

## Comprehensive Plan Update Process

Over the past two years, the Town of Washington (Town) Planning Board reviewed the Town's 1987 Master Plan. Specifically, the Planning Board examined whether the 1987 Plan provided adequate regulatory guidance to ensure the long-term protection of surface and ground-water quality, wildlife habitat, and the rural character of the Town. The consensus among those who reviewed the 1987 Plan was that while the document served as a useful guide for the past two decades, updates are needed, especially given increasing development pressures and regional and state regulatory changes. As a result, the Planning Board recommended updating the 1987 Master Plan.

The new Comprehensive Plan Update Process is intended to build on the accomplishments of the 1987 Plan. Conditions in and around the Village of Millbrook (Village) and the Town have changed and there is now increased pressure for growth, both residential and business; greater interest and concern about the environment; and an increased interest in preserving our beautiful open land. The updates to the 1987 Master Plan will address these concerns.

Typically, most communities hire a planning consulting firm to organize a committee, collect relevant data, and develop a community questionnaire. The firm then analyzes the data and survey results, identifies problems and/or concerns to be addressed, and recommends solutions, all at substantial cost. The Town of Washington has elected to take a different approach. We are fortunate to have among us residents who have lived in the Town for many years. These individuals have considerable knowledge of Town matters. For this reason, and in order to be fiscally prudent, the Town Board appointed 12 members to the Comprehensive Plan Update Committee (Committee). Who knows the community better than its residents? The Town wishes to utilize the knowledge of the Committee members, individuals from the community as well as professional planners, such as Neil Wilson, early in the Update Process.

The Update Process will occur in three major phases:

Phase I: Data collection,

Phase II: Community survey (both Village and Town), and

Phase III: Identification of future principal concerns and development of solutions.

### Phase I

Committee members will chair sub-committees that are aligned with each of the principal areas addressed in the 1987 Master Plan including land use, population and economics, housing, transportation, municipal and cultural resources, and natural resources.

Volunteers from the community and/or professionals in appropriate fields will be invited to join in the work of the sub-committees. For example, personnel from the Institute of Ecosystems Studies may be consulted on issues pertaining to land use and natural resources. The data collected in Phase I will be compared with the 1987 Master Plan and a written report which presents the pertinent data will be prepared.

## Phase II

Data collected during Phase I will be used to develop survey questions. These questions will be very specific, as the success of this Phase is dependent upon answers that are based on a foundation of fact rather than general opinions. The questionnaire will be circulated to both Village and Town residents and will help the Committee identify what the community values and what the residents' wishes are for the future of the Town. The information presented in the 1987 Plan will be compared to the Update Process survey results. It is possible that market research consultants will be hired to run this phase of the Process. The market research firm and Committee members, as well as the community at large, will analyze and identify community values and concerns to prioritize the issues that should be addressed in updating the Master Plan. All opinions and advice will be taken into consideration.

## Phase III

As the community values and areas of concern are studied, the Update Committee will invite professional input as needed, i.e., land-use attorneys, wetlands experts, biologists, town planners, etc. Public hearings on each of the areas studied by the sub-committees will be held. The dates and locations of these hearings will be published in the Millbrook Round Table, posted on the Town's website, and posted in the Town Clerk's office.

Information from each Phase of the process will be included in the final Comprehensive Plan. The Update Committee will likely employ professional planning consultants to write the final Comprehensive Plan Update for Town Board and public approval.