

Introduction

DRAFT – JUNE 24, 2009

New Rochelle is a vibrant and diverse city of almost 76,000 residents, characterized by exceptional human, economic, and physical diversity. The city's land use patterns, housing stock and demographic composition have been shaped by successive waves of growth and immigration, each of which has left an imprint on New Rochelle's cultural and historic fabric. New Rochelle's natural environment includes a nine-mile shoreline on Long Island Sound, hundreds of acres of parkland and woods, and several lakes and streams. The city's density varies substantially from open space, to single and multi-family neighborhoods, to an urbanized downtown, where the majority of New Rochelle's commercial activity is centered. As a "first suburb" just half an hour from midtown Manhattan, New Rochelle is closely linked to the metropolitan New York economy and to the regional interests of Westchester County.

Our future as a city – and as a world – depends upon the sustainable use of resources. We must pursue economic, environmental, and social policies that meet short-term needs, while also enhancing our long-term quality of life. And we must ensure that the benefits and burdens of an evolving community are shared as broadly and equitably as possible.

New Rochelle has taken a wide range of actions to achieve sustainability, including, but not limited to, transit-oriented development, reductions in energy consumption, construction of affordable housing, and investments in storm water infrastructure. These initiatives, however, have proceeded on an ad hoc basis, without an overarching long-term strategy for conceiving, prioritizing, and implementing sustainability objectives. The need for a coherent strategy is clear:

During the next twenty years, it is expected that New Rochelle's population will increase by roughly 5,000 new residents. How can our city ensure that additional population produces cultural and economic vitality, without overburdening services and facilities?

During the next twenty years, New Rochelle's infrastructure will continue to age, requiring the expenditure of scarce resources to maintain essential public services and safety. How can infrastructure needs be addressed most efficiently and with the greatest benefit to our quality of life?

During the next twenty years, global warming is likely to progress. How can we adapt to the impacts of climate change, help arrest further deterioration of the global environment, and take maximum advantage of the emerging opportunities and demands of a green economy?

This plan is intended to be a blueprint for meeting these and many other challenges, while also preserving or strengthening the qualities New Rochelle already possesses and which our residents greatly value: historic and charming neighborhoods, ample recreational opportunities, convenient access to places of employment, and an outstanding educational system.

Finally, while some of the actions recommended in this plan can be taken by municipal government alone, many others require involvement and participation from residents, businesses, schools, and institutions. Sustainability can only be achieved through a genuine partnership linking every part of our community in an ongoing dialogue about our values and common interests. We look forward to this plan evolving and improving through this process.

Vision

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AN ATTRACTIVE QUALITY OF LIFE characterized by safe, clean and appealing neighborhoods, ample access to recreational opportunities, efficient transportation, rich cultural and historic resources, and responsive services.

A GROWING ECONOMY that maintains or expands entrepreneurial opportunities, creates and attracts jobs, especially in emerging green businesses, provides convenient access to a broad range of quality goods and services, enhances our local tax base, and supports investments in public programming and infrastructure.

A THRIVING NATURAL ENVIRONMENT that allows current and future residents to enjoy the benefits of clean air and clean water, open space, biologically diverse habitats, abundant energy, and a stable climate.

HEALTHY FAMILIES AND INDIVIDUALS who are better able to achieve workplace productivity, academic performance, reduced medical needs and costs, and general life satisfaction.

DIVERSITY OF CULTURE & EXPERIENCE supported by fair and equitable access to services and a broad spectrum of housing opportunities, and demonstrated through vital expressions of the arts and a spirit of mutual understanding and respect among different groups.

AN EFFICIENT GOVERNMENT that achieves savings, shares services, and demonstrates creativity in order to limit the tax burden borne by residents and free up resources for beneficial public investments.

AN ENGAGED & INFORMED CITIZENRY that actively shapes public policy through open dialogue, participates in volunteer service, and helps to meet community and global challenges through individual, institutional, and civic action.

A MODEL CITY that sets an example for municipal action and that forges regional, state, national and international partnerships aimed at achieving the broadest positive results.

Goals

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ENERGY: Reduce overall energy consumption and transition to renewable sources of energy by setting an example of direct action in the public sector and by encouraging best practices community-wide.

CLIMATE: Reduce net greenhouse gas emissions while also adapting to climate changes by setting an example of direct action in the public sector and by encouraging best practices community-wide.

WASTE: Cut solid waste generation, improve recycling rates, and promote conservation and more efficient use of water and other natural resources by setting an example of direct action in the public sector and by encouraging best practices community-wide.

ECOLOGY: Improve air quality and water quality, while also limiting or reversing the incidence of flooding, deforestation, and habitat loss.

PRESERVATION & DEVELOPMENT: Strengthen land use policies that protect the character, history and beauty of our neighborhoods, promote growth in areas with ready access to local goods, services and mass transit, preserve or expand affordable housing opportunities, and better realize the environmental, economic, and recreational value of natural assets such as Long Island Sound, parks, and open spaces.

ECONOMY: Attract beneficial investment to expand our local tax base, enhance the vitality of our commercial centers, and promote green job creation and training.

TRANSPORTATION: Facilitate and encourage sustainable transportation options, including walking, bicycling, carpooling and mass transit.

HEALTH: Promote active lifestyles, support good nutrition, expand access to fresh local produce, and reduce health risks associated with environmental and behavioral factors.

PARTICIPATION & EDUCATION: Enhance opportunities for residents of every heritage and socio-economic status to benefit equitably from local services, obtain information about local challenges and issues, and participate fully in community activities, decision-making, and progress.