

North Avenue Streetscape

History & Background

In 1999, the City retained the services of R. G. Roesch Architecture to draft a schematic plan for North Avenue from Eastchester Road to Burling Lane, entitled the *North Avenue Corridor Study*. One of the goals was to conceptually divide the corridor into distinct districts for the purpose of strengthening their identities as great places to do business, dine, shop, stroll and commute more safely and efficiently. Through the introduction of new design elements and traffic-oriented improvements, the plan proposed to visually link these districts with one another, while still retaining their unique characters.

The three districts in this corridor beautification program, known as the North Avenue Streetscape, are as follows:

- ***Phase I- "College District"*** runs (from north to south) from Eastchester Road to Fifth Avenue and houses Iona College
- ***Phase II- "Government District"*** from Fifth Avenue to Morris Street where City Hall, the City School District and the Police/Court Building are located
- ***Phase III- "Transportation District"*** continues to Burling Lane leading to the Transit Center. Several County offices reside in the Transportation District, as does the New Rochelle Transit Center.

The program featured extensive public participation and a series of planning and design meetings by North Avenue stakeholder groups made up of local citizens and business owners, as well as representatives of the local neighborhood and historic associations. The result was strong community support for these projects, illustrating the City's commitment to the City's revitalization efforts along the North Avenue corridor.

Project Overview

The North Avenue Streetscape comprises a variety of improvements designed to:

- Improve North Avenue as a transportation corridor so it can function as effectively and efficiently as possible
- Enhance the physical environment and appearance of the corridor to bolster its economic viability, as well as create a more hospitable environment for pedestrians and motorists
- Strengthen its connection to the downtown so as to benefit and build upon current private and public sector investments
- Further the revitalization of North Avenue by supporting its commercial districts.

These improvements include the reconstruction of the sidewalks, decorative pavers, new granite curbing, repaving and resurfacing of the roadway, ornamental street lighting, banners, street

trees and landscaping, new trash receptacles, parking meters, intersection redesigns, ADA ramps and pedestrian-friendly improvements.

Phases I and II were completed in 2007 and 2010 respectively, receiving accolades for the new look and design from residents, visitors and businesses alike. The third and final phase was completed in June 2011.

Phase I- College District

Design elements include new sidewalks and granite curbing, decorative pavers, roadway widening, resurfacing and striping; columnar street trees and landscaping. New pedestrian-scale, ornamental streetlights and trash receptacles were installed to match the existing ones on the Iona College campus, a major stakeholder that fronts North Avenue, as well as ADA ramps and high-visibility crosswalks including a textured, terracotta pedestrian crossing at the entrance to the college. New underground utility line service infrastructure was installed and the existing, bulky, overhead utility lines (telephone, cable and electrical) were taken down. Finally, drainage was improved by adding catch basins, manholes and underground pipes.

The benefits of these improvements include reduced traffic congestion; a safer, more pedestrian-friendly environment; and beautification. The streetscape work also complements the city's Signage & Awnings program applicable in this area. In addition, the city has completed a rezoning along this corridor to help engender private investment and a more pleasing destination.

Phase II- Government District

The RBA Group, a consulting team of planners, landscape designers and engineers, designed the Government District along with staff from the City's Departments of Development and Public Works.

Design elements include new sidewalks and granite curbing, decorative pavers, roadway resurfacing and striping, new turning lanes, street trees and landscaping, trash receptacles, parking meters and pedestrian-friendly improvements, such as ADA ramps, high-visibility crosswalks, textured, terracotta pedestrian crossings, corner bulb outs, ornamental, pedestrian-scale streetlights and a bicycle rack pad with artistic racks selected via a design competition.

One of the unique features was the creation of an attractive, mini-plaza fronting on North Avenue at the entrance to Hamilton Avenue. An existing bus stop was relocated in front of the City Hall campus with a brand new bus shelter and bench. The new plaza is now a more visible setting for the Spanish American War memorial and flagpole which were previously hidden from view on the Hamilton Avenue parking lot median. Landscaping, benches, ornamental, decorative pavers and lighting were added.

Other physical and environmental benefits of these improvements include corridor beautification, reduced traffic congestion, and a safer, more pedestrian-friendly environment that encourages walking.

Phase III- Transportation District

The Transportation District, designed by IQ Landscape Architects, was completed in June 2011. The firm worked with the city to enhance the connections between North Avenue and the public and private parking lots along this stretch via design elements that sought to address safety and esthetic concerns.

Design elements include new sidewalks and granite curbing, decorative pavers, roadway resurfacing and striping, columnar street trees and landscaping, trash receptacles and pedestrian-friendly improvements, such as ADA ramps, high-visibility crosswalks, textured, terracotta pedestrian crossings, and ornamental, pedestrian-scale streetlights.

The Boulevard Plaza

This area serves as a gateway to the registered, historic, residential neighborhoods of Rochelle Park and Rochelle Heights and consists of improvements such as new sidewalks and granite curbing, landscaping, ADA-compliant ramp aprons, energy-efficient and pedestrian-scaled streetlights, trash receptacles and hi-visibility crosswalks. Unattractive, unsafe sidewalk and roadway were replaced with lawn panels and decorative hardscape, creating the only public community plaza on North Avenue south of Hubert Place. The historic “entry” pillars which were shielded from view by overgrown vegetation were brought back to visible prominence via lighting.

The existing public bus stop was moved to a safer and more protected location for users, and sidewalk mounts for emergency service vehicle access were installed. From a traffic safety perspective, the intersection was altered from one with an uncontrolled, channelized right-turn lane to a “T-intersection” recommended by federal highway standards. The reconfiguration of this public space now presents an opportunity to add additional amenities as desired by the community, such as public art, bike racks and café-style seating areas, etc., which were conceived of as part of the original visioning exercise.