



Grow the Gateways

Thompson | Monticello

A Strategic Plan for the Gateway Corridor

NOVEMBER 2017



Executive Summary

Why Grow the Gateways?

The exits along Route 17 for Monticello are not just gateways into the Village, but to the major destinations in Sullivan County for residents and visitors alike. Monticello is the County seat, which draws people from all over the county for transactions with the DMV, Board of Elections, County Clerk, Real Property office and more. Exit 104 is the gateway for the many thousands of people travelling to the Bethel Woods Center for the Performing Arts and to the County’s popular hamlets along the Upper Delaware River. All of Sullivan County’s big box retail shopping is located off Exit 105, and Exits 105 and 106 are gateways for visitors to the new Veria/YO1 spa and the new Resorts World: Catskills casino. These new resort projects are estimated to attract more than four million visitors annually.

After decades of disinvestment, the corridor surrounding these significant County gateways is seeing a revival. Even before the opening of the new resorts, the economic stimulus from their construction has spurred the development of new businesses as well as upgrades and expansions to existing ones. New hotels have been approved for development. Properties on the market for years are now seeing interest.

Opportunity has come to Sullivan County, and particularly to the Town of Thompson and the Village of Monticello. It’s time to *Grow the Gateways*.

This Plan was prepared to help Monticello and Thompson seize the opportunities provided by new resort development in the area. It looks at ways to build on and sustain the momentum that’s been kicked off by the more than \$1.5 billion in recent investment. It also looks at ways to make new development better —faster, more efficient, more attractive, and more supportive of community needs and goals.

All Hands on Deck

The planning process featured extensive outreach, including public meetings, focus groups, interviews and special events – such as a breakfast sponsored by the Sullivan County Partnership for Economic Development and a day-long community open house at the Ethelbert B. Crawford Public Library in the heart of downtown Monticello.

Hundreds of people who live, work, and own businesses or property in the gateway corridor contributed to the *Grow the Gateways Strategic Plan*. More opportunities to review, comment on, and carry out the Plan will be staged as the communities involved move forward with adopting the draft Plan and implementing its recommendations.

Issues & Opportunities

Public outreach for the Plan, along with a review of existing conditions in the corridor, revealed many issues of concern, opportunities for action and ideas for improvement. These are detailed in the plan appendices, with major themes addressed in the main Plan document.

PRIORITY CONCERNS

- **Public Image/Negative** perceptions of the area
- **Substantial presence of vacant and underutilized sites**, and of blighted and ill-maintained properties
- **Poor and confusing parking and circulation patterns**, particularly on Broadway and at the Exit 106 roundabout/lack of pedestrian accommodations/lack of access management/poor condition of public parking lots
- **Challenging development review process**/complicated Town-Village boundary with no land use coordination/lack of clear, predictable process/costly for small businesses/lack of design guidelines and standards
- **Lack of “things to do”**/desire for more parks, recreation, arts and culture, youth activities, Main Street retail

POSITIVES TO BUILD ON

- **Unparalleled \$1.5 billion investment in the casino resort**, plus 2,300 new jobs
- **Positive energy, enthusiasm**/strong partnerships working on an aggressive menu of revitalization initiatives
- **Affordable properties ripe for redevelopment**
- **Rich “borscht belt” history** and proximity to the natural resources of the Catskills

How should the Gateways Grow?

Part of the planning process for the corridor included the development of a vision for the future. The Plan’s recommendations are aimed at achieving this vision:

The Monticello-Thompson Gateway Corridor will be a destination for visitors to the area’s world class resorts and attractions, and for people who want a high quality of life in a rural small town surrounded by the natural beauty of the Sullivan Catskills. The area will offer affordable homes for all income levels and household types in close proximity to good jobs and quality schools. A rejuvenated downtown core will feature a traditional walkable streetscape with historic architecture and compatible infill development, hosting a vibrant mix of uses including restaurants, shops, offices, residences, boutique hotels, and places of entertainment, culture and recreation. Commercial and industrial growth will be accommodated outside the core, while abundant landscaping, well-designed signage, lighting, and other attractive design elements provide a cohesive appearance and sense of place. The Gateway Corridor will be safe, clean and well-maintained. It will support the full range of transportation options (for all ages and abilities) including driving, walking, cycling and transit.

GTG Plan Recommendations

Because the gateway corridor comprises a diverse area covering two municipalities, several highway interchanges, a pedestrian-scaled downtown main street, and commercial strip and big box development, some recommendations are broadly applicable to the corridor as a whole while others relate to a geographic category and still others address specific project sites. The highlights given here are grouped by the issue they address:

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING **IMAGE & PUBLIC PERCEPTION**

1. Develop a **brand identity** and **promotion campaign**
 - Coordinate Town and Village messaging
 - Train municipal officials and staff in delivering a consistent message
2. Actively **publicize positive developments**
3. Facilitate and incentivize **property maintenance and façade improvements**
4. **Prioritize efforts to address blight (see below)**
5. **Adopt Design Guidelines** and Standards to improve the quality of new development. **Note: Design Guidelines were drafted as part of this project and are included in a plan appendix.**

STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING **VACANT, UNDERUTILIZED & BLIGHTED PROPERTY**

1. **Explore Joint Code Enforcement** between the Village and Town to improve capacity and stretch resources
2. Develop a plan for **Data-driven Strategic Code Enforcement**
 - Establish a Blight Task Force
 - Implement a Vacant Property Registry
3. Develop a program to increase **Active Storefront Displays** in vacant property

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING **PARKING, CIRCULATION & WAYFINDING**

1. Create a **corridor-wide Wayfinding System** to help guide residents and visitors to points of interest, to existing municipal parking, and to reduce confusion at the Exit 106 roundabout
 - Upgrade, relocate and increase **Welcome Signage**
 - Install gateway banners on light posts
2. Develop a coordinated **Parking Improvement Program**, beginning with implementation of the “North Street Commons” project
3. Increase safe **Bike And Pedestrian Connectivity**
 - along Raceway Road that connects with Route 17B
 - along East Broadway, reconfiguring existing wide shoulder lanes
4. **Improve Access Management Conditions** throughout the corridor
5. Improve the appearance of the Exit 106 roundabout with **Iconic Public Art**

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING THE DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCESS

1. **Adopt Design Guidelines**, as noted above, to help streamline reviews by establishing clear expectations
 - Establish a Design Guideline Committee to finalize the draft guidelines with each municipality, and to develop standards
 - Integrate Low-Impact Development techniques to manage stormwater runoff
2. **Coordinate zoning in the corridor along the municipal boundary**, potentially through the creation of identical zoning districts along the corridor for the Village and Town
3. Develop provisions and incentives **to expedite permitting**
 - Create a GEIS for the corridor once new zoning is in place
4. Encourage **Training** for Planning Board and ZBA members beyond the NYS required 4 hours
 - Create training in the application of the new design guidelines, code amendments and procedural improvements

STRATEGIES FOR INCREASING VIBRANCY AND ACTIVITY

1. Bring **Residential Uses Downtown** to increase vitality, provide “eyes on the street,” and improve the economic viability of mixed use properties
 - Consider amendments to the Village B2 Core Business zoning district to allow for housing in strategic locations
2. **Create and promote financial** incentives for downtown mixed use and commercial development
3. **Recruit and facilitate Arts, Culture and Community activities downtown**
 - Facilitate restoration of the Broadway Theater
 - Upgrade the Ted Stroeble Community Center
 - Create playgrounds and pocket parks
 - Create outdoor space for community gatherings and festivals (e.g. North Street Commons)

What’s Next?

An implementation team has been created to promote the GTG Plan and oversee its long-term implementation. It includes representatives from the Town of Thompson, Village of Monticello, Sullivan County Government and partner agencies including the Sullivan County IDA, Sullivan County Partnership for Economic Development, Sullivan Renaissance and Cornell Cooperative Extension of Sullivan County. All these entities are currently engaged in projects that advance the Plan’s recommendations. Contact Sullivan County Planning for more information, and to get involved in achieving the Grow the Gateways vision.