



## Incorporated Village of Upper Brookville

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Oyster Bay, NY 11771

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### Mayor

Elliot S. Conway

### Trustees

Edward J. Madden, Jr.

Antje B. Dolido

Carl A. Friedrich

Francis J. Russo

### Village Clerk/Treasurer

Tracy L. Lynch

June 19, 2018

Dear Neighbors,

It has been my honor to serve as your Mayor for the past two years. We encourage every resident to exercise their constitutional right to vote and participate in Village government.

I am delighted to report that the village financial condition is strong. Over the past two years your Board has expanded services, lowered expenses and adopted measures to improve the quality of life in the village. We've upgraded our infrastructure and property values are rising faster than our neighboring villages. Here are many of the highlights:

- Property Tax Reduction. We lowered the 2018/19 property tax levy again – this time by 6.8%. By comparison, from 1996–2017, annual tax increases averaged 4.9%.
- Cost Reductions. This year we will lower the annual cost of living in the village by about 48%. The highest savings came from the new garbage district, a reduction in police contributions, funding our road repaving program with bonds and LED light bulbs.
- Strong Finances. Standard & Poor's rated the Village bonds "AAA" in January.
- Road Program. Almost all problem roads were repaved.
- Higher Property Values. Median property values more than doubled over the past six years and continue to grow at a pace that materially exceeds comparable neighboring villages.
- Strong Demographics. Our residents are prosperous and demographics bode well for the future.
- Exceptional Staff and Volunteers. We have retained exceptional village staff and attract capable, dedicated, and fair-minded volunteers to serve in leadership positions.
- Beautification. Dogwoods, village signs and sign plantings beautify the village.
- Electric and Gas Service. PSE&G have hardened electric poles, lowering the risk of outages. Natural Gas is within reach to many residents for the first time.
- Our Village Hall lease ended in 2017. We will soon move to our third Planting Fields location but subject to the availability of NYS grants, the Board has reserved funds and is considering building a village hall/community center/library on existing village land.
- A new State Law permits charitable contributions to the Village to offset property tax payments, effectively restoring most of the SALT deduction. Time, politics and perhaps the courts may ultimately determine whether the Law will be respected by the IRS.

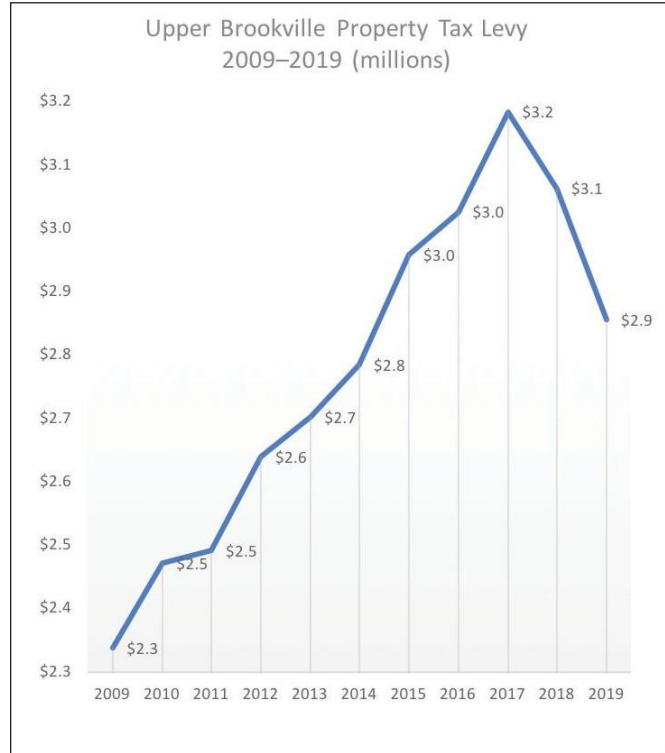
### Property Tax Levy Reduction

The chart to the right shows the 10.2% cumulative property tax reductions from \$3.2 million to \$2.9 million over the past two years. Residents should all see their village tax levy reduced this year.

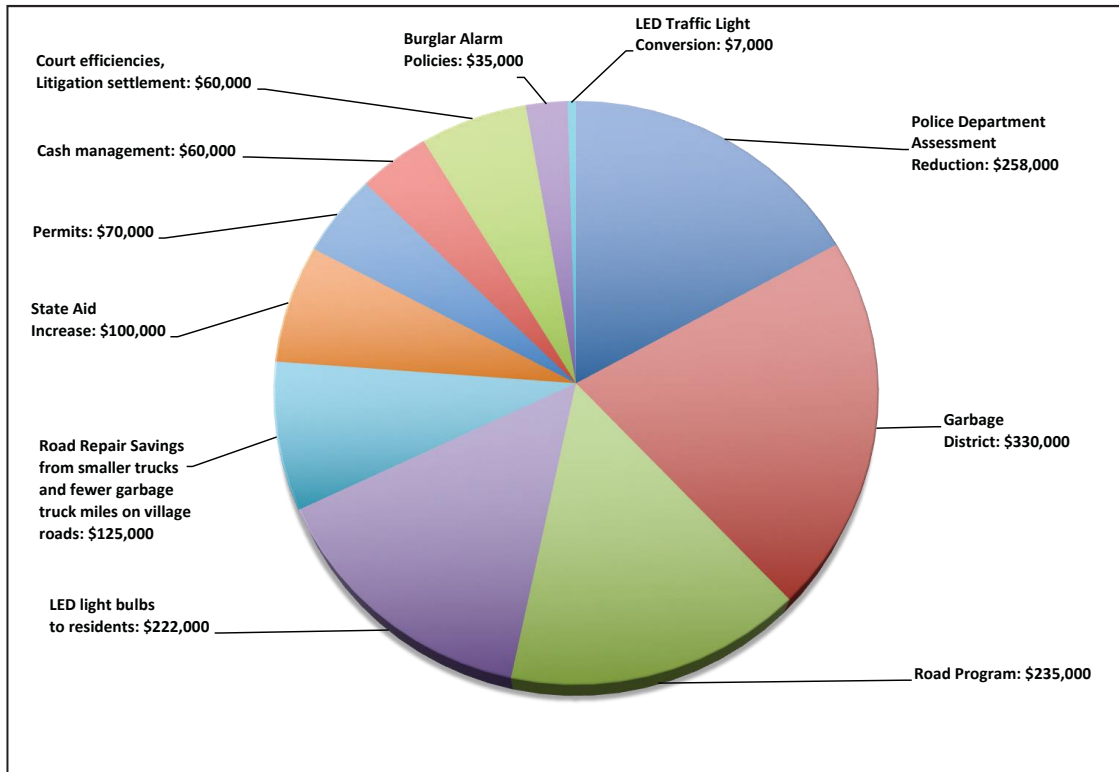
Last year, the reduction was offset entirely by residents who successfully grieved their property taxes and had their assessed values reduced by Nassau County. The village tax levy is currently based on the lower Nassau County values.

### Other Cost Reductions

By year end 2018 we will have lowered the annual cost of living in the village by roughly \$1.5 million, or 48% of the 2017 property tax levy. These savings don't all impact taxes but, over time, they should have a favorable impact on home values. Here are the major components:



1. We, along with our partners, were able to lower our contribution to the Old Brookville Police Department (OBPD) protection by 15%, or \$258,000. We convinced our village partners that existing contingency reserves were sufficient for all anticipated future needs. The OBPD budget, staffing and service levels were unaffected.
2. The Garbage District is saving our residents about \$318,000 per year. District participants pay the low village rate and most non-district carters lowered their prices to match the village rate. About half the village homeowners participate in the district. To preserve our investment in village roads, the Board encourages residents to join the district. However, we understand that many are torn between loyalty to their traditional carter who has served them well, and loyalty to the village and their neighbors.
3. The Garbage District contract mandated smaller collection trucks. In our licensing of non-district trash trucks we varied the fee based on the truck capacity (weight). Lighter trucks and fewer truck miles will reduce the village road damage, potentially extending road life by over 25%. With a \$10 million investment in roads, this is a \$2.5 million village tax saving over time, or, \$125,000 per year. Note that achieving the full cost reduction is aspirational only.
4. We issued \$2,000,000 of 15-year road bonds at a 2.48% interest rate. The AAA-rating we received is higher than the U.S. Government. The village had been spending \$400,000 to \$500,000 each year to reconstruct heavily damaged roads. We elected to repave all the remaining problem roads at once. Well maintained roads are safer, improve the quality of life in the Village and enhance property values. Our timing was excellent. The bids very low. The cost of asphalt is tied to the price of oil and has been historically low along with interest



*The cost of living in Upper Brookville this year should be lower by about 48%.*

rates. Villagers who use the roads over the next 15 years will pay back the repaving cost through future property taxes. The bond payments are \$165,000/year for an annual cash flow reduction of over \$235,000 per year.

5. Soon we will receive our long awaited LED bulbs for home use, purchased with the proceeds of our clean energy grant. Each household will be entitled to 12 bulbs in addition to the sample already sent. Once homeowners install the bulbs, the Village wide energy savings are estimated at \$222,000 per year for 8 years. We will also be receiving new LED street lamps paid for by the grant.
6. We have applied for additional NY State grants and \$100,000 was approved as part of this process.
7. Fees for commercial filming, tree removals, tag sales and other permits are up \$70,000.
8. Our new cash management program will generate about \$60,000 per annum of additional interest income.
9. Court efficiencies and elimination of litigation generates \$90,000 per year.
10. An updated burglar alarm law designed to halve the number of false alarms should generate \$35,000 of annual savings for residents with alarms. All permits now have 5 year terms and do not require costly annual inspections. Inspections are instead required after the third false alarms in any year. Additional false alarms carry higher fines. The law has been in effect for one month and alarm activations are down by 44%.

Our financial condition is strong. In January Standard & Poor’s assigned its ‘AAA’ rating to our road bonds, commenting: “the rating reflects...our opinion of the village’s very strong finances, bolstered by strong management practices and policies and strong budgetary performance, contributing to very strong budgetary flexibility and liquidity...We believe Upper Brookville’s very strong underlying economy, which benefits from its access to New York City, provides rating stability.”

Out of more than 500 statewide villages, the NY State Comptroller rated Upper Brookville as one of only four with no fiscal or environmental stress.

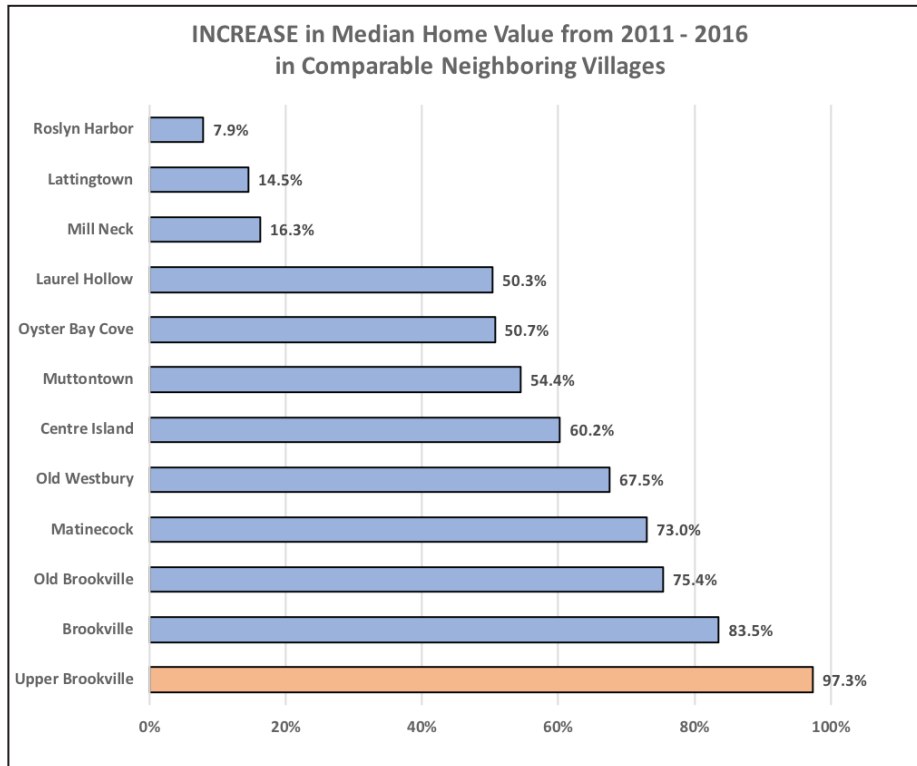
Village Property Values are rising at an accelerating pace.

NY State Comptroller statistics show Upper Brookville median home values almost doubled from 2011 to 2016 while increasing at a faster rate than all of our comparable neighboring villages.

From 2016 to 2017, the median home selling price in Upper Brookville increased by 40%—from \$1.6 million to \$2.3 million. There were 24 home sales in 2016 and 18 in 2017.

By comparison, median home prices in Nassau County rose 9.4% in the same period.

Prices are up again in 2018.



Our residents are prosperous and demographics bode well for the future.

Increasing home values, steady or increasing population numbers, a high percentage of working age residents and high household income are all indications of environmental stability and village health and vibrancy. Upper Brookville has very strong economic indicators and demographics among the North Shore villages.

These factors are outside local government’s control. However, successful homeowners will be more attracted to a village in good condition with moderate taxes and reasonably priced services.



## Quality of Life in the Village

Welcome to the Village of Upper Brookville signs are posted at key entry points and more are on the way. One resident wrote “The signs are beautiful. Really makes you feel proud passing them on the way home.” We have 6 more on the way paid for with our clean energy grant proceeds and I expect our Beautification Committee to continue their superb job in planting them out.



*Jose Hernandez and Steve Murphy of the Village Roads Department led by Road Commissioner Sam Vergata, flank our new sign at the corner of Mill Hill and Oyster Bay/Glen Cove Roads. They also seeded and planted and maintain the area, working with our Beautification Committee.*

## Beautification

Chaired by Lori Falco Greenberg, the Upper Brookville Beautification Committee has led the effort to install attractive, seasonal plantings around our village signs. You will find them on Chicken Valley Road, Ripley Lane and Mill Hill Road. We have six more signs on the way, purchased largely with NY State clean energy grant proceeds, and these will be planted out as well.

On Wolver Hollow Road and 25A, the Old Brookville Police Commissioners partnered with Upper Brookville to engage Heritage Farm & Garden to plant out the OBPD sign and Heritage has kindly donated material and design expertise to this and other village locations.

### Dogwoods are back.

Forty years ago, the unmistakable white flowers of our native American dogwoods lit up our community. Disease and pests virtually wiped them out. In May, based on an idea from Ginny Kunken, a Beautification Committee member, villagers adopted 125 disease resistant dogwoods under the condition that they be visible from the road. Helen Solomon, also on the committee arranged the purchase. The village buying power combined with generous beautification donations and swift deliveries from our Roads Department made it happen. The demand outstripped the supply so we plan to repeat the program this fall.

The village is working with the New York State DEC and Cornell University Cooperative Extension to inventory and replace trees in bad shape and reintroduce abundant dogwoods to Upper Brookville. Helen is helping us apply for a significant NY State Grant to cover the cost of inventorying, purchasing and planting these trees.

The Board is also planning a pilot tree planting project for Wolver Hollow Road where we control both sides as well as Chicken Valley Road where we may partner with the Village of Matinecock.

### Expanded Services

Our full time Village Clerk is now assisted by part time Deputy Clerks Thomas Mullen and Laurie Dooney. Someone should be in the office available to assist residents every day of the week.

### Transparency and Communication

Since the new Village web site was launched in September 2016 we've had 49,500 page views by 15,100 users. There is plenty of topical news and village information including meeting minutes, maps and annual reports. Eighty-five percent of residents now receive emails regarding storms, village and school votes, public safety matters, important meetings and events of general interest. The website is designed to attract potential new residents and highlight what a special place Upper Brookville is to live in and raise a family.

### Smoother Riding Roads

We repaved Friendly Road, Chapel Gate, the end of Linden Lane, Ripley Lane, Pine Valley Road, The Knoll, Cedar Ridge Road, Lawn Lane, Locust Lane and Hillcrest Lane. We've applied for a NY State grant and trust the Planting Fields Foundation will also help repave our portion of Planting Fields Road in 2019 or 2020. Mill River will be done under an agreement relating to The Oaks development. We also expect to repair our portion of Terrace Lane later this year.

One of Legislator Josh Lafazan's first official acts was to advocate, successfully, for Nassau County to repave Glen Cove/Oyster Bay Road. The Village of Old Brookville repaved their end of Linden Lane and cleared the opening onto Hegeman's Lane, also repaved by Nassau County last year.

### Roads Department

We are one of very few North Shore villages fortunate to have our own Roads Department headed by our able Roads Commissioner, Sam Vergata. They remove downed trees, branches and litter, maintain the culverts to keep rainwater flowing and look after our village right of ways. They plow the winter snow while we sleep and, last month, distributed the village dogwoods.

### LED Street Lights and Light Bulbs

After considerable form filling and waiting, last month the Village received the first installment of our \$100,000 clean energy grant proceeds. This will pay for 25 attractive new LED street lamps and 6,720 LED light bulbs to be distributed (twelve per home) in the Village.

### Possible SALT Fix

The cut back of the State and Local Tax Deduction threatens to disadvantage many of our residents, lower property values, drive homeowners out of New York State and make it more expensive for young families to settle on the North Shore of Long Island.

This month we implemented a novel provision championed by the New York Conference of Mayors and included in Governor Cuomo's Budget that will permit residents to make a charitable donation to the Village and receive up to a 95% credit toward their local property tax liability. The Federal government will have the final say on the deductibility of these contributions and it has been reported that the matter may be resolved in the courts. More information should be available before tax returns are filed in 2019. As the Village does not offer tax advice, participating property owners are advised to consult their own tax advisors.

### Russian Mission

The Russian Mission on Mill River Road remains closed and under the control of the United States State Department. We expect them to inform us of any change in the status of the property.

### Meet the Mayor

Many of you have attended the Trustee meetings that begin at 6:30 pm on the third Monday of most months. We value resident participation, feedback and suggestions even when it points out something we could or should be doing better.

Roughly 30 residents attended Saturday morning “Meet the Mayor” sessions. Some great ideas have come out of them. Please don’t hesitate to call Tracy Lynch, Village Clerk to book a convenient time to meet the Mayor on site or at the Village Hall.

### Deer and Raccoons

Deer have become a significant Village nuisance. DEC biologists have advised that two deer today can become 68 deer in five years. In addition to health and safety issues, we have reports of significant damage to foliage from deer groups of 5 or more. The DEC offered to provide nuisance permits to qualified residents for culling of deer on properties with sufficient land area and distance from neighboring homes. Check with the Village Clerk for more information.

Raccoons have been abundant and troublesome for many years in parts of the Village. The website has more information on raccoon control. The Village has a large raccoon trap available for a nominal rental if needed by enterprising residents.

### Weddings

The Mayor may perform weddings in the Village, subject to mutually convenient dates.

### Village Staff, Volunteers and Professionals

The Mayor, Trustees, Commissioners, Village Justices, Zoning, Planning, Ethics and Library Board members, Beautification Committee, VUB Chair of the Oyster Bay Cold Spring Harbor Protection Committee and other committee members serve without compensation. We are fortunate that capable and knowledgeable volunteers serve and make our community such a special place to live in and raise a family.

It is an honor to be associated with these volunteers as well as our superb village staff including our Clerk/Treasurer, Deputy Clerk, Building Clerk, Court Clerk, Road Commissioner, Road Crew, Village Attorney and legal assistants, Prosecutors, Engineers and Building Inspector. Our partners in safety include the Old Brookville Police Department and the East Norwich Fire Company. They all work hard to keep the village safe and running smoothly. And no matter what cockamamie ideas we propose, they strive to make them a reality.

Their collective efforts demonstrate that local government can have a positive impact on the quality of our lives. Besides fixing our roads and keeping us safe, it can contribute to fostering a sense of community and help us achieve things as a group that we could never do individually on our own.

Sincerely,

Elliot S. Conway  
Mayor