

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose and Function of the 2003 Comprehensive Plan

Comprehensive plans are variously described as cookbooks, toolboxes, and blueprints, all providing guidance and strategies for a community's future. As defined in NYS Planning and Zoning Law, a village comprehensive plan is a means to guide "the immediate and long-range protection, enhancement, growth and development of the Village." The comprehensive planning process involves a variety of research and assessment tasks: review of past plans and objectives, analysis of historical trends and current conditions, identification of issues of concern, and formulation of recommendations for problem areas and opportunities. This work occurs in conjunction with public participation and outreach efforts (workshops, hearings, surveys), to assure that public opinion and input are an integral part of the planning process. To be effective as guidelines for future direction, the recommendations presented in the comprehensive plan should be framed by an overall vision for the community. This "vision" is also developed through review of past planning efforts, public input, and consultation with local officials and agency heads.

The 2003 Comprehensive Plan was developed during a 16-month planning process, incorporating ideas and recommendations of Village officials, residents, and the Comprehensive Plan Committee. Extensive input from Croton-on-Hudson residents was obtained from three public workshop discussions and a mail survey of all Village residents. The public input, along with the research on existing conditions within the Village, helped define the guiding vision and the particular issues which the Plan will focus on.

The Plan's usefulness is therefore twofold: both in the decision-making and consensus building process that is involved in the creation of the Plan, and as a policy document guiding the future direction of Croton-on-Hudson. In order to serve as an effective guide, the Plan's future land use recommendations are framed by a set of policy objectives. These policy objectives are designed to shape the future of the Village's physical development.

Although the 2003 Plan sets forth recommendations for the future of Croton-on-Hudson, it is not, in itself, a regulation. Recommendations made in the Plan are implemented through zoning laws and other land use regulation tools. However, all village land use regulations must be in accordance with an adopted plan. This Plan also incorporates several revisions to the zoning code; these will help reinforce the recommendations of the Plan.

1.2 *Previous Comprehensive Planning Efforts in Croton-on-Hudson*

In 1977, the Village of Croton-on-Hudson adopted a comprehensive zoning plan, known as the Master Plan, to regulate land development throughout the Village. Although the Village experienced substantial changes in building construction and development over the next two decades, no comprehensive review or update of the Master Plan was undertaken. However, numerous strategic plans and studies focusing on specific topics or areas of the Village have been prepared in recent years, including waterfront feasibility studies, traffic calming studies, Upper Village design/market studies, a North End zoning study, open space inventories, Environmental Conservation policies, the Trailway Master Plan, water capacity and stormwater management studies.

In 1992, the Village adopted a Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) reflecting more recent development possibilities, and created policies to govern them. Since all of the land in Croton-on-Hudson falls within the New York State Coastal Zone, the LWRP and its policies effectively translated into a land use plan for the entire Village. In addition to its stated objectives for open space, parks, environmental protection, waterfront access, the LWRP recommended updating the 1977 Master Plan to provide for consistency with the Coastal Zone policies.

The Hudson River waterfront has been the focus of recent intensive planning efforts, with a ***Greenway Vision Plan*** proposing conceptual land use plans and design scenarios; in 1997 this plan was formally incorporated into the Village's Master Plan. The ***Feasibility Study for the Village Waterfront Property*** (Imbiano Quigley Landscape Architects, AKRF, 2000-01) focused on Croton-on-Hudson's underdeveloped Hudson River waterfront property (former Seprieo site). The first (March 2000) draft of the feasibility study prepared four alternative proposals for the recreational use of the site, which were presented to the community and to the NYS Department of State. The report was finalized in September 2001 with a single preferred alternative. It is currently under review by the Village Board. This proposed waterfront development plan is discussed in detail in Section 3.8.

In 1999, the Village Board of Trustees created a Comprehensive Plan Committee (CPC) to review, update, and revise the Village's Master Plan to address current conditions and current needs. The establishment of the Comprehensive Plan Committee was prompted by the Village's concern about land use and development trends in the Village, County, and region, and by the Village's intent to

update and revise its local laws and regulations (including zoning) to conform to a revised Master Plan.

1.3 Citizen Based Planning Process

Critical to the comprehensive planning process is citizen involvement, which ensures that the vision and recommendations put forth in the plan incorporate the ideas and concerns of Village residents. The public participation process for the Plan solicited input on a broad range of topics from Village residents and employees:

Interviews with Village staff and members of the Board of Trustees. Beginning in May 2000, BFJ conducted a series of interviews with directors of Village departments, members of the Board of Trustees and several Village organizations. Interviewees were asked to identify Croton-on-Hudson's main assets, the major problems confronting the Village, tasks to be accomplished over the next five years and to articulate a vision for the Village.

Public Workshops. Three public workshops were conducted between August 2000 and March 2001. The workshops, which were advertised in the local paper, on the Croton-on-Hudson website and on local access television, each had an impressive turnout of between 40 and 60 residents. Participants divided into discussion groups to focus on particular topics. Within each group, participants discussed their specific concerns and made preliminary recommendations which were recorded and presented to the entire assembly at the close of the workshop.

Resident Survey¹. In September 2000, the Village mailed 3,799 surveys, eliciting residents' input on a range of topics relevant to Croton-on-Hudson's character and future development. The response rate was a high 25%. The survey consisted of twelve questions concerning the Village's character, commercial and retail amenities, public and recreational facilities, Village objectives and spending priorities and future development.

The commitment of local residents to sharing their vision of Croton-on-Hudson was evidenced in the high level of participation in the planning process. All three workshops were well attended and the rate of return for the residential surveys was exceptionally high. The ideas, concerns and recommendations which evolved from these outreach efforts help ensure that the Plan focused on issues that are



Workshop Participants, August 2000



March 2001 Workshop



¹ Although school district-related growth and planning issues were not in the mandate of this Comprehensive Plan, the survey developed information that could be of use to the school district. This information is available to be shared with the district.

of central importance to local residents. As a result of comments received at the Comprehensive Plan Committee's Public Hearing, the committee added and further refined its recommendations.

In addition to these outreach efforts, the Plan is presented at a public hearing for further comment prior to its adoption. SEQOR review is also undertaken to evaluate any potentially significant environmental impacts that could result from the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan.

1.4 Guiding Goals of the Comprehensive Plan

The research and public participation stages of this comprehensive planning process provided the context for defining the scope and nature of issues and opportunities to be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan. Although numerous viewpoints and objectives have been presented, the vision for the Plan shared by most participants emphasizes the following overall goals for the future of Croton-on-Hudson:

- *preserving traditional qualities*
- *strengthening assets*
- *protecting resources.*

To realize these goals, the Plan emphasizes protecting, maintaining and enhancing Croton-on-Hudson's unique features to the greatest extent possible: the waterfronts; parks, open space and trails; the low key, small-town quality; historic qualities and character; convenient transportation and pedestrian access; economic diversity and expanding the tax base. These goals and the Plan recommendations are discussed in more detail in Section 4.0.

1.5 Format of the Comprehensive Plan

This document is structured in four major sections. This first section consists of the introduction to the Plan and the process. Section 2.0 describes Croton-on-Hudson's history and past planning efforts. Section 3.0 describes the "existing conditions": the Village's physical environment, land use, zoning, population, housing, transportation, and community services, facilities, and utilities. Special planning areas (commercial districts and the Hudson River Waterfront) are also delineated. Section 4.0 describes the public participation process in more detail, and outlines the goals, objectives, and issues defined during the comprehensive planning process. That section also outlines specific recommendations for each issue area.