

SOUTH ORANGE DOWNTOWN VISION PLAN SUMMARY

NOVEMBER 2009

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The South Orange Downtown Vision Plan is a community-based, market-based, sustainable concept for the future of downtown South Orange and its Valley Street and Irvington Avenue business corridors. It features a strong plan for smart growth, based on mixed-use, transit-oriented development, new public parking, and a commitment to retain the most beloved characteristics of the Village, including:

- Commuter rail service with a historic train station that anchors both the transit orientation of the Village and the downtown character.
- Walkable neighborhoods and plentiful and accessible transportation options via roads, rail, and walkways.
- Rich downtown architectural details that tell the history of this unique Village and its evolution over two centuries.
- Major academic and cultural institutions, such as Seton Hall University, the South Orange Performing Arts Center, and The Baird, which draw residents and visitors into the downtown.
- A growing roster of appealing restaurants and local businesses.
- Acres of open space providing active recreation, an accessible riverfront and relief from an urban environment.



VISION PRINCIPLES

The Principles upon which this vision will be implemented are:

Create a Village of Destinations - Diversify the economic and activity bases of the Village with the focus on arts and culture; restaurants and food; boutique and basics shopping; and, family-oriented, student, and adult activities.

Support the Cultural Elements - Support the arts and cultural traditions for a well-balanced and unique downtown. Support artists and the arts, local culture, history, and education by providing infrastructure and opportunities in the re-use of spaces and new development.

Build Etiquette For Seton Hall University Interactions - Improve the method of communicating institutional mission goals and public policy so that interests of each are clearly stated and accepted, and combined interests can be realized.

Shared routes - Share routes for cars, jitneys, buses, bikes and pedestrians but provide separate areas for through travel in each mode with routes that follow the commercial spines and meet in the centers of activity.

Active Commercial Uses - Attract active commercial uses which meet both the needs of the residents and the need to create destinations for the market region.

Office Space - Within new and renovated buildings, encourage creation of office space to

attract small businesses to locate here and allow residents to start small businesses.

Vary the Intensity and Type of Development - Each of the commercial corridors should be distinguishable and unique, serving different purposes and clientele.

Professionalize Commercial Real Estate Development - Ensure that projects in redevelopment areas are proposed with market support, analyzed and approved within reasonable terms, and implementable.

Retain Village's History - Use historic buildings for productive purposes, following design guidelines that maintain the character of landscape and place, and encourage new development to be aesthetically sympathetic.

Build Village Spirit - Encourage and support a diverse and integrated community center where all residents have the opportunity to congregate and participate on all social and economic levels.

Provide Housing Options - Integrate workforce housing (low and moderate income housing options) and student housing into new market rate housing projects.

Make it Green - Integrate sustainable designs, programs and uses that reduce energy demands, increase the use of alternative modes of transportation, and add vegetation for storm-water management, wind control, natural shading, and aesthetic improvement.

DOWNTOWN CORE



Rendered Sloan Street addition



The Vision Plan recommends:

- A commercial building on Sloan Street over a small portion of the existing public parking lot to improve the street, better define the street's building lines, and improve walkability. ①
- Improve the rest of Sloan Street to Third Street with a link to a new parking facility on the Village-owned parcel at Third Street. ②
- Relocate the South Orange Rescue beside the renovated Fire Station. ③
- Build a new tree-lined walkway through the public parking lots. ④

SOUTH ORANGE AVENUE, WEST

The west side of the railroad tracks is programmed for significant redevelopment:

- Continue to develop the street frontage with retail commercial and/or public activity space (e.g. art galleries) to enliven the street. ①
- Add second-story residential units to take advantage of the open space views and connections or optional use of the upper-stories as commercial space; e.g. dance/arts studios and business offices. ①

- Consider two options for the Beifus site – building the approved redevelopment project or use the rear of the site for public parking to support the downtown revitalization. ②
- Reconstruct the parking lot behind the Train Station for a more efficient drop-off/pick-up area, a better entrance to SOPAC, and a more pedestrian oriented connection to the river. ③

- Create a pedestrian plaza extending from the north side of the street to the riverbank, to attract people towards Meadowland Park with improved access to the river, park, and The Baird. ④
- Continue the riverfront path. ⑤
- Consider structured parking on the western side of the NJ transit lot. ⑥



Rendered Beifus site concept and park entrance

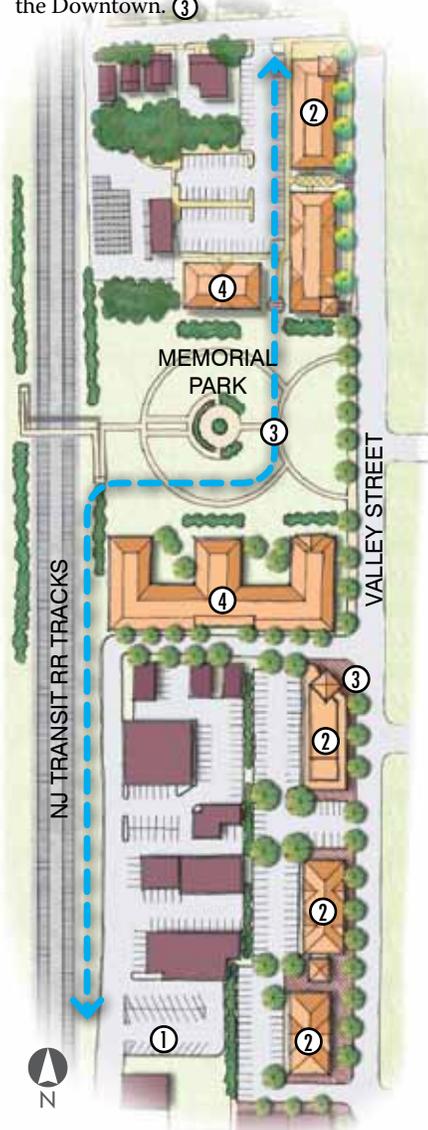
VILLAGE-OWNED PARCEL AT THIRD STREET

The Village land fronting on Third Street and Valley Street is an opportunity to support other downtown improvements:

- The frontage on Valley Street can be sold for new mixed-use development with residential units and ground floor retail. ①
- Sale of the parcel would help defray costs for a new parking structure to be built on the western side of the property. ②
- In turn, transfer of parking spaces from the NJ Transit lot to this new structure will open up land around the Train Station for improved accessibility to the Station, SOPAC and the River.
- This is also an opportunity to create a 'gateway' at the Third Street and Valley Street intersection to help distinguish this area as a unique location and signify a transition into the Downtown. ③



Rendered Valley Street and Third Street



Rendered Valley Street at Memorial Park

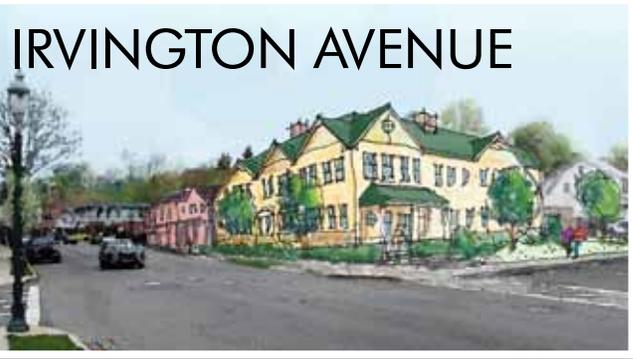
The change proposed for the Valley Street corridor will bring up the character of the street more in line with the rest of South Orange:

- Implement mixed-use residential zoning to encourage auto-oriented and industrial businesses to congregate around Lackawanna Place and discourage continuation of the small auto-oriented commercial lots on Valley Street. ①
- Include street-front retail, preservation of certain existing structures, and new apart-

ments including privately managed off-campus Seton Hall student housing. ②

- Improve walking and biking access to the core. ③
- Build residential units around Memorial Park to take advantage of the park's qualities, further activate the park space, and improve the overall visual quality of the corridor. ④

Township of South Orange Village
 South Orange, NJ 07079



Rendered Irvington Avenue at College Place

Other Vision Plan elements include:

- Irvington Avenue as another opportunity to connect with Seton Hall with commercial space that is attractive to neighborhood residents, students and faculty. ①
- A potential public garden behind residential development on the street, on the undeveloped land between Tichenor Avenue and West Fairview Avenue. ②

PARKING:

Additional public parking is considered most appropriate in three areas; Third Street on the Village-owned property, at the Beifus site and on the NJ Transit parking lot. Public parking at one or more of these locations will:

- Help facilitate downtown redevelopment with denser pockets of parking;
- Improve access to downtown activities and commerce; and
- Expand commuter parking for transit access.

OTHER ACTIONS:

- Implement the Affordable Housing Element of the Village Master Plan.
- Continue the Village's FRONTS façade and signage improvement program, administered by Main Street South Orange.
- Implement design guidelines and a program for sustainability and green building to improve the quality of local architecture and site improvements.
- New retail spaces on Vose Avenue.

