

Report
of the
Economic Development Team (EDT):
Summary, Background and Recommendations
for the
Town of Kirkland
Village of Clinton
Clinton Central Schools
Hamilton College

October 7, 2009

I. Summary

This Report of the Economic Development Team is the work of a committee of officials and citizens of the Town of Kirkland to review past efforts, analyze current opportunities and recommend a course of action to support a long-term economic development plan to benefit the Town of Kirkland (the “Town”), the Village of Clinton (the “Village”), Clinton Central Schools (“CCS”) and Hamilton College (the “College”).

This Report recommends the creation of a Local Development Corporation (or similar entity)¹ to champion and implement the recommendations of this report, develop and execute a marketing plan, identify funding sources (including private donors and State and Federal grants), and implement programs to retain and grow existing businesses.

This report also contains nine additional recommendations organized in four categories:

- Establish four “Focus Zones” for economic development (see appendix);
- Focus resources and efforts, over the next three years, on development of a business park along and northeast of Robinson Road;
- Create long-range plans for development in the secondary Focus Zones over the next three years; and
- Focus resources and efforts on the three secondary Focus Zones beyond the three year time frame.

The EDT believes that careful, controlled growth of a mix of retail, commercial and light industrial enterprises within the four Focus Zones will, in time, produce the desired incremental increases in employment, residential housing, and sales and property taxes that will expand the tax base in the Town to help support CCS and maintain the quality of life the Kirkland community cherishes. The team urges the adoption, funding and execution of the recommendations herein.

¹ The proposed LDC is not without precedent in the area. The Griffiss Local Development Corporation (“GLDC”) is a self-supporting entity that has made great progress in revitalizing the former air force base. The Cazenovia Area Community Development Association (“CACDA”) supports a broad range of initiatives in the community, including economic development projects.

II. Background

This Report and the work behind it are the outgrowth of two initiatives that have been underway in the Kirkland community² for several years.

The Master Plan Committee

Since 2006, the Master Plan Committee had been reviewing the 1993 Comprehensive Land Use Plan for the Town (the “1993 Plan”) with the intent of updating that plan. The Committee included representatives from the Town and Village boards, their respective planning boards and several citizens. The Committee met monthly to identify elements of the 1993 Plan that had not been implemented as well as potential opportunities for development that could be included in an update to that plan. By June 2008, the Committee determined that the 1993 Plan was adequate and suffered primarily from a lack of implementation and an incomplete understanding of infrastructure (water and sewer) conditions and capabilities. Consequently, the committee judged that the existing document required no comprehensive changes. The Town Board subsequently ratified and reaffirmed the 1993 Plan as the Master Plan for the Town at a meeting in late-June 2008.

Kirkland Ventures and the Community Development Plan

The second concurrent initiative is Kirkland Ventures, which was originally formed in the late 1990’s as an *ad hoc* citizens’ group concerned with the long-term quality of life in the Kirkland community, including financial and social quality of life. Over the intervening years, Kirkland Ventures gradually expanded the community’s conversation about weaknesses, threats and the lack of a long-term community plan, particularly with respect to balancing the high quality of education at CCS with an affordable school tax structure. The process accelerated in the fall of 2007 when the group, aided by private donations and funds from Hamilton College, contracted with a local resident and planning consultant to broaden both public and one-on-one discussions, conduct small group meetings and then publish two documents outlining future opportunities for the community.

In June 2008, officials from the Town, the Village, CCS and the College met and agreed to the need for a broad Community Development Plan (the “CDP”). Subsequently, and with additional funding provided by the Town, the Village, the College and private donors, Kirkland Ventures began a multi-faceted approach to defining the issues, identifying solutions, setting goals and strategies, and encouraging citizen involvement and action. The process included (1) “Focus Groups”, facilitated brainstorming sessions among resident professionals and other citizens to vet and prioritize goals and strategies, (2) a series of Town Hall-style “Community Forums” to solicit public input, generate additional ideas and engage the community, and (3) “Action Teams” to tackle specific issues in specific areas of community need.

In September 2008, the *ad hoc* citizens’ group dissolved and Kirkland Ventures became an informal community-wide development effort led by a seven member Steering Committee with representatives of

² In the context of this Report, the “Kirkland community” includes the Town of Kirkland, the Village of Clinton, the Clinton Central School District (CCS), Hamilton College, and the hamlets of Clark Mills, Franklin Springs and Kirkland.

key community stakeholders³. The Steering Committee provides oversight, general direction and fiduciary responsibility to the CDP effort.

In late January 2009, the Steering Committee approved the first version of the CDP, which was subsequently endorsed by the Town, Village and CCS boards, and the senior staff at the College. The CDP articulates a long-term view of the Kirkland community and provides fourteen (14) “First Initiatives” toward achieving the vision, goals and strategies.

CDP: Vision and Goals

The vision articulated in the CDP is a community that balances an attractive and desirable place to live with a diversified, growing and sustainable tax base. To realize this vision there are three overarching goals:

1. Provide a rich and varied quality of life, including convenient access to commercial, cultural and recreational activities.
2. Assure access to excellent, affordable K – 12 schools.
3. Create a vibrant and diversified local economy with commercial enterprises that provide every-day retail needs, high value employment opportunities and complementary tax revenues.

CDP: Strategies

Achieving these goals will require the following five strategies:

1. (People) Create a culture of continuous planning and implementation.
2. (Growth) Focus economic development activities in four priority areas (Clark Mills, Robinson Road, Route 5 and the Village Core).
3. (Assets) Strengthen cultural, educational and recreational resources.
4. (Unity) Foster active collaboration and communication among the Village, Town, CCS, Hamilton College and all other members of the community.
5. (Efficiency) Ensure the efficient operation of all public institutions (Town, Village, and CCS).

To achieve the CDP vision and sustain the “quality of community” and the level of educational excellence at CCS, it is critical that the tax base be diversified through economic development efforts

³ The Steering Committee currently has eight members or their designees: the Town Supervisor, the Village Mayor, the College President, the CCS Superintendent, the Clinton Chamber of Commerce, and the Mohawk Valley EDGE President, plus two representatives from the former Kirkland Ventures ad hoc citizens’ group.

that will attract expanded retail, commercial and light manufacturing operations. To that end the CDP highlighted economic development as its top priority, with improved collaboration and communication as the next most important initiatives. Progress is already being made on these latter two activities. This Report addresses the economic development proposals in the CDP.

III. The Economic Development Team (EDT)

The Economic Development Team (“EDT”) was commissioned by the Town of Kirkland in the early fall of 2008 to continue and expand on the activities of the Master Plan Committee and consolidate that Committee’s efforts with those of Kirkland Ventures and the CDP. At the outset, the EDT was comprised of ten members and officials representing the Town, Village, CCS, the College and Mohawk Valley Economic Development Growth Enterprise (EDGE), plus members of the Town Planning Board, a citizen appointed by the Town Supervisor, and a representative from the Kirkland Ventures Steering Committee, who served as the facilitator for the project. Current members of the EDT are:

Frederick J. Arcuri	Mohawk Valley EDGE
Ferris J. Betrus, Jr.	Clinton Central School Board
John L. Crossley	Village Board
Frederick H. Hager	Kirkland Ventures
John D. Hecklau	Town Planning Board
Edward W. Kaido, Jr.	Town Planning Board
Mark C. Lewis	Town Council
Robert L. Lewis	(at large member)
Mark W. Reynolds	Mohawk Valley EDGE
David L. Smallen	Hamilton College

Meeting regularly over the past year, the EDT reviewed the recommendations in the 1993 Plan, the work of the Master Plan Committee, and the CDP for the Kirkland community. At varying times and in varying levels of detail, the team discussed and vetted many issues, including:

- whether to focus on residential or commercial development;
- the critical need to retain and nourish the existing businesses on Robinson Road and the effect the lack of water and sewer services has on retention and growth efforts;
- the cost and sources of potential funding for infrastructure expansion, whether on Robinson Road or elsewhere.
- the need to maintain the integrity of the Village Green and West Park Row as the “heart” of the community;
- the lack of available, up-to-date and comparative demographic information about the Kirkland community; and

- the opportunities to implement recommendations from the 1993 Plan that remain fallow.

The EDT's members believe that to protect CCS and ensure the overall vitality and viability of the Kirkland community, some level of economic growth is both desirable and necessary. The EDT believes that the recommendations herein will balance the uniqueness of the Kirkland community with a careful and controlled expansion of the tax base.

IV. Recommendations

1. Obtain concurrence and ratification from the Town and the Village, and their respective planning and zoning boards, for this Report. Obtain endorsement from CCS and Hamilton College.
2. Create a Local Development Corporation (or similar entity) to
 - **Champion**, spearhead and manage the process of creating and executing a Development Plan covering the recommendations herein and for all future development projects in the Town;
 - **Collaborate** with the Town and Village, their respective planning boards, CCS, the College and other stakeholders to promote and implement the Development Plan;
 - **Coordinate** in-kind services by and among local governments and other entities;
 - **Develop** and implement a marketing plan in conjunction with Mohawk Valley EDGE;
 - **Review** State, Federal and other potential grants for community development needs;
 - **Seek** grants or manage the process or coordinate and support the grant-writing efforts of others;
 - **Establish** a continuous Business Retention Program to periodically survey existing business in the Town to foster closer relations, improve retention, support their expansion efforts, and identify potentially synergistic new businesses for the Town.
3. Designate and promote four economic development Focus Zones (see appendix):
 - (A) Robinson Road – commercial and light industrial enterprises.
 - (B) Village Core – retail and multi-unit residential development.
 - (C) Route 5 Corridor – retail and commercial operations.
 - (D) Clark Mills – adaptive reuse of mill buildings for residential, retail, commercial and light manufacturing.

4. Designate Robinson Road as the Primary Focus Zone and the land bounded by Robinson Road, Kirkland Avenue, Limberlost Road and Utica Street as the future Kirkland Business Park.
5. Develop and implement activities to protect and retain existing businesses, fill the existing lots along Robinson Road, and target the larger Kirkland Business Park area for development of new and expanded commercial and light industrial enterprises.
6. Obtain approval from the Mohawk Valley Water Authority to connect the existing water systems in Clark Mills and/or the Village of Clinton service area with a new water main along Kirkland Avenue.
7. Define the costs and sources of funds to conduct an Initial Site Assessment on the Kirkland Business Park. Determine maximum potential development area, including both public and private lands. Gather property and tax mapping to determine ownership and feasibility of including in the Kirkland Business Park. Inventory all existing site data, including, but not necessarily limited to the following:
 - Zoning
 - Wetlands
 - Floodplains
 - Soils
 - Drainage/topography/steep slopes
 - Cultural resources
 - Restrictions/covenants/easements/ Agricultural Districts
 - On site infrastructure
 - Existing public infrastructure mapping and/or plans/studies, including sewer, water, roads, storm water, etc.
 - Existing private infrastructure including electric, natural gas, telecommunications, etc.
 - Identify method and funding to gather missing data
8. Produce a Master Plan for the Kirkland Business Park. Determine the range of potential uses (professional office, light industrial or mixed use). Explore financing options, including private equity, public debt, PILOT/TIF, state and federal grants, tax credit deal, etc. Vet with land owners and public policy decision makers. Acquire development rights to private land (options) giving permission to study property, propose uses, do testing, etc. Develop master plan for site development:
 - Road layout/parcelization
 - Infrastructure expansion
 - Capital investment plan.
9. Explore development possibilities and create a longer-term, 3-5 year plan for the three secondary Focus Zones (Clark Mills, Route 5 corridor and Village core).

10. Review and implement recommendations that were included in the 1993 Master Plan and remain relevant.

Appendix

- A = Area North-East of Robinson Road
- B = Village Core
- C = Route 5 Corridor
- D = Clark Mills

