



# *ENVISION BREWSTER*

## **Village of Brewster Opportunity Area Implementation Plan**

### ***Executive Summary***

*The Village of Brewster and the City of Peekskill were designated Opportunity Areas by the Hudson Valley Regional Economic Development Council in late July 2013. This implementation plan outlines the resources and anticipated objectives necessary to make the Village of Brewster economically viable and vibrant again. Peekskill, Putnam County, Putnam County Economic Development Corp., Coalition for a Better Brewster, Brewster Central School District, Pattern for Progress, Covington Properties and a broad spectrum of stakeholders in the community are all contributing to the rejuvenation efforts of our Village. Revitalization of the Village is expected to stimulate the economies of; the Town of Southeast, Putnam County, and the Hudson Valley region providing job opportunities, reinforcing families, highlighting recreational activities, energizing businesses and benefitting New York State's economic and social well-being.*

*Revisions to the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code are intended to provide direction to the Urban Renewal Plan. Development of the Comprehensive Plan will include market research, demographics, and a wide variety of stakeholder participation. The Comprehensive Plan Committee that was formed on August 8, 2013 will evaluate the findings. The Committee will then suggest revisions to the Plan for consideration by the public and the Board of Trustees. During the Comprehensive Plan process the Zoning Code will be reviewed and suggested changes made that are in concert with the direction of the Comprehensive Plan. Once the Zoning Code revisions are considered by the public and their comments are provided, the Board of Trustees will consider the changes for adoption. This parallel process is intended to reduce the linear effort and shorten the time for positive results. After adoption of the revised Zoning Code work can begin on the Urban Renewal Plan.*

*The Urban Renewal Plan will be based on the newly revised Comprehensive Plan & Zoning code and is expected to focus on the Main Street Corridor emphasizing sustainability and invigorating economic viability. In addition to the Main Street Corridor the abandoned Garden Street School reuses will be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan allowing for design of an integrated and cohesive community. The anticipated objectives of the Urban Renewal Plan are:*

- To eliminate substandard conditions within the Project Area;*
- To redevelop deteriorating and underutilized properties with residential and commercial uses designed to benefit local area residents;*
- To create new housing opportunities within the Village;*
- To provide support for retail and service establishments in the downtown through the development of new mixed-use buildings;*
- To promote Transit Oriented Development (TOD) surrounding the NY Metro North Commuter Rail Station;*
- To enhance the aesthetics and overall image of the Main Street Corridor;*
- To generate a positive trend in real estate values;*
- To improve public safety; and*
- To help generate economic activity.*

*The Urban Renewal Plan will be developed using market analysis and demographics from the Brewster-Peekskill Feasibility Study, and the newly revised Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code. These guiding documents along with other recent studies conducted by the Village will help focus the area uses to desired outcomes.*

## **Needs Statement:**

The Village of Brewster poverty rate, unemployment rate, home ownership percent and median household income all fall significantly below Putnam County when compared:

1. The local poverty rate within the Village of Brewster is 17.9% v. 8.2% for Putnam County.
2. Unemployment in the Village is estimated at 10.4% v. 7.0% in Putnam County.
3. Home ownership in the Village is 22.5%. Greater than 70.0% is desired for a healthy community.
4. The median household income level in the Village is \$52,188 v. \$82,121 for Putnam County.

In order to address these issues we are working with Westchester Putnam Workforce Partnership and Westchester Community College to provide job and career training for the chronically unemployed and underemployed while envisioning a renewed Main Street Corridor. The revitalization of Main Street is intended to renovate or replace deteriorated, neglected, vacant and substandard properties with sustainable and vibrant construction. New residential, commercial and mixed use developments are expected to encourage home ownership, provide local jobs and careers, and improve the business climate through creative approaches to municipal revitalization, ultimately improving the quality of life and opportunity for local residents and families.

## **Background and Project Goals:**

Working with Putnam County, Putnam County Economic Development Corp., Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress, Brewster Central School District, Covington Development and key community stakeholders, the Village of Brewster embarked on a new community revitalization effort known as “Envision Brewster” in late June 2013. This effort comes as a result of the changing economic conditions and demographics along with the strong community desire to develop the Village in a sustainable manner. The Village also witnessed the closure of the neighborhood elementary school (Garden Street School) and is actively working with the Brewster Central School District to market the property, restore the property to the tax roll and investigate appropriate reuses for the building and land.

Over the past 3 years the Village commissioned and received a series of professional reports, planning efforts, marketing strategies and studies associated with the varied redevelopment efforts for Brewster. Since the Village has undergone numerous changes and has proactively commissioned various planning efforts, the Village is taking further action and has initiated the process of updating the Comprehensive Plan to be followed by synergistic changes to the local Zoning Ordinances.

Additionally, the Village is working toward the creation of an Urban Renewal Agency and Plan. The Village has established a strong partnership with Putnam County and has recently executed a formal Memorandum of Understanding for services through the County Planning Department to assist with these initiatives.

Furthermore, the Village executed a Memorandum of Understanding with Covington Development, LLC. The agreement describes specific steps to develop a conceptual planning and program analysis, revise the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code, create a generic environmental impact statement, designate an urban renewal project area and create an Urban Renewal Agency & Plan for community rejuvenation. To that end, the Village created a Community Revitalization Task Force known as “Envision Brewster” and established the following goals:

- to capitalize on our existing infrastructure which includes newly modernized water system wells, water tank, and mains; and newly constructed sewer plant and mains; both with ample capacity for expansion;
- to create economic value for the entire Village and greater Brewster area, focusing on the existing downtown core and redeveloping substandard sites and buildings;
- to create jobs and career opportunities for Village and area residents;

- to provide net positive tax revenue to the Village, Town, County and the School district;
- to provide a vibrant downtown and create a diversity of uses (live, work, shop, learn, and play);
- to restore and subsequently maintain the Village as a preeminent regional destination;
- to promote a sense of safety and security using our Village Police, resident Firehouse, and secondary water supply for fire-fighting emergencies when power to the main supply is unavailable;
- to establish and fund a full time, professional staff to plan and implement community development strategies, programs and projects;
- to capitalize on the existing transportation infrastructure and create new multi-modal transportation networks;
- to provide a mixed-use downtown setting to include residential, commercial, retail, hospitality, parks, open space, cultural, civic and other uses;
- to create and enhance Village gateways;
- to improve streetscapes and create a pedestrian friendly “walkable” environment;
- to achieve the adaptive reuse of vacant buildings where appropriate, or to rebuild for that purpose; and
- to create sustainable development by implementing smart growth and green building design elements in an economically viable plan.

The Envision Brewster Task Force consists of members from Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress, Brewster Central School District, Putnam County, Putnam County Economic Development Council, Covington Development, the Village Board of Trustees, and other members of the community. The task force meets in public at properly noticed Board of Trustee work sessions.

**Mission:**

Our mission is to create a strong vibrant and inviting community that reflects its diversity, history and culture. By encouraging strong relationships among residents, the Village government, businesses, educators, non-profits, and our faith based organizations; the community will foster a balanced approach to renewed pride, image, appearance and values. We believe by establishing long term private and public partnerships; the Village of Brewster will accomplish the goals and vision for a better place to live, work, play and nurture families.

**Redevelopment Planning Objectives:**

The Village is focusing and directing the efforts of Envision Brewster toward the following strategic areas over the next three to five years:

**Objective #1 - Create a Stronger Local Economy:**

Improve employment opportunities, economic stability and productivity. Strengthen and encourage retail and other commercial activities through the use of local, state and federal resources and incentives.

**Objective #2 - Build on Past Success:**

Foster the development of a sense of community and improve the visual image and cultural/recreational activities by reinforcing existing assets such as; the Metro North Commuter Rail Station, Southeast Museum, Brewster Library, Historic Walter Brewster House, Historic Old Town Hall with its 250 seat theater, as well as recreational trails such as the Inter-county Bike & Hike Trail, Passive Recreation Trout Stream Trail, Morningthorpe Bridge Pedestrian Walkway, and the Diverting Reservoir Trail.

**Objective #3 - Invest in Public Infrastructure:**

Achieve a coordinated pattern of commercial, industrial and public land uses with sustainable public improvements including streets, sidewalks, bridges, utilities and historic buildings.

**Objective #4 - Use Land Strategically and Wisely:**

Encourage commercial and retail development along Main Street and ensure a variety of sustainable land uses that will physically and economically complement revitalization and new development opportunities.

**Objective #5 - Provide an Array of Housing Options:**

Preserve, improve and construct housing to meet the needs of the community and increase home ownership.

**Objective #6 - Cleanliness, Value and Respect:**

Stimulate and provide new private investment opportunities by revitalizing property characterized by deterioration, blight and/or functional obsolescence. Fairly, consistently and objectively enforce local building codes and zoning ordinances.

**Proposed Implementation Plan:**

**Summary:**

The Village has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with a developer for the redevelopment of the Main Street Corridor predicated on completing updates to the Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Code, GEIS, and eventual Urban Renewal Plan. Conceptual planning and program analysis including a more detailed market and demographic analysis is expected to commence in early 2014. Comprehensive Plan updates will begin in the third quarter (3Q) of 2013 in parallel with and followed by Zoning Code updates, the GEIS and culminating with an Urban Renewal Plan that addresses the alleviation of chronic unemployment and underemployment while stimulating the local and regional economy.

**Project Description Preliminary, Estimated Costs, Objective Achieved**

**Economic Development Program:**

The Village will work in concert with the City of Peekskill and Westchester Community College to conduct a feasibility study and help develop targeted job training with emphasis on market research designed to focus results on putting people back to work in the local community. The market analysis will target and study technology clusters and mature industries. It will determine which businesses are an appropriate fit for the forecast uses and for the Peekskill/Brewster residents who will be trained for these industries. Multiple charettes at varying times and dates will be held to obtain a wide variety of stakeholder input. This joint study is expected to cost \$200,000.

Timeframe: January 2014 to October 2014

**Project Description Preliminary Estimated Costs Objective Achieved**

**Comprehensive Plan Updates:**

Provide a blueprint for development of the Main Street Corridor, the abandoned Garden Street School, a municipal parking garage, a passive Riverwalk park, and transit oriented development for the surrounding community. The desired outcome is sustainable development that will strengthen local businesses, increase home ownership, energize the regional economy and provide jobs for the chronically unemployed and underemployed.

\$60,000

Timeframe: October 2013 to October 2014

**Project Description Preliminary Estimated Costs Objective Achieved**

**Zoning Update:**

Provide supporting zoning code for the Comprehensive Plan updates. This process is forecast to be conducted partly in parallel with the Comprehensive Plan updates to compress the redevelopment schedule.

\$100,000

Timeframe: February 2014 to November 2014

**Project Description Preliminary Estimated Costs Objective Achieved**

**GEIS:**

Prepare a Generic Environmental Impact Statement for preferred land use. The GEIS is expected to abbreviate the time for development approvals and speed the process of redevelopment to achieve the Comprehensive Plan intentions.

\$50,000

Timeframe: February 2014 to November 2014

**Project Description Preliminary Estimated Costs Objective Achieved**

**Urban Renewal Plan:**

Formation of an Urban Renewal Agency and Plan delineating depressed areas for revitalization in concert with the newly revised Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code. This plan is expected to focus on the Main Street Corridor, leveraging our Metro North Commuter Rail station, providing opportunities for residential, commercial and mixed use outcomes for this pedestrian friendly, transit oriented Village.

\$75,000

Timeframe: December 2014 to April 2015