

NYS MPO

Integrated Transportation Planning &  
Community Design Processes

POUGHKEEPSIE

“The positive impact of this project will be felt throughout Dutchess County. The construction of a new parking garage will energize local businesses and create jobs, protect the environment by making it easier for commuters to use public transportation, and highlight the historic Poughkeepsie waterfront so tourists and residents alike can take advantage of the beauty of the Hudson River.”

— *Congresswoman Sue Kelly*

# City of Poughkeepsie Transportation Strategy



## Significant Achievements

- ◆ A long-term strategy was developed that has resulted in key improvements in the economic vitality and physical environment in the City of Poughkeepsie.
- ◆ Ideas have withstood the test of time and survived changing directions in local political leadership. The ideas continue to be relevant to the community.
- ◆ The plan was developed with early and active public participation that resulted in broad support from the public as well as the business community. Support for the Strategy continues.
- ◆ To date, several significant elements of the Transportation Strategy have been realized.

## Overview

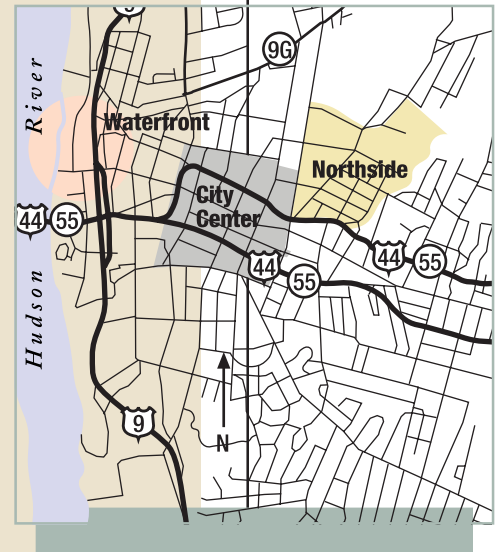
The City of Poughkeepsie Transportation Strategy is a long-range transportation and land use plan with specific goals of encouraging economic development, made possible by the Federal Transit Administration's Livable Communities Initiative. The plan focused on three strategic areas of the City; the waterfront, the City Center, and the Northside industrial area and its surrounding neighborhood. The strategy took a coordinated look at transportation and land use and set out to leverage changes in access, mobility and infrastructure to stimulate economic development and facilitate improvements in the overall community. The strategy was developed with broad based community participation and support.

# The Success Story

The Poughkeepsie Transportation Strategy was inspired by the Livable Communities Initiative, a program designed by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to strengthen the link between transit and community planning. The Poughkeepsie-Dutchess County Transportation Council (PDCTC), the City of Poughkeepsie, Dutchess County Department of Planning and Development, Metro-North Railroad, Economic Development Zone, and NYSDOT Region 8 all cooperated on the project. The planning study was conducted in 1997 with approximately \$50,000 in consulting fees and considerable staff resources. (Ehrenkrantz & Eckstut Architects was the urban design consultant and Sam Schwartz was the consulting engineer.)

Members of the Steering Committee focused the Transportation Strategy around three strategic areas of the City of Poughkeepsie: the Waterfront Area surrounding the Railroad Station, the City Center and the Northside Neighborhood. Each area offered different opportunities for improvements and faced different problems. Transportation was identified as a unifying opportunity. Planners, therefore, developed the strategy around key transportation improvements with the ultimate goal of encouraging revitalization and redevelopment.

The committee and consultants designed a planning process that encouraged early and active participation from as many people as possible. The public involvement process commenced with a series of public design workshops, held in the first two months of the project that involved presentations as well as small group work sessions. Organizers of the sessions set out to involve participants across project



The process began by looking at the City's overall context, but focused on three strategic areas.



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phases, so that they would be encouraged to do more than concentrate on the project elements specifically relevant to them. The workshops also stimulated involvement through creative use of three-dimensional models, aerial photos and maps. These communication tools helped elicit comments about existing conditions, potential opportunities and preferences for various development and transportation projects. The carefully designed and inclusive process ensured that the project was developed with full involvement from the public. Indeed the community energized the final strategy with a wide variety of ideas.

### The Strategy

#### Waterfront

Changes proposed for Poughkeepsie's Waterfront Area were among the most ambitious elements of the plan, in part because the Waterfront Area offered the greatest potential for change as well as the biggest opportunity to make a positive impact on the community and local

economy. At the start of the project, Poughkeepsie's Waterfront presented considerable development potential; it had large tracts of land controlled by the City, including a one mile of waterfront land with 46 acres of vacant property or under-used parkland.

To encourage use of the area, the transportation strategy proposed a series of transportation-related projects that would make it easier for people to see and get to the Waterfront. Each project was shaped to make the area more usable, attractive and secure, such that

A picture of Poughkeepsie's waterfront, taken in 1996, illustrates the area's development potential.



The intention was to bring the City back down to the Hudson by both expanding the active park area and by beginning to build an urban neighborhood.



When redeveloping the Metro-North Railroad station, designers enhanced interior passenger facilities as well as the station's exterior. The enhancements included visually aesthetic fixtures, lighting, benches and bike racks that also made the station more accessible.

## POUGHKEEPSIE

ultimately projects would stimulate economic development opportunities. The vision for the Waterfront, for example, included redeveloping a historic railroad station as the area's focal point taking advantage of the station's central location and frequent usage. The railroad station was already in important regional rail station that provided north and south connections via Amtrak and Metro-North Railroad.

Building out from the station, planners recommended creating an intermodal center at the train station, consolidating surface lots into a centrally located parking structure and building an elevated walking path with views of the river between the station and the waterfront. They also proposed a transit-oriented development district in the area within walking distance of the Railroad Station. They intended this district to complement the station's historic attributes as well as provide walkable, inviting connections between the City Center and the Waterfront and transform the station as the gateway to the riverfront. The railroad station was also selected as the site for a visitor's center. At the waterfront, planners also recommended extending the existing waterfront park north to Fallkill Creek, and to create a Greenway promenade with a central public plaza, skating rink and performance space.

### City Center

Similar to the proposed waterfront improvements, plans for the city center focused on improving transportation access to

### Project Success to Date:

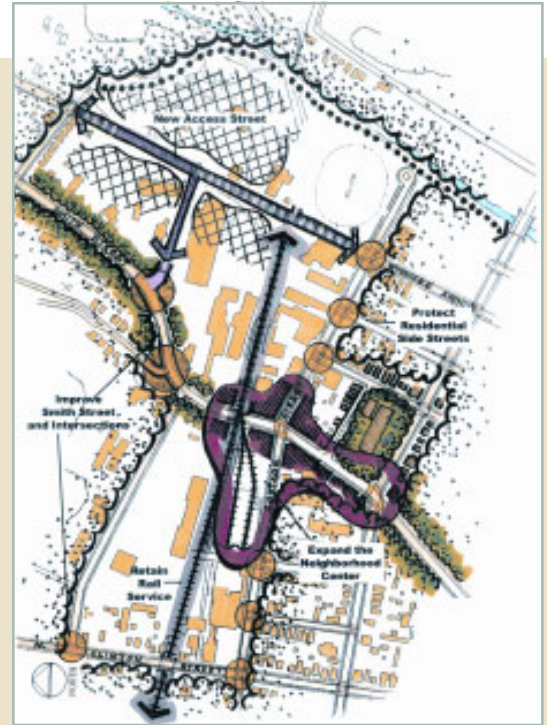
- ◆ Improvements to the Metro-North Railroad Station, including
  - ◆ a new intermodal center
  - ◆ restoration of the covered walkway to Main Street
  - ◆ an award winning parking structure with a covered walkway and river overlook that links the Station to the waterfront
- ◆ Completion of the Greenway promenade
- ◆ Development of the historic Reynolds warehouse complex
- ◆ Relocation of the Mid-Hudson Children's Museum to the waterfront
- ◆ Conversion of 1970s pedestrian mall into traditional Main Street
- ◆ Revitalization of the City Center with new residential projects

# City of Poughkeepsie Transportation Strategy

## POUGHKEEPSIE

One goal was to strengthen the Northside as a walkable and cohesive neighborhood.

and between downtown destinations. In particular, improvements were designed to make navigating the City more logical and accessible for both vehicle and pedestrian traffic. The consortium included, for example, turning the City's one-way system and pedestrian mall into tree-lined, two-way streets with on-street parking, reduced roadway speeds and improved pedestrian amenities. The plan also encouraged mixed use developments in the city center as a strategy to bring more people and more commercial activity to the downtown area throughout the evening, thereby addressing security concerns.



### Northside

Poughkeepsie's Northside neighborhood includes an industrial rail yard surrounded by residential neighborhoods. As a strategy to better integrate the industrial area with its residential neighbors, the plan called for establishing a transitional area of mixed use projects. The mixed-use development was designed to create a stronger neighborhood commercial center that would be used by members of the residential and industrial community. Planners envisioned the



commercial center as an asset for both residents and workers in the industrial area, giving both communities a common meeting area and stimulating neighborhood economic activity.

In the course of the public workshops goals for a neighborhood commercial center were expanded as conflicts were revealed between the residents and businesses in the area. These conflicts revolved concerns about increasing truck traffic routed through neighborhood streets. In response, the committee identified a 'preferred' truck route that outlined access to and within the industrial area. The route was not officially adopted by the City of Poughkeepsie, but some area firms have encouraged trucks to access their sites along this route. While not an ideal solution for all parties, the access plan was designed to remove trucks from side streets and improve access for trucks traveling to industrial areas.

## Results

The City of Poughkeepsie Transportation Strategy created a vision for three strategic areas of the city using transportation projects and land use changes as a catalyst for economic development. The Transportation Strategy developed an action plan that was built around a series of strategies with 41 implementation steps. These implementation steps, in turn, were prioritized and allocated across three development phases.

In addition to developing a long range implementation plan, the planning consortium also agreed to assign responsibility for implementation to several different agencies, including among others, the City of Poughkeepsie, NYSDOT, Metro-North Railroad, and NYS Bridge Authority. By assigning specific project responsibility to a variety of agencies, the plan encouraged an increased sense of



The historic Reynolds warehouse complex, originally proposed for another surface parking lot, has been renovated with a mix of retail, restaurants, and offices that will serve as a commercial anchor at the Main Street end of Water Street.

The Mid-Hudson Children's Museum relocated to the waterfront, providing a welcome burst of cultural activity at the northern end of Water Street, soon to be complemented by the rehabilitation of the historic Piano Factory across the street into 13 live-work units.

ownership among partner organizations and a bigger pool of financial resources. Having multiple partners also meant that delays experienced by one agency would not slow or stall the overall implementation efforts.

The Poughkeepsie Common Council unanimously endorsed the Transportation Strategy as a conceptual guide in 1997 and later cross-referenced it in the Comprehensive Plan.

Seven years after the Strategy was adopted, many of the Phase 1 action items have been successfully implemented with most improvements concentrated around the Waterfront Area.

Individual projects are improving the local economy and quality of life across the community in tangible ways. While the pace of implementation has been unsatisfactory for some of the strongest proponents of the plan, most agree that delays resulted largely from changing directions in political leadership. The Transportation Strategy retains considerable support and momentum for moving into Phase 2 of the Plan.



## Lessons Learned

- **Build broad-based support to transcend changes in the political environment.** The committee of agencies and organization designed the Poughkeepsie Transportation Strategy through considerable

The vision for the Waterfront included redeveloping a historic railroad station as the area's focal point taking advantage of the station's central location and frequent usage.

involvement and support from the public and key community stakeholders. They involved the public early during plan development and extended consultations through to final strategy development. By engaging the public and responding to their ideas, the plan generated significant support both from residents and the business community. This support proved critical as the views of local political leadership changed; the plan had sufficient support from a broad base of community stakeholders and thus, was able to survive changes in local political leadership.



- **Build consensus with partner organizations and diversify implementation responsibilities.** The Poughkeepsie Transportation Strategy required implementation actions from more than four independent agencies as well as the public sector. While a broad implementation strategy required additional cooperation during project planning stages, ultimately it helped secure early success for several key elements of the plan. By dividing responsibility across different agencies, some projects were able to move forward while others were stalled for political or budget reasons. The community, therefore, was able to see the progress and success which, in turn, built momentum and support. The momentum in turn spurred other implementing organizations to action.

- **Use small projects to demonstrate success and maintain momentum for long term goals.** In most cases, long term, 'big' plans consist of several smaller actions that are combined to achieve the overall goals of the plan. One of the challenges with long term plans is ensuring these smaller projects are carried out early enough in the process to sustain momentum and interest for the larger project. The

## Project Details

City of Poughkeepsie  
Transportation  
Strategy: Setting the  
City and Waterfront  
Redevelopment in  
Motion

Poughkeepsie-Dutchess  
County Transportation  
Council (PDCTC)  
Hudson Valley NYSDOT  
Region 8

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The bulkhead and  
the Greenway  
promenade were  
restored with street  
furniture, period  
lighting and a  
textured walkway  
along the entire  
Waryas Park  
frontage.

Poughkeepsie Transportation Strategy is an excellent example of such a plan. The Strategy broke action items into three phases and identified several high profile projects that could be implemented early to gain success and attention. This success demonstrated the effectiveness of the plan and ensured that the plan retained its relevance and interest for the community.

- **Improve security and safety by encouraging pedestrian activity and calming traffic.**

The Transportation Strategy included plans to improve traffic circulation as well as the pedestrian environment in the city center. These improvements were designed not only to improve transportation but also to encourage commercial activity and mixed use development in the city. These improvements also had a positive impact on community security. More “eyes on the street” tend to lend a sense of security to an area, because they minimize the feelings of isolation and vulnerability felt by lone pedestrians, especially at night. By incorporating elements that encourage slower moving vehicles and pedestrian activity, security can be increased and ultimately lead to new investment in downtown commercial and housing activities.

