



BUILDING MOMENTUM

PEEKSKILL REVITALIZES

From the shores of the Hudson River to the far end of the Beach Shopping Center, major projects are underway or already completed that are reenergizing our city.

Drive up Main Street and you'll see neglected buildings being transformed in our downtown. Go a step further, and you'll find a gleaming and glorious Beach Shopping Center boasting a magnificent new Super Stop 'N Shop.

Go down to the waterfront, and you'll notice that the view of the building that will soon be the Lincoln Train Station Museum is better than ever before. Take a close look at the empty parcels and flat, underutilized

parking lots. In a few years an entire new neighborhood is likely to grow up here.

Then go out to our already magnificent Riverfront Green Park. If you travel to the park's north end, you'll see more land that seems empty. But it is actually full of possibilities. This is the Peekskill Landing property, and for the last several months citizens from all over our city have been contributing their ideas and visions for this valuable land's future.

One of the most important things about these projects is that you can have a direct voice in many of them—either as an active citizen or a supportive customer.



BETTING ON PEEKSKILL. A total of 67,000 square feet of broad, gleaming aisles, excellent products and attractive prices greet customers at the new Super Stop 'N Shop at the Beach Shopping Center.

Each project is different, but all of them signal Peekskill's increasing attractiveness as a community and as a place to do business.

Read about the current projects on page 5.

DOWNTOWN: Coming Back, Building by Building



By Mayor John Testa

CONGRATULATIONS! Peekskill citizens reside in one of the 10 Best Places to Live in Westchester County. That's according to Westchester Magazine, an independent publication that made its decision after conducting intensive surveys dealing with everything from our arts community to real estate values.

There are many beautiful places in Westchester. Being selected as one of the 10 best is an honor—and one our City has been working hard to achieve for a long time.

Westchester names us one of the 10 best for many different reasons—some of which were beyond our control, such as our beautiful location on the Hudson River. But other factors are the direct results of the decisions our city and citizens have made over the last few years. They also realize where we are headed and that Peekskill is getting better all the time.

Riverfront Green is a precious, valuable resource—and we're going to be protecting and improving it. A key portion of that effort will be the revitalization of the Peekskill Landing property. This is four acres on the north side of the Riverfront Green Park that are owned jointly by the City and non-profit Scenic Hudson Inc.

We've been holding hearings so that citizens can have a say about the future of Peekskill Landing. But even as that's been going on, many other exciting things have been happening. I don't have much space, but here are a few:

MAIN STREET IS GETTING A MAJOR FACELIFT courtesy of CPC Inc., which has started work on renovating a number of buildings in the downtown and will begin construction of its artlofts shortly.

WE HAVE A MAGNIFICENT NEW GROCERY STORE! The Super Stop & Shop that opened in early November is a state-of-the-art-facility, and a powerful vote of confidence in our city's future. Not to mention all of the other improvements and additions to the Beach Shopping Center.

OUR CITY HAS AN AWARD-WINNING STAFF, which has been taking home prizes for everything from the Central Avenue repair project to the brochures the Department of Public Works hands out.

You'll see articles on this and other topics inside this issue. You can also keep up to date by viewing the Government Channel 78 of your cable system or visiting the City of Peekskill web site, www.cityofpeekskill.com, from time to time. Open government and informing the public has been a priority of ours. Enjoy, and a happy and healthy new year.

inside

Keeping Citizens

Informed and Aware

In Peekskill, keeping a watch on city government is easier than in most other places. All you have to do is turn on your TV.

If you have cable, you'll get to see an entire channel that provides hundreds of hours of programming each year that can inform and educate you about key issues. A total of 150 different programs are produced by Peekskill every 12 months. Watching these programs can provide you with valuable information about everything from the City's garbage collection policies to what happened at the latest Common Council meetings.

There are a number of different categories of programs on the Government Channel:

Official meetings. These programs give you an up-close view of what's happening with your local and regional government. The shows included presentations of Peekskill Common Council meetings and special work session presentations. Meetings of the Westchester County Board of Legislators are also aired.

Updates by Elected Officials. Find out what's happening with the community from the people who help make things happen on these shows. They include Mayor John Testa's City Update and County Legislator George Oros' Legislative Update.

Regular Informational Shows. Local businesses are a vital part of our community. Find out what new businesses have come to town and what old businesses are doing on Meet the City, which is hosted by Jennifer Wenk. Paramount Spotlight provides news and features about the Paramount Center for the Arts.

Ribbon Cuttings. Each new business that opens in Peekskill can have its own celebration. See the people and companies that



INCREASED CONTROL. Clockwise from top, scenes from the Council Chamber on a quiet day; one of the three remote cameras; the controller that runs the three cameras.



Several different sets of equipment were provided to Peekskill:

A remote-controlled, three-camera system for the Common Council chamber. "This system will provide a number of different benefits," says Mike Miner, the city's director of video production and development. "Having three cameras will enable us to boost the production values of our presentations of the council meetings dramatically. We'll be able to get reaction shots and make the meetings more compelling and interesting," he says. In addition, the fact that the cameras are remote controlled means that there will no longer need to be a camera operator in the council room taking up space and being a distraction.

Six digital VCRs. These machines will make it easier for the City to record, produce and edit video material.

Because they are digital, the units will also increase the quality of the images being broadcast.

An advanced video switcher. By allowing producers to switch between video feeds, this piece of equipment will bring new flexibility to the City's video production efforts, enabling producers to work with numerous different sources at the same time.

An important capability of the new system will be the ability to switch to live broadcasts at the push of a button. "If there's an emergency, all it takes for us to do a live broadcast is flip a switch," Miner says. "This means our citizens will get more and better information than ever before."

are investing in our City and the products and services they have to offer.

News and Informational Programs. Whether you want to know how our city—and you—can better deal with snow or know the details about garbage pickup regulations, special Peekskill programs can help you understand our city and deal better use its services. New technology that Peekskill has secured with the support of Cablevision Systems Corp., our local cable service supplier, will help make the city's programs better and more diverse than ever. Cablevision gave the city the equipment as the result of negotiations with Peekskill over its once-a-decade contract renewal.

CALENDAR

JANUARY

- 6 **Business Council Breakfast**, Hudson Valley Gateway Chamber of Commerce, 7:45a.m., Susan's Restaurant, 12 North Division, call 914-737-3600 for information.
- 13 **First Marketing/Retail Program**, Hudson Valley Gateway Chamber, Chamber Office, One South Division St., free to Chamber members, call 914-737-3600 for information.

FEBRUARY

- 5 **101st Annual Lincoln Society in Peekskill Dinner/Dance**, call 739-4861 for more information.
- 12 **Silent Surrealism w/the Hot Club of San Francisco**, Paramount Center for the Arts, 8pm, \$10 to \$20.
- 19 **Harlem Gospel Choir**, Paramount Center for the Arts, 8pm, \$25.
- 25 **An Evening w/ Donny Osmond**, Paramount Center for the Arts, 8pm, \$46.50.

MARCH

- 5 **HBO's Curb Your Enthusiasm on Tour!**, Paramount Center for the Arts, 8pm, \$40 to \$50.
- 12 **Ronald K Brown/ EVIDENCE**, Paramount Center for the Arts, 8pm, \$25 to \$35.
- 19 **Sweet Honey In The Rock Saturday**, Paramount Center for the Arts, 8pm, \$35 to \$40.

The Peekskill Youth Bureau

CELEBRATING A DECADE OF SERVICE

Taking care of kids is a tough job. It's one that extends far beyond the school day, and even the school system. And perhaps that's why, on December 27, 1988, the City of Peekskill's Common Council decided to take the first steps towards creating a Youth Bureau.

A Youth Board was established. That Board surveyed the community to see what needs existed, then established goals and objectives and helped define the Peekskill Youth Bureau's mission and vision.

On March 4, 1994, the Peekskill Youth Bureau opened its doors for the first time. Since then it has served thousands upon thousands of youth, doing everything from helping dropouts get Graduate Equivalent Diplomas to boosting self esteem and learning abilities. The ages helped by the Youth Bureau range from near-toddlers to 21-year-olds.



A TEAM FOR PEEKSKILL'S YOUTH. The committed and dedicated staff of the Peekskill Youth Bureau: From top left: Debra Long, program director, Joanne Dunn, program director, Laura Luna, administrative assistant, Fran Owens, youth court. From bottom left: Felicia Jenkins, administrative assistant, Valerie A. Swan, executive director, Darryl Francis, youth advocate, Lisa Hintze, executive assistant.

Youths of all kinds participate in the Bureau's activities. Meeting their needs is sometimes a complex and difficult task. But community members are proud and satisfied with what they see. The Peekskill NAACP has given awards to both Youth Bureau Executive Director Valerie Swan and the organization itself.

"We chose the Youth Bureau because of their many years of outstanding service to the youth here in Peekskill and the positive image they have with the youth in this community," says Bob Spencer, president of the Peekskill Area NAACP. "The kids who have worked with the Youth Bureau do well," he says.

Sarah Cortese certainly agrees. She first started using the Youth Bureau's services in 1995, when she was 18. Today, at age 27, she owns the Carvel franchise that was in the Peekskill Shopping Mall on the east end of Main Street.

"Where would I be without the Youth Bureau?" Cortese asked a local newspaper. "Probably not owning my own business. There I learned responsibility. They taught you to think about where you want to go, who you want to be."

Although Cortese was devastated by the fire that destroyed her shop in early December,

the personal strength and resources the Youth Bureau helped create are assisting her in starting over again.

Youth Bureau services can help kids of any age or economic status, Cortese and others say. The Bureau offers an ongoing medley of programs designed to fulfill its mission of helping young people develop into

responsible, achieving adults.

Working with kids using focused, targeted programs, the Youth Bureau helps children apply their positive energy and skills to life situations and their goals so that they can believe in their futures and themselves.

Programs such as Jr. CEO, Olympic Youth

...it has served thousands upon thousands of youth, doing everything from helping dropouts get Graduate Equivalent Diplomas to boosting self esteem and learning abilities.

Day, Summer Youth Employment and Shining Stars have helped teach young people everything from the skills needed to lead and coach people to what it is like to hold a job.

Activities sponsored by the Youth Bureau have reached out to parents as well. Regular jazz concerts have given adults a chance to relax to wonderful music while their children play and learn; a recently established Health Fair provides urgently needed advice and information.

What's great for Peekskill taxpayers is that they only pay a small portion of the cost of staging the Youth Bureau's program. Fully two thirds of the money the agency spends comes as grants from outside organizations. In 2004, the Youth Bureau raised a total of \$689,000 and had approximately \$250,000 of city funds as operational and matched funds.

Agencies providing grants do more than just give the Youth Bureau money. They make certain the programs the Youth Bureau implements meet rigorous, independent standards and truly make a difference for the kids involved in them.

Many attribute the Peekskill Youth Bureau's success to the skills of its executive director, Valerie Swan. Before she signed on with Peekskill, Swan worked with the Westchester County Youth Bureau's regional office in White Plains.

Continued on page 8

WORKING TOGETHER To Help Our CHILDREN

There are many different organizations dedicated to supporting Peekskill's young people. To help them work together more effectively, Peekskill Agencies Together was created in 2001.

Recognizing that the best way they could serve the city's youth was to act as a team, the agencies have cooperated in numerous projects since the group was established.

Peekskill Agencies Together's members are: Peekskill Youth Bureau, Westchester Community College, WestCOP Peekskill CAP, United Methodist Church of Peekskill, Westchester County Dept. of Social Services-Peekskill District Office, EPIC, Mt. Lebanon Baptist Church, Peekskill Police Dept., Catholic Charities, Wheelabrator Westchester, Peekskill City School District, Peekskill Presbyterian Church, The Field Library, Peekskill Parks & Recreation, Hudson River Community Health, Westchester County Youth Bureau, Urban League of Westchester, Westchester Youth Services, Boy Scouts of America Westchester/Putnam Council, Paramount Center for the Arts, Putnam/Northern Westchester County B.O.C.E.S. and the Peekskill Housing Authority.

Congratulations

& WELCOME

TO THE NEW BUSINESSES IN PEEKSKILL

El Trigal Restaurante



Opening Day

Peekskill's flavorful menu of restaurants has a new addition with the opening of El Trigal Restaurante, an eatery dedicated to the Ecuadorian cuisine of its owner's homeland.

"We'll be serving traditional Ecuadorian cuisine, especially seafood," says Brauilo Quituisaca, El Trigal's owner. "We'll work a lot with such items as shrimp, fish, tuna and clams," he says. El Trigal is located at 11 Bank Street.

One of El Trigal's specialties will be "plates" that offer diners a full, tasty meal for a reasonable price. Plates will include a main course, soup, and a can of soda, all for \$6, Quituisaca says. Plate dishes will include chicken, beef or fish along with rice. "Every day we'll have a different kind of soup," he says.

11 BANK STREET • 914-788-7631

Nelson House Antiques



Owner, Karen Burghart

Warm and inviting as a Victorian parlor, Nelson House Antiques is the latest shop in Peekskill that is drawing people to the downtown area from all over the region. Nelson House Antiques offers fine antique furniture, paintings, mirrors, lighting, and decorative accessories at 32 North Division Street.

"There is something magical about walking into an old home that evokes the time when it was built," says store owner and Peekskill resident Karen Burghart. "Integrating antiques and a homeowners own pieces allows me to create rooms that truly reflect the homeowner's own style — giving them romance, comfort, and a bit of history. This is what Nelson House Antiques is all about: helping people create the feeling of magic and romance in their home, and at a reasonable price," she added. Nelson House is also always on the lookout for fine furniture, porcelain and other excellent antiques. Calls from those looking to sell such items are welcomed."

32 NORTH DIVISION STREET • 914-739-0344

Green Acres Gourmet



Founder,
Christina DiMaria

This new store features organic products grown locally and produced naturally. Its offerings range from meat and chicken to fine cheeses and organic honey. While owner Christina DiMaria specialized in chicken, eggs and meat at her farmer's market stand, the new store is giving her the chance to broaden her offerings.

Fresh apples gleam in sturdy baskets; natural honeycomb, organic maple syrup and healthy sodas line her shelves. Everything from Amish cheddar to apple smoked bacon to grass pastured beef to an entire list of exotic cheeses and a full menu of fancy sausages can be found in her coolers.

"When you live in very rural areas close to family farms, it's easier to get these foods directly from the source. Here, you have grocery stores. Most of the food sold in grocery stores has been shipped or brought by truck, airplane or train. By the time it gets to you, it's a week old if not more," DiMaria says.

1027 PARK STREET • 736-3737

Modern Bakery



Co-owners, Joann Boniello and Darlene Curtis

Joann Boniello understands how important tradition is in this City. That's why she spent months training with the former owners when she purchased Modern Bakery, a store that's been producing bread, rolls, pastries, cakes and all manner of baked goods for more than half a century.

"My brother and I spent months working with the owners. We'll keep the same quality that people are used to," Boniello says. They'll also maintain the same menu. "Crumb buns, coconut buns, black and white cookies, apple turnovers—these are some of the very popular items that have been here for generations that we're keeping," she says.

933 SOUTH STREET • 914-737-0822



BUILDING MOMENTUM: Peekskill Revitalizes Continued from page 1

BEACH SHOPPING CENTER. Just a few years ago, the Beach Shopping Center looked weary and worn out, as if time and prosperity had passed it by. The truth turned out to be something far different. All the Beach needed was a committed owner and the infusion of significant capital. Today, the Beach hasn't just been spruced up—it's been transformed. Revamped facades and signs make much of the shopping center seem almost new. But the centerpiece is a brand new Super Stop 'N Shop. At almost 70,000 square feet, the store is big, modern, and carries a huge array of products. It's well worth a visit and a purchase.

CPC DOWNTOWN RECONSTRUCTION. Some of the lovely brick buildings in our downtown had deteriorated so much that the roofs had fallen in on their back rooms. Now they're getting a full-service makeover, courtesy of CPC Inc. CPC has already taken the rubble and wreckage out of some of our most attractive structures. Within the next few months, these buildings will get improved facades and modern interiors. They'll help make our downtown all the more lively and attractive, with upper stories acting as art lofts and lower floors hosting restaurants and retail outlets.



WORK BEGINS ON LINCOLN MUSEUM. In a major step towards the completion of the Lincoln Train Station Museum, an old building is cleared from the site. Coleman Distributing moved to a new site at 1000 Lower South Street.

WATERFRONT REVITALIZATION. One measure of a town's success is the quality of the company it keeps. Ginsburg Development Corp. has spent the last several months working with members of the community to help shape its vision of what our waterfront will look like in the future. They've invested money in everything from traffic studies to architectural plans. So far, however, all the spending has been nothing but a gamble—the company, which is among the most respected developers in the region, hasn't yet been chosen as the official executor of the water-front project. That's something the City Council will decide in the coming months. Citizens have already voiced many opinions on the project; further comments are appreciated.

While private industry continues to move forward, the City itself is also in a number of efforts that have important implications for Peekskill's future.

LINCOLN TRAIN STATION MUSEUM. Our City's long past is going to prove one of the foundations of its future success. After years of dreams, negotiations and planning, work has begun on the Lincoln Train Station Museum. This is the building located on Water Street on the site where Abraham Lincoln spoke to the citizens of Peekskill on his way to Washington in 1861. A modern building on the site has been removed, and full restoration efforts should begin in coming months.

PEEKSKILL LANDING. This is a valuable piece of property Peekskill owns in partnership with non-profit Scenic Hudson Inc. The four-acre plot is located on the north end of Riverfront Green Park. A number of in-depth hearings were held to decide what to do with the property, and ideas ranged from a town marina to pure parkland. As the project moves forward in coming years, your feedback and suggestions would be greatly appreciated.



NEW USE FOR PRECIOUS LAND. In the 1960s when this photograph was taken, the four acres that make up the Peekskill Landing Property were crowded with boats and industrial facilities. Today, the property is empty, awaiting citizen input as to what its future will be.

CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW WATER FILTRATION PLANT. Few Peekskill residents realize how lucky they are that the city has its own water system. Most Westchester communities tap into New York City's water supply—and wind up paying among the nation's highest rates for water, as well as losing control over how much they can get and when they can get it. Peekskill has had its own system since 1875. Our water is safe to drink, but new federal regulations demand that the city install an advanced filtration system. The cost of such technology is significant, but New York State is helping us out. It has just given us the first \$7 million installment of a low-interest loan that will help us meet the government's demand in coming years—and give our citizens safer, better-tasting water than ever before.

CITY OF PEEKSKILL
Key Government Meetings

JANUARY

4	Committee of the Whole
6	Historic and Landmarks Preservation Board
6	Historic Preservation Advisory Commission
10	Committee of the Whole/ Common Council
11	Planning Commission
18	Committee of the Whole
20	Zoning Board of Appeals
24	Committee of the Whole/ Common Council

FEBRUARY

3	Historic and Landmarks Preservation Board
3	Historic Preservation Advisory Commission
7	Committee of the Whole
8	Planning Commission
14	Committee of the Whole/ Common Council
17	Zoning Board of Appeals
22	Committee of the Whole
28	Committee of the Whole/ Common Council

MARCH

3	Historic and Landmarks Preservation Board
3	Historic Preservation Advisory Commission
7	Committee of the Whole
8	Planning Commission
14	Committee of the Whole/ Common Council
17	Zoning Board of Appeals
21	Committee of the Whole
28	Committee of the Whole/ Common Council

Code Enforcement/
 Quality of Life Hotline
862-2065

Dialing for Safety

what happens when you call us



By Eugene Tumolo, Chief of Police

Every year more than 31,000 complaints are phoned into the Peekskill Police. All of these calls are important to us. Each is unique. Everyone is treated with respect and each call is handled differently, dependent on the circumstances.

Our ability to respond to your complaints is shaped not by the number of telephone lines we have, but by the number of officers already handling calls and those who are available at any given moment to take new calls. Although our department's size is adequate for the size of our community, we cannot respond to every call within minutes. Determining where and when officers are deployed is dependant on a number of factors. That is why the person who answers the phone at the police station is always an experienced officer or supervisor.

Every call you make to 737-8000 or 862-1400 goes directly to a Peekskill Police Department dispatcher. Though 911 calls are routed through a different line, the same dispatchers answer them. These officers must make important decisions based upon the severity of the calls they receive. Although we would like to respond to every call immediately, we must respond to the most serious first. We practice what is known as triage. Every call that comes in is evaluated in terms of severity and potential risks to life. The calls which represent the greatest threats to people and public safety, get the most rapid and intensive response. In some communities, this has resulted in people who use specific catchphrases that they know will have us responding more quickly. This is dangerous, illegal and life threatening.

“ Our policy is to provide the highest level of service possible to all people, courteously and expeditiously. ”

Our officers working the police desk are trained to carefully analyze every call that comes in, determining which are the most serious and necessitating immediate response. But, we respond to all the calls we receive. It's just that sometimes we need to react faster and with more intensity to some than others. That is one of the reasons we have created different kinds of police units and why we ask in depth questions with respect to your complaint or issues, such as whether a situation is a one time occurrence, ongoing or a threat to life or property.

If you feel we have not paid close enough attention to your call, please do not be frustrated. Policing is a service business and you are our customers. Our policy is to provide the highest level of service possible to all people, courteously and expeditiously. If you have a complaint or wish to discuss any matter, feel free to call me, Chief Tumolo, and anyone else in the police department to discuss your concerns.

We also want you to know that all your calls to the police department are recorded. Given the sensitive nature of the information we deal with, we feel it is crucial to document all calls. This is often a life saving practice as callers under pressure or duress often hang up before the call is completed. Other calls are critical to furthering investigations and later prosecution. We also review calls when complaints are filed regarding how someone was treated when they called to either sustain or refute the allegations.

A further word of advice: if at all possible, please try not to call us on cell phones. With our current systems, we use caller ID type technology to instantly trace the location of every person who dials in. This can save precious seconds and minutes when it comes to responding to serious emergencies. It's not only impossible to trace the location of cell phones — the calls themselves are routed in a way that may dramatically increase the amount of time it takes to respond to them. That is because, unlike landline calls, 911 cell phone calls are routed through state police dispatchers.

If you are under stress or are unclear about your location, it can sometimes take five or ten minutes for your cell phone call to even be routed to the right people in the Peekskill Police Department. So, if you do have a cell phone, tell us exactly where you are and, if at all possible, use a landline instead.

One more thing, it is fine to use a portable phone at home. Our system treats that as a landline call. A full list of the Police Department's phone numbers is next to this article. Please use them wisely and well.

THE CITY BUDGET

A DELICATE BALANCING ACT

By Marcus Serrano

When most people write their tax bill check, they often wonder "Where does the money go?" To shed some light on this, here is some information about your tax dollars and where they are spent.

Most of the tax dollars you pay to the City of Peekskill does not go to the City. In fact, Peekskill gets less than a third of the money it collects from property owners. This is due to the fact that Peekskill acts as the tax collecting representative for other agencies such as the Peekskill City School District, Hendrick Hudson School District and Westchester County.

Budgets are not just about money. Behind the numbers are some interesting facts, trends and challenges. The City of Peekskill's budget is more than 300 pages long and contains thousands upon thousands of numbers. Taking a closer look at the budget gives you, the taxpayer, the opportunity to see some the hidden realities of the City's financial life.

Though Peekskill has a number of different revenue sources, the first and most important is real estate taxes. Homes and buildings stay in the same place for a long period of time and have fairly exact defined values. Because of this, real estate taxes have become the average community's primary tool for generating revenue.

Of the real estate taxes paid in Peekskill, about 57% goes to the school district and 13% goes to Westchester County. This generates some interesting results.

First, the School District tax increase can have a disproportionate impact on property owners. Second, the City tax increases

can have a smaller effect than expected, because the City's share of the tax dollar is such a small proportion of the total.

Most of it is devoted to protecting you. Approximately 42% goes to public safety—that is, the fire and police department. The next biggest share is "General Government" operations, at 17%; "Home and Community" at 11%; "Recreation and Culture" at 10%; "Transportation" at 9%; and "Debt" service at 8%.

Budgets are not just about money. Behind the numbers are some interesting facts, trends and challenges.

The Debt number is very important because it means that the City must be very careful how it handles itself financially. Poor management could lead to a downgrading of the City's debt burden, which would have a big impact on the budget, given how large a share of it is taken up with debt service.

What does the City's money pay for? About 49% of Peekskill's expenditures pay for personnel; 24% goes to benefits; 17% goes to meet contractual demands; and 9% of the City's spending is for debt service.

Given that Public Safety is such an important category, where does that money go? Well, 71% of the spending is dedicated to the Police Department; 22% goes to the Fire Department; a 5% share goes to building and plumbing code enforcement; and 1% goes toward animal control and street signs.

To put the budget in even more of a perspective, we can look at the contributions the State requires the City

make to employee retirement funds. As recently as 2002, this number was around \$100,000. Today it is close to \$2.1 million. You can see where in a city budget of just \$30 million, this number is huge!

At the same time, the assessed value of the real estate upon which the City's tax collection is based is actually declining. Because of a number of complex factors, even though houses in Peekskill are worth more than ever before, the actual assessed value of properties in the City has declined quite significantly in the last 15 years.

For example, in 1990, the assessed value of taxable properties in the City of Peekskill came to almost \$71 million. Today it's a little less than \$64 million. This has an especially dramatic impact on single family homeowners, who find they are paying an ever-growing share of the City's taxes.

A tool called the "equalization rate" that is set by the state government up in Albany is the primary reason for this. Originally developed to create a level playing field when it came to taxes, the equalization rate has instead had the opposite effect.

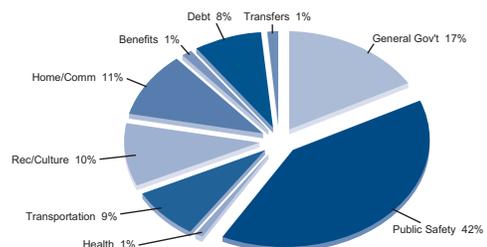
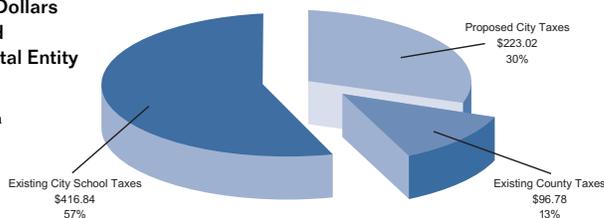
Set at 100 in the 1960s, Peekskill's equalization rate has dropped every year as the value of housing has increased. Today, the city's equalization rate is 3.79%. In effect, that means that \$100 in 1960s dollars would buy \$3.79 in real estate today. This wouldn't matter to homeowners except for the fact that the equalization rate is used to determine the value of commercial properties.

Making the situation worse is that, legally, the definition of commercial properties

Continued on page 8

How Your Tax Dollars Are Distributed By Governmental Entity

Tax rate per \$1,000 of Assessed Value and Percent of Each Tax Dollar Paid



Expenditures by Function

W E L C O M E

to the City of Peekskill



NEW YORK STATE'S FASTEST GROWING CITY

TOTAL \$ FOR CITY OF PEEKSKILL:

2003 Revenues \$27.308 million

2003 Expenditures \$27.273 million

WHO GETS THE MONEY:

Adopted budget

for 2005 \$29.424 million

Percentage kept by city 30%

Percentage going to

City School District 57%

Percentage going to

Westchester County 13%

WHERE THE MONEY GOES:

General Gov't 17%

Public Safety 42%

Health 1%

Transportation 9%

Rec/Culture 10%

Home/Comm 11%

Benefits 1%

Debt 8%

Transfers 1%

WHERE THE PUBLIC SAFETY

MONEY GOES:

Police 71%

Street Signs 1%

Fire 22%

Animal control 1%

Building/Plumbing 5%

RETIREMENT CONTRIBUTION TO NEW YORK STATE:

2000 181,452 2003 805,303

2001 165,428 2004 2,085,624

2002 206,398 2005 2,202,438

The Peekskill Youth Bureau

Continued from page 3

Teamwork is a key part of Swan's approach. One of her most important successes were helping create Peekskill Agencies Together, a collation of the City's non-profits that includes an incredibly wide variety of organizations.

Swan also works with Youth Bureaus all over New York State to help create new programming and more effective approaches. But what she takes pride in most is the contribution she's made to the city's youth.

"Peekskill really cares about its kids. That's why it has given us this wonderful opportunity to contribute to them. And what we should be proud of is not what we've done, but what our children have achieved in the 10 years the Youth Bureau has worked with them," Swan says.

Visit www.cityofpeekskill.com

Support Available For Peekskill Shopping Mall Fire Victims

Civic, government, businesses and other groups are banding together to support the businesses and employees whose livelihoods were destroyed by the fire at the Peekskill Shopping Mall on East Main Street. All seven of the stores in the Mall were totally destroyed. Businesses at the Peekskill Shopping Center included a Lincoln/Mercury used car dealership, a butcher, a restaurant, an ice cream franchise, a pizzeria, a nail salon and a laundromat. More than 175 firefighters from 13 of the City's neighbors were battling the blaze.

City officials are committed to helping businesses and employees affected by the fire. To help coordinate the effort, the Peekskill City Planning Department has formed a Disaster Assistance Team under the guidance of Brian Havranek, Director of Planning, development and code assistance. Members of the Disaster Assistance Team are helping out fire victims in a number of specific ways. They are collecting information on potential jobs, providing assistance in finding new locations, guiding businesses through the paperwork needed to gain loans or other funding, and helping those impacted reach out to the media.

Anyone who had a business at the mall, or who has potential jobs or is looking for work should call Havranek at 914-734-4210. The Planning department has an intimate knowledge of both economic development resources and potential business sites all over the city. It is using that information to assist the businesses hit by the fire.

Other organizations that are helping out include The Hudson Valley Gateway Chamber of Commerce, The Peekskill Business Improvement District and the Peekskill Fire Department.

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includes both businesses and residential structures operated as businesses, such as rentals, co-ops and condos.

So, as the appraised value of Peekskill's properties increases, the equalization rate drops—and the equalization rate is what the city uses to determine the assessed value of properties. Commercial property owners can thus hire a lawyer, take the City to court, and say that since the *assessed* value of their property has dropped—that their real estate dollars are worth less—their taxes should be lowered.

Judges tend to agree with this, which means the City has no choice but to cut the property owner's tax bill—even though the *appraised* value of their property may have skyrocketed.

A very large share of Peekskill's housing stock consists of exactly the type of property that can benefit most from a skewed equalization rate. We're taking steps that should blunt the impact of this situation in the future—but this and many other factors are making managing the City budget a more complex and challenging task than ever before.

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