

# Orange seeks to enhance its image

By John Zucal

For business owners and outside residents who may be considering a new address, city officials in Orange have an answer: the door is open; come on in.

City officials said they are working to attract “new blood” into Orange through several plans: residential redevelopment, physical business redevelopment and business recruitment.

- **Transit Village:** The area surrounding NJ Transit’s Lincoln Avenue train station received this designation in December 2009. City officials said they want to use the program as a mechanism to spur market-rate residential housing.

That housing, coupled with Midtown Direct service from the station, said city officials, could attract residents who are employed in New York City. The station also is located one block from Main Street, Orange’s economic center, which city officials believe could attract shoppers if they could present businesses that will interest out-of-towners.

- **Urban Enterprise Zone:** Orange was one of the original Urban Enterprise Zones when the state program was created in 1983. Benefits of the program include the ability for eligible businesses to charge one-half of the state’s sales tax, now at 7 percent. City officials promote the lower sales tax in an effort to attract area shoppers to businesses within the zone’s boundaries.

The program also provides tax benefits for purchases and employment. City officials said funding collected from the program in previous years has been used to supplement police, planning and public works functions within the zone.

- **Central Avenue:** In business, the first impression often becomes a lasting impression, and it is easy to see when a driver enters Orange from East Orange: commerce quickly becomes lacking.

City officials said they want to build upon East Orange’s revitalization of its business district through improving the avenue’s appearance and bringing projects to long-unused properties.

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# Orange hopes for business diversity

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Streetscape improvement is expected to come to Central Avenue’s east side through Community Development Block Grant funds from the federal government, and city officials added approvals have been granted for mixed-use projects, which would include market-rate housing, on two larger properties.

- **Main Street:** In business, the first impression often becomes a lasting impression. With three commercial entrances into Orange — both sides of Main Street and east side of Central Avenue — city officials said they have used several resources to improve visitors’ first impression.

City officials added they want to diversify the types of businesses which will occupy Main Street in the future in an effort to provide additional products and services to residents. This was determined through the results of a market survey the city commissioned during 2009. Other plans for Main Street include mixed-use additions on East Main Street and the Tony Galento Plaza, adjacent to the Lincoln Avenue station.

They have suggested that the area near the West Orange border could be an excellent site for a mixed-use complex of commercial and residential space.

- **ValleyArts District:** The arts-themed area, which straddles the southern Orange-West Orange border, continues to increase its mix of residential and commercial units. It also has developed an entertainment center with the opening of Luna Stage, which occupies a formerly vacant building along Valley Road. City officials continue to promote this area as a potential residential base due to its proximity to the Highland Avenue train station in Orange and Mountain Station in South Orange. Both provide Midtown Direct service on weekends; a brief transfer at Orange, Brick Church or Newark is required on weekdays.

- **Residential:** City officials said they want to continue increasing the number of market-rate residential units within Orange.

Those units are planned to be included within a project on the former Walter G. Alexander apartment complex. The two buildings which formed the former federal housing site were demolished in 2010 and city officials said they plan to replace them with more than 150 residential units. The site — along Interstate 280 — also would benefit residents who must drive to their destinations.