



Robert P. Astorino  
County Executive

Westchester County Planning Board

July 2, 2015

Honorable Sue Donnelly, Supervisor  
Town of Ossining  
P.O. Box 1166  
Ossining, NY 10562

Subject: **Referral File No. OST 15-002 – Town of Ossining Comprehensive Plan Update**

Dear Supervisor Donnelly:

The Westchester County Planning Board has received a copy of a draft Town of Ossining Comprehensive Plan Update. The comprehensive plan sets forth a vision to preserve, maintain and enhance the existing characteristics of the town. It focuses on seven major areas: community appearance, environmental resources, residential uses, parks and recreation, community services/facilities, transportation and future development/redevelopment.

We have reviewed the draft comprehensive plan under the provisions of Section 239 L, M and N of the General Municipal Law and Section 277.61 of the County Administrative Code. We applaud the Town for undertaking this effort to update its comprehensive plan and we encourage the Town Board to adopt the plan. We offer the following comments on each section of the plan for the Town's consideration:

**1. Community appearance.** The plan describes a number of objectives and implementation strategies with respect to the goal of enhancing the physical and aesthetic appearance of the Town, and to protect its scenic and historic resources. We point out that these goals are consistent with the County Planning Board's long-range planning policies set forth in *Westchester 2025—Context for County and Municipal Planning and Policies to Guide County Planning*, adopted by the Board on May 6, 2008, amended January 5, 2010, and its recommended strategies set forth in *Patterns for Westchester: The Land and the People*, adopted December 5, 1995.

Specifically, the plan calls for gateway signage at the various entrances to the town, the creation of a tree planting program, the creation of a Beautification Committee and encouraging better landscaping of privately-owned properties. The plan also recommends amending the Town Code and Zoning Ordinance to update sign and street furniture regulations, expand the duties and responsibilities of the Architectural Review Board and to create design guidelines for new development. The plan calls for more vigorous enforcement of building code and site plan violations from the Town Building Inspector. We support these initiatives.

**2. Environmental resources.** The plan presents objectives and implementation strategies with respect to the goal of preserving and conserving open space; the plan states that the Town hopes to acquire new properties for preservation and recreation as well as for watershed, steep slope and view shed protection. Also, the plan calls for local boards to consider the inclusion of landscaped buffers, open space, pocket parks and trail connections in future developments during the land use review process with the objective of creating an integrated open space and trail network.

The plan recommends that the Town explore and promote the use of alternate forms of energy relative to the use of fossil fuels and that the Town encourage the use of permeable pavers as part of development projects, wherever it is feasible.

All of these recommendations are consistent with the County Planning Board's adopted policies and strategies.

With regard to the Indian Brook Reservoir watershed, the plan recommends the Town work with the County to prepare a protection and management plan for this important watershed. We note that the County Planning Department, in cooperation with watershed municipalities, has already undertaken such work through the *Indian Brook-Croton Gorge Watershed Conservation Action Plan*, completed in November 2007. We recommend that the comprehensive plan be expanded to reference this plan and its recommendations. The plan is online at: <http://planning.westchestergov.com/indian-brook>.

**3. Residential.** With regard to the plan's goal of preserving the quality, character and stability of neighborhoods, the plan discusses a need for better code enforcement and a need to re-examine existing buffer requirements. The plan also calls for the creation of a "wide range of housing opportunities," including affordable housing. These recommendations are consistent with the County Planning Board's adopted policies and strategies.

We recognize that the Town of Ossining was the first municipality in the county "eligible" under the terms of the Housing Settlement to adopt the *Model Ordinance Provisions* with respect to affirmatively furthering fair housing (AFFH). We support including the continued development of affordable AFFH as a goal in the updated comprehensive plan.

**4. Parks and recreation.** The plan sets a goal of providing recreational programs, services and facilities to address the current and future population of the town. One of the implementation strategies discussed is to create an inventory of all recreational and cultural programs, activities, services and facilities available from various different agencies. As the plan notes, doing so would allow for greater coordination and efficiency in the provision of services.

**5. Transportation.** With regard to the plan's goal of maintaining and improving various aspects of the town's transportation network, several specific recommendations are made concerning roadways and safety issues. The plan also contains a discussion on improving bicycle, pedestrian and transit mobility in the town, which we support.

With respect to increased transit services, the plan recommends that the Town and community groups should work with Metro-North Railroad and Westchester County Bee-Line to explore the option of operating jitney bus service in the Town of Ossining to link the train station, residential areas and employment sites. We note that such local services may currently be beyond the operational capability of the Bee-Line. However, the County is always open to discussions on how to improve mobility.


**6. Future development and redevelopment.** The plan describes several objectives and implementation strategies with respect to the goal of promoting development and redevelopment which is consistent with the current scale and historic character of the community.

One objective presented is to limit the amount and intensity of land use development to levels which minimize traffic congestion and encourage the use of transit. The plan recommends reviewing zoning density to determine if modifications should be made. Specifically, the plan recommends that several parcels currently zoned R-40 (approximately one acre minimum lot size) in and near the Maryknoll Seminary may be more appropriately zoned two-acre minimum lot size. In the Crotonville area, the plan recommends rezoning the GB-1 and NC districts to R-5 or R-7.5.

We note that while reducing development potential can serve to protect open spaces and sensitive environmental features, that result is dependent on the design and layout of individual developments, regardless of permitted density. Further, lowering density does not usually have the impact of increasing transit use. If the goal of the Town is to increase transit mobility, as well as increase the potential for residents to walk and bike to local businesses and services, the comprehensive plan should discuss the potential to increase density and a mix of uses in appropriate targeted areas.

The plan recommends the preservation of historic, architectural and archeological resources and includes a list of specific noteworthy buildings that should be protected and that could be converted to new uses. These recommendations are consistent with the County Planning Board's adopted policies and strategies.

Thank you for calling this matter to our attention.

Respectfully,  
WESTCHESTER COUNTY PLANNING BOARD  
By:   
Edward Buroughs, AICP  
Commissioner

EEB/LH