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DOBBS FERRY

Residents Favor a Vibrant Downtown Dobbs Ferry



by Abby Luby –

A year's worth of surveys and testimonials on how to invigorate downtown Dobbs Ferry was presented to the Dobbs Ferry Board of Trustees in mid-May.

Raven David, Coordinator of the Dobbs Ferry Downtown Improvement Task Force, highlighted the salient points culled from 929 questionnaires filled out by residents and business owners.

“We submitted a high-level overview as well as our recommendations and proposed actions,” said David. “When I told them that all this information could be intimidating, there was a light chuckle from the crowd.”

The challenge for the task force was summarizing extensive data and focusing on the popular issues. Not surprising, parking and traffic flow was a top priority for residents and small business owners. More specialty shops and family-owned restaurants were also high on the list, along with enhancing the downtown's walkability. Beautification would entail building more green spaces, more trees, sidewalk planters, benches and gathering spaces. Overall, loud and clear was creating a downtown that would be an inviting destination point.

“Our objectives are to build a harbor of commerce,” said David. “We want to attract visitors and bolster patronage of our businesses. We also need to study traffic alternatives and embellish services for the future.”

More than 30 people contributed to the task force in a collaborative effort with groups such as the Village of Dobbs Ferry Sustainability Task Force, The Historic District and Chamber of Commerce. Task force members also met one-on-one with village administrators from Ardsley, Irvington, Hastings, Larchmont, Sleepy Hollow and Tarrytown.

“We’re hoping that collaborative effort continues, and our recommendations carry over to the next phase of this project,” said David.

Dobbs Ferry Village Trustee Christy Knell worked with the Downtown Improvement Task Force as a liaison, guiding them through a list of recommendations. “We needed to look at what items were possible,” said Knell. “We also worked with our village administrator, Charlene Indelicato, on what ideas could actually happen and weren’t pie in the sky, unachievable goals.”

Now that the results of the survey are completed, Knell said the first steps responding to the recommendations wouldn’t require any money.

“One of the task force’s recommendations was to create committees as a way of mobilizing volunteers who want to contribute,” she said. “We don’t want to add more onto the plates of the village board or staff.”

One of those recommendations would be to form an events committee; survey results favored more “experiential” events, including Ferry Festa, 4th of July, and Memorial Day Parade. An economic development committee would study how to incentivize businesses, fill vacant storefronts and develop goals to stimulate downtown business activity.

Other recommendations were to develop pre-approved aesthetic standards and lower fees for fast-track signage approval, as well as more thorough, strict signage guidelines for new business applications. Grant monies might be sought to transform the intersection of Cedar and Main Streets into a proper town square.

“I feel a lot of momentum is out there with residents and businesses who are engaged in this idea,” Knell said. “It’s a really a good time to be in Dobbs Ferry for all of us — businesses, residents, new property owners. There are many people who want to volunteer their time to make things happen in the downtown and that’s very inspiring and heart-warming. It was a very positive experience to be a part of the many meetings and workshops of this task force.”