

Project Name: NY Forward: Farmingdale
Subject: Local Planning Committee Meeting #4

Meeting Location: Farmingdale Village Hall (361 Main Street)
Meeting Date: September 10, 2025
Meeting Time: 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Participants: **Local Planning Committee**
Mayor Ralph Ekstrand, Co-Chair
Peter Elkowitz, Co-Chair
Eric Anderson
Anthony Bartone
George Graf
Debbie Podolski
Chris Werle

Not present: Joseph Staudt, Paul Defendini, Nick DeVito, Adrienne Esposito, William Sklar

New York State

Pape Cisse, Department of State (DOS)
Brandon Gimpelman, Empire State Development (ESD)

Consultant Team

Noah Levine, Associate Principal, BFJ Planning
Suzanne Goldberg, Senior Planner, BFJ Planning
Eshti Sookram, Planner, BFJ Planning

Note: comments made by LPC Members and members of the public have been paraphrased for clarity and summary purposes.

The purpose of this meeting was to discuss updates on submitted projects from the Open Call for Projects. Approximately 2 members of the public were in attendance. The presentation is posted on the [Farmingdale NYF website](#) and can be referenced for additional details.

Introductions and NYF Code of Conduct

- Members of the public were reminded that LPC meetings are working sessions, and there is an opportunity for the public to share comments at the end of the meeting.
- The BFJ Planning consultant team and State team introduced themselves.
- Co-Chair Peter Elkowitz read aloud the NYF Code of Conduct, reminding members of their obligation to act in the public interest and to recuse themselves when necessary.
- It was noted that LPC member Chris Werle would need to recuse himself from the discussion of two new projects: Croxley's and Zuzu on Main.

Planning Process and Engagement Updates

- Eshti Sookram of BFJ Planning provided an overview of the NYF Timeline, highlighting a midpoint in the planning process.
- The second public workshop (September 17th at the Farmingdale Public Library) will include an overview of the program, a summary of submitted projects, and interactive components to gather community feedback. Unlike the first workshop, which featured roundtable discussions, this session will use display boards posted around the room where attendees can share comments and questions for proposed projects.

Project Evaluation Criteria

- Noah Levine of BFJ Planning discussed eligible project types for NYF funding. Mr. Levine explained the evaluation criteria that the LPC will use to determine whether a project should be included in the Strategic Investment Plan.
- Mr. Levine also explained that there is a minimum match requirement of 25% for private sponsors. The committee could choose to set a higher match. The LPC chose to keep the match at 25%.
- He also explained the Small Project Fund Interest Form, which is specifically for projects requesting less than \$75,000. This interest form can stay open beyond the Open Call for Projects to gauge further interest.

Open Call for Projects Summary

- The project team then discussed updates for public and private projects. It was noted that private project sponsors may also use other funding sources (e.g., CDBG funding for façade improvements). This funding can count towards their minimum 25% match. Since the previous LPC meeting, two additional projects were proposed.

Overview of Public Projects

Performing Arts Center:

New construction of an 8,000 sq ft performing arts center on South Front Street (currently the northern portion of Parking Lot 3), with approximately 275 seats. This is proposed to be operated by the Studio Theatre of Long Island. A refined cost estimate, revised rendering, and examination of the parking and circulation plan are in progress.

- It was noted that parking is a higher priority than new green space. Concerns were raised that the Village's popularity has already increased parking demand, and that residents may push back against the loss of spaces.
- Screening along the back of businesses on the west side was suggested.
- A question was raised about buses accessing the site.
- Expanding sidewalks behind businesses on the west side was suggested as a potential alternative to a plaza space.

Streetscape, Signage, and Village Green:

Landscaping on Moby Way, installation of a retaining wall at Village Green, and the installation of more gateway signage at Village entry points. A proposal to the Long Island Railroad (LIRR) was made to restripe the crossing Main St. and Front St., replace fencing along S. Front Street, and add signage on a Conklin St trestle.

- It was noted that the connection to the potential theater site and other parking lots is a positive feature.
- Additionally, some existing signs have deteriorated over time and have not been replaced.
- It was emphasized that the purpose of the restriping is to improve safety and reduce traffic speeds.

Pedestrian Safety and Traffic Calming:

Improvements at the key intersections of Fulton and Main Street and Fulton and Staples Street are proposed to increase pedestrian safety. Since Fulton Street is a NYS roadway, this project requires further coordination with NYS DOT.

- A member of the LPC suggested a mid-street crossing on Fulton.

Historic Thomas Powell House Repairs & Renovations:

Interior and exterior renovations aimed at rehabilitating the structure and preserving the historic home. In a second phase, which is not part of this funding request, the Village plans to operate the restored home as a museum and visitors center. Additional funding sources and partnerships should also be explored.

Overview of Private Projects

Lithology Brewing:

Exterior façade improvements, new entrance, and creation of an outdoor patio space. Interior small kitchen and HVAC system addition.

L.I. McGrath's:

Addition of solar panels, other energy efficient improvements (doors/windows, appliances, plumbing, HVAC system), and a mural on the side of the building.

The Barnyard Caribbean Soul Bistro:

Installation of new, energy efficient HVAC system, updated exterior improvements (awnings, signage, lighting), and replacement of outdated windows and doors with energy efficient alternatives.

The following two projects, Croxley's and Zuzu, were proposed after the Open Call submission period. The LPC decided to consider these as part of the overall slate of projects. Reminders were sent to Village business and property owners for a final call for proposals before this meeting.

Croxley's

Tinting of windows for energy-efficiency, replacement of awnings, installation of a new sanitizer walk-in box, and upgrade of the security system.

The project team noted that the original proposal included roof repairs, but this was deemed as ineligible for NYF funding.

Zuzu on Main

Installation of a water circulating tower, installation of new water lines, and installation of a new roof rack for the water tower. The project team noted that the sponsor added a new water heater with increased capacity to the project.

Other Projects:

Small Project Fund:

A fund that could support a range of improvements for buildings and businesses, with totals of less than \$75,000.

- A question was raised about whether any businesses enrolled in the façade program have not yet received funding; it was noted that a few remain in the queue.
- It was suggested that the fund could also address rear facades.
- It was agreed upon that the funding amount should be set to \$600,000.

Next Steps

- The project team will work with project sponsors to refine their submissions.
- The next LPC meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 15 from 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM at Village Hall.
- Public Workshop #2 will be held on Wednesday, September 17, 2025, from 6:30 - 8:30 PM at Farmingdale Public Library.
- The Virtual "Ideas Wall" is still open throughout the summer.