

Village of Castleton-on-Hudson, New York

**2015 ADDENDUM
TO THE
2005 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

Submitted to the Village Board of Trustees

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*Village of Castleton-on-Hudson
Economic Development Committee*

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2015 INTRODUCTION

In November 2014, after the Main Street Stewart's Shop closed, Mayor Keegan and the Village Board established an economic development committee to redevelop the Main Street shopping district. The committee is focused on three areas: 1) resolving the issues surrounding access to the Hudson River; 2) documenting "zombie" buildings and other derelict properties; and, 3) updating the village's comprehensive plan.

Past efforts in planning were reviewed by a subcommittee and it was determined that much of the 2005 Comprehensive Plan was still relevant in 2015. The subcommittee decided to draft this addendum to the 2005 report, addressing the following questions:

- How far did we come?
- What goals have been achieved?
- Did we make progress on others?
- Are there goals that should be added, revised or deleted?
- What is the current plan for accomplishing the goals that were not met but still are important?
- What is the plan for achieving any goals that are added?

As noted in the 2005 document, "Many facets of this "new" Castleton-on-Hudson Comprehensive Plan are not new. The Committee has reviewed and included many elements of several previously prepared plans that date back over thirty years. These planning documents raised issues that continue to be relevant as much today as they were thirty years ago."

At the same time, some conditions have worsened, some have been resolved, and others have emerged in a way that may not have been relevant ten years ago. On the bleak side, the Main Street business district has continued to decline, as was made painfully clear with the loss of the Stewart's Shop at the end of October 2014; Village residents still have no access to the Hudson River; and Hamilton Printing is almost out of business. On the side of accomplishments, Green Avenue has been completely reconstructed and the storm water problems have been remedied; some sidewalks in the village have been replaced; the library in the Village Hall has been upgraded and renovated; and the Village has successfully negotiated with the Town of Schodack to solve drinking water issues. Finally, good news on the horizon includes a New York State EDC grant of \$500,000 for the former Fort Orange site; and 82 campsites are slated to open at the Schodack Island State Park in the summer of 2015.

With all this in mind, the subcommittee has endeavored to reflect on and update the 2005 Comprehensive Plan by making practical, specific recommendations. This document contains commentary and excerpts of what the subcommittee determined to be the most imperative and do-able recommendations in the 2005 plan; new 2015 analysis, goals and recommendations along with new sections identified by the shaded areas. The appendices include the original goals and recommendations as they appear in the 2005 comprehensive plan; a 2015 document summarizing possible funding sources for Main Street redevelopment; the full 2005 Comprehensive Plan; and "A Village Walk" from 1977, which documents historic buildings in the village.

2015 Analysis of the Economy

The closure of the Stewart's Grocery and Ice Cream Shop on Main Street was strong evidence that the prior assumptions and beliefs expressed regarding economic development in the 2005 comprehensive plan were incorrect. Accepting village status as a "bedroom community," with a Main Street that will serve the "upper village" will not provide a path to economic development or revitalization. While economic plans refer back to the strong independent economy of Castleton's historic pre-WWII era, and the desire to recapture that flavor; the referenced divide between the "upper village" and "Main Street" has only grown over the last 10 years. The 2005 comprehensive plan identifies Main Street as shabby and where crime is a problem. Is it? Is there crime or just the perception of crime? Are we stereotyping residents and neighborhoods based on economic status? To see Stewart's close, after 40 years on Main Street, when it is one of the most popular and beloved convenience stores in the Capital region demonstrated that the aversion to Main Street by the "upper village" is more powerful than the draw of an extremely successful regionally famous business. What are the prospects for another shop without Stewart's strength, capital and reputation?

This requires us to think differently, to step back from decades of the same formulas and models for improvement. The clear next step for Main Street development is to look beyond the borders of the village. A short 10 minute drive north is Albany and to the south is the City of Hudson. The village is beautifully situated on the shore of the Hudson River which is a popular natural resource for transportation and recreation. Also, since 2005, Schodack Island state park has grown in popularity with a boat launch, walking trails and soon to be opened overnight camp sites. Over the past 10 years the City of Hudson has drawn more and more weekend visitors and part-time residents from the NYC area. The asset of the river and the economy of the Hudson River corridor is where we will find opportunities for development. This shift in focus is one that will require a solid plan for external marketing as well as internal preparations for an external audience.

To develop a plan with focus on this new external orientation will take a substantial amount of time and effort on the part of the economic development committee. Rather than surveying the 1,400 residents of the village for answers, it will take researching and understanding the greater capital region and NYS. It will require looking at the success stories of towns and villages that have reinvented themselves and used their refreshed image to inspire and draw new businesses that in turn attract new consumers.

There have been many great ideas shared at EDC meetings. There is the need for more discussion as we develop these ideas further. A few key ideas:

- Develop a theme for Main Street redevelopment based on the Hudson River, the Boat Club and the Schodack Island State Park. Replicate the type of village or town that supports recreational sports such as boating, kayaking, biking, fishing and camping. The village can encourage businesses that provide needed rentals, supplies and services.
- Successfully gain access to the river from Main Street by opening the planned park at the former Hudson Marine Sales location. Include a kayak and canoe launch.
- Develop a draw to the village by promoting our history. There can be several focal points – Brickmaking, Bungalow houses, trains.
- Develop a cultural draw to the village. The bank building is ready to be a hub for arts and cultural events. Shops and storefronts can be occupied by working artists or house galleries. Foster a Center for Performing Arts. Outdoor plays on the green, etc.
- This is just the start of the potential

2015 Recommendations:

The following list contains the recommendations that have been moved forward from the original 2005 Comprehensive Plan. The intent is to create a targeted focus to accomplish the new EDC goals for economic development. Given the fact that the original plan was in development for four years, each recommendation has value and if accomplished would benefit the village. The assumption is that given limited time and resources – a high-yield targeted approach is necessary.

HISTORY & GEOGRAPHY

- Establish a walking link to the Schodack Island State Park.
- Continue to pursue revitalization of the Village's riverfront.
- Enhance opportunities for residents and visitors to view the Hudson River.

HISTORIC & CULTURE RESOURCES

- Work with the New York State Education Department and the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation to evaluate and inventory the Village's historic buildings.
- Promote the current Castleton Historic District and develop guidelines consistent with meeting eligibility to secure grants and funding.
- Develop and adopt standards for signage located in the Castleton Historic District.
- Research and inventory the Village's historic photographs. Work in conjunction with the Schodack/Castleton Public Library to create a central repository for historic photographs.
- Create a collection of physical artifacts from the Village's past and centralize this collection.
- Create an awareness of history by erecting interpretive panels at various key areas of the Village.
- Develop a walking history trail in conjunction with the interpretation.

PARKS & RECREATION

- Continue to work with State agencies to provide access to, and fund the construction of, a mini park on the former Marine Sales property at the base of Scott Avenue.
- In conjunction with the above mini park, design and construct a landscaped parking area, playground, and sitting area on the northwest corner of Scott Avenue and North Main Street.
- Explore opportunities to develop marine-related uses of the waterfront and develop public/private partnerships to operate these facilities.
- Work with the Hudson River Valley Greenway, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, & Historic Preservation, Town of Schodack, and Rensselaer County to develop linking trail systems. Link these trail systems with the proposed Village trail systems.

ECONOMY

- Develop and market the Village's positive aspects and future potential.
- Create a Business Development Council to procure important parcels of property for further planned development and work with businesses and developers.
- Create more off-street parking and limited time parking on Main Street and adjacent areas to provide for resident and customer parking.
- Establish commercial corners (zones) at the north end of Main Street for future business development Plan for construction of a Village square on Main Street to form a focal point for the Village and to set a theme for revitalization.
- Create additional satellite parking areas and link these areas to Main Street by means of walkways, pathways, and stairs.

HOUSING

- Initiate a Village policy to help market Main Street property as it becomes available.
- Appoint a public housing authority to seek grants and develop public housing and/or senior housing. Continue to enforce provisions of the zoning ordinance which limit the conversion of single family homes to multiple family dwellings.

PUBLIC & COMMUNITY SERVICES

- Pursue efforts to bury public and private utility lines throughout the Village to enhance safety and appearance.

TRANSPORTATION

- Make Castleton a walking village by instituting a consistent and budgeted program to repair and/or install new sidewalks complete with ADA curb cuts.
- Link sidewalks with proposed trail systems. Install sidewalk resting and viewing areas complete with purchased landscape furnishings.
- Work with State and county transportation authorities to establish a more comprehensive public transportation plan for the Village and surrounding area.
- Establish a program with the Castleton Boat Club to provide for more dockage for transient boaters.

REGIONAL PLANNING

- Work jointly with the town to establish permanent waterfront access and boat, canoe, and kayak launching sites.
- View the waterfront as the town and the Village's waterfront. Prepare joint grants to develop the waterfront.
- Work jointly with the town to prepare a new Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan WRP.
- Work jointly with the town to create additional public transportation routes and senior citizen transportation.