

Draft Strategic Plan for the Town of Canaan

Prepared by the Canaan Strategic Plan Committee

Submitted to the Town Board on October 31, 2003

Canaan Strategic Plan – Draft Submitted to the Town Board

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I. INTRODUCTION

This Canaan Strategic Plan is hereby submitted to the Canaan Supervisor and Town Board by the Canaan Strategic Plan Committee. We offer this plan with excitement and enthusiasm. It represents our ten-month effort to identify and record the desires and needs of the Canaan community. It reflects the people's recognition of what we have, what we value, and what we desire for the future. It calls upon us to be proactive in shaping that future.

We submit this plan for adoption by the Town Board. Acting within the scope of its policy power, the Board, by adopting this plan, will fulfill its obligation to protect and promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the Town of Canaan. Moreover, it satisfies the requirements of the Governor's Office for Small Cities, 2002 Technical Assistance Grant Program, Community Development Strategic Plan Grant.

The Strategic Plan process formally began over a year ago, when in August 2002, the Town Board voted to apply for a New York State Small Cities Technical Assistance Grant. That application (see Appendix 1) was accepted and money was given to the Town of Canaan (hereafter referred to as "Canaan"), which in turn contracted with the New York State Rural Housing Coalition and Housing Resources of Columbia County to provide technical assistance. After an open selection process, the 15 newly chosen members trudged through the cold and snow to the first meeting of the Strategic Plan Committee in January 2003 (see Appendix 2 for the committee list). Many of us were strangers to each other, bound together not by a common philosophy, but by a desire to help improve our community. That meeting, like all subsequent events, attracted an audience of concerned citizens.

Through the winter months and into the spring, the Strategic Plan Committee worked with the professional planning consultants to organize a process for gathering the concerns and priorities of the town's residents (see Appendix 3 for the committee's calendar). A Community Survey was developed, distributed, filled out by 379 Canaan households, returned, and compiled and analyzed by the consultants. This response of over 34% of Canaan households showed an extraordinary degree of concern about the future of our town. (The full survey results, both the quantitative responses to the questions and the written comments of respondents, are too lengthy to attach here, but are available on the Town website, www.canaannewyork.org, and from the Town Clerk.)

Two well attended public meetings on April 26th and June 14th followed the Community Survey. These combined introductory presentations with small group discussions and public comment. The results were then summarized in charts showing the issues of concern reflected at the meetings (see Appendix 4).

We repeatedly heard the following priorities from the residents who submitted the survey and attended the public meetings:

- Preserve farmland, historic buildings and sites, open spaces, scenic views, and woodlands
- Encourage single family housing
- Insure environmental quality, particularly with concern for water quality, noise levels, traffic, and visual character
- Support interaction, communication, and volunteerism among town residents
- Maintain the rural atmosphere of the community
- Limit major commercial development while encouraging local business and agriculture

Based on this public input as well as census data (see Appendix 5), the Committee went to work drafting outlines and papers on specific topics. Five working groups were formed:

- Conservation and Preservation of History, Agriculture, Open Space
- Natural Resources and Environment
- Economic Development
- Housing
- Community Services/Outreach

The working groups each prepared draft sections of the Strategic Plan, which were then reviewed at two meetings by the Committee as a whole with public participation. After making the Preliminary Draft available to the public, an additional open meeting was held on Saturday, September 20th in order to assure maximum public participation in preparing the Plan for submission to the Town Board. All the public comments from that meeting were subsequently reviewed by the committee and many resulted in changes to the plan.

The Canaan Strategic plan is a continuing process, not a final product. We recommend adoption of this plan as a vital step along a continuing path to building consensus and to preserving the quality of life in our community. Completing this first phase of the process will enhance our ability to obtain outside funding to implement objectives defined in the plan. We also recommend that as one of its first acts after adoption of the plan, the Town Board consider developing a phased implementation plan that might include:

1. An identification of priorities of goals to be accomplished within time periods
2. The financial cost of implementation of each priority
3. Inclusion of volunteers in the implementation program, including committees established by the Town Board
4. Identification and pursuit of funding sources outside the town
5. An Annual Strategic Plan Report to show the progress being made to achieve the goals
6. A Five-Year Review of the Strategic Plan in order to assure its continuing relevance to the needs of Canaan

We will have the town we want - today and tomorrow - only if we work in an inclusive fashion to develop a consensus on our goals and how to achieve them. Tools exist to maintain Canaan's quality of life. The question remains whether or not we choose to use those tools. The Strategic

Plan Committee recommends that we take a proactive approach to change, continuing the strategic planning process by committing to goals and identifying strategies to achieve those goals. We share a process; the product will be the Canaan we agree to preserve.

II. PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION: HISTORY, AGRICULTURE, OPEN SPACE

Keep Canaan's quality of life. This is the recurrent theme of town residents during the Strategic Plan process. The responses to the survey, comments at Committee meetings, statements at public meetings, all concur: *People like the town just as it is* (Chatham Courier, June 26, 2003). Preservation and conservation are the keys to achieving the goal. This section of the Strategic Plan deals with strategies for preserving and conserving the history, farms, and open space of Canaan.

1. Historic Preservation

"The historic buildings in a community are tangible links with the nation's past that help provide a sense of identity and stability that is often missing in this era of constant change... Preservation is an anchor that keeps communities together and re-establishes pride and economic vitality."

-Excerpt from a 1981 U.S. Dept of the Interior policy directive

Historic preservation is an invaluable part of a long-term sustained effort to preserve Canaan's rural character while ensuring stability and economic development. Successful protection of the town's heritage will benefit residents as a whole for the following reasons:

- Enhancement of our quality of life
- Physical and psychological link to our past
- Educational benefits
- Economic benefit through tourism
- Attract new residents who will contribute to the town
- Increases property values over time

The following are proposed actions in the realm of historic preservation.

A. Continue to make local history available to the public. Current resources include:

- Historical Societies in Canaan, Red Rock and Kinderhook (Columbia County Historical Society)
- Historical markers
- Booklets published in 1959 and 1979 by the Canaan Historical Society

B. Continue to build on the historical work that has been done and find new ways to bring Canaan's history to the attention of residents and visitors alike. Potential projects in this direction are:

1. Commission a historical survey of the town and its immediate surroundings
2. Create a series of maps, based on maps stored at the County Historical Society, that could be sold at the Historical Societies, showing the town at four different times in history (e.g., 1776, 1835, 1890, 1945)
3. Create a pamphlet and map to guide visitors on driving, hiking and walking tours
4. Apply for additional historical markers
5. Produce a history of farming and farms in Canaan
6. Pursue the idea of creating a walkway to link old mill sites along the Stony Kill

C. Identify sources of funding and support to preserve historic houses and sites, and provide this information and/or support to residents. Often, there is a perception that the cost for preserving historic houses and sites is too high, especially when the burden falls on the individual property-owner. However, there are many programs in place that are designed to make preservation feasible and even potentially lucrative.

Federal Programs: The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 created the National Register of Historic Places, the official list of properties significant in the history, architecture, archeology, and culture of the United States. Once a property is on this list, it is eligible for federal and state funding. State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPO) administer the national program at the state level.

State Programs: The New York State Historic Preservation Act of 1980 created the New York State Register of Historic Places. The Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Places (OPRHP) was created as a reviewing body for state-level funding and maintains an informative website. Major benefits of listing on the Federal or State Registers of Historic Places include:

- Owners of depreciable, certified historic properties may take a 20% federal income tax credit for costs of substantial rehabilitation
- Access to a wider variety of funding sources for maintenance and renovation
- No restrictions placed on private owners of registered properties

D. Investigate forming a citizen board on historic preservation to identify and protect treasured historic properties. Preservation needs to be a community effort in order to share the work and the benefits. A citizen board, such as a historic preservation commission, would perform the following functions:

1. Survey the town to identify historic properties
2. Research funding and support options
3. Help coordinate applications for grants, other funding, and/or Register of Historic Places
4. Begin to identify Historic Districts. Possibilities might be:
 - Canaan Four Corners (the Town Hall and Stoddard Park area)
 - Canaan Center (the Historical Society and Warner's Tavern area)
 - Frisbee Street
 - Red Rock
 - East Chatham

E. Investigate the possibility of setting aside Historic Districts and applying for New York Certified Local Government (CLG) status. Designating Historic Districts and targeting these areas for preservation would achieve the following:

1. Conserve the historic feeling of the town and prevent older buildings from being lost to neglect or ruin
2. Help define historic areas and encourage a wider vision of preservation
3. Foster a sense of pride in the town
4. Dovetail well with the idea of a town center, where there could be a pedestrian area, small shops, perhaps a coffee-shop, all housed in buildings that fit into the character of the area
5. Key step in fund-raising; larger grants become accessible when the goal is preservation on a larger scale, because many of the grants are earmarked for public areas

Many of the major grants of state-administered federal money are only open to municipalities that have CLG status. Since 1985, New York has given out almost one million dollars in more than 130 subgrants to its CLGs.

2. Agricultural Conservation

Encouragement of farmers and conservation of agricultural lands are central to maintaining Canaan's current quality of life. This irreplaceable land produces our food and provides a diversity of scenery, as well as wildlife habitat. It also contributes to the economic viability of the town. *See Section III: Natural Resources and Environment and Section IV: Economic Development for further consideration of this topic.*

A. Ensure that residents who wish to farm are encouraged and supported, as part of an overall effort to maintain the town's rural feeling and its open spaces. Locally, Canaan could support farmers by providing the following:

- Farmers' Market
- Clearinghouse where landowners could identify potential farmers and vice-versa, to farm currently fallow land
- A forum for participation in regional marketing and advertising programs
- Promotion of programs offered by local organizations such as Columbia County Soil and Water Conservation District and Cornell Cooperative Extension of Columbia County

B. Encourage programs that support the expansion and preservation of agriculture.

Canaan should provide support and assistance to farmers through supportive laws, timely information on grants, and/or other support both financial and technical. Some of the tools used in farmland conservation are:

- Agricultural Protective Zoning
- Columbia County Right to Farm legislation
- Conservation easements
- Acquisition and/or transfer of Development Rights
- Agricultural District Programs
- Zoning law allowing additional housing density on farms
- State and Federal programs which support small-scale farming

C. Coordinate with other strategic plan programs. As part of the effort to emphasize history, tourism, and economic development, Canaan should encourage farm tours, Bed & Breakfast farms, special Canaan Day activities that feature agriculture, and the purchase and consumption of locally produced food.

3. Non-Agricultural Open Space

Preserving non-agricultural vacant land is critical to maintaining Canaan's quality of life. Meadows, wetlands, and wood lots provide the texture and unspoiled environment. Open lands combined with concentrating development gives the best opportunity for meeting future agricultural needs, conserving wildlife habitat, maintaining water quality, and providing areas for outdoor recreation.

A. Provide opportunities for individual landowners to preserve land.

1. Establish a clearinghouse for information on programs and methods of open-space preservation
2. Encourage donation of land to the town or not-for-profit organizations
3. Coordinate with not-for-profit organizations, such as the Columbia Land Conservancy, Inc., to accept conservation easements
4. Aid landowners in participating in programs such as timber management, wetlands reserve program, and wildlife habitat incentive programs

B. Through the Town government, actively pursue open-space initiatives and support the establishment of open space for hunting, public recreation, open vistas and wildlife habitat. This is of particular importance given the lack of public land in Canaan.

1. Work with existing organizations such as Canaan Conservation Club, Canaan Rifle Club, and Columbia Land Conservancy
2. Pursue New York State funds for open space and cost of community services studies
3. Apply for New York State funds for the acquisition of park and recreation lands for public use
4. Work with elected officials to arrange Forest Legacy grants and other programs to acquire undeveloped land
5. Investigate the creation of a Canaan land acquisition fund to be funded as part of the real estate tax

See Section III: Natural Resources and Environment and Section V: Housing for further discussion on open space.

III. NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT

In the area of natural resources and environment, this plan puts forward the following goal: **To provide the leadership and citizens of Canaan with strategies to protect and promote the natural resources that define the "rural character" of our community and enhance our quality of life.** The following objectives are critical to reaching this goal:

- Support the conservation of undeveloped land
- Increase publicly accessible nature areas for recreational and educational use
- Monitor and maintain surface water quality in Canaan
- Maintain adequate and safe household water supplies
- Preserve dark skies
- Support measures to maintain/improve Canaan air quality
- Limit noise pollution

Following are the proposed actions to reach these objectives.

A. Support the conservation of undeveloped land

1. Partner with the Columbia County Land Conservancy to increase public awareness of tools available to maintain a desirable open space standard for Canaan

2. Encourage the application of these tools by working with the appropriate institutions to assist citizens in obtaining support for the conservation of their farmlands and forestlands

See Section II: Preservation and Conservation and Section V: Housing for other discussion on this topic.

B. Increase publicly accessible nature areas for recreational and educational use

1. Support the formation of a citizens' group to pursue ways to create an array of lands accessible to the public. Such lands could be used for a variety of recreational and educational uses including but not limited to: wetlands for canoeing, forests for hiking and hunting, paths for walking and biking, separated trails for both motorized and non-motorized enjoyment, and ridgelines for scenic splendor.
2. Support the development of a wetland walkway through the Town-owned land that parallels Route 295
3. Support inclusion of a pedestrian zone along County Route 30 in conjunction with the proposed Queechy Lake storm drain project
4. Acquire and/or develop for distribution educational leaflets on wild flora and fauna and respectful use of nature
5. Develop Queechy Lake Good Neighbor Guidelines for public distribution

See Section VI: Community Services/Outreach for more on this topic.

C. Monitor and maintain surface water quality in Canaan

1. Support Queechy Lake Club Management Plan, specifically proposals related to storm water management and sewer district (see Appendices 6 and 7)
2. Support the development of a plan to assess the quality of other surface waters to include but not be limited to creeks, ponds, and lakes

D. Encourage the maintenance of adequate and safe household water supplies

1. Collect information on the quality and availability of drinking water in Canaan from the Department of Environmental Conservation
2. Conduct a ground water assessment as outlined in New York Rural Water Association document and from this formulate suggested water-source protection guidelines in relation to development
3. Acquire and/or develop for distribution guidelines for conscientious water use and information on well water testing

E. Preserve dark skies

1. Review and enforce current zoning regulations on exterior lighting
2. Assess the effects of light pollution on our quality of rural life and, if warranted, research, and enact existing models for Town ordinances relating to outdoor lighting
3. Promote the use of technologies available for reducing light pollution

See Appendix 8 for discussion of light pollution. *See also Section VI: Community Services/Outreach for complementary recommendations.*

F. Support measures to maintain/improve Canaan air quality

1. Enforce diesel idle laws along the Exit B-3 area of the NYS Thruway
2. Make clean air a priority when considering commercial development
3. Monitor anecdotal medical evidence of poor air quality
4. Work with regional initiatives that seek to limit long-range air pollution problems

G. Limit noise pollution

1. Enforce zoning regulations regarding decibel tolerance
2. Review adequacy of current zoning regulations and, if deemed necessary, research models for Town ordinances regarding noise pollution
3. Develop for public distribution Good Neighbor Guidelines regarding noise
4. Explore other methods for reducing noise pollution from trucks and traffic

See also Section VI: Community Services/Outreach for complementary recommendations.

IV. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Discussion focused on five areas that collectively represent a comprehensive approach to appropriate and sustainable economic development for Canaan, which would also have a positive impact on preserving the quality of life most important to town residents. These are practical opportunities that constitute a healthy blend of traditional and historical Canaan resources and new technologies and economic endeavors.

The five areas of potential economic development identified by the committee are:

- Organic and niche farming
- Development of the area around Exit B-3
- Home-based businesses
- Canaan town center
- Tourism

A. Promote organic and niche farming

The committee drew extensively from the comments and emphasis relating to bringing back farming to the forefront of the economic life in Canaan, a theme that was reported by virtually all of the small groups at the two Saturday Public Meetings.

The committee recommends that a detailed fact-finding effort be initiated as part of the strategic planning process to identify a variety of specific areas and resources:

- Incentives, regulations, and zoning codes
- Technical assistance
- Supportive grant funding
- Farmers' market collaboration with information and databases of relevant farming-related agencies
- University agricultural schools and departments and community-based farming groups

These resources can provide the basis for developing Canaan-specific guidelines for expanding farming in Canaan as a viable economic activity, especially organic and niche farming.

Inherent in this approach is also the preservation of much of Canaan's open space, because the pressure to develop open land with residential and commercial expansion will be partially satisfied by keeping the open space as economically viable farmland.

B. Develop the area around Exit B-3 in ways that do not intrude on the rural nature of Canaan

A number of the small working groups at the Saturday Public Meetings and a number of comments in the surveys identified the development of the Commercial Zone surrounding Exit B-3 as critical to the overall economic and lifestyle issues in Canaan. There appears to be a strongly held belief among a majority of the residents of Canaan that the development of the Commercial Zone surrounding Exit B-3 should not be allowed to intrude on the rural nature of Canaan, while at the same time it should be a major contributing factor in the future economic stability of Canaan.

Although some town residents feel that it would be ideal if there were simply to be no additional commercial development at the Exit B-3 Commercial Zone, the committee feels that to do nothing regarding a balanced strategic plan for the development of this major commercial zone in Canaan would simply invite some accidental non-planned use that might be counter to the

desires of the majority of town residents at some future point, over which the town would have no retroactive recourse.

To achieve this critical balance, the committee recommends exploring various options, including the possibility of establishing at Exit B-3 a small high tech office and laboratory complex that might serve as an auxiliary to the high tech center being forged in the Albany area surrounding the University at Albany, State University of New York, and RPI. Small- to medium-sized high tech businesses may be attracted by the potential for significantly less expensive space and the unique location of Exit B-3 along the Massachusetts Turnpike (I-90), with its close proximity to Albany and convenient proximity to New York City and Boston. It is important to include in any such high tech development proposal amenities such as a pharmacy, restaurants, and other specialty stores, including the potential for walkways and pedestrian access. It is also deemed desirable to consider architectural motifs that draw on the cultural traditions of the Canaan area, such as Shaker design, for the conceptual and artistic appearance of the buildings and public spaces.

In pursuing this recommendation, the Town should endeavor to meet with existing stakeholders in the economic life of the Exit B-3 area to gain additional insights into existing needs and problems and potential successful approaches to maximize the potential for positive economic development in this critical Canaan commercial district.

The Strategic Plan Committee has already contacted the University at Albany, Department of Regional and Urban Planning about providing consultation and other assistance in our planning for this important location. They have agreed to assist us in the planning around Exit B-3 as well as with the Town Center proposal below.

C. Encourage home-based businesses through incentives and changes to Town ordinances

There was a strong consensus among the small groups at the Saturday Public Meetings that home-based businesses are a positive but under-supported part of the economic life in Canaan. The committee believes that an essential component of positive future economic development in Canaan is the creative expansion of home-based businesses in Canaan through appropriate incentives and changes in Town ordinances. An extensive review of the means by which Canaan can create such a network of incentives and ordinance changes, including improved high-speed internet access, should be initiated as part of the ongoing Canaan Strategic Planning activities.

D. Develop a designated Canaan Town Center

For reasons related to cultural-historical benefits, as well as economic development, the committee endorses the development of a designated Canaan Town Center. This concept was raised frequently in the small groups, which met at the two Saturday Public Meetings and received a great deal of support in those discussions.

The most logical geographic location of such a center is in the corridor stretching south from the intersection of Route 5 and Route 295, along Route 5 past the park and Town Hall. Ideas to explore include:

- Expansion of the park
- Expansion of the property owned by the Town surrounding the Town Hall
- Establishment of services and amenities in that area, including hiking trails running parallel to the railroad tracks West from Route 5 and South of Route 295

These ideas and others need to be fully explored to develop a comprehensive and realistic design for such a Canaan Town Center. Historical, cultural, and artistic/architectural traditions of Canaan and the region should be a major part of the conceptual development of this initiative. The working group is eager to explore other locations that may also serve to advance this important goal for Canaan. Such exploration, including possible funding to support planning and implementation stages, should be a part of the continuing work of the Canaan Strategic Planning effort.

See the recommendations in Section II: Preservation and Conservation.

E. Promote tourism and tourism-related businesses

Exploration should be made into ways to promote tourism-related businesses that are consistent with the traditions and priorities identified as part of the Canaan strategic planning process. Business opportunities such as a farmers' market near the center of town at the blinking light on Route 295 and Route 5 and specialized crafts markets featuring crafts of the Berkshire-Hudson River region are examples of such tourism-related business opportunities, the development of which would enhance the economic health of Canaan and be reinforcing of its rich traditions. An attempt should be made to develop a Canaan tourism slogan, which can be consistently used to promote Canaan tourism. Such a slogan should also be part of the Canaan website, which should be used to provide detailed promotional information about Canaan.

F. To support the above 5 recommendations, the following steps are recommended:

1. **Take this comprehensive set of areas of economic development for Canaan as an integrated approach.** It is our belief that significant exploration of all five of these areas should follow as ongoing work of the Canaan Strategic Planning effort. Canaan's economic development will be the most successful if it can rely on a set of specific implementation steps that draw as extensively as possible from all five of these areas.
2. **Improve infrastructure to remove barriers and limitations for businesses.** An important part of an excellent economic development plan for Canaan should be the successful and creative addressing of infrastructure issues. A number of new technologies need to be considered for advancing the overall economic development of Canaan, such as improved high-speed Internet access and waste and water treatment facilities. In regard to waste and water treatment, there is some local expertise from the innovative work being done at the Darrow School and elsewhere that should be reviewed for potential consideration in the economic development approach for Canaan.

3. **Give special attention to assisting existing and dormant businesses in Canaan.** One of the principles of economic development that is key to broad-based support among town residents is that there should be a concerted effort to assist existing Canaan businesses through the development of the economic development strategies that the Town government adopts. The Town should also develop strategies that look to assist in revitalizing dormant businesses in Canaan, either for their original or newly developed purposes.
4. **Take steps to attract young individuals, including young families, to Canaan.** Essential to the development and implementation of a successful economic development approach for Canaan is the attraction and retention of young individuals, including young families, with the energy and talent they would bring. In a number of these potential areas of economic development, and potentially with others as well, strategies should be developed to strengthen the attraction of living in Canaan for this population. As we develop more opportunities in Canaan and improve and maintain the quality of life, we will encourage younger people and families to stay and settle in our town.

The committee recommends strongly that these areas be explored thoroughly and in a timely manner, but notes that there is no requirement to establish a set of premature implementation target dates that could jeopardize for Canaan a balanced and sustainable plan of economic growth, the breadth of community support, and the excellence of implementation.

V. HOUSING

With near unanimity those who responded to the survey or participated in the public hearings want to see the rural character of the town maintained and, to the extent possible, its open spaces preserved. To achieve these goals we believe the following recommendations about housing are important for serious study and possible action by the Town.

A. Explore ways to control housing development through mechanisms that preserve the rural character of the town.

1. **Determine what areas** outside the commercial zoning districts are currently undeveloped, which are unsuitable for development (because of topography or because they are wetlands etc.) and which (with priorities) are **important to preserve**.
2. **Anticipate**, with the advice of experts and financed if possible by a grant, what our **housing needs** will be during the next 3, 5, 10 years and what kinds of new residents (like weekenders, retirees, those attracted by any new employment opportunities that the town can generate or that may arise in nearby areas) are likely to produce those needs. This might help in forecasting how much pressure there will be on our open spaces. In addition, the town needs to know in what ways and to what extent these expected needs will affect environmental matters such as water availability and quality, as well as community services such as fire protection and road maintenance.

3. **Study open-space preservation techniques**, consulting with communities that are similar to ours and have implemented such techniques, and determine which ones might best help Canaan achieve the goal of preserving the town's open space. Some options to consider are:

- Scenic and conservation easements, if the Town promotes them in ways that ensure such easements will remain permanent and, while providing landowners with federal or state income tax deductions, will not have significant adverse property tax effects on the town or other property owners
- "Cluster" housing, if the Town legislates it in a way that creates a hamlet style of development while permanently preserving significant amounts of open space, and in a way that does not have significant adverse property tax effects (see Appendix 9 for more on this topic)
- Changes in zoning density, for example, changing RA-4 density from a 5- to 10-acre minimum lot size.
- Changes in zoning laws related to two-family dwellings, multifamily housing, and mobile home parks (see point C below)
- Other open-space preservation techniques that experts in rural housing, conservation, and planning might suggest as appropriate for Canaan

B. Examine whether or not there is sufficient affordable housing in Canaan

An inventory of current housing in Canaan (by type, single family, two family, multifamily, mobile home, approximate age and value, lot size) might be useful in addressing a concern or uncertainty expressed by many in the survey about whether there is enough affordable housing in Canaan. Perhaps the Town government could obtain a grant to finance such an inventory. Affordability is perhaps of greatest relevance to the town's ability to attract younger persons as residents and to permit older, retired residents to continue to live here, and the town should define its concept of and expectations for "affordability."

C. Review/revise Canaan's zoning law to ensure that all provisions promote the type of development that preserves the town's rural character and open space

1. Canaan's zoning law currently prohibits new **two-family dwellings** but allows multifamily units in the C-II and C-III commercial districts. Only a small number of survey respondents voted to prohibit two-family dwellings, while a majority of those who addressed the question voted to prohibit multifamily dwellings and attached housing such as condominiums. The reasons for, continued appropriateness of, and effects on open-space preservation of the two-family prohibition should be studied.
2. Many survey respondents felt that the town should prohibit or allow only with conditions **multifamily housing**. Canaan's existing zoning provisions for multifamily housing do allow for it, though subject to extensive conditions, and they also require a special permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals and site plan approval by the Planning Board. Although multifamily housing was given low ratings by the public, we recommend that the subject be reviewed again in the context of all of the feedback received during the

strategic planning process. This review is suggested because multifamily housing is one way to address widely expressed concerns in the survey and public meetings, concerns such as housing affordability generally, availability of affordable rental housing for seniors, and preservation of open space.

3. The Zoning Law currently allows **mobile home parks** in the RA-3 district with a special permit and site plan approval. A large majority of survey respondents voted to prohibit mobile home parks and it therefore seems appropriate that consideration be given to banning them from all districts. New individual mobile homes are permitted but only in the RA-3 district. The survey questions did not cover the desirability of individual mobile homes in that or any other zoning district, but it is understood that they cannot legally be entirely excluded from the town.

VI. COMMUNITY SERVICES/OUTREACH

The overall goal of the strategic plan is to improve the quality of life in Canaan over the coming five years. The overall goal for this segment of the strategic plan, Community Services/Outreach, is to improve the quality of life in Canaan through:

- Enhanced community services, including those provided by the Town as well as those provided by other organizations
- Greater outreach to residents in ways that allow them to benefit fully from all this town has to offer
- Initiatives that strengthen relationships among residents
- Measures that reduce negative forces on the quality of life
- Mechanisms that increase the sense of community

A. Improve communications between Town government and residents

1. Print an expanded **brochure** including a piece on living in Canaan and a map of the town including, but not limited to, the locations of the Town Hall, Town garage, Stoddard Park, natural areas accessible to the public, Queechy Lake boat launch, historical societies, post offices, firehouses, and the library.
2. Encourage residents to use the **Town website** to read Board minutes (Town Board, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals), to download forms and applications, to learn about town services, to know of volunteer opportunities, and to access Town laws. Make computer access to the website available at the Town Hall for those who do not have computers in their homes.
3. Make available in hard copy in the Clerk's office **information sheets** on town services and volunteer opportunities (information that is already available on the website).

4. Have **e-mail addresses** for Town officials and bodies: Town Supervisor, Town Clerk, Highway Superintendent, Building Inspector/Zoning Enforcement Officer, Planning Board, and Zoning Board of Appeals.

B. Ensure that Town laws and their application serve to promote and protect the desirable quality of life in Canaan

1. Find ways to **educate residents** about the town's current Zoning Law and Subdivision Regulations, as well as other local laws. Use these educational opportunities to make residents aware of the existence and purpose of zoning restrictions, to reduce the frequency of people proceeding without zoning approval, and to promote a uniform standard for fairness. Post all Town laws on the Town website. Make the Zoning Law easier to use, for example, by indexing the current document.
2. When the **Zoning Law is revised**, make copies available to residents at no cost, for a limited time, at the Town Hall. Outline the revisions for ease of identification.
3. Improve **enforcement of zoning regulations** through Town Board oversight, review, and evaluation of the work of the Building Inspector/Zoning Enforcement Officer to ensure skilled and knowledgeable enforcement. Promote proactive versus reactive efforts to keep activity within the law.
4. Strengthen **enforcement of other laws**, including noise and lighting control and speed limits on roads. *See Section III: Natural Resources and Environment.*

C. Provide residents with expanded and enhanced recreational opportunities and enrichment programs that build the sense of community

1. Promote greater use of **Stoddard Park, the Canaan Library, and the Town Hall** through wider communication on the potential use of these facilities by the public. Improve Stoddard Park, including repair and maintenance of the tennis courts, basketball court, benches, playground, and baseball field. *These measures should assist with enhancing a sense of a town center. See the recommendations in Section IV: Economic Development.*
2. Increase the number of **natural areas** accessible to the public and do more to inform residents of existing such areas. Create a trail or boardwalk between the Town Hall and Town garage. *See the recommendations in Section III: Natural Resources and Environment.*
3. Assess the extent to which residents are not using **Queechy Lake** because of the cost and if significant, seek ways to overcome this barrier.
4. Increase participation by town residents in **enrichment programs**. Expand participation in current programs (the Senior Group, the summer Town Recreation Program, and

Meals on Wheels). Assess the demand for additional programs such as RSVP (for senior citizens) and encourage such groups to come into Canaan.

D. Promote volunteerism, community service, and civic responsibility among all ages and groups of the Canaan population

1. Provide information about **volunteer opportunities** through the website and information provided in the Clerk's office (see Objective #1.C. above).
2. Provide **support to and incentives for volunteer** organizations and the individuals who staff them, e.g., through tax breaks for community service. (Current NYS law allows this for volunteer firefighters if the county and town choose to adopt such a program.) Consider financial and non-monetary ways to support all who volunteer their time and talents for the benefit of the town. Have the Town Supervisor and Town Board provide, on an ongoing basis, recognition of individuals and groups who service the town.
3. Create and provide to visitors and new residents **town informational packets** that include above-mentioned items such as good neighbor guidelines, materials on respectful use of nature areas and water conservation, the town map/brochure, and lists of town services and volunteer opportunities. *See Section III: Natural Resources and Environment.*

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Community Development Strategic Plan Grant application

Appendix 2: List of Committee Members

Appendix 3: Committee's Strategic Plan Calendar

Appendix 4: Public Meeting Comments

Appendix 5: Census Data Referenced by the Committee

Appendix 6: Summary of Queechy Lake Club Management Plan

Appendix 7: The State of Queechy Lake June 2000

Appendix 8: Light Pollution

Appendix 9: Cluster Housing

**Appendix 1: Community Development Strategic Plan
Grant Application**

See attached document

Applicant Information

- September 3, 2002

Town of Canaan Small Cities Strategic Planning Grant Proposal

Calculation of In-Kind Value

Item	Anticipated Hours	Hourly Rate	Total Value
Local Officials	30	35.00	1,050.00
Supervisor	125	30.00	3,750.00
Board Members (5)	6	22.00	132.00
Building Inspector	4	25.00	100.00
Highway Superintendent	90	25.00	2,250.00
Planning Bd. Members	90	25.00	2,250.00
Zoning Bd. Of Appeals	18	35.00	630.00
County Planning Staff			** to attend regular monthly meetings
Community Volunteers (15)	270	18.00	4,860.00
Meeting Room Rental Value	18	16.67	300.06
Telephone			150.00
Postage			50.00
Total In-kind			15,522.06
Cash Match (staffing from NRC through HRCC)			5,250.00
Total			20,772.06

Proposal Information

1. Proposal:

The following information should be typed on 8 ½ by 11 paper with each section clearly labeled:

- a. Describe the importance of the strategic plan to the community. Describe the benefits the community intends to derive from completing the strategic plan and the preliminary needs the strategic plan intends to address.
- b. Describe the community's plan to ensure citizen and business community participation.
- c. Define the community's level of commitment to complete and implement the strategic plan. (i.e. Letter of Intention from governing body to officially adopt the plan.)
- d. Provide a proposed schedule highlighting milestones for the completion of the strategic plan.
- e. Describe any existing plans that identify community development needs including how they interact or interconnect with other plans/programs, actions already taken to meet the needs, partnerships developed and available resources and the resources needed for implementation).
- f. Provide an outline of the steps that will be followed to develop the proposed strategic plan.

2. Financial Information- Maximum Grant Request \$25,000

Grant Amount Requested	\$ 23,035.50
Required 40% Match	\$ 20,772.06 (\$9,214.20 required match threshold)
In-Kind Match Proposed	\$15,522.06
Cash Match Proposed	\$ 5,250.00 *
Total Project Cost	\$ 41,807.56

Organization/Agency's current annual budget \$1,034,678.00 (Attach separate sheet if necessary)

* Cash match contribution from staffing contributed by Housing Resources of Columbia County through a grant from the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation. See Attachment 4 for the In-Kind Match budget.

The following information should be typed on 8 ½ by 11 paper with each section clearly labeled:

- a. Demonstrate the need for financial assistance and that the TA grant will not be substituted for funds available in the municipality's general fund and/or private funding sources.
- b. Describe how the estimated cost of the project was determined.
- c. Provide the name of the source(s) and the type of funding (grant/loan, in-kind) of the match and evidence that the funding is available.

Applicant Authorization

To the best of my knowledge and belief, all data in this application is true and correct. The document has been duly authorized by the governing body of the applicant and the applicant will comply with the attached assurance if the assistance is rendered.

Ann W. Vedder

Supervisor

Signature of Chief Elected Official

August _____, 2002
Date Signed

Describe the importance of the strategic plan to the community. Describe the benefits the community intends to derive from completing the strategic plan and the preliminary needs the strategic plan intends to address.

The Town of Canaan is a small rural community located on the New York/Massachusetts border in Columbia County. The town is a very scenic area, with mountainous heavily wooded terrain bisected by transportation routes such as the Thruway, Route 22, Route 295, and the railroad. The town has extremely limited commercial development, centered for the most part in the vicinity of Exit B-3 of the New York State Thruway. This development consists of travel-oriented businesses, such as a truck stop, gas stations and a motel, and is designated as an Empire Zone. There are some restaurants, a general store and a car repair facility along Route 295 in the vicinity of Queechy Lake, as well as scattered bed and breakfast inns catering to summer visitors to the community. Much of the Town is mountainous terrain, and many of the homes are used as vacation homes. The largest employer is the Berkshire Farm Center, a residential school for troubled youth. Until a few years ago, the community was served by a Community Health Plan office, but that facility was closed about the same time that CHP merged with Kaiser Permanente. There is a small library in the town, and as of the beginning of July, the Town became responsible for the library financing. The school district cut library support funding from its 2002-03 budget, and a Friends committee recently raised \$4000 at a book sale, and the Town secured a \$5000 member item from Assemblyman Manning to offset this loss. There is no senior services center in the Town, although a senior luncheon program is held at the Town Hall on Wednesdays, and there is a well-utilized Volunteer Meals on Wheels program. There is one public park in the Town- Stoddard Park- located across Route 295 from the Town Hall. This recreation space has a pond, baseball diamond, picnic area, and two tennis courts in need of major repair. This park is the home of a summer recreation program for local youth. The vast majority of the tax base in the town is provided by residences. There are no housing subdivisions in the Town, and most of the housing stock pre-dates 1950. Some of the existing housing stock is in need of rehabilitation. There is virtually no rental housing in the town, for either senior citizens nor young families employed in the service industries located in the area.

The Town of Canaan is governed by an elected Board of 5, and has no full-time employees with the exception of the highway department. The Town Hall is relatively new, having been built 5 years ago, but the facility has major flaws that will have to be addressed. The lack of full time staff has resulted in the inability of the Town to effectively pursue community development funding in the past.

The strategic plan to be developed under this grant seeks to address the need for additional development in the town, balancing new growth with environmental sensitivity, providing new job opportunities with business growth, new affordable housing opportunities for year round residents (both senior citizens and young families), addressing infrastructure shortcomings, identifying and remediating possible environmental contaminants, all within a vision to maintain the rural flavor of the area. The task of developing a strategic plan will be complicated by the diverse interests of the many stakeholders, including competing interests of residents and business owners, or year round residents and vacation home owners. These diverse issues include both different visions of the future of the community, as well as timing issues, as many vacation home-owners are unable to participate in community meetings during the winter season. The strategic plan development process will need to respect these differences, as well as include methodologies for maximizing community input beyond public hearings and community meetings. Careful planning, though, may make it possible to identify strategies for multi-use projects that can resolve multiple community needs with lower overall capital outlay.

The strategic planning process will help identify various priority elements requiring immediate programmatic attention on the part of local officials, as well as identifying potential funding programs suitable for each activity, and establishing a multi-year timeline for preparing and submitting grant applications. This strategic plan will become a road map for local officials to follow in terms of community development planning, providing guidance on which programs to pursue, as well as helping to determine when, and how much, consultant assistance will be needed each year to be successful in pursuing funding for that year's priority projects.

Describe the community's plan to ensure citizen and business community participation.

The Community Visioning process model involves outreach to all stakeholder groups in the community to notify them of the planning and visioning meeting schedule. Stakeholder groups will be directly invited to provide designee representation at all visioning meetings to ensure that the diverse concerns and issues of all members of the community are voiced. In addition, the data collection element of the visioning process will include a community survey to identify citizen issues and concerns. If feasible, meals on wheels volunteers will be used to deliver, implement, and collect survey responses from shut-in senior citizens. To the greatest extent possible, email and a website will be utilized to encourage public participation in the process, including part time residents. Community meetings will be scheduled to permit the broadest possible attendance. The facilitators will work to disseminate meeting notes/minutes via electronic means following each community meeting, to help promote additional feedback.

The business community will be further engaged in this process through the Town's existing community development board, which has already been established and consists of representatives of the Town Board plus business owners (primarily located in the vicinity of the B-3 Thruway interchange). The Community Development Board will be an integral player in the visioning process, providing insight into business development issues, resources and obstacles.

Define the community's level of commitment to complete and implement the strategic plan. (i.e. Letter of Intent from governing body to officially adopt the plan.)

The Town of Canaan is committed to implementing the strategic plan for community development upon completion. The Town Board has issued a Letter of Intent to adopt the community development plan (see Attachment 1) and is committed to participate fully in the survey process, provide input on local needs, identify/project reasonable budget levels for community development consulting services, and participate in community development outreach and visioning efforts. The attached in-kind services budget is based on a commitment from Town officials to attend monthly community development meetings for six months as the strategic plan is developed. Once the strategic plan is developed and adopted formally, it is expected that ongoing meetings of the Community Development Board will be held to ensure that momentum is not lost, that consultants remain on task, and that the priority schedule is adjusted to reflect gains (or losses) in securing funding for specific projects and programs. The Town has passed a resolution authorizing submittal of this grant request and authorizing the Town Supervisor to enter into contracts with the facilitating agencies (HRCC and NYS RHC) once funding has been awarded for this project from the Governor's Office of Small Cities (Attachment 5).

The Rural Housing Coalition and Housing Resources of Columbia County have both committed to participate in this effort contingent upon the Town's receipt of grant funding to support the data gathering and facilitation effort. Letters from the Rural Housing Coalition and Housing Resources are included as Attachments 2 and 3 of this application.

Provide a proposed schedule highlighting milestones for the completion of the strategic plan.

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| ❖ Execute grant agreement with GOSC | December 31, 2002 |
| ❖ Execute strategic planning facilitation contracts with New York State Rural Housing Coalition, Inc. and Housing Resources of Columbia County, Inc. | January 15, 2003 |
| ❖ Development of community outreach plan (flyers, development of e-mail newsgroup, website, media contact list) | February 15, 2003 |
| ❖ Schedule community visioning meetings | March 1, 2003
April 1, 2003 |

- ❖ Conduct mail-in survey
- ❖ Convene Strategic Plan Development group meetings

- ❖ Develop Strategic Plan Report
- ❖ Adoption of Strategic Plan by Town Board

May 1, 2003
 March 15, 2003
 June 1, 2003
 July 1, 2003
 August 1, 2003
 August-Sept. 2003
 October, 2003

Describe any existing plans that identify community development needs including how they interact or interconnect with other plans/programs, actions already taken to meet the needs, partnerships developed and available resources and the resources needed for implementation).

The town has secured Empire Zone status for the commercial area surrounding Thruway Exit B-3. This area is a natural nexus for future commercial growth, and may offer opportunities for limited industrial development as well. There is significant undeveloped acreage surrounding this area, all under control of the same owner, who has expressed interest to the Town in developing the land in a planned, coherent fashion. The town's Community Development Board was convened to respond to the challenges and opportunities presented by this development potential.

Lacking infrastructure, the Empire Zone area will need to be developed in a carefully planned manner, with different phases implemented as water and sewer services can be provided, and other issues (such as possible site contamination) are addressed. The site of a former gas station may be suitable for development as leasable retail space once site testing clearly indicates that it is free of contaminants. Water and sewer service to this site could make the location feasible for the development of affordable senior rental apartments above leasable commercial space. The hillside areas surrounding the Empire Zone offer development potential for new housing, which can include new affordable first time homeownership opportunities, as well as more expensive housing, if infrastructure can be provided to the area. The town is interested in exploring development covenants and incentives with the property owner that will encourage mixed income development, preservation of open space, and other community betterment issues.

Housing Resources of Columbia County, one of the facilitators identified to participate in the development of the strategic plan, is a non-profit housing agency (and NYS-funded Rural Preservation Company) charged with improving housing conditions in Columbia County. HRCC is also a developer and manager of affordable housing units, and has the expertise to guide local officials on realistic pre-development of new affordable housing, including issues related to market, siting, finance, and other pre-development concerns. HRCC also has experience as an administrator of housing rehabilitation and first time home-buyer assistance programs, and therefore is ideally positioned to assist the town in analyzing local needs in those areas.

The New York State Rural Housing Coalition, the other identified facilitator, has significant experience in the development of housing and community development grant programs, and operates a Resource Development searchable database on their website (www.ruralhousing.org). Through this resource, NYSRHC will be able to readily assist the town in identifying suitable funding programs that match the priority projects that will be identified in the community visioning process.

Provide an outline of the steps that will be followed to develop the proposed strategic plan.

- ❖ Develop a community outreach strategy that provides the broadest possible dissemination of information regarding the goals of the strategic planning process, and inviting public participation;
- ❖ Conduct a community survey to solicit feedback on priority issues of concern;
- ❖ Convene a series of 3 public meetings to solicit public input on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the vitality of the town;

- ❖ Disseminate the results/outcomes of the public meetings to all stakeholders and invite feedback, via local media, email newsgroup, and website;
- ❖ Convene a working group of local officials, the Community Development Board, planning officials (county), and academics to review community input and develop priority list of projects and programs to address community concerns;
- ❖ Identify funding programs that are appropriate to support the priority project list;
- ❖ Identify possible consultants to work on developing funding proposals for projects on priority list;
- ❖ Establish a timeline for submission of grant applications to the funding programs identified for the priority list;
- ❖ Town Board adopts the community development strategy.

Demonstrate the need for financial assistance and that the TA grant will not be substituted for funds available in the municipality's general fund and/or private funding sources.

The Town of Canaan is a small rural town located in eastern Columbia County. The Town has limited tax base and relies exclusively on property levies for operating funding for municipal government. The Town's budget is simply insufficient to permit expenses for this project without outside aid. The strategic plan will enable the Town to begin addressing the land use and development issues (such as a lack of commercial or industrial development of any significant scope currently) that results in such limited tax base.

As there are no funds in the Town's budget for planning study purposes, the funding requested will not substitute for funds available from another source. The lack of available funding for non-essential projects or planning is clearly evidenced by the inability of the Town to make much needed repairs to local facilities such as the tennis courts in Stoddard Park, or correct the flaws in the Town Hall structure.

Describe how the estimated cost of the project was determined.

The staffing budget for this project is based on hourly rates provided by the facilitating agencies- Housing Resources of Columbia County, and the New York State Rural Housing Coalition, Inc. The time estimates are based on their involvement in consulting assignments of this type for other communities.

The budget is based on a project plan that begins with a substantial time investment in data collection and survey work, followed by a series of community visioning meetings to discuss Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats and Opportunities. The project facilitators are expected to conduct in-depth interviews with local officials such as the building inspector and highway superintendent to ensure that their perspectives are incorporated into the later visioning discussions. The 3 community meetings are expected to be 3 hour sessions. Overall, local officials, board members will have invested over 363 hours in this process. A panel of 15 community volunteers will represent various community interests at the 3 visioning meetings, providing another 270 man-hours in support for this effort. The in-kind budget calculates various hourly rates valuing this time investment from \$18 per hour to \$35 per hour. The Town also expects to invest incidental postage and telephone expense in the development of the planning study.

The total operational budget is included in the proposal from the New York State Rural Housing Coalition, found in Attachment 3. The in-kind budget includes \$5,250 in direct expense coverage provided by a grant from the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation to Housing Resources of Columbia County. This cash match is supplemented by the time of local officials, Board members, community volunteers and county planning staff to participate in the community visioning and data collection processes. The total combination of cash and in-kind match expected for this program represents 225% of the threshold requirement of 40% of the grant request.

Provide the name of the source(s) and the type of funding (grant/loan, in-kind) of the match and evidence that the funding is available.

The in-kind match for this proposal is in the form of the time investment of local officials, Town employees, and concerned citizens who will be dedicating themselves to a regular series of facilitated visioning meetings, one-on-one interviews, and survey sessions to provide background and context for the planning and strategy development process. Please refer to the in-kind budget found in Attachment 4 for more detail on the proposed match.

A portion of the staffing needs for this project will be provided by Housing Resources of Columbia County under a grant from the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation. This grant has already been received, and the staff position has been filled. The HRCC staff is available to begin work on this project upon notification of receipt of a GOSC strategic planning grant.

Appendix 2: List of Committee Members

COMMITTEE

Brenda Archer Adams
Jeffrey Arp-Sandel
Marcia Blethen August
Michael Belknap
Grace E. Bischoff
Christine (Spee) Braun
Donald Fischer
Gene Leganczuk
Pat Liddle
Donald Malin
Don Mele
Paul Naamon
Robert Ross
Ken Soule
Kevin Walsh

ADVISORY BOARD

John Adams
Leonard Dooren
Verlyn Klinkenborg
Jonathan Schor
Conrad Vispo

Appendix 3: TOWN OF CANAAN STRATEGIC PLAN DEVELOPMENT CALENDAR

DEC 2002	\$23,035.50 planning grant awarded to Town of Canaan Town Board solicits proposals for a planning consultant Town Board solicits Strategic Plan Committee members
JAN 2003	Town Board appoints Colin McKnight of the New York State Rural Housing Coalition as planning consultant Town Board appoints Strategic Plan Committee & Advisory Board members Strategic Plan Committee meeting on January 29 Committee meets consultant team, reviews process and receives draft database matrix and draft survey from consultant
FEB 2003	Strategic Plan Committee meeting on February 18 Committee works on draft survey and database matrix Draft survey submitted to Planning Board for input
MAR 2003	Survey questions finalized incorporating Planning Board comments Surveys mailed to residents and property owners
APR 2003	Survey return date April 4 Surveys were accepted through the public meeting on April 26 for maximum resident participation. Approximately 400 surveys returned of 1285 mailed, a 30% return rate. Consultant begins summary of survey data Strategic Plan Committee meeting on April 8 Committee works on the format and agenda for the first public session First public participation meeting on April 26 at the Town Hall 70 to 80 residents participated in a three-hour session
MAY 2003	Consultant continues summary of survey data Strategic Plan Committee meeting on May 13 Committee works on the format and agenda for the second public session
JUNE 2003	Second public participation meeting on June 14 at the Town Hall Survey priorities and April 26 priorities identified Strategic Plan Committee meeting on June 24 Work Group formation and assignments

- JULY 2003** Work Group meetings
Analysis and review of data obtained through surveys, public sessions, correspondence and database
- AUG 2003** Work Group meetings
Analysis and review of data obtained through surveys, public sessions, correspondence and database for guidelines and recommendations to full committee
- Strategic Plan Committee meeting, August 19, 7:00 PM, Town Hall
 Work Groups report to full committee
- SEPT 2003** Strategic Plan Committee meeting, September 9, 7:00 PM, Town Hall
Committee assembles preliminary / draft concepts for a plan
- Preliminary / Draft Strategic Plan concepts delivered to Town Clerk for public information, Friday, September 12**
- Third public meeting, Saturday, September 20, 9:30 AM, Town Hall**
Committee to present preliminary / draft concepts to the public
- OCT 2003** Strategic Plan Committee meeting, October 8, 7:00 PM, Town Hall
Committee works on draft Strategic Plan, incorporating public comments, for November submission to the Town Board
- NOV 2003** **Draft Strategic Plan submission to Town Board for November Meeting, November 3**
- Town Board workshop meeting on Draft Strategic Plan, Monday
 November 10, 6:00 PM, Town Hall
- Public Hearing on draft Strategic Plan, to be scheduled by the Town Board**
- Strategic Plan Committee meeting, date TBA
Committee works on draft Strategic Plan, incorporating public comments, for December submission to the Town Board
- DEC 2003** Town Board additional review of Strategic Plan
- Town Board adoption of Strategic Plan

REV 8 October 2003

Appendix 4: Public Meeting Comments

See attached documents or access them on the Town website
www.canaannewyork.org

Town of Canaan Strategic Plan Development
Priority Issues Identified April 26, 2003 Public Meeting

Group 1 ➤ Development at what cost? ➤ Development s/have a net positive effect balancing tax issues & preservation of rural character ➤ What kinds of commercial development should be encouraged? ➤ Availability of water and the effect on development ➤ Value open space, lake, views ➤ Losing historical character with uncontrolled growth ➤ A strategic plan should address more than bldg or zoning issues; s/consider a balance of taxes, infrastructure, resources and government	Group 2 ➤ Need for the town to foster communication (mediation) ➤ Commercial development- what, where and how? Benefits if done properly ➤ Taxes- how much and what do we get for what we pay? ➤ Enforcement of zoning laws and speed limits ➤ Managing infrastructure with limited resources
Group 3 ➤ Opportunities for job and economic growth that respect rural character ➤ Maintain rural character & landscape ➤ B3 interchange-easy, toll free access to Thruway ➤ Concern that growth can bring traffic and congestion ➤ Industry must change with the times ➤ Development- balance contributions to town with demands on infrastructure	Group 4 ➤ Losing vision, growth that does not preserve rural character ➤ Quality/quantity of affordable housing ➤ Historical character of town ➤ B3 issues-managed growth to contribute to tax base ➤ High taxes / limited opportunities for employment ➤ Reluctance to enforce zoning law
Group 5 ➤ Vulnerability to exclusive high end development ➤ Challenge of creating zoning that actually matches our desires ➤ Preservation of our resources ➤ Challenge of communication and participation ➤ Public input provides town officials with a good picture of what residents want	Group 6 ➤ Emphasis on conservation/nature reserves/trails ➤ Historical nature /character of town ➤ Support for small farms, farming ➤ Real estate pressure- rising taxes ➤ Housing growth inevitable, support slower growth that preserves large undeveloped tracts ➤ Selective commercial development ➤ Volunteers for fire departments and town services ➤ Preserving rural character, farmlands, views, and fresh water

Additional comments in General Session:

- Traffic patterns, will they support development?
- Is multiple housing, condos/apartments desirable in town?
- Police protection- cover costs by issuing tickets to speeding out of state truckers
- Water quality- degradation from beaver population. Wetlands area is a former trout stream.
- Water supply plans, availability (or lack of) water determines development
- Aquifer recharge area?
- Health issues?

This is a summary of the small group discussion in the meeting of April 26. Additional comments or questions may be directed to the Strategic Plan Committee at any time in the process as follows:

Mail: Town of Canaan Strategic Plan Committee
PO BOX 58
Canaan, NY 12029

Email: canplan@earthlink.net

Priority Issues Identified June 14, 2003

Group 1 ➤ Housing Development Clarify the meaning of different housing alternatives (types) Use controlled development Reach a balance- look at each development and weigh the pros and cons Have a plan for development areas ➤ Economic Development Effective, balanced development of B3 Community plan to support existing businesses Explore allowing more home based businesses/types of development with low impact on town ➤ Quality of Life Identify and plan for health care issues Accentuate historic properties Encourage community centric volunteerism involving all age groups, schools/colleges, churches ➤ Preserving Farms / Open land Commitment to central depository of info/skills to keep economically viable farms Collaboration with experts/external organizations Give incentives for working farms (zoning, special uses permits, town designation)	Group 2 ➤ Maintain Canaan as we know and love it. Retain and support volunteers (tax incentives) Encourage commercial development that is low impact, sustainable, locally focused, and offers jobs for teens and is not a negative for existing businesses ➤ Improve communication infrastructure (telephone, cable, etc.) ➤ Protect water and air quality ➤ Conserve open space ➤ Economic and cultural diversity Retain younger people in community, Promote home business opportunities ➤ Affordable/senior housing concerns- to resist or create opportunities ➤ Explore zoning strategies to achieve above goals ➤ Explore tax policy as a methodology to accomplish this
Group 3 ➤ Maintain the status quo- if it's not broken, don't fix it ➤ A central/community meeting place in the town for community gathering /news ➤ Encourage development of small businesses that conform to the existing character of the community including home based businesses ➤ Encourage commercial development under certain conditions, within character of existing community ➤ Water analysis- figure out what level of water capacity really exists ➤ Traffic/speed limits noise and safety	Group 4 ➤ Traffic and speed limits impact on quality of life and taxes. Monitor the effect of speed on road surfaces; Purchase or lease speed recording device(s); Review speed limits on town roads. ➤ Rural character: balance of preservation and development, conservation of resources ➤ Educate community re: existing zoning laws; discussion; explore alternative means of preserving open space & resources ➤ Encourage controlled commercial development including home

Group 5 ➤ Preservation and conservation of historical buildings and natural areas and farms ➤ Zoning to protect hilltops ➤ Seek designation and funding for historical districts/buildings ➤ Expand Historical Society ➤ Educate public about natural areas and wildlife in Town ➤ Favorable tax breaks for farms ➤ Tax Break for conservation easements for walking/hiking/nature trails ➤ Public Input (educate/discuss/vote) ➤ Referendum on strategic plan ➤ Make clear why strategic plan process got started ➤ Ensure adequate public input (summer meeting to involve weekenders) ➤ Commercial Zoning and Development Follow (enforce?) zoning laws, don't expand commercial zones ➤ Provide essential Services- esp. Emergency Fire and Health (ie clinic) ➤ Tax breaks for homeowners who volunteer for fire co./EMS ➤ (Provide?) public transportation	Group 6 ➤ Consider the interaction between commercial and non-commercial uses and how zoning impacts that (creation of buffer areas) ➤ Define cluster housing, review impact on water, septic and zoning (density?). Zoning to accomplish this needs to be explored. ➤ All development needs to be reviewed in terms of the impact/interaction of that development on nature, "tread lightly upon the land" should be the philosophy. Development should preserve and encourage enjoyment of the rural character w/out destroying it. ➤ The community needs to continue to have the opportunity to discuss future development concerns in a civil manner. Recommend the creation of a local roundtable forum to meet regularly to continue this discussion.
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Comments in Open Forum:

- Planned Business Development concept, consider adding to the zoning law?
- Concern about development of B3, impact on neighbors along Route 22.
- Committee plans for draft plan distribution for public comment?
- Look at other similar communities?
- Timeline is short for public review once draft is prepared, can process be extended?
- Concerns about water quantity / quality: housing density impact on water.
- Concerns about health issues such as West Nile virus.
- Confusion in the community re: cluster housing, define it and talk about it.
- The need for an effective economic base to contribute to tax base.
- Natural resources- ie gravel needed, yet zoning limits access to this natural resource
- Balance land use - developed vs. undeveloped.
- The need to provide opportunities for further communication.
- Local sustainability- conservation of resources.
- The school tax subsidizes other towns if young people don't stay in the community where they are educated.
- Commercial zones are treated like the enemy, additional zoning makes it harder for businesses to operate.
- Support ideas to encourage and support a local economy, look to other communities for a viable model

Appendix 5: Census Data Referenced by the Committee

US Census Data Town of Canaan 2000				Data Collected for 1999			
	Source Code	Canaan	%	New Lebanon	%	Columbia County	%
Total Population	p1	1820	100%	2454	100%	63094	100%
White	p6	1590	87.36%	2373	96.70%	58233	92.30%
Other than white	p6	230	12.64%	81	3.30%	4861	7.70%
Family Households	p13	413	64.43%	647	66.36%	16662	67.04%
NonFamily Households	p13	228	35.57%	328	33.64%	8190	32.96%
Households Over 65	p13	173	26.99%	222	22.77%	6492	26.12%
HH Income <\$20,000	p31	92	14.35%	156	16.00%	5054	20.34%
Median HH Income	p53	\$51,607	123.12%	\$44,805	106.89%	\$41,915	100%
PerCapita Income	p82	\$28,209	126.70%	\$20,529	92.20%	\$22,265	100%
HH With Soc. Security Income	p62	226	35.26%	270	27.69%	8061	32.44%
HH With SSI Income	p63	18	2.81%	36	3.69%	985	3.96%
HH With Pub. Asst. Income	p64	9	1.40%	11	1.13%	540	2.17%
Income @ or < Poverty Level	p88	77	12.01%	211	21.64%	5471	22.01%
Total Housing Units	h1	970	100.00%	1201	100.00%	30207	100%
Occupied Housing Units	h6	643	66.29%	983	81.85%	24796	82.09%
Vacant Housing Units *	h6	327	33.71%	218	18.15%	5411	17.91%
Owner Occupied Housing Units	h7	533	82.89%	726	73.86%	17493	70.55%
Renter Occupied Housing Units	h7	110	17.11%	257	26.14%	7303	29.45%
Units For Rent (vacant)	h8	2	0.61%	34	15.60%	429	7.93%
Units For Sale (vacant)	h8	24	7.34%	16	7.34%	500	9.24%
Seasonal/Recreational	h8	278	85.02%	140	64.22%	3718	68.71%
Single family home-detached	h30	878	90.52%	871	72.52%	21224	70.26%
Single family home-attached	h30	14	1.44%	13	1.08%	535	1.77%
2 family	h30	23	2.37%	49	4.08%	2264	7.49%
3-4 unit	h30	16	1.65%	69	5.75%	1751	5.80%
5-9 unit	h30	5	0.52%	18	1.50%	885	2.93%
Mobile homes	h30	32	3.30%	179	14.90%	2809	9.30%
Median year house built	h35	1958		1962		1958	
Heat with Nat. Gas	h40	7	1.09%	3	0.31%	2775	11.19%
Heat with Bottled Gas	h40	50	7.78%	66	6.71%	1145	4.62%
Heat with Oil or Kero	h40	459	71.38%	802	81.59%	15985	64.47%
Heat with Electricity	h40	69	10.73%	50	5.09%	3661	14.76%
Heat with Wood	h40	58	9.02%	55	5.60%	1060	4.27%

* Many are Seasonal

Appendix 6: The State of Queechy Lake June 2000

See attached document

Summary
(full version
available from
Town Clerk)

**The State of Queechy Lake -
January, 2000**

Main Findings - Threats to Water Quality

Excess nutrient loading to lake - visibly manifested as silt and occasional algae blooms

Two most likely sources of this phosphorus loading:

- 1) Watershed erosion / silt carries phosphorus - especially runoff along roadways, hills cleared of vegetation, and construction sites.**
- 2) Septic systems contribute two culprits - coliform contamination and household water products containing phosphorus - if systems are over used, malfunctioning, or poorly maintained**

Additional monitoring is recommended.

Plant growth.

Currently non-native plants are not growing to nuisance levels but require continued management.

Recreational / user conflicts.

Not direct water quality issue, this is most often cited by surveyed watershed users. Jet skis / motor boats / canoes / swimmers. Prudent and conservation-oriented use of the lake is recognized as assisting to maintain the current water quality at Queechy Lake.

Draft Queechy Lake Management Plan

Reduce nutrient (phosphorus) loading - Watershed sources by:

- Reduce the rapid silt loading from road runoff - reduction of runoff from roads contiguous to lake, esp. Rte. 30
- Reduce nutrient input from septic systems.

Septics

Continue periodic Total coliform testing activities from previous years

- 1) Continue educational efforts by Lake Association about monitoring, maintenance and replacement for septics
- 2) Evaluate the Citizen's Pollution Control Program for its appropriateness
- 3) Try to re-establish group rates or discounts.
- 4) Continue interest in/ feasibility of and efforts for sewerage or a community sized on-site waste water treatment system to serve existing residences and commercial sites around the lake. .

Road runoff - preserve the existing forest, wetland and low - density residential land uses in the watershed.

- 1) Conserve wetlands.
- 2) Maintain land uses/ local zoning ordinances - permit only low density development.
- 3) Educate and involve about setback requirements
- 4) Encourage and educate about buffer strips....other management practices
- 5) Encourage and educate of current zoning practices of preservation of surrounding hillsides...prevent rapid sediment loading during precipitation events.

Plant growth (*M. spicatum*) in heavy use areas. Contain the spread.

1. Education efforts: post signs, educate importance of clean, fragment free - zebra mussel free boats.
2. Continue hand harvesting of non-native plants.

3. *Continue the current hydroraking practices* - helps some residents control plants.
4. Perform a more extensive aquatic plant survey, mapping, long term to see population changes, if any. Investigate for the presence/absence of herbivores.
5. Herbicides not acceptable option by most surveyed lake users, at this time.

RECREATION ISSUES

Boating

1. Support the FOLA in efforts to extend 5 mile speeding limit to 200 feet.
2. Help assure enforcement of the current limit. Use peer pressure.
3. Extend educational efforts post additional info at boat launches, discuss care of fuel, and prevention of spillage (MTBE and other)
4. Continue support of mandated boaters course "Make Sure, Make Shore".
5. Continue to encourage stocking of lake by DECpromotes fishing at lake.
6. Discuss controlling uses or a ban on jet skis if consensus, or make the use of them more acceptable to the majority of residents...such as lower speed limits, restrictions in time of day /place of use.
7. Continue the popular parade to encourage good use and enjoyment of lakeExtend to special portion including non-power boats.

Appendix 7: Summary of Queechy Lake Club Management Plan

This is a spring-fed lake with no inlet other than run-off from surrounding land. The watershed is about 500 acres. The lake size is approximately 135 acres with the deepest part being 45 feet; the lake averages 19 feet in depth. A solid core dam was constructed in 1919 at the outlet, which increased the water surface area by about 20% and added 18 inches to the lake depth. The shoreline is approximately four miles with 25% to 30% owned by the Berkshire Farm. Queechy is a two-tier lake with the shallow portion warmer than the deeper portion, thus the lake can support both bass and trout, which are stocked by the DEC Department of Fisheries. The lake elevation is 1,021 feet above sea level. It takes 2.8 years for the lake to flush itself of its total volume of water. The only public access is the DEC Car Top Boat Launch at the northern part of the lake. There is a swimming facility, Adams Point Beach Association, which is open to resident members of the Towns of Canaan and New Lebanon either by annual membership or through the purchase of day passes.

Queechy Lake's water quality and clarity is in the top 5% of Federation of Lakes/Department of Conservation/Citizens Statewide Lake Assessment Program sponsored lakes, which currently number approximately 200.

The Queechy Lake Club, Inc. has in place a State of the Lakes and Management Plan aimed at preserving and improving the water quality and surroundings of Queechy Lake. Copies of this plan are available to those interested.

A primary goal in this plan is to better manage and continue the club's efforts to reduce the two most conspicuous sources of phosphorus and sediment loading into Queechy Lake:

1. Road run-off containing nutrients, salt, and silt, especially at the western shore County Route 30 side
2. Overused, under-maintained, and malfunctioning septic systems

To date the club has received a DEC 50% matching grant of \$18,500 to address goal #1 and has initiated a feasibility study to accomplish reduced County Route 30 run-off into the lake. Also, the club has recently received a \$1,000 grant from the Hudson River Bank, plus pledges from the Berkshire Farm and individuals totaling \$4,000 additional to conduct a sewer feasibility study for the lake to address goal #2. Cost of this feasibility study is estimated to run \$10,000.

Appendix 8: Light Pollution

Introduction

Light pollution can occur on a localized (e.g., one house's lighting which invades a neighbors yard) scale or a more regional (i.e., a set of lights that illuminates the night sky for miles around) scale. In both cases, several solutions are possible. These include light shields which reduce light lost in unintended directions, better light orientation and positioning which focuses lighting on desired objects only, and light choice which chooses the type of light (e.g., mercury vapor, high pressure sodium) best suited to the task. It has been amply demonstrated that very satisfactory lighting can be had while reducing light pollution; indeed, light pollution is wasted light and improved fixtures and focusing can often improve lighting in the intended areas and reduce light pollution at the same time. Many lights can be retrofitted, meaning that shielding and even orientation can be improved without the need to replace the lighting system.

The Thruway tollbooths, the businesses associated with Exit B-3, and the Berkshire Farm School on Route 22 may be the largest "regional" light polluters. However, it also seems that some house owners and small businesses install all-night, poorly shielded, high-wattage lighting that affects neighbors.

Various municipalities have implemented lighting charters, and models for such charters and the process of getting them improved are available. Grants are available for some lighting improvement work, and it need not be seen as a *we* (the star-gazing resident) vs. *them* (the well lit business) issue. If well planned, lighting improvement can be a win-win situation.

Proposal

That the Town investigate the problem in more detail, identify the problem areas and possible solutions and then move towards improving them, possibly via grant-assisted light modifications. The appropriateness of a Town ordinance on lighting should depend on the extent of the problem and the willingness of the "polluters" to collaborate voluntarily. At the least, "appropriate-lighting" guidelines might be written and shared with new and existing businesses and the owners of large, lit properties.

Resources

Various organizations and resources provide information for pursuing these ideas. For starters, see the following:

To understand the general concept of light pollution and its resolution:

New England Light Pollution Advisory Group (NELPAG)

<http://cfa-www.harvard.edu/cfa/ps/nelpag.html>

International DarkSky Association,

<http://www.darksky.org>

To find information on the relevant technologies:

The above organizations plus the following

The Illuminating Engineering Society of North America (IESNA), www.iesna.org
www.buildinggreen.com

To find information on municipal policies relating to light pollution:

The above organizations and the following:

Chittenden County (Vermont) Regional Planning Commission, 1996, *The Outdoor Lighting Manual for Vermont Municipalities*. Highly recommended. Available from the PTI Publications Center at (800) 784-8976 or (301) 490-2188, pubs@pti.org. Ask for publication # 95 308.

The Indiana Council on Outdoor Lighting Education (ICOLE), <http://icole.home.att.net>

Appendix 9: Cluster Housing

See attached documents from two websites:

<http://www.plannersweb.com/articles/are015.html>

<http://ohioline.osu.edu/cd-fact/1270.html>

PlannersWeb www.plannersweb.com
PLANNING COMMISSIONERS JOURNAL

"Open Space" Zoning: What It Is & Why It Works by *Randall Arendt*

Other Articles Online ▼

"Open Space Zoning" is also included in
a printed collection of articles dealing
with **Green Essentials**

About the Author

[From Issue 5, page 4, of the PCJ, July/August 1992]

Local officials in most rural and suburbanizing areas have a long-term choice about which many are not fully aware. That is whether to continue implementing "conventional zoning", or whether to refine their existing land-use regulations to ensure the preservation of open space through creative development design.

Conventional zoning is essentially a blueprint for development, and development alone. Of course, zoning normally separates incompatible uses, and it does establish certain standards (such as maximum densities and minimum setbacks), but it typically does little to protect open space or to conserve rural character. The reason many subdivisions consist of nothing more than houselots and streets is because zoning and subdivision design standards usually require developers to provide nothing more. While many ordinances contain detailed standards for pavement thickness and culvert diameters, very few set any noteworthy standards for the quantity, quality and configuration of open space to be preserved.

Conventional zoning assigns a development designation to every acre of land, generally residential, commercial, or industrial. The only lands which are normally not designated for development are wetlands and floodplains. Conventional zoning has been accurately described as "planned sprawl," because every square foot of each development parcel is converted to front yards, back yards, streets, sidewalks, or driveways. Period. Nothing is left over to become open space, in this land-consumptive process.



Above photo is of conventional large lot zoning in Middletown, Rhode Island.



Above photo is of open space development in Lower Makefield Township, Pennsylvania, where over half of this 431 acre tract has been preserved as farmland (137 acres donated to a local farmland trust) or as woods and wetlands (100 acres). Houselots are about 1/2 acre in size. Buyer response has been very favorable, with sales outpacing similarly priced developments. The developer advertises the project as "a community that will be forever surrounded by acres of preserved farmland, open fields and woodlands."

[Editor's Note: The Center for Rural Massachusett's Web site contains excellent drawings comparing development under conventional zoning principles and development using open space/cluster principles].

A Better Solution

Local officials who are interested in ensuring that their communities will not ultimately become a seamless web of subdivisions, shopping centers and office or industrial parks now have a practical and effective alternative: compulsory open space zoning. This technique has been successfully implemented by a number of municipalities in New

England and the Mid-Atlantic states, and by several counties in Virginia, Washington State and California.

In order to avoid disturbing the equity held by existing landowners, **open space zoning allows the same overall amount of development that is already permitted.** The key difference is that this technique requires new construction to be located on only a portion -- typically half -- of the parcel. The remaining open space is permanently protected under a conservation easement co-signed by a local conservation commission or land trust, and recorded in the registry of deeds.

As "open space zoning" is based upon the technique of "clustering," these two terms are used interchangeably throughout the rest of this article. It should also be noted that the cluster concept can be restricted to detached, single-family homes, each on its own downsized houselot, in communities or in specific zoning districts where this is politically desirable. In other words, cluster housing is by no means limited to townhouses, apartments, or condominiums, as is typical in many PUDs (planned unit developments) and PRDs (planned residential developments). In fact, the classic rural village settlement pattern is a superb example of single-family clustering, sometimes with a central green constituting the permanently preserved open space.

Cluster Design

The basic principle of cluster development is to group new homes onto part of the development parcel, so that the remainder can be preserved as unbuilt open space. The degree to which this accomplishes a significant saving of land, while providing an attractive and comfortable living environment, depends largely on the quality of the zoning regulations and the expertise of the development designer (preferably someone experienced in landscape architecture).

Although the concept of clustering is fairly simple, this "new" form of development has raised concerns among some residents of rural or suburbanizing areas because it is quite different from the conventional, standardized subdivision pattern with which most of us are very familiar. Interestingly, the conventional suburban model, commonplace in many growing communities, is actually a pattern that is at odds with the otherwise traditional rural landscape. It looks "at home" only in our sprawling metropolitan post-war suburbs, where it has become the predominant building pattern.

The purpose of this article is to first briefly explain what I believe are the major advantages of requiring clustered (open space) development, and then to discuss several of the concerns typically expressed at local meetings where the open space planning concept has been discussed.

The Advantages of Open Space Development

The conventional approach to development results in the entire parcel being covered with houselots and subdivision streets. Communities which have had a lot of experience with

this type of development ultimately realize that, as one parcel after another is eventually developed, their formerly open landscape evolves into a network of "wall-to-wall" subdivisions. [See Sidebar, "Large Lot Zoning" at the end of this article].

The beauty of open space zoning is that it is easy to administer, does not penalize the rural landowner, does not take development potential away from the developer, and is extremely effective in permanently protecting a substantial proportion of every development tract. It does not require large public expenditures (to purchase development rights), and allows farmers and others to extract their rightful equity without seeing their entire land holding bulldozed for complete coverage by houselots.

This pattern of down-sized houselots and preserved open space offers distinct economic advantages to all parties. Developers can reduce the costs of building roads and, if applicable, water and sewer lines. Local governments save on snowplowing and on periodic road re-surfacing. And home buyers often pay less because of these cost savings.

Landowners who view their property as their "pension" no longer have to destroy their woods and fields in order to retire with a guaranteed income, as their equity is not diminished. Local governments do not have to raise property taxes to finance expensive open space acquisitions, and are not faced with the administrative complexities posed by TDR (transfer of development rights) systems. Developers are not placed under unreasonable constraints, and realtors gain a special marketing tool, in that views from the new houses will be guaranteed by conservation easements protecting the open space from future development.

Why Require Cluster Design?

Perhaps the most controversial issue surrounding the cluster concept is the suggestion that this open space approach be made mandatory. The rationale is that there are certain types of irreplaceable natural resources which are extremely important to protect. Among these may be listed aquifers, riverfront land, fields and pastures. In addition, clustering allows flexibility in layout so that a developer can avoid impacting important wildlife habitat areas, such as deeryards, or scenic features of the rural landscape, such as large rock formations, hill crests, and mature tree-stands. It is a local decision whether to require the cluster approach when development is proposed on any or all of these resource lands.

There are several possible options to mandating open space. One is to require the cluster approach in only certain zoning districts, or when certain resources are present. Another alternative is to authorize the planning commission to require it only when the developer's conventional plan would destroy or remove more than a specified percentage of certain listed resources, leaving determination on a case-by-case basis. Whatever the choice, it is important -- in my view -- not to leave it to the developer to decide whether to opt for cluster development. [See Sidebars "Requiring Open Space Design" and "West Manchester Township" at the end of the article].

Questions About Cluster Development:

Will It Harmonize With Its Surroundings? A concern I often hear is that cluster housing will not blend in with a town's rural character. It is true that some cluster developments done in the past have failed to harmonize with their surroundings. Recognizing this potential problem, a few communities are now requiring that new cluster plans consist of only detached, single family homes, each set on its own, down-sized individual lot, roughly resembling a traditional village pattern. This also ensures that everyone will have their own separate yard space, in addition to the larger "open space" which the cluster approach creates.

The related issue of "impact upon surrounding property values" is also often raised. Along any part of the parcel perimeter where down-sized lots would adjoin standard-sized lots, communities can require buffer strips. Along other edges, this may not be desirable or logical, as lots which border permanently protected open space almost always enjoy higher property values. Indeed, **most realtors would attest to the fact that all lots within a well-designed cluster development usually gain enhanced value as a result of the protected open space.** [See Sidebar, "Enhancing Property Values" at the end of this article].

"Open Space" Maintenance. Another issue is maintenance of the open space created by clustering. If this space is recreational (playing fields, jogging trails, tennis courts), upkeep is typically handled by a homeowners' association, to which everyone is contractually obligated to contribute when they purchase their home. Home buyers sign a legally enforceable agreement which enables the homeowners' association to collect any unpaid dues.

If the open space is agricultural, there are several options. The agricultural open space can be sold "in fee" to the homeowners' association, which can in turn lease it to local farmers. Alternatively, the original farmer can retain ownership of it and sell only his "development rights." I favor the latter option, even if the farmer is planning to retire, because he could still sell the field to a younger farmer in the neighborhood at an affordable price reflecting the land's agricultural value -- not its potential building-lot value -- thus strengthening the local farming economy.

Buffering Farm Operations. In order to reduce potential conflicts between new residents and agricultural practices, communities are beginning to require that cluster lots be separated from the protected farmland by a "buffer" strip, typically 75 to 100 feet wide. Where it is not possible to use existing woodlands for this purpose, officials can require new buffer areas to be thickly planted with a variety of rapidly growing native trees and shrubs. A similar requirement should also be placed on conventional subdivisions when they abut working fields, but this is rarely done.

Street Standards in Cluster Developments. When cluster developments are designed with privately maintained road systems, planning boards are often asked to reduce their normal street construction standards. This has sometimes created substandard conditions,

and is a practice which communities would be well-advised to resist. If subdivision street construction standards are excessive -- as they often are -- they should be revised for all types of new development, so that street width bears a reasonable relationship to the expected volume of traffic. [Editor's Note: On this point, see Joseph Molinaro's article, "Rethinking Residential Streets," in Issue 1 of the PCJ].

Sewerage and Septic Systems.

Because of the shorter road system needed to serve lots in a cluster development, substantial savings are possible with respect to the construction of roads, sewers, and water lines. Where sewer service is unavailable, however, people have expressed concerns about siting septic systems on the smaller cluster lots. Recognizing this factor, officials are requiring such houseslots to be located on that part of the parcel where soils are most favorable for leaching fields. The flexibility of cluster design allows this to happen. On the other hand, in a conventional subdivision, septic systems are located wherever the soils manage to pass minimum health requirements, even on marginal soils whose long-term suitability is questionable. In addition, it should be noted that septic systems can be located beyond one's lot lines, on an easement within the protected open space.

Summing Up:

Whether continuous coverage by large-lot subdivisions is more desirable than a mixture of village-sized cluster lots surrounded by permanently protected fields and woodland is a decision for residents and officials in each town. As long as everyone is clear about the ultimate consequences of the various development types which are available to them, these decisions can be made on an informed basis.

Sidebars:

Large Lot Zoning

One of the "solutions" that many conventional zoning ordinances use for presumably maintaining open space and rural character is large lot zoning -- that is establishing large, five to ten acre, minimum lot sizes in rural zoning districts. Although large lot zoning does reduce the number of homes that can be built, it also spreads out the homes in such a way that none of the remaining land is useable for farming, forestry, or even recreational trails. Houseslots become "too large to mow, but too small to plow," and the greater distance between homes effectively stifles the emergence of any sense of neighborhood.

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Open Space: What Size and Shape?

Unless local regulations require the open space to be at least a certain size with specific minimum dimensions, it can end up being a long narrow fringe abutting rear lot lines and the parcel's outer perimeter. This can be easily avoided by clarifying, in the ordinance, that lots and roads shall not cover more than, say, 50% of the parcel, and that at least half of this open space must be shaped so as to be useable for active recreation or agriculture, for example.

Requiring Open Space Design

Experience has shown that when clustering and open space preservation are left optional, only a small percentage of developers choose to take advantage of this approach. Most simply continue to do as they have always done: creating checkerboards of house lots and streets. This means that even though the clustering option is in the zoning ordinance, it remains essentially unused. The community is still left with conventional development patterns repeated over fields and woodlands.

If a community is reluctant to require clustering, it might consider the approach taken by Clallam County, Washington. The County recently revised its zoning from a density of one unit per five acres (which was creating non-functional "farmettes") to a minimum of thirty acres. However, the original one unit per five acres density remains available if the houselots are downsized so as not to consume more than fifteen to twenty percent of the parcel. Applying this kind of stiff "density penalty" to discourage land-consumptive farmettes may be a far more effective technique than offering meager density bonuses to encourage clustering.

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West Manchester Township, Pennsylvania

West Manchester Township, in south-central Pennsylvania, last year amended its zoning ordinance to require open space development within an undeveloped portion of the township. The area had been zoned for single-family detached residential homes, on half acre or smaller lots. Before amending the ordinance, the township had prepared build-out maps showing what the area might look like if developed under the existing conventional zoning. These maps vividly showed the potential loss of the existing farmland and open

view the various open space requirements as opportunities rather than as liabilities. A look at the most successful projects in any region will reveal that open space has not been wasted. Projects that feature open space are projects that sell and, at the same time, provide environmental amenities and opportunities for recreation." Land Development, Summer 1992, p. 25.
[Return to text of article](#)

Resources:

A valuable resource on open space development is "Dealing With Change in the Connecticut River Valley: A Design Manual for Conservation and Development," available for \$25 from the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy: (800) 848-7236. "Rural Design," a 60-minute video of Randall Arendt's slide show, provides a very useful visual introduction to cluster design and related topics. It can be ordered from the American Planning Association: (312) 955-9100.

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FactSheet Extension

Ohio State University Fact Sheet

Community Development

700 Ackerman Road, Columbus, OH 43202-1578

Cluster Development

CDFS-1270-99

Land Use Series

Thomas W. Blaine

Northeast District Specialist

Community Development

Peggy Schear

Southwest District Specialist

Community Development

Introduction

Throughout the post World War II era, out migration from urban to suburban areas and into the countryside has constituted a significant trend throughout much of the United States. In response to this phenomenon, planners, developers, and elected officials have created a number of tools designed to balance growth with the preservation of community environmental and financial assets. One tool that has received an increasing amount of attention in the 1990s is cluster development. This approach may be termed open-space development, conservation development, hamlet style, farm village, or other unique names coined by proponents and developers. Regardless of the title used to describe it, cluster development is an important tool community planners should consider as they look to the future. The purpose of this fact sheet is to describe cluster development, its history, potential, and limitations.

What Is a Subdivision?

Most of the residential development that has emerged in the suburban United States since World War II can be described as "checkerboard housing development." Since it is so common, this pattern is also considered to be "conventional development." Residential zoning regulations typically provide standards for the division of large land parcels which require that when a piece of land is divided into smaller parcels, or plots, each must have a uniform road frontage, meet specified street standards, and achieve minimum setbacks from roads or neighboring property owners. These restrictions generally result in equal lot areas with homes placed in the same

location on each lot regardless of the parcel's characteristics. The resulting group of homes or vacant lots is typically termed a subdivision. In conventional development subdivisions, all of the land is privately owned by the individual homeowners.

What Is a Cluster Subdivision?

A cluster subdivision generally sites houses on smaller parcels of land, while the additional land that would have been allocated to individual lots is converted to common shared open space for the subdivision residents. Typically, road frontage, lot size, setbacks, and other traditional subdivision regulations are redefined to permit the developer to preserve ecologically sensitive areas, historical sites, or other unique characteristics of the land being subdivided.

Consider the following distinction between a conventional and a cluster subdivision. Imagine that a 100-acre piece of land might be subdivided into 50 two-acre parcels, each with a residential dwelling. Under a cluster design, a developer would plan differently. Imagine that the plan would still call for 50 dwellings, but this time each would be located on, say half-acre parcels, "clustered" together in groups. This would only use 25 acres of land for residences and would leave 75 acres of "open space." Typically, the open space areas are in the midst of the development and are designed around the natural or man-made features of the landscape. In our hypothetical 100-acre parcel, for example, we might have three separate areas of open space averaging 25 acres each. One might be centered around a section of woods, one around a pond or a creek, and one around a meadow.

In a typical cluster subdivision, each homeowner has access to all of the open space areas, which may be permanently preserved by a conservation easement -- a restrictive covenant forbidding any type of development in perpetuity (see OSU Extension Fact Sheet CDFS 1261-99, *Conservation Easements*). To provide maximum protection for both the resource and the residents, the conservation easement should be assigned to at least two organizations, a homeowners' association, whose membership consists of all the homeowners in the subdivision, and a local government agency or land trust (see OSU Extension Fact Sheet CDFS 1262-99, *Land Trusts*). The conservation easement should specify the types of activity permitted on the open land, i.e., recreation, type of agriculture, woodland protection, or stream buffers. It is ideal, but not essential, for the easement to be placed on the property prior to the development of the subdivision. If that does not occur, the property owners could place an easement on the land at a later time.

What Are the Advantages of a Cluster Subdivision?

Clustering housing in rural areas can maintain the rural character of the area. It can also provide open space for community members and preserve critical land qualities. It may provide a sense of community among residents, particularly if some of the open areas are designed for communal activities. Another advantage is that developers often experience cheaper site development costs involving the construction of roads and water/sewer infrastructure. These reduced costs often offset the costs of restoration or development of amenities such as trails in the open space areas. Other advantages include meeting a market need for low-maintenance housing and greatly reducing the impacts of development on watersheds.

What Are the Disadvantages of a Cluster Subdivision?

In many communities, current zoning and subdivision regulations require conventional building patterns. This forces the developer to educate and convince local zoning boards to approve variances for a cluster subdivision, adding a potential time delay to the project.

The maintenance of open space normally requires the formation of a homeowners' association and the assessment of maintenance fees to each subdivision lot owner to pay for taxes, insurance, and the general upkeep of the land in the open-space areas. This is a cost not typically incurred in a conventional subdivision, since all of the land is privately owned.

The smaller-sized lots often result in close proximity to neighbors' homes and are considered a disincentive to some homeowners. If the lots and housing layouts are designed carefully, each house in the subdivision has a private unobstructed view that overcomes the disadvantage of the small lot size. Unfortunately, some earlier cluster subdivision models did not provide very much open space, resulting in a negative attitude toward this option in some communities.

What Is the Role of Sewage Disposal in Determining What Types of Residential Development Are Created?

In the past, many zoning regulations that called for large minimum lot sizes (two to five acres, for example) were put into place primarily to allow adequate room for on-site septic systems. This was especially true in rural areas, where central sewers were not available. Advances in technology, however, have given developers the capability of creating small community systems where wastewater is transported and treated in an environmentally safe, economically feasible, and aesthetically pleasing manner.

What Is the Difference Between a Cluster Development and a Planned Unit Development?

Most zoned communities in Ohio have ordinances permitting Planned Unit Developments (PUDs). They often include a mix of residential, commercial, industrial, or other uses, whereas the cluster subdivision normally only includes single family housing. Within the PUD, zoning and subdivision regulations need not be uniform with the community's traditional codes. Planned Unit Developments often include single- and multi-family housing at higher densities than permitted in conventional subdivisions. They can contain many of the amenities of cluster developments, i.e., open space, pedestrian paths, or recreational areas. One major difference between PUDs and cluster development is the amount of open space. Where PUDs usually contain 20% open space or less, most proponents of cluster development recommend a minimum of 40%.

How Does Cluster Development Protect Farmland?

Some proponents of rural cluster development contend that this is a tool that saves farmland. The open space areas that are protected by conservation easements do protect land, but it is not likely that these areas can provide space for a vigorous agricultural industry. They are designed more

for the enjoyment of the residents than for use in agriculture. However, these areas can be used as effective buffers to separate residential areas from agricultural enterprises and thus may reduce agricultural nuisances, such as odors and noise. Nevertheless, if communities are serious about preserving farmland itself they need to consider very specific farmland preservation tools such as exclusive agricultural zoning, water and sewer boundaries, and purchase of development rights programs (see OSU Extension Fact Sheets CDFS 1266-99, *Agricultural Zoning*, and CDFS 1263-98, *Purchase of Development Rights*).

Where Have Cluster Developments Been Built and Have They Been Successful?

Cluster housing developments have been very popular in rural areas in the eastern United States. Surveys have shown that residents generally rate them very highly as places to live, and they have maintained their property values well. In Ohio, the concept has been applied in Wayne, Lake, Geauga, Medina, Summit, and Madison counties. For more information on the cluster subdivision concept, refer to the resources and web sites listed in this fact sheet.

Suggested Reading

- Arendt, Randall. 1994. *Designing Open Space Subdivisions: A Practical Step-by-Step Approach*. Natural Lands Trust, Media, Pa.
- Conservation Development Resource Manual*. 1998. The Countryside Program. Western Reserve Resource Conservation and Development Council, Painesville, Ohio.
- Daniels, Tom, and Deborah Bowers. 1997. *Holding Our Ground: Protecting American Farms and Farmland*. Island Press, Washington, D.C.
- Kunstler, James Howard. 1994. *The Geography of Nowhere: The Rise and Decline of America's Man-Made Landscape*. Touchstone, New York.
- American Farmland Trust. 1997. *Saving American Farmland: What Works*. Northampton, Mass.

You Can Read About Cluster Development on the Worldwide Web! Try the Following Addresses:

- Cluster Housing Development*, by Richard Lasnier:
<http://www.reinet.com/library/general/file3.html>
- An Examination of Market Appreciation for Clustered Housing With Permanent Open Space*, by Jeff Lacy: <http://www-unix.oit.umass.edu/~ruralma/LacyMarket.html>
- 'Open Space' Zoning: What It Is & Why It Works*, by Randall Arendt:
<http://www.plannersweb.com/articles/are015.html>
- The entire OSU Extension Land-Use Fact Sheet Series is on line at: <http://www.ag.ohio-state.edu/~landuse>

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