

## Public Workshop #1 Event Summary

### Downtown Revitalization Initiative

### Peekskill, NY

October 30, 2019, 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

Peekskill Neighborhood Center, 4 Nelson Avenue, Peekskill NY



### Introduction

The first Public Workshop for the Peekskill Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) was held on October 30, 2019 at the Neighborhood Center located at 4 Nelson Avenue in Peekskill. The workshop was attended by approximately 120 people, including members of the public, the Local Planning Committee (LPC), and representatives from New York State.

The Public Workshop started with a welcome from Mayor Andre Rainey, which was followed by a brief presentation from Susan Favate and Simon Kates of BFJ Planning that covered the DRI program and process, the DRI project timeline, the draft Vision and Goals, an outline of the public outreach strategy, and the open call for project proposals.

After the conclusion of the presentation, attendees were encouraged to visit six different workshop stations where they could propose ideas relating to the draft vision and goals and initial project ideas. Each station was facilitated by a member of the consultant team who helped answer questions and guide attendees to write down their ideas for new projects and responses to preliminary project ideas. Each of the ideas and comments provided by members of the public will help inform the planning process. The presentation and workshop station materials will be available on [www.PEEKSKILLDRI.COM](http://www.PEEKSKILLDRI.COM).

The open house portion of the workshop concluded with a “report back” presentation by BFJ Planning and other members of the consultant team who summarized the comments from each station. This summary allowed members of the public to hear a comprehensive accounting of other attendees’ ideas and comments.

## Workshop Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Presentation
3. Open House Stations
  - Vision Station
  - Goal 1: Job Opportunities for Existing and Future Residents
  - Goal 2: Inviting and Walkable Connections
  - Goal 3: Arts, Culture, and Dining Destination
  - Goal 4: Attractive Downtown Environment
  - Goal 5: Healthy Balance of Downtown Uses
4. Report Back and Next Steps

## Presentation

Susan Favate and Simon Kates lead a presentation that lasted approximately 20 minutes at the beginning of the meeting. The presentation included an overview of the DRI program, what goes into the DRI Strategic Investment Plan, the DRI planning process and timeline, the draft Vision and Goals, and the public engagement strategy. The presentation ended with directions for the open house interactive exercise and more information on how the public could stay involved.



## Overview of DRI Program

Ms. Favate gave an overview of the DRI Program. This included a brief history and goals of the DRI program, and the program's implementation strategy. Ms. Favate discussed what goes into a DRI Plan, and described the DRI boundary which includes Downtown Peekskill and the Waterfront connected by Central Avenue.

## DRI Strategic Investment Plan

Mr. Kates reviewed the six parts of a DRI Plan as outlined by the State. He then discussed the types of public and private projects that are eligible for DRI funding, and the types of projects that are not eligible for funding.



## DRI Planning Process and Timeline

Mr. Kates addressed how the creation of the Strategic Investment Plan fits in with the overall DRI process and discussed the project timeline including general dates for the next Public Workshops and a public survey.

## Draft Vision and Goals and Public Engagement

Mr. Kates described the draft Vision statement and the five DRI Goals and then followed with a discussion of how the general public can get involved with the DRI process. Mr. Kates then outlined the Open Call for Projects, which is one of the ways people can get involved.

## Open House Exercise

Mr. Kates concluded the presentation with directions of the open house exercise which occupied the remainder of the workshop. Meeting attendees were asked to visit the stations which corresponded with the draft Vision and Goals and to give their feedback.

## Summary of Work Station Discussions

The six work stations included maps, project boards, and flip charts where the attendees could write down their responses, identify project locations, and create new ideas. Attendees were asked to provide input on which project ideas they think would have the greatest impact, which details are needed to shape potential projects, and to help identify other project ideas that were missing. In addition, attendees could respond to ideas with green stickers that represented support for an idea, and red stickers which represented disapproval.

### Vision Station

- Attendees want the vision to include references the natural history and beauty of the Hudson River Valley, sustainability, and more specific descriptions of Peekskill's diversity.
- Commenters want the vision and goals to include the history of Peekskill and that improvements to the City should help maintain the City's history and diverse culture.
- Attendees want the linkages in Goal 2 to feature public art.
- A comment for Goal 5 includes promoting diversity in downtown businesses.

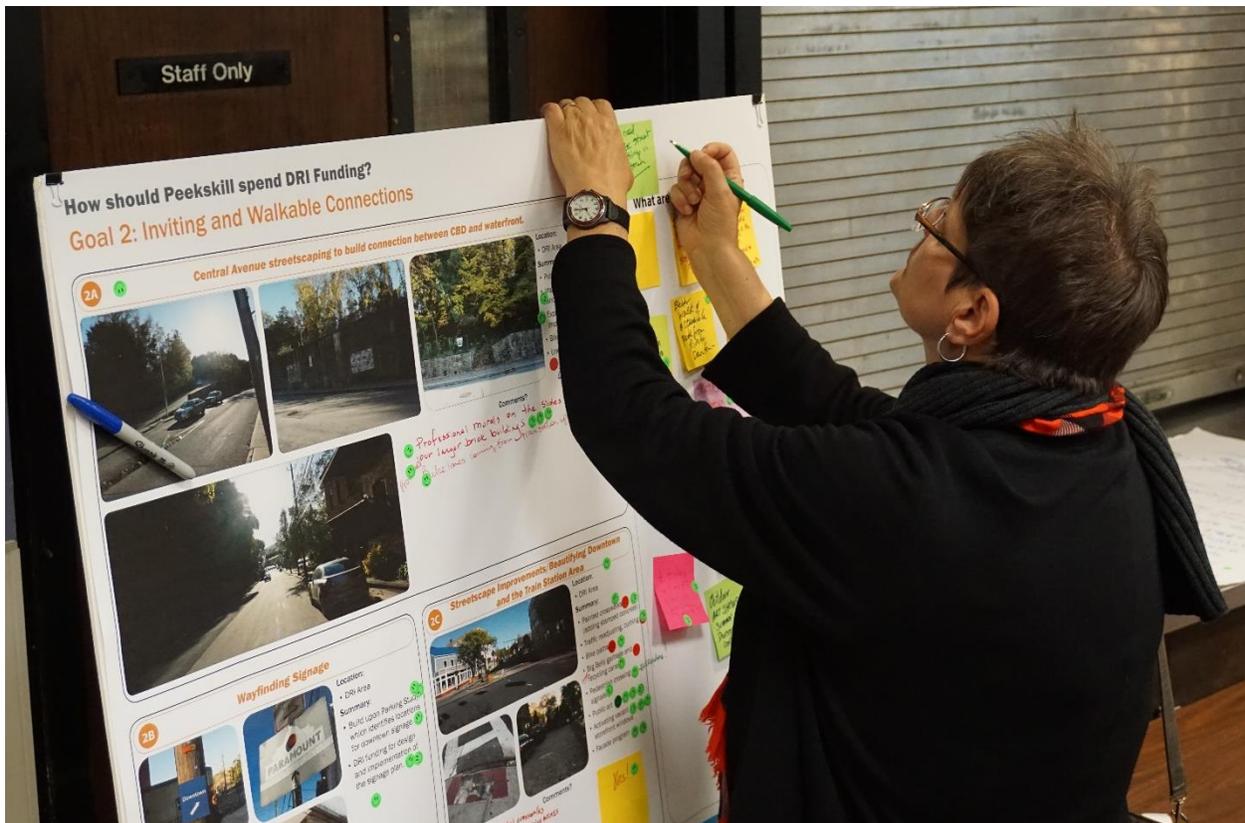
### Station 1: Job Opportunities for Existing and Future Residents

- General support for the proposed hospitality training facility; mentions that White Plains and Yorktown have similar facilities for high school students and adults.
- Support for bringing high-speed broadband to Downtown Peekskill. Attendees want the broadband to be affordable and available in the library. There is also support for having electric car charging stations in Downtown.
- Attendees support implementing the 2012 Retail Recruitment Strategy, but also want to create a revolving fund to help existing businesses and residents.
- The library could be a resource for job training and workforce development.
- Promoting women and minority-owned businesses and a diversity of businesses was a popular sentiment. Shared retail spaces and pop-ups may be ways to help these businesses try out ideas with lower costs or shorter leases.
- There was wide support for creating job training and job opportunities for residents of public housing, and to linking DRI projects to job opportunities for existing residents.
- Attendees supported the idea that increasing the walkability and connections in Peekskill would lead to more foot traffic for local businesses.
- There is general support for a shuttle bus or trolley linking the Waterfront and Downtown areas.
- Attendees want businesses to be open later in the evening so they can shop after work, or after dinner or a show.



## Station 2: Inviting and Walkable Connections

- There is a lot of support for streetscape improvements all over Peekskill, including painted crosswalks, bike paths, improved garbage cans, public art, façade improvements, and activating vacant storefronts.
- Using public art to promote walking, but also as a way of expanding Peekskill's identity as an artistic community, is very popular. Other ways to promote walking include street trees and benches.
- Public art, combined with other interesting attractions along Central Avenue can make the walk up from the Waterfront up to Downtown an attraction by itself. A specific idea is to paint a "yellow brick road" up to Downtown Peekskill along Central Avenue.
- Attendees supported improving wayfinding in Peekskill with attractive signage that identifies historic buildings and other points of interest.
- Attendees identified broken sidewalks and sidewalks ramps as accessibility and aesthetic issues.
- Bike lanes and bike rentals/bike share were supported.
- Outdoor art shows could promote walking and tourism.
- Streetscape improvements should focus on safety, especially along Division Street. Complete Streets-style design features like bulb-outs can help create safer streets by shortening crossing distances in Downtown.
- Pedestrian-focused lighting on sidewalks and in parking garages is needed to promote walking in evening and in winter months.



### Station 3: Arts, Culture, and Dining Destination

- Improving the Paramount Theater and creating the Peekskill Arts Center both received a lot of support from the public.
- In addition to the Peekskill Arts Center, an expanded library could provide arts and culture programming.
- Other ideas for the Paramount Theater include dividing the theater into smaller spaces for art shows and classes, expanding backstage to attract more contemporary acts, creating flexible seating on the main floor, and creating a way for the community to use the theater for events.
- Programming ideas for the Paramount Theater include reinstating an independent film series.
- Attendees linked the success of the Paramount Theater to the success of local restaurants and businesses.
- Fixing up the Paramount Theater and letting a private company operate the theater received some support.
- Public art and events related to arts are a very popular ideas. Arts ideas include a public art competition and a summer storytelling series.
- There is support for operating a free circulator shuttle that links the Waterfront to Downtown to support restaurants and arts attractions.
- A permanent riverfront amphitheater was proposed and supported by attendees.

### Station 4: Attractive Downtown Environment.

- Ensuring that Downtown Peekskill is an attractive place to live, work, and visit is a very big priority for residents.
- Residents support improving the gazebo with the help of the local arts community. This could include renovating or replacing the structure and redesigning the park.
- Reconstructing Fleishmann Pier for tour boats, fishing, and water crafts was supported by attendees.
- Meeting attendees overwhelmingly support improving waterfront parks. Ideas include providing kayak/canoe/paddleboard storage, a permanent band shell, and repaving uneven concrete.
- Attendees support improving Pugsley Park, however they also identified that the park is deed restricted to only be for passive use.
- Other ideas for creating an attractive Downtown include signage and storefront improvements, and creating infill developments on Downtown surface parking lots.
- There is also support for expanding the library in addition to plaza improvements as an anchor for the Downtown community.



### Station 5: Healthy Balance of Downtown Uses

- There is support for the 653 Central Avenue development especially if it includes ground floor retail or another attraction that would help bring people from the Waterfront into Downtown.
- Attendees support partnering with the Boys & Girls Club of Northern Westchester and current youth organizations to operate a renovated and expanded Kiley Youth Center.
- Developing the Water Street parking lot with a parking structure received mixed support, however one idea was to create a parking structure with ground-floor retail to serve commuters and visitors to the Waterfront.
- Attendees support revitalizing the South Street corridor with business improvements.
- Other ideas include creating community gardens, and community solar on structures where appropriate.



### Report Back and Next Steps

The first Public Workshop for the Peekskill DRI concluded with a report back session where the planning professionals summarized the discussions at each workshop station. Meeting attendees were reminded that the next LPC meeting was scheduled for November 20, 2019 at 7:00pm at the Neighborhood Center. The second Public Workshop has not been scheduled, but will likely be held in December 2019.





