

Local Planning Committee (LPC) Meeting #3

Wednesday, July 24, 2024, 6:00 to 8:00 pm | Montgomery Senior Center, 32 Bridge St, Montgomery, NY

Meeting Summary

Tommy Boston, Project Manager from VHB – the consulting firm that is leading the state and subconsultant project team, opened the meeting with a review of the Village’s vision and goals with the LPC and then presented the initial key takeaways from the Village of Montgomery’s Downtown Profile and Assessment (DPA). The DPA is a document that the project team has developed that take a holistic look at the existing conditions of the Village through the lens of demographics, socioeconomic conditions, environmental considerations, transportation and connectivity, as well as the Village’s economic context and housing inventory and needs assessment. Key takeaways revolved around the need for better accessibility, connectivity, and safety for pedestrians and cyclists, a need to attract more residents and visitors to Montgomery to sustain its high quality of life, and a need to diversify and expand the existing retail and hospitality offerings in the Village.

Tommy, along with Christie Kastalek, Deputy Project Manager from VHB, took turns presenting the eighteen stand-alone projects that were submitted as part of the Open Call for Projects. Three projects were submitted by non-profits, five public projects were submitted by the Village, and ten private projects were submitted by private sponsors. Of the three non-profit projects, the Montgomery Free Library project had a scope of under \$75,000, meeting the criteria for the Small Projects Fund (SPF), and was subsequently moved to the SPF after speaking with the project sponsor. One of the Village’s public projects, the Walkkill River Linear Trail, referenced in previous LPC meetings and in the Village’s NY Forward application, was tabled by the Village prior to the LPC meeting after reviewing the cost estimate and the need for additional discussions with private property owners. Lastly, a private project sponsor had submitted two separate projects for the same property. After discussions between the project team and the sponsor, it was decided that the two projects would be consolidated into one single project.

The last project that was discussed in greater detail by the LPC was a private project submitted by the Montgomery Nursery School to repurpose and renovate the Route 17K Water Building to house its Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) Program. This was discussed in greater detail given that the proposed location of the project is outside of the existing Montgomery NY Forward Target Area. The LPC deliberated the implications of extending this boundary to include this property, such as fairness to the other property owners and businesses in the extended area, and determined that the boundary should not be extended to include this property.

The meeting then moved to the eligible public projects and their summary presentations where it was noted that this was a high-level introduction to the projects, and that the LPC would have an internal review session on August 8th to review the projects and applications further and discuss and ask additional questions. It was also noted that all project scopes and budgets are expected to evolve during the NY Forward process, and that this process is iterative where changes are anticipated based on coordination between the project team, project sponsors, the Village, and the LPC. The project team presented information about 14 standalone projects, including the project description, project sponsor, project type, alignment with vision and goals, total project cost, and NY Forward request.

A brief discussion was had regarding the Letters of Interest(LOI) for the Small Project Fund. It was noted that the LOIs are aimed to inform the Village about the demand for projects meeting the requirements of the SPF, which covers facades, accessibility, energy improvements, among other things. There was a consensus to proceed with the SPF as a public project based on the demand presented by the LOIs. The LPC discussed the appropriate scale of projects in terms of project costs, eligibility, and the priority of non-profit and private projects. It was noted that the LPC could continue to discuss the fund in future meetings and make recommendations about the appropriate size of the Small Project Fund.

The LPC also emphasized that any awarded projects would still undergo the Village's review process to ensure alignment with planning guidelines. Christie added that projects removed from consideration for NY Forward funding would still be included in the SIP as supporting projects, giving them an advantage in pursuing other state funding.

Prior to the close of the LPC meeting, the public comment portion was opened. Public comments are summarized below:

- A question was raised about whether the Veterans Park scope included the Pleasure Ground rails, pavilion, kayak launch, and restrooms. The response indicated that this would be discussed with the Village.
- Another question concerned the management of the SPF and the process for letters of interest. It was explained that a grant administrator would be hired, likely external to the Village. The Village would also establish a committee to review future SPF applications.
- An inquiry was made on if the presentation materials would be available to the public, to which it was confirmed that all public and LPC meeting materials would be posted on the project website.