- Senior Center on Franklin
- Anti-liter campaign
- Flood control



## Hawthorne

### **Strong Areas Summary**

#### *Broadway Fields*

Broadway Fields was noted as a strong area in downtown Hawthorne due to its green spaces, activities for kids, playground and snack stand. Many felt it was friendly, safe, well-maintained and well-lit, and a great community gathering place.

#### *Train Station*

The Hawthorne Train Station was also selected as a strong area in Hawthorne due to its free parking on the weekends, its easy access into NYC and the Hudson Valley region, its iconic clock and for being the destination for Mt. Pleasant Day and other Town community activities.

#### *Berger Hardware*

Berger Hardware was noted as a strong destination due to its convenience, its aesthetically pleasing building, and noted as a business that cares about the community. Many stated it was family friendly, locally owned, and well maintained.

#### *The Triangle*

Located at the intersection of Elwood Avenue and Broadway. Participants noted the Triangle to be a place that is aesthetically pleasing, well-maintained and pleasant to visit.

### **Challenge Areas Summary**

#### *North of Berger's Hardware*

Participants noted that the area north of Berger's Hardware is an eye sore with too much congestion and lack of connectivity. Other reasons for selecting the site were that it had parking problems, no sidewalks, poor lighting, unappealing exterior appearances of buildings, empty lots, unkempt and not pedestrian friendly.

#### *141 Corridor across from train station & Broadway heading north towards the baseball field*

Participants discussed the need in the area for improvements, including crosswalks, cleanliness, and safety at various intersections. Many remarked on how undeveloped and barren the area looked and how many buildings were underutilized.



## Opportunities for Downtown Hawthorne

### *Beautification/Design Regulations*

- Develop Architectural theme for new buildings
- Important to have a strong Architectural Review Board to preserve quaintness
- Unified storefront aesthetics/standards
- Uniformity of signs, awnings, and exterior structures
- Storefronts need to be updated and made more eye appealing
- Curbside appeal – regulated community standards
- Get rid of town corruption and selective enforcement
- Enforce building, zoning and health codes fairly to all
- Exterior appearance and new streetscape
- Improve streetscape in CBD
- Improve appearance of area around 141/Elwood stores – lack uniformity, area appears to be neglected
- Exteriors of businesses need to be updated
- Beautify the railroad line – sturdy fences with plantings so if you drive it looks like Town officials care and enables us to be proud of our Town
- Decorate the area seasonally
- Plating in the community – possible volunteer opportunities for people to participate in the community
- Mandate that businesses maintain, and where necessary refurbish, store fronts and street frontage – existing businesses can be “grandfathered” and be allowed time to conform

### *Mixed-Use Development*

- Facilitate mixed use residential retail development across from the train station
- From Triangle to Train Station on west side – raise and redevelop into retail/residential with parking
- New relevant and attractive retail stores in the CBD
- Revitalize area across from the train station
- Make better use of and redevelop real estate across from the train station
- Need new merchants that Hawthorne residents will use. Most new stores are service places. If you want Hawthornians to “shop in town” then give us some nice stores
- Good examples to follow – McCarthy and Gas Station near entrance to car wash
- Use eminent domain for area across the train station to develop mixed use building – retail on street level/rental apartments above

### *Mobility*

- Add/repair sidewalks on Elwood. Better access to commuter train. Pave Elwood.





- Sidewalks from Hawthorne to Thornwood
- Better lighting in this area
- Build sidewalks, more continuing sidewalks
- Sidewalks for safer access to all businesses
- Improve pedestrian experience and fill in commercial voids so that you don't need to drive from shop to shop
- Parking in area where Bell Piasi was – if empty lot is not used for parking then let's make it a gazebo for town events with plants, benches and use for monthly farmer's market
- Improve street and road conditions
- More attentiveness in maintaining roads/buildings, etc.
- More defined crosswalks across driveways and streets connecting business areas
- Light on 141 – 9A corridor
- New streetscape design that is pedestrian friendly and provides parking for commuters and residents
- Clean up traffic confusion at Veteran's Memorial, 141 Commerce Street/Elwood intersection
- Better parking for residents, not commuters
- Get State or Federal funding for sidewalks and better roads

#### *Community Space*

- Convert Bell Piasi area into park or community space
- Utilize triangle for Farmer's Market/Community Events
- Convert vacant land to retail nursery
- Plantings
- Restaurant-family friendly
- Close off Triangle for Sunday Farmer's Market
- More flowers like the 141 Triangle Area – flower boxes on Chelsea Bridge