

# Town of Washington Comprehensive Plan Consolidated Preliminary Goals and Actions May 22, 2010

Actions brainstormed by the committee and presented at the Action Planning Workshop are in regular text. New or expanded actions offered by participants at the Action Planning workshop are in italicized text. After the actions “comments” are listed that may require additional consideration. Listed “questions” require answers. “Zoning issues” are issues that would be addressed in a zoning update rather than this comprehensive plan.

## **Goal 1: Our Goal Is A Healthy Natural Environment.**

### **1. Protect the quality and quantity of groundwater and surface water**

- a. Protect water supply and quality through pollution prevention and careful zoning
- b. *Map aquifers and recharge zones*
- c. *Conduct studies of groundwater hydrology to determine how much groundwater can be extracted without drawing down the aquifer*
- d. Create natural buffers between uses
- e. Protect wetlands and vernal pools to protect biodiversity, including some agricultural activities

**Question:** What is the backup water supply? Does it require additional protection greater than is provided today?

**Comment:** Other actions suggested addressed putting requirements into place to require septic treatment and maintenance.

**Zoning:** Evaluate which agricultural activities should be exempt from wetland protections and other local laws

### **2. Coordinate natural resource protection**

- a. *Coordinate town actions that affect natural resources with those of other nearby municipalities addressing issues like major development projects (like Bennett College), flooding, groundwater and stream corridor protection*
- b. *Enforce existing regulations and add stronger language, penalties and fines*
- c. *Use education as a tool to address environmental actions*
  - i. *Support county funding for Cornell Cooperative Extension*
  - ii. *Educate the public about habitat and biodiversity*

- iii. Educate people about the use of chemicals used in lawn maintenance, pesticides and salt*
- iv. Work with the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies and Hudsonia to better use scientific information to assess and minimize environmental impacts*
- d. Encourage recycling and composting of household waste*

**Comment:** It was suggested that the Town be involved in major development projects in nearby municipalities such as the development of Bennett College, which is in the Village, but affects the Town.

### **3. Protect habitat and biodiversity**

- a. Prevent fragmentation of large blocks of forest*
- b. Protect animal populations (beyond any protection arising from habitat protection such as wetland or forest protection if appropriate)*
- c. Develop/encourage/allow management of deer populations*
- d. Prevent obstruction to fauna migration through creation of safe corridors*

### **4. Manage natural hazards**

- a. Develop a flood management strategy*
- b. Prevent stream channelization*
- c. Prevent lyme disease and tick borne illness and educate the public about the hazards*

### **5. Protect forest land and support sustainable timber practices**

- a. Support sustainable working timber and harvesting practices*
- b. Adopt incentives to retain and sustainably manage foresting land. Alter assessment criteria and include forest land in agricultural definition*
- c. Prevent ATVs in forests*
- d. Follow through with enforcement of fines for violations of clear cutting, etc.*

### **6. Manage extractable non-renewable natural resources**

- a. Minimize the undesirable environmental impacts of sand and gravel operations to the extent that this is legally possible*
- b. Remediate abandoned sand and gravel mines*
- c. Negotiate and monitor reclamation plans (i.e. such as requiring the development of lakes when extraction has been completed)*
- d. Manage topsoil extraction*

## **7. Protect soils and slopes**

- a. Control/regulate development on steep slopes to reduce environmental impacts (erosion, runoff, etc.)
- b. Protect soils, especially prime agricultural soils

## **8. Manage stormwater**

- a. Manage stormwater to prevent flooding and habitat degradation and encourage groundwater recharge
- b. *Require “green” stormwater techniques such as bioretention ponds or bioswales for improved aesthetics*
- c. *Require all new development to use permeable (pervious) surfaces to the greatest possible extent*

## **9. Promote green design and development standards**

- a. *Support alternative energy production, if it has low scenic and environmental impacts*
- b. *“Green-up” town operations to reduce environmental impacts (town buildings, highway dept., etc.)*
- c. *Develop green building standards for new development and encourage use of native plants in landscaping*
- d. *Encourage the use of green energy (wind, solar, geothermal, biomass and other clean sources\_ where such production is compatible with other goals such as protection of biodiversity and water, etc.)*

## **10. Address other environmental issues**

- a. *Preserve and enhance air quality*
- b. *Adopt and enforce a noise ordinance*
- c. *Reduce light pollution*

## **Goal 2: Our Goal Is A Scenic Rural Landscape.**

### **1. Restrict development to existing built-up/settled areas**

- a. *Encourage re-use of abandoned buildings*
- b. *Limit/prohibit commercial developments to small businesses rather than big boxes, franchises and chain stores*

**Comment:** There was a lot of discussion about what “constituted a settled area”. Perhaps use a different term or provide definition.

**Comment:** Development restriction is very confining. What does it mean specifically?

**Comment:** There was a difference of opinion of whether to require, encourage or prohibit cluster housing.

**Comment:** The Town was asked to keep in mind that “development” is not just “commercial” – also “light industrial” and “multi-family residential”

**Comment:** It was suggested that “settled” be defined as locations where there is existing infrastructure that can support new uses

**Comment:** It was suggested that the Town restrict commercial development in Mabbettsville potentially maximum of 50/50 which is current

## **2. Protect scenic resources**

- a. *Enact very clear and strict zoning laws*
- b. *Identify ridgelines that should be protected - both building and tree line*
- c. *Identify viewsheds that should be protected - prevent trees and berms on roadsides views*
- d. *Adopt/revise tree ordinance*
  - i. *Protect trees (6” diameter)*
  - ii. *Maintain trees (and remove dead trees)*
  - iii. *Coordinate with utility companies to prevent aggressive tree trimming near power lines and promote undergrounding of utility lines in new (and existing) development whenever possible.*

**Zoning Issue:** Evaluate whether larger lot zoning will protect open space and farms.

**Zoning Issue:** Codify zoning regulations for scenic vistas, ridgelines, viewsheds, etc.

## **3. Conserve open lands**

- a. *Encourage/support organizations that preserve open spaces such as hunt clubs, Rockefeller, Innisfree, Cary/IES, private schools (Dutchess Day)*
- b. *Establish conservation fund to purchase land for open space*
- c. *Encourage biking, hiking and other diverse recreational activities that require and protect open space*

#### **4. Preserve historic resources**

- a. Inventory and designate historic/cultural buildings, structures and landscape features
- b. *Landmark buildings and reinforce standards*
- c. *Investigate offering a tax benefit to encourage historic preservation*
- d. *Protect existing stone walls, and ensure railroad stone culverts are preserved*

#### **5. Support beagling and the hunt club**

- a. *Support and promote hunting and beagling as a “destination” activity which preserves open space and corridors (it is an important private use with a public benefit)*

### **Goal 3: Our Goal Is A High Quality Of Life.**

#### **1. Maintain and expand the existing level of municipal services**

- a. Maintain or expand the availability of municipal services
- b. Continue to provide opportunities for the public to participate in Town planning
- c. *Adjust town hall hours for convenience of the public*
- d. *Broadcast town meetings on television and Youtube*
- e. *Require periodic update of the comprehensive plan every three to five years*
- f. *Commence review of Town zoning and other land management tools upon completion of the comprehensive plan*
- g. *Seek grants to implement comprehensive plan actions*

**Question:** What municipal services are provided currently?

#### **2. Address Tax Issues**

**Comment:** There was a lot of concern expressed in many groups about the negative effect high taxes have on quality of life and the need to “overhaul” the tax system. Some participants felt that the Town needs to understand the hard choices about taxes. What kind of new growth could be allowed to increase the tax base? What services could be eliminated to bring taxes down? It was suggested that the Town evaluate the impact of tax exempt properties, payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) agreements and “exemptions” and incentives with a focus on minimizing their impact on the tax base.

**Ensure safety (police, fire, emergency and disaster planning) and plan for future privatization of emergency services**

- a. Maintain local fire services despite nation-wide trend to privatize emergency services
- b. *Provide more support for volunteer fire company including recognition of volunteer contributions*
- c. *Explore opportunities to create housing and other incentives to make it affordable for local emergency service workers to live locally*
- d. *Advocate at state level about emergency services issues*
- e. *Provide more police coverage “12 midnight – 7AM”*

**4. Improve telecommunications**

- a. Negotiate and advocate for better high speed internet and cellular phone coverage for residents, businesses (including home-based) and visitors.

**5. Provide quality recreation**

- a. Maintain and expand park facilities and recreation programs
- b. Increase educational use of nature trails, educational walks, programs, etc.
- c. *Encourage recreational interactions (and other) between private schools/towns as well as Institute for Ecosystem Studies, etc.*
- d. *Charge an impact/payment in lieu fee for new residential projects that do not provide adequate recreation facilities and parkland*

**Comment:** It was suggested that the Town develop things for teenagers to do socially (outside of school) instead of hanging out in front of Stewarts.

**6. Meet the arts, cultural and educational interests of residents**

- a. *Support cultural activities and develop a facility to enable more art and cultural opportunities (feeds into teen activities and seniors)*
- b. *Promote a dynamic/diversity of community (old and young people, rich and poor, year round and seasonal) living together*
- c. Support community-based organizations (service) such as the excellent library
- d. *Encourage more use of school facilities/integrate with community services.*

## 7. Implement Town educational programs

- a. *Market and advertise the town's assets through education about programming and services via website, handouts, user-friendly dissemination, partnership with realtors and contractors to inform their clients of the Town resources*
- b. *Increase coordination of public relations for education, agriculture and nature programs between public/private organizations. Send flyers for IES programs simultaneously with town recreation flyers.*

## 8. Encourage housing affordability

**Comment:** There was a great deal of discussion, comment and difference of opinion about affordable housing. Participants asked that terms be defined more clearly (both in the plan and in the vision statement). Specifically the Town was asked to define what is meant by “healthy diversity of housing,” “affordable” and “low income housing”. Participants also asked the Town to present data establishing the need for affordable housing and clarify specific zoning mechanisms for implementation of different types of housing. Some participants argued that affordable housing was important to create a diverse community and that there is a need to improve local rental housing.

**Comment:** It was suggested that the Town look at housing from a regional perspective and participate in development of a regional “affordable” housing strategy to determine how the surrounding communities can help meet needs of the Town of Washington and what part of larger regional need can Washington meet?

**Comment:** Specific actions were offered including developing a standing housing committee to protect against big developments and focusing on programs like first time homeowner incentives to encourage use of existing homes rather than new construction. Some participants expressed the need to improve the quality of housing. Others felt the Town should prevent creation of mismatched housing (“i.e. 40,000 sq ft house or trailer park”)

**Comment:** Participants expressed concern about the impact of commercial multi-family housing on residential areas and the need to deter or prohibit condominiums since they are taxed differently.

## 9. *Maintain an excellent transportation network*

- a. *Reduce driving as part of a smart growth strategy. See resources at smart growth network [www.smartgrowth.org](http://www.smartgrowth.org)*
- b. *Create more biking amenities:*

- i. *Develop a bike lane between Millbrook and Mabbettsville and elsewhere such as the pool.*
  - ii. *Provide better shoulders on roads for bikes*
  - iii. *Designate bike routes and maintain biking roads that exist*
  - iv. *Advocate with DOT regarding biking routes on 82*
- c. *Study ways to improve/provide senior transportation service*
- d. *Preserve Road Character*
  - i. *Continue to seek scenic road designation for South Road.*
  - ii. *Adopt rural road standards that preserve dirt roads, manage them properly and keep them passable.*
  - iii. *Consider using roundabouts instead of traffic lights and to control traffic*
  - iv. *Work with town highway dept and New York State Department of Transportation to minimize the undesirable effects of road management (paving, widening of shoulders, ditch-cleaning, salting, tree-cutting)*

**Question:** What is known about the designation of South Road as a scenic road?

**Question:** Can burying power lines be considered together with dirt road maintenance?

**Question:** What are the environmental impacts of using oil/gravel rather than asphalt as paving material?

## **10. Consider Shared Services/Consolidation**

- a. *Cooperative and share services with the Village of Millbrook, nearby Towns and the County whenever possible and develop written memoranda of understanding to confirm agreements*
- b. *Explore combining village and town government and services to achieve greater efficiency and decrease taxes. Pursue NYS Department of State Shared Services Grant program to complete this evaluation.*

## **Goal 4: Our Goal Is Working Farms.**

### **1. Prepare an agriculture and farmland protection plan**

- a. Implement the grant to develop a local agriculture and farmland protection plan. Include a survey of farmers to see what they feel the Town could do to be most supportive.

## **2. Regulate farmland carefully**

- a. Require that all town ordinances evaluate impact on agriculture
- b. Encourage communication with farmers and farmer representation on local boards and committees

**Zoning Issue:** Do not over-regulate farming and control impacts of land use around farms

## **3. Encourage a diversity of farm businesses.**

- a. *Facilitate partnership between grower and community schools – encourage school lunch programs and local restaurants and specialty grocers to use local produce*
- b. *Market locally grown foods and start a “buy-local” campaign to support local products*
- c. *Develop the existing markets through “a new agrarianism” or coops, like Hudson Valley Fresh (for dairy), but for produce/meat outlets*
- d. *Encourage organic farming that does not use insecticide and toxic chemicals*
- e. *Encourage alternative energy farming*

**Zoning Issue:** Evaluate zoning to allow a range of non-farm businesses like farm stands, farm-stay vacations, and other retail business on farms

## **4. Develop a year round farmer’s market**

- a. *Encourage local farmers to participate in the local farmers market and look for a permanent year round location for the market*

## **5. Work with farmers to protect open space**

- a. *Support efforts that “keep farmers farming” like “Hudson Valley Fresh” (dealing with federal milk commodity pricing)*
- b. *Encourage horse and local dairy industry to protect open spaces. Use Dutchess Land Conservancy or land banks or sell development rights to protect open space*
- c. *Develop options for transitioning large family owned farms and other open land to niche farms and other uses to preserve open spaces*

**Zoning Issue:** Evaluate whether it would benefit farmers to “upzone” to higher zoning for agricultural land (50 acres)

## **6. Provide incentives for farmers to create stability**

- a. *Consider further tax breaks for keeping farms in productive use*

- b. Support “community preservation act/law” which is a real estate tax like those that Red Hook or Rhinebeck use.
- c. Provide open space exemption, like Agriculture exemption
- d. Consider “impact fees” on development that would go to support farming
- e. Incentivize a “green farming” act – keeping “real” farms that do not use pesticides, etc.

**Question:** Does the Dutchess Land Conservancy pay taxes on/or get incentives for the land it owns?

### **7. Encourage subsistence and “niche” farms**

- a. Learn from other communities (Great Barrington) that encourage niche farming and micro-farming
- b. Encourage/create leasing opportunities for new farmers

### **8. Support subsistence farming**

- a. Encourage subsistence farming incentives. Since subsistence operations do not gain \$10,000 or more annually from farming they are not defined as farms and do not benefit from exemptions

**Zoning Issue:** Define subsistence farming and review zoning regulations to ensure that they do not inhibit or prohibit home-based or subsistence farming

### **9. Manage Extraction of Materials on Farms**

- a. Allow extraction of gravel, sand or other materials from farms as a revenue stream if it can be done in a controlled way.

## **Goal 5: Our Goal Is A Vibrant Village Of Millbrook And Hamlet Of Mabbetsville.**

### **1. Cooperate closely with Village of Millbrook, Mabbetsville area and other communities**

- a. Identify the overriding issues of Village and Town that affect both and identify funding and the mechanisms that can benefit both simultaneously. Encourage the communities to continue joint efforts post master plan.
- b. Expand relations with adjoining townships - look into neighboring “town” that is developing at Washington Hollow

- c. *Partner with neighboring Town of Pleasant Valley for border development like a joint EMS aide program*
- d. *Take advantage of the Dutchess County Economic Development Council*
- e. *Support the creation of jobs for “our children” to stay or come back and start a family*
- f. *Focus public services in the Village*

**2. Encourage business retention and growth in the Village and the Mabbetsville area rather than new locations in the Town.**

- a. *Encourage community leaders/business leaders to be more supportive of new and existing local businesses*
- b. *Use existing buildings for commercial uses whenever possible.*
- c. *Limit the size and locations of commercial development to deter sprawl*
- d. *Encourage businesses to expand evening and weekend hours of operation*

**Comment:** There was a wide diversity of opinion about whether development should be allowed in Mabbetsville or anywhere else in the Town outside of the village and the range of comments addressing this issue are listed below:

- Clarify definition of “settled area” or use another phrase.
- Don’t restrict town business attractions as they will be part of the draw to the area and help create a vibrant retail life.
- Keep Mabbetsville viable, but don’t encourage business that is best suited to Millbrook Village. Since parking is an issue in the Village, consider uses with larger parking demands (like a movie theater) in the Town.
- Limit commercial uses to Mabbetsville which is the only current commercially zoned land in the Town.
- Consider the impact of any activity in Mabbetsville on the Millbrook Village water supply/aquifer.
- Prevent/forbid/discourage development of new business areas in the Town until existing village and Mabbetsville is fully utilized
- Proceed cautiously in developing new commercial areas
- Do not allow any new commercial development in the Town.
- Control issuance of special permits to allow business development or expansion. Clearly define what type of special permits are allowed to avoid ‘wedge-issues’ or ‘foot in the door’ issues that can be exploited.
- Question: Is the Town actively planning to propose commercial districts in Washington Hollow (Cottonwood, Copperfield area), Mabbetsville, and South Millbrook (bus depot area) and what zoning in these areas allow.

### **3. Minimize new business competition with the village**

- a. Do not allow strip malls/new business areas which will harm the Village (i.e. Mabbettsville Market may/will compete with the Village)*
- b. Develop an inventory of attractions and amenities and prepare a market study to decide how to move forward as a destination and part of common theme that results in a diversity of attractions (some of the existing activities are viewed as exclusionary or exclusive).*
- c. Ensure that new attractions build on existing assets and character: horses, dairy, art, coffee, movies, theater, do something with the Thorne Building*

### **4. Encourage businesses that are compatible with traditional community character, uses, character, scale, and size**

- a. Recruit businesses that are compatible with the Town's style, character and tradition.

**Zoning Issue:** Use zoning restrictions on size and design standards to keep out "big box" stores, strip malls, chain stores and shape new commercial development to the size and scale of the Town

### **5. Provide for home occupations**

- a. Support development of home-based businesses as long as they do not interfere with residential character.*
- b. Improve internet service that support home based and all businesses*

**Zoning Issue:** Provide clearer definitions of which home occupations are supported and develop standards and regulations to permit home based businesses