

1. Introduction

Yorktown is a diverse community that encompasses many landscapes: the Croton Reservoir and Mohegan Lake; the Jefferson Valley Mall, one of the largest retail centers in the County; the Teatown Lake Reservation, Turkey Mountain, and FDR Park; athletic fields of all kinds, the Shrub Oak pool and the Yorktown Community and Cultural Center; old stone walls; extensive hiking paths and the North County Trailway; historic sites and districts dating to the Revolutionary War; two fire districts; four school districts; five commercial hamlet centers; and 12 distinct residential neighborhoods, each with its own unique character and identity.

Yet Yorktown is more than just the sum of its parts. With a vibrant civic and cultural life; one of the most frequently visited libraries in the County; many sporting clubs; a dynamic Chamber of Commerce; active neighborhood and homeowner's associations; dedicated religious leaders, teachers, police officers, fire fighters, and volunteers; and multi-generational facilities like the YCCC, Yorktown has a rich quality of life.

1.1 YORKTOWN & REGIONAL GROWTH

In the 1950's and 1960's, Yorktown was at the edge of the New York metropolitan region and experiencing rapid growth. Since the 1970's, growth in Yorktown has been occurring at a very slow pace. Today, it is an established community of more than 36,000 residents, and suburban growth reaches as far north as Poughkeepsie. (See Table 1-1.) Slow growth results from the relatively small amount of remaining vacant, developable land in Yorktown. As of 2002, about 20 percent of the Town's total land area is developable and zoned for residential use. Another 15 percent of the Town's residentially zoned is underutilized, that is, in the form of oversize lots that can be subdivided.

Table 1-1: Historical Population Growth in Yorktown, 1950-2000

	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>Average Annual Growth Rate Over Prior 10-year Period</i>
1950	4,731	
1960	16,453	13.3
1970	28,064	5.5
1980	31,988	1.3
1990	33,467	0.5
2000	36,318	0.8

Sources: Westchester County Data Book 2001

Recognizing this limitation, the Comprehensive Plan cannot and will not fundamentally alter the Town's established development patterns. Nevertheless, the Plan puts forth targeted proposals and strategies for improving traffic congestion, enhancing the hamlet centers,

reducing allowable development densities in residential areas, and so on. These adjustments, while individually small in scope, will cumulatively bring forth significant long-term benefits for Yorktown's quality of life. That is, without re-inventing the wheel, without compromising the qualities that make Yorktown such a great place to live, the Plan moves away from suburban sprawl.

Slow growth has advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, slow growth may limit the availability of housing and place upward pressure on housing costs, but on the other hand, less open space is lost in any given year. Business opportunities may evolve more slowly, but commercial sprawl is limited to a handful of locations. The Town has the time to plan out expansions of community facilities and services as demand increases, but Town tax revenues, which pay for those expansions, are slow to increase. Whether growth is fast or slow, natural resources and systems experience more stress as new tracts of land are subdivided.

Traffic congestion is only partly the result of new development. National trends have shown that there are more cars per household and people are spending more time in their cars and traveling more miles. In Yorktown, more than 71 percent of households have two, three, or more cars, compared to 49 percent for the County as whole and 30 percent for the metropolitan region. Therefore, even if all new development came to halt, traffic congestion would still be expected to increase.

Recognizing these opportunities and pressures, the Town Board embarked upon the preparation of this new Comprehensive Plan in 2001. This effort represents the first significant update of the Town's Comprehensive Plan since 1983. The overriding goal of the Comprehensive Plan is to build off of the Town's strengths, while improving upon its weaknesses. In the future, Yorktown should continue to be a multi-faceted place, but ever stronger in the commonalities that bring residents together.

1.2 COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROCESS

From the start, the Town established a goal to develop the Plan through an inclusive process that would engage the community in an active dialogue about Yorktown's future. Working with consultants, the Town established a multi-faceted outreach process that has been unusually successful in eliciting input from the full Yorktown community. The process included everything from newsletters, to web-based outreach, to public workshops, to surveys, to interviews with key stakeholders. By using a variety of techniques, the Town obtained a wide range of perspectives from a cross-section of the community, including business leaders, residents, Town department heads, and neighborhood and homeowner's associations.

Although public outreach increased the time needed to prepare the Comprehensive Plan, it was time well spent. The viewpoints, concerns, and comments expressed by participants played *the* essential role in developing and refining the goals and policies in this document, ultimately resulting in a Plan that is both broad-based and detailed.

Now that the Plan is in draft form, public outreach will continue to play a critical role in the process. This "draft for public review" is being made available to the public, and comments are being actively solicited.

The "draft for public review" will be updated to reflect public comments and will then become the "proposed" Plan. The proposed Plan will be the subject of formal environmental review, as required by the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) Act, and a Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement (Draft GEIS) will be prepared. A 30-day period for written comments will follow the public release of the Draft GEIS.

The proposed Plan, the Draft GEIS, any public comments of record, and then the Final GEIS, which will contain responses to comments, will all be the subject of public hearings of the Town Board, during which there will be opportunity for additional comment. In short, the entire process, from inception to adoption, was designed to be fully open and inclusive.

TASK FORCE WORKSHOPS

The key constant to the public outreach process was the creation and empowerment of a citizen's Task Force, which in fact can be viewed as the primary author of this Plan. The Town invited more than 250 residents, property owners, businesspeople, and members of the community to join the Task Force, which first convened in April 2002, before any technical work on the Plan was started. People who participated in the Task Force meetings are listed on the Acknowledgments page.

In the period between April 2002 and May 2003, there were 12 Task Force meetings. The purposes of the meetings were: (1) to listen to and understand community concerns and issues; (2) to allow the Town's consultants to propose and test out new ideas and creative solutions; (3) to allow participants an opportunity to put forth their own ideas or ask questions. All meetings were interactive, audience-based discussions and were facilitated by the Town's consultants. Comments were recorded, and notes were then written up and posted to the Town's web site. All meetings were open to the public and were noticed in local newspapers.

- *April 3, 2002 — S.W.O.T.* During the first workshop, the Town's consultants facilitated a S.W.O.T. discussion. The acronym S.W.O.T. stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. The exercise was intended to identify those attributes of the Town that participants liked or disliked (strengths and weaknesses) and those evolving trends that had the potential to positively or negatively impact the Town (opportunities and threats.)
- *May 1, 2002 — Visioning.* During the visioning session, participants worked together to develop preliminary visions for the Comprehensive Plan. This provided the consultants with some initial insight into the types of ideas to be explored.
- *Topical Workshops.* What followed were 6 separate workshops, each focusing on a particular topic of concern. During each topical workshop, the consultants provided a technical analysis and a list of "ideas to be tested." These ideas became the topic of discussion, and through the discussion, the consultants and the participants reached a general consensus about which ideas made the most sense and were worthy of further study. The discussion topics were as follows:

- *June 5, 2002 — Parks and Community Facilities,*
- *July 10, 2002 — Scenic & Historic Resources*
- *September 18, 2002 — Transportation*
- *October 16, 2002 — Natural Resources*
- *November 20, 2002 — Housing & Neighborhood Quality of Life*
- *January 15, 2003 — Economic Development & Hamlet Business Centers*
- *Technical Memoranda.* Subsequent to each topical workshop, the consultants prepared a Technical Memorandum on the topic with draft recommendations for discussion purposes. The memoranda were made available to the Task Force at subsequent meetings and were posted on the Town's web site.
- *Review of Draft Recommendations.* Four final workshops were held to review the contents of the Technical Memoranda and to solicit further comment from Task Force participants on the more controversial and complex of the draft recommendations. Task Force participants were given a draft summary of each chapter, including a vision statement and major goals and policies.
 - *March 5, 2003 — Parks, Community Facilities, Infrastructure, Natural Resources, Scenic & Historic Resources*
 - *April 3, 2003 — Housing, Neighborhood Quality of Life*
 - *April 24, 2003 — Transportation, Hamlet Business Centers*
 - *May 14, 2003 — Land Use Plan.* The Land Use Plan synthesizes all of the recommendations of the other chapters into a single, unified map that serves as the basis for future zoning.

The Task Force meetings were designed to be interactive, with an experienced facilitator shepherding the discussion. In each meeting, consultants and participants entered into a constructive dialogue where they learned from each other, and through mutual revision, inched together toward draft goals and policies for the Plan. Using professional facilitation techniques, the consultants sought to provide all participants with an opportunity to be heard, while at the same time moving the discussion along in a manner that made efficient use of the Task Force's time and energy.

INTERVIEWS & INFORMATION MEETINGS

While the Task Force meetings were taking place, the Town was also busy conducting interviews and informational meetings. The Town's consultants met with key individuals and groups who by nature of their positions or experiences had the potential to provide unique perspectives on the planning effort. By way of an overview:

- Interviews were conducted with emergency service directors and boards to understand long-term infrastructure and staffing needs.
- Meetings were held with Town Department heads to review each Department's operating procedures and long-term staff and space requirements.

- Interviews with the Planning Board, Conservation Board, Community Housing Board, Landmarks Preservation Committee, and ABACA were conducted to understand policy issues.
- Meetings were held with local realtors to discuss housing trends and needs.
- A special meeting with the New Chamber of Commerce was held to review economic development interests and concerns.

NEWSLETTERS & SURVEYS

Two newsletters discussing the Comprehensive Plan were prepared and mailed to every household and business in Yorktown. The first newsletter, released in spring 2002, introduced the Comprehensive Plan process and invited residents to attend the Task Force meetings. The newsletter included a phone-in survey with questions relating to a variety of Comprehensive Plan topics.

The second newsletter, circulated in fall 2002, reported the results of the first survey and the first few Task Force meetings. Dates for future Task Force meetings were listed as well. A second phone-in survey was included in the newsletter, providing residents a another chance to respond.

Approximately 1,100 residents responded to the first survey, and approximately 1,300 responded to the second survey. Such response levels yielded statistically significant results. Each survey asked respondents to indicate what part of Yorktown he or she lived in. The geographic distribution of the respondents closely resembled that of the general population, confirming the reliability of the results.

The results of the survey played a major role in developing ideas and draft policies for the Comprehensive Plan. Survey statistics are noted throughout. The results of the surveys have also been posted to the Town's web site and are available through the Yorktown Planning Department.

TOWN WEB SITE

The Comprehensive Plan process made extensive use of the Town's web site, <www.yorktownny.org>. A "Comp Plan" link was added to home page, which lead to a separate page dedicated entirely to the Plan. This page included "Frequently Asked Questions," agendas for upcoming meetings, notes of past meetings, the results of the two surveys, and the completed Technical Memoranda. The page also allowed residents to include themselves on the Comprehensive Plan's email list, so that they could receive notices electronically, and to send emails to the Town with comments or questions.

1.3 CONTENTS OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Comprehensive Plan is composed of nine different elements, each dealing with a distinct topical area of the community. The Proposed Land Use Plan in Chapter 2 weaves together those goals and recommendations into a single, coherent proposal for development and conservation, providing a snapshot of what the Town would be expected to look like in the future. The eight other elements of the Plan are organized as follows:

- Chapter 3: Transportation
- Chapter 4: Economic Development & Hamlet Business Centers
- Chapter 5: Housing & Neighborhood Quality of Life
- Chapter 6: Scenic & Historic Preservation
- Chapter 7: Natural Resources Conservation
- Chapter 8: Infrastructure
- Chapter 9: Parks & Recreation
- Chapter 10: Community Facilities

Each chapter includes a vision statement and a list of overarching goals. Specific policy statements, with detailed discussion paragraphs, are provided as well. These statements represent the specific "action items" of the Comprehensive Plan. An "overview" section starts off each chapter and provides a brief summary of the technical analysis, survey results, and Task Force input. More detailed background information is included in an appendix at the end of the chapter.

The Plan process was structured such that draft policies were developed first, and the vision statements and goals are an outgrowth of those recommendations. As a result, the vision statement and goals have a level of specificity and nuance that provides a meaningful long-term direction for the Town's future.

1.4 RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS & PROJECTS

Preparation of the Comprehensive Plan was undertaken concurrently with several other planning efforts. The evolving studies and recommendations of those efforts have been taken into account in this Plan, to the greatest extent possible.

- *The Route 202/35/6 Bear Mountain Parkway Sustainable Development Study*. A joint effort between the State DOT, the County, the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC), and the municipalities of Yorktown, Peekskill, and Cortlandt, the study is putting forth long-range proposals to address traffic congestion and land use patterns west of the Taconic Parkway.
- *Comprehensive Croton System Water Quality Protection Plan*. Spearheaded by the County, the plan will identify sources of pollution to the Croton watershed and recommend measures to be taken by watershed municipalities, the County, and the

New York City Department of Environmental Protection (NYCDEP) to maintain and improve water quality.

- *Hallock's Mill Sewage Treatment Plant Wastewater Diversion.* Because the Hallock's Mill sewage treatment plant is operating over capacity and does not currently meet certain water quality standards for post-treatment effluent and currently emits effluent into the Croton watershed, there is a proposal to close the plant and divert wastewater flows to the Peekskill treatment plant.
- *Metropolitan Conservation Alliance's Biodiversity Study.* This study will identify areas throughout the County that have the ability to support a rich diversity of species.

1.5 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

This draft document is being distributed within Yorktown for public comment in June 2003. Once comments are received, they will be reviewed, and if necessary, the draft will then be revised in response to those comments. At that time, the Plan will undergo an environmental review process, as required by State law. Copies of the Plan will be sent to State agencies, the County, and neighboring municipalities for their review and comment. Depending on the comments received and the findings of the environmental review process, the Town Board will decide whether to adopt the Plan as is, adopt it with changes, or not to adopt it. Until a new Plan is adopted, the current Plan will remain in effect.

Implementation of the Comprehensive Plan, once it is approved, will be an incremental process. When the Comprehensive Plan is completed, the Town's zoning ordinance will be updated to reflect the Land Use Plan and newly adopted goals and policies. Then, as development proposals come forward, those new projects will have to conform to the new zoning. State and County agencies, when undertaking projects in Yorktown (e.g., roadway improvements) will be required to consider the Comprehensive Plan's goals and policies.

Implementation will be relatively inexpensive and cost-effective. Many aspects of the Plan would be implemented incrementally over time, and implementation tasks would be folded into the Town's day-to-day administrative tasks. Thus, implementation for the most part would cost no more than the normal costs that the Town already incurs for the purposes of administration. There would be a one-time cost involved with updating the Town's zoning regulations.

The Comprehensive Plan includes some recommendations for new, expanded, or improved public facilities, like parks, roads, or maintenance facilities. However, the Comprehensive Plan does not make budgetary decisions. The Town Board would have to decide whether and how much money to spend on implementing such facility improvements when considering and voting on the Town budget each year.

Ultimately, the Plan's implementation is dependent on continued political support. The document can and should be changed as trends, needs, and priorities inevitably evolve, but the basic vision, goals, and concepts put forth in the Plan should serve as guideposts for the future that the entire community believes in, whatever political affiliation, whatever neighborhood.

Thus, the exhaustive community process undertaken for the Plan was not only essential to ensuring its quality and responsiveness to present-day concerns, but is also essential for its ongoing implementation. It is in that spirit of going forward together into the future that further formal and informal comment is invited on this draft.