

Board of Trustees  
Village of Freeport

After a careful study of the official report and attached map thereto, I herewith submit comments and suggestions relative to the improvements for midtown Freeport.

The major portion seems based upon the change of location of the L.I.R.R. depot; also a hope of change of policy by the State Public Service Commission. If both of these matters were to result favorably, a passenger platform extending to Grove Street would be of great convenience to the commuters.

It is doubtful if any major change of business will result, and no such hope should be held out for Henry Street.

Smith Street is not suited for an arterial highway, or an aid to Merrick Road traffic. The destruction of two blocks of residential property by diagonal extension easterly and westerly of Smith Street is ruinous to property values. As an aid to local conditions, the extension of Smith Street to connect with South Henry Street and South Columbus Avenue has merit. The extension of South Henry Street to South Main Street is needless unless South Main Street is widened. Bedell Street will be the feeder for traffic from the south. Traffic lights would be needed at all corners on Smith Street were the plan submitted followed.

While Brookside Avenue does need improving, it would seem rather outside the scope of the present plan. That section between W. Merrick Road and Sunrise-Highway would lend itself to development of a fine park between it and the Milburn Reservoir and improve our western approach immensely.

The extension of Henry Street north to Randall Avenue and N. Main Street would destroy the value of much North Main Street property, as this, like the recommended extensions on Smith Street, is diagonal and leaves odd-shaped and triangular plots. Instead, I would suggest that North Henry Street be widened to 100 feet between the Railroad tracks and Broadway with its easterly line connecting with the easterly line of Harding Place. Also that Broadway be widened from Harding Place to N. Main Street to a sufficient width for the extra traffic. Brooklyn Avenue could be widened to conform to Broadway by the use of the present parking area on the south side of it. Parking facilities would be available under the railroad from Bergen Place east. Broadway might be widened easterly, also.

It should be emphasized that there is an extremely marked opposition to the connection of North and South Columbus Avenue. Several reasons have been expressed to me. One is the objection to extra traffic, which would cut through the northeast section to Roosevelt. One school official expressed an opinion that traffic would have to be closed around Columbus Avenue School to protect our children. Another objection is the danger of second rate business trying to encroach upon our quiet residential area.

The paving of Sunrise Highway from curb to curb is fine, but the State controls its traffic, so also it should pave the roadway. Any legal difficulties existant should be removed.

Relative to the parking fields. If obtainable at a reasonable price the field in the rear of the High School should be purchased and added to our high school grounds. As our village grows, so does the number of our high school students increase. The other field listed in your plan is expensive and has failed to be acted upon previously for this reason. Might I suggest the area on the east side of Henry Street from Newton Blvd. to within 100 feet of Merrick Road. This is not valuable property, and car owners could park here adjacent to both the business, the Theatre and the proposed new depot. If needed, an easterly exit is possible.

This proposed new depot would indeed be a show spot and great advertisement for Freeport, something sadly lacking in most of our public buildings, for they are hidden on side streets.

Freeport has a large amount of tax exempt property. This project will take considerably more from the tax rolls, several hundred thousand dollars in fact. Since the main support of Freeport's government is from real estate taxes, this angle should be studied as an indirect cost of the improvement.

This plan is one that touches every person in Freeport, both financially and as to their daily routine. It should not be rushed through without a full discussion of its merits and defects, for it has both, and a careful study to see if it is worth the price and resultant tax rate increase.

May I point out that the counsel and engineer have been authorized to go ahead, previous both to this public hearing and to either notification of or action by the Freeport Planning Commission. And there is the question of finance. Wild guesses are not sufficient, and an estimated cost should be given the public, both maximum and minimum. Voters naturally expect to vote upon the bond issue, and the amount of this should be known.

These comments and suggestions are designed to provoke constructive discussion before the village is obligated to so far reaching a program. Definitely, this plan should be greatly modified before adoption.

Signed

William E. Crevoiserat

Freeport, N.Y.  
February 8, 1945.

Honorable Mayor and Trustees  
of the Village of Freeport

Gentlemen:

The undersigned Robert E. Patterson, Chairman, and Edmund Lumley, Jr., member of the Planning Board, respectfully submit their report on the recommendations made by your Special Committee consisting of Trustees Ryan and Wood prepared by your consultant, Mr. H.A. Strecker, Jr., called the MID-TOWN PLAN.

The Planning Board according to the Village Clerk's letter of December 30, 1944, was requested by you to make such report. At a meeting of the Planning Board held on January 3, 1945, attended by Messrs. Carpenter and Gallo, the Trustee members of the Planning Board, Mr. Lumley and Mr. Patterson, the plan was discussed but no conclusion reached. In an attempt to reach some conclusion, the chairman, by letters mailed on January 8th, 1945, called a meeting of the Planning Board for January 23rd, 1945. The Chairman invited Mayor Flint and Messrs. Ryan and Wood, trustees, besides Trustees Carpenter and Gallo, Mr. Strecker, Mr. A. Burton Cohen, the engineer-consultant of the village in the concluded grade elimination proceedings, and Mr. Samuel M. Levy, the former village attorney who represented the village in those proceedings.

Mr. Strecker wrote the chairman he would be out of the city on that evening and until the end of the month. Mr. Gallo wrote that he would not attend as he considered the meeting unnecessary because of the public meeting called by the Board of Trustees for January 25, 1945. Messrs. Carpenter, Ryan and Wood each wrote that he had a previously made engagement. The chairman did not hear from the Mayor who did not attend.

The Planning Board is charged by the Village Law with the duty of reporting within 45 days on any matter referred to it by the Board of Trustees. The undersigned two members of the Planning Board, as long as they are members of such board, intend to discharge their duty. The undersigned are convinced that after your board became aware that the undersigned would not become its rubber stamp, it is regretted referring the so called MID-TOWN PLAN to the planning Board and deliberately sought to block any action by us.

Despite the handicaps under which it had been operating, the Planning Board submitted a report to the Board of Trustees on March 1, 1944 containing a program for 25 public improvements. All the recommendations of the Ryan-Wood Committee and Mr. Strecker, other than the proposed moving of the station and the street changes made necessary thereby, were included in the report of March 1, 1944. The Planning Board requested in March, 1944, an appropriation in the 1944-1945 budget of \$5,000.00 for the making of a master map provided for by the Village Law and for consultant services to aid the Planning Board in presenting full and necessary data of its recommendations to enable the Board of Trustees to act intelligently on such proposals. The refusal of the Board of Trustees to grant such request for funds completely blocked further activities by the Planning Board to present a comprehensive plan.

Any public body charged with the responsibility of projecting any public improvement should, before recommending its adoption, determine firstly, the desirability of such improvement from the standpoint of the whole community, secondly, the estimated cost of such improvement, and thirdly, the method of financing such cost. In estimating cost, if the improvement involves land acquisitions, appraisals should be obtained, and for the construction work and proper engineering estimates.

Items 2 to 6 are on the projects submitted to the State Post-War Planning Commission, by order of the Board of Trustees, for an allowance of 50% of the cost for drawing plans. Although neither the State Government nor the Federal Government have made any assurances to that end, for the purpose of this computation we will assume that the village will not bear more than 50% of their cost, they being actual work projects. Funding the village's share by bonds, the debt limit would be reduced to \$1,305,181.00, unless the items 2, 3 and 4 aggregating \$82,500. are financed out of the light plant surplus, which is now down to about \$306,440.00, in which case the debt limit would be \$1,387,681.00.

The Mayor is quoted in the Nassau Daily Review of March 3, 1944, as proposing the following additional public improvements:

8. Municipal Garage	\$100,000.
9. Drain Russell Place	20,000.
10. Curbs and Gutters	200,000.
11. Street Intersections	100,000.
12. Extension of Washington Street	10,000.
13. Brook culvert Fredericks Ave.	30,000.
14. Brook culvert Freeport Creek	30,000.
15. Fencing village property	20,000.
16. Water meters	50,000.
17. Park at Milburn Creek	75,000.
	<u>\$635,000.</u>

If these are also undertaken, not necessarily immediately, and assuming the estimates of cost stated by the Mayor are reasonably correct, the debt limit would shrink further to \$752,681.00.

This program of public improvements leaves out an extension to the Memorial Library and any playgrounds and parks other than the one at Milburn Creek.

Permanent parking fields, to serve Main Street, exclusive of the cost of the land acquisitions, would at the lowest estimate cost \$100,000. which would bring the debt limit down to \$652,681.00.

We are submitting later in this report, a conservative estimate of the cost to the village of the parking plaza at the proposed site of the station and street changes made necessary thereby. Our estimate is approximately ONE MILLION DOLLARS.

The village would be over its lawful debt limit if all these plans are carried out. Many of them would have to be dropped. Which would they be? If the parking plaza is number 1 on the list, it would absorb over 40% of the present debt limit margin.

It is apparent that your special Ryan-Wood Committee utterly failed to submit a comprehensive plan within the reasonable limits of the pocketbooks of the taxpayers and which would be within the debt limit margin of the village.

The MID-TOWN PLAN proposes:

(1) parking fields for the business district, the paving from curb to curb of Sunrise Highway and the widening by the County of Merrick Road, east of Main Street; and

(2) for the railroad grade elimination; the moving of the station from its present location to one which would extend from Main Street to Columbus Avenue, providing a parking plaza to accommodate 1000 cars and a bus terminal, the widening and extending Henry Street north and south, extending Smith Street east and west, providing marginal roads, north and south of the railroad, and providing an additional railroad crossing at Columbus Avenue and extending Columbus Avenue from Bennington Avenue to Commercial Street and from Alexander Avenue to Merrick Road.

As to the items under 1 above, parking fields to serve the business district were at the top of the list of March 1, 1944, submitted by the Planning Board. It is our opinion that the parking areas proposed by the Ryan-Wood report will not adequately serve the needs of

the heart of Main Street. The Sunrise Highway improvement, just before the war, was on the program of the State Department of Public Works for the installation of a safety island in the centre and the widening of the concrete pavement area. The Merrick Road widening is desirable, and was on the list of March 1, 1944, if the County can be persuaded to undertake to bear its cost. We have made no estimate of the cost of acquiring property for parking fields. Such cost can only be estimated after the locations are determined, and when also the means of financing is agreed upon.

As to the desirability of moving the station, it is clear to us that it would depreciate the value of properties in the Grove Street and Railroad Avenue areas. If a viaduct is constructed between Main Street and Columbus Avenue, the viaduct between Bergen Place and Main Street may be eliminated by the Public Service Commission to save cost and be replaced by a Chinese wall in the form of an earth embankment, in which event, the value of the property on Brooklyn Avenue, and in that section will depreciate.

The MID-TOWN PLAN is a plan to provide a ONE MILLION DOLLAR parking place for the cars of the commuters and for a bus terminal.

As a parking field it will not serve Main Street shoppers. As a bus terminal 500-600 feet away from Main Street, it will not serve Main Street shoppers. The parking plaza may be made attractive as a front yard to the railroad station with a lumber yard, nevertheless as its back yard.

The southwest section of the village is 48%, the northwest is 30%, the northeast is 18% and the southeast is 4% of the aggregate residential area of the village. Only the latter two sections are closer to the proposed new station site; 78% of the residential area is further away.

Estimate of the cost of the parking plaza and  
street changes made necessary thereby

It has been conceded by Mr. Strecker that the widening and extension of Henry Street, the cutting through and extension of Columbus Avenue, the extension of Smith Street and the marginal roads North and South of the railroad are necessary only because of the proposed change of location of the station.

We have obtained the County assessed valuations of the properties which would have to be acquired, to which we have added an additional 25%, to get a minimum cost. In the experience of another village, awards in condemnation proceedings were several times the village assessed valuation.

This is the tabulation of the minimum estimated cost:-

Assessed values of land and buildings to be acquired for parking plaza .....	\$219,350.
Assessed values of land and buildings to be acquired for widening and extending Henry St. ....	100,000.
Assessed value of land and buildings to be acquired for extending Columbus Avenue .....	30,000.
Assessed values of land and buildings to be acquired for extending Smith St. ....	45,000.
Assessed values of land and buildings to be acquired for widening Broadway to Henry St. ....	31,800.
Assessed values of land and buildings to be acquired for marginal roads .....	106,000.
	\$532,150.
Plus 25% .....	133,050.
Total .....	\$665,200.

Estimated cost of improvements		
Plaza and Henry Street .....	\$204,000.	
Estimated cost of improvements		
Smith Street .....	87,000.	
Estimated cost of marginal roads .....	38,000	329,000.
		\$994,200.

The MID-TOWN PLAN calls for the creation of a new railroad crossing at Columbus Avenue. Apparently the Ryan-Wood Committee were not advised that such a new crossing could be obtained only as provided by sections 90-94 of the Railroad Law and not under the grade elimination act and that under sections 90-94 of the Railroad Law,



the cost of constructing the grade elimination crossing over such new street crossing would be borne equally by the railroad and the village. The above tabulation does not include the one half of the cost of this construction to be borne by the village, which would be about \$8,000 making the actual total \$1,002,200.

If the \$1,002,200 is paid for by a 20-year bond issue, with interest at 2%, the average amortization and interest charges will be about \$60,132. per annum, which, plus a loss of taxes of about \$6,500., on these properties which would become exempt, would mean that an average additional \$66,632. per annum for 20 years would be added to the 1944 budget of \$497,591.86 which was raised by taxation. The additional \$66,632 for the MILLION DOLLAR parking plaza would increase the tax rate of 1944 from \$1.33 per hundred dollars to \$1.507 per hundred dollars.

The village and its taxpayers face the absolute necessity of making some public improvements for which bond issue must be issued. Assume \$1,000,000. must be raised for other necessary improvements, on 20-year bonds, the amortization of such bonds plus interest at 2% will require the same annual increase in the budget to be raised by taxation, another approximate \$.177 in the tax rate.

Therefore, if \$2,000,000 improvements are bonded, it will mean for this increased debt service, the tax rate will be \$1.684 against the 1944 rate of \$1.33.

If we have learned anything from the experience in the post-war period of World War #1, we should know that municipalities will face substantial increases in the costs of present services to be met by increased taxes.

Financing of the Station Plaza  
and incidental improvements

The Ryan-Wood Committee apparently accepted the vague statements of Mr. Strecker that the cost of acquiring the properties necessary for the station plaza and the streets necessary thereby would be included in the cost of the grade elimination and be borne by the State of New York and the railroad in the proportions fixed by law.

The Public Service Commission which decides the matter, has already, as publicly admitted by Mr. Strecker, denied Rockville Centre a parking plaza and street layout improvements as improvements incidental to the grade eliminations in Rockville Centre.

Your Board of Trustees applied to the New York State Post-War Planning Commission for 50% of the Engineering cost of preparing plans for village post-war projects among which you listed the plaza and street improvements necessary in the MID-TOWN PLAN from which it would seem that your Board realized that such projects would not be part of the grade elimination program.

Mr. Strecker has suggested that there will be Federal or State grants or both, for such public improvements. In the most profligate days of P.W.A., when we the United States of America was only just accumulating a great national debt, the Federal grants were never given for the cost of acquiring land for an aided public work. At a time when the national debt has reached hundreds of billions of dollars, we cannot refrain from believing that anyone who tells the taxpayers that the Federal Government will change its previous policy and give a grant to pay for land acquisitions, is asking the taxpayers to cling to a straw for support.

The Governor of the State of New York has clearly indicated that it is not the fiscal policy of the state to give state aid to post-war projects beyond giving 50% of the cost of the engineering costs of preparing plans.

From these stark facts, which must be faced by everyone, whether he is interested in seeing the station re-located for personal advantage or because he is honestly convinced that it would be a good thing for the majority at least of the people in the village, it is clear that if a MILLION DOLLAR parking plaza is wanted, the taxpayers must be prepared to pay for it.

C o n c l u s i o n

It is the carefully considered judgment of the undersigned that the so called MID-TOWN PLAN should be rejected by your board and steps taken to prepare for a truly comprehensive plan.

Respectfully submitted,

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ROBERT E. PATTERSON  
Chairman of the Planning Board  
of the Village of Freeport.

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EDMUND LUMLEY, JR.  
Member of the Planning Board