

Project Name: NY Forward Stamford
Subject: Local Planning Committee Meeting #1

Meeting Location: Stamford Village Hall (84 Main Street)
Meeting Date: July 15, 2026
Meeting Time: 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM

Participants: **Local Planning Committee**

Robert Schneider (Co-Chair)
Peg Ellsworth (Co-Chair)
Patrick Barnes
Letty Karlsen
Hannah Bradfield
Patricia Heath
Cathy McKenna
Salvatore Fabbella
Antonia Besculides

Not present: Mary Skinner, Linda Stratigos

New York State

Stephen Yerly, AICP, Department of State (DOS)

*Not present: Tammy Kocak (ESD), Omar Sanders (ESD), Taylor Disco (HCR),
Allison Bodine (DOS)*

Consultant Team

Sarah Yackel, AICP, Principal, BFJ Planning
Suzanne Goldberg, AICP, Senior Planner, BFJ Planning

Not present: Michelle Gilman, AICP, Senior Planner, BFJ Planning

The purpose of this meeting was to introduce the Local Planning Committee (LPC) and project team members, the NY Forward process and timeline, and begin discussing goals and priorities for downtown Stamford. Approximately 40 members of the public attended the meeting. The presentation is posted on the [Stamford NY Forward website](#) and can be referred to for additional details.

Welcome and Introductions

- Mayor and LPC Co-Chair, Robert Schneider, welcomed attendees.
- Stephen Yerly, Revitalization Specialist from the New York State Department of State (DOS), introduced the NY Forward process.
- BFJ Planning, the consultant team, introduced themselves. They will be supported by subconsultants specializing in economic development, design, and cost estimation.
- LPC members then introduced themselves and shared their connections to the Village.

NY Forward Code of Conduct

- Mr. Yerly gave an overview of the NY Forward Code of Conduct, which all LPC members must sign, and explained that any potential conflict of interest must be disclosed at the earliest possible time. If a potential conflict is identified, members must complete and submit a formal Recusal Form.
- Mr. Yerly stated that the DOS Ethics Officer can assist with any specific questions.

NY Forward Program Overview

- Mr. Yerly described the overarching goals of the NY Forward program: To enhance downtown living and quality of life; create diverse housing options for all income levels; create an active downtown with a mix of uses; provide diverse employment opportunities for a variety of skill sets and salary levels; provide enhanced public spaces that serve those of all ages and abilities; encourage the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions; and grow the local property tax base.
- Mr. Yerly gave a summary of the timeline and deliverables, highlighting an 8–9-month timeframe for the planning process.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Sarah Yackel (BFJ Planning) confirmed with the LPC that the next meeting will be held on Thursday, September 17, 2026 from 5:00 – 7:00 PM at Village Hall.
- LPC members agreed to schedule future LPC meetings for the third Thursday of the month.
- LPC Meeting #3 is tentatively scheduled for October 15, 2026.

Planning Process

- Suzanne Goldberg (BFJ Planning) presented a summary of the NY Forward timeline.
- Ms. Goldberg gave an overview of the eligible project types.
- She also reviewed project match requirements, including sponsor contributions, project size expectations, and details on the Small Project Fund.
- Projects identified during the Open Call for Projects will be evaluated based on their alignment with local and State goals.
- The planning process will culminate in the development and submission of the Strategic Investment Plan (SIP) to the State. The final slate of recommended projects, finalized by the LPC, will include requested NY Forward funds exceeding the awarded amount.
- Following the planning phase, State agencies will review the recommended projects, announce funding decisions, and execute contracts with project sponsors.
- Implementation involves reimbursement-based grants, meaning sponsors must complete work before receiving funds.

Your Role as the Local Planning Committee

- Ms. Yackel explained the responsibilities of the LPC. LPC members serve as ambassadors of the NY Forward program. Led by co-chairs, the LPC helps ensure the community vision is achieved and the public interest is upheld.
- Ms. Yackel then asked LPC members what they value most about Stamford, what types of amenities or services they'd like to see added or improved, and how they would like to see Stamford evolve over the next 10 years.

The following is a summary of LPC comments:

- **What LPC Members Value About Stamford**
 - Tight-knit, supportive community.
 - The Village has maintained rural character while welcoming new residents.
 - Walkable Main Street and local gathering places that foster connection and information-sharing.
 - Access to outdoor recreation, including hiking, fishing, and hunting.
 - Existing local amenities, particularly the grocery store and golf course.
- **Amenities and Services Needed**
 - A local pharmacy.
 - Improved trail signage.
 - Restoration and preservation of historic homes and buildings in the downtown area.
 - More restaurants and dining options.
 - Greater diversity of retail shops and local businesses.
 - Revitalization of storefronts and commercial areas while ensuring essential services remain available for year-round residents.
 - More diverse housing options. Participants noted that housing shortages are a challenge across the county.
 - Stronger community branding and marketing efforts to rebuild local pride.
 - Improved communication within the school system.
- **Vision for Stamford's Future**
 - Recapture Stamford's historic charm, pride, and identity.
 - Strengthen Stamford's reputation as an eco-tourism destination.
 - Create a vibrant and economically thriving community while maintaining its rural character.
 - Restore historic properties and embrace local history.
 - Expand dining, shopping, and recreational opportunities.
 - Revitalize downtown and commercial areas without losing focus on the needs of year-round residents.

Public Engagement

- Ms. Yackel stated that public engagement is a critical component of NY Forward, and activities should encourage participation from broad and diverse populations.
- The public helps refine the goals, vision and strategies, provides input, and offers feedback on proposed projects.

- The public will be engaged through LPC meetings, the Open Call for Projects, public workshops, local outreach activities, and online engagement.
- The Public Workshop is scheduled for August 10, 2026 from 5:00-7:00 PM at Village Hall.

Open Call for Projects and Small Project Interest Form

- Ms. Goldberg stated that private, nonprofit and public entities are eligible to submit applications through the Open Call for Projects.
- The Open Call period is scheduled for July 16 –August 28, 2026.
- Applicants can access the Open Call Form and Small Project Interest Form on the [project website](#) and submit completed forms via email or in person at Village Hall.
- An LPC member asked how an applicant develops a project cost. The consultant team stated that they have cost estimators that can assist with project development.

Stamford's NY Forward Application

- Ms. Goldberg went into further detail about the Village's NY Forward application, focusing on the boundary of the study area and the vision statement initially submitted.
- Suggestions for boundary expansion include incorporating the rail trail and old depot building, as well as parcels on both sides of South Street.
- An LPC member suggested that vision the statement be shortened.
- Ms. Goldberg presented the projects that were included in the application:
 - A new library will serve as a community hub and social service resource.
 - Redevelopment offering affordable home ownership opportunities.
 - Property revitalization will preserve historic character and address code and environmental remediation needs.
 - Creation of public space for all ages.
 - Replace critical housing lost in the 2023 fire.
- An LPC member proposed the idea of expanding the community garden and installing a new fence and signage.
- Another LPC member shared the idea of creating an amphitheater or pavilion for concerts near Indian Trail.
- An LPC member asked how many public versus private projects should be included in the final slate. Mr. Yerly stated that there should be a balance of different types of projects.
- Members of the LPC stated that the Small Project Fund is expected to be a key project for the Village.

Next Steps

- The LPC should review the following documents: NY Forward Guidance Document, the NY Forward application, and sign the Code of Conduct.
- Help promote the upcoming Public Workshop on August 10, 2026 from 5:00-7:00 PM at Village Hall.
- Publicize the Open Call submission period from July 16 -August 28, 2026.
- LPC Meeting #2 is scheduled for September 17, 2026 from 5:00-7:00 PM at Village Hall.

Public Comment

Members of the public were invited to share comments and questions. The following is a summary of the discussion.

NY Forward Boundary Expansion

- Comment received to consider expanding the project boundary to include the south side of South Street and the area along Railroad Avenue, between the car wash, laundromat, and Catskill Junction.
- Comment received to consider expanding the boundary to allow for future wayfinding signage, gateway features, and welcome facilities near the sewer plant area.
- Comment received regarding expanding the NY Forward boundary to include a historic stone wall along Route 10 and former village foundations near the school.

Project Eligibility

- Question: Can a resident submit a public project proposal, such as a dog park?
 - Response: Residents are encouraged to discuss public project ideas with the Village.
- Question: Can loan interest be counted toward the required 25% private match?
 - Response: DOS will look into this.
- Question: If a nonprofit sponsors a public art project in partnership with private businesses, can the nonprofit apply without providing the match requirement?
 - Response: Applicants are encouraged to submit an Open Call Form. The consultant team will work with the applicant to determine the most appropriate path forward.
- Question: Do applicants need to be Village residents?
 - Response: No. Applicants do not need to reside in the Village. However, the project property must be located within the Village boundaries. Anyone may apply.