

PUTNAM COUNTY MAIN STREET PARTNERSHIP PLANNING STUDY

Spring 2009

Prepared for the Putnam County Department of Planning
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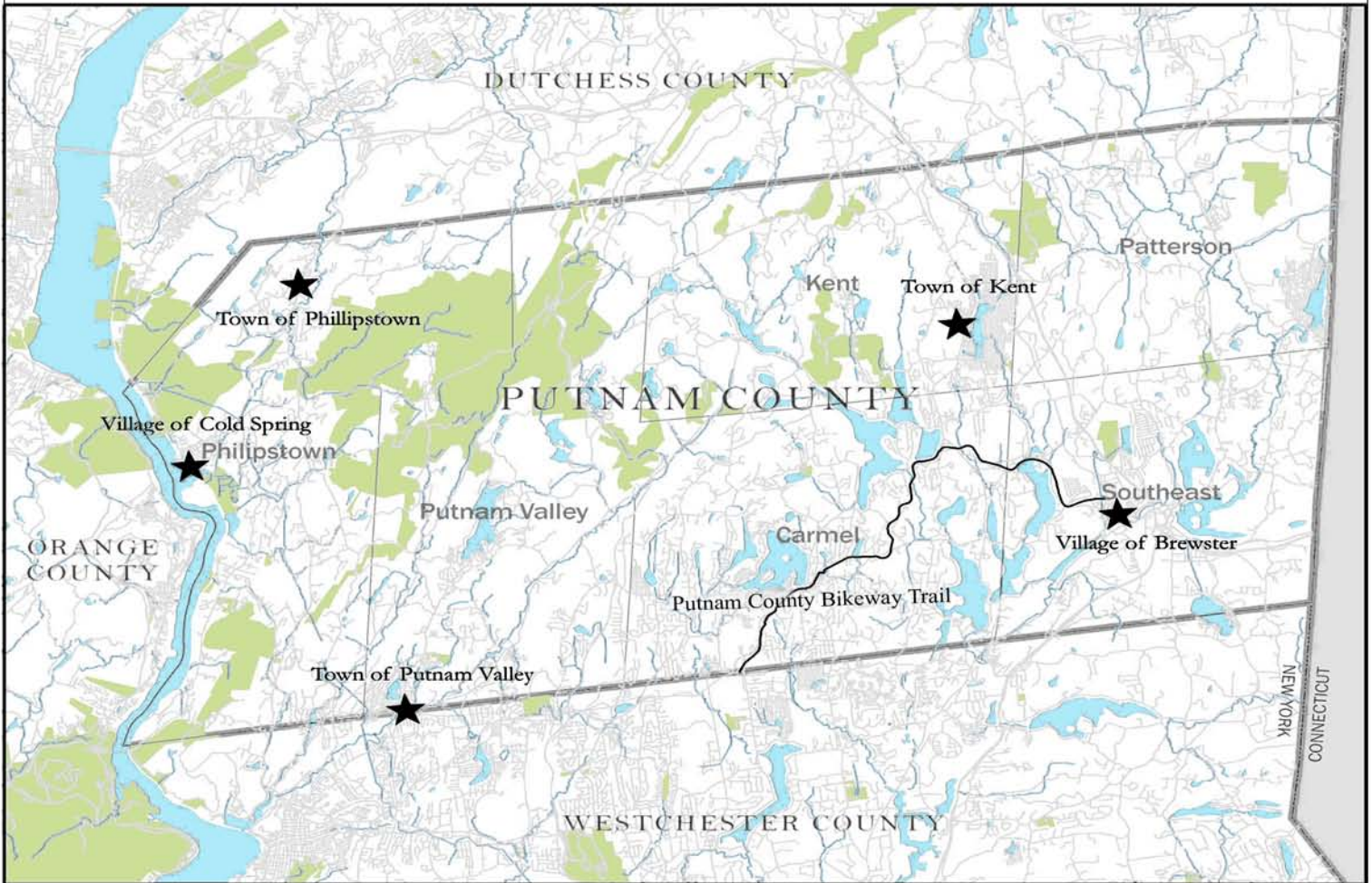


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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Putnam County Main Street Partnership represents a partnership between Putnam County and its towns and villages to address issues of community revitalization in the County's hamlets, villages, and traditional commercial centers. Funding for this study was secured by the Putnam County Department of Planning from the NYS Quality Communities Program and administered locally by the Putnam County Planning Department in conjunction with the Putnam County Purchasing Department. The RBA Group in association with E.M. Pemrick & Company were the consultants hired to conduct the various components of the study. The RBA Group in association with E.M. Pemrick & Company was the consultant hired to conduct the various components of the study. This report is available to all of the County's municipalities, so that the ideas resulting from this study may be applied to other towns or villages experiencing similar issues. The final product was a series of illustrative plans and cross-sections, renderings, maps, two niche marketing plans and a draft sign ordinance, as well as a report documenting all that the RBA team had learned.

After reviewing prior plans and visiting each of the sites to understand the context, the RBA Group met with stakeholders from each community to identify the core issues to be addressed. On subsequent visits, members of our project team spent time at each location making observations and collecting data. RBA worked with Putnam County to gather information about previous studies and capital projects that would inform our recommendations. Depending on the individual needs of the community and the project requirements, RBA conducted traffic counts, roadway inventories, business surveys, and focus group interviews, as well as issued questionnaires to solicit broad community input.

Below is an overview of the tasks and recommendations for each of the municipalities that participated in this study.

Town of Kent

Route 52 along Lake Carmel, from Route 311 to Towners Road, is in need of a cohesive planning effort to connect existing businesses with one another while recruiting new businesses in the corridor's vacant retail space. To address this issue, the RBA team was tasked with developing a niche marketing plan to identify economically viable commercial uses as well as marketing opportunities for vacant commercial space. Further, the Town sought recommendations to address zoning limitations that tend to stall tenant recruitment.

Recommendations include a focus on "convenience" retail development, catering to Kent residents that travel on Route 52 daily, rather than a focus on a specific business identity or type. In previous decades, the strength of this corridor as a main street lied in the fact that business thrived off of the family-oriented culture of the lake community, so convenience shopping would reestablish that focus on the local population. In addition, it is recommended that mixed-use and new types of commercial development be pursued, such as a new business incubator, where start-up businesses can grow with the Route 52 corridor. The regulatory solution is to streamline the building code requirements in order to allow businesses to rent in a shorter period than it currently takes. All of this will work to overcome the difficulties Kent has seen in recruiting and keeping retail tenants.

In conjunction with the niche marketing plan was a public space/placemaking initiative to identify locations for a pocket park along Route 52 that would focus community revitalization efforts. Five sites were recommended based on considerations of location and ability to acquire the land for public use. Two sites, one on each end of the corridor, were proposed for gateway treatments. These gateways would establish a sense of place as drivers enter the “downtown” section of the corridor. Three sites were recommended for further evaluation as potential pocket park locations. All sites are either owned by or can be acquired by the Town for public use. Emphasis was put on locations that relate to the existing businesses as well as to the Lake Carmel Community Center, which houses the Arts on the Lake program.

Village of Brewster

Main Street/North Main Street from Route 22 to Carmel Avenue includes a variety of business types, with some vacant retail spaces, particularly further away from the centrally-located Metro North railroad station. The RBA team was asked to conduct a market analysis to determine the strengths of the existing businesses, and to develop a commercial ‘identity’ to establish a direction for future retail development in the Village.

In addition, the Village sought an update to the sign regulations in the existing Village Code, which was outdated and did not consider all applicable sign types. A review committee met with RBA to identify specific issues to be addressed, and worked independently to arrive at a consensus about the desired specifications for new sign regulations. Among the concerns were excessive window signs, incompatible sign styles, non-conforming regulations for temporary signs and a general lack of signage limitations.

The Niche Marketing Plan offers recommendations that build on the urban character within a natural setting, the proximity and relationship to New York City and the diverse population of the Village. Keeping in mind the local perceptions of the Village as well as the limitations of being within the New York City Watershed, the recommendations aim to fill vacant retail space with businesses that will not only compliment those which already exist, but to draw people from elsewhere in the County and along the Metro North Harlem Line into Brewster.

The Draft Sign Ordinance established the framework for a revised sign ordinance that will provide a balance between a spirit of unique character and a cohesive downtown identity. The Draft Ordinance requires further refinement by the Village Board of Trustees, but includes guidelines and restrictions to address the specific needs of the Village of Brewster. The recommendations in the Draft Sign Ordinance cover allowable sign types, materials, size (as a function of the size of the storefront), lighting, color, awning requirements, and time duration and quantity limitations for temporary signs, such as political signs. The Village will utilize this draft as the basis for final sign regulations to be incorporated into the Village Code, which is currently under revision.

Town of Putnam Valley

Oregon Corners, the intersection of Oscawana Lake Road and Peekskill Hollow Road, is the commercial center of Putnam Valley. Historically, the converging creeks created ideal circumstances for commercial development, however in more recent years, prioritizing vehicular traffic and uncoordinated development have created an environment that is uncomfortable for drivers as well as pedestrians. To help Oregon Corners become a vibrant town center once again, RBA conducted a traffic and pedestrian access study with the dual

purpose of addressing vehicular and pedestrian access while also creating a sense of identity for this business district. In addition, RBA was asked to propose locations for pocket parks.

The recommendations are based on original traffic count data, and include improved vehicular operations, which were coordinated with the County's ongoing plan to redesign the intersection. The addition of turn lanes at three of the intersection's approaches will ensure better traffic flow without impeding on pedestrian space. In addition, connections between parking areas, businesses and natural areas through a series of proposed footpaths, pedestrian bridges, sidewalks and pocket parks are proposed. Distinctive crosswalks and shortened crossing distances at intersections are recommended to improve pedestrian access. Street trees and tinted sidewalks will provide a sense of place as well as a cue to drivers that pedestrians are to be expected.

To address the need for parking, parallel parking is proposed, as well as improved access to the considerable parking areas that already exist in the vicinity. These parking areas will be connected to nearby businesses via sidewalks and footpaths that would bring pedestrians through wooded areas along and over the creeks to access stores and services.

Village of Cold Spring

Route 9D from the intersection of Main Street to Chestnut Street is a section of a State highway with moderately high traffic volumes and speeds. Many Cold Spring residents cross Route 9D on foot to access the services on the west side, but there are no signalized crossings other than the intersection with Main Street. RBA was asked to improve traffic flow and to provide additional pedestrian crossing opportunities.

The primary recommendations of this study relate to providing a pedestrian safety zone on Route 9D between Main Street and Chestnut Street, with minor adjustments to signal timing. A series of paved intersections with striped crosswalks linking desire lines across Route 9D are proposed. These crossings will strongly emphasize the pedestrian presence in the area. "Yield to Pedestrians" signs at each crossing, as well as at the intersection with Main Street further reinforce pedestrian prioritization. It is recommended that a full traffic study be conducted utilizing summer volumes for the signalized intersection of route 9D at Main Street. Both pedestrian and vehicular volumes have been growing in this area, and signal timing should be optimized for maximum benefit to both pedestrians and motorists.

Town of Philipstown

Philipstown Center (previously known as Perk's Plaza) is a newly renovated and expanded strip mall on Route 9 between East Mountain Road South and the former Fishkill Road. At the center of this study area is the newly configured Fishkill Road, which provides a new more direct connection between Philipstown Center and the newly expanded Firehouse and ballfields, which is a growing community gathering place. Because there are no sidewalks and no signal at this new intersection, the Town was in need of a pedestrian access plan.

The County has conducted a signal warrant analysis for the intersection and has recommended that a signal be installed at this location.

A sidewalk is proposed along the north side of Fishkill Road (within the existing right-of-way) as well as on the east side of Route 9. Street trees within a planted amenity strip are

proposed along Route 9 and will act as a buffer between pedestrians and adjacent traffic. This improvement would create a pedestrian connection that would encourage pedestrian access between the community's recreational and commercial centers. A southbound right-turn lane is also proposed for vehicles turning onto Fishkill Road from Route 9, to alleviate pressure from through traffic that has been experienced by drivers wishing to turn onto Fishkill Road. Envisioning the success of this initial step towards a walkable community center, a long-term recommendation proposes that non-conforming (mostly industrial) uses could be redeveloped as additional downtown commercial, thereby justifying another sidewalk with street trees on the west side of the street.

Putnam County Trailway

The Putnam County Trailway is on the old New York Central Railroad right-of-way, which roughly parallels Route 6 from Baldwin Place through Mahopac and Carmel, ending in Brewster. The purpose of kiosk placement along the trail is to link the trailway to the surrounding areas as it passes through historic sites, natural areas and commercial centers. A total of nine kiosk locations were identified, where trail users can learn about the County's past and current attractions, and where users can access the trail and often times, park vehicles.

An important consideration is available space for a kiosk structure, as the trailway's right-of-way is often only wide enough for the paved path itself. Close coordination with the County ensured that the trailway design and connections that would be made by segments of the trail that are currently under construction were fully understood. Locations were further refined by proposing *wayfinding* kiosks, to point out nearby destinations and services, and *interpretive* kiosks, which highlight scenic views and tell the stories of the area's history.

For further information on this study please contact:

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Funding and Purpose

The Putnam County Main Street Partnership Program is collaboration among Putnam County and its 6 towns and 3 villages to engage in cooperative problem solving and the sharing of talent and resources through broad based community involvement in issues surrounding revitalization in Putnam’s traditional villages, hamlets and commercial centers. Funded through the New York State Quality Communities Grant Program, a program of the NYS Department of State, Office of Coastal, Local Government and Community Sustainability, the Main Street Partnership Program was designed by, and is administered by, the Putnam County Department of Planning, Development and Public Transportation in conjunction with the Putnam County Purchasing Department. State funding for this program was provided to conduct a variety of planning studies including a niche marketing program, design guidelines and local ordinance development, pedestrian safety studies, and identification of sites for public spaces/places.

All Putnam municipalities were invited to participate in the planning studies. The towns of Kent, Putnam Valley and Philipstown and the villages of Cold Spring and Brewster joined the program. Topics for study were selected by each community to reflect their needs. Putnam County participated as well, with a multi-town project for the design of wayfinding & interpretive kiosks along the Putnam County Trailway traversing the towns of Carmel and Southeast. Topics for study were selected by each community to reflect their needs. After an extensive Request for Proposal process, Putnam County selected the RBA Group in association with E.M. Pemrick and Company to conduct the various planning studies requested by the participating communities. E.M. Pemrick and Company was responsible for the preparation of niche marketing plans for study areas in the Village of Brewster and Town of Kent. The RBA Group supervised all aspects of the planning study in conjunction with the Putnam County Planning Department.

1.2 Study Locations and Tasks

There are six distinct study locations detailed in the four project tasks. They will be broken down in this report by geography rather than task. The study locations and corresponding tasks are as follows:

1. Town of Kent - Route 52 along Lake Carmel, from Route 311 to Towners Road

Niche Marketing Plan: Identify economically viable commercial uses and marketing strategies.

Public Space/Places Opportunity Study: Identify locations for creating a pocket park to provide a focal point for community revitalization.

2. Village of Brewster - Main Street/North Main Street from Route 22 to Carmel Avenue

Niche Marketing Plan: Identify economically viable commercial uses to develop a commercial “identity”.

Signage: Prepare a sign ordinance to be incorporated into their Village Code.

3. Town of Putnam Valley - Oregon Corners: intersection of Oscawana Lake Road and Peekskill Hollow Road

Traffic/Pedestrian Access Study: Prepare a cohesive plan to enhance the appearance and maximize public access, creating a sense of place and improving vehicular and pedestrian flow.

Public Space/Places Opportunity Study: Identify locations for creating a pocket park to provide a focal point for community revitalization.

4. Village of Cold Spring - Route 9D from the intersection of Main Street to Chestnut Street

Traffic/Pedestrian Access Study: Prepare a design study to improve traffic flow and add additional crosswalks to ease congestion for residents, Metro-North commuters and visitors.

5. Town of Philipstown - Philipstown Center (previously known as Perk's Plaza): Route 9 from East Mountain Road South to the former Fishkill Road

Traffic/Pedestrian Access Study: Formulate a plan that to improve pedestrian access.

6. Putnam County Trailway - Roughly parallels Route 6 from Baldwin Place through Mahopac and Carmel, ending in Brewster

Signage: Inventory historic sites, service establishments and points of interest. Identify optimum placement of signage kiosks at strategic points along the trailway.

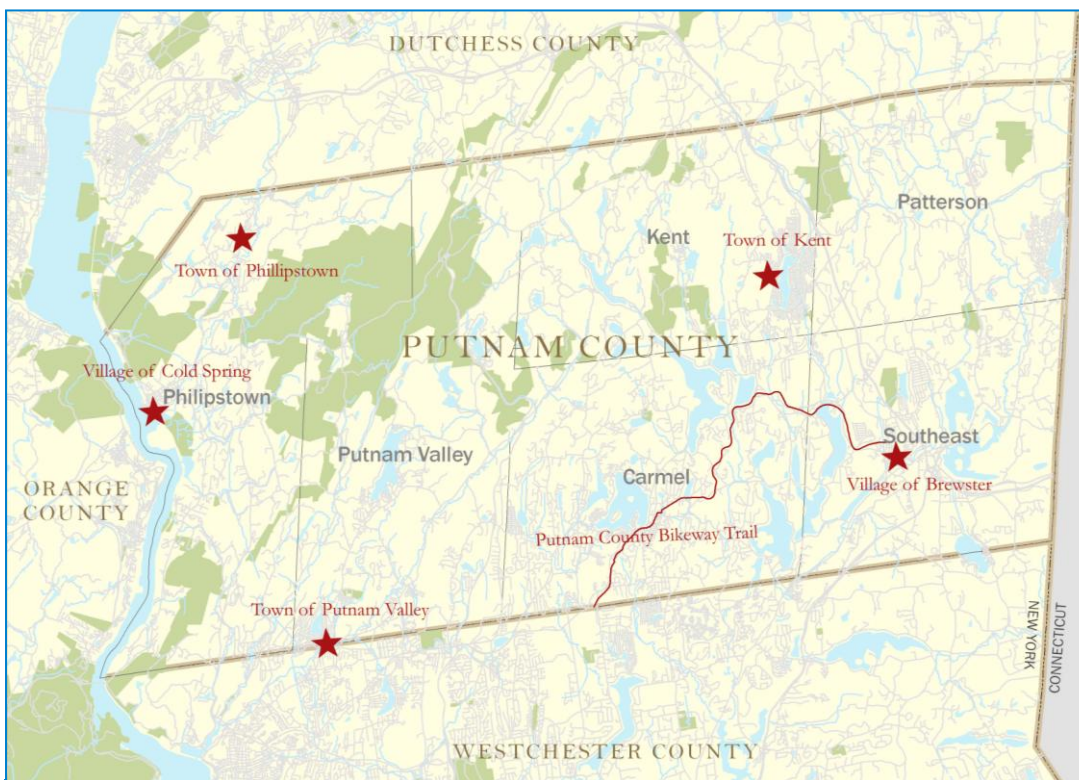


Figure 1.1: Study Locations

1.3 Study Goals and Objectives

The Putnam County Main Street Partnership Program was created to facilitate the collaboration between the County and its municipalities to provide implementable programs that translate community revitalization goals into concrete design plans. The products of the study will be available countywide, so that every community can use the information and methodology as a basis for similar projects tailored to their community. The benefits of this collaboration will be replicable, relevant community enhancement strategies that respect individual community visions while creating a coordinated, consistent and readily implementable response to revitalization issues countywide. While the products are mostly site-specific, they are designed to inform and inspire neighboring communities.

1.4 Approach

Following the selection of the planning consultant, The RBA Group, staff of the Putnam County Planning Department and the Putnam County Purchasing Department met to refine the project scope. County staff visited with each participating community to explain the program in greater detail and to gather relevant studies, plans and background material from each community in advance of the first meeting with the planning consultant. The RBA team then met with elected officials and/or stakeholder groups from each community to discuss project goals and to acquire additional site-specific information, including existing and proposed drawings and maps used to determine property ownership and right-of way. RBA performed site evaluation and analysis, documenting existing conditions specific to objectives set for each location.

Each community required a slightly different approach because tasks varied in each community. After the first meeting with each community, the RBA team was in regular contact with the designated community representative. Coordination with appropriate County personnel was also important to both acquire existing plans and to provide consistency with ongoing and future County and State projects. Meetings were held with the Putnam County Department of Highways and Facilities staff as well as with the Transportation Planner at the Putnam County Department of Planning.

Draft plans were presented to the County project team, comments were addressed and plans were then presented to each community at public meetings, soliciting feedback and answering questions. Follow-up communication was coordinated with each community as necessary. The final product is a culmination of input from the County, local elected officials and stakeholder groups and comments from the public at each presentation.

This final report will be provided to each participating community and will be posted on the Putnam County website, www.putnamcountyny.com for download by any interested parties. A public symposium will be held in April, 2009 to present the study to the community at large.

For further information on this study please contact:

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