

Hyde Park is poised for compact development

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(Photo: Courtesy photo)

Trump, Sanders, Clinton, Cruz, Rubio! With all the buzz created by the presidential primaries, conversations about what America should be in the 21st century are taking place everywhere — coffee shops, hair salons, family dinner tables. Though these discussions often become heated, their value lies in the opportunity for each of us to envision our own concept of the future and ask, “What would I like America to be?”

This holds true for local government as well, and after each municipal election, mayors, supervisors, boards and councils are given the chance to define our particular community’s future. If the need to control taxes while providing essential services — police, road maintenance, recreation — will always remain paramount, the most compelling component of our jobs is seeking ways to shape our future through capital projects and infrastructure improvements.

Latest trends identified by economists and demographic researchers indicate clear changes in store. A desire for vibrant, walkable communities replete with shops, services and entertainment with tidy, energy-efficient dwellings in neighborhoods with transportation options, and ample recreational opportunities has supplanted the “large homes on large lots” coveted by my generation. Smaller family sizes and aging populations are defining our needs for this century, and for local government, finding ways to adapt to these changes is essential.

Fortunately, Hyde Park has great bones to meet these new expectations. Premier historic and tourism sites, our fabulous location on the mighty Hudson River, an extensive trail system, affordable, well-located housing stock, and our proximity to mass transit bode well for its future.

However, our town’s big burst of growth in the ‘60s and ‘70s left it without a traditional center and without the infrastructure required for compact development. This is why my colleagues on the town board and I diligently pursue the creation of a modern, walkable Hyde Park through the use of grant monies and innovative zoning. Our best bet to transition to a 21st-century community is to develop a Main Street feeling in our commercial corridors.

ADVERTISING

With the assistance of our state and county partners, we have made important strides forward toward our lofty goal. In the last few years, we have added sidewalks to connect residents to nearby businesses, obtained an \$800,000 grant to make Route 9 from the drive-in to Park Plaza more welcoming, received a New York State Energy Research and Development Authority grant to produce a redevelopment strategy for the Pinewoods intersection and most recently received the first-ever award of \$500,000 from the county’s Partnership for Manageable Growth, to jump-start a commercial sewer system. Though these capital projects are only the first steps, we are on our way to adding additional muscle to our good bones!

Armed with the knowledge of what a 21st-century community must be and the support of our constituents and partners at the state and county level, we are honored to be able to continue this work, and fortunately, will do so regardless of how this wild election cycle ends.

Democrat Aileen Rohr is supervisor of the Town of Hyde Park. "Legislative Spotlight," written by federal, state, county and municipal leaders, provides insight on topical issues. To submit a column, call 845-437-4979 or email Barbara Gallo Farrell at bfarrell@poughkeepsiejournal.com.

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