

City of Rensselaer's Short-Term Implementation Guide

The City's Comprehensive Plan identifies a number of implementation items in each policy area that will, when completed, move Rensselaer closer to reaching its Vision for the future.

Successful plan implementation often hinges on the City's ability to quickly initiate or accomplish specific actions identified in the Plan. To assist in this effort, a Short-Term Implementation Guide has been developed to jump start the implementation phase.

The Guide is a collection of Implementation Items, grouped by policy area, that the City should address first. These items, which are direct excerpts from the Comprehensive Plan, were selected because they had a lower level of complexity, a shorter anticipated timeframe for completion and/or a smaller number of potential constraints. Consequently, these items were considered highly attainable relative to other items included in the Implementation section of the Plan.

Daily Plan implementation is the responsibility of all City administrative, elected and volunteer staff. However, the general public should be involved and informed throughout the implementation process. As mentioned in the Comprehensive Plan, regular public meetings should be conducted to review the Comprehensive Plan and to solicit citizen input and participation in projects of interest. In addition, City staff should be available for Ward meetings on a regular basis for specific neighborhood improvement projects, workshops and discussions.

Not only will this type of public outreach support the successful implementation of the Plan, it will improve the community's overall image of City government and enhance Rensselaer's reputation for community involvement, which will be a valuable asset in the City's efforts to secure outside funding sources in the future.

WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT

1. Establish a local development corporation (LDC) to oversee the redevelopment of the Hudson River waterfront in Rensselaer. The goals of the LDC would include:
 - Enhancing public access to the waterfront;
 - Ensuring new development is of the highest and best use;
 - Advocating for the protection of the environmental quality of the River and its shoreline; and
 - Identifying opportunities to expand recreational opportunities on the waterfront.

Specific responsibilities that the LDC would undertake include:

- Reviewing all development proposals within 100 feet of the River;
 - Working with existing waterfront property owners to provide public access; and
 - Ensuring the progress of the Hudson River Waterfront Trail and related trail linkages.
2. Review, and revise as necessary, the City's zoning code to ensure waterfront related uses are permitted in appropriate locations along the shoreline. Uses other than public recreation, water-dependant development (e.g. marina), residential, retail, office, accommodations and professional services should not be permitted.
 3. Involve citizens' groups, volunteer organizations and school groups in the clean up and protection of future public waterfront areas. Consider hosting regular clean-up days to remove debris and litter from the shoreline.

RESIDENTIAL LIVING

1. Encourage new housing development in strategic locations proximate to activity centers, such as the Central Business District, Bath Neighborhood and Train Station Area. These locations would provide convenient access to goods and services and generate additional demand for retail and other services. New development should focus primarily on infill sites in these preferred areas.
2. Develop a map of housing in the City and identify critical structures that are of importance to the architectural fabric of the community.
3. Identify housing structures that are not in compliance with maximum tenant allowances for enforcement purposes.
4. Develop and maintain a street tree inventory. To reduce costs, the City can solicit local forestry students to assist in the data collection needed for the inventory.
5. Develop a property maintenance brochure that describes the City's property maintenance program and regulations. In addition, the City's Code Enforcement department could meet with block clubs and other neighborhood and business organizations to discuss the program and to seek input on ways to improve it.
6. The City should promote the establishment of block clubs and other neighborhood organizations. Conduct seminars and workshops to guide citizens in their grassroots organizing efforts.
7. Work with block groups and community leaders to determine if there is interest in better defining particular City neighborhoods. Neighborhood definition techniques could include, but not be limited to, the installation of historic plaques, neighborhood signage, or specially designed streetscape elements. An identifiable and defined urban

neighborhood can create a strong sense of community pride for its residents. Neighborhoods are often defined based on location and community assets such as downtown, the waterfront, a park and historic architecture. The City of Rensselaer consists of several neighborhoods, some that are fairly well defined and others that are not. A program that assists in the definition and organization of residential neighborhoods could be expanded to identify other neighborhood specific activities needed to address quality of life issues for residents.

8. Work with developers to ensure new residential development is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood(s) and supports the overall goal of increasing home ownership opportunities in the City.
9. Due to the age and condition of infrastructure, and the new Statewide Stormwater Management regulations, ensure a review of system impacts are provided by residential developers.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND OPEN SPACE

1. Ensure strict review of Environmental Impact Statements and Environmental Assessment Forms associated with all new development and redevelopment projects.
2. Post "do not litter" signage in areas with heavy pedestrian traffic.
3. Develop educational kiosks and interpretive signage near key natural resources in the City.
4. Pay tuition and related expenses for key officials and staff members to attend SEQRA training sponsored by the New York State Planning Federation and other groups. This will assist the City is staying up to date on SEQRA and learning how it can be used to protect the environment from development activities.

5. Develop and inventory of brownfield sites in the City.
6. Develop a Master Plan for the Hollow that integrates environmental education and stewardship efforts with habitat restoration programs.

TRANSPORTATION

1. Develop attractive wayfinding signage to post at major gateway locations entering the City and downtown.
2. Require that new streets be connected to the existing street grid. The grid street pattern provides excellent access and connectivity, not only for vehicles but also pedestrians and bicyclists. Cul-de-sac and dead-end streets should be discouraged. The grid street pattern should not be compromised by large development projects that would consume a section of a street. This is especially true downtown, where pedestrian activity is at a premium and where short blocks allow for easier pedestrian movement. Having short blocks downtown is an important asset that should be maintained wherever possible.
3. Work with county, state and regional economic development agencies to fund transportation access projects at key economic development sites.
4. Position off-street parking in the downtown area behind buildings. Parking along the frontage of lots should be restricted. Where possible, shared parking lots should be encouraged, especially where the timing of parking lot usage varies.
5. Conduct a comprehensive parking analysis to determine where parking shortages exist and what groups lack adequate parking (i.e., residents, retail customers, office workers, industry workers, etc.). The study should develop a prioritized list of areas that need additional parking and the type of parking (e.g. surface lot, parking structure, on-street, etc.) that would best suit each area's need.
6. Develop access management plans for key

corridors in the City to identify strategies to improve and enhance their safety, operation and appearance.

7.

IMAGE DEVELOPMENT

1. Maintain existing and identify new locations for planters and landscaping in public spaces throughout the City.
2. Adopt and consistently enforce design guidelines in commercial areas throughout the City. Design guidelines can be customized for specific areas of the city (e.g. Waterfront, Downtown, etc.) or can be developed for citywide use.
3. Develop a façade improvement program and identify additional resources to improve the maintenance of city buildings and structures, especially those located in the downtown, train station and waterfront areas.
4. Support the development of volunteer gardening and clean-up clubs to augment the City's beautification efforts.

GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY AND COMMUNICATION

1. Work with other municipalities in the region to pursue private and public funding opportunities. This approach not only improves cooperation among neighboring municipalities, it increases the chances of receiving funding.
2. Establish regular meetings with representatives from neighboring municipalities to share information, ideas and issues.
3. Utilize multiple means of advertising for public meetings, such as notices in the paper, City website, direct mailing and flyers at strategic locations, to increase public participation at City meetings and events.
4. Successful revitalization of the City will require a substantial grassroots effort by citizens and merchants. Promote volunteer opportunities that invite residents and merchants to participate in revitalization efforts. Utilize volunteers innovatively and capitalize

on often underutilized segments of the community, including the elderly and youth.

5. Consider recruiting interested community volunteers from each of the City's wards to represent their area in planning-related matters. The Planning Department would engage in regular meetings with participating community members to provide updates on citywide issues as well as those relating to the specific wards. In addition to conveying information, such meetings would also allow the officials to hear concerns from citizens from particular areas of the City on a regular basis. It is recommended that each ward include between three and five volunteer representatives for this program.
6. Develop a community service recognition program that would include a "Distinguished Community Service" award. The awards should be symbolic of the City of Rensselaer and connote community pride.
7. Work with surrounding municipalities to enhance the tourism industry and economic development opportunities.
8. Consider the development of youth advisory committee to provide input and feedback on youth-related activities, policies and programs. Cultivating youth involvement will help ensure active citizenry and leadership in the future.
9. Utilize the City's website to provide elected officials, city staff, residents and businesses with information about important issues, events, meetings and activities.
10. Develop a citizen's handbook that contains contact information and general information about City government and local community organizations. The handbook could be posted on the City's website.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

1. Identify and inventory potential economic development sites in the City, listing their attributes and site preparation needs to enable shovel-ready status. Work with the County,

State and other government officials to fund preparation of key sites.

2. Maintain a database of available retail space, vacant parcels and build-ready sites suitable for commercial and industrial development.
3. Identify areas where electronic infrastructure is or could be located to support the development of high-tech businesses and industry within the City.
4. Conduct a retail and services survey among residents to identify existing gaps. This information could be used to pursue development opportunities within the City.
5. Meet regularly with officials from the University of Albany, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and other regional institutions of higher education to plan economic development projects that could foster new industries in the City.
6. Create a dialogue with high-tech groups (e.g. RPI, Tech Valley, Sematec, etc.) to determine whether sites in Rensselaer could be used for support services.