

**Town of Ossining Comprehensive Plan  
Public Workshop 2  
Combined Meeting Notes  
April 26, 2021**

**Summary**

The Town of Ossining held its second virtual public workshop on the Town's Comprehensive Plan on April 8, 2021 at 7:30 pm. Close to seventy people joined the workshop. The Land Use Law Center (Center), along with WXY Architecture + Urban Design (WXY) facilitated these meetings. The meeting opened with a welcome by the Town Supervisor, Dana Levenberg. Staff from WXY presented an overview and summary of the draft goals for the Comprehensive Plan and a timeline for completion of the project. The Land Use Law Center staff explained the engagement exercise for the evening and the ground rules for participation. Participants divided into small groups to enhance effective conversation with facilitators. A trained facilitator led each small group in an exercise. The small groups reviewed maps specific to open space and connectivity and then land use/development. Participants used the Zoom annotate feature to "stamp" the map noting three places of strength and three challenged areas. Facilitators asked participants why these areas were stamped as places of strengths and why others were noted as challenged. Participants then brainstormed ideas and strategies for these prioritized areas. For each discussion topic/map, a recorder recorded all responses using a Word document. The maps associated with each breakout group can be found at the end of the notes. Each comment reflected below was stated by an individual person and was not reflective of the full group.

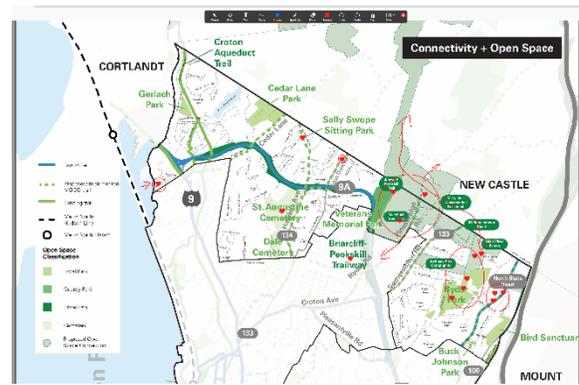
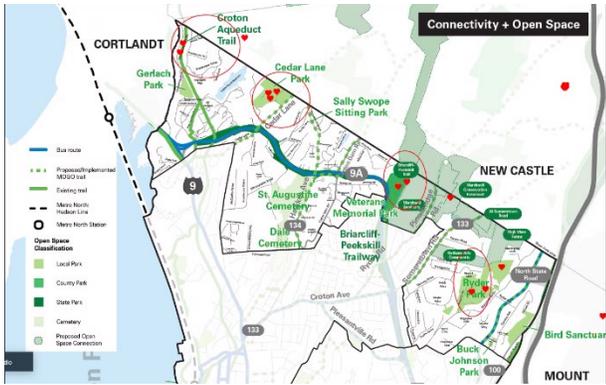
After the breakout room discussions, the public meeting concluded, and participants were provided the Comprehensive Plan website address and direct link to the draft goal's survey. Participants were thanked and attendees were encouraged to visit the website for future meeting dates. All materials for the exercise were posted online for future engagement by citizens. A survey pertaining to the draft goals was also posted online.

After collecting the notes from every breakout room, the Land Use Law Center staff compiled the notes into one document. Below, presents the combined comments.

**OPEN SPACE/CONNECTIVITY**

*Participants were asked to identify three specific areas in the Town that they associated as a "strength" or a positive place regarding open space and connectivity. Positive places are places that people enjoy or are attractive places to visit. The following places were noted by the various breakout groups.*

**Places of Strength**



### Briarcliff Peekskill Trail

- Wonderful to have accessible outdoor space which is safe and engaging
- Drove down the roads and in the area as a kid, nostalgic attachment to this area
- Connectivity from Rydell park is very updated, marked

### Cedar Lane Park

- Only community garden in the town or village.
- A lot of residents working on it.
- There is a dog park and a park.
- It has the Kress estate, so has historical significance.
- Arts center is wonderful. This is a wonderful area of opportunity with community garden
- Good for walking, the trail is not too long
- Nice nature in the area
- Good arts area
- Dog Park, her children take classes at the art center, enjoys Ice Skating and playing hockey — wants a safe bike path
- Gorgeous driving area by the water around Cedar Lane

### Croton Aqueduct Trail, Gerlach Park

- Fond Memories
- Softball

- Trail is a nice walk
- Pretty place
- Bike trail
- Less populated than park by dam
- Enjoy nature
- Volleyball
- Within walking distance of houses.
- Extremely useful during the pandemic to get fresh air.
- It's peaceful and beautiful.
- An opportunity within walking distance to make you feel like you're away.
- There's no vehicle traffic.
- You get to see other people enjoying – people riding bikes, walking dogs, etc. Makes you feel part of the community.
- It is also historically significant.
- great for hiking, biking and close by
- Unique resources

### **Dale Cemetery**

- Peaceful
- Good place to walk dogs
- Short cut to the middle school

### **North State Road**

- Important for commerce, draw to the area

### **Ryder Park**

- Open space area
- Ballfields
- Trails
- Nice place to walk
- Nicer green space in town
- Kids starting with baseball and those have been key
- 2 different parts separated by housing. Top part is trail system which is beautiful but could use some work. Lower part is the pond, baseball fields, tennis courts which is nice to have in the community
- Good place to walk dogs and be outside with kids
- Great way to get outside to use trails.
- Gorgeous trailway, would love to connect Ryder park to trails that go up through Mary Knoll to Briar Peaks Trailway and Blue Mountain
- Crosswalk would be nice to Riding Trail

### **St. Augustine Cemetery, Maryknoll**

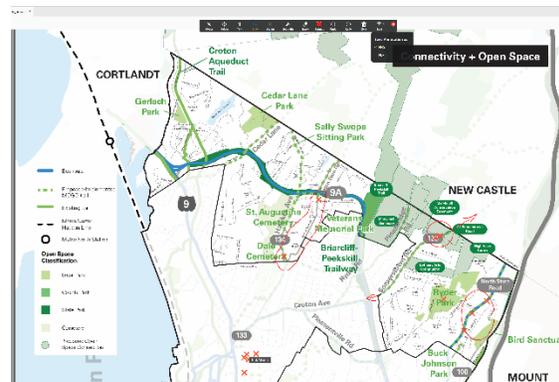
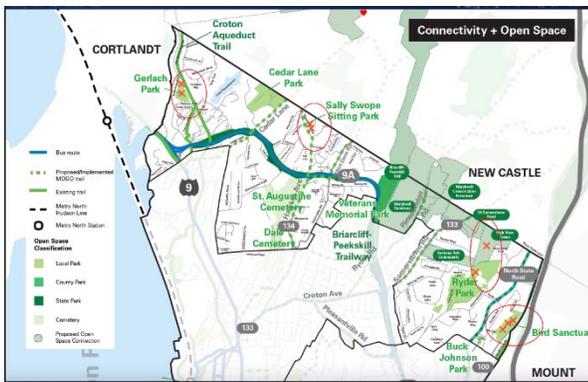
- Like darker areas of trail
- Hiking

- Open space at Maryknoll
- Walk on conservation easement
- Pleasant and easy walk
- Grandfather did work at Maryknoll in 20/30s (memories)
- Great post office
- Views are beautiful
- Architecture
- Historical parks are an important draw to the area

## OPEN SPACE/CONNECTIVITY

Participants were asked to identify three specific areas in the Town that they associated as a “challenge” regarding open space and connectivity. Challenged places are places that people don’t enjoy, are undesirable or that people believe need to be fixed. The following places were noted by the various breakout groups.

### Challenged Places



### Bird Sanctuary

- Protected, but no way into it. Eventually maintenance has to take place. Nature areas aren't maintained too well in this town.
- No idea this place existed. Not well advertised. Very few people in the town know about it.
- Very little access to it.

### **Cedar Lane Park**

- Up hill is undeveloped DOT site
- No hangout space in the park
- Not conducive to walking
- Profile of the park and area, underutilized because people don't know about it.

### **Gerlach Park**

- Seems more like an afterthought of a park
- Hard to access and leave
- There used to be nothing there in terms of playground equipment
- Very messy. Plenty of litter and garbage
- Located near very dangerous curve
- Very underutilized
- A playground would be nice
- Crossing to 9, it is not well marked
- Not enough signage in the area

### **Highview Farms**

- Not geologically suited for development
- Should be part of open space
- Not doing any good except tax revenue

### **North State Road**

- Needs clear planning, was part of new learning center development
- Building is close to the road and added a lot of impervious surfaces to the area
- Bike path was inserted and goes over sewers and seems to go too much into the road.
- More thought needed toward improvements, detailed oriented final product would be nice
- River Knoll (*located at 40 Croton Dam Road, Ossining*), a big development that could impact traffic, view, population, etc. Keep the vision of the town in mind.
- There is a large amount of traffic and not enough pedestrian walkable areas
- Unappealing for commerce and should include a more walkable and natural zone
- Epicenter of business district of unincorporated
- Great restaurants and businesses, very good mix.
- N. State Road should be classified as a Hamlet

### **Northern Section** (*GE Area*)

- GE in area of corporate training center is world class. Unknown what it will become

### **Ryder Park**

- It's a big muddy field

- Never sensed there was a place to cross to Bethany arts area

### **Riverfront**

- Hard to get to from town
- Not a lot of parking
- Not a lot of anything

### **Route 9A**

- Bisects town – impossible to walk or bike
- Obstacle to connect 2 sides of town
- A bit of a scary road
- Identity crisis – what is the downtown?
- Development will cause a higher density
- Green Space should be preserved

### **Route 133**

- Terrible traffic here, vehicle intensive town and would like to see improvement
- Would like more sidewalks in these high traffic area
- Wants a more walkable area, especially in the main commerce zones

### **Sally Swope Sitting Park**

- Not inviting. Used to be place where drug dealers met. Also underutilized and its purpose is uncertain.
- Not recognized as being available, why it's there, or who Sally Swope was. Dishonor to Sally Swope because of how it is currently utilized for drug dealing.
- Never heard of it
- N Country Trail way connect needs to connect the parks

### **Stony Lodge Property**

- High density in the area is not what the people in the area want
- Should be zoned for business or some other purpose
- Increased density means more traffic that could be a problem

## **OPEN SPACE/CONNECTIVITY IDEAS AND STRATEGIES**

*Participants spent time brainstorming and generating ideas regarding what they would like to see in these prioritized areas that will make Ossining better. Some discussed particular strategies that could help overcome some of the challenges.*

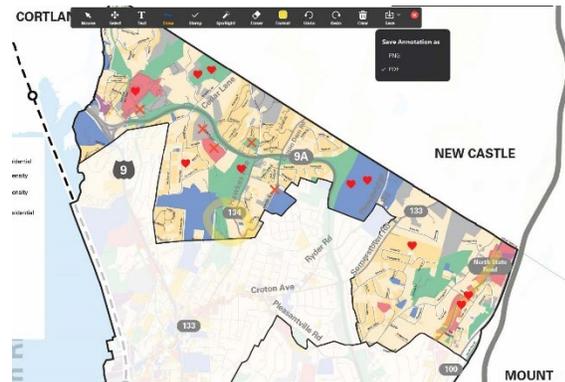
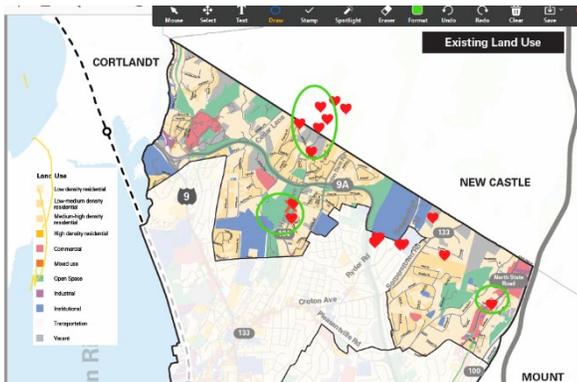
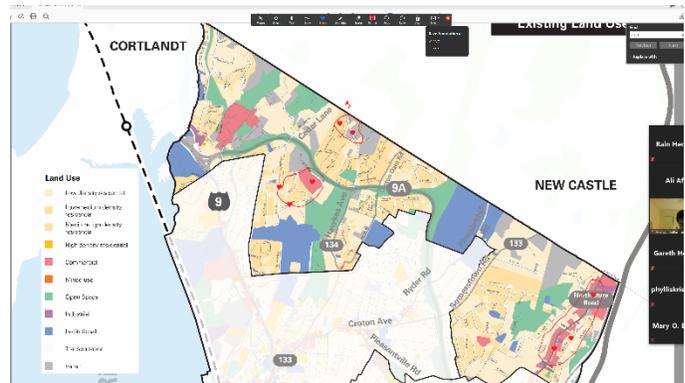
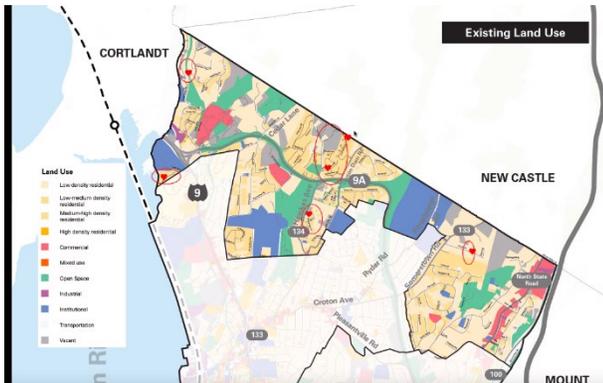
- Bike trails needed
- Hike Area off 134 – connection needed from Hawkes Avenue (properties are in New Castle)
- Connect Briarcliff/Peekskill Trail to Ryder Park
- More desirable hook up Ryder Park to State Road/Empire State Trail
- More desirable trails would generate business from tourists using trail
- EAC has been working on connecting Ryder park to Briarcliff Peekskill trail

- North State Road is a corridor of mostly wetlands, there are other natural areas that are not noticed and deserve to be written into/encapsulated the future planning as well
- Highview Farm was up for development roughly 8 years ago, was going to be 30+ homes, it is a gorgeous piece of property connected to Ryder Park, start something with the town to start an open space fund that the town can support
- Wants more public awareness and to get people involved
- Many organizations and municipalities that have implemented active plans, would like an initiative to meet some of these ambitions and lists out guidelines and possibilities to achieve them (i.e wetlands). Would like to see a roadmap of sciences and best practices to educate and get the community involved
- Environmental beneficial and visually appealing to bring in native plants to create sanctuaries, planters could be used along North State Road and other major roadways
- Sidewalks are not contiguous, cannot walk the whole of North State Road, does not connect the trailways, adding width to these sidewalks allow for more pedestrians and safer walkways

## DEVELOPMENT/LAND USE

Participants were asked to identify three specific areas in the Town that they associated as a “strength” or a positive place regarding development/land use. Positive places are places that people enjoy or are attractive places to visit. The following places were noted by the various breakout groups.

### Places of Strength



### **Albany Post Road**

- Crotonville has a very rural feel there. Old growth trees create sense of place here.

### **Croton Dam Road**

- Great to walk around during quarantine. Community interaction here is great.

### **Executive Blvd. Office Park (abuts 9A)**

- Opportunity to redevelop
- Pocket development – live, work, play
- Breath life back into Ossining
- 20 or so acres are designated for offices+
- Bring in retail/economic engine

## Natural Space on Hawkes Avenue

- Serene and beautiful area
- Undeveloped
- Preserve land
- Only remaining natural area from condo development
- Lots of watercourses
- Low/medium Density residential areas
- Hilly, so great for exercise.

## Maryknoll

- Mailing center is in a good location

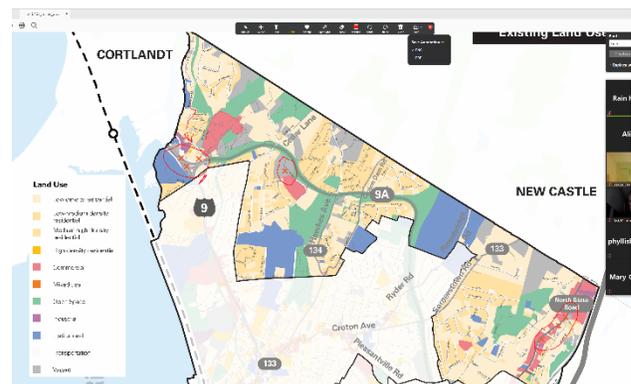
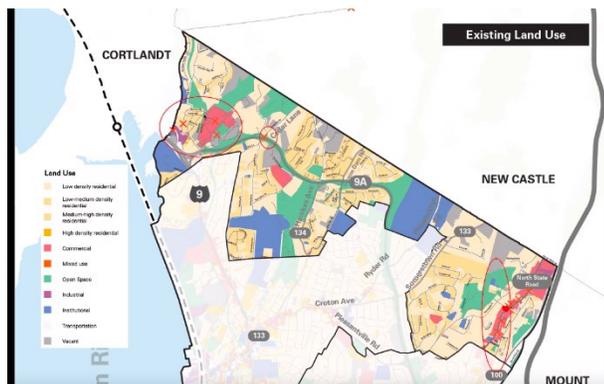
## North State Road

- Only area with commercial now
- Services available here (Mechanic, restaurant, childcare)
- Useful for the town, income, economic engine
- Potential for more
- Club Fit is great
- North state pizza has really good pizza

## DEVELOPMENT/LAND USE

*Participants were asked to identify three specific areas in the Town that they associated as a “challenged” regarding open space and connectivity. Challenged places are places that people don’t enjoy, are undesirable or that people believe need to be fixed. The following places were noted by the various breakout groups.*

### Challenged Places



## Above Cedar Lane

- Challenged open space

### **Albany Post Road**

- When getting off the exit, there is a risk of accidents here. There should be signage to denote speed reduction
- Crotonville could use some attention

### **Executive Blvd.**

- Connecting that with the rest of the town
- Make it more walkable/bikeable
- Challenging Area
- It should remain open, it provides an open space

### **GE Campus**

- GE using their helipad day and night to fly people in, including in low visibility conditions, which created a threat and uneasiness in the community.
- They have so much land that it would be nice if they made it accessible to the public.
- If GE goes out of business, will this open area become apartment buildings?

### **Industrial area by the river**

- Very rundown and industrial

### **North State Road**

- Development is not rational
- Development is ugly
- Do better providing more/better business
- Make is more uniform/integrated looking (aesthetically pleasing)
- Make better use of existing land
- It's a pass-through road – no reason to be there
- Needs to be more of a destination
- It's always been an infill – hard to get uniform architectural standards because of businesses, etc. there – blend new with old
- No uniformity or enforcement for new buildings
- Big unplanned strip mall
- Businesses and eateries could be more exciting
- Needs a vision and better planning, a lot of car dealerships, there was a magnificent boulder that got cleared to be blasted and is now a pile of rubble, room for so much improvement
- Intersections could use some plantings, seems like a missed opportunity
- Too much traffic,
- There are open areas to take advantage
- There are spots with a business and then a pile of rubble or dumping that is left on the wayside

### **Route 9A**

- A little “death-trappy”
- Industrial traffic with small roads

## **DEVELOPMENT/LAND USE IDEAS AND STRATEGIES**

*Participants spent time brainstorming and generating ideas regarding what they would like to see in the prioritized areas that will make Ossining better. Some discussed particular strategies that could help overcome some of the challenges.*

- Housing
- Revitalize existing office stock
- More lab/tech space
- Restaurants
- Make it more walkable
- Shops for destination – sandwich shop, restaurant
- Need businesses to keep Ossining residents in Ossining and not going to neighboring towns
- Bike/walking trail from train to village (aid economy)
- 9A/9 merge area – not a great use of space, development
- Have conversation with GE to see if their land can be accessible by the public.
- Need to understand GEs level of commitment to the property
- Create a central place that creates a sense of place for the community.
- Incentivize business owners to plant greenery and use sustainable materials.
- Would like 3D rendering of projects and developments, should make this a requirement so that people can have a better idea of the vision
- Enforce environmental codes to protect/create open space
- Clearer zoning maps, contractors are scared off because everything needs a variance
- Really high residential tax rate, wants to know the revenue of the tax created by businesses
- Better signage
- Available literature for how the connections work for the trails
- Better utilization of cemeteries.
- Signage
- Condos trim trees in a particularly ugly way. Crime against nature.

### **North State Road**

- Renewables company that is concerned about being green is a benefit.
- Garbage truck area is a bad choice to have where it is.
- Alzheimer unit at center of commercial district.
- Diversity of businesses is a good thing
- Parking on North State Road would be great addition and would bring revenue
- There are open areas to take advantage of by North State Road
- Ryder park: Open Space