

CAPSTONE CLIENT APPLICATION 2016-2017

Final – for submission

I. APPLICANT CONTACT INFORMATION

Date of Application * Year Month Day **2016 June 6**

Organization Name: * Town of Rye, NY

Organization Address: * 222 Grace Church Street

Address Line 2: Suite # 302

City: * Port Chester

State: * New York

(please select “Non-US” to enter foreign state or province)

Zip Code: * 10580

Country: * USA

Organization Website: * <http://www.townofryeny.com/rye-town-park--beach-home-page.html>

Annual Operating Budget: * \$3,118,958

Project Liaison Name: * Debbie Reisner

Project Liaison Title: * Chief-of-Staff to the Town Supervisor and Secretary to the Rye Town Park Commission

Project Liaison Phone: * (914) 939-3553

Project Liaison Email : * DReisner@TownofRyeNY.com

II. UNDERSTANDING OF PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

Agree to guidelines *

I have read and understood the Capstone proposal guidelines in full, including all of the frequently asked questions and mutual expectations, and agree to abide them.

YES

III. PROPOSAL ABSTRACT (50-75 WORDS)

Describe the key points of your proposal. *

Rye Town Park is a public park/beach that serves a social good (provides access to nature, open space, passive recreation, historic sites, public and performing arts). It's located in a residential neighborhood of suburban Rye. Use of the park/beach has increased dramatically, along with traffic congestion, air/land pollutants, parking on the green space. At issue: how do we maximize access to this social good while working to protect it by minimizing any environmental impact?

(74 words)

IV. ORGANIZATIONAL DESCRIPTION (1,000 WORDS)

Please describe your organization or unit, including mission, scope of work, key program activities, target population, and number of years in operation. (For Capstone projects, we look for organizations that have been operating for at least three years, have at least three full-time employees, and can offer a mutually beneficial opportunity for the agency and the student team.)

Organizational Description *

Rye Town Park was created in 1907 by Act of the New York State Legislature.

It is currently governed by the 6-person, Rye Town Park Commission ("Commission") whose members are appointed by 4 municipal jurisdictions:

- The Supervisor of the Town of Rye and his/her appointee (2 members)
- The Mayor of City of Rye and his/her appointee (2 members)
- The Mayor of the Village of Port Chester (1 member)
- The Mayor of the Village of Rye Brook (1 member)

The Park has historically been managed by the Town of Rye, which currently employs 10 full time staff, 30 part-time, and over 100 seasonal employees from the local community each year.

The Town of Rye, founded in 1660, consists of more than seven square miles with a population of over 47,000 people. It encompasses the Villages of Port Chester, Rye Brook and the Rye Neck section of the Village of Mamaroneck. 48% of the population identifies as white, 42% as Hispanic or Latin and 5% as African American¹.

While median household income (MHI) for the Town has been estimated at \$47,000, MHI for the Village of Rye Brook is \$139,000 and that of the Village of Port Chester is \$56,000. 10% of the Town's population lives at or below the poverty line.

There are four school districts located in the Town: Blind Brook, Port Chester, Rye Neck, and a small portion of Harrison. The responsibilities of the Town include real property assessment and tax collection for our constituent villages and school districts. The Town maintains vital records through the Clerk's Office and operates a Justice Court. The Town is also responsible for the maintenance of several bridges and cemeteries including an historic African American Cemetery. The Town also operates and maintains two parks: Crawford Park, which is located in the Village of Rye Brook and, through an inter-municipal commission, Rye Town Park/Oakland Beach.

As one of the first sites ever to be set aside for public use at the dawn of the 20th Century, Rye Town Park is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The park is well known for its breathtaking views of the Long Island Sound. Its pastoral setting and Spanish Mission Style buildings attract visitors from throughout Westchester County and the New York metropolitan area.

Rye Town Park is physically located within the City of Rye, formerly, until 1942, the Village of Rye. When Rye became a city it was no longer part of the Town of Rye, hence the unusual political configuration. The City of Rye has a population of approximately 16,000 living within 5.85 square miles of the park. MHI was \$146,069 as of the 2010 census. Hence, the park is actively used by residents of both the City of Rye and the Town of Rye. And as a result, the park's constituent population is quite diverse and measures more than 60,000 people. Westchester County has a population of approximately 949,113.

The Rye Town Park, Bathing Complex and Oakland Beach, was designed in 1909 by architects Upjohn & Conable and landscape architects Brinley & Holbrook. It is situated on 28.1 acres of rolling terrain along the shore of the Long Island Sound. The park is bounded to the north by Rye Beach Avenue, to the south by Dearborn Avenue, to the west by Forest Avenue and to the east by the publicly accessible 34.5 acre Oakland Beach, stretching 1200' in length. Adjacent to the east is the beach area of Playland Amusement Park (National Historic Landmark). The boundaries of the park remain true to the original design and layout.

The park sits approximately 15 feet above the beach level, grounded securely by a rubble stone foundation/retaining wall on the eastern side. Character defining landscape features of the park include stone walls, a terrace overlook, a stone bridge, light fixtures, staircases and ramps, pathways, trees, plantings, lawns, a small lake and Oakland Beach. There are 17 structures within the park. Of these, six are historically significant and contribute to the architectural integrity of the site and are exemplary of a recreation facility designed at the turn of the 20th century. This cohesive collection of buildings, designed in the Spanish Mission Style, define the character and identity of the recreational Bathing Complex.

A waterfront restaurant is open seasonally providing both indoor dining and beachside snacks. During the summer, various arts and performing arts events take place, including concerts, open-air theater performances, and public art exhibitions. Dogs owners and their pets enjoy off leash opportunities every morning, year round from 6 am -9 am. Residents enjoy the passive park and beach for walks, sunning, sledding and other informal recreational activities.

The Town's mission with regard to Rye Town Park, is to steward this singular and historic open space for its residents and future generations. The primary obligation of the Commission is to represent its community residents, optimize access and enjoyment of the park, and provide oversight to the park's operations.

823 words

V. CAPSTONE PROJECT OVERVIEW

Describe the scope of the project for which you would like a Capstone Project Team to focus. (The best Capstone proposals are important but not urgent; achievable within the academic timeframe and with the resources available; provide a clear definition of the problem or issue to be addressed; have a realistic scope; and specify tangible deliverables for the Capstone team to provide.)

Please provide a brief overview of the issue or problem. (500 word limit) *

After deferring capital investment for many years, a community-wide conversation has recently begun to clarify a long term vision for the park. How does its broad spectrum of stakeholders want to engage with their park? What do they want it to be? What do they want to be able to do there? What kind of capital investment will be necessary to make that vision a reality?

A park is a public trust and as such, we are striving to ensure residents can enjoy this natural wonder year-round while protecting it for future generations.

In its discussion of a long term vision for Rye Town Park, the commission and community have identified the following framework issues:

1. Who are the stakeholders, how are they aligned, and what is their vision for the park?
2. How do we maximize access to the park's social good (passive recreation, open space, historical significance, public arts) while minimizing environmental degradation caused by traffic congestion, air/land/water pollutants, parking on the green space, etc.?
3. Rye Town Park/Oakland Beach is located in a densely populated residential neighborhood. How do we balance the mission of the park with the reality of its location in a suburban neighborhood and the related quality of life issues (traffic, pedestrian safety, litter, noise)?
4. The park's budget is heavily reliant on seasonal parking fees as its primary revenue source, which places weather-related unknowns into financial planning. How do we diversify the budget to provide a more level financial planning process?
5. Given the long deferred capital investment in the buildings, how do these historical structures factor into the park's long term plans (access, use, financial)?
6. RTP is governed by a commission that is overseen by 4 different municipalities. What opportunities exist within this multi-bodied governing structure to address these issues?
7. What metrics are needed to guide/measure the operations and management of the park?

We would like the NYU Capstone team to research and provide recommendations for these seven issues.

(329 words)

Why is this issue of particular relevance to your organization? What are the implications of this issue or problem for your agency? (500 word limit) *

Developing a long term vision and plan is essential to the future of Rye Town Park. The most immediate impact of not addressing the 7 issues identified above is that much needed capital expenditures will continue to be deferred, degradation to the park and beach will continue, and residents will continue to endure quality of life issues. The social good provided by Rye Town Park/Oakland Beach will be lost in a din of public complaints and lack of financial resources. We must protect this public trust and proactively secure resources such as a Capstone team to help achieve that goal.

--100 words

Please describe potential activities in which the Capstone Team might engage (i.e. conduct a literature review, create and administer a survey, evaluate a program, analyze a dataset, etc.). (500 word limit) *

Activities will include:

1. Conduct town hall forums for stakeholders and conduct other qualitative and quantitative research
2. Identify best practices of parks and how they are used in like circumstances (i.e., located in residential, suburban environment)
3. Develop performance metrics and outline a process framework for future success
4. Review park/beach financials and provide recommendations for increasing revenue/decreasing expense
5. Recommend alternative transportation and mobility options
6. Identify, examine, and recommend strategies for financial sustainability which include both public and private sources of support

85 words

Please describe specific skills or qualifications that would be helpful for the Capstone Team to have in order to address this problem (i.e. knowledge of specific computer software, language proficiency, program evaluation, etc.) (250 word limit) *

Skills that would be helpful but not mandatory include experience with any of the following:

- Urban planning
- Interest in public spaces such as parks, beaches
- Environmental studies
- Municipal policy making
- Mobility and transportation
- Performance Measurement & Management
- Program Analysis and evaluation
- Financial management

43 words

VI. DESIRED OUTCOMES (250 WORDS)

Please describe the deliverables that are expected of the Capstone Team at the completion of the project (i.e. survey or evaluation instruments, draft policies and procedures, resource lists, analysis of large datasets, a comprehensive report, recommendations on how to proceed, etc.).

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The ultimate goal is to provide the client with information and recommendations to allow for development of a future vision based on public and stakeholder in-put as well as long-term planning. A comprehensive report addressing the following issues will be the deliverable from the Capstone team:

1. Who are the stakeholders, how are they aligned, and what is their vision for the park?
2. How do we maximize access to the park's social good (passive recreation, open space, historical significance) while minimizing environmental degradation caused by traffic congestion, air/land/water pollutants, parking on the green space, etc.?

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244 words

VII. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

If applicable, please describe any special considerations that NYU Wagner and/or the Capstone Project Team should be aware.

Travel to Rye is via MetroNorth, a 35 minute ride. Rye Town Park is a 5-minute drive from the train station and in most cases, rides will be provided by the project coordinator and other volunteers.

The project liaison, Debbie Reisner, is an NYU Wagner graduate (EMPA 2015). Another member of the client team, Helen Gates, has successfully led three Capstone projects: two for NYU Capstone on behalf of the Rye YMCA in 2010-11 and 2011-12 and a third one with Columbia University Capstone in 2014-15 on behalf of the Rye Arts Center.

Was this project designed with specific NYU Wagner students in mind? If so, please list student names. (15 word limit) *

N/A

Can you anticipate obstacles that a Capstone Team might encounter while working on this project (i.e. incomplete data, lack of buy-in for the project, staff turnover, etc.)? (250 word limit) *

None anticipated at this time.

Must a significant portion of research and data gathering be done during regular business hours? (Many Wagner students work full-time and may have constraints on their daytime availability). (50 word limit) *

Site visits, stakeholder/client meetings, and town hall forums can be completed in the evening or weekend

Will the Capstone Team be required to conduct field research and/or visit multiple locations, other than the primary client site, to complete their project? Where would the team travel? (250 word limit) *

Team would travel to Rye Town Park, located in Rye, NY (35-minute Metro North train ride). Meetings may also take place at Rye Town offices located at 222 Grace Church St., Rye and other government buildings within a five-mile radius of the park.

Do you anticipate that this project would need to undergo human subjects or IRB review at your institution? *

No

An engagement fee of \$5,000 is suggested for chosen projects. NYU Wagner recognizes there will be organizations for which this fee may be prohibitive. In these cases, the fee may be adjusted to reflect the resources available to each agency.

For internationally-based clients, Wagner will consider the provision of accommodations and in-country travel support for a Capstone team in lieu of the engagement fee. Please note that international site visits should take place sometime between December 26, 2016 and January 22, 2017. (While projects are 8-months long, students are only available to travel overseas during their winter break).

For domestic clients outside of NYC that require overnight stays to conduct research, Wagner will consider the provision of travel and accommodations in lieu of the engagement fee.

Do you anticipate any obstacles to supporting the Capstone program in the aforementioned financial ways? If so, what might your organization offer? (250 word limit) *

This is an unbudgeted expense item for the municipality. As such, the applicant currently has zero funding for this project, but understands the need for travel to the site. Therefore, the client will reimburse for train tickets and meals, as needed, with a total budget of \$750 on offer.

End of application
