

# 1. INTRODUCTION AND VISION

## 1.1 PLANNING BACKGROUND AND PROCESS

The Village of Nyack's last comprehensive plan was prepared beginning in 2002 and adopted in 2007 after several amendments. That Comprehensive Master Plan (CMP) was organized around the four key themes of downtown, the "Gateway" area around Exit 12, the waterfront, and residential neighborhoods. The CMP outlined a range of recommendations, including a series of zoning amendments, many of which were implemented through the creation of new mixed-use and waterfront districts.

In updating the 2007 CMP, the Village is seeking to build on these planning efforts with current demographic and economic data, and to integrate plans for new multi-modal transportation options, waterfront development activity and environmental sustainability. Nyack received a grant award in 2015 to complete the update from the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA).

State municipal law provides that the Board of Trustees may prepare a comprehensive plan with the assistance of a special board. Accordingly, in the fall of 2015, the Trustees appointed a Steering Committee of 10 members to assist with the preparation of a Plan update, working with a multidisciplinary consultant team. The committee included representatives from Village government, staff and boards and committees, as well as members of the community at-large. The committee met regularly during the course of the year-long planning process, provided guidance and direction in the drafting of this Plan and hosted seven community workshops to collect and incorporate public input.

The concluding Future Land Use Plan and Implementation section of this Plan incorporates the Village's essential

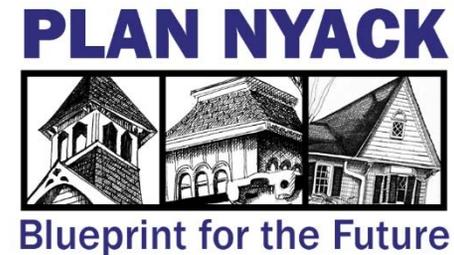
characteristics and future goals addressed in the following chapter topics: Regional Context and History; Socioeconomics and Housing; Land Use and Zoning; Infrastructure and Utilities; Transportation; Natural Resources, Parks and Open Space; Historic, Cultural and Municipal Resources; and Economic Development and Planning Focus Areas. The final piece of the Plan is an Action Agenda that is both part of the document and can also be used as a stand-alone "to-do" list for the Trustees.

## 1.2 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

In undertaking this Plan, a major focus for Nyack was for the process to be open and engaging to the community, taking advantage of the local "experts" who know their Village best. Public participation was identified early on as critical for the development of a successful Plan, and a variety of outreach methods were used to reach stakeholders from a broad spectrum of the community, as follows:

### *Project Branding*

To capture the interest of stakeholders, the project team worked with the Steering Committee to create a name and a brand for the comprehensive planning process – Plan



Nyack: Blueprint for the Future. Major elements of the brand included a consistent color palette, font and style of layout that was used for publicity materials and project deliverables. The idea was to create a name and project image that would be

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recognizable and visually appealing, and that would convey qualities that make the Village unique within the region.

## **Public Workshops**

A total of seven public workshops were held as part of this comprehensive planning process, covering a variety of topics, as follows:

- October 19, 2015: Opening Public Workshop
- December 2, 2015: Sustainability, Land Use, Socioeconomics & Housing
- January 13, 2016: Downtown & Gateways
- February 24, 2016: Transportation, Infrastructure & Utilities
- March 30, 2016: Waterfront Development & Ferry Potential
- April 26, 2016: Economic Development
- May 18, 2016: Draft Comprehensive Plan

Feedback and recommendations from each of these sessions have been reviewed and appropriately integrated into this Plan. The seven workshops are summarized in the Appendix.

## **Public Survey**

Attending public meetings is difficult for people with many constraints on their time, including work, family and social obligations. Because of this, there are generally only specific segments of the population who attend community workshops – namely those who are deeply civic-minded or those with a specific area of concern. Therefore, an online survey was used to further inform the planning process by allowing the project team to gain insights into the opinions of the portion of the population who may not be reachable by traditional outreach methods. The survey was available from February to March of 2016, and was completed by 988 people. In addition, hard

copies of the survey were made available at Village Hall and the library, and were returned by 43 people. The responses to the survey – which was not limited to Nyack residents – were integral in drafting the Plan chapters. A summary of the survey results is found in the Appendix.

## 1.3 SUSTAINABILITY

### **Sustainability Process**

The 2016 Comprehensive Plan update is part of a broader effort on the part of the Village of Nyack to support principles of sustainability in the community. The Village's ongoing sustainability programs began when the Village adopted the pledge to become a Climate Smart Community in 2013. The Climate Smart Community Program is an initiative led by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) to help local governments reduce municipal and community greenhouse gas emissions. In becoming a Climate Smart Community, Nyack committed to achieve five milestones: 1) conduct a GHG emissions inventory, 2) adopt emissions reduction targets, 3) develop a climate action plan, 4) develop implementation policies, and 5) monitor and verify results of GHG emissions reductions. The Climate Smart Community Program is helping to guide the Village's sustainability programs and the Comprehensive Plan supports this effort by incorporating principles of sustainability throughout chapters.

The Village has been working toward achieving these milestones, including completion of the Sustainable Nyack Action Plan in 2015. The Action Plan was produced to guide ongoing action by the Nyack Green Policy Task Force, which is made up of the Village's Sustainability Coordinator, elected

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officials, Village staff and members of the community. It outlines goals, targets, and actions related to energy, recycling and waste, landscape and water, and communication and outreach. The Action Plan also provides a framework for incorporating sustainability principles into the Comprehensive Plan.

The goal of the Comprehensive Plan is to carry forward the goals of the Sustainable Nyack Action Plan and support the Climate Smart Community pledge. Through the comprehensive planning process, the Steering Committee identified sustainability goals that can be achieved through the comprehensive plan, reviewed the Village's zoning code and developed recommendations to revise the code to promote sustainability, developed strategies to reduce energy and GHG emissions in municipal operations, identified potential capital projects and plans to support sustainability goals, and began to develop GHG emissions reduction targets.

As the Comprehensive Plan is finalized, the Green Policy Task Force is also working on the Nyack Climate Action Plan, which is one component of meeting the Climate Smart Community pledge. The Climate Action Plan will include finalized GHG emissions targets, an implementation strategy for sustainability goals, and a strategy for ongoing monitoring and reporting of GHG emissions reductions.

## ***Completed and Ongoing Projects***

The Village has already begun efforts to reduce GHG emissions, including adopting the Climate Smart Community (CSC) Pledge and then creating a CSC Task Force and appointing a CSC Coordinator. As a first step, the Village has developed a municipal GHG emissions inventory in order to establish a baseline for measuring future GHG emissions and monitoring progress in meeting emissions reduction targets.

Additional efforts by the Village are underway and ongoing. For example, the Village is in the process of developing a community-wide GHG emissions inventory. The Village is also working on establishing emissions reduction targets for both municipal and community GHG emissions. The Comprehensive Plan is one piece of the Village's broader goal of developing a Climate Action Plan which will include long-term strategies to reduce GHG emissions and monitor progress. In addition, Nyack is also currently conducting a study of pedestrian and bicycle options to reduce vehicle miles travelled in the downtown. The study, funded through the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) Grant, is looking at the potential to improve safety and access for pedestrians and bicyclists in Nyack's downtown.

The Nyack Comprehensive Plan fits within the Village's ongoing process to promote principles of sustainability, both by municipal operations and throughout the community as a whole. The role of the Comprehensive Plan in this process is to identify recommendations from the Sustainable Nyack Action Plan that can be moved forward by the Comprehensive Plan while also setting the Village up to complete its CSC pledge following adoption of the plan. In particular, the Comprehensive Plan attempts to promote principles of sustainability related to green infrastructure, renewable energy policy, transportation infrastructure, building energy efficiency, environmental resources, and solid waste management.

## ***Best Practices and Policies for Sustainability***

In addition to advancing Nyack's ongoing sustainability efforts, this Comprehensive Plan is intended to support a number of national and regional practices for enhancing sustainability:

- *Mid-Hudson Regional Sustainability Plan (2013)* – This report, funded through the Cleaner Greener

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Communities program for a consortium of communities in the region, is intended to promote sustainable development focused on climate change mitigation and adaptation, environmental justice, economic development and governance. Key goals of the Regional Sustainability that Nyack envisions its Comprehensive Plan supporting are:

- Increasing carpool, transit and non-motorized vehicle work trips and decreasing single-occupancy vehicle work trips;
  - Reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT);
  - Reducing Hudson River bridge crossings per registered vehicle;
  - Reducing transportation GHG emissions per capita; and
  - Reducing stationary fuel consumption GHG emissions.
- *Sustaining Places: Best Practices for Comprehensive Plans (2015)* – The American Planning Association (APA) has identified a set of standards for comprehensive plans to encourage communities to plan for meeting the needs of current and future generations without compromising environmental resources.

The APA's Comprehensive Plan Standards for Sustaining Places are organized around six overarching themes:

- A livable built environment;
- Harmony with nature;
- A resilient economy;
- Interwoven equity;
- Healthy communities; and
- Responsible regionalism.

- *LEED for Neighborhood Development (LEED ND) rating system* – The U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED®) program has created a rating system that integrates the principles of smart growth, urbanism and green building into a national system for neighborhood design. LEED ND scores projects according to satisfaction of five categories:
  - *Smart Location and Linkage (SLL)* – site design that minimizes adverse environmental effects and avoids contributing to sprawl.
  - *Neighborhood Pattern and Design (NPD)* – creation of compact, walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods with good connections to nearby communities.
  - *Green Infrastructure and Buildings (GIB)* – building techniques that reduce waste and use energy, water and materials more efficiency than conventional building practices.
  - *Innovation (IN)* – projects that use innovative planning practices and sustainable building features.
  - *Regional Priority (RP)* – design that addresses local environmental issues.

Although Nyack is a largely built-out community of established neighborhoods, it is appropriate that the Village look to the LEED ND rating system as a model in supporting initiatives such as transit-oriented development (TOD), alternative transportation modes and green infrastructure and building.

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## 1.4 VISION STATEMENT

Nyack is a Village that strives to:

- **Value** its rich historic assets and walkable neighborhoods and the diverse and creative culture that has grown from them.
- **Enhance** its Hudson River waterfront as a vital and attractive resource that should be fully accessible and enjoyed by all.
- **Strengthen** its vibrant downtown community to help current businesses thrive, attract new investment and visitors and provide economic opportunities for Village residents.
- **Protect** neighborhood character while creating housing opportunities for a wide range of people, including seniors, young professionals, low-income individuals and families, and the disabled.
- **Create** a sustainable and resilient community capable of balancing interdependent needs in a lasting way, and prepared for and adaptable to the impacts of climate change.

Nyack's Comprehensive Plan seeks to protect and enhance its historic and residential neighborhoods; facilitate revitalization of the downtown, waterfront and gateway areas; and chart a path toward a more sustainable and resilient future.