

# TOWN of Bethlehem *Economic Developments*

January 14, 2009

"The Town will grow in a manner that maintains and enhances its preeminent residential and semi-rural character through the attraction of high quality, clean, commercial development to carefully planned and strategically located sites. Residential neighborhoods in the Town will be enhanced by proximity to open space, pedestrian oriented facilities, high quality employment opportunities and neighborhood scale commercial services."

BIDA Vision Statement



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Local Waterfront

## SELKIRK YARDS INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT FOCUS GROUP MEETING #1

On December 12, 2008 despite an ice storm and power outages, Supervisor Cunningham welcomed 63 representatives of industry and government to the first Town Hall meeting of the Selkirk Yards Industrial District Focus Group. Several elected representatives of the district including County Executive Mike Breslin, Assemblyman Tim Gordon, Congressman Elect Paul Tonko and several County Legislators and Town Council members participated in the discussion. By all accounts the participants engaged in a candid and illuminating discussion of the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for improving existing industries and for attracting new industries to the Selkirk Yards Industrial District (an area that includes the CSX Rail Yard / Creble Road corridor bracketed by Route 32 and the NYS Thruway).

Focus group participants said that the strengths of the District included the increased use of rail, existing zoning and land use regulations, availability of acreage and buildings for development, proximity to the Port of Albany for marine/rail/truck transportation, and the desire and opportunities of existing industries to collaborate on mutually beneficial projects. The participants also identified constraints such as expensive power, lack of municipal sewer, poor access to the Thruway and the Port, costs of development (GEIS, NEPA), and diminishing business incentives at the State level (Empire Zone).

The tone of the meeting was remarkably positive and the dialog crackled with creative ideas and enthusiasm. John Morgan (SABIC) talked about building combined cycle gas-fired generators to produce five cent power based on the energy requirements of Rail Yard industries to make the Region competitive with other locations. Bob Verstandig (Verstandig's Florist) was frustrated by regulations that prohibit him from purchasing waste heat from neighboring SABIC. Maurice O'Connell (CSX) talked about the railroad's plans to build a mainline bypass track and to upgrade the rail connection to the Port of Albany.

[Revitalization](#)



[9W Linkage Study](#)

**For More Information**

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Ken Green (McNeary), Bob Hanson (NYS DOT) and Dave Jukins (CDTC) recommended that the Town start planning now because the improvements being envisioned cannot be undertaken until GEIS and NEPA requirements have been met. Supervisor Cunningham suggested the possible creation of a special assessment district to fund expenses associated with GEIS and NEPA (and perhaps other mutually beneficial projects). Other creative ideas included exploring a municipal power district, leveraging the AMD project, and completing the feasibility study for the Clapper Road / Thruway interchange.

The participants agreed that the group should continue to meet on a regular basis. Moderator George Leveille said that the Town would reconvene the "Working Group" in a few months to develop and prioritize next steps. Despite Mother Nature and power outages, the meeting provided a model of business and government leaders thinking creatively, synergistically and collaboratively to make the Selkirk Yards Industrial District a desirable location for the next wave of industrial development.

**This Bulletin was provided by the Town of Bethlehem,  
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