



PUBLIC WORKSHOP SUMMARY REPORT
January 7, 2010



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Rockland County, New York

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I. WORKSHOP AGENDA

Rockland County Comprehensive Plan Public Workshop #1

2 December 2009

1. Introductions
2. Presentation by BFJ Planning
3. Coffee Break
4. Roundtable Discussions
 - There will be six topic areas for discussion:
 - ❖ Land use and planning
 - ❖ Transportation
 - ❖ Infrastructure (i.e. water, sewer, power, communications)
 - ❖ Population, aging, and social services
 - ❖ Environment and open space
 - ❖ Economic development
5. Public sharing of items discussed at the roundtable groups
6. Questionnaire
 - All participants fill out

II. INTRODUCTION

In August 2009, with the support of County Executive C. Scott Vanderhoef and the County Legislature, the Rockland County Department of Planning launched the process to update the County's Comprehensive Plan.

The goal of the Comprehensive Plan is to provide a framework for future consensus-building and planning collaboration between the County and the various local governments. The Plan will not dictate local land use decisions and zoning designations, but it will build on the existing town and village plans. The Plan will provide general suggestions on future County land use issues and policies to address matters under direct County jurisdiction and to identify specific land use and zoning conflicts among municipalities that should be resolved for better functioning of zoning regulations.

In recent years, Rockland County has experienced a transformation from a rapidly growing area to a stabilized, maturing suburb. This shift in development has ushered in new issues of land use and transportation, such as water quantity and quality, traffic congestion, replacement of aging infrastructure, reuse of former industrial areas, development of State facility lands, redevelopment of the Hudson River shoreline, job creation and retention, protection of critical environmental areas, and revitalization of older village and hamlet areas. Rockland County's demographics have also undergone a shift, as its elderly residents have grown at a faster pace than the rest of the population, and are expected to represent a significantly larger portion of the County's residents in the future. This growth will have major implications for housing, transportation and community and social services.

Rockland County has hired BFJ Planning and its subconsultants, Urbanomics and McLaren Engineering Group, to prepare a comprehensive plan that will address the issues described above and provide a strategy for implementing



the goals and objectives of the plan. As part of the planning process, the County hosted a public workshop on December 2, 2009. The workshop was a very well-attended meeting, with approximately 130 engaged attendees who enthusiastically shared their ideas and experiences to inform the planning process. The workshop was a successful first step in the public participation aspect of the Plan.



At the workshop, BFJ Planning presented an overview of the comprehensive plan process and *Rockland Today*, to solicit feedback from the attendees. Following the presentation and a brief coffee break, the audience split into roundtable discussion groups corresponding to the following six topics: land use and planning (two tables); transportation (two tables); infrastructure; population, aging and social services; environment and open space; and economic development. With handout materials and maps as a starting-off point, the tables held meaningful discussions both on their specific topic and on a range of other issues. Each table chose a facilitator to guide discussion and a “scribe” to compile the salient points. Members of the Planning Department staff and BFJ consultant team were also present at each table to listen and assist in the discussion.



After the discussion period, the attendees reconvened and a representative from each table presented a summary of the issues they discussed. The presentations were beneficial for all the attendees because they provided an opportunity to hear all the points discussed, and to see the interconnectedness of issues facing the County. Understanding how these issues are related, and how they impact each other, is a key step in development of goals and objectives for the comprehensive plan.



To provide additional input, participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire, which they returned to BFJ as they left the workshop. Some attendees also chose to submit their responses at a later date. The results of this questionnaire are given in Section V of this report.



III. PRESENTATION BY BFJ PLANNING

Below is a summary of BFJ's presentation:

1) Project Summary

Frank Fish provided an overview of the comprehensive plan process, including the project team, the schedule, a description of the Plan contents and its general purpose.

2) *Rockland Today*

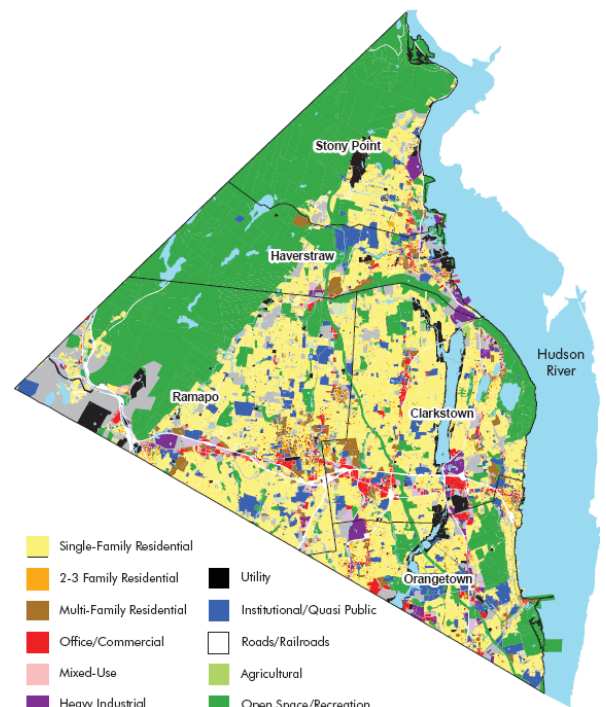
Mr. Fish continued with a summary of *Rockland Today*. Maps identified Rockland County's place within the region, its towns and villages, generalized county land use, and municipal zoning. Mr. Fish then reviewed the County's demographic profile and identified several aging issues, and John West discussed the Plan's draft goals.

3) Planning Issues

Mr. West summarized planning issues that have emerged so far in the planning process and which the draft goals and objectives seek to address. These issues corresponded to the roundtable discussions, and included: potential for transit-oriented development and balancing residential and commercial uses; addressing traffic congestion on commercial corridors and public transit improvements; maintaining an adequate water supply and providing infrastructure to attract and retain businesses; providing sufficient services for all of Rockland County's population, especially the elderly, youth and young adults; protection of environmentally critical areas and equal provision of parks; and promoting growth industries and expanding job opportunities.

4) Opportunities for Public Participation

Mr. Fish provided information on the Comprehensive Plan web site and the second public workshop, to be held in June.



IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Following the presentation, workshop participants were asked to discuss issues that will be central to the plan within small groups at tables around the room, covering six major topic areas. Each table was given a set of questions to guide their discussion. Comments received are listed below; where the comments are clearly in response to a question in the handouts, the question is also provided, with the answer in italics.

LAND USE AND PLANNING (TWO TABLES)

- 1) Describe your favorite aspect of Rockland County's character. Is it threatened or protected? How is it changing?
 - *Open space and access to the waterfront – the views*
 - *Walkability of river villages*
 - *The shift from low to high density is “changing our way of life”*
 - *Heterogeneity of population - threatened*
- 2) Which recent development has echoed or reinforced the County's traditional character? Which has threatened it? Describe how.
 - *Urban renewal in Spring Valley – positive*
 - *Haverstraw Bay Park – positive*
 - *Proposed slaughterhouse in New Square – negative*
 - *Mixed use can be positive*
- 3) If you moved away, and returned in ten years, what positive changes would you hope to see with regard to the County's character and housing stock?
 - *No strip malls*
 - *Bike paths*
 - *Parking behind buildings*
- 4) Describe the changes you've seen in the housing market since you moved to Rockland County. How has this been positive for the County? How has it been negative?
 - *Downzoning – negative*
 - *Increased density*
 - *Price of land drives larger homes*
 - *Housing is not affordable for seniors and younger adults*
- 5) Does the County's population need more accessory apartments, smaller-lot houses, townhouses, small multi-family buildings, or senior-citizen housing?
 - *County needs all of these, but “within reason”*
- 6) Imagine you have a camera with only a few shots left, and someone wants to see the story of Rockland County. What would you take a picture of?
 - Which images tell the County's history?

- *Tappan Zee Bridge*
- *Cropsey Farm*
- *Courthouse*

- Which images show the future?
 - *Route 306 – Monsey*
 - *Ferry*
 - *287/Garden State Parkway – network of superhighways*
 - *McMansions*

- Which images show a part of the County that you'd delete if you could?
 - *Mall*
 - *Home rule*
 - *McMansions*

- Which images show a Rockland County you are proud of?
 - *Patrick Farm*
 - *High Tor*

- 7) Describe your town or village. Is it like any other in the County? What are two differences? What are two similarities?
 - *No responses noted*

- 8) Other comments:
 - *Local planning/zoning often ignores the bigger impact on Rockland*
 - *High-density development (i.e. Ramapo) carries costs for infrastructure improvements – shouldn't developer pay? Should overdevelopment be allowed?*
 - *Lack of zoning enforcement*
 - *Too often politics plays a role in decisions*
 - *County Planning Department does great job, but overruled by local municipality – can we do nothing?*
 - *Municipalities become lead agency over their own projects or ones the town overtly supports*
 - *Comprehensive plan should not be about "growth projections" or unrestrained and unsustainable growth, but instead about limited resources*
 - *Resource constraints – drinking water, transportation, trash/sewage*
 - *Housing is currently unaffordable, and there is a lack of community*
 - *Governments seem to be competing – towns vs. county vs. state*
 - *Lack of access to the river*
 - *Openness of parks*
 - *Too much building and overdensity – leads to traffic problems. Does County have control over development?*
 - *Are we under- or over-populated?*
 - *Revitalize Nanuet Mall*
 - *Need bicycling trails, active communities, preservation of natural resources*

TRANSPORTATION (TWO TABLES)

- West Shore Line and New Jersey Transit should be focus of transportation discussion, not the Tappan Zee – most commutes are to Manhattan and New Jersey, not Westchester
- Don't push density to justify the Tappan Zee corridor development
- Transportation should be safer for cyclists and pedestrians, with connecting parks via walkways and bike trails
- High-density housing areas should consider implementing more public transportation options
- Impact of Tappan Zee corridor on local roads – traffic congestion increasing
- Rail travel important for moving commuters
- Increased truck traffic – in next 20 years, truck traffic to increase by 50%
- Replace Tappan Zee Bridge or keep repairing it to keep it safe. The ramp from the bridge should go directly to the Tarrytown Metro-North station instead of creating a new corridor.
- Carpool incentives
- Cumulative impact of local housing on transportation for the county
- Local traffic congestion – e.g. Route 59
- No rail on the Tappan Zee Bridge – there isn't the density to serve
- Don't use Rockland as corridor "pass-through"
- Bicycling as important alternative to the car – should be designed into new roads, added to existing ones. Need provisions for putting bikes on buses. Road surfaces should be improved for bicycles
- Sidewalks – some areas don't like them (rural vs. urban/suburban) but could be added. Existing sidewalks should be improved and widened
- "Complete Streets"
 - Many cul-de-sacs
 - Cannot reclaim some land
 - New developments should include non-vehicle trails
- No new train station in Hillburn – would need more use of cars to get to the station. Train stations should be where the density is, i.e. Monsey
- Promote reduction of automobile use – bikes, bus, train
- Limited north-south vehicular access

INFRASTRUCTURE

- Need for more coordination of services – infrastructure providers should communicate when ripping up the roads
- Comprehensive Plan should improve implementation and technical support for local land use boards
- Need energy master plan
 - Conversion of waste stream
 - Sustainable/green infrastructure
 - Potential employment/tax opportunity
 - Explore water reuse (greywater, reuse of sewer and water links)
- Maintenance of infrastructure – sewers, etc.
- Public vs. private control of water system – impacts ability to conserve water
- Better coordination of utilities in planning, to determine future demand
- Need comprehensive drainage plan – eliminate piecemeal approach, promote regional approach
- Adaptive reuse of retail/office uses – allows for lower infrastructure cost
- County needs capacity to help with local siting of new infrastructure investment

POPULATION, AGING AND SOCIAL SERVICES

- Not enough specialists in medical facilities
- Salaries not sufficient to keep people here
- Cost of living too high, not enough child care
- Not enough doctors accept Medicaid
- Veterans care not sufficient
- Not enough “coherent” senior centers, senior care program is at capacity
- Senior centers seem to be in “pockets” – not racially diverse. Segregated communities lead to segregated senior centers. New City, Haverstraw, Spring Valley have senior centers – if you live in Suffern or Valley Cottage, you can’t get there
- Grandparents raising grandchildren – do not qualify for some services
- Population is getting older, transportation options are not improving
- DSS is sending more people to nonprofits
- What should be the County’s top priorities regarding programs and facilities targeted to its diverse population?
 - *Affordable housing, i.e. cluster developments*
 - *Transportation-oriented center*
 - *Hold landlords accountable to prevent neighborhoods from deteriorating*
- Should any government services be consolidated? If so, which ones? What do you think are potential obstacles to consolidation of services?
 - *Yes - Need consolidation of services for seniors and children – greater availability and accountability*
- Seniors and teens alike in that they both need affordable, accessible activities. Need affordable activities for all ages and income levels (recreation and social services, e.g. pocket parks, community centers)
- Need livable, accessible housing for all ages – walkable centers with diverse housing options, centered around transportation hubs

ENVIRONMENT AND OPEN SPACE

- Preserve and facilitate more sustainable, organic agriculture – results in food security, jobs, education, health, carbon offset, community building
- Beef up the Environmental Management Commission – coordinate, train and support town and village environmental committees
- Need a full resource inventory and analysis as a starting point – this should determine county’s carrying capacity for development – resource-based planning
- Greater education of local planning board members to look at the larger community, cumulative impacts
- More countywide protection of streams
- Watershed-focused planning/protection
- Need all of the highlands protected – large areas in Ramapo currently are not
- Climate action plan for the county – County should take a leadership role that goes beyond just focusing on County buildings and properties
- Set specific goals for recycling, water usage, etc., to meet best practices
- Comprehensive Plan public participation process is not adequate – need committees meeting monthly, at least six public input meetings
- Need countywide water/drainage commission, water resources management plan including water conservation
- Make Rockland County more bicycle friendly
- Historic preservation with a focus on the buildings and the land

- Make Rockland a “poster child” for elimination of pesticides and herbicides
- Research and develop viable alternative energy sources in the county, especially solar energy parks on available open space to provide fossil fuel energy independence
- Need more education for county residents about resources and programs, encouraging participation on all levels – legislative, planning, intermunicipal, schools, neighborhoods, etc.
- Comprehensive Plan chapters should be better integrated – current outline is silo mentality
- 40% total preserved open space is misnomer – most of this open space isn’t really connected to the village and neighborhoods or to other open space
- Current protected open space isn’t protecting the water supply
- County open space guidelines are strict, but towns don’t follow them
- Encroachment in buffer areas around reservoirs – the County should have more say in stopping this
- What role do we want open space to play – preservation of forests vs. prevention of development

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Many underutilized sites
- Too much retail – Rockland is “over-stored”
- Focus needs to be on high-skilled and high-tech jobs, e.g. pharmaceutical, wireless
- Does the County have a real plan to focus on economic development?
- Rockland Economic Development Corporation (REDC) – is it too reactive and not proactive enough? REDC should focus on more marketing, with specific goals and measures, so people know what it’s doing
- Land is relatively scarce for economic development
- Possibility of fast-tracking projects, streamlining approvals process – County could produce or collect best practices
- County Executive should act as CEO, take a lead role to attract businesses and jobs, e.g. Michael Bloomberg in NYC
- Need to “make Pfizer happy” – can a corridor or center be built around Pfizer?
- Build new urbanism developments near train stations – retain the young
- Develop communication hubs
- Take more advantage of people passing through, keep them from going elsewhere
- Identify the businesses the County can support, expedite the process

V. QUESTIONNAIRE

In order to solicit additional feedback, participants were asked to fill out questionnaires corresponding to their topic table. A total of 38 attendees completed and returned their questionnaires at the end of the workshop. In addition, the Planning Department contacted all workshop participants who had provided e-mail addresses to receive any other completed questionnaires or further comments.

It is important to note that the questionnaire was not a scientific survey. The workshop attendees were not a random sample, not all participants completed a questionnaire and those who did may not have completed all of the questions. In addition, the questionnaires were not completed uniformly by all discussion tables; some tables returned more completed questionnaires than others. However, the questionnaires were a useful tool to gather input on a variety of topics, and the open-ended nature of the questions provided a way for participants to freely expound on the issues raised. Additionally, participants often feel more comfortable submitting anonymous written comments than speaking in front of others. Thus, the questionnaire responses are another important piece of the public participation process and will substantially inform the final Comprehensive Plan.

Questionnaires for each topic table are presented below, with answers provided in bold italics:

LAND USE AND PLANNING

- 1) The following are the draft Land Use goals and objectives. Please rank them in order of importance to you (1 being the highest). Please add any you think are appropriate. ***[Note: The numerical values given by participants were averaged and rounded to provide an approximate ranking. Note that some participants did not rank all of the objectives, while others gave some objectives equal ranking. Where goals were simply checked, the rankings were assumed to be 1.]***

Goal:

Promote a suburban county comprised of high-quality residential communities with a range of densities surrounding vibrant village and hamlet centers and activity nodes, and well-defined and designed business and residential clusters and corridors.

Objectives:

- 2** Focus commercial and high-density residential development in existing mixed-use centers and encourage open space and cluster development of neighborhoods outside of the centers.
- 2** Preserve existing open space to the greatest extent possible.
- 5** Promote a waterfront that maximizes positive water-dependent and water-related uses with connections to the immediate surrounding community and residents of the county.
- 5** Maximize opportunities for direct public access to the waterfront through esplanades, public boat ramps, upland connections and waterfront plazas and parks, and preserve public enjoyment of the Hudson through protected view corridors while respecting the needs of local residents living near the waterfront.

- 4 Enhance the viability of the County’s strategic east/west and north/south corridors by promoting the efficient flow of people and goods while maintaining an adjacent land use framework that supports residential, commercial and open space functions.
- 5 Strengthen institutional centers, community facilities and educational and cultural resources serving the County as a whole and the immediate surrounding communities.
- 5 Foster successful institutions that respect the integrity of surrounding neighborhoods and land uses.
- 3 Reuse and redevelop major parcels in a coordinated manner, providing identified housing, recreation, open space, institutional and economic development needs within the context of their local community setting, as well as infrastructure improvements that might be necessary to support such reuse and redevelopment.
- 6 Support senior and work-force housing initiatives.
- 5 Encourage transit-oriented development strategies and zoning at the local level near and adjacent to the proposed transit centers for the Tappan Zee Bridge/I-287 improvements.

- ***One participant opposed this goal.***

Other

- ***Walkable, bikeable communities.***
- ***Preservation and conservation of water resources.***
- ***Alternative energy investment (solar, geothermal, etc.).***
- ***Encourage local food networks.***
- ***Encourage bike- and walk-to communities.***
- ***Develop a Water Resource Plan that addresses the wasteful use of water, need for water recapture and reuse, conservation and water management.***
- ***Zoning stays, no rezoning.***

2) Describe your favorite aspect of Rockland County’s character. Is it threatened or protected? How is it changing?

- ***Ridge lines and view of Hudson.***
- ***What is generally described as the County’s “rural” character, what is left of its open space. It is threatened! Changing as a result of inappropriate development.***
- ***Walkable waterfront communities, open space.***
- ***Abundance of green space that is being altered by public access that has little appreciation for watershed protection.***
- ***Loss of historical buildings and town centers. Strip malls became ugly fast and are “no place.”***
- ***The County is intimate in size but increasing traffic threatens accessibility.***
- ***Farms are disappearing.***
- ***Openness, and yes, it is threatened.***
- ***Its semi-rural character is threatened by TOD and the pressure of being located so near to the city.***
- ***Parks, open space and ridgelines.***
- ***Density or lack of.***
- ***Open space, rural feel definitely threatened.***
- ***Rural feel threatened by high-density housing.***
- ***The diverse population.***

- *Suburban small-town feel that is threatened by density.*
 - *Back roads – houses on large acreage. Forested lots – overdevelopment has threatened it.*
 - *Parks.*
 - *Distorted politics by ethnic groups who vote in blocs.*
 - *Threatened by rampant and uncontrolled development in Ramapo – New Square, Monsey.*
 - *Rural suburban is threatened by overdevelopment.*
 - *Size of lots is getting too small. Development is good – overdevelopment is not good.*
 - *Maintain wilderness – privately held kind terribly threatened with development.*
- 3) If you moved away, and returned in ten years, what positive changes would you hope to see with regard to Rockland County's character and housing stock?
- *More parks, open space.*
 - *Open space preserve, greenways; mixed-use; clustered housing; walkable/bikeable accessible well-connected public transit.*
 - *Downsizing of structures, community housing in walk-to neighborhoods.*
 - *Smaller, more energy-efficient and water-efficient homes that people can afford.*
 - *That existing neighborhoods have been revitalized and redeveloped to meet changing needs.*
 - *More thoughtful development.*
 - *More sidewalks and bike paths.*
 - *More open space – protected Hudson Riverfront.*
 - *More open space.*
 - *Vibrant “downtown” centers.*
 - *Affordability*
 - *Less high-density housing.*
 - *More mixed-use areas, with shopping and transit near homes in town centers.*
 - *More affordable housing for seniors and improved safety on roads.*
 - *New Square and Monsey to have proper planning for safe housing – not just add on to houses.*
 - *More housing for diverse populations located near existing transit.*
 - *Cycling accepted and integrated.*
 - *Capability to get to the library and shopping centers either by foot or cycling.*
 - *Have it look like the little hamlets in New Jersey with a train/rail station within walking distance to town.*
 - *Hopefully it would look similar to what it does now.*
 - *Better welcome for foot travel.*
- 4) Imagine you have a camera with only a few shots left, and someone wants to see the story of Rockland County. What would you take a picture of?
- *Riverfront communities, High Tor, Tappan Zee Bridge*
 - *Hudson River, Hook Mountain*
 - *Tappan for history, the river for context, the Palisades Mall and Tappan Zee Bridge to show what happens when the process goes beyond the people. I love Rockland for its warm character and small-town feel.*
 - Which images tell the County's history?
 - *Stony Point Battlefield*
 - *Farms, quarries, railroad*
 - *Blauvelt House – Historical Society of Rockland*
 - *Farms, the river*
 - *Homes*
 - *Davies Farm, Dutch farmhouses*

- *Tappan Zee Bridge (4)*
- *Haverstraw/Nyack*
- *Bear Mountain*
- *The river and great parks.*
- *Beautiful Main Street, USA*
- *Torne Mountain*
- Which images show the future?
 - *Tappan Zee Bridge (3)*
 - *Shopping, traffic*
 - *High-density housing in Ramapo*
 - *Overdevelopment of Route 59*
 - *High density if it is not controlled*
 - *New City revitalization*
 - *Housing near stations*
 - *Interconnected automobile alternatives*
 - *Parts of redeveloped Haverstraw*
 - *Ramapo's overdevelopment*
 - *High-speed train*
- Which images show a part of the County that you'd delete if you could?
 - *Palisades Mall (4)*
 - *Strip Malls*
 - *The voting bloc community*
 - *High-density housing in Ramapo*
 - *Deteriorated homes*
 - *Houses on mountains*
 - *Tappan Zee Bridge*
 - *Slaughterhouse – New Square*
 - *Monsey and New Square houses that are unsightly and unsafe – no more high-density*
 - *Route 59 strip.*
 - *New Square's mass development*
 - *New Square*
 - *Cluster housing on Route 306*
- Which images show a Rockland County you are proud of?
 - *Bear Mountain Park*
 - *Parks (3), lakes, trees, riverfront, green areas*
 - *Farmers markets, community playground projects, Habitat for Humanity, Harriman State Park*
 - *Haverstraw Bay Park/marina and kayak launch*
 - *Natural settings*
 - *Preservation of the Hook Mountain road, preservation of ridgelines, views of the Hudson*
 - *Open space*
 - *The view from the high point on the Long Path.*
 - *Riding over the causeway on Conyers Road.*
 - *Love Bear Mountain, and all the parks here a real gem. Hudson River towns – Nyack and Piermont Riverwalk.*
 - *Outdoor recreation and open space*
 - *Downtown Suffern*
 - *Hudson and parks*
 - *Kakiat Park*

5) Miscellaneous Comments

- ***This public meeting should have been an all-day session. Too rushed to properly discuss these important issues.***

TRANSPORTATION

1) The following are the draft Transportation goals and objectives. Please rank them in order of importance to you (1 being the highest). Please add any you think are appropriate. ***[Note: The numerical values given by participants were averaged and rounded to provide an approximate ranking. Note that some participants did not rank all of the objectives, while others gave some objectives equal ranking. Where goals were simply checked, the rankings were assumed to be 1.]***

Goal:

Foster an integrated vehicular, mass transit and alternative transportation infrastructure with an efficient network of intra- and inter-county and state roadways, railways and pathways.

Objectives:

- 4 Maintain an efficient roadway and bridge network providing access to key centers within and outside of the County. This includes upgrading the I-287 corridor and a new Tappan Zee Bridge that can accommodate mass transit.
- 4 Increase utilization of mass transit alternatives that reduce roadway congestion, including the I-287 corridor.
- 6 Designate park-and-ride and parking facilities coordinated with areas of population and business growth that meet the needs of existing and proposed mass transit facilities.
- 2 Promote effective transportation management techniques applied in a coordinated manner with existing and future land use development to reduce roadway congestion.
- 6 Expand mass transit opportunities to facilitate passenger access to all County residents.
- 6 Enhance linkages to and from the region's core, including Tappan Zee Bridge transit options, rail access to Stewart International Airport, and a new rail tunnel to Manhattan.
- 4 Provide safe and efficient access to transit stations, major public facilities and shopping areas for pedestrians and cyclists.
- 7 Promote and highlight the Palisades Interstate Parkway as a Scenic Byway.
- Other
 - ***Provide increased opportunities and safety of pedestrians and cyclists generally.***
 - ***Do not push any more density or downzoning. While a one-seat ride to NYC is desirable, the added density that will result will destroy the character of the county.***
 - ***More buses to access parks and recreation.***
 - ***Focus on existing stations first.***
 - ***Develop cycling corridors so cyclists are safe.***

- **Transition to all forms of transport other than the car.**

2) Miscellaneous Comments

- **Please remember the very high number of cyclists in the county, and the probable passage of the three-foot safe passage law. Much more “share the road” signage throughout the entire county.**

INFRASTRUCTURE

- 1) The following are the draft Land Use goals and objectives. Please rank them in order of importance to you (1 being the highest). Please add any you think are appropriate. **[Note: The numerical values given by participants were averaged and rounded to provide an approximate ranking. Note that some participants did not rank all of the objectives, while others gave some objectives equal ranking. Where goals were simply checked, the rankings were assumed to be 1.]**

Goal:

Promote a suburban county comprised of high-quality residential communities with a range of densities surrounding vibrant village and hamlet centers and activity nodes, and well-defined and designed business and residential clusters and corridors.

Objectives:

- 6 Focus commercial and high-density residential development in existing mixed-use centers and encourage open space and cluster development of neighborhoods outside of the centers.
- 5 Preserve existing open space to the greatest extent possible.
- 8 Promote a waterfront that maximizes positive water-dependent and water-related uses with connections to the immediate surrounding community and residents of the county.
- 7 Maximize opportunities for direct public access to the waterfront through esplanades, public boat ramps, upland connections and waterfront plazas and parks, and preserve public enjoyment of the Hudson through protected view corridors while respecting the needs of local residents living near the waterfront.
- 1 Enhance the viability of the County’s strategic east/west and north/south corridors by promoting the efficient flow of people and goods while maintaining an adjacent land use framework that supports residential, commercial and open space functions.
- 3 Strengthen institutional centers, community facilities and educational and cultural resources serving the County as a whole and the immediate surrounding communities.
- 2 Foster successful institutions that respect the integrity of surrounding neighborhoods and land uses.
- 4 Reuse and redevelop major parcels in a coordinated manner, providing identified housing, recreation, open space, institutional and economic development needs within the context of their local community setting, as well as infrastructure improvements that might be necessary to support such reuse and redevelopment.

- Support senior and work-force housing initiatives.
 - Encourage transit-oriented development strategies and zoning at the local level near and adjacent to the proposed transit centers for the Tappan Zee Bridge/I-287 improvements.
 - Other
- 2) What kinds of infrastructure upgrades do you think Rockland County needs in order to attract and retain local businesses? Where do you think these upgrades need to be made?
- **Coordination of services to optimize all infrastructure costs of use.**
- 3) Would you be in favor of upgrades to energy production facilities to provide for cleaner, renewable energy? What do you think are the most feasible short- and long-term options for sustainable energy production?
- **Create energy districts – decentralized power service.**
 - **Biomass – energy that also deals with waste disposal costs.**
 - **Water resources are critical – all other infrastructure needs energy, applications are generally big water uses – integrate water uses with all aspects of long-range planning.**
 - **Consider Rockland County pursuing municipal authority of water by bonding.**

POPULATION, AGING, AND SOCIAL SERVICES

- 1) The following are the draft Land Use goals and objectives. Please rank them in order of importance to you (1 being the highest). Please add any you think are appropriate. **[Note: The numerical values given by participants were averaged and rounded to provide an approximate ranking. Note that some participants did not rank all of the objectives, while others gave some objectives equal ranking. Where goals were simply checked, the rankings were assumed to be 1.]**

Goal:

Promote a suburban county comprised of high-quality residential communities with a range of densities surrounding vibrant village and hamlet centers and activity nodes, and well-defined and designed business and residential clusters and corridors.

Objectives:

- 2 Focus commercial and high-density residential development in existing mixed-use centers and encourage open space and cluster development of neighborhoods outside of the centers.
- 4 Preserve existing open space to the greatest extent possible.
- 8 Promote a waterfront that maximizes positive water-dependent and water-related uses with connections to the immediate surrounding community and residents of the county.
- 7 Maximize opportunities for direct public access to the waterfront through esplanades, public boat ramps, upland connections and waterfront plazas and parks, and preserve public enjoyment of the Hudson through protected view corridors while respecting the needs of local residents living near the waterfront.

- 5 Enhance the viability of the County's strategic east/west and north/south corridors by promoting the efficient flow of people and goods while maintaining an adjacent land use framework that supports residential, commercial and open space functions.
- 7 Strengthen institutional centers, community facilities and educational and cultural resources serving the County as a whole and the immediate surrounding communities.
- 5 Foster successful institutions that respect the integrity of surrounding neighborhoods and land uses.
- 2 Reuse and redevelop major parcels in a coordinated manner, providing identified housing, recreation, open space, institutional and economic development needs within the context of their local community setting, as well as infrastructure improvements that might be necessary to support such reuse and redevelopment.
- 4 Support senior and work-force housing initiatives.
- 4 Encourage transit-oriented development strategies and zoning at the local level near and adjacent to the proposed transit centers for the Tappan Zee Bridge/I-287 improvements.
- Other

- ***Consolidate school districts to create "neighborhood" schools people could walk to.***

2) Are there sufficient programs, activities or facilities to serve senior citizens in Rockland County? What about children, teens and young adults?

- ***No. More neighborhood schools would facilitate local, affordable activities.***
- ***A great deal of attention has been given to the needs of seniors and little to teens and young adults.***
- ***Senior services should be provided adequately throughout the county.***
- ***The name of senior centers should be changed to accommodate a whole family. More activities in communities that are more affordable and close by for teens and children.***

3) What should be the County's top priorities regarding programs and facilities targeted to its diverse population?

- ***Determine what programs are cost-effective and efficient and desirable and fund those, whether public or privately run.***
- ***Programs to help persons find and purchase their first homes.***
- ***Easier availability and more visibility of where and how to get services in the county.***

4) Should any government services be consolidated? If so, which ones? What do you think are potential obstacles to consolidation of services?

- ***All services should be intermunicipal – there should be greater consolidation of services: 1 school district, 1 police force. Eliminate county executive offices.***
- ***Consolidation must not lead to a weakening of services. Any consolidation must be carefully studied prior to implementation.***
- ***Make more of the government services "one-stop shopping," meaning have more of your social services like counseling, mental care, day care, together. This would address people feeling that it would be a stigma.***

ENVIRONMENT AND OPEN SPACE

- 1) The following are the draft Environment and Open Space goals and objectives. Please rank them in order of importance to you (1 being the highest). Please add any you think are appropriate. **[Note: The numerical values given by participants were averaged and rounded to provide an approximate ranking. Note that some participants did not rank all of the objectives, while others gave some objectives equal ranking. Where goals were simply checked, the rankings were assumed to be 1.]**

Goals:

Ensure enhanced local, County, and regional parks; the expansion of parks and open space in areas of highest population density; the promotion of recreation resources serving the diverse needs of the County's population; and preservation of farmland, cultural, and historic resources.

Preserve Rockland's natural land and water resources for citizens of the County and region.

Objectives:

- 3 Increase and expand regional active recreational resources such as bikeways, public golf courses and waterfront recreation providing options for all age groups and segments of the population, including a linked network of parks and linear open spaces and the reuse of abandoned railway, stream, and utility rights-of-way as multiuse recreational trails.
- 5 Increase active and passive recreational facilities, such as pocket parks or playgrounds, in the more urbanized areas of the County.
- 2 Preserve open space resources and environmental features that enhance community appearance and quality-of-life such as scenic corridors, ridgelines, wooded lands, and farmlands.
- 1 Preserve sensitive environmental features such as steep slopes, the Palisades, stream corridors, wetlands, floodplains, and water bodies and maintain the County's diverse ecosystems.
- 4 Preserve remaining farms/orchards and diversified agri-entertainment businesses (i.e. farm stores, u-pick operations, etc.) that are compatible with surrounding uses and maintain the essential open space character of agricultural lands.
- 5 Promote development of local food production and local markets.
- 2 Ensure protection of the County's sole-source aquifer with established limitations on impacts from future development, infrastructure improvements and transportation corridors.
- 4 Continue reduction in the County waste stream through the use of a comprehensive recycling, reuse and reduction program.
- 5 Ensure an adequate water supply that meets the quality and quantity needed for the growing County's population.
- Ensure adequate supply to meet demand for gas and electric service.
- Other

- 2) Which of Rockland County's natural resources are well-protected? Which need protection?
- *Parkland that already exists. Open space needs protection and more land needs to be purchased for parks/pocket parks, farming/garden.*
 - *Palisades still is fairly well protected. Water, streams and riparian zones are not well protected.*
 - *Watershed – need to protect.*
 - *All waterways, all stream corridors and tributaries to the Hudson River.*
- 3) Are there sufficient active recreational resources, both parks and recreational programming, where you live? If not, what types of open space/recreation would you like to see in your area?
- *Yes on a large scale but some are not accessible from neighborhoods via walking.*
 - *There is no walkable park near us but we can bike to one.*
 - *Make Rockland bicycle friendly, both recreational and commuting.*
- 4) Are you concerned about Rockland County's environmental sustainability? If so, what are your most pressing concerns and why?
- *Overdevelopment and density.*
 - *Villages are independent and do not seem focused beyond their own borders. Overbuilding – reduce impervious surfaces, protect streams and wetlands, steep slopes.*
 - *Water, open space, overdevelopment.*
- 5) Miscellaneous Comments
- *Set specific goals for county, reduce waste by this amount.*
 - *Research and develop alternative energy sources – solar energy park, wind, small-scale hydro so that Rockland can be energy independent.*
 - *Contiguous open space.*
 - *Need water conservation commission.*
 - *Countywide protection of streams.*
 - *Restart Environmental Management Commission.*
 - *Not much open space (outside mountains).*

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- 1) The following are the draft Economic Development goals and objectives. Please rank them in order of importance to you (1 being the highest). Please add any you think are appropriate. **[Note: The numerical values given by participants were averaged and rounded to provide an approximate ranking. Note that some participants did not rank all of the objectives, while others gave some objectives equal ranking. Where goals were simply checked, the rankings were assumed to be 1.]**

Goal:

Ensure enhanced opportunities for growth and expansion of first-class businesses in Rockland County, providing a broad range of employment opportunities for county residents and a stable tax base for the County, its various communities and other taxing jurisdictions.

Objectives:

- 3 Enhance traditional downtowns that capitalize on historic resources and positive elements of older centers and provide linkages among and between centers.

- 9 Develop a hierarchy of centers from most to least dense, with new investment available to communities willing to promote new housing, transportation and parking development opportunities that serve local as well as Countywide needs.
- 2 Create areas for small entrepreneurs to attract start-up enterprises and small-scale initiatives, fostering a physical and economic environment that is business-friendly and that attracts and maintains a broad range of businesses.
- 4 Create viable regional centers with adequate transportation systems, infrastructure sufficient to maintain their continued success and employment opportunities accessible for persons both within and outside of the County.
- 8 Identify and promote an array of key business growth opportunities, including Empire Zones, on specific sites, and along growth corridors, and promote the advantages of Rockland as a place in which to live and do business.
- 5 Ensure that critical infrastructure needed to attract and expand business is both available and of a high quality throughout the County, today and in the future.
- 7 Identify and promote key industries and business clusters within Rockland County that have significant future growth potential in the County, the region, and the nation.
- 1 Streamline approval process for businesses, while still assuring community input.
- 6 Expand tourism potential as a major economic factor.
- Other

- 2) How would you describe Rockland County's current commercial and industrial areas? What are the strengths or assets that economic development brings to Rockland County? What are the problems?
- ***We are not doing enough to leverage our cultural richness and downtown gentrification. These will drive commercial interest.***
- 3) Should economic development be concentrated in certain areas? Can you identify where those might be designated in Rockland County? Should these areas have residential development nearby or mixed in?
- ***PUDs (planning urban developments) as exist in Maryland and Virginia are fabulous, worthy models of mixed use.***

MISCELLANEOUS QUESTIONNAIRE COMMENTS VIA EMAIL

The Rockland County Planning Department contacted all workshop participants who gave their email addresses and provided the opportunity for further comment and to complete the questionnaires. The comments below represent those of one person; all other comments received pertained to the public participation process itself.

- ***No new bridge – protect the Hudson and the riverfront villages. No rail or BRT – the commuter patterns and numbers don't support a one-seat ride for so many diverse destinations over the bridge.***

- *Stop treating Rockland County like a corridor. It's a beautiful place to live.*
- *Create a dedicated bus ramp off the present Tappan Zee span that feeds directly into the Tarrytown train station, avoiding local streets. This is much less expensive and will use existing infrastructure.*
- *No increased density, period. No TOD, that's not why we moved here from NYC.*
- *More historic preservation please. The Onderdonk House in Piermont and Petersen's Boatyard in Nyack must be protected.*
- *More local organic farms and food co-ops. Change land use laws to encourage small local farms instead of residential developments.*
- *More green energy initiatives. Create incentives for green energy and other green technology to be built in Rockland, which will bring living wage jobs instead of shop clerk wage jobs.*
- *No more big box retail or malls, please.*
- *Build more safe bicycle paths. Connect the Orangetown bicycle path to the shopping in Northvale, NJ.*
- *No desalinization plant on the Hudson. Promote rainwater use and stop sending our water to New Jersey.*

VI. CONCLUSION

The public workshop was successful in attracting a large number of Rockland County residents who were eager to discuss a range of issues. While participants were asked to choose one general topic area for roundtable discussion, the table presentations at the end of the workshop demonstrated that the six main discussion areas (land use and planning; transportation; infrastructure; population, aging, and social services; environment and open space; and economic development) are interconnected and can significantly affect one another.

Despite the wide array of issues discussed at the workshop, several key themes emerged that should be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan. Workshop participants may not have agreed on all of these points, but the fact that they were discussed by multiple tables indicates that the following themes are worthy of detailed discussion in the Plan:

- Water resources in the county, both in terms of quantity and quality
- What constitutes the appropriate level and location of development. A number of residents were concerned about potential “overdevelopment” resulting from the growth of high-density residential uses. Others thought that density should be increased about transit hubs and in downtown centers (transit-oriented development)
- Preservation of Rockland County’s rural and semirural character
- Promotion of bicycling as both a recreational and commuting function
- Protection of streams, ridgelines and other sensitive environmental areas
- Coordination between the County and the towns and villages, and among the municipalities
- Housing affordability for all Rockland County residents, particularly seniors and first-time homebuyers
- Uneven geographic distribution of services in the County, e.g. parks and open spaces, senior centers
- The impact of the Tappan Zee Bridge replacement project
- Role of the County Comprehensive Plan in local planning decisions

In addition to the above issues, a number of workshop participants expressed the desire for more opportunities for public participation, beyond the Web site and the second planned public workshop. In response, the County may want to consider a third public workshop to be held, in the early spring, focused on specific selected issues.