

Chamber gets update on Poughkeepsie progress

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Paul Hesse, City of Poughkeepsie Community Development Coordinator.

POUGHKEEPSIE – The City of Poughkeepsie’s Economic Development Director Paul Calogerakis joined Paul Hesse, the city’s Community Development Coordinator in a presentation about the city’s economic revival on Wednesday morning.

At the monthly Dutchess County Regional Chamber of Commerce breakfast, business and civic leaders listened as Calogerakis and Hesse spoke of the renewed interest in the city’s real estate market. A gathering of over 200 people heard about the more than 1,200 housing units have been either recently completed or are under construction. One-third of the new units are below market rate. On the business side, one million square feet of commercial space has been recently completed, under construction, or is going through the approval process.

Since Mayor Rob Rolison took office in 2016, the city has been able to restore positions, like Paul Hesse’s, that had been abandoned under the previous administration. Until Rolison arrived at city hall, the second floor which houses the planning and economic development offices was vacant. There was no planning and no economic development taking place. “The combined forces of greater personnel capacity at city hall, Opportunity Zone tax legislation, creation of the Innovation District, abundant real estate inventory, and the high demand for housing has created a ‘perfect storm’ for development in the City of Poughkeepsie,” said Calogerakis.

One proposed project that has both proponents and detractors is directly across from city hall at 47-49 Civic Center Plaza. The building which had housed Take 5 Deli for close to 30 years as well as a laundromat, and tax preparation business was bought by the development arm of Page Park Associates. After forcing the closure of Take 5 and the laundromat, plans have been submitted to create a single-story dining establishment along with a new three-story building with 20,000 square feet of office space. Employees at city hall are pleased that a food establishment is returning to the area while detractors say that the three-story building will take away the views of the historic post office as well as the eloquent building that houses the county’s health

department, professional businesses, and a daily newspaper.



Artist rendering of the proposed structure for 47-49 Civic Center Plaza.

The Innovation District, created after clearing a plethora of hurdles as well as delays put in place by lawmakers, is in place to streamline projects in the downtown area. City officials are currently working to revamp the City's Comprehensive Plan as well as their vision for waterfront development.

The City also has created an Anti-Blight Task Force that includes non-profit housing partners Habitat for Humanity of Dutchess County, Rebuilding Together Dutchess County, and Hudson River Housing. Since its inception in 2018, the task force has addressed more than 100 vacant properties. The City had slightly more than 600 in 2018; that number is now below 500. As part of this effort, the City also took ownership of the former YMCA site on Montgomery Street and has received a proposal from 35 Montgomery Community Coalition. 35 Montgomery is comprised of local colleges, non-profits, along with Dutchess County and Healthquest. The coalition has presented a plan to rehabilitate the dilapidated structure and turn it into a multi-function community center. Rolison has recently sent a letter to 35 Montgomery to determine how soon the project can move forward. The city has inquired as to the validity of the funding streams, the details of property ownership, and other factors that need to be addressed. Rolison has called the city's timeline as "robust" and "ambitious" and is seeking to move the vision forward to fill a major void in the city while simultaneously addressing blight.

Hesse said, "The City's been making strategic policy shifts, particularly with respect to planning and zoning, that have signaled our soundness for investment, and you're now seeing the fruits of those policy shifts blossom. At the same time, the City is now investing in places for people, undertaking meaningful improvements to public spaces that enhance the quality of life for residents. We're demonstrating our commitment to investing in our community, and the private sector is taking notice."