

Cornwall on Hudson Master Plan Committee

The recommendations that the Master Plan Committee in the Village of Cornwall on Hudson will make to the public and then to the Mayor and Trustees are broken down into the following general categories:

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CBS

Business activity in the Village Center may already be gaining ground, though no one can yet call it a touchdown. Stores and businesses have recently opened, and what may be even more significant is that some established businesses are moving to other locations ...but remaining in the here. Appropriate business activity in the Village Center can ultimately provide tax revenues that could be allocated to a number of beneficial programs, including, but not limited to the following

A. PARKING - In order to spur further appropriate growth in retail businesses that fit the character of Cornwall on Hudson, the Master Plan Committee strongly urges that special attention be given by the Village to additional parking areas and/or spaces for shoppers and visitors, as the success of any revitalization initiatives will depend to a great extent on the availability of such parking. Control of any additional traffic in the Village Center would surely benefit from additional police presence, an expense that would be offset by increased business tax receipts.
revenue

B. FAÇADE PROGRAM - Another initiative that can help in the promotion of Village business activity is the formulation and implementation of a Façade Program. Grant monies could seed such a concept and the Local Development Corporation might be the best group to take on this responsibility. As in other communities, a Façade Program could distribute funds in any number of ways, i.e., as low or no-interest loans or as outright grants. Attractive street lighting could further enhance the appearance of the Village Center. The influence of such a program on the local business scene, and thus on tax relief through increased rateables, could be impressive. In addition, a Façade Program can make the Village Center more attractive for everyone from the outset.

C. INCENTIVES – While the Real Property Tax Law (Section 265b) already provides a reduction for commercial improvements, the Master Plan Committee recommends that the Village study the efficacy of additional incentives to attract new retail activity.

D. MARKETING - At the very least, the Village should undertake a marketing effort to promote Cornwall on Hudson as a 'destination' for visitors and a place where residents can 'Shop Local'.

F. The Village Center already attracts hundreds of customers every day of the week—both residents and visitors—to existing restaurants and other eating establishments, which provides an impressive starting point from which to expand this success story into other appropriate types of retailing.

G. FIRST FLOOR STOREFRONTS - The market will ultimately set the bar for business activity in the Village Center, and if our sense of the growth potential is (anywhere near) correct, then a program to reclaim first floor storefronts along Hudson Street that were converted to residential dwellings may become desirable and should then be implemented.

Design Guidelines

The Master Plan Committee urges the enactment of modest 'Design Guidelines' for all structures in the community.

A. DESIGN GUIDELINES - The 'Guidelines' provide a simple, virtually non-intrusive means to preserve the 'scale' of structures across the Village, to maintain and enhance owner property values, and to promote the preservation of the community character, as well as to improve the business climate in the Village Center through the formation of recommended standards that can greatly improve the attractiveness of the Village as a whole. These 'Guidelines' are also a way for the community to regulate, for the benefit of all, the construction of excessively dissimilar buildings that do not reflect the character of existing structures in our neighborhoods.

B. ALTERATION/DEMOLITION MANAGEMENT - We further recommend additional controls covering renovation, modification or the tear-down of structures over 100 years old, as of the date of application, that are reasonably deemed to be historically and/or architecturally significant. Should an unresolved dispute ever arise, the Planning Board may consult with the Cornwall Historical Society and call for the assistance of independent professional consultants as it has occasionally in the past and much as it now does to resolve engineering issues. This recommendation is designed to enhance the application process for renovation, modification or tear-down of any such historic structures.

C. VILLAGE-OWNED PARCELS - Overall, the 'Guidelines' are to be followed as well in any construction undertaken by the Village on properties that it owns.

D. STRICTER ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW - By making its recommendation, the Master Plan Committee is not suggesting anything that is revolutionary in terms of local statutes. In fact, if Village residents later determine that these 'Guidelines' are insufficient to foster the sorts of construction and renovation that helps maintain the character of the Village, they may decide to enact stricter Architectural Review regulations, which are now in force and are well accepted by residents in a number of Hudson Valley communities.

Government Organization

Even as our community matures and modern technologies explode, the Village also confronts a growing complexity of Federal, State, County and Local laws, regulations and mandates governing all aspects of municipal operations.

A. EFFICIENT ADMINISTRATION - The Master Plan committee recommends that a review and analysis be undertaken by the Mayor and Trustees to determine the best, most reasonable and effective distribution of responsibilities for Village governmental employees. For example, the committee is concerned about numerous comments from the public as well as those voiced within the committee itself, about 'inconsistent enforcement'. We recommend that particular attention be given to this critical activity.

B. COMMUNICATION capabilities have never been more accessible and the Committee recommends that the Village take full advantage of the variety of up-to-date message-modes now readily available through the Internet and public-access television, to name just two. Trustee meetings, for instance, should be taped for TV and the proceedings transcribed for distribution on the Village website.

C. GRANTS - Also, as all communities, large and small, must now depend to some extent on 'grants' from the county, state and federal governments, it may be more efficient and productive to consider the use of a contract Grant Writer to develop and shepherd grant proposals, than to rely solely on Village personnel.

D. ANNUAL REPORT - Finally, we urge that the Village present an annual report to the public on all infrastructure and assets owned by the municipality, under accounting rules known as GASBY-34, and released in a timely fashion so that this assessment can inform budget development.

Infrastructure

Cornwall on Hudson like other municipalities, manages a number activities designed for the benefit of all its citizens. Among these are the local Police Department, the Building Department, Code Enforcement, etc, while at the same time it cooperates in the activities of independent organizations such as the Volunteer Fire Department and Ambulance Corps.

A. WATER SYSTEM INC. - The Village is in the water supply business and that business must be operated as such. The Water Department is in charge of this function. At the same time, we feel that certain facts be acknowledged and acted upon. Sections of the distribution system are old. System leakages have occurred and the network is not yet fully up and operating. It must be noted that water rates are high and that much of the network is located outside Village boundaries, which leads to additional pressures on taxes and water rates.

B. WATER SUPPLY - Additional wells may someday be needed, and planning for this eventuality should begin now.

C. MAINTENANCE - When asked whether an enhanced, scheduled maintenance program would be beneficial we were told by the official in charge that, 'yes, it would be'. Therefore, we recommend that the Village study this proposal to determine the most cost-effective means of instituting such a program.

D. SANITARY SEWER CAPACITY - The Village sewer system presents some of the same concerns as the Water system, including the age and condition of the waste management setup. While adequate capacity exists now, the committee is particularly concerned about any future capacity limitations at the Town of Cornwall Shore Road Treatment Plant. Of equal importance, the committee recommends that plans be formulated now to handle future financial responsibilities when remedial action becomes necessary, and creates the need for the Village to contribute its portion to a costly, expanded treatment facility.

E. DISASTER RESPONSE - Given that the only existing Disaster Response study was created in 1993, we feel strongly that an update to the document should be developed without delay to determine the best ways to protect our population and at the same time, to draw a roadmap for coordinating the efforts of all Village departments' responses to any type of catastrophic event. Once completed, this information and response directions should be shared with the public.

Public View Shed (PVS)

The Master Plan Committee understands the value Village residents place in the protection of its great physical assets of land and water.

A. VIEW PRESERVATION DISTRICT - These resources include all areas which fall within the View Preservation District, and in the broadest sweep of the eye, encompass everything around us, from the beauty of Storm King Mountain to the majesty of the Hudson River. What we see...from these places... and as we look at them, represents nothing less than the spirit and personality of Cornwall on Hudson. The Committee also recommends that the words which define our community...Cornwall **on Hudson**...be reinforced by at least one public view from a point along Hudson Street, of the river whose name we bear.

B. ENFORCEMENT OF THE PVS - Therefore, we recommend creation of a strong mechanism to enforce proper maintenance of the Public View Shed. This would include a true enforcement of the View Preservation District (VPD), i.e., tree heights, etc. In the first instance, the Village is to take responsibility involving appropriate property maintenance.

C. TREE CONTROLS - Trees should be trimmed according to existing code, and no tree-cutting should be undertaken without reference to an accepted vegetation management plan. Such procedures, in the view of the committee, are essential to resist erosion, particularly in the often sloped terrain of our community.

D. STORM WATER - In this regard, careful attention should be paid to storm water drainage in keeping with updated regulations as well as all traditional drainage concerns.

E. PUBLIC VIEW SHED BASELINE - In addition, preserved views of the PVS should be photographed once they conform to code to create a baseline for future reference and control.

F. GATEWAY APPEARANCE - Part and parcel of the face of the Village are those specific places that give visitors their first impression of Cornwall on Hudson. Therefore, we propose the creation of at least three Gateway/Scenic Road Zones: at the Bayview entrance to the Village on Rte. 218; and along Academy Avenue and on Hudson St., at the Village boundaries. These locations would be viewed with an eye to making them as attractive as possible. Welcoming signs should be erected.

Quality of Life

It is not so surprising that the greatest population density within the Cornwall on Hudson lies in the Village Center. The same situation exists in many other communities. And it's here, in these dense population clusters, that there's a collision between human concerns and business needs.

A. DUMPSTER PICKUPS - Given the possibility that this may increase in years to come, beyond the current existing problems, the committee would restrict all dumpster emptying and pickups to the hours of 7 AM to 6 PM, and strongly urge that none occur until after the morning rush hours and after the start of regular school classes.

B. BUILDING SUPPLY DELIVERIES - As for the delivery of building supplies to project sites, the committee urges that these be restricted to no earlier than 6 AM on weekdays and 8 AM on Saturdays.

C. LIMIT NOISE - Residents in this central area have also complained of amplified communications from inside a business to its clients outside, and because of this, we call for all such communications to be inaudible beyond the boundaries of that business.

D. EMERGENCY SIGNALS - In addition, the committee acknowledges the long-standing tradition of alerting Volunteer Fire Department personnel to alarms, which results in the periodic soundings of the firehouse siren. Unfortunately, these alerts, as well as the daily 5 PM signal, represent a Quality of Life issue, particularly for those residents who live in close proximity to the fire station where sound levels reach dangerously high levels, exceeding 94 decibels recorded at a point near Cumberland Farms on Hudson Street, at peak of cycles. An even higher sound pressure level (SPL) of 99 decibels have been recorded adjacent to the Water Dept. building on Maple. Any sound level above 80 db, is considered dangerous if the exposure to it is consistent. Therefore, we recommend that a review of silent alerting procedures now used by scores of Fire Departments across the state be undertaken with Storm King leadership to determine the best means of reducing potentially harmful noise levels while at the same time maintaining optimum Department readiness.

E. LIGHT POLLUTION - Another type of pollution is one that's clearly visible. It is Light Pollution and the committee recommends that strict cut-off lighting regulations be adopted and enforced.

F. The Committee also recommends strict enforcement against littering and vandalism, with specific definitions of such conduct and resulting fines for these illegal activities.

Traffic

Considering its location at the rim of some of the area's highest-volume roads, (the Thruway, Rtes. 84, 32 and 9W) a surprising number of cars, trucks and buses pass through Cornwall on Hudson on Rte. 218, at certain hours as the pathway delivering personnel to jobs at West Point and taking them on their trips back home. The vehicle count at peak travel times reaches 200 per hour along Hudson St. Unfortunately, only a minority of these drivers and their passengers stop here, but simply use 218 as entrance and escape route. This being said, what is especially interesting and potentially significant to revitalization efforts in the Village Center is the fact that this high level of traffic flow is more or less consistent throughout the entire day, and reaches a total of some 2,200 vehicles. Isn't it likely that at least some of these people already driving along Hudson Street would become clients of a renewed Village Center?

A. ENHANCED PARKING - As stated earlier, we consider enhanced parking availability to be crucial to this effort, and we recommend that, as revitalization efforts take hold, the Village consider the addition of an attractive, low-profile 2nd level parking facility at the existing Municipal Lot that would greatly expand its capacity while also taking a pro-active position involving the purchase or lease of additional parking areas in the Village Center as appropriate properties become available.

B. PEDESTRIAN SAFETY - At the same time, how do we make our community safe for pedestrians? The Master Plan Committee feels that the best short-term means available to lessen the impact of passing vehicles is through the design and installation of 'Calming Controls', i.e. raised crosswalks, etc. Suggested locations for these: where Hudson becomes Bayview, at Hudson and Payson, at the elementary school on Hudson, at the corners of Hudson, Duncan, River and Idlewild, at Hudson and Avenue A, at Academy and Homeland and at Hudson and Willis Avenue.

C. POLICE PRESENCE – In addition to its earlier reference in regard to business activity in the Village Center, we also feel that increased police presence can significantly assist in making the entire Village more pedestrian-accessible to residents and visitors alike.

D. ROAD DESIGN - The committee also endorses an interim design for the Hudson-Duncan intersection. While the favored remedy for traffic junctions such as this is construction of a roundabout, we're not universally in favor of that particular solution, and besides, we've been told it might take five (5) years for the Department of Transportation (DOT) to get around to that 'improvement'. We recommend that a Task Force of concerned citizens be formed to work with the DOT on this important issue since corrective action will provide not only the opportunity to solve a potentially dangerous vehicle traffic problem, but it could also help make the Village Center more pedestrian-friendly and thereby improve the business climate.

E. SIDEWALK CONDITIONS - What is more, and because we recognize that Cornwall on Hudson is a 'walking' village, we urge that the community's sidewalks be properly maintained, and where appropriate, extended, to provide safe foot passage for walkers who comprise a significant element of local activity through the Village Center. In this regard, we recommend that trees planted along these walkways be those with shallow, confined root systems that will not cause heaving or buckling.

F. PEDESTRIAN SIGNAGE - The Committee also feels strongly that Pedestrian Crossing signs, though vulnerable to damage, should be maintained and in place, as the protection of our citizens outweighs any additional costs.

G. THE PLACE FOR BICYCLES – Finally, the committee recommends that a study of bicycle usage be undertaken, particularly in the Village Center, and central to this should be an effort to find and dedicate spaces or areas for bicycle parking.

Trails Programs

What makes the Cornwall on Hudson riverfront so unique is that the views from it are panoramic, with the river to its east and to Storm King mountain at its west. In the waterside areas and heading westward, are parklands and woods that could easily become some of the most striking sites for hiking and biking trails anywhere in New York State.

A. TRAIL PLANNING - The committee has discussed this matter and received expert advice which leads us to recommend that the Village liaison with the NY/NJ Trails Council, to begin the planning and construction for such activities in the Village, the town, and beyond. For example, the establishment of a trail system along the Village-owned Boulevard and Round Top.

B. DISABLED ACCESS - In the shore areas, we believe some of these trails should be accessible to people with disabilities.

C. PARTIAL RTE. 218 CLOSINGS - As an extension of the traditional Trails Program, the committee recommends that Rte. 218 around Storm King mountain be closed for walking on selected Sunday mornings, once each month from spring through the foliage season from the hours of 8 AM to 11 AM. This timing would have the least impact on vehicular traffic along 218, and re-open it in time for Sunday midday and afternoon dining, shopping and travel in and out of the community. We believe that Village Center merchants, i.e., shops and eating establishments could offer premium incentives at these events to attract residents and visitors .

D. ACQUIRE PIPC UNUSUED PROPERTY - A suggestion has been made that the Village seek to reclaim unused property now controlled by the Palisades Interstate Park Commission (PIPC), though any transfer for the purpose of economic development is highly unlikely at this point in time, even if Village residents would countenance such activity. We strongly support passive recreational use of the property.

E. HISTORIC SITE DESIGNATION - In addition, since our riverfront may reasonably lay claim to being a pre-eminent environmental site resulting from the landmark decision to deny approval of a Con Edison Water Pump Station, thus keeping Storm King mountain forever green, we urge that an 'Historic Site' application be made to honor this event on some portion of the park property. Such an acknowledgement, created in partnership with the Palisades Interstate Park Commission (PIPC), 'Scenic Hudson' and the Natural Resources Defense Council, could well become an attractive destination for ecologically-aware visitors.

Volunteerism

It takes a Village to make...a village. Taxes, especially for schools, are so high that communities must keep their budgets artificially low. Which requires action by state legislation, and we hope this will occur before more of our citizens are forced *through financial crisis to leave* the community. Meanwhile, if local government can't afford to perform many non-mandated operations of the heart and soul, then who? Us.

A. CITIZEN CONTRIBUTIONS – Cornwall has often benefited from individual contributions to this place we call home. Shouldn't we all continue this tradition? Giving of our time and expertise and yes, even money. Many of us donating even small amounts can make a big difference.

B. COMMUNITY SUPPORT FUND - And so the committee recommends the *prompt* formation of a community-supported non-profit funding mechanism through the Community Foundation of Orange County...perhaps this is another activity the Local Development Corporation (LDC) might undertake ...to pay for smaller projects deemed beneficial to the Village and its residents. And carried out by volunteers.

C. STUDENT PARTICIPATION - This should include recruitment of students in order to help shape a keener interest in their home and at the same time assist them to earn community-service credits required for graduation.

D. GRANT OPPORTUNITIES - It may be possible to credit these volunteer activities to the Village as part of 'in-kind' contributions toward so-called 'matching' grants.

E. NEIGHBORHOOD PRIDE - Another device we recommend is the start-up of a 'Support a Block (or Street) Program', to be funded by residents and/or businesses in the subject areas.

Waterfront

While many residents who attended our first 'Outreach' Public Hearing made it plain that they would resist significant change at our beloved riverfront park, the Master Plan Committee believes that revitalization of this important treasure of Cornwall on Hudson can be accomplished in a manner that will be minimally disruptive to the park's normal uses over the past 30+ years.

A. BOAT LAUNCH - First and foremost is the need for immediate work to improve the Boat Launch and that project should begin forthwith under the guidance of the Riverfront Revitalization Committee.

B. TOILETS - In order to make the park more user-friendly, appropriately designed toilets should be installed.

C. PROMENADE - To make our park more accessible for all residents and visitors, we recommend the creation of a Promenade foot path that will provide an attractive gateway from the Village Center to the waterfront.

D. STONE DOCK - Action should also be taken to rehabilitate the existing stone dock that lies directly to the north end of the park for use as *an esplanade for walkers and pier for fishing*.

E. MARY POWELL DOCK - Then, in order to determine its feasibility and to take advantage of statewide interest in the 2009 Hudson/Fulton/Champlain Quadracentennial, the Village has applied for a grant to fund an engineering and design study for an historic 'Mary Powell' dock. State Senator Bill Larkin has offered local officials his support and Congresswoman Sue Kelly has promised to approach the Army Corps of Engineers to conduct a 'sounding' of the entire Village waterfront. Assuming these studies produce positive results, we recommend every effort be made to complete construction of the Mary Powell dock by 2009. While the short to medium-term focus lies on the celebrations planned for three years from now, the dock itself can become the park's centerpiece for residents who long for closer contact with the river, while at the same time assist the Village in the longer-term goal of reclaiming its connection with the Hudson River, and help to provide a friendly destination for those who use the river.

F. RECREATIONAL BOATING - Locally, the interest in kayaking and other forms of recreational boating will, we feel, continue to grow, and Cornwall Bay is a perfect place to enjoy the river, which the committee generally supports.

G. GREENWAY TRAILS - The Village Trustees have unanimously confirmed Cornwall on Hudson's willingness to participate in the New York State Greenway's Water Trails program to make available to Cornwall on Hudson grants that could be used by the Village to further improve the waterfront.

H. O & W ACCESS – An additional potential for expansion of resident access to our waterfront for recreational and culture exists in the strip of Village-owned land once used by the O&W Railroad. A plan to reclaim this substantial property in its entirety should be undertaken.

I. YACHT CLUB COOPERATION - Finally, as the Village pursues a greater connectivity with the river for its citizens, efforts should be undertaken to advance a sense of broader sense of cooperation between the Village and management at the yacht club. In this regard we recommend the formation of a Business Improvement District (BID) to create a partnership between the yacht club and local government. In addition, it is suggested that the Village begin forthwith in negotiations with the yacht club regarding its lease of Village-owned land, to determine whether that arrangement should be renewed or whether the Village might have better use of this property for the benefit of all its citizens.

Workforce Housing

Perhaps nowhere else in the contemporary life of Cornwall on Hudson is there such an historic convergence between the need for a vision of the community's future and the crisis that confronts a growing number of its long-time residents, as well as those who would like to make the Village their home, yet cannot.

A. WORKFORCE HOUSING - One approach to this issue that could encourage young adults to move here and provide a means to do that is through 'Workforce Housing'. The Master Plan Committee firmly believes that those who man our volunteer ambulances, pick up and go when a fire alarm sounds, should—if they need it—be able to find housing they can afford. Therefore, we recommend that the Village adopt new rules providing developer incentives to create Workforce Housing. This might include tax concessions and the opportunity to create a somewhat higher level of density.

B. ACCESSORY APARTMENTS - Of equal importance and perhaps more frustrating and even heartbreaking is the dilemma of our community's elders...living on modest fixed incomes that cannot hope to cover the cost of soaring taxes... so many of whom are forced to depart the place they called home for so long. For these residents, as well as young adults just starting out, the committee reaffirms the value of legalized Accessory Apartments in single family residences in Cornwall on Hudson, while at the same time setting in place *updated and exact* mechanisms which will ensure that these units be strictly controlled...and will not contribute to traffic congestion and parking problems, and that they meet all health, fire and safety code standards.

Building on the current Accessory Apartment regulations that already exist in Cornwall on Hudson, the committee recommends the establishment of 'Permits' for Accessory Apartments, to be applied for and granted by the Planning Board.

These renewable permits would be valid for three (3) years from date of approval and only 20 such permits would be available in any calendar year; plans must be submitted along with the application; it is understood that only one Accessory Apartment will be allowed in any building and each Accessory Apartment, as now, would be limited to one bedroom; the applicant property owner must occupy the building as principal residence and must have occupied it for at least five (5) years preceding the date of application; Accessory Apartment permits shall lapse and expire automatically upon change of ownership of the dwelling; any person taking title to a residence where a currently valid Accessory Apartment permit exists may apply within 60 days for a continuation of that permit, but any extension would require a review by the Planning Board; and finally, any violation of these regulations for Accessory Apartments would result in revocation of existing permits and constitute a violation punishable by a fine of not less than \$1,000.

As currently written, Accessory Apartment regulations are designed to meet the special housing needs of the elderly and young, and to ensure the preservation of the character, integrity and property values in surrounding areas. In addition, we feel strongly that Accessory Apartments also encourage diversity in the population of Cornwall on Hudson.

Zoning

A. FLOOR AREA RATIO - We favor adoption of a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) plan to include Bulk & Scale proposals. These parameters, now the law in several communities in our region, are designed to:

- Restrict over-development
- Help maintain the character of our Village
- Eliminate construction of excessively dissimilar buildings

B. DENSITY CONTROL - Because Cornwall on Hudson has less open land than is available to many other municipalities for new growth, it faces pressure from fill-ins and requests for variances in order to sub-divide. In order to protect the existing fabric of the community from unwanted subdivisions or fill-ins, the Master Plan Committee recommends, for example, an increase in Minimum Lot Size (MLS) to 19,000 Sq. Ft., from 15,000 Sq. Ft. On the issue of land availability, we urge the Village to consider any appropriate opportunity to annex suitable lands bordering Cornwall on Hudson. If Village revitalization attracts growth, residential or otherwise, annexation can enlarge the community's limited space by expansion of existing geographic boundaries to adjoining parcels which have the need for infrastructure and services, i.e., water and sewer, and which can then add ratables to the Village.

C. NO NEW NONCONFORMING LOTS - Further, we propose that no subdivisions be approved that create non-conforming lots.

D. RESTRICT VARIANCES - In this regard, we urge variances from existing and proposed regulations be granted rarely.

E. RESTRICT PRIVATE ROADS - In addition we deem it essential to restrict creation of private roads if *contrived* in order to meet minimum frontage requirements for the purpose of subdividing properties, though they may allowed in multiple acre parcels where all other requirements for development, i.e., lot size, setbacks, steep slope limitations, etc. are met under new zoning regulations.

F. COVERAGE LIMITS - We also favor adoption of new Lot Coverage Limits, and recommend the elimination of any loopholes to compliance.

