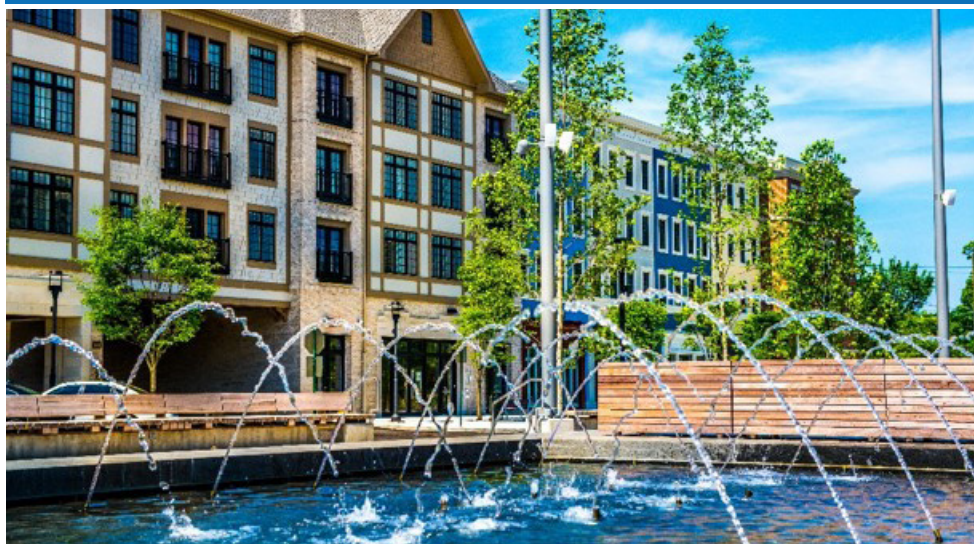


ULI Case Studies

Tri-State Land Use Council

Wyandanch Village



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Wyandanch Village is located in the Long Island town of Wyandanch, New York.

PROJECT SUMMARY

Wyandanch Village is a 40-acre, community-led redevelopment project designed as a comprehensive, “smart growth” transit-oriented development (TOD) located in the hamlet of Wyandanch, a historically underserved community within the town of Babylon, in New York’s Suffolk County, located on Long Island. This comprehensive, multiphase, mixed-use, mixed-income project was made possible by the foresight and dedication of community leaders and the master developer, the Albanese Organization, working together in a public/private partnership committed to implementing and achieving the community’s vision. This project was intended to address longstanding issues of poverty, blight, and disinvestment in Wyandanch, which was once identified as one of the most economically distressed communities on Long Island. To ensure project feasibility, the town government of Babylon assembled more than 70 properties and constructed numerous public improvements, including the extensive sewer infrastructure necessary for the project.

A true placemaking initiative, the redevelopment of this former brownfield site adjacent to an existing Long Island Rail Road station with direct service to Manhattan includes a mix of affordable and market-rate multifamily residential rental units constructed over various commercial uses. Wyandanch Village is also served by a newly rebuilt station house and a 920-space commuter parking garage. To date, the first phase consisting of two mixed-income buildings has been completed, containing a total of about 222,000 square feet, including 177 residential units and 35,000

QUICK FACTS

Location

Wyandanch (Babylon, Long Island), New York

Project Type

LEED-Silver, LEED-ND, Mixed-income, Mixed-use, Transit-oriented development

Site Size

40 acres

Land Uses

Buildings A & B: Multifamily residential (65% affordable/35% market rate); Retail/Restaurant; Recreation & Open Space; Building C: YMCA community center; medical clinic; Building D: Age-restricted multifamily residential; Building E: Mixed-use multifamily residential (65% affordable/35% middle income); Wyandanch Community Resource Center

Keywords/Special Features

Transit-oriented development; LEED Silver; LEED-ND; affordable housing; age-restricted affordable housing; public/private redevelopment; community-driven development

Website

wyandanchvillage.com

Project Address

10-40 Station Drive, Wyandanch, NY 11798

Master Developer

Albanese Organization Inc. (albaneseorg.com)

Equity Capital Sources

Tax credit syndicator: Hudson Housing Capital

Tax credit equity investors: Capital One Community Finance Group of New York; New York Community Bank

Private equity investors: Albanese Organization Inc.; Castagna Realty

Debt Capital Sources

Private sources: Capital One Community Finance Group of New York (Multifamily); Sterling National Bank (Multifamily); Signature Bank (Commercial Retail)

Public sources: New York State Homes & Community Renewal (NYSHCR); New York State Housing Finance Agency (NYSHFA); State of New York Mortgage Agency (SONMYA); New York State Housing Trust Fund Corporation (HTFC); Suffolk County Workforce Housing Infrastructure Program; HUD HOME Partnership Program

Master Planners

Town of Babylon; AKRF Inc.; the RBA Group; Sustainable Long Island

Architects & Engineers

Beatty, Harvey, Coco Architects LLP; Perkins Eastman; Cameron Engineering & Associates

square feet of retail space, all surrounding a community park and plaza with an ice-skating rink and a seasonal farmers market.

A third building, completed in December 2019, includes an additional 124 mixed-income rental units. In April 2020, Albanese commenced construction on a 94-unit, age-restricted residential building. Moreover, construction is expected to begin in 2021 on a 77,000-square-foot health and wellness center, housing a brand-new, state-of-the-art YMCA and providing an updated, modern location for an existing community health care facility. This phase of the project will mark the introduction of recreational and wellness facilities, long absent from the community, which are anticipated to serve as a focal point and place of congregation for community residents.

Introduction and Background

The development challenges faced by Wyandanch mirror those faced by many other older, outer-ring suburbs developed in the post–World War II building boom of the 1940s and 1950s. Developed as some of America’s “first suburbs,” the towns of Long Island were originally bedroom communities of single-family homes arranged in typical postwar subdivisions, intended to serve those Manhattan workers who could afford to move out of the city and commute via train. As a result, there is a dearth of multifamily housing and mixed-use development throughout Long Island. Over time, this pattern of development and its limited affordable housing options came to be seen as a significant contributing factor not only to the widespread segregation and economic inequality affecting the area, but also to its “brain drain,” as many young people from the area moved away permanently after college due to the lack of housing, jobs, and entertainment. This historical pattern of suburban sprawl—type planning had particularly adverse impacts upon economically disadvantaged communities throughout Long Island, including the Wyandanch Hamlet, a small, predominantly African American and Hispanic community located within the town of Babylon in central Long Island. Wyandanch had long struggled with the ill effects of these outdated planning philosophies: a general lack of safe, affordable housing options; stagnant commercial investment and job creation; and outdated infrastructure. Moreover, the auto-centric nature of development in Wyandanch had created a hostile pedestrian environment, which, combined with the lack of available local public transit options, made it difficult for low-income residents without

cars to get to work and do basic household shopping.

In the early 2000s, Wyandanch was identified by the Suffolk County Planning Department as the most economically distressed community on Long Island. This was due in part to the relatively high percentage of families receiving public assistance but was also attributed to Wyandanch’s high levels of unemployment and low median family income and home values. In addition, the high cost of living in the New York Metropolitan Area had disproportionately adverse effects on Wyandanch’s lower-income residents, forcing them to spend a greater percentage of their incomes on necessary goods and services, particularly in comparison to the more affluent residents of neighboring towns.

By 2003, years of economic inequality and disinvestment had resulted in widespread blight throughout the Wyandanch community, which was struggling with the negative effects of numerous deteriorated and vacant structures; contaminated brownfields and industrial sites along Straight Path, the central business district; pervasive trash; potholed streets; and, perhaps most surprising, a lack of sanitary sewers. With the nearest sewer line approximately two miles from the center of town, much of Wyandanch was reliant on septic systems, including Straight Path and the nearby train station area. The lack of sewer infrastructure was a clear barrier to development and community investment—it prevented the construction of much-needed multifamily housing affordable for existing residents and made any type of commercial business development cost-prohibitive, precluding the creation of much-needed job opportunities. It was clear to community leaders that the lack

QUICK FACTS

General Contractor

A3 Construction LLC, an affiliate of the Albanese Organization

Stakeholder Interviewees

- Russell Albanese, chairman, Albanese Organization Inc.
- Anthony Albanese, AVP development, Albanese Organization Inc.
- George Aridas, executive vice president (ret.), Albanese Organization Inc.
- Ellen Kackmann, vice president, Affordable and Workforce Housing, Albanese Organization Inc.
- Sean Fitzgerald, assistant commissioner, New York State Homes & Community Renewal
- Paul Beyer, strategic coordinator, Office of Community Transformation, New York Department of State
- Steve Bellone, Suffolk County executive
- Jonathan Keyes, director, Downtown and TOD Development, Suffolk County Department of Economic Development and Planning
- Vanessa Pugh, chief deputy commissioner, Suffolk County Department of Labor Licensing and Consumer Affairs
- Rich Schaffer, supervisor, town of Babylon
- Tony Martinez, deputy supervisor/councilman, town of Babylon
- Amy Pfeiffer, director of downtown revitalization, town of Babylon
- Noelle Campbell, nonprofit administrator, Ryan Outreach
- Sondra Cochran, nonprofit administrator, Wyandanch Community Development Corporation
- Megan Mason, manager, Island Jerk
- Sal Coco, partner, Beatty, Harvey, Coco Architects LLP
- Kevin M. McAndrew, partner, Cameron Engineering & Associates LLP
- Desiree Francis, team lead, Capital One Community Finance Group
- Gwen O’Shea, president and CEO, Community Development Corporation of Long Island
- Kerry Gillick-Goldberg, director, Communications and Programming, Wyandanch Plaza Association

of infrastructure investment in Wyandanch had stagnated development and prevented this community from taking full advantage of its prime location along the Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) with direct rail access to Manhattan.

Interestingly, one of the contributing factors cited by local government officials as a barrier to development and investment in Wyandanch is the decentralized nature of municipal government within New York. As an unincorporated hamlet within the larger town of Babylon rather than a “village,” Wyandanch does not have its own direct representatives in local government. Communities large enough to be designated as villages are empowered to elect their own mayor, who can advocate for the village at the town government level. A given town may have several villages and hamlets with disparate needs and various interests within its borders, making it easy to overlook the needs of a smaller community, especially an economically disadvantaged, minority community like Wyandanch. However, the emergence of an effective champion at the local government level can be a game-changer for redevelopment.

Community Visioning

The story of the redevelopment of downtown Wyandanch begins in the mid-1990s with the community’s struggle to bring the most basic of civic land uses to town: a supermarket and a post office. As of 1994–1995, there had not been a supermarket in Wyandanch for over 20 years, which presented significant difficulties for many lower-income residents without cars. As Steve Bellone, former supervisor of the town of Babylon (now Suffolk County executive), described it, “It was a herculean effort just to get a basic land use done,” and despite years of effort by local government officials, the end result was “not transformative.” In 2001, Bellone began to think that there had to be a better way to effectively attract development and investment to Wyandanch. He reached out to Sustainable Long Island, a regional nonprofit organization with the mission of promoting sustainable, multifamily development and economic equity.

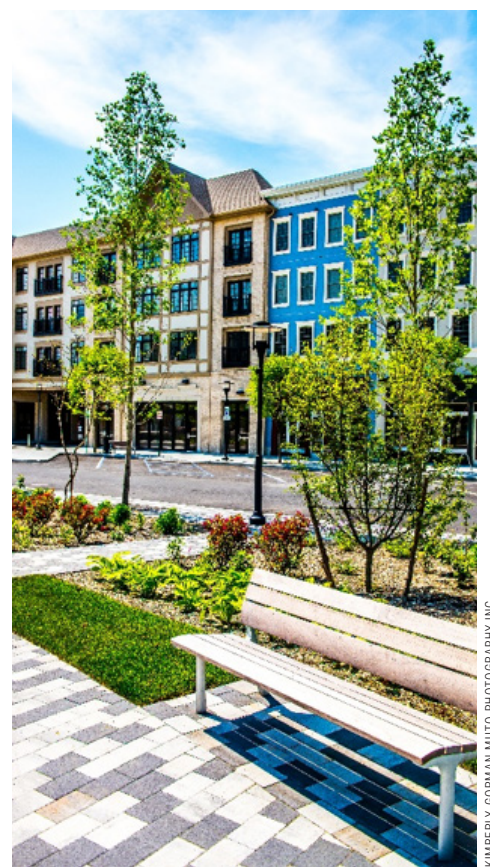
Together with Vanessa Pugh, then executive director of Sustainable Long Island, Bellone crafted a community visioning process for Wyandanch’s future, held over five days in a local shopping center in June 2003, with over 500 participants. During the visioning sessions, attendees identified the top priorities for their community as (1) a

safe, clean environment; (2) better schools and creating educational and recreational opportunities for children; (3) the ability to shop for essential goods and services in Wyandanch; and (4) the availability of adequate and well-maintained housing affordable to all residents. Out of these visioning sessions emerged the Wyandanch Hamlet Plan, which was adopted by the governing body in 2004.

The primary goal articulated in the Hamlet Plan was the transformation of Wyandanch’s auto-centric, suburban sprawl-type development pattern into a walkable downtown village, with multifamily housing at increased densities, and retail and commercial uses designed to meet the needs of the community. Due to its central location at the heart of Wyandanch’s downtown business district, the LIRR station was identified as the community’s definitive asset. However, as it was noted in the Hamlet Plan, the existing station was “very scantily appointed; it is a weak focal point of the community and is surrounded by a sea of commuter parking,” with the surrounding area “depleted and underutilized.” The Hamlet Plan also pointed out that the proliferation of free parking surrounding Wyandanch Station was being used primarily by wealthy residents of neighboring towns and not by Wyandanch residents, and therefore it recommended that these commuter lots be rezoned for mixed-use development in order to encourage new multifamily housing and retail and commercial uses.

In order to implement the community’s vision of creating a walkable, mixed-use neighborhood around the Wyandanch train station, the Hamlet Plan included detailed and specific design guidelines applicable not only to the architectural style and appearance of new buildings, but also for street and sidewalk improvements, signage, exterior lighting, landscaping, and window and facade design. It also included an action plan for implementation of the community’s vision, which identified specific steps to be taken by the municipality and community stakeholders in the immediate and intermediate futures, as well as those necessary over the long term.

Importantly, the Hamlet Plan specifically identified obstacles to the implementation of the community’s redevelopment vision. The most complicated issue identified was the lack of sewer line infrastructure and presence of a high-water table within the redevelopment area. The Hamlet Plan explored various alternatives for the provision



Wyandanch Village includes elements designed to facilitate public gathering and social interaction among residents, commuters, and commercial patrons alike.

of sewer service that did not involve passing the costs of new infrastructure on to developers, in recognition of the fact that these costs made Wyandanch less attractive to potential developers, particularly since there were plenty of other communities in the area that already had the necessary sewer infrastructure in place. Other obstacles to implementation noted in the Hamlet Plan included the preponderance of industrial uses and brownfields within the redevelopment area, as well as various planning challenges, including restrictive and outdated zoning regulations, and a lengthy and costly development review and approval process.

To facilitate this process, in 2004 the town of Babylon established two official bodies that were specifically charged with implementation of the community’s vision as articulated in the Hamlet Plan: a citizens’ committee composed of residents, business owners, and church and civic leaders, known as the Wyandanch Rising Implementation Committee, and a local government agency, known as the Office of Downtown Revitalization, which was responsible for the planning work and close management of the town’s TOD redevelopment efforts. This includes the extensive planning studies that

have been done by some of the most well-respected planners in the country, as well as the coordination of the necessary grant funding. It also develops and adopts specific form-based overlay zoning regulations applicable to development within the designated TOD redevelopment areas, which supersede the standard zoning ordinance otherwise applicable throughout the town of Babylon. The Implementation Committee acts as a liaison between residents and the Office of Downtown Revitalization to implement the community's redevelopment vision. The Office of Downtown Revitalization and the master developer continue to meet regularly with the Implementation Committee to ensure that the town's redevelopment and planning efforts are responsive to community needs.

Predevelopment Planning and Implementation Work Undertaken by Municipal Officials

By 2005–2006, with the community members and leaders galvanized to bring change to Wyandanch, municipal officials were empowered to take action to make the Hamlet Plan a reality and begin remaking Wyandanch into a place that residents could be proud of, beginning with the redevelopment of the area surrounding the train station. The first test of the community's dedication to its vision was the proposed construction of a longstanding community need: a post office to be located within Wyandanch, which for years the community had been trying to get the federal government to construct. When the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) finally responded with a proposal to construct a new post office on a key development site right in the heart of downtown, near the train station, the proposed design was antithetical to the walkable design guidelines articulated in the community's Hamlet Plan. Following a series of involved community meetings, extensive negotiations between town officials and the regional director of the USPS, a lawsuit, and the eventual intervention of a U.S. senator, the Postal Service finally agreed to redesign its site plan to meet the design standards articulated in the Hamlet Plan.

Although this initial victory involved just one site out of nearly 40 acres slated for redevelopment, it was a pivotal moment for Wyandanch. As Bellone described it, this was the moment when town officials realized they truly had the support of their constituents for the implementation and execution of the Hamlet Plan. With the community's

full buy-in, by 2008, town officials were certain that they had the political will to begin the next phase. However, in order to attract a high-quality developer, the most pressing obstacles identified in the Hamlet Plan—the lack of sewer infrastructure; the preponderance of contaminated brownfield sites; and the disparate ownership of blighted, vacant, and underused parcels located within the redevelopment area—would first have to be addressed. Funding this necessary—and costly—predevelopment work presented these public officials with yet another challenge.

A critical piece of the town's predevelopment efforts was to capitalize on the various state and regional planning, sustainability, and brownfield remediation initiatives and associated funding opportunities. In 2007, the town, in partnership with Sustainable Long Island and the Wyandanch Community Development Corporation, obtained the first of several grants from New York State's Brownfields Opportunity Areas (BOA) Program to complete a Blight Study, Economic and Market Trends Analysis, Comprehensive Site Plan, Urban Renewal Plan, and Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS). This study included the identification of various strategic sites within the redevelopment area, including the core TOD site adjacent to the LIRR station now known as Wyandanch Village. With the GEIS in place, the town government was able to resolve a major impediment to private development because all development proposals involving those portions of the study area that fell within the thresholds of the GEIS would automatically be deemed compliant with State Environmental Quality Review requirements. The following year, Wyandanch was named a Brownfields Smart Growth Spotlight Community by the State Department of State, providing the town with access to state funding for planning and redevelopment tax incentives through the state's BOA Program.

Additional state funding and support for Wyandanch Rising was obtained by former town supervisor, now Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone through the town's preparation and publication of the Connect Long Island Regional Transportation and Development Plan in October 2011. This plan highlighted the TOD planning efforts around Wyandanch and other nearby stations and called for the implementation of a regional transportation and development strategy to concentrate growth around existing stations and increase the frequency and reliability

of train and bus service throughout Long Island. The timing of the report was key; its 2011 publication capitalized on a regional economic development initiative started by Governor Cuomo earlier that year, pursuant to which the newly created Long Island Economic Development Council (LIEDC) had decided to focus on transit-oriented development and revitalization of the surrounding downtown areas.

By tying the proposed Wyandanch Rising project to the LIEDC's larger regional transit initiative, Bellone was able to get the attention of state agencies and programs responsible for promoting and distributing funding to eligible local projects. As described by Paul Beyer, strategic coordinator for community transformation and smart growth at the New York Department of State, "Once Wyandanch was recognized as a regional priority by the Regional Economic Development Council, the private development community could be certain of the state's support, which was a critical element necessary to attract a quality developer to the project."

Another important strategy employed by town officials was to engage sophisticated and nationally recognized planning consultants with new urbanism expertise throughout the planning process. In 2009, the town government hired planning consultant and Walkable City author Jeff Speck of Speck & Associates LLC to create a design to transform its downtown corridor, Straight Path, into a pedestrian-friendly streetscape. In 2010, the town engaged Torti Gallas and Partners Inc. of Silver Spring, Maryland, to prepare a conceptual site plan to guide the future redevelopment of Wyandanch. The resultant conceptual plan called for a "transformative mixed-use development with a range of housing options built at appropriate transit-oriented development densities, active street-level retail uses, civic buildings, and attractive public spaces," as it was described in the 2011 Master Developer Request for Qualifications (RFQ).

Dealing with the land assemblage and installation of sewer infrastructure aspects of this predevelopment phase involved a bit of risk, since the town needed to invest public funds to purchase and assemble the disparate parcels within the redevelopment site and to extend sewer infrastructure to the downtown area. However, town officials were cognizant of the fact that the land assemblage and infrastructure investments were non-negotiable prerequisites to the



Wyandanch Village Site Location Map as depicted in the 2011 Master Developer RFQ.

implementation of the Hamlet Plan that could be addressed only by local government. The town began quietly purchasing properties within the core redevelopment area as they became available. Although some properties were acquired through the use of eminent domain, most were purchased piecemeal over a period of several years, and by 2011 when the town issued its RFQ seeking a master redeveloper for the Wyandanch Rising project, it owned or controlled more than 90 percent of properties within the 40-acre redevelopment zone, representing a total investment of more than \$26 million in public funds.

The installation and extension of the sewer infrastructure, completed in 2013, was understood to be a necessary prerequisite to any future development. The

total extension and installation cost of \$18.6 million was therefore expended primarily as an investment. Funding for the sewer extension was provided primarily through a \$14.6 million loan from the New York State Environmental Facilities Corporation, with the town of Babylon contributing an additional \$4 million. Suffolk County agreed to waive sewer connection fees for a five-year period, providing an additional savings of \$6,750 to \$9,000 per residential unit, for a total in-kind contribution of about \$11 million. Furthermore, since the town was already expending public funds to transport waste to a local landfill, the installation resulted in an immediate savings and helped to offset some of the town's initial costs.

Through these strategic, coordinated planning and funding initiatives and by

maintaining an open dialogue with the affected community, town officials felt confident that the financial investment they were making from the town's capital program in the hamlet of Wyandanch would be an overall benefit to the town of Babylon. By 2011, after years of exhaustive predevelopment work by the town and a substantial public investment totaling well into the tens of millions of dollars, the stage was set for the issuance of the RFQ and the entrance of a master developer willing to implement the Wyandanch community's detailed vision.

The Site and the RFQ/RFP

After seven years of intensive planning, on February 18, 2011, the town of Babylon issued an RFQ for a master developer of the Wyandanch Rising site. The RFQ articulated a number of ambitious goals for the redevelopment project, chief among which was to improve the quality of life for Wyandanch residents. Additional goals listed in the RFQ included the following:

- Increase property tax revenues and establish a sustainable fiscal base for Wyandanch;
 - Implement transit-oriented development through the creation of residential and mixed-use development in Wyandanch that is responsive to regional building and architectural traditions;
 - Create a distinctive and positive "sense of place" for Wyandanch;
 - Satisfy the existing and future parking demands of commuters, the business community, and residents;
 - Improve the vehicular traffic infrastructure to serve the long-term needs of Wyandanch;
 - Enhance and encourage walkability throughout Wyandanch;
 - Enhance public "green" space, open space, public plazas, sidewalk/trail linkages, and landscaping in Wyandanch;
 - Use innovative, environmentally friendly and sustainable architecture and site design where economically feasible;
 - Further the revitalization of Wyandanch through significant new private investment in residential, retail, and parking development, as well as in public infrastructure, transit, and traffic improvements;
 - Become a model for green, sustainable development on Long Island.
- By the time the RFQ was issued in 2011,

the town of Babylon had invested roughly three years and \$26 million in acquiring parcels within the delineated Brownfields Opportunity Area in order to assemble the development site. As of February 2011, the town owned or controlled about 38 parcels consisting of over 35 acres or about 90 percent of the total land area that makes up the site. Located at the intersection of Straight Path and Long Island Avenue, parallel to the LIRR tracks, the site includes five separate planning areas, designated in the RFQ as Areas A, B, C, F, and G, with the Wyandanch LIRR station at its center.

Site Area A, also identified as the Transit Plaza District, is a triangular-shaped parcel located to the north of the railroad tracks and east of Straight Path, which included the then-existing LIRR stop and a 1,200-space commuter surface parking lot owned by the MTA. The RFQ specifically required that Area A be included in the initial phase of the redevelopment project. Because the surface parking lot remained in active use, this presented various construction and staging challenges that the master developer would later have to address. Town officials negotiated with the MTA to swap the commuter lot parcel for an alternative parking site elsewhere within Area A, but still within easy walking distance of the station. The town agreed to construct a new 920-space transit parking garage on the alternative site, at a cost of about \$30 million.

The RFQ further required that certain elements of the Torti Gallas Conceptual Plan be implemented by the master developer as part of the redevelopment of Site Area A. These mandatory elements included the construction of both a new LIRR station and the proposed Station Plaza, an area of public open space to be located adjacent to the new station, in accordance with the landscape design plans prepared by Olin Studios. The RFQ called for the Station Plaza improvements to be completed in conjunction with the development of the mixed-use buildings in Phase I of the redevelopment of Site Area A. Notably, the RFQ did not require the master developer to fund the construction of Station Plaza, and, at the time the RFQ was issued, the town had authorized \$2 million in bond funding for its construction.

With regard to the other four designated areas within the site—B, C, F, and G—the RFQ provided that the future development and construction phasing would be subject to later negotiation. Site Area B, denoted as “the Mews,” is located on the opposite

side of Long Island Avenue and the railroad tracks, southwest of Area A. Site Area C, “South Plaza,” lies directly to the east of Area B across Straight Path. Site Area G, “the South Lawn,” is situated to the north of Area C adjacent to the railroad tracks/Long Island Avenue, just south of Area A. Site Area F, dubbed the “Civic Area,” is located on the opposite side of Straight Path just west of Area A, to the northeast of Area B and Long Island Avenue.

Consistent with its primary redevelopment goals of improving quality of life and providing economic opportunities for Wyandanch residents, the RFQ also required that the project’s construction would be subject to an agreement governing labor rates, work conditions, apprenticeship ratios, and local community benefit requirements, the terms of which would be negotiated by the town and the Nassau-Suffolk Building Trades Council.

The Developer and the Idea

The Albanese Organization, a Long Island-based real estate development firm active in sustainable development and social equality issues, responded to the town’s RFQ with a submission that proposed to create a mixed-use, mixed-income community centered on the Wyandanch LIRR station. With extensive experience in public/private partnerships through its redevelopment of three parcels in Battery Park City in Manhattan, as well as its long-term involvement in the downtown revitalization of Franklin Avenue—the commercial core of Garden City, New York—the Albanese team was keenly aware of the difference a committed and sophisticated municipal government can make to the success of a large-scale redevelopment project. The dedication of town officials and the Wyandanch community, together with the opportunity to truly make a difference in their local area, were the critical factors that attracted the Albanese Organization to the project. As described by Anthony Albanese, associate vice president of development, “At the time we were coming off a successful public/private partnership with the Battery Park City Authority, we saw the Wyandanch Rising RFQ as another example of government being serious about making something happen. We were motivated to respond by the high level of work and investment the town had already put into making this project a reality.” Notably, the fact that the town had already assembled the redevelopment site was a significant motivating factor. As Albanese said, “Land

assemblage is always the hardest part, and when a town is already on top of the assemblage, it really demonstrates that they are serious about getting something done.”

In its initial response to the RFQ, Albanese described its vision for Wyandanch as one very much in sync with the town’s vision—a redevelopment project designed to engender social sustainability and a sense of community through “the successful blending of residential, commercial, retail, and recreational components” to create “a self-sustaining social environment.” Notably, Albanese emphasized its intention to make a commitment to Wyandanch beyond just completing a few new buildings. Throughout its initial response, Albanese stressed its dedication to community building through activation of public gathering spaces in and around the redevelopment area with community programming and events, entertainment, social support, and recreational amenities. Satisfied that the Albanese Organization understood the public’s vision and had the requisite experience to make it a reality, the town invited Albanese to submit a more detailed proposal for the Wyandanch Rising project.

In its June 2011 proposal, Albanese articulated as its paramount goals for the project “to create a distinctive and positive sense of place for Wyandanch by implementing transit-oriented development through the creation of residential and mixed-use development.” To that end, Albanese initially proposed four mixed-use buildings: two four-and-a-half-story, mixed-use buildings with a total residential square footage of about 94,000 square feet, including both affordable and market-rate units; over 22,000 square feet of ground-floor restaurant and food-based retail uses; and two additional four-story buildings containing a total of roughly 138,000 square feet of residential uses, to be constructed atop another 26,000 square feet of ground-floor retail or community space.

Key to Albanese’s selection as master developer was its proposal of a true mixed-use project including a large amount of retail and restaurant uses intended to enliven the area and create a sense of place. As Amy Pfeiffer, town of Babylon’s director of downtown revitalization, described it, “Albanese was selected as the master developer because they were the respondent pushing the true mixed-use plan that the town really wanted. Other respondents were proposing more of a residential component, and that wasn’t as consistent with our goals.”



Overall Site Plan for Wyandanch Village prepared by the Albanese Organization.

Notably, during this phase, Albanese also reached out to Sustainable Long Island, the community development corporations (CDCs) of Wyandanch and Long Island, as well as the Long Island Housing Partnership (LIHP) to ensure that the affordable housing component of its proposal would be responsive to community needs. It was this commitment to the community's vision, as well as their overall depth of experience with downtown redevelopment and new urbanist placemaking, that really sealed the deal for town officials and community leaders. As Sandra Cochran, executive director of the Wyandanch CDC, described it, "Albanese was the best; they didn't want to just make money, they were interested in helping the community and making a difference." The town approved Albanese as master developer on July 21, 2011, and the parties entered into a master developer designation agreement on October 11, 2011.

Approval Process

Although Albanese had articulated a general conceptual plan for the project in its response to the RFP, which was

initially memorialized in the October 2011 master developer agreement, the project continued to evolve through a collaborative process with the town's Office of Downtown Revitalization over the next few years. The town had adopted a detailed form-based code for downtown Wyandanch and the Straight Path Corridor that included very specific architectural and design standards and provided for a streamlined application and development review process for the redevelopment project. Essentially, the code called for the town's planning department to appoint a form-based code architect (FBCA) who would be responsible for the timely review of all development applications and plans for sites within the redevelopment zone for consistency with the code provisions. If deemed consistent, the FBCA would then recommend that the building department issue construction permits, bypassing the need for review and approval by the town's land use board entirely.

The benefits of this form-based-code approach to the approvals process cannot be overstated. It allowed the town to exert a high

level of control over the front-end planning stages of the project, while at the same time eliminating uncertainty and streamlining the approvals process on the back end. Instead of the typical cumbersome bureaucracy that developers often deal with during the entitlements process, the implementation of this form-based-code approach allowed for maximal flexibility to respond to changing community needs and market forces on the parts of both the municipality and the developer. This flexibility was critical to the success of the first phase of the project, which, by the time it broke ground in June 2013, had been revised substantially from the vision initially articulated in Albanese's 2011 response to the RFP.

Development Finance

Implementation of the community's vision for Wyandanch Rising required a wide array of public and private funding sources. The overall public investment in the project, which included planning, conceptual design, land acquisition, and substantial improvements to public infrastructure and facilities—e.g., the sewer line installation;

construction of the MTA parking garage and new rail station; along with various improvements to the public parks, roadways, streetscapes, and construction of the intermodal plaza and ice rink—was nearly twice as much as the private development costs to the developer for the construction of buildings A and B. Of course, the widespread public investment at all levels of government and demonstrated support for the project proved to be the most significant factor in ultimately attracting Albanese to Wyandanch Rising. Nonetheless, in order to give the Wyandanch community the vibrant, economically diverse place to live, work, shop, and eat for which they had so meticulously planned, Albanese would have to first overcome various private financing challenges that arose as a result of the project's unique mix of uses.

Public Funding Sources: Planning, Predevelopment, and Land Assemblage.

During the lengthy predevelopment phase leading up to the 2011 RFQ/RFP, the total public investment in Wyandanch Rising, including federal, state, county, municipal, and other public organizations, was about \$143.65 million, as follows:

- Federal funding: **\$6.64 million** for planning, sewer extension feasibility study, design of public improvements, and train station.
- New York state: **\$61.6 million**, including \$23 million in MTA funding for the new parking garage and train station; \$16.6 million in sewer construction financing; and about \$5.1 million for the construction of the intermodal plaza and roadway.
- Suffolk County: **\$25 million**, including an \$11 million in-kind contribution for the waiver of the sewer connection fees; \$2.5 million for the construction of improvements to Straight Path; and \$3.9 million in loans for the construction of buildings A and B.
- Town of Babylon: **\$50 million**, including \$27 million for the property acquisition; \$4 million for the installation of sewer infrastructure; \$3.65 million for road improvements and parking lot construction; \$3.75 million for the construction of the intermodal plaza; and \$10 million for the renovation and improvements to nearby Geiger Park.

Private Funding Sources: Construction and Permanent Financing. Because the residential component of Phase I consisted primarily of affordable housing units, the development finance strategy was centered primarily on the federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program, which provides tax credits to developers of qualified rental projects via a competitive application process overseen and administered by state housing finance authorities (HFAs). For new construction, the LIHTC program provides for a tax credit of approximately 9 percent of the project's qualified basis (cost of construction) over a 10-year period, which can then be sold to an investor to raise project capital.

Unlike a traditional market-rate investment model, LIHTC investors do not typically expect their equity investment to produce income; instead, the tax credits are used to offset other income tax liabilities. However, the credits cannot be claimed by the investor until the project is completed and occupied, and the federal regulations governing the LIHTC program require extensive monitoring and reporting to verify the project's continued compliance with the program requirements for a period of 15 years. Assuming a project remains in compliance with the federal requirements, the tax credits will continue to flow for up to 10 years. Moreover, there is high market demand and a limited supply of affordable housing, particularly on Long Island and in the New York Metro area.

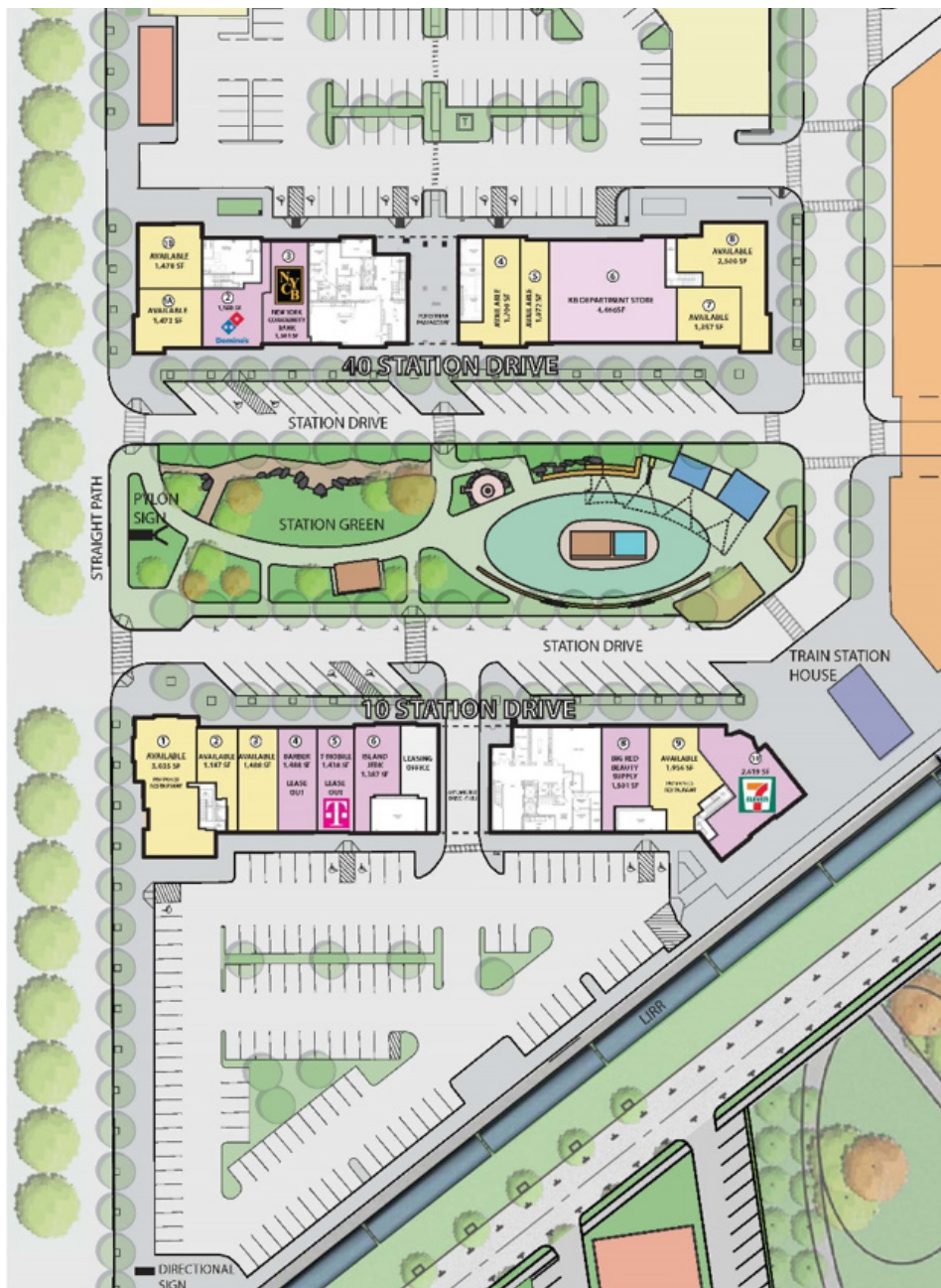
Combined, these factors make LIHTC a relatively stable, low-risk investment, particularly in comparison to other types of real estate, and LIHTC investors tend to be more conservative and less inclined to risk as a result. The specialized, complex, and generally risk-averse nature of LIHTC financing presented Albanese—a first-time affordable housing developer—with a series of challenges, which were complicated further by the unfavorable investment climate affecting the real estate market in 2011.

Although Albanese had over six decades of experience developing market-rate, luxury residential mixed-use and commercial projects in Manhattan, the outer boroughs, and Long Island, the company was viewed initially by LIHTC investors as “little more than a startup,” as described by Anthony Albanese, since Wyandanch Village was the company's first true affordable project. According to Albanese, LIHTC financing “was a radically different model that we had to figure out,” especially because Wyandanch Rising included a significant

portion of market-rate residential units, as well as commercial retail space. As Albanese quickly discovered, several aspects of the Wyandanch project would complicate the company's efforts to raise tax credit equity financing for Phase I.

One such complicating factor was the project's unique (at that time) mix of affordable and market-rate residential units and retail/commercial tenant space. Although mixed-use projects are now commonly seen as the gold standard for urban redevelopment and considered quite desirable from a planning standpoint, the view was much different from the perspective of a prudent LIHTC investor amid the Great Recession. At that time, the introduction of new market-rate residential units and retail space in a historically disadvantaged community like Wyandanch seemed like a radical idea to the LIHTC financing market, and one that would introduce an unacceptable level of risk to an otherwise secure investment. Even though the affordable units were generally considered by investors to be a “slam-dunk,” the potential demand for new market-rate residential in Wyandanch was unknown. Nonetheless, Albanese was eventually able to make investors comfortable with the 65 percent/35 percent affordable to market-rate split due to the project's proximity to transit and direct rail access to Manhattan; the near-absence of any new, modern, sustainable rental housing elsewhere within the market area; and the unique public amenities and retail/commercial uses within the project area.

Nonetheless, the inclusion of the ground-floor retail/commercial space would prove an unacceptable risk to the LIHTC investment community, and Albanese soon realized that it would need to come up with a creative solution to secure permanent financing for Phase I. In order to shield the LIHTC investors from any perceived additional risk generated by the retail component, Albanese ultimately decided to bifurcate the ownership of the project's residential component from its commercial component through the formation of two separate condominium units for each building, thus allowing the company to secure separate financing for the project's different use types. Each residential condo unit would include all affordable and market-rate apartments, together with the common areas intended for residential use, such as the community room and laundry area. The retail/commercial condominium units included all ground-floor commuter-oriented and neighborhood support retail uses.



Wyandanch Village Site Plan.

LIHTC equity for buildings A and B of Phase I was provided by Capital One's Community Finance Group of New York and arranged by syndicator Hudson Housing Capital. The Community Finance Group actively seeks out opportunities to invest in affordable housing and community-oriented development throughout New York City's five boroughs and Long Island—opportunities that have historically been quite limited, despite the low default rates for this type of investment and high pent-up demand for affordable housing. As described by team leader Desiree Francis, her group was attracted to Wyandanch Rising in large part due to the high level of support from the community, and exhibited across all levels of local, county, and state government, as well

as the level of experience displayed by the affordable housing compliance and property management team assembled by Albanese. Moreover, the team was “excited to be part of a development project with the potential to revitalize a historically underserved community like Wyandanch.”

For Building A's residential component, Capital One provided a \$26.95 million construction loan, which was eventually converted to a \$10.75 million permanent loan, with approximately \$17 million in tax credit equity. Rounding out the capital stack was an additional \$2.1 million loan through the New York State Housing Trust Fund Corporation; a \$1.7 million loan provided by the Suffolk County Workforce Housing Infrastructure Program; and \$3.1 million in

developer equity and deferred fees. Financing for the retail/commercial component of Building A was provided through a \$4 million loan from Signature Bank and \$1.2 million in additional developer equity.

The financing structure for the residential component of Building B was slightly different. Again, the primary funding source was \$14.7 million in tax credit equity, also provided by Capital One's Community Finance Group and arranged by syndicator Hudson Housing Capital. The financing for Building B's residential component also included various public funding sources available through the state of New York, including \$8.1 million in State of New York Mortgage Agency (SONYMA) bonds; a \$1.7 million state HFA loan; a \$2 million loan through the State Homes for Working Families program; a \$1 million loan through the State Neighborhood Stabilization Program; a \$2.2 million loan through the Suffolk County Workforce Housing Infrastructure Program; and \$330,000 through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's HOME Partnership Program, administered by the town. Albanese provided about \$5.5 million in additional developer equity and deferred fees. Building B's retail/commercial component was financed primarily through a \$2.75 million loan from Signature Bank and a \$750,000 loan through the State Community Investment Fund, with Albanese providing an additional \$1.3 million in developer equity.

Planning, Design, and Construction

Albanese broke ground on Phase I of Wyandanch Rising in June 2013. In the intervening two years since the submission of its initial proposal, the Phase I design evolved from four mixed-use buildings with about 49,000 square feet of restaurant/retail uses and 232,000 square feet of residential, to two buildings with roughly 35,000 square feet of retail/restaurant uses; and 188,000 square feet of residential. Construction of buildings A and B was completed in February and December of 2015, respectively.

The two buildings, which face each other across the Station Green, a public plaza containing an ice-skating rink and passive recreational space, are located immediately north and west of the newly constructed Wyandanch Station House and LIRR parking garage. The ground-floor storefronts on Building B are occupied by a mix of restaurant, retail, and personal service uses, including a 7-Eleven convenience store located immediately adjacent to the

station. The residential component of Phase I includes a total of 177 rental units—nine studios, 88 one-bedroom units, 65 two-bedroom units, 14 three-bedroom units, and one unit reserved for the building superintendent—65 percent of which are affordable to low- or moderate-income households and 35 percent of which are priced at market rate.

Due largely to the town's hands-on planning process, which includes monthly meetings with the developer and community representatives, they were able to adjust the plan in response to changes in market forces, a process that has continued through the planning and development of Phase II. This second phase includes four additional buildings, featuring residential apartments, health and wellness, and community space. The first building, completed in December 2019, includes 124 additional mixed-income residential units. The second building will be a 1,200-square-foot permanent home for the Wyandanch Community Resource Center, currently located at a temporary trailer facility adjacent to the post office. The third building will provide space for a new YMCA facility, along with new medical clinic space for an established use, the Martin Luther King Jr. Community Health Clinic. The fourth building, which is in active construction as of April 2020, will be a senior living center with a total of 94 residential units. Amy Pfeiffer described Phase II as “in many ways, as important or more important than Phase I. Phase II is about really doing something to provide services to the community.” This sentiment was echoed by members of the development team as well, who described Phase II as “critical to bringing more diverse uses to the community.”

Stakeholders on all sides noted that they felt significant pressure to ensure that Phase I would succeed, but the reasons for the sentiment varied. Municipal officials had invested a tremendous amount of time and public resources in the installation of infrastructure and the assemblage of properties, as well as significant public grant money invested in the predevelopment studies and planning efforts. Community leaders were keenly aware that the people of Wyandanch had a substantial need for safe, affordable housing, access to local retail, and job opportunities. And Albanese, the developer, was quite conscious of the difficulties inherent in creating a “place” from the ground up that would serve not only as the new focal point of a long-overlooked community, but also as a precedent for the

extensive redevelopment already planned to follow. With so much riding on the project's success, there was a great deal of collaboration and cooperation between municipal officials and the development team throughout the planning and development process of the first and second phases.

Project Special Features

Station House, Parking Garage, and Rail Improvements. The completion of extensive improvements to the Wyandanch LIRR station house, tracks, and parking facilities—all with public funds, at no cost to the developer—is an excellent example of how regional cooperation among various levels of state government can contribute to a project's success. Back in 2004, the town was awarded \$3.7 million in grant funding from the Federal Transit Administration for the planning and design of the new Wyandanch Transit Station House and associated elements, including the new structured parking garage, a public plaza, and streetscape, drainage, and signage improvements. The Conceptual Plan called for the demolition of the former station area and construction of a new station house with an air-conditioned indoor commuter waiting area, bathrooms, and ticket vending machines.

As provided in the RFQ and RFP, although the master developer was initially responsible for the construction of the station improvements, the costs were financed by the town through \$2 million in bond funding and additional funding from New York state. Completed in 2018, the new Wyandanch Station House is now a point of pride for the community; it is described by some as “now the nicest train station and parking garage in Long Island.” Thanks to the efforts of local artists and students, the station and garage also function as a public art installation space.

The first phase of the MTA parking garage was initially completed in 2016 with a capacity of 920 spaces. The second phase will include a planned expansion to provide an additional 1,500 spaces to support future commuter growth resulting from the full buildout of Wyandanch Rising. As noted earlier, the garage was the key to the town's negotiated land swap with the MTA, allowing for the redevelopment of Site Area A, the former site of the commuter surface lot adjacent to the train station. Designed by Jeff Speck, the garage features a monumental central elevator tower, together with an innovative switch-back staircase designed



JONATHAN KEYES

The northern curtain wall of the Wyandanch Garage Tower features a 50-foot laminated glass sculpture by artist Moe Booker.

to provide viewing platforms for a 50-foot-tall laminated glass sculpture by artist Moe Booker, commissioned by the MTA for the tower's northern curtain wall. Located northeast of buildings A and B, the parking garage will be incorporated more closely into Phase II with the construction of the 94-unit senior living center, which has been designed to wrap around the garage's northern and western facades.

One of the most critical public rail improvements made in conjunction with this project was the MTA's installation of an additional track between the Ronkonkoma and Farmingdale stations, which has resulted in more frequent, regular rail service to Wyandanch from Manhattan. As project architect Sal Coco noted, “The frequency and reliability of rail service is key to the success of any TOD project.” In recognition of this fact, Bellone worked extensively with the MTA to ensure that these necessary track and signal improvements were put in place to upgrade the available rail service from the new station and further support all the phases of Wyandanch Rising.



Living/dining area of the Wyandanch Village apartments. The affordable and market-rate units feature similar layouts and amenities.

Affordable Housing Component.

Wyandanch Rising is notable for the significant percentage of affordable housing units provided in Phase I. Out of a total of 177 units, only 35 percent are market-rate. The remaining 65 percent are affordable to a broad range of households making between 50 and 90 percent of area median income (AMI) for the area, with the majority (84 units total) affordable to households making 60 percent of AMI. Construction finishes in the affordable units are the same as those provided for the market-rate units, and the units are arranged throughout buildings A and B without regard to pricing.

Notably, the large affordable housing component of Phase I was not without controversy, since various stakeholders noted that there was some disagreement as to whether the construction of more affordable housing would truly benefit an economically challenged community like Wyandanch. However, due to the prevalence of substandard housing in Wyandanch and the historic shortage of affordable multifamily housing throughout Long Island, demand for these units was significant. Community leaders have put forth a significant effort to assist local residents with the affordable housing application process to ensure that the existing community directly benefits from the project. As a result, the provision of safe, new affordable housing units has had positive impacts across the community and the affordable housing component has been essential to the success of the project's first phase.

Sustainable and LEED Project Elements.

Buildings A and B are designed to achieve LEED Silver Certification by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), and the entire community is registered with the USGBC for its LEED Neighborhood Development

Program. The inclusion of energy-efficient construction materials in buildings A and B provides an added benefit of cost savings to residents and the developer, since utilities are included in the calculation of the maximum monthly rent for all residential tenants. The site design also includes various green infrastructure elements, including rain barrels for stormwater collection and constructed wetlands.

Marketing, Management, and Performance

Residential. Due to significant pent-up demand for affordable housing on Long Island and limited area supply, together with an active community outreach effort undertaken by local affordable housing organizations, including the Long Island Housing Partnership, CDC-Long Island, and the Wyandanch CDC, the affordable units leased up quickly. For Building A, completed in February 2015, the 60 affordable units were fully leased within two and a half months of issuance of the certificate of occupancy. The absorption rate for the 62 affordable units within Building B, completed in December 2015, was slightly more gradual, reaching 80 percent within three months, 90 percent within five months, and 100 percent by eight months.

The market-rate units within both buildings are also now fully leased, despite initial questions by investors about the viability of these units. Not unexpectedly, these units took longer to fully absorb—for Building A, the absorption rate reached 33 percent within three months, 60 percent within four months, and 100 percent within eight months of issuance of the initial certificate of occupancy. The market-rate absorption for Building B was similar—25

percent within four months, 67 percent within six months, and 100 percent by the end of seven months.

Retail/Commercial. Given the demographic profile of the surrounding area and the industry's overall downward trend in retail leasing, it is not surprising that some challenges have been involved with the leasing of the ground-floor commercial space. The current commercial tenants include a 7-Eleven convenience store—located immediately adjacent to the train station—a T-Mobile store, a New York Community Bank branch, a Domino's Pizza, and a beauty supply store. There are also several established local businesses,



Wyandanch Village features a variety of facades and architectural elements designed to stimulate visual interest.



LIFETIME PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEVEN CAICEDO

Station Plaza provides year-round recreational and community gathering space. The central pavilion and stage area is used for community programming in warmer months and then converted to an ice-skating rink in winter.

including Island Jerk—a popular local restaurant—a barbershop, and a retail discount store. At present, there is a total of six unoccupied commercial spaces in buildings A and B.

Representatives from both the project team and the municipality acknowledged that the difficulty in retail/commercial leasing was not unexpected, since this is only the first phase of a long-term placemaking and community revitalization effort. Nevertheless, town officials stressed the importance of the retail component of this project, citing the need to create jobs within the Wyandanch community, as well as the need to provide new retail opportunities in a place with a history of disinvestment. Town officials have taken an active role in courting other established local businesses to relocate to or open new facilities in Wyandanch. Interestingly, one strategy used by the town and the developer to offset the retail leasing difficulties has been to activate Station Plaza with a full slate of community programming and events.

Public Space. The centerpiece of Phase I is Station Plaza, the public plaza and community park, which was designed

by renowned landscape architect Olin Studios as part of the town's overarching goal for improving the quality of life for Wyandanch residents. Bisected by a curved pathway leading from Straight Path to the train station, the plaza is intended to draw in pedestrian traffic and support the surrounding ground-floor retail uses. Included within the plaza are several different programming elements, including contemporary benches and lighting, terraced seating, a pavilion, a fountain and stage area for use in warmer months, and an ice rink and fire pit, together with a convertible kiosk/skate rental area, providing recreational opportunities year-round.

Following completion of construction in 2016, the Albanese Organization founded the Wyandanch Plaza Association—a nonprofit comprising local government officials, community members, and business leaders—to provide programming, outreach, and events that create opportunities for community engagement within the plaza. “Recreational amenities and programming are about bringing the community together,” noted Rich Schaffer, current town supervisor for Babylon. To that end, the association

offers free year-round programs, including yoga and Zumba fitness classes; a bilingual summer reading program, complete with breakfast and lunch, for local children; holiday celebrations; an arts and dance fair held in August; a health fair; and outdoor movies and roller skating during the summer months. Throughout the growing season, the plaza hosts a farmers market that provides job opportunities for local high school students, as well as educational opportunities and cooking demonstrations for community members.

Community Impacts

Perhaps not surprisingly for a project borne out of such an active community visioning process and intensive municipal planning effort, stakeholders were united in their view that Wyandanch Rising has had overwhelmingly positive effects on their community. Megan Mason, manager of Island Jerk, the local restaurant that was relocated from its original space within the redevelopment area in 2012, and moved back to a new ground-floor space in Building A in 2018, said that “there used be a stigma [about Wyandanch], but this project takes away the bad name and lifts the community



Station Plaza provides residents with opportunities to shop, socialize, and interact.

up; it has been great for the community.”

The provision of much-needed affordable housing in the area has also had salutary effects, particularly due to the region’s high cost of living and the limited affordable housing supply. Several affordable housing advocates noted that the high cost of living means that the people eligible for the low- and moderate-income units are not simply “the faceless poor,” but rather those who work locally in the community. This has resulted in the creation of a new community of sorts within buildings A and B, which was described by stakeholders as a very diverse, inclusive group of residents of varying ages, races, and genders with abundant opportunities to socialize and interact at the public plaza, restaurants, and shops.

Other positive impacts of Phase I cited by stakeholders included a renewed interest in Wyandanch both from potential new residents as well as from the business community. Thanks to the construction apprenticeship program implemented by the town as part of the RFQ/RFP process, which provides training in the construction trades for local residents, the project has accomplished one of the town’s most important goals—the creation of new economic opportunities and jobs for local residents.

The people of Wyandanch are feeling a great deal of excitement and anticipation for the project’s next phase, which includes the new YMCA and health center. In addition to meeting a significant need for

health and wellness services within the community, these uses are both expected to create a significant number of new jobs. The construction of the YMCA is also expected to help satisfy a long-unmet need for high-quality child care and educational programming, including summer camp and after-school programs.

Demographic and Fiscal Impact

As with any new multifamily residential project, there have been additional costs to the town of Babylon and the local school district generated by the development of Wyandanch Village. However, none of these costs were unexpected or deemed excessive in relation to the tremendous public benefits to the community that the project has provided. One of the most significant benefits has been the employment opportunities and skilled job training for residents created as a result of an innovative construction apprenticeship program administered by the town of Babylon through the Wyandanch Resource Center. This program, which was included as part of the master developer agreement, takes advantage of the project’s various construction phases by providing community members with an opportunity to apprentice in a skilled trade and participate in the construction of the project itself. Amy Pfeiffer, the town’s director of downtown revitalization, cited the creation of employment opportunities for residents as the most important aspect of the project from the town’s perspective. Pfeiffer also noted

that the health clinic and the YMCA planned as part of Phase II were expected to create a significant number of new jobs within the Wyandanch community.

Municipal officials, including Schaffer and deputy supervisor and councilman Tony Martinez, as well as Bellone, emphasized that they had always viewed Wyandanch Rising as an investment in the future of their community. Thus, the initial infrastructure and assemblage costs, as well as expenses for municipal services and education, were viewed as incidental and necessary to the achievement of the community’s vision for its future.

Observations and Lessons Learned

As of publication, only the first phase of Wyandanch Village has been completed, and therefore, any discussion of observations and lessons learned is still somewhat premature. Nonetheless, the unusual foresight and commitment to this project demonstrated by the town of Babylon offer important lessons for municipalities interested in achieving similar results in their communities. From a private-sector perspective, the ongoing commitment to community investment demonstrated by the Albanese Organization vividly illustrates the difference between simply constructing a new building and true placemaking. Together, they demonstrate the power of a strong public/private partnership to transform a community and improve quality of life.

With the redevelopment still very much a work in progress, the conversation between the Albanese Organization and the town of Babylon—government officials and community members alike—about future buildout remains ongoing. The fact that this conversation happened at all, much less that it has continued for over 15 years, is probably the single most critical element to the success of Phase I. Town officials had the foresight to jump-start the redevelopment process by asking the residents of the Wyandanch community how they wanted to see their community develop and what changes they wanted to see made. From the intensive community visioning session that was held over several days, facilitated by a regional nonprofit group with both planning expertise and an understanding of local conditions, emerged a comprehensive plan that detailed both the community’s vision and the numerous obstacles that needed to be resolved to implement that vision. Although the Wyandanch Hamlet Plan was only the first of many planning studies and

reports prepared in furtherance of the town's redevelopment, it became a roadmap that would be followed throughout the years-long redevelopment process to come. By obtaining the community's buy-in from the start, town leaders and officials built the necessary political capital to allow them to move forward with the difficult task of eliminating the obstacles to implementation.

As described earlier, these obstacles—a historic lack of investment in sewer infrastructure, environmental contamination, and pervasive blight caused by numerous vacant and dilapidated properties throughout the downtown area—could be overcome only through a substantial economic investment. This would be a complicated and difficult proposition for any municipality, much less for an economically distressed minority community that for years had struggled to draw even the most basic land uses to its downtown core. The town's resolution of these issues came down to three critical factors: 1) an early recognition of the importance of sophisticated land use planning and retention of a nationally recognized expert to translate the community's vision to a workable plan, including the preparation of the town's detailed form-based code; 2) tying the proposed redevelopment of the Wyandanch rail station to other ongoing state, county, and regional land use, environmental, and energy policy initiatives in order to obtain both political support and access to grant funding for the project; and perhaps most significant, 3) a champion in government with an understanding of what needs to be done to make a redevelopment project happen. For Wyandanch, that champion was Bellone, described by interviewees as "persistent" and "visionary" and "a real risk-taker, who acted as a developer" and "crucial to making sure that Phase I was on solid ground." Indeed, it was this complete and unwavering support of local government officials and community members that was key to attracting a high-quality developer to the project, a feat that would not have been possible without the town's substantial predevelopment investment in the necessary sewer infrastructure and land assemblage.

Of course, the town's commitment to achieving the Wyandanch community's vision did not end with the selection of the Albanese Organization as master developer. Bellone's dedication to realizing the community's vision for Wyandanch is carried on by the current administration. Schaffer, the town supervisor, put it simply: "We see ourselves as the



KIMBERLY GORMAN NUTO PHOTOGRAPHY INC.

Wyandanch Village offers residents a variety of transportation options and opportunities for public engagement.

caretakers of this project." To a large degree, the role of project caretaker is carried out by the town's Office of Downtown Revitalization, which oversees the implementation of the form-based code and manages the short- and long-term planning process critical to ensuring that the project remains responsive to both community needs and market forces. Although this process requires detailed municipal planning on the front end, it streamlines the entitlement process and provides the master developer with a great deal of certainty regarding the construction timeline once the plans are deemed in compliance with the requirements of the form-based code.

The overall effect of these various municipal initiatives has been to eliminate uncertainty for the developer, to the extent possible, at least with regard to those aspects of the planning and entitlements process within the town's control. Nonetheless, placemaking from the ground up remains an inherently uncertain process, especially in a community with a history of economic disadvantage like Wyandanch. Despite the morning and evening pedestrian traffic automatically generated by the site's proximity to the rail station, it has been a challenge to attract commercial tenants to the ground-floor retail space, since there are few people around during the daytime. However, it is the feeling of those involved with this project from both the municipal and the developer's side that the commercial aspect of the project will grow more successful with the continued activation of Station Plaza, as well as the completion of the YMCA and community

health center currently under predevelopment with Phase II. This will contribute to bringing more people to the area, further enlivening the space during daytime hours and likely attracting new commercial tenants.

The success of Wyandanch Village demonstrates how the long-term commitment and dedicated vision of municipal officials and community leaders can spearhead large-scale transformational redevelopment of a formerly blighted area, particularly when the process involves an ongoing dialogue with residents. When the needs and interests of the community, the local government, and a private developer are closely aligned, the result can be true community renewal and inspired placemaking. It offers a fascinating blueprint for municipal officials eager to set the tone and vision for transit-oriented redevelopment projects in order to maximize a community's assets and meet the needs and improve the lives of those most invested in a community—its existing residents and business owners.

PROJECT INFORMATION

WYANDANCH VILLAGE (Buildings A and B of Phase I)

10-40 Station Drive, Wyandanch, NY

Development timeline

Site purchased	2011
Construction started	2013
Project opened	2015

Gross building area

	Gross residential sq ft	Commercial sq ft	Retail sq ft	Office sq ft
40 Station Drive (Building A)	104,670	0	17,693	0
10 Station Drive (Building B)	83,465	0	16,447	0
Total	188,135	0	34,140	0

Land use plan

	Site area (acres)	% of Site
Buildings	1.06	16.6%
Streets/surface parking	4.29	67.2%
Landscaping/open space	1.03	16.2%
Other		
Total site area	6.38	100%

Land uses

	Gross building area
Office	0 sq ft
Retail/restaurant	34,140 sq ft
Commercial	0 sq ft
Hotel	0 rooms
Residential	177 units
Industrial/warehouse	0 sq ft
Parking	242 spaces
Total GBA	222,275 sq ft
Total site size	6.38 ac

Retail/restaurant information

Gross leasable area	34,140 sq ft
Percentage of retail GLA occupied	50%
Annual rent range (per year)	\$30 per sq ft
Average annual sales	undisclosed

Key retail/restaurant tenants

Tenant	Type	GLA (sq ft)
New York Community Bank	Bank	1,581
Legislator DuWayne Gregory	Office	1,389
7-Eleven	Convenience store	2,619
Domino's	Pizzeria	1,560
Sir Shave	Barbershop	1,488
Island Jerk	Restaurant	1,387
Big Red Beauty Supply	Beauty supply store	1,501
K&B Department Store	Discount store	4,466

PROJECT INFORMATION

Office information

Office net rentable area	0 sq ft
Typical floor size	0 sq ft
Percentage of NRA occupied	0%
Number of tenants	0
Annual rents (per year)	\$0 per sq ft
Average length of lease (range in years)	0 years

Residential information

Building or unit name/type	Number of units	Percentage sold/leased	Typical rent or sales price (market rate)
40 Station Drive (Building A)	91	99%	\$30 per sq ft
10 Station Drive (Building B)	86	99%	\$30 per sq ft
Total residential units	177		

Typical unit size and rents

Unit type	Size (sq ft)	Rent	Rent per sq ft
Studio (market rate)	500	\$1,750	\$42
1-Bedroom (market rate)	750	\$2,000	\$32
2-Bedroom (market rate)	1,000	\$2,500	\$30
3-Bedroom (market rate)	1,200	\$3,000	\$30

Development cost information

	Amount
Site acquisition cost	
Total	\$800,000
Hard costs	
Total	\$57,000,000
Soft costs	
Total	\$22,380,000
Total development cost to date	\$80,180,000
Total development cost at completion	\$80,180,000

Net operating income

Buildings A and B	\$2,000,000
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PROJECT INFORMATION

Financing sources

	Amount
Debt capital sources	
Capital One Community Finance Group of New York	\$10,750,000
Signature Bank	\$6,750,000
Equity capital sources	
Capital One Community Finance Group of New York/Hudson Housing Capital (tax credit equity)	\$31,700,000
Albanese Organization Inc. and Castagna Realty	\$11,100,000
Public-sector capital sources	
New York State Homes and Community Renewal	Tax credits (see Equity Sources)
New York State Housing Finance Agency	\$5,450,000
State of New York Mortgage Agency	\$8,100,000
New York State Housing Trust Fund Corporation	\$2,100,000
Suffolk County Workforce Housing Infrastructure Program	\$3,900,000
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development HOME Partnership Program	\$330,000

Developer

Company name	Albanese Organization Inc.
City/state	Garden City, NY
Website	albaneseorg.com

Lead designer

Company name	Beatty Harvey Coco Architects LLP
City/state	Melville, NY
Website	bhc-architects.com

Other key development team members

Role	Engineering consultant
Company name	Cameron Engineering & Associates LLP
Role	Financing consultant
Company name	Best Development Group LLC

About the Urban Land Institute

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About the Urban Land Institute Tri-State Land Use Council

The Urban Land Institute Tri-State Land Use Council is a regional partnership that provides elected and public officials with a nonpartisan platform for networking, learning, collaborating, and action addressing issues related to land use policy, urban and suburban growth, economic development, housing, transportation, and market trends. Participation is offered exclusively to mayors, city managers, and other appropriate elected representatives and public officials in planning, economic development, housing, and transportation who serve in the New York metro region.

More information is available at newyork.uli.org/resources/tri-state-land-use-council.

ULI CASE STUDIES

The ULI Case Studies program highlights and showcases innovative approaches and best practices in real estate and urban development. Each case study provides detailed information regarding the ideas, plans, process, performance, and lessons learned for the development project. Each also includes project facts, timelines, financial data, site plans, photos, and location maps. The new ULI Case Studies program is the revitalization of a program begun in 1971. For more information, visit the ULI Case Studies website at casestudies.uli.org.

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