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“Small Town, Big Heart”



Introduction

In 2015, the Rock Hill Business and Community Association

won the Sullivan Renaissance Golden Feather Award for its excellence in community beautification, development and planning, as a result of years of hard work from community members. As a next step, the RHBCA thought it was time to host a “Community Visioning”, through a series of public workshops. Rock Hill originally hosted the community visioning workshop in 2005, which generated a number of ideas and projects that have been implemented to date. This plan is an update to the 2005 Community Visioning Document, created by the Catskill Center for Conservation and Development in partnership with Sullivan Renaissance and the Sullivan County Division of Planning and Environmental Management.



What is there to love about Rock Hill?

THE WORKSHOPS WERE ORGANIZED and facilitated by staff from the Sullivan County Division of Planning and Environmental Management and Sullivan Renaissance, and were designed to help the community take stock of where it stands today, and to develop a vision for where it wants to go in the future. Sponsored by the Rock Hill Business and Community Association and the Town of Thompson, the workshops involved direct participation of residents, business owners and community leaders from throughout the hamlet. Through three facilitated meetings, participants were guided through a process that resulted in a list of possible projects that could be implemented at the local level to beautify and revitalize Rock Hill's commercial district, along with a list of strengths and weaknesses within the community.

This report summarizes the process that was undertaken and describes the results and recommendations that were generated at each step along the way. The document is intended not only as a reference and documentation of the process itself, but as a starting point for the gradual implementation of various projects designed to revitalize the community and as a guide for future development in Rock Hill. The project ideas and information generated through this process are dynamic and ever changing. The visioning process was designed as a starting-point to stimulate thinking about the future and the qualities of the community that should be preserved and/or changed. As conditions change over time, the vision for the future must change as well. Therefore, this document should not be viewed as a static set of guidelines and recommendations, but rather a fluid document that itself should change over time.

Contained within this document is the information and tools with which a few motivated individuals can change the community in which they live for the better. The information itself is meaningless -- the real power to effectuate change lies in the hands of the people who call Rock Hill home and are concerned about its future. For only by working together, will its residents be able to see their preferred vision for their community to become a reality.





A Vision for the Future

THE FIRST STEP IN THE VISIONING PROCESS was an exercise designed to stimulate thinking about what qualities Rock Hill currently possesses that makes it unique and special, and what conditions could be changed to make it better. This exercise was undertaken by participants at the first workshop meeting held on Tuesday, October 27th with over 75 participants in attendance. Participants were asked to state what they love about Rock Hill, and what they would like to change.



Rock Hill residents expressed some of the many reasons why they cherish their community. Below is a summary of just some of the reasons:

Its Country Character

Participants spoke of the love they feel for the small town feeling that Rock Hill possesses and the friendly people. Residents seemed content with their community, but saw opportunities for growth. But, love the low-density, small community feel of Rock Hill.

The music and culture scene in Rock Hill. Rock Hill has a very strong and lively music scene, such as the Rock Hill Summer Concert Series, Dutch's Open Mic and Steve's Music Center.

The array of activities and events that take place such as the races/walks, the parades, the farmers market and the concerts.

Being located in the Southern Catskills region, Rock Hill is blessed with a great beauty, a beauty, which its residents love and admire. The abundance of outdoor opportunities such as the Neversink River and the Neversink Unique Area, the lake communities, biking and hiking opportunities, the ballpark and playground, Holiday Ski and Fun Park and the YMCA environmental education center. In addition, participants spoke of the importance and beauty of the Rock Hill Farmers Market park.

Rock Hill isn't just loved for its small-home town feeling, but also for the helpful and supportive people, and the "Mom and Pop" businesses that contribute to making it a special place. Participants spoke of the love for Rock Hill's main street, the strength of having a hotel located on main street (Rock Hill Drive), the dining and shopping opportunities, the walking path and strong employers located within the Rock Hill community such as Crystal Run Healthcare and the Irwin Siegel Agency.

Participants also love the active community organizations such as the Rock Hill Fire Department, the Rock Hill Ambulance Corps., the YMCA, the Rock Hill Business and Community Association and places of worship.



What is There to Love About Rock Hill?

What needs to change?

PARTICIPANTS EXPRESSED CONCERN over a number of issues and conditions that, if changed, would improve Rock Hill, with a particular focus on the commercial business district. Most of the concerns brought up revolved around things such as the need for more growth and business development, rezoning, the appearance of the business district and a desire to make it more pedestrian friendly as well as a need for more organized activities focused increasing access to outdoor recreation.

Marketing & Business Development

Participants shared concerns over the empty Frontier building and lack of development at the Emerald Corporate Park, the lack of a water district along Rock Hill Drive, a lack of cell service and the need for a more central location for sharing business information and events. Participants also spoke of the need to better market Rock Hill's outdoor recreational opportunities, such as the Neversink Unique Area in relation to the business community in order to generate more business and tourism in Rock Hill. There is also a need to better market our music and art scene and look into expanding this.



Community Character & Growth

As beautiful as the surrounding lake communities are and despite the amount of work completed to beautify Rock Hill, many participants spoke about the need for better code enforcement, new codes dealing with aesthetics, and the need for planned growth to limit sprawl, unchecked development, industrial industries and hi-density housing.

Participants also spoke about the need for design guidelines, develop Rock Hill as a “boutique town” and to not have “box stores” located in Rock Hill. Participants also discussed the concern over traffic flow and pedestrian safety in the hamlet center, specifically at the intersection of Rock Hill Drive, Katrina Falls Road and Glen Wild Road. Participants expressed a desire to see the commercial business district cleaned up and beautified. They would like to see building facades improved, garbage cleaned up, organized signage, more landscaping and greenery, and less pavement on Rock Hill Drive. Participants wanted to see more architectural unity.

Access to Outdoor Recreation & Social Activities

When speaking of things they would like to see changed, many participants spoke of the need to have more events related to outdoor recreation in order to promote Rock Hill's natural resources, to increase social activities and to increase resident's access to healthy activities. Participants also noted that there are existing organizations that we are not tapping into such as the NY/NJ Trail Conference, the Sullivan Striders, and the fishermen and other outdoor enthusiasts that frequent Rock Hill.





Generating Project Ideas

THE NEXT STEPS IN THE WORKSHOP SERIES were designed to review the lists of assets, problems and needs generated in the previous step, and begin to develop project ideas. Ideas for projects were generated by using the community inventory as a basis for determining how Rock Hill's existing assets and resources could be used to address some of the problems and needs of the community.

At the second workshop held on December 16, 2015, participants were asked to undertake a creative thinking exercise within focus groups to develop ideas for projects that could be implemented locally. The groups were in the following key areas:

1. **Business Development and Marketing**
2. **Outdoor Recreation and Social Events**
3. **Community Character and Development**

Several project ideas were generated by each focus group designed to address some of the existing problems and needs in the community. All of the ideas were summarized and presented to the larger group. Likewise, the ideas presented on the following pages are intended as a starting point for implementation. As additional ideas are generated beyond the initial visioning process, they should be evaluated based on whether or not they address any of the problems or needs already identified. This list may then be updated as the need arises.

Each category is broken down according to Group, Project title and description and timeframe. The timeframes are as follows:

- Short Term: 0 – 1 year**
- Mid-Term: 1 – 3 years**
- Long Term: 3 – 5 years**



Outdoor Recreation & Events

1. Create “Rock Hill Outdoor Group”

Timeframe: Short Term

Project Description: Create an outdoor group to help promote outdoor recreation, develop the outdoor recreation ideas generated from the Rock Hill Community Visioning document, help to market Rock Hill’s natural assets (as mentioned in the Business Development and Marketing section) and develop outdoor recreation activities

2. Rock Hill Bike Race and Bike Trails

Timeframe: Short-Term

Project Description: Bike riding, especially in Rock Hill, is becoming increasingly popular. Rock Hill should capitalize on this by creating a bike race in Rock Hill, (a “Tour De Rock Hill”). A short term goal should be to promote the existing roadways for bikers to ride through Rock Hill (in connection with the Business & Marketing Development section of this document). This would involve the creation of a committee focused solely on the bike race.

3. Expand Access and Recreation Opportunities to the Neversink River and Neversink Unique Area

Timeframe: Short

Project Description: As stated numerous times in the Rock Hill Community Visioning Workshops, the Neversink River and the Neversink Unique Area offer enormous opportunities for recreation for both residents and tourists. A main priority should be to develop these opportunities. Specific items related to this project include:

- Develop organized hikes to the Neversink Unique Area. These can be done in partnership with local residents and the NY/NJ trail Conference.
- Install better signage directing people to the Neversink Unique Area
- Increase marketing and outreach to residents and tourists to the Neversink Unique Area (see business development and marketing section)
- Work with the NYSDEC to clean up the parking area (this is more of a long-term project)
- Work with the Town of Fallsburg to better develop the Neversink River for kayakers, tubers and fishing enthusiasts. A Neversink River trail map should be created showing the different access points and locations to get on and off the river for kayaking. Signage should be placed on the river and/or bridge warning kayakers/tubers about safety and the importance of exiting the Neversink River before Holiday Mountain.
- Develop programs for the youth.

4. Rock Hill Town Park

Timeframe: Mid-Term

Project Description: Purchase the Farmers Market lot and make it a town park. This will be a community effort and will need support from the Town, along with substantial funding.

5. Rock Hill Town Park on the Neversink River

Timeframe: Mid-Term

Project Description: There currently is a limited amount of direct access to the Neversink River. Access to the Neversink River through the Neversink Unique Area can be challenging and difficult to get to. Currently the NYSDEC has a fishing access located on Edwards Road. The Town of Thompson also owns a 5 acre parcel located on the Neversink River within this vicinity. The RHBCA should work with the Town of Thompson to develop this 5 acre parcel as a small Town Park, that would allow better access to the River. In addition, we should explore the possibility of creating a small fishing access on Holiday Mountain Road by the bridge.

6. Rock Hill Dog Park

Timeframe: Long-Term

Project Description: Create a dog park for Rock Hill. A dog park came up as a priority project for quite a few participants. Ideally, the Dog Park would be located at the Farmers Market Park, once it is made a Town Park.

7. Rock Hill Wetland Trails Project

Timeframe: Long-Term

Project Description: Create a wetland trail system at the Farmers Market Park. This project is contingent on the Farmers Market lot becoming a Town Park. Ideally, these Wetland Trails could connect to the power line that runs through the Farmers Market Park and then connect to the Rails to Trails System in Woodridge.

8. Connect to the Woodridge Rails to Trails System

Timeframe: Long-Term

Project Description: Once the wetland trail system is developed, there is the opportunity to connect to the power line that runs through the Farmers Market Park. People would then be able to walk the power line and connect to the Woodridge Rails to Trails system. This would be dependent on permission from NYSEG.

9. Rock Hill Triathlon

Timeframe: Long-Term

Project Description: Since Rock Hill has an abundance of races, biking opportunities and a number of lake communities, we should explore the possibility of creating a Rock Hill Triathlon. This would involve long term planning and a committee solely focused on the triathlon.



10. Increase Cultural and Social Activities in Rock Hill

Timeframe: Short – Long term (Depending on activity)

Project Description: In addition to the opportunity to develop outdoor recreational opportunities for Rock Hill, there are a number of social and cultural activities that should be developed. These activities include the following:

- **Rock Hill Outdoor Movie Nights:** Develop movie nights at the Farmers Market Park or the Rock Hill Fire Department. These movie nights can start out small and then develop into a regular schedule. The timeframe for this is short – mid-term
- **Rock Hill Info/Cultural/Arts/Tourism Center:** A need that was identified at past and current visioning workshops is the development of tourist centers, art galleries and historical cultural centers. Since Rock Hill is a small community, ideally this can be created all at one location. This would be a long term activity.
- **Development of Youth Programs:** The Rock Hill community should partner with the YMCA of Sullivan County to help promote their youth programs and/or partner with the YMCA on youth programs instead of creating entirely new youth programming. This is an ongoing project.
- **Winter Activities:** Rock Hill currently has a Christmas Tree and Menorah lighting ceremony every year. This can be expanded to include additional winter activities such as a winter farmers market, a winter festival and lighting down Rock Hill Drive. In order for this to happen, a winter activities committee must be formed. This is a mid-term project.

Business Development & Marketing

1. General Rock Hill Marketing

Timeframe: Short to Mid-Term

Project Description: In addition to the outdoor recreation and music marketing initiatives listed in this section, the Rock Hill Business and Community Association should develop the following marketing initiatives in order to better promote the community and the Rock Hill businesses:

- Create a new website, showing everything great about Rock Hill and promoting all Rock Hill Business and Community Association business members
- Create a rack card promoting Rock Hill and its businesses.
- Create RHBCA business member stickers for businesses to place at their location in order to promote the website
- Create a tourism guide for Rock Hill. Promote this within Sullivan County and outside Sullivan County
- Continue to utilize social media and email marketing to promote Rock Hill activities and businesses
- Continue to assess and communicate with businesses and residents regarding other marketing initiatives
- Create a tag line for Rock Hill
- Through the Rock Hill Public Art project, market Rock Hill as an arts destination and create a public art trail map.
- Look into the feasibility of hiring a marketing consultant to further the marketing initiatives laid out in the Business Development and Marketing Section of the visioning document.

2. Marketing of Rock Hill Assets and Outdoor Recreational Opportunities

Timeframe: Short to Mid-Term

Project Description: As mentioned in the Outdoor Recreation section, Rock Hill has an abundance of recreational assets and potential opportunities. As a result, Rock Hill should develop a marketing plan to promote these opportunities. This would help to increase foot traffic to Rock Hill businesses, increase tourism and increase social/recreational activities for Rock Hill residents. Below is a list of potential marketing activities.

- Create a central location on the Rock Hill website for promoting outdoor recreational opportunities. Continue to acquire quality photos of the natural resources and outdoor activities in Rock Hill.
- Create a Neversink River Access map (in relation to the projects outlined in the Outdoor Recreation section)
- Develop marketing materials for promoting Rock Hill as a fishing, hiking, biking and lake community destination.



3. Marketing of the Rock Hill Music Scene

Timeframe: Short to Mid-Term

Project Description: Rock Hill has a vibrant music scene as a result of Steve's Music Center, the Rock Hill Summer Concert Series and Dutch's Open Mic. This is a resource to be tapped into. General Rock Hill marketing materials should promote the music scene. Other items to create are:

- A central location on the Rock Hill website for promoting the Rock Hill music scene
- Help to expand live music in Rock Hill
- Develop specific advertising materials promoting Rock Hill's music scene

4. Address Vacant Buildings and Attract New Businesses

Timeframe: Long Term

Project Description: Rock Hill contains a few vacant buildings, along with the opportunity to attract new businesses. Specific properties/building that are in need of development and business attraction are the Frontier Building, the Emerald Corporate Park and the old Land and Sea Restaurant. RHBCA should work with the Town of Thompson and economic development groups to attract new businesses to these properties that are aligned with the community character and development section of this document.



Community Character & Development

1. Create a Community Character & Development Committee

Timeframe: Short

Project Description: A Community Character Committee should be created in order to implement the projects identified in this section.

2. Traffic and Pedestrian Safety

Timeframe: Short to Long Term (Different aspects of the project occur over time)

Project Description: The visioning workshop identified serious issues with traffic and pedestrian safety along Rock Hill Drive, Glen Wild Road and Katrina Falls Road. As a result, the following projects should take place:

- Develop a concept plan to make Rock Hill Drive and surround roads safer for both pedestrians and vehicles. The plan should include pedestrian crosswalks at key locations and the need to develop additional walking paths/sidewalks.
- Reduce the speed limit on Rock Hill Drive from 40mph to 30mph
- Identify any new impacts of new businesses on the traffic flow in Rock Hill

3. Signage

Timeframe: Short Term

Project Description: The visioning identified the need for better signage and design guidelines in Rock Hill. Currently, LED and “flashing signs” are proposed in Rock Hill. The RHBCA should work with the Town of Thompson and the SCDPEM to develop sign guidelines and update the code to reflect this.



4. Community Character and Zoning

Timeframe: Short

Project Description: Overall, a major concern at the community visioning was high-density development, industrial development and development that does not fit into the community character of Rock Hill. Furthermore, the current zoning is not fit for a down town hamlet and promotes industrial/ highway commercial development along a “main street”. In addition, there are large parcels of land zoned for high density development situated throughout Rock Hill. As a result, the RHBCA, the Town of Thompson and/or the SCDPEM should implement the following activities:

- The Community Character committee should create an online and paper survey to help identify further concerns over zoning and community character for both businesses and residents.
- Hire a consultant to review the current zoning in place, in relation to the concerns addressed in the survey
- Develop solutions to address these problems
- Host 1 community character/land use workshop to present the solutions.
- Work with the Town of Thompson to implement the recommendations.

5. Design Guidelines:

Timeframe: Short

Project Description: Overall, the participants of the visioning stated the need to have aesthetically pleasing developments that fit with the character of Rock Hill. As a result, the RHBCA and the Town should work with the SCDPEM to develop general design guidelines for Rock Hill.

6. Community Aesthetics

Timeframe: Short to Long Term (dependent on activity)

Project Description: RHBCA has been working hard with businesses to beautify Rock Hill. However, there is still work that needs to be done. The following activities should take place in order to promote and implement beautifying Rock Hill:

- Start a photo contest for Rock Hill residents to post photos of what they like about Rock Hill
- Work with the Town on code enforcement in relation to garbage, signage and clothing bins.
- Work with businesses to apply for Sullivan Renaissance grants to help improve their facades and landscaping.

7. Infrastructure Improvement:

Timeframe: Long Term

Project Description: Currently, businesses in Rock Hill do not have access to public water, only sewage. Therefore, the Town should work with existing water facilities at the Emerald Corporate Park and Emerald Green to look into the feasibility of expanding this infrastructure. In addition, cell service coverage in Rock Hill is very limited. RHBCA should work with the Town and cell phone carriers to improve cell coverage in Rock Hill.

