

Ashford continues progress on master plan

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ASHFORD—The Town of Ashford’s master plan will focus on three main areas as it lays the groundwork for the future.

The Route 219 corridor, the Route 240 corridor in the Hamlet of West Valley and the **West Valley Demonstration Project** site will be the main focus of the plan. Supervisor Charlie Davis said the plan will greatly help the town continue growing.

Karl Kalbacher, director of environment, economics and grant services for the Ferguson Group, echoed Davis’ statement, adding it will also help the town receive grants. The town recently signed a contract with the Ferguson Group to develop the master plan.

Kalbacher said the firm is currently laying the foundation and collecting information on the town in order to provide a suggested plan to stakeholders, the public, elected representatives, the planning board and other interested parties.

“If you are a business and you are seeking to expand into a geographic area, you want to know the rules of the road,” Kalbacher said. “You want to know what you are going to be allowed to do, how much land is available for you to build, what type of workforce is there, what type of infrastructure is available or not available ... it’s laying the framework for site selectors.”

Davis said the town is looking to better the areas within Ashford that will set up a future for the town.

“We are going to write our story of where we were, where we are now and where we want to be and we need to tell our story,” Davis said. “I want the people in the town to understand that we are working hard to move this stuff forward and get the master plan completed.”

He continued to say the town will be better positioned to receive grants for development. Creating the master plan is essential to continuing the growth of Ashford, he said.

“One of the things that most people don’t understand is that if you don’t have a master plan, you don’t have the nuts and bolts and things you need to get grants and get things accomplished within the town for infrastructure and all the rest of the stuff,” Davis said.

As the process to complete the master plan continues, Ashford Planning Board Chairwoman Andrea Mellon said there will be opportunities for Ashford citizens to give their input and suggest changes and additions to the finished master plan now, and in the future.

“As the skeleton is starting to be laid out, there will be opportunities for the public to weigh in on it ... they can weigh in as we are starting to put the meat on it so that the whole thing is put together as a master plan for everyone,” Mellon said.

“Every three years, five years, seven years, we revisit the master plan and we constantly try to meet the communities needs,” Ashford Planning Board member John Allen added. “Ten years from now, the whole community profile could change ... once we get the master plan in place, other people from the outside can look and see what we have and what we have to offer and the people on the inside can have a vision of where we want to go.”

If anything continues to go as planned, Kalbacher said the plan will be completed in six to nine months.