



# SCARSDALE FORUM

SCARSDALE FORUM INC.

June 9, 2019

Re: Downtown Revitalization Committee of the Scarsdale Forum – Forwarding and Summarizing Forum Reports Relating to the Freightway Site Redevelopment Project

Dear Mayor and Trustees:

A Request for Proposal (“RFP”) is currently being developed by the Village Board to solicit bids from potential developers for the Freightway Site Redevelopment in the Village Center. It is the recommendation of the Downtown Revitalization Committee that all prospective developers should be well informed about the conclusions and recommendations of the relevant Scarsdale Forum surveys and reports that have been published on the subject of the Village Center<sup>1</sup> as an integral part of the Village Board’s evaluation and selection process.

The Scarsdale Forum created a Downtown Revitalization Committee in November 2016 to determine how best to revitalize a Village Center suffering from an abnormally high commercial vacancy rate (approximately 16% by most estimates). The Committee produced three reports, where the latter two contained surveys to garner the opinions of the two major stakeholders in the Village Center: consumers (mainly but not restricted to Scarsdale Village residents) and merchants in the Village Center and the Garth Road and Scarsdale Avenue commercial areas in Scarsdale and Eastchester. The surveys gathered the opinions of these stakeholders, compiled results, developed recommendations, and identified areas for further study.

Two reports by the Scarsdale Forum’s Municipal Services Committee on traffic safety and parking issues in the downtown area were published in November 2015 and January 2018. These reports reflected well-documented public concerns over many years about safety and parking in the Village Center, many of which are also reflected in the Consumer and Merchant surveys.

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<sup>1</sup> Each of the Committee’s reports appear on the Scarsdale Forum website and may be retrieved through links provided below.

A comprehensive review of the issues and community input contained in these reports is imperative to the long-range success of a potential Freightway site redevelopment and its integration with the rest of the Village Center and adjacent residential areas.<sup>2</sup>

**Report of the Downtown Revitalization Committee on  
Efforts to Revitalize Scarsdale Village Center, September 28, 2017**

The Committee's 2017 Report was a preliminary statement on the status of the Village Center and the Committee's plan to conduct a consumer study and a separate merchant survey. The report outlined the following areas for study:

- a) Parking and parking enforcement
- b) Retail vacancies
- c) Retail mix
- d) Streetscape appeal/visual appearance/lighting/holiday decorations
- e) More events and activities, and places for concerts, performances, theater and the like in the downtown
- f) Increased indoor/outdoor dining options and adult gathering places such as a wine bar or microbrewery
- g) Improvement of downtown parks and public spaces to invite community use
- h) Pedestrian and cycling safety
- i) Zoning changes to encourage development, including residential housing compatible with a vision for the overall Village.<sup>3</sup>

**Report of the Downtown Revitalization Committee on  
The Consumer Survey Concerning Scarsdale Village Center, May 9, 2018<sup>4</sup>**

The Consumer survey, comprising an online questionnaire, generated 1,257 responses and included over 1,000 free text comments in addition to responses to the specific survey questions.

**Summary of Consumer Survey Recommendations:**

“The recommendations outlined below regarding revitalization of the Scarsdale Village Center are based on the results of the Survey, and suggest actions for consideration by the

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<sup>2</sup> While they are not Forum reports, recent communications to the Village from its appointed Conservation Advisory Council and the independent nonprofit, Friends of the Scarsdale Parks, Inc., offer additional recommendations about Freightway site redevelopment.

<sup>3</sup> Downtown Revitalization Committee, 2017 Report on Efforts to Revitalize Scarsdale Village Center, page 2, retrieved from <https://www.scarsdaleforum.com/Reports/Download/615>.

<sup>4</sup> Downtown Revitalization Committee, 2018 Consumer Report and Survey, retrieved from <https://www.scarsdaleforum.com/Reports/Download/719>.

stakeholders who can act upon them: Village officials, landlords, merchants, Village boards and councils, and independent agencies.

- 1) Expand the availability and diversity of grocery and beverage options such as specialty stores and the Farmers' Market, as well as upgrading existing facilities;
- 2) Expand restaurant and other dining options including family dining, lunch and specialty establishments;
- 3) Improve retail diversity and services to balance the current concentration of a limited type of providers;
- 4) Provide space for entertainment and cultural event programming;
- 5) Implement practical solutions to parking availability, and address aggressive parking enforcement issues;
- 6) Improve parks and other green spaces in the Village Center to create more welcoming, usable community spaces; and
- 7) Establish a coordinating body to study similar regional municipalities and the implementation of best practices to ensure a thriving downtown environment.”<sup>5</sup>

**Report of the Downtown Revitalization Committee on  
The Merchant Survey Concerning Scarsdale Village Center, January 30, 2019<sup>6</sup>**

The Merchant survey featured a six-page questionnaire delivered in person to Village Center merchants and some merchants located in the nearby Garth Road and Scarsdale Avenue business district. Responses were collected from 78 of the targeted 120 businesses.

**Summary of Merchant Survey Recommendations:**

“The recommendations outlined below are based on the results of the Merchant Survey, and suggest actions that stakeholders – Village officials, boards and councils, landlords, merchants, and independent agencies – may consider:

- a) Form a subcommittee of the Downtown Revitalization Committee to review comprehensive solutions to the parking issues in the Scarsdale downtown, including the Committee’s 2018 Consumer Survey (the “Consumer Survey”), the 2018 Traffic Study, the 2018 Parking Meter Study and the ongoing Freightway Development Project;

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<sup>5</sup> Id. at page 2.

<sup>6</sup> Downtown Revitalization Committee, 2019 Merchant Report and Survey, retrieved from <https://www.scarsdaleforum.com/Reports/Download/861>.

- b) Improve the number and variety of restaurants and retail establishments by combining and comparing the results of the Merchant Survey with the Consumer Survey;
- c) Improve the communication of Downtown projects, customer feedback and advertising channels available to merchants and business owners;
- d) Improve the Downtown infrastructure and landscaping in Chase Park, Boniface Circle, green spaces, and sidewalk spaces, in anticipation of greater pedestrian traffic, extended evening hours, and weekend use of downtown services; and
- e) Make recommendations on how relevant portions of the Village Center Component of the Scarsdale Comprehensive Plan, October 1994 (updated in 2010) (the “Scarsdale Comprehensive Plan”) should be implemented during 2019.

The Committee intends to work with the relevant stakeholders and other interested parties to further study the issues and assist in implementing the recommendations set forth above.”<sup>7</sup>

### **Report of the Municipal Services Committee on The Scarsdale Forum Traffic Survey, January 18, 2018<sup>8</sup>**

The Scarsdale Forum’s Municipal Services Committee designed, distributed, and analyzed a Traffic Survey as a supplement to the Committee’s 2015 Traffic Assessment, Safety and Improvement Report. Survey participants, the majority of whom were Scarsdale residents, unequivocally affirmed the community’s collective desire for the Village to find solutions to the impacts of:

- speeding vehicles
- distracted or negligent motorists
- the lack of sidewalks in many places throughout the Village
- the absence of crosswalks
- poor lighting, and
- other safety hazards.<sup>9</sup>

### **Summary of Traffic Survey Recommendations**

The principal recommendations of the traffic survey and studies were to achieve the goal of safer streets through traffic calming, new signals and signage, crosswalks and sidewalks, etc. The data, collected from over 700 respondents, demonstrated that Scarsdale residents want the Village to make improving pedestrian, cyclist and driver safety a top municipal priority, and to:

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<sup>7</sup> Id. at page 2.

<sup>8</sup> Report of the Municipal Services Committee on The Scarsdale Forum Traffic Survey, retrieved from <https://www.scarsdaleforum.com/Reports/Download/684> .

<sup>9</sup> Id. at pages 4-5.

- “(1) prioritize the implementation of traffic calming features, including but not limited to lowering speed limits on linear portions of certain north-south and east-west corridors as allowed by NYS law;
- (2) address among other issues, gridlock and pedestrian crossing signal timing, add or repair barriers, signage and signaling arrows, and enforce U-turn prohibitions;
- (3) increase the number of sidewalks throughout Scarsdale where feasible, and repair and maintain existing sidewalks;
- (4) install new or improved crosswalks, signals and signage along the most troublesome roads and intersections cited by residents;
- (5) increase enforcement and/or traffic calming features to curtail drivers who exceed speed limits, drive through crosswalks where pedestrians have the right of way, make illegal turns through red signals, fail to stop at stop signs, double-park in the Village Center awaiting train pick up, etc., and
- (6) implement an ongoing education campaign and Safe Streets event days to address hazardous behaviors and encourage compliance with VTL regulations including speed limits, yielding to pedestrians and bicyclists, and road safety in general, . . . .”<sup>10</sup>

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The findings and recommendations of recent Scarsdale Forum committee surveys and reports, and the Freightway Site Redevelopment Study, should be used as a resource by the Village Board of Trustees:

- in the development of the Request for Proposal for the Freightway Site Redevelopment,
- for the evaluation of proposals submitted by potential developers and selection of the developer for the Freightway site,
- as general guidelines to consider for any proposed development of the Freightway site,
- to ensure that any impacts resulting from Freightway site development on the Village Center are well-understood and addressed, and
- to create positive synergies between the future Freightway site and the Village Center.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Upton Douglass, Chair  
Scarsdale Forum Downtown Revitalization Committee

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<sup>10</sup> Id. at page 21.