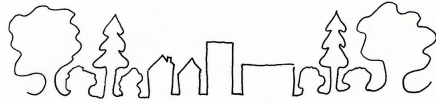


# Rockland PLUS Community Assessment



**ROCKLAND P.L.U.S.**  
PLANNING LAND USE WITH STUDENTS

## Site Assessment

*\*Note - the first section of this form (Questions 1-7) is to be completed during a field visit by the students, either independently in or small groups. Questions 8 & 9 are discussion items for small group work in class.*

Consider a section of your community to review for development/redevelopment. Visit the site in person or through using Google Earth. Use this form to help you carefully investigate the site you select. You are looking at the existing feel of the site (character), current use, linkages to the wider community, and development potential.

### SITE ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS #1-7:

1. Identify the specific site in your community that you are investigating and draw a sketch map on the back of this sheet to highlight and location key features.

*The Palisades Mall in West Nyack NY. See attached sheet for sketch*

2. What specifically about the site encouraged you to select it?

- *Community magnet*
- *Put Nanuet Mall out of business*
- *Large tax base for the community*
- *Potential to serve as community hub*
- *Rearranged traffic and the traffic flow is poor*
- *Interior of the mall and the parking lot could be better utilized*
- *Flooding around the mall on a regular basis*

3. List 5 descriptive words that you think best describe the appearance of your site.

*Shopping, really big, cement cement cement, large parking lot, indoor mall*

4. List the strengths of this site. What do you like best about it? What makes it unique?

- *Close to the thruway – easy to get to by local and out of town buyers*
- *Located between major highways minimizing traffic impacts on residential areas*
- *Fairly central location in County*
- *Was one of the largest remaining open areas (not protected as parkland) for development in the County*

5. What challenges do you see in redeveloping this site? (for example financial issues, market competition, clean up costs, traffic issues...)

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- *Dump site across street can be seen as a negative*
  - *Flooding of the area can cause closures and traffic issues*
  - *Thruway being near can be seen as both a strength and a weakness*
  - *The economy is a bit slow and so filling all the store sites could be hard*
6. Thinking about the community features activity we did in class, how might this site be used to enhance your community?
- *The space is large and there is the possibility of building something multiuse that would serve different ages as well i.e. include a Children's Center Museum, a Senior Center etc.*
  - *Include recreation with both indoor and outdoor uses for general public*
  - *Include some parkland, a gazebo, creating a destination space – to do this we need more greenery both inside and outside – more attractive look.*
  - *Create some mixed use with the fourth floor being turned into residential space*
  - *Include more local businesses and fewer chain retail stores to connect it better with the local community*
  - *Make it bikeable and walkable both to and from*
7. In planning, building participation and support is an important part of the process. Think about different groups and members in your community that might care about what happens to this space (for example sports teams, senior citizen groups, affordable housing groups). We call these different people/groups 'stakeholders' in the planning process. Brainstorm a list with your class and consider if you could involve any of them or their members in the planning & development of your proposed site? (you can go to <http://www.planet-rockland.org/html/rockland.html>) to further explore groups in your community who you might work with).
- *Possible partners or stakeholders we should consider would include:*
    - *Apple Computers – partner in internet café &/or young person's creative 'hang out' for a spot to share talent*
  - *Real Estate*
  - *Steps to a Healthier Rockland*
  - *Museums (NYS and private)*
  - *Town of Clarkstown – develop a more walkable/transit-oriented area*
  - *Commuter tram/shuttle*
  - *Project for Public Spaces a company that works with towns to help them create destination locations.*
  - *Entertainment – Dance club, comedy club, local film-makers showcase*
  - *Light industry – example the solar panel business in Poughkeepsie*
  - *Commuter tram/shuttle*

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**Team activity as a class project or assign teams etc.**

### CONNECTING TO COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS 8 & 9

**This table asks you to think about your village/town, and consider its strengths and weaknesses. How can your site enhance what already exists in your village/town? To complete this form use your own knowledge of your community and what you can find online using resources such as the County website - <https://rocklandgov.com/>**

8. Considering your wider community (the village or town around the site), rate the following features under **Strengths** or **Needs/Challenges** using a score of 1 (mainly absent) to 5 (well represented). Support your number choice with a few words of explanation.

Community Feature	Strengths Rank 1 (low) to 5 (high) with comments	Comments on Needs/Challenges
Community Character – <i>Are History, &amp; the Arts part of your community, Is there a diversity of people and backgrounds</i>	5 – The whole area has a rich history: Early farming settlements and rivertown communities along the Hudson; Historic Underground Railroad & contributions of the African Americans in Palisades (Skunk Hollow – free Black community 1806-1905; history of thriving arts and theatre)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Maintain sense of place as new mega buildings and suburban sprawl occurs.</li> <li>* Improve the treatment of the cemetery space.</li> <li>• Include culture through art displays in the mall, music events, and financial support where feasible</li> </ul>
Housing/Affordability/Mix of Housing - <i>Apts., condos, single family homes – options for singles, families and retired</i>	3 – Decent mix of housing in the community, although some regions are dominantly a single style. Entry level housing, and affordability for seniors is an issue in much of Rockland.	Correct pockets of single income housing that exist in all parts of Rockland. Design of riverfront town with its mix residence over shops has primarily been lost.

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Community Feature	Strengths Rank 1 (low) to 5 (high) with comments	Comments on Needs/Challenges
<p>Transportation/Accessibility/Walkability <i>public transportation, sidewalks, drivable roads, bikeways, crosswalks</i></p>	<p>1-3 – There is some bus service and there is a shuttle for seniors. Few bikelanes.</p>	<p>Many unwalkable areas- sidewalks missing or too narrow, need bikelanes, street crossings not friendly; poor mass transit - too many rely on cars with few other choices.</p>
<p>Health &amp; Wellness – <i>nutritional awareness, exercise opportunities, preventive treatment, clinics and hospitals close by</i></p>	<p>4 - Major hospitals; clinics preventative care facilities; Steps to a Healthier Rockland; Rocknet agencies for aging, smoking cessation, teen alcoholism</p>	<p>Safety is an issue in some communities; fresh local produce available, but not promoted; health services could do more to support preventative health and wellness</p>
<p>Social/Recreation – <i>variety of opportunities for various ages – young, teen, adult, senior?</i></p>	<p>3-4 - Clubs for adults – Italian American Club, rotaries, chamber of commerce; sports clubs, community events, parades and celebrations; street fairs; many local and county parks - 1/3 of the county is dedicated to parks</p>	<p>Activities for teens and young adults are needed, especially inexpensive ones.</p>
<p>Open Space – <i>undeveloped land ranging from natural habitat to parkland</i></p>	<p>4 - 1/3 of county is parkland</p>	<p>Isolated in the northern section of the county so not accessible to some residents</p>
<p>Environmental Awareness - <i>do people pay attention to what goes into their streams? do they recycle? Are they energy conscious?</i></p>	<p>3 – There are some programs - a policy on non pesticide use in county parks; an educational brochure available on invasive plants; recycling program exists</p>	<p>Lack of consistent conservation policy and education; irrigation and unrestricted water use resulting in need for tapping more water sources and consideration of desalination plant; invasives planted in public facilities, no consistent energy reduction focus</p>
<p>Green Development/Infrastructure – <i>storm water runoff collection, energy saving (solar or automatic light switch off) and habitat preserving</i></p>	<p>2 - Some county educational initiatives have promoted rain gardens; Environmental Management Council; Soil &amp; Water conservation; pervious paving; recycling program; composting for waste reduction</p>	<p>Lack of finance and laws that provide incentives,</p>

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Community Feature	Strengths Rank 1 (low) to 5 (high) with comments	Comments on Needs/Challenges
Access to Local Products – <i>Farmer’s Market, local production</i>	3 –Rockland Farm Alliance provides local farms in the community; Village and Town Farmers markets; local farmers section in some grocery stores; Local foods like Lucas Candies in Haverstraw; Defiant Beer in PR; street fairs for local artisans;	The more opportunities we can offer the less these items will cost (economy of scale); educate for true cost for purchases
Goods & Services (stores, shopping) – <i>walkable?</i>	5 – One of the biggest malls in the Country as well as other smaller malls	Overabundance of goods and services – cultural emphasis on consumption
Education – <i>schools from pre-school to college</i>	5 - Many K12 schools; several colleges; Jr. colleges; extensions	Preschool is a challenge for some due to cost Head Start is available to low income families
Safety – <i>street lighting, fire depts., police</i>	3 – Crime is lower in this area than in many other communities.	Some pockets very safe others have high crime rates
Employment – <i>are there opportunities</i>	2 – NYC nearby and commutable; a few large vendors in area	County has lost most light industry; shortage of trade skill jobs
Aging in Place – <i>places and transportation for seniors to live in the community</i>	3 - Senior facilities in several places in Rockland; Meals on Wheels; RSVP; local rotaries and lions clubs; Vietnam Vets have an active group; churches and synagogues.	Cost for senior services and facilities is a factor. Walkability is a huge factor, although there is some shuttle service for seniors.

9. Based on your completed table above evaluate the overall needs of the community, what opportunities do you see to help your community improve? (Look for low ranking sections)

10. As a group brainstorm some possible plans for your site? Don’t forget to consider how you might use and enhance any of these existing features: