NEW PALTZ DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION - *Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Council*

Municipality Name: Village of New Paltz and Town of New Paltz (Ulster County)

Downtown Name: ***Heart of New Paltz: Smart Growth, Design, & Connectivity Project***

Downtown Description: New Paltz is ideally positioned to benefit from the NYS Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) and leverage recent and anticipated investments. In the words of Rich Gottlieb, owner of Rock & Snow on Main Street: "*(This) would enable New Paltz to reach its giant potential ....Not only are we one of the most exciting outdoor activity destinations in the State of New York (the 46-year-old outdoor shop that I run continues to grow) but we have great schools, a superb university, a priceless historic district, wonderful farms and orchards, a friendly, diverse, population, and close proximity to the greatest city in the world. . ..Investing in the revitalization of downtown New Paltz would not be a gamble but it would deliver what has been severely needed for decades and allow our downtown to properly compliment the greatness that surrounds it.*"

The Heart of New Paltz initiative builds upon the physical connections and partnerships between SUNY New Paltz, Town and Village governments, and downtown entrepreneurs to forge a stronger sense of place. New Paltz's image is formed by Main Street and its role as Shawangunks' gateway to Mohonk Preserve and Minnewaska State Park enjoyed over four seasons. We are a key node within scenic byways that distribute hundreds of thousands of visitors per year to the Gunks and Catskills. Tourism and recreation, arts, higher education, technology, and agriculture are showcased here and our local economy is transforming and growing across all sectors.



Figure 1: Students in Our Heart - at Main/ Plattekill Intersection

This project will catalyze new buildings, civic spaces, and streetscapes at and around an anchor project located between Main Street and the College, while strategically investing in New Paltz's downtown core, capitalizing on innovation associated with SUNY New Paltz and tech firms seeking downtown amenities, and adding to regional tourism destinations. It will encourage pedestrian activity, enhance the Main Street east-west corridor, and the Plattekill Avenue connection to campus, and foster local capacity to steward smart growth opportunities.

Particularly exciting is an emerging, multifaceted development proposal by The Lalo Group, Inc., a general contractor/ developer based in the Village, and owner of 2.4 undeveloped acres at the anchor site. Luis Martinez, Lalo's President, notes: *"I've long recognized latent opportunities for New Paltz to awaken to its full potential. My partners and I purchased the largest vacant site in downtown New Paltz, we have invested in creating a vision for a signature downtown development and we are collaborating with the community to continue to refine our hotel and condominium plans and design a project that can also incorporate a municipal center for Town and Village governments, a much needed local food store and space for growing technology-based firms. We are committed to working with the community and Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Council to marshal our significant financial resources to create a new landmark signifying all that is possible in this great town -- my hometown."*

By addressing needs including a downtown fresh food store, a new joint municipal building, and a transit center, while cultivating businesses compatible with the economic base and academic specialties of SUNY New Paltz, including establishing a downtown hotel and conference center, bolstering creative sectors, and creating a diverse housing supply and providing for sustainability, the needs of New Paltz and the College community will be served. Regional agricultural and recreational markets will also be strengthened. New Paltz will become a Mid-Hudson Region prototype for how to plan for and achieve smart, sustainable and resilient growth while maintaining the sense of place of the Heart of New Paltz.

1) **Boundaries of the Downtown Neighborhood -** Boundaries of the anchor site and targeted neighborhood are shown below. The focus is on a compact, highly developable anchor location encompassing five parcels, three of them owned by the Village or Town, and all within the core business zone. The anchor/catalyst site covers four public streets and 7 acres. The broader core downtown district encompasses a compact 120 acres, extending from the Campus and Main Street. This core neighborhood includes numerous downtown commercial and cultural destinations and attractive residential areas; it connects to the College with a total undergraduate and graduate enrollment of 7,700 students, plus nearly 1,600 full- and part-time employees.

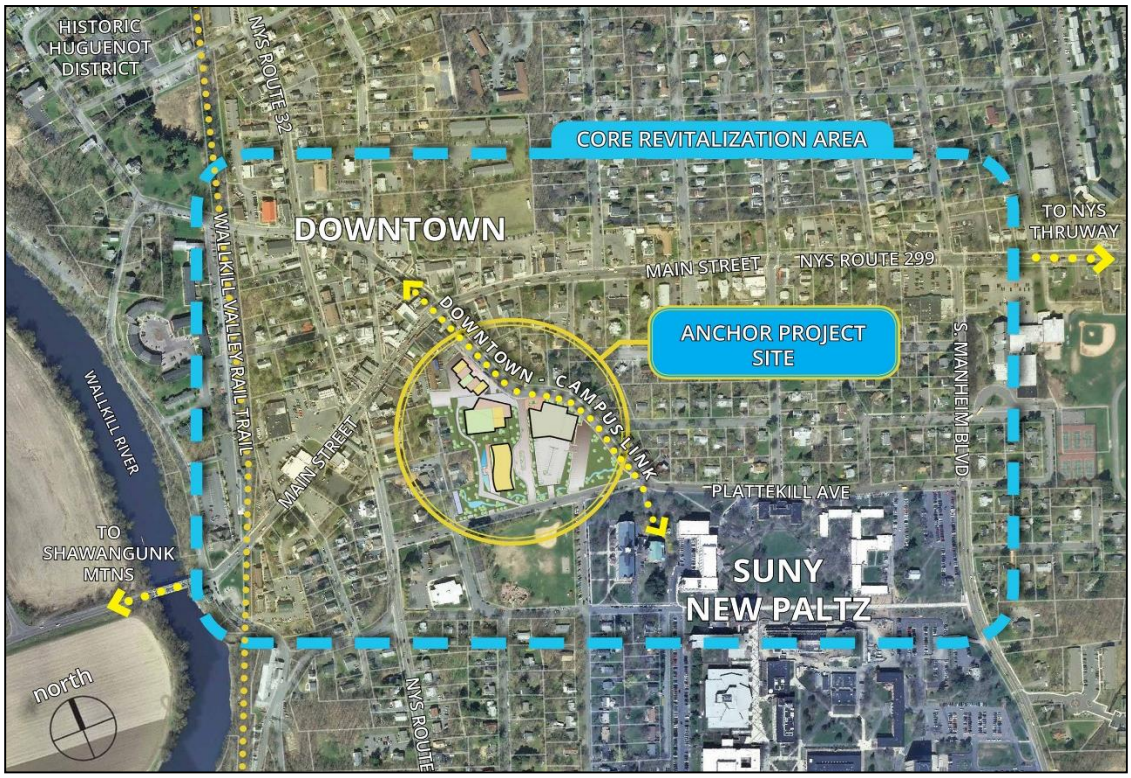


Figure 2 – Anchor Site shown in the center of the Downtown Neighborhood Revitalization Area.

2) **Size -** New Paltz and its downtown are an 'eco-village' framed by floodplain and preserved open space that limits sprawl. It is compact with a population of roughly 10,000 within walking distance to the core. Downtown serves as civic center of the town (34 square miles – 14,000 population). A five-mile radius primary trade area includes 26,000 residents in the Town of New Paltz and adjacent towns. Yet, much of this primary business activity originates within the 1.8 square mile Village and immediately adjacent parts of the Town which comprise the heart.

   New Paltz has a four-season economy that balances tourism peaks with the academic calendar which

includes summer sessions. Southern Ulster County is the fastest growing part of the county and the Village has supported growth with a diverse housing supply (and population), and recently established a large new mixed use zoning district. The Village has a large supply of rental housing stock balanced with single-family homes. The College continues to plan for housing as well. In 2015, the newly-constructed Ridgeview Hall was opened, providing 225 beds. Establishing job and housing growth at the anchor will strengthen downtown's base. In 2015, the Village enacted an affordable housing ordinance designed to increase the supply of affordable housing as new units are constructed.

With an exit on the Thruway and a role as the gateway to the Shawangunks and central Catskills, there are robust secondary and tertiary markets. An important tertiary trade area extends south and encompasses the New York metropolitan region—a market that is increasingly drawn to our regional attractions and world-renowned outdoor recreation.

3) **Past Investments and Future Investment Potential -** New Paltz's walkable downtown is iconic. Public and private investments are diversifying our economy, including: a new Hampton Inn; a net-zero apartment building with 45 units (including affordable units); and Wildberry Lodge, an entertainment complex supported by a 2015 NYSESD CFA. Besides substantial private investment interest, such as by Lalo Group, the Village offers a revolving loan fund, $550,000 capitalization, to stimulate job creation and rehabilitate commercial spaces. Moreover, the Village has, per Moody's May 2016 Annual Comment, a high-quality credit position (Aa3 rating) with a "full value" of $299 million. We believe the following factors will underpin DRI efforts to further support our community:

- **Commercial Infill**: Renowned outfitter Rock & Snow opened a new annex on Main Street and the regional retail destination Water Street Market, host to 20 businesses along the rail trail downtown, is complemented by our restaurants, cafes, breweries and diverse retail base.
- **Business Support**: Organizations like New Paltz Downtown Business Association, the regional Chamber of Commerce, and Water Street Market work together fostering downtown vitality including weekly events like outdoor movies and live music.
- **Arts & Culture**: New Paltz supports numerous institutions ranging from Historic Huguenot Street to Unison Arts Center to the Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art at SUNY New Paltz and galleries. Efforts are underway to establish an art district zone for downtown.
- **Expanding Housing Options:** Housing development is robust and diverse including the newly developed Woodland Pond retirement community and multifamily housing like The Ridge at South Manheim (90 units by campus). However, vacant and underutilized sites exist in and near downtown where housing choices can be expanded, creating diverse options under the Village's new Affordable Housing ordinance. There is capacity to create housing for a broad spectrum of incomes, ages, and household sizes that will complement the existing housing supply.



Figure 3 - Water Street Marketplace, an outdoor pedestrian shopping

- **Commitment to Sustainability** – As the College implements

capital improvements and advances the Governor's requirement to reduce energy consumption, it will demonstrate how to effectively make the physical and social changes needed to prevent and withstand climate change while beautifying Campus and strengthening linkage with Main Street. Likewise, joint efforts to plan a microgrid and establish policies for resiliency will prompt greater private investment because we are preparing for the future as promoted through the Governor's Reforming the Energy Vision (REV) plan.

Public-Private Partnership—Downtown New Paltz Anchor Project - There are exciting elements of the anchor project concept that will be refined with the community as part of the strategic investment planning provided for by DRI:

- **Hotel/Housing Project**: A custom hotel and conference center has been proposed to provide a commercial hospitality anchor for downtown to enhance the four-season tourism market.
- **Tech Space & SUNY New Paltz**: The anchor project includes additional space to supplement existing and expanding tech firms, as well as continued collaboration with the College to enhance its role in local tech development; and via the START-UP NY initiative.
- **Joint Municipal Center**: The Town evacuated the former Town Hall which was condemned due to public health concerns and now operates out of temporary facilities 3 miles from downtown. The anchor site is an ideal, central location for a shared facility with the Village. The concept and design alternatives for this joint facility will be advanced through DRI.
- **Fresh Food Store**: Convenience stores do not meet the need for reasonably priced access to healthy food choices. The anchor project includes space for a food market that will bring much-needed access to fresh foods within walking distance of the population center. Food would be sourced from area farms, supporting the strong local agricultural sector. Providing outlets for local products meshes with regional initiatives to establish agricultural hubs and cultivate specialization in food/ beverage supply chains, consistent with the MHREDC's plan and its 2015 Progress Report.
- **Parking and Transit**: Existing slopes on the anchor site are advantageous for parking that can be placed underground/under buildings and coordinated with enhanced transit facilities outlined in multi-modal plans by Ulster County Transportation Council.
- **Bicycle and Pedestrian Connections, Streetscape Improvements, and Green Infrastructure**: New Paltz is a compact, walkable community with an extensive sidewalk and regional bike path network. DRI will support enhanced pedestrian and bike facilities, and amenities including energy-efficient municipal-owned lighting, street trees and plantings, wayfinding, and green infrastructure to manage stormwater and reduce inflow and infiltration (I&I).
- **Readiness:** The anchor project is perfectly aligned for advancement with the DRI project as the partnerships, management capacity, and developer capacity are all in place. As well, the broader downtown revitalization program elements proposed are ready to be advanced.

Infrastructure Investments - Many Public Improvements are Underway:

- **Sewer System**: New Paltz has received $3 million in NYS CDBG grants in 5 of the last 6 years for sewer line upgrades and NY Rising is underwriting treatment plant resiliency.
- **Water Supply**: The Village is investing several million dollars establishing a new backup water supply in cooperation with NY City DEP while also improving storage, treatment, and distribution systems via USDA financing.
- **Stormwater Management**: Ongoing upgrades and plans include stream daylighting at Peace Park, a $250,000 HREP award to replace a culvert under the Rail Trail, and a $45,000 grant from Hudson River Estuary Program for green infrastructure capital planning.

4) **Job Growth -** With increasing attractiveness of the community and region, coupled with advantages brought by the nexus of SUNY New Paltz, employment growth downtown is on the rise. Access to jobs by walking and public transit to/from downtown is supported by the local sidewalk and bike path system and UCAT 'Loop Bus' and regional transit services and Trailways intercity bus service.
   - **Direct Employment Growth**: Construction jobs for the $80-million downtown anchor project are estimated at 150+/year over 2-years of construction, plus 290 permanent jobs are projected at the new hotel, restaurant, spa, office/tech space, and food store. These new jobs will be a diverse mix of service, professional, technical, management, and administrative positions.
   - **Background Growth**: Downtown New Paltz is attracting employers nationally and locally. For example, SamSix, a tech firm that makes proprietary geospatial software for utilities and governments, recently opened its headquarters on Plattekill Ave in the anchor area, creating a number of new jobs. In attracting employees, SamSix's website highlights downtown's pedestrian-friendly full-time college town environment and amenities. Similarly, Alfandre Architecture, a regional firm, constructed its new headquarters on Main Street with a LEED Platinum, net-zero energy office building that is also home to other engineering and energy-related professional services firms
   - **SUNY & Tech Growth**: Induced growth related to SUNY New Paltz is expected to be significant. A thriving 3D printing/digital design and fabrication/additive technology initiative is being successfully advanced by SUNY New Paltz in collaboration with faculty and students in Fine and Performing Arts, Science, and Engineering. Through private grants, funding from the State Senate, and MHREDC/ESD of $2.3 million, the College established a first-in-the nation "MakerBot Innovation Center." Over three years, SUNY New Paltz has offered Digital Design and Fabrication curriculum and formed partnerships with two leading manufacturers of industry-grade 3D printing equipment, established high-end equipment at the campus' Hudson Valley Advanced Manufacturing Center and collaborated with 150 businesses and entrepreneurs involved in 3D design, prototyping and fabrication. This growth will be enhanced by completion of the College's Engineering Innovation Hub with funding awarded under the Governor's NYSUNY 2020 Challenge Grant. DRI will help establish spaces where public-private innovation and job creation may occur, including through START-UP NY.

5) **Attractiveness of the Downtown**

Residents and visitors value downtown's eclectic nature and walkable Main Street. It has unique buildings, character zones, and is a recognized destination. There is opportunity for enhanced place-making. Urban design can define ways to stitch districts together and integrate new buildings with New Paltz's historic character and establish pronounced streetscapes.

New Paltz's comprehensive plan aims to make downtown a dominant feature of the region by enhancing it as a center for commercial, governmental, and cultural activities. Other goals aim to protect and enhance the drawing power of commercial and historic areas, ease traffic congestion and offer more parking without spoiling physical and visual amenities. Through DRI we are excited about accommodating a growing residential population of millennial professionals and retirees seeking a less-car-dependent lifestyle; and advancing community sustainability and resiliency consistent with the Mid-Hudson Regional Sustainability Plan.

New Paltz has identified other private properties to target for infill and densification. Parking lots and single story buildings at key intersections and on Main Street can be reshaped over time. One activity underway, FeedBackLab, involves an interdisciplinary team from the College collaborating with property owners and engaging the community on creating a 'Town Square' near our busiest intersection. The project is setting-up infill and green streets as it fosters creative dialogue to rethink/

experience and redesign systems and aesthetics of sustainable living in the face of climate change and threats to living environments. DRI planning will build on efforts like this showing possibilities and defining incentives to foster other attractive infill and enhance urban form.

The anchor location is the largest vacant/underutilized site in downtown New Paltz. It is bounded by two major streets and has access through adjacent public parking lots. There is prime opportunity to transform the anchor area with a street grid, pedestrian access, and substantial buildable area that can accommodate several hundred thousand square feet of new development. New mixed-use spaces at the anchor location built at a higher density can enable developers to address housing affordability and foster a live-work and pedestrian-oriented environment where it is not necessary for people to own cars, or use them daily, since there are jobs-housing balance, transit options, and diverse retail on site and close-by.



Figure 4 -Anchor Site (middle), between Main Street Heart & SUNY Campus beyond.

6) **Policies to Enhance Quality of Life -** The Town, Village, and SUNY New Paltz have expanded their partnership to focus on opportunities for downtown revitalization. The Town and Village are embarking together in updating their comprehensive plan -- timing is perfect to integrate DRI strategic investment planning element into that process. There are many other renewed efforts to form greater intergovernmental cooperation, foster multi-stakeholder coordination, and apply strategic mindsets to advance overall economic development.

The bullets that follow define policies used to advance livability and quality of life in New Paltz. These are documented to show activities, methods of organization, stakeholder talents, public-private action, capacity, and potential to rapidly adjust and transform systems so it is possible to efficiently advance high-quality and multifaceted downtown revitalization:

- A Town-Gown Committee meets monthly involving SUNY New Paltz, the School District, the local governments, the Chamber of Commerce, and emergency services.
- In 2015, a Joint Municipal Master Plan Steering Committee was established. This 9-person group is tasked with forming a unified long-range plan.
- NY Rising Community Reconstruction: There is active planning to harden the wastewater treatment plant. Village Engineer indicates there is adequate sewer capacity available, on the order of 0.5 MGD for future build out. A county-led replacement of the Carmine Liberta Bridge over the Wallkill River involving NY Rising funds will sustain connection between Main Street and the Shawangunk Ridge's adjacent open space and outdoor recreation environments.
- NY Prize – Phase I Report for New Paltz is completed. It shows that implementing a microgrid is feasible. DRI can help achieve coordinated policy and programming to modernize the grid. New Paltz Microgrid will provide fundamental economic restructuring, advance REV and create jobs.

It is envisioned that a node can be established at the anchor site.

- Development Review and Resource Preservation Planning – each municipality has a Planning Board, Historic Preservation Commission, and an Environmental Commission (Village) and Board (Town), while the Village also has a Shade Tree Commission. These bodies are equipped to help achieve quality growth management.
- There is a multifaceted program of coordinated transportation and land use, led by joint Village-Town Transportation Implementation and Bicycle-Pedestrian Committees. A 2007 Land Use & Transport Report provides strategy to advance smart growth and multimodalism and set-up transit (Loop Bus was implemented and expanded through regional partners including the College) as part of balanced growth including to mitigate congestion in the Heart of New Paltz. A 2015 Intermodal Facility Study evaluates options for siting and programming a local transit hub. There are also DOT-programmed capital projects to implement Main Street intersection and corridor reconstruction; active planning to develop regional bike trails; and a Safe Routes to School Plan identifies ways to advance walk- and bike-ability downtown and to the adjacent Middle School.
- New Paltz is part of Wallkill River Watershed Alliance. It supports community-based and regionally-oriented watershed-based planning.
- Shawangunk Scenic Byway is a federally-funded intermunicipal partnership that leverages capital improvements and smart growth planning toward enhanced tourism along the byway that links through downtown.
- Open Space Plan, Mill Brook Preserve, & Recreation Planning –We are actively engaged with the Hudson River Valley Greenway, open space and recreation improvements include:
    - Mill Brook Preserve was created, featuring nearly 200 acres including primitive hiking trails within easy walking distance of the Heart of New Paltz.
    - Hasbrouck Park, adjacent to the anchor received a drainage upgrade. The New Paltz Community Foundation and the Village are collaborating to upgrade ball courts and creating a new playground including facilities for children with special needs.
    - Levering our $2.0 million open space bond fund into multi-million conservation projects with NYS Ag. & Markets, Open Space Institute, and conservation-minded land owners.

7) Local Support–This DRI collaborative is led by Village Mayor Tim Rogers and Town Supervisor Neil Bettez, in cooperation with SUNY New Paltz with project management support by village planner, David Gilmour, AICP. There is an emphasis on preparing investments and refining plans so there is demonstrable progress implementing projects. Local leaders recognize the need for smart density around our core and that New Paltz's efforts must involve development as well as conservation. There is a positive public perception about New Paltz local government, and citizens and property owners appreciate the inclusiveness and spirit of partnership.

DRI will define innovative methods of sustaining community engagement, while aiding projects readiness and effective implementation in order to realize new sources of private development and enhancement of the tax and economic base. Particularly beneficial is strong local organizing potential -- many persons with academic backgrounds serve in public capacities, process is well-organized, and there is an orientation in using evidence and best practices within our public administration. This means New Paltz will effectively manage the shot-in-the-arm provided by DRI.

The Village and Town passed resolutions supporting this project and SUNY New Paltz President Donald Christian is supportive as well. Numerous regional groups have shown support, such as: County Executive Mike Hein; Open Space Institute, Inc.; Mohonk Preserve, Inc.; New Paltz Regional Chamber of Commerce; the School District.; Rural Ulster Preservation Company; and Microgrid Institute. Key

municipal bodies like Village Planning Board; Village Historic Preservation Commission; and New Paltz (joint) Transportation Implementation Committee are signatories of a letter of support. Likewise, landowners adjacent to the anchor site like Mountain Laurel Waldorf School and Village Tearoom signed on. We will also benefit from support of individuals like New Paltz resident Gerald Benjamin, SUNY Distinguished Professor of Political Science, Associate Vice President of Regional Engagement and Director of The Benjamin Center, and Art Professors Andrea Frank & Emily Puthoff, principals within the Town Square Visioning Project, the SUNY Center of Excellence-awarded project that aims to assist placemaking and the transition to ecological sustainability.

Challenges: We need fresh strategies, such as: establishing an arts district, designing creative parking and transit solutions, and increasing green infrastructure approaches. We recognize the hard work required to achieve consensus and avoid the attitudinal pitfalls that foible needed change. We recognize the local financial resources and public investment that will leverage the much larger private capital that is waiting in the wings. The DRI support and partnership with the REDC will help us address these challenges that New Paltz community is fully prepared to meet.

8) Other – As outlined above, the New Paltz's DRI project advances each of the strategic plan goals and also implements priorities in REDC's Upstate Revitalization Plan:

1. *Live: Investing in City, Town & Village Centers*- It revitalizes the Heart of Downtown New Paltz.
2. *Work: Innovation and High Tech*- It integrates tech incubator space downtown and strengthens the role of SUNY New Paltz in local technology development and job creation.
3. *Play: Premier Regional Tourist Destination*- A downtown hotel and conference center with spa, restaurant, and housing complex within the anchor project with upgrades to nearby downtown infrastructure and streetscapes, improving the tourist environment.

New York Healthy Food & Healthy Communities Fund - New Paltz does seek $500,000 for support of a local food market at the anchor site. New Paltz is eligible as an underserved area because it contains a moderate income census tract. Based on the 2014 American Community Survey, Tract 9535 has an Estimated Median Household Income of $44,107, less than the New York State Median Household Income of $58,687, based on 5-year estimates for 2010-2014.

Conclusion– Our Heart of New Paltz initiative seeks to harness our remarkable urban fabric, fantastic history, a great college, incredible open space and recreation resources, and an agricultural base that will sustain us in the future. All of these are being improved upon.

Ulster County Executive Mike Hein, speaking about our downtown revitalization, including efforts to add vitality to an anchor location in the heart of the community into vital mixed uses, notes: "*New Paltz is leveraging private investment and its invaluable SUNY New Paltz relationship to foster downtown job growth across industries. The plan is transformative but carefully constructed to support New Paltz's unique year-round community while welcoming visitors to Ulster County's world-class open spaces, including the Mohonk Preserve, Minnewaska State Park, and our regional trails system*."

We believe that New Paltz's DRI project will be transformative and positively and directly impact job creation, regional productivity, and well-being. We request partnership with the REDC to further revitalization of downtown New Paltz which is also part of the heart of the Mid-Hudson Region.