



www.cityofpeekskill.com

A Newsletter for the People of Peekskill

JUNE 2005

PEEKSKILL'S REAL IMAGE Shining Through

Companies spend millions of dollars shaping and boosting the images of their products. Cities the size of Peekskill don't



By Mayor
John Testa

have that kind of money. What we do have is an energetic business community, many different dedicated volunteer groups, a lot of passionate, committed citizens, and a group of employees at City Hall that are dedicated to providing service so good you can't help but tell your friends about it.

All those elements together are creating a seismic shift in the way the world around us sees our city, and the evidence of that change is growing stronger every day. Earlier this year, Peekskill became the first city in living memory to win top 10 honors from both Westchester and Hudson Valley Magazines in the space of a year. Adding to the energy: an extraordinary March 27 issue of the Sunday New York Times where there were three major articles that talked about the exciting changes happening in our city.

Media outlets aren't the only ones paying attention to our city. A group of top economic development experts recently held an event here, and Westchester County has just given us not one but two awards for our creative and effective efforts to deal with the challenges of modern waste disposal. There's a new energy in Peekskill's downtown, one that will be reflected in many different events and activities going on this spring and summer. You'll notice one result from that effort in our newsletter, as we team up with the BID and the Paramount Center for the Arts to offer you information on what's happening in your City.

We still face many challenges, but we're taking them on. We're forming new committees and engaging in intensive outreach efforts to help protect our most vulnerable citizens. Simply managing the interest in our city is a huge job in itself, but we're up for it, and we know you are, too.

POTENTIAL BEING REALIZED: Peekskill and Tourism

Tourism is the ultimate renewable resource—and then some. The more people who visit a place, the better it gets known, and the more attractive a place it becomes to visit. That very cycle is building in Peekskill, with growth spurring growth. Museums are being created, historic sites labeled, signage installed on state and local roads, and promotional materials printed and placed on the Internet.

"There's going to be a big difference this spring, summer and fall. There's going to be a tremendous difference," says Ed Burke, owner of Gallery 25N and a member of the Business Improvement District, the Peekskill Artists Council and other organizations.

Some of this comes naturally. A portion grows out of the foresight of city leaders today and generations ago, and much of it is growing out of an increasingly energized, activist business and volunteer community. Major advances have occurred in just the past year. The Paramount Center for the Arts, which brings tens of thousands of people to Peekskill's downtown every year, has just completed a renovation that is so stunning it has gained national attention. The new Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art has also snared the public eye. New plaques in the City's Fort Hill Park are helping turn it from a nature reserve into an historic site with a compelling story.

In a brand-name dominated economy, Peekskill comes with compelling appeal.

A crucial component of Peekskill's tourism program is that few elements are free standing. All fit into local, regional and even national projects that ensure that the reach of the city's tourism campaigns will be both broad and deep. Experts consider the Hudson River itself to be one of the world's most neglected and underutilized scenic tourism destinations—and Peekskill happens to be based at one of the artery's most dramatic points, just as the Highlands begin to rise and confine its wide waters. That translates into spectacular physical site. Peekskill sits surrounded by tall hills and short mountains, facing a broad and attractive bay. Instead of selling crucial waterfront property to developers, the city created an open, expansive park that offers a view that is literally stunning.

In a brand-name dominated economy, Peekskill comes with compelling appeal. George Washington didn't just sleep in Peekskill during the revolutionary war; he used it as his head-quarters and spent weeks and months at a time there. Abraham Lincoln made his only stop in Westchester County in Peekskill, while fleeing slaves used the Underground Railroad to get to the town. There's even history that would appeal directly to children. L. Frank Baum went to school in Peekskill, and at one point ran away on streets that were once made of bright yellow bricks, and the company that became Crayola Crayons was founded here.

Work has only just begun on tapping into some of these assets. Yet a solid foundation of other attractions is already present. A thriving restaurant community has made Peekskill a definite dining destination in Westchester, from the award-winning Zeph's Restaurant to

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inside

PEEKSKILL

A Safer, More Secure Place

Peekskill is a safer, more secure place than it's been in decades, and you don't have to take my word for it. Local police



By Eugene Tumolo
Chief of Police

departments are required by law to send data on their crime statistics to the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Those statistics are then processed by the FBI and sent back to communities to let them know how well, or badly, they're doing.

According to our most recent numbers, Peekskill is doing wonderfully.

Crime rates dropped in almost all major categories by significant amounts during 2004. The FBI divides crime statistics into two categories: Part I and Part II. We did well in both, with major crimes dropping 9.41% in 2004, and less significant offenses by 10.4% for an overall decline of nearly 20%. If you have any doubt about the

impact of our efforts, just take a look at Peekskill's downtown some evening after 11:00. Our downtown is more quiet, orderly and welcoming than it's been in years. That's great news for the businesses that operate and the residents that live there.

Accomplishing this has taken a great deal of hard work in many different areas. Fighting crime in real life is a different world than what people see on TV. It's a matter of tactics, strategy, and hard, relentless, often exhaustingly repetitive work. Many different factors go into a reduced crime rate. Some of the work takes place on the streets. Enforcement efforts by uniformed and undercover police officers have been stepped up significantly in recent years. We've engaged in some highly successful cooperative projects that have literally broken the back of the drug business and had a major impact on other criminal activities in our city.

We've implemented an intense and some-

times controversial campaign that focuses on quality of life issues. This has deterred or taken off the street many people who might otherwise have committed more serious offenses. Our community policing department is helping build bridges to our neighborhoods, resolving important issues and making our city a better place to live.

Other law enforcement agencies aren't our only partners in this effort. The mayor and the Common Council have played a crucial role in giving us the tools we need to succeed at our jobs. One of the most important weapons is a new law that limits operation of delicatessens and other businesses that serve food but do not provide indoor seating. You might not think a law focused on food would have an impact on enforcement, but the regulation has had a significant impact on downtown activity and made life far easier for our police officers and all decent people who live, work and visit there. **I'm especially pleased with three specific efforts:**

The Safe Streets Campaign. This effort focuses on the reduction of illegal loitering, public misbehavior and other inappropriate activities. It has visibly improved our neighborhoods, making them better places to live while reducing crime crime overall.

Operation Big Dog. Here we combined local, county, state and federal resources to sweep up 87 serious drug offenders. Its success resulted in a significant decline in drug-related offenses.

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Peekskill/Cortlandt Community CALENDAR

JUNE

25 **Bernadette Peters in Concert**, Paramount Center for the Arts, 8P.M., Tickets \$100-150.

JULY

1 **First Friday**, Live music, shops, restaurants and artists studios open, Peekskill Downtown, 5P.M.-8P.M.

6 **Riverfront Concert Series***, Professor Louie & the Crowmatics with Tom "Bones" Milone and the ROA Horn, Riverfront Green Park, 7P.M., free.

13 **Riverfront Concert Series***, The Streets of the Bronx, Paramount Center for the Arts, 7P.M., free.

20 **Riverfront Concert Series***, Riverfront Green Park, The Tim Gillis Band, 7P.M., free.

27 **Riverfront Concert Series***, Riverfront Green Park, Lucy Kaplansky, 7P.M., free.

AUGUST

4 **Schooner Lois MccClure Lecture and Tour**, Riverfront Green Park, 7:30 P.M., \$5. For reservations send email request to: info@peekskillcelebration.com or call the Celebration Office at 914-736-2000.

5 **First Friday**, Live music, shops, restaurants and artists studios open, Peekskill Downtown, 5P.M.-8P.M., free.

5 **Peekskill Celebration**, Food Vendors, Riverfront Green Park, 5P.M.

5 **Peekskill Celebration**, Main Stage Kick Off Concert sponsored by the New York Power Authority, Joey Dee & The Starliners, Riverfront Green Park, 7P.M., free.

6 **Jan Peek 10k Race & 2 Mile Fun Walk**, Downtown Peekskill, 7:45 P.M., race forms can be obtained by e-mailing info@peekskillcelebration.com. Be sure to put "Jan Peek Application" in subject area.

6 **Annual Hudson Rally Peekskill Sailing Regatta**, Riverfront Green Park, 9P.M., contact Dr. Ralph Cunningham at 914-739-9400.

6 **1st Annual Dragons on the Hudson Dragon Boat Races**, Riverfront Green Park, 10A.M., for more information visit www.22dragons.com.

6 **Elton Brand Youth Basketball Clinic**, Downtown Peekskill, 10:45 a.m., for youths age 7-17, applications available Peekskill Celebration Office, (914) 736-2000.

6 **Various Events Throughout the Day**, see www.peekskillcelebration.com, Riverfront Green Park.

6 **Fireworks Extravaganza**, Riverfront Green Park, 9:30 P.M., Free.

7 **Old-Timers Stickball Tournament**, Downtown Peekskill, 9A.M., \$10 per person registration. Call Roger Hamilton at Brush Graphics at 914-788-577 for details.

14 **Sunday Jazz Nights in the Park**, Sponsored by the Department of Parks and Recreation, Depew Park Bandstand, free.

21 **Sunday Jazz Nights in the Park**, Burr Johnson, Sponsored by the Department of Parks and Recreation, Depew Park Bandstand, free.

*All Riverfront Concert Series Events sponsored by the Bank of New York, Con Edison, Frank & Lindy Plumbing & Heating, Inc., Hudson Valley Hospital Center Foundation, ShopRite Supermarkets, and Wheelabrator Westchester

Source: The Hudson Valley Gateway Chamber of Commerce and other organizations.

Peekskill News

Vol. X Number Y

The Peekskill News is the quarterly newsletter of the City of Peekskill, NY. It is written, edited and photographed by the Peekskill Department of Public Information.

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Turning a downtown around takes teamwork. No single person can do it. That's why the Peekskill Business Improvement District was created, and it's why bringing prosperity, vitality and energy to Peekskill's downtown is the BID's primary goal.

What the BID does is to marshal the resourcefulness of downtown businesses to attract customers, companies and new residents. It does this by using funds generated by a special tax levy on the commercial properties within its boundaries. The money is used to everything from capital improvements to boosting downtown's image.



The Flower Barrel Beautification Program. There will be more barrels than ever before this year, and they'll look better. The BID has hired local florist and landscape designer Shades of Green to do its barrels, so the streetscape should glow with the colors of beautiful buds.

The Banner Project. Giving people the information they need to get to the right place is a key part of any revitalization effort. The BID is going to be steering people towards Peekskill's stores with the Banner Project, which will create 140 banners showing where the BID is. Highway signage will also be created as will kiosks that will be available to the walking public.

ENERGIZING DOWNTOWN THE PEEKSKILL BID

According to the BID's official statement, the organization's purpose is "to develop, organize and sponsor professional programs and community activities that maintain and promote Peekskill's vibrant commercial center." Currently, the BID is concentrating on improving the Downtown's landscape and promoting a series of ongoing, regular events that will help people form the habit of coming downtown. "We're going from a primarily a special event-driven organization to something that's more public infrastructure and marketing oriented," says Mark Cavanna, the BID's president.

"Our marketing goal is to bring people into Peekskill," Cavanna says. "Right now, our most important tool is our brochure. We've printed about 35,000 of them," he says. Other efforts include working with the Westchester Business Journal on a special issue focusing on Peekskill that will come out in June and placing advertisements in publications like the New York State tourism guide.

Synergy is a key aspect of the BID's current strategy. There are many different groups working on promoting Peekskill. Many of them have an abundance of enthusiasm but lack money. The BID is making its cash go further by tapping into the energy of these organizations. "We're seeing a real multiplier effect by working with these organizations in the way we are," Cavanna says. "We give them money and they do the legwork," he says. With BID support, organizations such as the Peekskill Arts Council are creating a series of ongoing events that will draw people to the downtown on a regular basis. These started with the Arts Council's Open Studios event on May 21-22. **A full menu of other activities is scheduled:**

First Fridays. In one of the most exciting of the developments, starting June 3 through November, several organizations will work together to make the first Friday evening of every month a compelling, exciting event. Galleries, restaurants and specialty shops will stay open from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. So will the Paramount Center for the Arts and the Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Arts. There will even be a shuttle bus to ensure that all locales are easily accessible. Visitors can make purchases at some of downtown's unique specialty shops, see some art at a gallery, go for coffee or tea and then see a show--all within easy walking distance of ample parking.

The Peekskill Farmer's Market. Last year the Farmer's Market drew more than 25,000 people to Peekskill's downtown with its abundant and excellent offerings of fresh fruit, vegetables, bread, cheese, meat and poultry. It is held weekly on Saturdays on Bank Street off main from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. This year's market should be even better.

The Peekskill Project. On Sept. 24 and 25th, the Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art is sponsoring its second "Peekskill Project." The BID is supporting this effort with marketing funds and expertise.

In addition, the BID is also working on transforming the look and feel of downtown. It is working with the City on a project that could double the number of parking spaces that are available with the goal of making certain that the downtown district retains its unique charm. In addition, we'll also be installing an antique-style clock to further add to downtown's welcoming atmosphere.

Peekskill's downtown is definitely changing for the better. "A new type of business is starting to open--operations like Shades of Green, the Peekskill Coffee House and new toy store Sam and Zanzi," Cavanna says. In fact, it's getting harder to find good available real estate in Peekskill's downtown. While there are still some empty storefronts, few sites are actually available--and though that situation might make it a bit tougher to open a new business, its one of the best signs of rising economic health and energy that anyone could ask for.

How The Bid Works

"Downtown" is very specifically defined when it comes to the BID. Although Peekskill has a number of business areas, the BID's focus is on the area bounded by Broad Street on the east, Nelson Avenue on the West, the north side of Main Street on the north, the south sides of Brown and South Streets on the south.

There are two kinds of BID members: property owners and tenants. Of these, there are approximately 160 property owners and 250 tenants. The BID was established with an annual tax levy of \$100,000. It can also raise funds by charging fees for projects and special events.

Although the City acts as the collector of the BID's funds, the BID itself is an independent organization. Its board has 11 members. Three City officials--the mayor, the city manager and the controller, two commercial tenant representatives and six property owner representatives. In any given year, about half the board is up for election. Between 350 and 400 ballots are sent out which generate 60 or 70 responses.



New Trash, Garbage Policies Succeed In Cutting Waste, Boosting Recycling

In a major breakthrough for the City and its taxpayers, sometimes controversial changes in solid waste disposal policies have resulted in significant reductions in the amount and cost of material the city has to handle and dramatic increases in recycling.

Implemented a little over a year ago, the new rules are saving the City tens of thousands of dollars in disposal fees and reducing the total amount of material that must be gotten rid of by thousands of tons. At the time of the changes, Peekskill was being backed into a corner with its solid waste disposal efforts. There were dramatic restrictions on the City's ability to dispose of wastes, costs were tremendous and rising, and recycling levels were weak at best.

Instead of settling for second best, elected officials and City staffers decided to take an aggressive, proactive approach. They were willing to take some heat to resolve the problem by using a variety of new techniques, including increasing fees, reducing pickups and boosting enforcement. Though some criticized the approaches without providing their own solutions, outside experts are very impressed by what they have seen. Good government means doing the right thing, not the most popular one, and that's what experts say Peekskill has accomplished.

"The city has set an example that innovative solutions can be found with new manage-

ment techniques," the Westchester County Recycling Office said in an official release. County authorities were so impressed with the effectiveness of the City's new waste disposal programs that they gave Peekskill two awards for its efforts.

Dealing with solid waste is one of the biggest challenges facing communities around America. Solid waste professionals place the material they deal with into three highly specific categories. There is garbage, which is the kitchen refuse most homeowners place in black bags or garbage pails every week. There is trash, which consists of the larger, bulk material the City now picks up once every two months. And then there are recyclables, which are supposed to go in blue recycling bins or in clear plastic bags.

In 2004, Peekskill faced a crisis in its solid waste disposal efforts. Policies that were among the most generous in the country had led to near exponential growth in volume and costs. Predatory landlords were adding tremendously to the problem by throwing out huge amounts of material that should have been disposed of commercially. Some were even bringing in material from out of town.

New rules that limited garbage disposal to four barrels per tax parcel, trash to specified amounts two months a year instead of 10, and which encouraged recycling have totally turned the situation around. "Where

before these changes we were seeing seemingly limitless double-digit increases in tonnage levels, year to date we've seen the most dramatic drop in garbage pickup since we began keeping records," says Howard Wessells, general foreman of the City's Department of Public Works.

Such dramatic shifts in fundamental statistics are almost unprecedented. But the numbers collected by the DPW make the shift clear. Even though the new programs didn't start until April 2004, the City's total cost of waste disposal dropped from about \$385,000 in 2003 to \$331,000 for the year. Month to month comparisons show an even more significant shift. As of the end of April 2003, the City handled 4739 tons of solid waste. That number soared to 5251 tons in 2004—and then declined to just 4168 tons for 2005.

Almost the entire shift arises from changes in waste disposal behavior by residents. Predatory landlords are no longer exploiting the system by disposing of vast amounts of waste each month, and many homeowners are now recycling their paper products instead of throwing them out with the general trash. Indeed, where recycling levels were formerly languishing, they are now on a significant upswing, with the amount of commingled recyclables soaring from 48.77 tons in the month of April 2004 to 56.39 tons in April 2005.

Outside organizations took note of how well Peekskill's solid waste programs were working, and the Westchester County Recycling Office gave the City two awards. One was for "Innovative Programs" for the achievements of the City's recycling programs. The other was for "Outstanding Recycling Education Program" and honored the City for the scope and quality of the information it was putting out.

"We like to recognize municipalities, companies, and schools each year for outstanding recycling accomplishments," Petronella says. "Peekskill is being recognized for their efforts to increase enforcement to encourage recycling and the way they were working to lower the amount of garbage that's put out at the curb."

"Peekskill received a second award to recognize the city for its education program. The mailing they sent to all residents was a very comprehensive guide, including local

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Peekskill: A Safer, More Secure Place *Continued from page 2*

Taxi Safety Enforcement. Strong efforts dedicated to improving the safety, efficiency and functionality of Peekskill's taxi fleets have made the city's neighborhoods more quiet and secure places to live and provided safer, cleaner cab service to members of our community.

FBI numbers tell a powerful story about how much better life in Peekskill has gotten in the last decade. Specific declines in designated areas include a 33.33% drop in robberies, a 20.51% decline in assaults, an 11.54% decrease in burglaries, and a 25% drop in motor vehicle thefts. A glimpse at the long-term statistics shows even more dramatic declines. There were 238 burglaries in Peekskill in 1995 and just 46 in 2004, a drop of more than 80%; robberies dropped by 63% over the same period larcenies by 62%, and motor vehicle thefts by 59%. The total number of major crimes committed in Peekskill has declined by 62% since 1995, from 998 to 337.

An increase in one area was actually good news. Because of Big Dog and other forceful enforcement efforts, the number of arrests for controlled substances did increase. But that was because the City made a strong and highly effective effort to seek out and incarcerate perpetrators. We're not interested in generating statistics that make us look good. The Peekskill Police Department wants to make our City a better place to live, and I think these numbers show we're doing just that. Now we just need to let the world know how we'll we're doing. You can be a big help with that. The more citizens who visit our downtown, the better things will get. So go visit Peekskill's downtown one evening, and see how well your city is doing.

Congratulations & WELCOME



Royal Falafel

323 North Division Street • 914-737-0044

Chef Najm Kassas has brought a taste of his native Lebanon to Peekskill. Leading the menu is falafel, a famous dish made of fried ground chick peas that is both tasty and healthy. From delicious lamb gyros to fresh, airy Tabbouleh, salad of wheat, tomato, mint and parsley, Royal Falafel offers a spectacular introduction to Mideast cuisine. Other dishes include hummus, a dish that combines the tartness with lemon with the smooth, subtle flavor of tahini, a sauce made up of ground sesame seeds, and garlic; kibbeh, oval-shaped nuggets of cracked wheat with a rich, savory lamb center; shish kabob, home made stuffed grape leaves and numerous other tasty treats.

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Besides quality, the most consistent facet of Royal Falafel's menu is the astoundingly low prices. A large falafel is big enough for three and costs just five dollars, and even the most expensive items on the list are usually under \$10. Add to that a clean, welcoming atmosphere and efficient, welcoming service, and Royal Falafel makes a spectacular addition to Peekskill's list of diverse and quality restaurants.

Millie's Fish, Fruit and Vegetable Market

364 Washington Street • 914-737-3675

Those looking for great ingredients at fabulous prices need travel no further than 364 Washington Street, where owner Millicent Morris's airy, open, attractive new store provides everything from perfectly ripe mangoes to magnificently fresh fish. "What's special about us is we carry everything—all of our vegetables and fish—fresh," Morris Millicent says. Special services are also one of the store's features, which include:

- Free delivery to the elderly and disabled Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays.
- A 20% discount to every senior that shops at the store.
- And coming up, a free three pound bag of onions and five pound bag of potatoes with every purchase of \$15 worth of vegetables at the store.



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Clams, oysters, mussels and whole flounder, salmon, tilapias and shrimp were also available. Prices change on a daily basis, depending on the catch and the weather, Morris says, but her goods are almost always competitive and even lower than other local outlets and major chain stores.



Side Effect

1011 Brown Street
914-736-1235

Experienced shoppers know a real find when they see it — and that's what they've discovered in Side Effect. Owner Patty Villanova's goal has been to create a place which offered unique, creative items

and affordable prices. Her goods range from spectacular beaded handbags for under \$25 to attractive and stylish necklaces and bracelets that go for similar prices. An artist herself, Villanova makes stunning hand-painted silk scarves that

are guaranteed to get adoring comments from all those who see them. Bracelets made of semi-precious stones and handcrafted necklaces come in at higher prices but are virtually guaranteed to be worth their weight in compliments. A full medley of other extras is one reason Side Effect has already become a standout favorite among both high school girls and their stylish moms.

Decorative items for the home complete Side Effect's menu. With paintings, faux tiles, and myriad other items available. Making Side Effect even more attractive is Villanova's willingness to create silk-painted artworks on commission. She'll match any style or outfit a customer desires.

Ruben's Café

914-739-4330 • 5 North Division Street

Ruben's Café is the latest addition to Peekskill's growing list of fine restaurants. Owner and chief chef Ruben Alvarez plans specializes in the cuisine of his native community of Guadalupe, Mexico.



Besides offering such Mexican standards as fajitas,

burritos and enchiladas, Ruben's Café will give customers a chance to explore a number of specialized dishes. Among Alvarez's favorites is Mula, which is a special meat that is cooked on a very hot stone with peppers, chicken and shrimp.

Other dishes offered at Ruben's will include Costilla De Borrego Tatemada, a slow-roasted rack of lamb with a touch of adobe sauce accompanied by potatoes and seasonal vegetables, Filet Mignon Cinco De Mayo, which is a filet mignon wrapped with bacon and cheese and topped with a tomatillo pineapple sauce, and Bistec Tarasco, a grilled steak served with sautéed onions and peppers topped with melted cheese and tarasco. A bar specializing in Mexican beverage is another of Ruben's highlights.

SAM AND ZANZI'S Fabulous Toy Shop

914-737-0749 • 907 South Street

A truly magical toy store has come to Peekskill. Growing out of the magnificent imagination of ballet dancer Christian Claessens, Sam and Zanzi's has a spectacular atmosphere and an even better selection of books, toys and educational games. Just step inside the store and you'll know you're in a special place. It's like walking into an imaginary forest, with support beams converted into trees bearing lovely red fruit and the floor patterned with lovely green leaves. This atmosphere is a world away from that provided by big box stores, and that's exactly what Claessens is intending to provide. Rather than just moving tons of goods, he wants to spur children's imaginations and open them up to new worlds of fun and growth.

"Toys are tools for children," Claessens says. "Their job is to play. This is how they learn and discover. Creative play develops the mind and the child's inventiveness. I have been exploring this avenue for years as a dance teacher. Now, I am interested in taking it into a different dimension." Discerning parents from around the region are exploring Sam and Zanzi's, and discovering new ways to help make their children happy and wise.



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Succeeding In The Art Of Commerce: The Flatiron Gallery

Wendie Garber can paint a lovely still life. But her true masterpiece is the Flatiron Gallery, which has proven to be one of the driving forces behind Peekskill's downtown revitalization. Located in one of the City's most fascinating buildings, the Flatiron Gallery is as unique and complex as the City itself. There are gorgeous paintings by nationally renowned artist Andrew Lattimore, filed with lush and beautiful details. Playful and delightfully realistic sculptures by Marlene Ferrell Parillo portray everything from family relationships to demented pets. Dozens of jewelry makers provide the gallery with a never-ending supply of stunning items that are unique, dramatic and affordable.

Like many artists, Garber does a number of things to pay the rent. She is a much loved and respected teacher at the Blue Mountain Middle School; she has the Flatiron Gallery; and she does her own work painting and drawing. Also like many artists, Garber believes training should never end. "I still study," Garber says. "I'm doing portraiture with Andrew Lattimore," she says. Currently, still-lives are her strong suit, but she is also focusing on the beautiful landscapes of the Hudson Valley area. "I've studied my whole life, actually," she says. "You should never stop studying. I'll probably continue to take courses my whole life," she says.

Art can be a lonely pursuit. That's why Garber came to Peekskill a dozen years ago, when she started renting a studio in the Flatiron Building at the corner of Brown Street and Division Street. "When I heard about the Peekskill art scene developing, the idea of having a small rented studio space where you could still have your privacy but would be part of an art movement and a dialogue was very exciting. I and most of the community who were working at home were very isolated," she says.

Special things can happen when people come together. The energy of Peekskill's early arts community transformed Garber. "It was more than I bargained for. It was absolutely fantastic. It changed my whole life," she says. She had no idea that she was going to open an art gallery, but eventually it simply seemed like the logical thing to do. "I met the most fabulous artists and clients and art lovers," Garber says. "When you meet more people things happen. The arts grow very quickly when people put their minds together," she says. That growth is what helped inspire Garber to open her gallery. All this passion and energy came at minimal cost to Peekskill taxpayers.

Zoning changes that allowed property owners to rent out second and third floors that had sat unoccupied for decades drove the first stages of the artists movement. People like Garber received no subsidies or government support at all. Even the next generation projects such as the Central Avenue purpose-built art lofts were built with state and federal, not city, money. What the Garber's entrepreneurial energy has done is to have created a destination unique and dramatic enough to make it worthwhile to visit downtown Peekskill all by itself. Today's Flatiron Gallery displays the work of more than 100 different artists of many different kinds and spreads out over two floors of the Flatiron Building. It's possible to buy a unique and lovely necklace for under \$30, or an investment-value painting for many thousands of dollars. At least one person has done an entire season's holiday shopping in the Flatiron Gallery and its downstairs neighbor, the Coop, in just one afternoon.

For its first five years, the Flatiron Gallery wasn't a profitable venture. That changed as the Peekskill Arts District gathered momentum and a new generation of businesses such as the Peekskill Coffee House opened. Those who criticize the Arts District should think what the downtown would be like if it had never happened. "It's attracted a lot of people who wouldn't have been here otherwise. It's made a great, big difference, and I hope everyone realize that who isn't involved in art. It's help keep the downtown alive," Garber says.

"When I see the impact of the Paramount and John Yanovsky coming on board, and the Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art opening, and new art related businesses popping up every minute, I see that yes, this has given us new life and new blood," Garber says. Where Peekskill's downtown was virtually desolate and empty 15 years ago, "People are coming and spending the whole day and evening here. Then they're coming back on a regular basis, and there's something to come back too," Garber says. That momentum seems to be building steadily, Garber says. "Peekskill has had its growing pains. It wasn't always fantastic, but it's gotten a lot better," she says. And she's proud to have played a part in making it happen.



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CITY OF PEEKSKILL Key Government Meetings

JUNE

- 20 Committee of the Whole, 6:30 p.m. (CH)
- 23 Historic and Landmarks Preservation Board, 7:30 p.m. (CH)
- 27 Committee of the Whole, 6:30 p.m. (CH)
- 27 Common Council Meeting, 7:30 p.m. (CH)

JULY

- 7 Historic Preservation Advisory Commission, 7:30 p.m., Neighborhood Center, 4 Nelson Avenue
- 12 Planning Commission, 7:30 p.m. (CH)
- 5 Committee of the Whole, 6:30 p.m. (CH)
- 11 Committee of the Whole, 9:30 a.m. (CH)
- 11 Common Council Meeting, 10:00 a.m., Senior Citizen's Activity Room, Neighborhood Center, 4 Nelson Avenue.
- 21 Zoning Board of Appeals, 7:30 p.m. (CH)
- 28 Historic and Landmarks Preservation Board, 7:30 p.m. (CH)

AUGUST

- 9 Planning Commission, 7:30 p.m., (CH)
- 8 Committee of the Whole, 6:30 p.m. (CH)
- 15 Committee of the Whole, 6:30 p.m. (CH)
- 15 Common Council Meeting, 7:30 p.m. (CH)
- 18 Zoning Board of Appeals, 7:30 p.m. (CH)
- 25 Historic and Landmarks Preservation Board, 7:30 p.m. (CH)

(CH) =Location is City Hall

Peekskill's Image Getting Polished

PEEKSKILL'S IMAGE IS TURNING AROUND

After years of negative reporting by a myriad of different media, the City is getting its most positive exposure in years. It even won an unprecedented honor, becoming the first place to win top-10 awards from both Westchester Magazine and Hudson Valley Magazine in living memory.

There's a reason for all the great coverage—years of hard work by elected officials, businesspeople, city staffers and residents along with successful implementation of a number of different programs.

The Peekskill Artists District is Rapidly Gaining Momentum. Smart planning is paying off for the City of Peekskill. The recently-completed Central Avenue and South Street Art Lofts have helped bring the Artists District to critical mass. They've brought in an energetic new generation of Artists who are working with the City's veteran art community volunteers to do everything from opening new galleries to creating exciting advertising campaigns.

Many Non-Profit Groups and Other Organizations Are Working with the City to Promote Peekskill. With the City's support, organizations from the Business Improvement District to the Peekskill Arts Council to Historic Peekskill Inc. are working hard to get the message out about our City.

Economic Development Projects Are Bearing Fruit. Money from the Grow Peekskill Fund is acting as a catalyst to create attractions and energy, drawing new people to the community and bringing new life to the downtown and elsewhere. The Peekskill Coffee Shop is among the leading examples of this kind of success.

Smart, Aggressive Relationships With Developers Are Paying Off. Taking a firm but supportive stand with developers and bringing some of the nation's most respected companies to Peekskill is having a positive impact on real estate values across the City. More and more developers are paying attention to the City as they see the Chapel Hill and Riverbend projects sell out at record prices.

Strong Code Enforcement Efforts and Support of Preservationists Is Making A Real Difference. As Peekskill cracks down on predatory landlords and supports preservationists with programs like the annual Historic Plaque

Awards, the world is becoming familiar with our wonderful antique housing stock and the efforts that are underway to preserve it.

Award-Winning City Services are Gaining Notice. Local and state-wide organization are noticing how well Peekskill's staffers are serving the City's residents. Organizations from the New York Council of Mayors to Westchester County Government have singled out Peekskill for projects ranging from new sanitation and recycling programs to storm water repairs.

Working with the Media is Paying Off in a Huge Way. The City's recently-implemented media outreach campaign is bearing tremendous fruit. Instead of negative stories ripped from the police blotter, a stream of positive articles is appearing in the local media. That's great news for Peekskill and its taxpayers.

Besides the Artists District, other factors listed by publications covering the City included Peekskill's downtown revitalization, fascinating and extensive history, beautiful and accessible waterfront, scenic location, the scope and variety of services available to citizens, and the growth, energy and diversity of the city itself.

"Peekskill' and 'preservation' have become nearly synonymous," Hudson Valley reported. "The city today is a vibrant combination of Peekskill born-and-bred locals and newcomers," the magazine said.

"Within the last few years, the downtown area has been rejuvenated," Westchester Magazine said. "New residents are flocking to the city, bringing with them a lot of enthusiasm for paint, wallpaper and flower bulbs," the article said.

Copies of both the Hudson Valley Magazine and the Westchester Magazine articles have been posted on the city's web site, www.cityofpeekskill.com, with the permission of the publications. Even The New York Times has joined the crowd, publishing a series of upbeat pieces, including three on the weekend of March 27 alone. In a New York Times real estate article, a leading expert on the Westchester market said that Peekskill is following a more

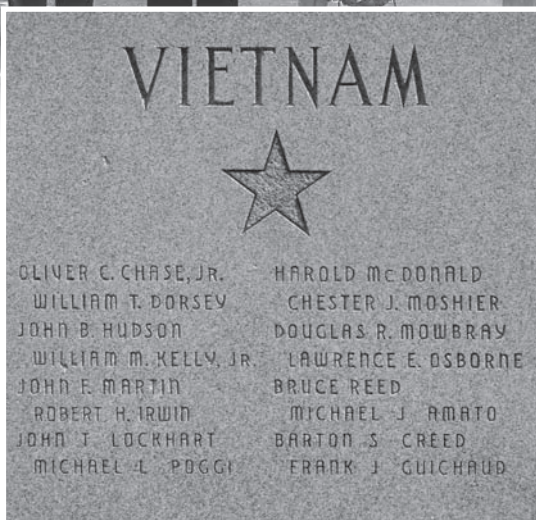


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solid and sustainable path than many towns and cities in Southern Westchester. "There is an inorganic element to a city built on the back of large development projects," an expert told the article's author in describing some of the massive projects underway in White Plains.

"He is more confident in the sustainability of progress in the northern city of Peekskill, which, unlike White Plains, has been settled by a burgeoning population of artists, taking advantage of available lofts and river views," The New York Times said of the expert. "The cultural beat in Peekskill far exceeds anything in White Plains and that could make a difference," he said.

Residents can add to Peekskill's momentum by checking out its downtown themselves. Dramatic reductions in crime rates have made Peekskill one of the safest places in the Hudson Valley, while creative entrepreneurs have created many wonderful shopping, eating and entertainment opportunities in the central business district.



Honoring Those Who Served and Sacrificed

Peekskill residents have played an important role in America's armed services since before the country was founded. This year has seen some special tributes.



CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP: State Assemblywoman Sandy Galef, Councilwoman Drew Claxton, Deputy Mayor Cathy Pisani, Mayor John G. Testa, Councilman Mel Bolden, Councilman Bill Schmidt, Councilwoman Milagros Martinez, City Manager Dan Fitzpatrick, Councilman Don Bennet; Soldiers arriving home from Iraq are greeted by the Peekskill Fire Department at the National Guard Armory on Washington Street; Peekskill Youth pay tribute at the Memorial Day ceremony; Five names were added to the City's Vietnam War Monument on Memorial Day in a service attended by the Mayor, City Council, and local elected officials.



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