

Town of Bedford
Planning Board Master Plan
Preliminary Report for Hamlet of Bedford Hills
October 28, 2020

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I. Introduction

The Master Plan Subcommittee for Bedford Hills has engaged in numerous sessions and zoom based meetings since receiving the charge to develop a concept for the future of the Hamlet of Bedford Hills. Every two weeks, the subcommittee has received briefings from key members of the community, as well as elected and appointed officials which are listed on our stakeholders reference sheet. While we could not hold in-person outreach efforts due to COVID-19, we have elicited many important opinions, an amazing history of the Hamlet, and have come to understand even more about our community. We have been gifted with a committee with diverse expertise and knowledge of the community. These members include;

Rosemary Lee, Chair; Gail Harrison, Amy Lowenthal, Patsy Morton, Rob Siegel, Lisa Spano and Sunilda Vasquez-Subcommittee Members and advisory members John Stockbridge, Ellen Cohen and Dominick Bueti.

We are extremely grateful to those guests who spent their time enlightening us, and providing essential feedback for our report to you. One of these conversations led to the creation of a directory and listing of businesses and commercial properties in Bedford Hills. Unfortunately, there is no Chamber or business organization at the present time and we felt that this is an important component of the future viability of Bedford Hills. Our thanks to the Town of Bedford intern Alexa Ruscitto who worked with our Chair to help create this listing. It is our intention to offer this roster as a networking opportunity for our Hamlet, and to continue to solicit input as to the future of the commercial sector of Bedford Hills.

The committee decided to focus on the entirety of Bedford Hills when developing our report, as our discussions encompassed issues and recommendations throughout the Hamlet. We view this connectedness as a vital element to ensure that throughout the Town of Bedford, we work in harmony for the future of each very different and important segment of our community, as working together with the Hamlet of Katonah, and the Village of Bedford can only complement the future growth and viability of Bedford Hills and our Town.

Challenges

In view of the restrictions engendered by the onset of an influenza pandemic, certainly a historic event, we do resolve that having residents and business owners input to our vision of the future will be vital going forward. This pandemic has and will bring about great change in the way we work, meet for business, commute, and live. Enjoying the outdoors has become one of the key issues for families in isolation and our town has seen a huge growth in finding and exploring opportunities for spaces for hiking, walking, enjoying restaurant meals and events. Therefore we have included a section on **Open Space and Parklands**.

In addition, certain data was difficult to locate, --demographics on housing and population, especially since the existing census is ten years old, would be helpful. Therefore we will discuss the areas that were an important focus within our range of opportunities. Among the key issues that consumed our time were;

- The pending sewer project which impacted Katonah and Bedford Hills and was already underway when we received our charge to develop a report. Early on, we identified a concern and a challenge due to the fact that while the installations of sewer connections in Bedford Hills were only beginning, applications were already underway for sewer capacity in Katonah which could possibly consume any excess capacity. Fortunately, the chair of the Katonah subcommittee and our chair were able to communicate and discuss this situation, and we agreed that action needed to take place to prevent all the excess capacity from being consumed before the connections took place. Kevin Winn and Ken Kohlbrenner, both involved in the installations joined our zoom meeting and provided a full briefing on the project. We were then able to issue an advisory memoranda to the Town of Bedford Planning Board with our recommendations. This resulted in an action pending on the Town Board to create a temporary moratorium on applications to the Planning Board, and recommendations to be developed in 90 days. Update: Bedford Hills will receive 40% of the excess capacity for sewers.
- The lack of any existing information on businesses in Bedford Hills, which was remedied by the research conducted to create the business listing. This will be used as a networking tool. Already subcommittee members have connected with business owners to obtain feedback. They uniformly expressed their appreciation for being included in the discussion on the concerns and recommendations for the future of Bedford Hills.
- The Historic nature of the Bedford Hills community, consisting of the establishment of the railroad in 1847, as well as the many historic homes throughout the hamlet. We are concerned about the fate of many structures that may not be protected under current practices, as well as the streetscape. One of our guides was Ellen Cohen, of the Bedford

Hills Historical Museum, in addition to the documents containing the history of Bedford Hills, such as the Walking Tour of the Historic Hamlet. John Stockbridge also provided background on our history, as well as information on Historic Districts. The committee is recommending a historic designation for the Hamlet of Bedford Hills including individual markers of historic structures.

- We also discussed the traffic and parking issues that have plagued the hamlet for some time. Pedestrian safety, large trucks and traffic through the hamlet center of Main Street, Adams Street, Babbitt Road, Bedford Center Road and other streets have created a highway with little opportunity to enjoy the downtown area due to noise, parking problems and the lack of patrons for our business district that rely on foot traffic. Abe Zambrano was extremely helpful to our understanding of the existing town parking lots, and the available parking in the hamlet.
- Chris Soi spent time with us discussing the Parks and Recreation programs and potential for a jitney and youth programs in the future

Our committee did due diligence in outreaching to many organizations and members of the community, as we consider them important stakeholders. Please see our enclosure, “Stakeholders and Speakers/Advisors”

II. History of Bedford Hills

Clearly, the history and development of the Hamlet of Bedford Hills is tied to the original settlement of the Town of Bedford in 1681. Within the Hamlet are a number of historic structures and locations, such as the Buxton Cemetery, established in 1788 for the family of local farmers and residents. Also the cemetery contains the graves of Revolutionary and Civil War soldiers. While Bedford Hills developed as land was sold, the original lands were traversed by native peoples such as the Munsee and Cantitoe nations. Several roads in Bedford Hills still bear a name associated with these people, such as Succabone Road, where the dirt pathways were used to travel for hunting, fishing and visiting small communities. We would like to understand more of this history, and see this incorporated into local history, including historic markers. Much of this history or pre-history is unwritten, therefore Bedford Hills in later development was devoted to farming and commerce, with some areas along Cherry Street the location of a sparse settlement. Traveling artisans went from farm to farm to provide services such as leather workers, tailors, masons, coopers, blacksmiths and weavers. Farmers raised crops and built stone walls. Immigrants arrived to help build the great waterworks and dams associated with the plentiful fresh water available in the region. Bedford Hills, originally known as Bedford Station, was a

transportation hub for the area, with goods sent to market by sloop or horse drawn wagons. In 1847, the NY and Harlem Railroad developed a station stop at Bedford Hills, which was renamed in 1910. This enabled local merchants to send dairy and other products to market faster and more efficiently. Here are some other interesting dates in our history;

- Bedford Farmers Club established in 1852
- NY Abolished Slavery in 1799
- Bedford Village was burned in 1779
- Bedford Hills fire in downtown 1929
- Bedford Station Fire Department 1903
- Society for Suppression of Horse Stealing 1818
- School in Cherry Street Community 1770
- Post Office in Bedford Station 1848
- Bedford Station changed to Bedford Hills 1910
- Bedford Hills school opens 1927
- Croton Dam and Aqueduct are built 1842

Adams Street and other local street names mark the merchants and stores that existed in Bedford Hills in the early years. The Town of Bedford also identified Historic Neighborhoods and Historic and Scenic Roads in the Hamlet. This list names the Downtown Business District among others. The Bedford Hills Historical Museum has created "Bedford Hills: A Walking Tour of the Historic Hamlet" which documents many historic homes and locations of historical interest. One of our sources was "A Brief History of Bedford Hills" by Jaap Ketting written prior to the Hamlet's Centennial in 2010.

Recommendations:

- Establish a Historic District and/or a Special Character District for Bedford Hills in view of the extensive detailed history associated with the central district, including the train station, historic buildings and architecture. While there are specific buildings throughout Bedford Hills named in the Town of Bedford's survey, the protection of a special design district, to enhance and preserve historic or cultural character in this area is a top priority to bring about careful planning in the future, as well as bring the public into the area for walking tours which will provide a cultural attraction for the hamlet.
- Install historic markers for public interest and a walking tour in the central downtown area. The Bedford Hills Historical Museum, which developed a wonderful walking tour of the area has a guide which can be used by visitors.

- Establish a location in central area of Bedford Hills within walking distance of the train station to house exhibits and engage the public in the history of the hamlet. Examine existing buildings that might be used for this purpose, the Community House, Scout House or other convenient location.
- Historic Cemeteries exist in Bedford Hills, such as Buxton Cemetery, established in 1788 and in the Bedford Hills Park. Continue to maintain these sites as part of the Hamlet's history and conduct periodic walking tours for the public to provide historical context.
- Architecture in the central district of the hamlet reflects a number of older structures alongside newer and larger buildings. The committee is proposing a plan to provide a transition within the zoning structure to protect and enhance the small town scale and appearance of the area, and has discussed preserving the character of the downtown within the current structure. Our goal is to have a thriving business sector which meets the needs of the community and residential opportunities to support the viability of the hamlet. This will be discussed in Existing Zoning and Potential Changes section.

III. Responsibilities of the Hamlet Subcommittee

The Town of Bedford has provided areas of responsibility for each hamlet subcommittee. Each of these subcommittees will identify the unique aspects of their hamlet and discuss how to preserve and enhance those characteristics while still meeting the broader needs of the Town regarding the following issues;

- Housing Needs
- Merchant and Customer Parking
- Commuter Parking
- Economic Development Issues
- Impact of Sewers and Possible Solutions
- Impact of Lack of Sewers and Possible Solutions
- Water Supply Issues in areas of BH not supplied by NYC
- The Changing Role of Public Transportation, both Rail and Bus in each Hamlet and its implications for future planning
- Existing Zoning and Potential Changes, Particularly in Areas Where Hamlet Vitality Might Be Increased By Allowing New Uses, or Limiting Others
- Any Other Issues the Committee May Identify as Important to Their Particular Hamlet
- **Open Space and Parkland***

The Committee for Bedford Hills will address these issues in the Preliminary Report Section. In addition to the above on open space and parkland.

IV. Outreach and Communication with Stakeholders and Speakers/Guides

The Bedford Hills Subcommittee for the Hamlet reached out to many speakers/guides and organizations which reflect the vitality and history of the Hamlet during our meetings. Universally, these individuals gave generously of their time and expertise. We consider them important stakeholders in the future of Bedford Hills and have included a listing below of these contacts. Together, we sought to inform ourselves about a variety of background, history and current information about Bedford Hills, and hold a dialogue with these representatives. Committee Members were responsible for contact with specific organizations allowing us to form detailed recommendations through discussions, inquiry or asking a representative to attend our meetings. In the absence of the possibility of any public meeting or forum, we gained a great deal from these connections and discussions in order to vet our findings and add to our recommendations. We note that several active forums for communicating with organizations and not for profits have discontinued, and the influenza has added to this isolation, causing some groups to cancel important events and suspend charitable works.

Town of Bedford Comprehensive Plan

Bedford Hills Subcommittee

Stakeholders and Speakers/Guides

Antioch Baptist Church..... P. Morton
Bedford Hills Library.....R. Lee.....T. Paladino
Bedford Hills Historical Museum.....R. Lee.....E. Cohen
Bedford Hills Fire Department..... L. Spano..... D. Bueti
Bedford Hills Hamlet Businesses.....R. Lee/Intern.....Business Listing
Town of Bedford Historian.....R. Lee.....J. Stockbridge
Bedford Hills ElementarySchool..... S.Vasquez.....Demographics
Bedford Hills Womens Prison.....S. Vasquez
Baseball/Youth Sports/Scouting..... in progress

Local Realtors.....P. Morton.....Ginnell

Town of Bedford Parks Dept. R. Lee.....C. Soi

Highway/Sewer Project.....R. Lee....K.Winn&K.Kohlbrener

Town Parking Agency.....R. Lee....A. Zambrano

Metro North..... R. Lee.....K.Kovill

Business Owners/Bedford Hills.....Gale Harrison

Women’s Club Bedford Hills..... R. Lee....Joanne Rosamond

Lions Club/Bedford Hills..... R. Lee.....George Rosamond

Garden Clubs/BH.....in progress

Traffic and Safety Committee.....R. Lee zoom meeting

Zoning Issues.....A. Lowenthal, L. Spano and R. Siegel

Planning Proposals..... R. Siegel

V.Preliminary Report and Recommendations to the Planning Board

The committee was guided by our earliest discussions around the question of “How Would You Envision Bedford Hills in the Future”. Each member shared their vision of the hamlet in the future, what would we see? How would it look? How do we access all the amenities that our hamlet has to offer in this new vision?

Here is a list of potential themes from which we worked to connect our recommendations:

- | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Sustainability | 11. Accessibility to All |
| 2. Self Sufficiency | 12. Education |
| 3. Walkable Community | 13. Community Gardens |
| 4. Housing | 14. Senior Living |
| 5. Parking | 15. Family Living |
| 6. Shopping | 16. Single Living |
| 7. Recreation and Parks | 17. Youth Activities |
| 8. Transportation | 18. Historic Preservation |
| 9. Bicycle Accessibility | 19. Public Arts Integration |
| 10. Safety | 20. Open Space |
| | 21. Local Government Involvement |

- 22..Community Services (free activities)
23. Visual Impact of Hamlet Center
- 24.Importance of Community Organizations
25. Connections and Neighborhoods

A. Housing Needs

Bedford Hills grew in the mid nineteenth century, providing services to the surrounding area, following the Civil War it expanded to become a transportation and commercial hub. During the early twentieth century the downtown contained a majority of businesses and some residential areas, which then extends from the business center to farms and estates to the eastward, and south and west. From the central hub, smaller lot residential areas move gradually into larger estates of four or more acres. This lends a great transition and diversity of housing to the hamlet and is reflected in the town zoning regulations.

According to data collected in 2016, Bedford Hills population is approximately 3,416 with 55% of families having children under 18. In addition, seniors are seeking more services and the housing market is in transition as seniors downsize and new families move to Bedford Hills. However, many senior residents decide to stay in their homes with assistance, or desire to move in with families. Also there are some representative condominium or apartment complexes in the hamlet, as well as rentals and affordable housing units. Bedford Hills contains the greatest diversity in housing in the Town of Bedford. All this is contained within a larger community consisting of the Town encompassing 39 square miles. The defining borders of the Hamlet of Bedford Hills consists of varied interpretations; the 10506, 10507 postal zone; the census tract; the school district boundaries, etc. For our purposes, we intend to use the postal zone as our geographic region.

Recommendations

- Provide methods to enable seniors to continue to live in Bedford Hills through aging and lifestyles such as allowing home renovations to include a companion or health care worker in the home or a family member
- Support additions/renovations to structures so that senior residents can be accommodated in separate space within one family homes
- Continue to support the Air B and B provision which will provide additional income to seniors who have limited income and wish to reside in the hamlet

- Identify opportunities for developing town homes and condominiums to allow downsizing and competitively priced options for residents to remain in the community

The committee found that our information on housing and demographics was limited and outdated, therefore we suggest a later revisit to this topic. Bedford Hills is fully built out and has a variety of offerings, in the downtown and business areas, with homes and residences fanning out from the central district. Housing is varied including apartment rentals, senior complexes, affordable housing units and multi-acre estate properties. We did not locate data that provides the square miles of land encompassing Bedford Hills, and other important demographics. We are in discussion with representatives of the local realty market to get their take on current changes and transitions, and will report on that in subsequent sessions.

B. Merchant and Customer Parking/Commuter Parking

The committee discussed extensively parking issues in the Main Street and downtown area district of the hamlet, and considered this a priority for creating a vital and thriving central hub. We established that the town provides 409 spaces within five parking lots for Bedford Hills. Typically these spaces are dedicated to commuters and merchants. There are also short-term parking spots in and around the train station as well as private parking spaces and lots owned by businesses and the local Bedford Hills library.

It would seem reasonable that the combination of all these spaces would lead to sufficient parking for residents, shoppers, and business owners, however the parking concern has continued to persist. Complaints and concerns have arisen over the years and currently about availability of parking spaces for short term stops, for spending time in the hamlet. Parking to increase the accommodation of residents, visitors and shoppers is extremely important for the hamlet to thrive.

In addition, we have research which was provided by MTA that shows in 2019 almost 700 passengers were traveling from Bedford Hills station with the majority southbound and return trips to the station. We assume that not all these travelers have a permitted parking spot. However in this year, ridership is down 95%, and the farthest parking lots do not really enhance the accessibility to shopping and activities as the typical majority of these commuters leave from the parking lots and do not cross over into the hamlet business area.

In addition, sewer capacity and expansions are predicated on availability of parking spaces for merchants.

Recommendations

- Develop a detailed map and study of all available parking in the Hamlet for accessibility to the public and planning purposes for future revisions
- Parking locations are preferred behind stores with sufficient accessible parking devoted to short term visitors and events at the train station which is a new hub for activities
- Parking at the newly renovated Community Center should be Identified as the current parking is limited
- Consideration should be given by the Planning Board to alter existing streets to create one way or other configurations to allow street parking to increase for short term visitors (i.e. Babbitt Road from Church Street to Adams Street)
- Continued monitoring of short-term parking spots should be performed by police patrols, preferably on bicycle patrols during good weather to discourage long term parking in these spaces. Bicycle patrols also enhance community connections and safety
- Parking should be configured to allow for events at the Bedford Hills station and to increase visibility of the existing storefronts
- While there is no current Bedford Hills Chamber of Commerce, one did exist in the past and was successful with planning and coordination to improve attendance at events and bring customers to the shops. This committee has developed a business listing for Bedford Hills which should be utilized as a networking tool for feedback and to encourage public awareness of the more than 100 businesses and commercial establishments that make their home in Bedford Hills. The committee has begun these outreach sessions to obtain feedback for our report
- Review and develop the proposal to add additional parking for Bedford Hills in the future or enhancements to the hamlet from Railroad Avenue. Consider lowering the requirements for parking to support business development
- Improve the appearance of downtown hamlet by providing additional street tree plantings, flower baskets, and artwork to draw more visitors. Continued beautification of the station and buildings as well as entry signage
- delineating the hamlet from Rt. 117, improving the gateway to the hamlet to become more visible and providing continuity

- Safety considerations should be in place for pedestrians to navigate the downtown area and accommodate the needs of seniors, those with challenges and bikers
- Allocate sufficient parking spaces for seniors and those with mobility challenges, as well as event based parking
- Adopt the bike rack proposal, here submitted to alleviate need for parking spaces

C. Economic Development Issues

The committee has intensively focused our discussions on maintaining and enhancing the Bedford Hills hamlet to increase vitality and create a thriving commercial district which serves residents locally and throughout the region. In addition, local jobs are a key factor in the success of the community. Without these services, revenues and our tax base will decline. We are now in the midst of a pandemic which has severely impacted many of these establishments, and face the additional challenge of a struggling economy. Businesses and the workplace are changing rapidly, with work from home, zoom meetings, re-envisioning food establishments and restaurants and an apparent boom in real estate purchases and renovations to the homes and businesses.

Bedford Hills is on the verge of installing sewers in the downtown area, which could serve to improve and enhance the viability of our commercial district, and provide necessary services to some residential sections. However, as we learned during our working sessions, this change may also bring about potentially negative results. These factors must be monitored closely and studied so that the town can provide support and structure to our economy.

In that regard, we have provided recommendations to the town on the economic impacts and potential for the sewer projects, Phase I. The Town is conducting a study based on recommendations from the Bedford Hills and Katonah hamlet subcommittees within a 90 day moratorium.

Additional Recommendations:

- Study impact of future changes in working requirements such as work at home; technology based businesses, and the suite of stores and offices within the hamlet of Bedford Hills to increase opportunities and provide incentives for “brick and mortar” stores that serve the public. In particular, our committee recommends that preference be offered to shops that will meet the needs of the hamlet including café restaurants, and increasing the rentals in the commercial district to provide residences on upper floors of the storefronts which will increase foot traffic in the hamlet and contribute to the viability of the downtown
- Allow more spaces and furnishings to the infrastructure for outdoor seating and services
- Increase the number of public events offered at the train station and surrounding space to allow for concerts, art exhibits, historic tours and presentations
- Create Market Stalls in parking lot for commuters to provide local businesses with an opportunity to serve customers that routinely drive off after exiting the train. Include dry cleaning pick up, flowers, take away foods, produce and other quick stop opportunities
- Develop a bicycle pathway in Bedford Hills connecting the two hamlets and the Village of Bedford to increase recreational opportunities and bring more people to the Bedford Hills central district without adding vehicles and necessary parking
- Establish a jitney bus which can provide transportation to events at the Bedford Hills park, such as the recently launched Food Truck Friday. A number of residents in the area of Babbitt Road are walking long distances to get to town or the park, and there is no sidewalk most of the way, and additional safety hazards. This would be an opportunity to create inclusion for families with children and seniors to participate on greater levels in events. This has been discussed with the Parks and Recreation Department during one of our meetings
- Expand Community Center programs for youth activities and not for profit programs

D. Impact of Sewers and Lack of Sewers

An important responsibility of the committee was to examine the impacts of the new sewer installations which are currently in progress, with connections planned for 2021. Early on, we received briefings from our town and consultant representatives on the details of the project. Simultaneously, applications were coming before the Planning board for new uses and renovations, which included increased demand for sewer capacity. Our committee, along with the Katonah committee, raised issues of concern involving rapid utilization of the excess capacity, and balancing the needs of the two hamlets for the services of the system. We wanted options open for new growth and uses in Bedford Hills, and both committees were concerned that there was no plan for sharing the resources equitably. After much discussion, our committee submitted recommendations, which are on record with the Planning Board, and a temporary moratorium has been declared for 90 days while the issue is studied and new regulations can be developed. We expect to be involved in those discussions.

Water and sewer capacity are a vital service to allow Bedford Hills to have more options in terms of the types of commercial and residential opportunities in the hamlet. We have recommended that regulations for development favor more residents in the downtown area, including stores on first floors and apartment rentals on upper stories. Uniformly, the committee wishes to see more improvements and regulations which will permit the downtown to become a vital and prospering destination.

Recommendations:

- Continued involvement and discussion which will include the business community to identify inhibiting factors which result in the downtown area having low patronage to stores which need accommodations to foster commerce
- Preference for specific businesses that bring more residents into the downtown area, such as café, resident rentals and transportation which are highlighted in our draft zoning concept proposals.
- Data which will clarify water and sewer use for existing and proposed businesses, that can be verified in order to determine and guide capacity
- Protection of historic buildings and streetscapes which may be impacted as a result of sewer connections, therefore allowing for expansion and resulting renovations, possibly demolition of structures, including abandonment of septic systems

- Provide group pricing for the owner portion of the sewer connections using a list of qualified contractors to achieve competitive pricing for residents and business owners

E. Changing Role of Public Transportation, Rail and Bus

Bedford Hills is served by rail through Metro North, as mentioned, approximately 700 commuters per day traveled north and south from the Bedford Hills station during weekdays prior to the influenza crisis. Should this large number of commuters be restored in the future, the opportunity arises to take advantage of their presence by providing access to services in Bedford Hills. Current parking accommodations seem adequate for commuter usage, however short term parking seems limited and streets are highly congested in the downtown commercial district. Traffic and large trucks are a daily presence moving through the relatively narrow quarters of Adams, Main, Babbitt, Bedford Center Road and side streets. Bus schedules run by the County are limited and do not have a schedule that services frequent travelers. Private parking lots also accommodate commuters and customers.

Recommendations:

- Examine the potential for reconfiguration of parking and allowing more short-term spaces for visitors and improved parking for events
- Develop planning approaches to incorporate the changing nature of work at home vs. commuting. Identify new uses for available parking should the volume decrease
- Study the downtown area traffic and noise issues, reduce the numbers of large trucks and traffic by diverting to Rt. 117. This issue has come up in all previous studies and planning and has been requested by community members repeatedly, therefore it is an imminent priority to eliminate the “dead zone” that results with a highway through a very tightly configured space. Revise traffic law if needed and conduct enforcement
- Traffic safety and pedestrian accommodations should be examined to improve the current situation, where pedestrians and those with limitations can safely cross streets and high speed traffic is controlled. We recommend an additional review of the Complete Streets approach for all relevant committees and the Planning and Zoning Boards to begin to implement these strategies of traffic calming and safety, which may result in increased visits to downtown, combined with events and activities

- Several community not for profit groups have concerns about parking for events, and are finding limitations on their activities- identify or designate event parking
- Regarding bus schedules, we have connected with the Women's Prison and they have a concern about portion of Harris Road where families and children who visit the prison have to walk, unlighted, no sidewalks and limited bus schedules. Recommend inquiry to County regarding schedules to train, and looking at the local taxi situation
- Babbitt Road area contains many families, a senior complex and has a higher density. Walking or biking along Bedford Center Road to visit park at Bedford Hills, or attend town activities is a safety hazard, develop bike paths and offer a small bus run to activities for accommodation. Discussion with Parks Department has been initiated to determine if a pilot program would work. Also concern has been noted on the approach to the overpass over the Saw Mill Parkway as having safety concerns, and residents will not risk the access to the park due to safety concerns
- The committee has discussed the potential benefit of altering streets to improve traffic, parking and speed, perhaps creating one-way access in a few locations of the downtown. This requires a more comprehensive study including traffic patterns, safety and parking

F. Existing Zoning and Potential Changes

The committee has discussed and is presenting several unique approaches to zoning regulations in the hamlet of Bedford Hills, downtown area. These consist of;

1. A proposed zoning consideration which will specify and support the need for businesses and apartment rentals which better serve the residents and public in the mixed use of downtown Bedford Hills. The ordinance will require study and adoption to attract cafes, restaurants, and services which are valued by the community
2. A proposed incentive area covering the downtown historic area and adjacent streets. The goal is to create an identifiable and viable hamlet center and provide commercial uses on lower floors at street level and residential use on upper floors with ample parking in the rear of buildings and concealed. Bedford Hills has a confusing layout of signage and roads which are not compatible with pedestrian usage. In addition, the

heavy truck and thru acts as a highway with accompanying noise pollution, safety hazards and speeding. The incentives could also offer economic considerations for sustainable development such as Green Roofs, solar installations, energy saving features. Primarily the architecture of the downtown has had rapid loss of buildings and new construction which is not in harmony with small scale architecture.

G. Open Space and Parks

Bedford Hills has an amazing variety of open space and parks, most recently the Buxton Gorge Preserve consisting of 56 acres has been acquired by the town along with the many public hiking trails and a town park in Bedford Hills.

Recommendations

- Create a local map with hiking trails and provide to the public
- Create pocket parks in the densely populated area of Bedford Hills
- Establish and support community gardens throughout the hamlet
- Develop and institute pesticide regulations to support pollinators and reduce or eliminate water contamination
- Continue to maintain dirt roads as our residents have discovered the joy of walking on beautiful paths and dirt roads throughout town
- Support open space acquisition
- Establish and promote bike paths connecting to Bedford Hills and throughout the town. Bedford Center Road could connect to Rt. 22 and Bedford Hills and Katonah. Safe bike trails would benefit families and individuals who enjoy this travel and recreation and also reduce automobile congestion in Bedford Hills. To accompany and support the bike paths, a network of bike racks should be installed. (see proposal)
- Road closure for community and neighborhood gatherings and events; opportunities to enjoy the streets for shopping and to walk on our beautiful roads where all will be safe from high volume or speeding vehicles
- Restore and replace trees and install more street trees in Bedford Hills and along Babbitt Road and other community streets that are lacking street trees and plantings

VI. Connecting to the Master Plan of 2003 and Community Forums

Our committee has explored multiple previous reports and Master Plans for the town of Bedford. Many excellent ideas and suggestions have been cited in these documents, including the most recent community feedback sessions conducted by Pace University. Together, they present a collective offering of ideas for the improvement and development of our town. Our

preliminary report can only be added to the community vision which has already been presented.

Recommendations

- We recommend that all suggestions and proposals be **prioritized** in review with the input of the hamlet's subcommittees and relevant subcommittees and an **Action Plan** for the town with proposed implementation dates and timelines be developed. One of those priorities on the list for many years has been the sewer project, which our representatives on the town board and departments have worked very hard to implement, with success this year for Phase I and Phase 2 covering Katonah and Bedford Hills. This was a major accomplishment and the associated funding was critical in achieving this goal.
- We would be interested in a process which involves all stakeholders and residents in the hamlet of Bedford Hills along with our town representatives developing such a plan to move forward while understanding that there are current and future constraints on some of these proposals, and others that can be implemented using town resources.

VIII. Envisioning the Future of Bedford Hills

Early in the process, the committee decided to identify the individual vision we each had for the future of Bedford Hills. This exercise enabled us to focus on the future and what we see as a thriving hamlet. Here is an abbreviated version of our future vision:

We would like to spend some time in downtown Bedford Hills, to get there, we walk, bike, or take a jitney bus. Attractions include several shops where we can sit and enjoy the setting and a café for brief coffee or tea. Sitting outside is a pleasure because there is little traffic noise and major traffic has been diverted from the community gathering places. Traffic is diverted to Rt 117 when special events are scheduled. Today, there is an event at the Railroad station building, which is outdoors. Also a recently completed art project is on display in the plaza, as well as an artist exhibit and outdoor painting class. The Bedford Hills Historical Museum is located right in the center of town, and has a walking tour planned of historic houses later today. A local bookstore is a gathering place for book clubs, connected to the Bedford Hills library, and is also having authors speaking about their work this weekend. Throughout the area, street trees have been planted which help provide cool temperatures and shade on the sidewalks. Tables and

chairs are located outdoors with benches for the public to gather and relax.

Later in the evening, a concert is scheduled at the Community House, or train station either indoors or outdoors. During fall seasons, and Harvest time, a farmer's market provides fresh produce, and local shops have market stalls selling flowers, coffee, pastries and gifts.

Tours are also scheduled of the historic cemeteries in Bedford Hills, by the Cemetery Committee and Friends of Bedford Burying Grounds.

Many neighbors live in the area within walking distance, and enjoy coming out for a stroll, even into the evening, when beautiful lighting, plantings and trees draw in residents who are needing some fresh air and sunshine. This setting also enhances community building, as there are a variety of community groups and neighborhood organizations which are supported in the area. Police presence is close to the community using bicycle patrols on a regular basis.

Also this week, a hiking tour is being guided to the nearby Buxton Gorge Preserve, under the auspices of learning about trails and nature. A jitney bus ensures that individuals with no auto transportation such as seniors and families are able to participate in these programs, as well as at the Bedford Hills Park, and many cars are left behind with other options available, and off street parking allowing pedestrians to roam. Many of the daily commuters and those who work or live nearby come to enjoy the hamlet, as well as residents from nearby towns who wish to enjoy the events. The area has the distinct feel and attraction of small town centers which draw you in and provide architectural and cultural interest.

Recommendations

In order to promote and advance this vision and others that have been expressed, the committee offers the following recommendations to create and sustain hamlet vitality, connectedness and inclusion;

- Remove heavy traffic from the downtown area by diverting to Rt. 117 and closing streets for events
- Create outdoor lighting and seating in the railroad

- Install additional street trees
- Welcome businesses serving walkers and offering housing for residents in the downtown
- Locate a facility to install the Bedford Hills Historical Museum collections where public can access programs. Look at existing buildings such as Community House, storefronts, Scout House etc.
- Create bicycle paths and install bicycle racks throughout town
- Promote and protect the historic homes and establish a historic district in downtown hamlet
- Create an ongoing schedule of community events such as music, art installations, performances, speakers, markets, historic tours at the central railroad plaza with community assistance
- Utilize the roster of businesses and commercial properties in Bedford Hills developed by the committee to reach out to this sector for input and support
- Investigate programs such as Complete Streets to envision the future design of Bedford Hills downtown hamlet
- Encourage and support community gardens to provide food and gathering places. See Chappaqua, Hastings and other communities as examples
- Alter traffic patterns to facilitate or reduce heavy traffic and utilize future parking as off street. Determine what needs for parking will exist in future should commuter traffic decrease dramatically
- Develop Youth and Teen programs at the Community Center, also extending within the community to allow full access
- Consider planning for seniors who wish to downsize and may be attracted to the area for cultural resources, health care needs and opportunity for attractive housing and transportation
- Beautify the “gateway” to the Town with signage, plantings, etc including the overpasses on 117 and islands near Cherry Street and the Town House

- Clean up Railroad Avenue, currently the site of numerous businesses and affordable housing, high truck traffic and disposal operations appear to be causing litter and debris problems

Respectfully Submitted,

Master Plan Subcommittee for Bedford Hills

By the Chair, Rosemary Lee for the Subcommittee

Gale Harrison, Amy Lowenthal, Patsy Morton, Robert Siegel, Lisa Spano,
Sunilda Vasquez

October 28, 2020

DRAFT