

Hyde Park seeks state grant to enhance town center

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(Photo: Spencer Ainsley/Poughkeepsie Jou, Spencer Ainsley/Poughkeepsie Journal)

HYDE PARK – Hyde Park is seeking to revitalize the town center by conducting the engineering, marketing and environmental studies that developers usually pay for.

Town officials hope covering these preliminary costs will attract developers interested in investing in the town center and creating a more pedestrian-friendly downtown.

"We're trying to clear the path so when the developer is ready to move ahead we have already done a lot of the preliminary work," said Hyde Park Supervisor Aileen Rohr.

That town center includes a number of empty buildings and commercial strips lining Route 9. The town is focusing on redeveloping the commercial area in the vicinity of the intersection of Route 9 and Pine Woods

Road.

The town is seeking a \$161,000 grant from the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority. The grant is administered through the agency's Cleaner, Greener Communities Program which funds smart growth practices.

Funding of \$54,000 by the town is required to obtain the grant, bringing the total project cost to \$215,000. This sum would pay for the various studies needed to transform the town's commercial center.

The \$54,000 would include in-kind contributions of \$20,000 from Dutchess County Department of Planning and Development, \$7,000 from the Dutchess County Water and Wastewater Authority and \$13,000 from the town. A cash contribution of \$14,000 from the town is planned.

The studies the project would fund include the environmental impact studies required by the State Environmental Quality Review Act that developers usually have to pay for when seeking approval for projects from the town planning board. This would not only provide developers with an incentive to invest in the town center but gives the town control over what kind of development will take place there.

"By doing this work, it would ensure that future development meets the town's expectations," Rohr said.

Karen Rudowski, owner of the Roosevelt Inn on Route 9, said the town's plans to invest grant money and some of its own resources into completing preliminary studies for developers is a good idea.

"If this work actually streamlines the process and cuts out a lot of work for the developers and companies coming into Hyde Park, it should boost new business in Hyde Park," she said. "We need more incentives and assistance to stimulate economic growth in Hyde Park."

Clint Kershaw, 53, who lives on Yates Avenue, said he supports funding the preliminary studies but more should be done to streamline the planning and zoning approval process.

"I think a better way to help all the developers in the town and promote the town would be to improve the planning and zoning process — not to change the regulations but change the process to reduce the time that it takes to get through it," he said.

The project also would fund an engineering study for a sewage treatment system in the town center.

"We will do a sewer study to lay the groundwork to identify options for a commercial wastewater treatment system," Rohr said.

In addition, the project will pay for engineering designs for a new cross street and traffic signal, as well as improvements benefiting pedestrians, bicyclists and those who ride the bus. Plans include drafting new zoning regulations to permit denser development in the town center, Rohr said.

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