

Dear Friends:

Like cities and families throughout America, New Rochelle has been impacted by a weak national economy that demands tough budget decisions and a rigorous commitment to efficiency. At the same time, we must also pursue long-term goals and opportunities that could enhance our community in the decades to come.



In the following pages, you will find information about the City's fiscal condition and actions, a review of our major planning and development objectives, and an assortment of other items that may be of interest. You can learn more (and also sign up to receive regular email news bulletins) on my website at: [www.noambramson.org](http://www.noambramson.org).

I welcome your questions, comments or ideas. And please also feel free to get in touch with me for assistance with municipal services.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Noam Bramson". The signature is fluid and cursive.

LEER MÁS NOTICIAS EN  
[noambramson.org/es](http://noambramson.org/es)

## INSIDE

GreeNR Plan Charts Course for Sustainable Future . . . . .	2
Tough Choices for Tough Times: 2011 Budget Overview . . . . .	4
Forward-Looking Development Remains Essential . . . . .	6

## AND MORE

City Pursues Energy Savings; BID Activities Support Commerce & Culture; Downtown Parking Revised; City Digs Out from Winter Storms . . . . .	10
--	----

# NEW ROCHELLE'S PLAN FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

To find out more about local sustainability initiatives, and to read the GreeNR plan in its entirety, please visit: <http://www.noambramson.org/topic/environment-sustainability>



FIND OUT MORE

## Draft "GreeNR" Plan Outlines Long-Term Goals for City

For almost a year, members of the City's staff worked alongside dedicated volunteers, community leaders, and experts to draft New Rochelle's first Sustainability Plan, called "GreeNR."

GreeNR articulates a broad vision for economic and environmental progress, while also outlining a specific and achievable plan of action tailored to our own community. It is intended as a framework for goal-setting and decision-making to guide municipal and individual action for the next twenty years.

### TEN BIG GOALS FOR 2030:

- 1 ▶ Reduce energy use and greenhouse gas emissions by at least 20%.
- 2 ▶ Cut non-recycled solid waste generation by 15%.
- 3 ▶ Preserve natural spaces and restore inland water bodies.
- 4 ▶ Absorb or retain 25 million gallons of flood water per storm.
- 5 ▶ Decrease sewage flow by at least 2 million gallons in peak hours.
- 6 ▶ Build at least 95% of new housing near mass transit.
- 7 ▶ Open at least one additional mile of the Sound shore to the public.
- 8 ▶ Plant at least 10,000 new trees on public property.
- 9 ▶ Create a comprehensive walking and bicycling system.
- 10 ▶ Subscribe at least half of all households to the City website.

Aside from the serious global challenges of resource depletion and climate change, there are immediate local opportunities that make a municipal sustainability plan of great value. Protecting open spaces, parks, and waterways can improve our quality of life and property values. Being a regional leader in a green economy can broaden New Rochelle's economic development options and help create jobs. Smart planning for inevitable population growth can make New Rochelle's development more integrated and successful. And reducing energy and resource costs for City properties and services can generate ongoing savings for taxpayers.

GreeNR has been informed by significant public input, including a Sustainability Forum and public hearing in 2010. Now, as we move to adopt a final plan, community participation will be essential to its implementation.



### ACTION PLAN SUMMARY

#### Energy & Climate



Reduce local energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions while transitioning to renewable sources of energy and adapting to probable climate changes.

#### Resource Conservation & Waste Reduction



Cut waste generation, improve recycling rates, encourage conservation and efficient use of water and other natural resources.

#### Ecology, Biodiversity & Public Health



Preserve New Rochelle's natural beauty, stabilize vulnerable habitats, improve air and water quality, limit or reverse the incidence of flooding and deforestation, and promote beneficial lifestyles and practices in order to achieve a healthy ecosystem, healthy neighborhoods, and healthy families.

#### Smart Growth & Economic Prosperity



Attract investment to expand our local tax base, enhance the vitality of our commercial centers, and promote green job creation and training. Employ smart-growth principles that encourage density and diverse housing opportunities, while also realizing the economic and recreational potential of assets such as Long Island Sound.

#### Transportation & Mobility



Facilitate and encourage the use of sustainable transportation options, including walking, bicycling, carpooling and mass transit, while also reducing traffic congestion and enhancing the safety and efficiency of transportation routes.

#### Public Participation & Awareness



Empower all residents to obtain information about local challenges and issues, make sensible choices about individual lifestyles and practices, and participate fully in community activities and decision-making.

# BUDGET AIMS FOR EFFICIENCY & SAVINGS

For a more detailed look at the 2011 budget, please read the articles posted to my website during the budget process this past fall:

<http://www.noambramson.org/tag/2011-budget/>



New Rochelle's 2011 budget attempts to balance several critical priorities: (1) respect and limit the difficult financial burdens confronting taxpayers; (2) preserve essential public services; and (3) safeguard the City's long-term fiscal stability. In the context of an exceptionally challenging economic climate, these objectives require hard choices.

In recent months and years, the City has:

- Cut about 10% of the positions in the municipal workforce, bringing our local government to just about its smallest size in New Rochelle's modern history. This includes a reduction of 26 full-time positions in the current budget.
- Frozen salaries for all municipal employees, except those completing multi-year contracts.
- Dramatically reduced expenditures on infrastructure and equipment.
- Cancelled or deferred several worthwhile, but non-essential, programs.
- Successfully obtained grants to pay for local projects, such as the North Avenue, Lincoln Avenue, and City Park improvements.
- Secured alternative revenue sources, such as a new hotel occupancy fee that raises about \$250,000 per year through modest charges on guests at local hotels.
- Renegotiated the terms of the Avalon project to accelerate land payments, bringing in \$9 million, spread over five years.
- Employed selective borrowing to take advantage of low interest rates and spread some cost pressures over an extended period.

These various economizing measures have created savings of \$12 million in 2010 and 2011 — a huge amount for a

city our size. Yet, the 2011 budget still calls for a 2.81% increase in the municipal property tax rate. (That translates into \$81 per year for the average taxpayer, less than 1% in one's overall property tax bill from City, County, and Schools.)

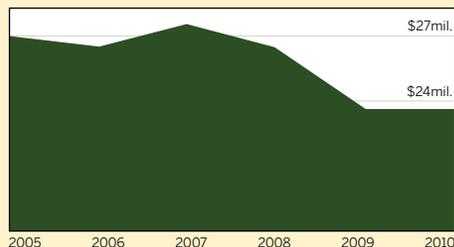
If the City is reducing expenses, why must it still raise property taxes? The answer is simple, but frustrating: dramatic cuts within our control are offset by falling revenue and rising expenses outside our control.

## Falling Revenue

Since the recession hit three years ago, almost all sources of revenue for the City have fallen considerably.

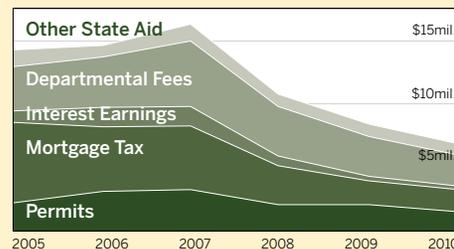
- Sales tax receipts, which make up over a fifth of the City's income, have fallen as the economy has slowed.

SALES TAX PLUMMETS



- Other revenue sources — like mortgage taxes, interest earnings, permits, and departmental fees — have declined by almost \$9 million since the economy peaked in 2007.

RECESSION'S DOWNWARD PRESSURE ON REVENUE



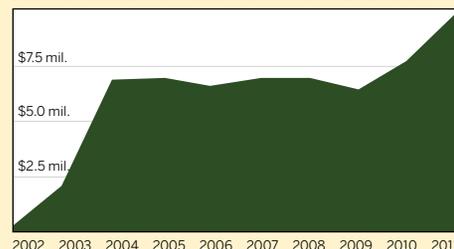
- In addition, the assessed value of taxable property in New Rochelle has declined as many property owners file grievances. This last point is critical: **even with an increase in the property tax rate, the City's revenue from property taxes will decrease this year**, because the rate is applied to a smaller base.

## Rising Expenses

A large percentage of municipal costs are simply dictated to us by State government. For example:

- The City's contribution to the State Pension Fund is mandated by Albany. After a 22% increase in 2010, Albany demanded a 29% increase in our contributions for 2011.

NEW ROCHELLE CONTRIBUTIONS TO STATE PENSION



- The City has seen steadily growing costs for medical benefits that cover employees and retirees.

- Because State labor policy constrains our options with respect to salary negotiations, the typical contract for City employees includes a modest annual salary increase.

Taken together, these negative factors would have created a cumulative budget gap for 2010 and 2011 of more than \$13 million. Filling that gap would have necessitated a whopping 36.5% tax increase, spread out over two years, **just to maintain the status quo with respect to the size and operation of City government.**

But, as noted above, we did not maintain the status quo, and because the City acted, this huge potential tax increase was cut by about three-quarters, for a total two-year increase of under 9%.

TWO-YEAR TAX INCREASE %



Although the recession is technically over, the recovery is tentative, and municipal budgets are often lagging indicators of general economic conditions. We will continue to monitor our fiscal condition carefully in the months ahead and, with public input, take additional steps as necessary to achieve efficiencies and savings.

Fortunately, New Rochelle retains significant economic strengths, including relatively high wealth level, property values and tax collection rates. The challenges of the moment are serious, as they are for cities throughout New York and the nation, but the long-term outlook for our community remains strong.

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IS AN ESSENTIAL CITY PRIORITY

Visit my website for ongoing posts and updates on this topic:  
<http://www.noambramson.org/topic/planning-development/>



FIND OUT MORE

A forward-looking planning and development strategy is essential to New Rochelle's future. We have made significant progress during the past fifteen years, but far more must be done. Although the weak national economy poses serious challenges at the moment, New Rochelle continues to press forward on a range of opportunities and initiatives. Following are status reports on several projects and activities.

## Infrastructure

### North Avenue Streetscape Improvements

Beginning with the "college district" surrounding Iona, this project has greatly improved the appearance and functionality of North Avenue. The final phase, which extends to Burling Lane, includes a heavily landscaped node at the Boulevard. The project has been funded almost entirely by federal, state, and county sources.

### Downtown Streetscape

The appearance of a commercial district can impact its economic vitality. The City utilized federal grants in the 1990s to completely upgrade the downtown streetscape, but, with time, some streetscape elements need replacement or repair. This year we have allocated an additional \$400,000 from the federal community development block grant program to refresh our downtown's look.



## Sites

### Main Street Core

Covering 4.5 acres and straddling two parking sites between Church Street and Centre Avenue, this location is a stone's throw from Main Street itself and an easy walk from the train station. The City selected Albanese Development, a leader in sustainable architecture, as its preferred partner and is now evaluating options, with preliminary judgments expected early this spring. Albanese is a leader in sustainable design, having developed the nation's first LEED platinum and gold residential towers.

### Echo Bay

The contaminated and semi-industrial Echo Bay waterfront could be an attractive mixed-use setting of parks, housing, and shops, with full public access to the shore. New Rochelle's designated developer for the site, Forest City Residential, is presently revising their initial plans to better reflect altered economic conditions. Changes under consideration include: reconfiguration of on-site parking, reduction in housing density, and preservation of the armory building. In parallel, the City government is conducting an updated analysis of public costs and benefits.

### Davids Island

For fifty years, proposals for Davids Island have generated fierce debates and faltered in the face of environmental, economic, or political obstacles.

Mindful of this difficult history, but determined to realize the island's potential, New Rochelle has convened a Task Force composed of residents, experts, and stakeholders to help frame a homegrown vision. I am hopeful that sustainable design will help resolve the historic tensions between environmental and economic objectives. The Task Force is expected to complete its work later this year.

### Lecount Square

Conceived as a million-square-foot mixed-use project, Lecount Square would have dramatically reshaped a large downtown block. Economic conditions, however, have deteriorated since the project's conception, and the City Council opted against extending its agreement with the developer. Our development staff is now consulting with property owners on the block in order to better consider next steps, but keep in mind that there is no publicly-owned land within the project site, which limits the City's leverage.

### New Roc City

The City government and the new operators of New Roc City, Entertainment Properties Trust (EPT) remain committed to bringing new retail uses to the center. In today's weak economy, however, retailers are less willing to expand into new space. Until prospects for retail are brighter, Monroe College has struck an agreement with EPT to use the space of the former ice rink for a new college basketball arena.

Continued on next page.

Planning & Programming

North Avenue Zoning

Late last year, the City Council adopted new zoning standards for the North Avenue corridor, from Eastchester Road to the Memorial Highway overpass, in order to attract private investment and increase development potential. The most significant changes are: (1) an increase in the maximum height of buildings, which will now be set at three stories or forty feet; and (2) an increase in the maximum floor-area-ratio.

Local Comprehensive Plan

A sound development strategy can't focus only on site-specific initiatives, it must almost encompass a broader vision for our community's growth and evolution. That is the purpose of a Comprehensive Plan — a land use document that guides subsequent zoning and resource-allocation decisions. New Rochelle's current Comprehensive Plan is fifteen years old. Our Department of Development has just commenced a full update, initially focusing on the West End, but ultimately expanding to other key target areas. Public input will be essential, so look for more information on this subject in the months ahead.

Regional Cooperation

Our local plans must also be integrated into a regional strategy for housing, transportation, and sustainable growth. New Rochelle has taken a lead role in a new bi-state Consortium, stretching from New Haven to New York City to Long Island. The Consortium has already attracted a large grant from the federal Department of Housing & Urban Development. New Rochelle will use its share of this funding to study means of improving connectivity to our train station.

TAXPAYERS BENEFIT FROM DEVELOPMENT

The large majority of New Rochelle's recent projects are now paying full taxes:

- Full Taxes (No Abatement Ever Received)
  - Weyman Avenue Retail (excluding Home Depot & Costco — see below)
  - New Roc City — Lofts at New Roc
  - Trump Plaza Apartments
  - Palmer Center and Palmer Square
  - Davenport Lofts on Main
  - 543 Main Street Apartments
  - Shoprite (formerly Home Depot Expo)
  - Avalon — Retail

- Full Taxes (Temporary Abatement Expired)
  - Weyman Avenue — Home Depot & Costco
  - New Roc City — Marriott Residence Inn

- Minimal Abatement
  - Trump Plaza Retail (payments in lieu of taxes set at full tax equivalent, increasing annually at inflation rate)

- Expiring Abatement
  - New Roc City — Entertainment & Retail (partial abatement phasing out, will fully expire in 2014)

- Large Abatement
  - Avalon — Residential (pays percentage of net operating income in lieu of taxes)

These developments net significant annual revenue for the City (\$4.7 million), School District (\$1.3 million), and County (\$1.5 million). That's a total of about \$7.5 million, each and every year, helping to offset property tax rates.

TOTAL ANNUAL BENEFIT: \$7.5 MILLION



REDEVELOPMENT OF HARTLEY HOUSES MOVES FORWARD

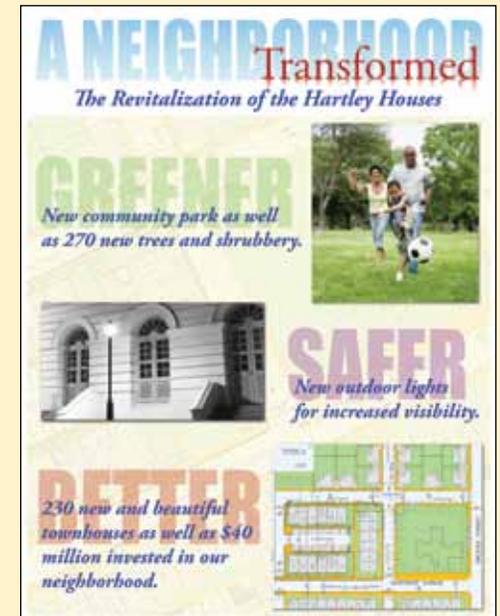
Project, Now Called “Heritage Homes” Receives Various Approvals

For several years, the New Rochelle Municipal Housing Authority (NRMHA) has planned a complete redevelopment of the Hartley Houses apartments. Hartley is New Rochelle's largest public housing complex, containing 240 units within 5 mid-rise buildings on a seven-acre site about a block west of City Hall.

Like most public housing developments of a similar era and style, Hartley faces a host of challenges, such as aging infrastructure, a physical layout that severs connections with the surrounding neighborhood, and an unacceptably high crime rate. The residents of Hartley themselves are the chief victims of the complex's deficiencies and would be the chief beneficiaries of improvements.

NRMHA envisions a complete transformation, including the phased demolition of the existing structures, and their replacement with new homes, mainly of a townhouse design. In addition, a new street grid would be established to integrate the development into the surrounding area. This is much more than a face-lift — it is an entirely different affordable housing model, likely to be far more supportive of a good quality of life and of surrounding property values.

The City will not expend any funds on this development and will, in fact, enjoy increased income under the terms of the revised PILOT framework.

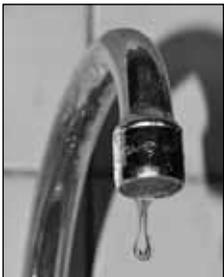


Promotional poster for Heritage Homes

## CITY PURSUES ENERGY SAVINGS

New Rochelle recently completed an energy audit of three large municipal buildings — City Hall, the Police-Court Facility and the Harrison Street Fire House. The audit identified significant opportunities for energy and cost savings. We are now performing a more detailed engineering analysis to pin down the best options for proceeding. Improvements will be financed by a combination of federal stimulus funding, a grant secured by Congresswoman Nita Lowey, and a local bond, with ongoing annual savings to exceed the City's annual debt service.

## STATE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION STICKS-IT TO TAXPAYERS & RESIDENTS



Despite vigorous opposition from local officials, the New York State Public Service Commission in October approved a huge 34% water rate hike in New Rochelle and neighboring communities, to be phased in over 4 years, as well as an increase of almost 70% on hydrant fees over the next four years, putting further strain on our municipal budget.

The decision was a slap in the face to the residents of our region. The PSC has shown complete indifference to the challenges facing struggling families and municipalities in this difficult economy. Together with the other municipalities impacted by this wrong-headed decision, New Rochelle is now exploring options for addressing this matter.

## BID SPONSORS DOWNTOWN ACTIVITIES

The Downtown Business Improvement District (BID), an independent, quasi-governmental entity, has been an effective partner in promoting downtown commerce. Among other things, the BID sponsors business promotions, cultural events and performances, facade and awning restorations, daily cleaning services, and artist live-work conversions. This year, we are working with the BID to evaluate changes in parking technology and regulations, and to conduct targeted retail recruitment.

You can learn more about the BID at [www.newrochelledowntown.com](http://www.newrochelledowntown.com).

## CITY COUNCIL CONTINUES REVIEW OF DOWNTOWN PARKING REGULATIONS

Public parking in the downtown area must serve multiple — and sometimes conflicting — purposes. For businesses and restaurants, parking turnover and availability are critical. For residents, reasonably priced overnight options are needed. Customers of all kinds rightly demand safety and accessibility.

Last spring, the City, acting on the recommendations of the Business Improvement District and a Parking Task Force, adopted new regulations that, among other things, require 24-hour payment in off-street lots, Sundays excepted. Council members who voted in favor of the plan, myself included, insisted that the changes be closely evaluated. While these changes have achieved some benefits, I have received mostly negative feedback, and I believe that further changes are necessary.

The City is now working jointly with the BID to complete a more rigorous analysis of options, including a review of parking meter technology. I have recommended one possible regulatory framework, with a more flexible approach that adjusts rates according to variable levels of demand. The City Council will revisit this subject in the spring.



## REGION DIGS OUT FROM TOUGH WINTER

This has been a very difficult winter, with unusually heavy and frequent snowfall. The Department of Public Works has done reasonably well, considering its lean workforce and aging equipment, but the City has had to supplement internal operations with outside contractors. The cost of both overtime and contracted services will exceed our budget and deplete the City's fund balance — a reminder that unpredictable events can upend the best planning. Our new DPW Commissioner Alex Tergis is exploring various operational changes that should improve snow removal service in future years. Now, about those potholes ...



**City Hall**

515 North Avenue  
New Rochelle, NY 10801  
(914) 654-2150

**Home**

201 Pinebrook Blvd.  
New Rochelle, NY 10804  
(914) 632-4847

**noam@noambramson.org**



Follow Noam on Facebook  
**noambramson.org/facebook**



Subscribe to Noam's News  
**noambramson.org/feedburner**



Follow Noam on Twitter  
**noambramson.org/twitter**



Follow Noam on Google Buzz  
**noambramson.org/buzz**



Get Updates from the City  
**newrochelleny.com/list.aspx**

**SIGN UP FOR EMAIL UPDATES**  
**noambramson.org/signup**



TAKE A PHOTO  
OF THIS CODE  
WITH YOUR  
SMART PHONE  
AND CONNECT  
WITH NOAM  
RIGHT NOW:

**MAYOR NOAM BRAMSON**

201 Pinebrook Blvd., New Rochelle, NY 10804



Printed on recycled paper  
10% POST-CONSUMER WASTE

NOT PAID FOR AT GOVERNMENT EXPENSE