

## Appendix B

### **PHILIPSTOWN 2020: A SYNTHESIS**

**May 2001**

Philipstown 2020, a community planning workshop held April 27 – 29, 2001, was attended by a broad cross-section of Philipstown residents. On the final afternoon, participants were given a draft summary synthesizing the conclusions reached during the previous day's small group discussions. This summary received extensive comments from the small groups on Sunday, and the following synthesis of areas of consensus emerged from discussion among the participants.

1. Philipstown is a unique place characterized by great natural beauty, historic places, and a sense of small-town community. This uniqueness is fragile and could be lost through a rapid influx of development. Development should be done in a manner that is sensitive to the Town's special rural and historic qualities. It should also advance the Town's planning goals expressed below.
2. The Town's problems include increasing traffic and population, loss of social and economic diversity, inadequate support for local businesses, loss of open space to unattractive forms of unplanned development, lack of enforcement of regulations, and the dilution of its special character.
3. There is a strong desire for more community cohesion to pull together different segments of the community. Measures that would encourage this include:
  - Developing a community center and/or more public gathering places. This might take one or more of the following forms:
    - A townwide recreation facility, including a swimming pool, tennis courts, and/or an ice rink
    - A facility for the arts
    - A senior center
    - A youth center
    - A new town hall and other government buildings
  - Cooperation between the school districts, with continuing exploration of the potential for consolidation. Although there is no consensus on consolidation, all agree that it is important to bring children from different school districts together for educational, athletic, cultural and artistic programs.
  - Continuing a cooperative planning process (such as Philipstown 2020) that brings people together from around Philipstown to work together on different projects of community interest.

4. Open space lands should be preserved, consistent with the fulfillment of other Town goals.
  - Remaining parcels of open space that have important scenic and environmental significance should be preserved, or developed only in ways that respect their contribution to the community's character and maintain the rural feeling of the town. Particular attention should be paid to the protection of farmland, forestland, steep slopes, ridgelines, large trees, dirt roads, historic areas, stone walls, wetlands, the Hudson River shoreline, and scenic viewsheds visible from both land and the river
  - The public needs a better understanding of the effects of development and land preservation on property taxes and the costs of municipal services. Where land is owned by the state, the Town should work to secure larger payments in lieu of taxes.
  - The community should identify those significant parcels of land that it would like to see permanently preserved as well as those that could be sensitively developed to achieve objectives identified by town residents.
  
5. Social, economic, and ethnic diversity of the community should be encouraged.
  - Housing that is affordable to current residents of the Town and their families should be available throughout the Town (including the villages). Creative solutions such as appropriate conversion of large houses to apartments, accessory apartments, and other ways of securing an unobtrusive range of housing for a variety of income levels should be explored.
  - The Town should consider affordable housing measures to make housing available to parents and children of local residents, emergency services volunteers, and employees of town government, the school districts, and local businesses and organizations.
  - Local small businesses providing a range of services accessible to local residents should be encouraged.
  - Home-based businesses should be encouraged.
  - Cold Spring and Nelsonville should remain a strong community center that is home to long-term residents as well as newcomers.
  - A variety of clean industries and institutions that benefit the town should be encouraged, especially those related to the arts, culture, spiritual enrichment, education, history, agriculture, horticulture, nature, health care, and the internet.
  - There should be more accommodations for the tourism industry, built to a scale and esthetic that is appropriate to the Town, such as bed and breakfasts and small inns.
  - Telecommunications infrastructure should be improved, including improved telephone service and broadband internet access, but not more wireless communication towers.
  - An emergency health care facility is needed.

6. The esthetic quality of development should be improved, but the approach should be tailored to the needs and character of different parts of the Town.
  - Design guidelines or standards should be developed for Route 9D and should be better enforced for Route 9.
  - Design controls should strike a balance between maintaining quality and over-regulating what landowners can do.
  - Where feasible, utility lines should be buried.
7. The Town should articulate a vision of Route 9 that transforms existing development into attractive small mixed-use clusters of development, maintaining extensive areas of open space elsewhere. It should change its zoning accordingly, and communicate with the state DOT to achieve this vision.
  - Existing buildings that do not meet design standards should be encouraged to improve and/or be buffered by vegetation.
  - New buildings should be required to meet design standards with parking lots buffered or placed behind the buildings.
  - Road design measures should be used to slow down traffic and make Route 9 safer and more attractive.
8. Improve accessibility and connections within the Town through more trails and walkways (especially along the river), bikeways (especially along 9D), river access, shuttle buses at the train stations to relieve congestion in the villages, river transportation, taxi services, village parking, and internet connections.

### **Follow-up Actions to Consider**

Philipstown has a proud tradition of volunteerism and cooperation between government and non-profit organizations. Actions to implement the recommendations above should be the joint responsibility of municipal government and voluntary organizations.

1. Incorporate the results of Philipstown 2020 into a new comprehensive plan that includes action steps to achieve the goals of the community and provides for continuing community involvement.
2. Determine changes needed in the zoning ordinance and land development regulations to implement the comprehensive plan; draft and adopt these changes.
3. Explore the desirability and political acceptability of design guidelines tailored to different environments of the Town.
4. Continue to pursue collaboration between the school districts and revisit the consolidation issue at the appropriate time.
5. Assess the need for different kinds of affordable housing and develop zoning, design strategies, funding mechanisms, and the organizational capability to provide what is needed.
6. Study how to improve the telecommunications infrastructure (without new cell towers).

7. Establish task forces to work on Route 9, affordable housing, health care issues, zoning revision, school cooperation, infrastructure development, open space protection, trail systems, and other issues that are priorities.
8. Continue the planning effort and communication process of Philipstown 2020 through a broad-based organization that represents the citizenry of Philipstown and publicizes and implements its results.

### **Immediate Next Steps**

The suggested next steps listed below were not specifically discussed at Philipstown 2020. However, these have been prepared in response to questions raised at the event by participants who were anxious to see forward movement in planning for Philipstown's future, and asked about what comes next.

1. ***Begin Work on the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Amendments.*** The Town Board's first step to begin work on the Town's comprehensive plan is to consider appointing a "special board" as provided for in Section 272 of the Town Law, and charging that board with preparing a new comprehensive plan based to a significant extent on the results of Philipstown 2020. The special board should represent a genuine cross section of the community, including at least one planning board member. Alternatively, the Town Board could charge the Planning Board or itself with preparing the comprehensive plan. The work on the comprehensive plan and amendments to the zoning should be tied together to ensure consistency between the two documents and implementation of the plan. Consulting assistance should be retained as needed.
2. ***Commission Task Forces and Studies as Needed.*** The Town Board may want to establish task forces and/or study groups to focus on issues identified under the follow-up actions as needing further study or work. These should all feed into the comprehensive plan process and should be used to facilitate, not delay, the process. Task forces should only be set up if they have a clear charge, a time frame to report back, accountability, committed leaders and participants, and if necessary, a budget for expert assistance and/or needed materials. A plethora of task forces that accomplish little does not advance the community planning process, but a small number that produce concrete results can jump-start the plan and increase public confidence in it.
3. ***Hold Additional Public Forums.*** The Town Board and/or other organizations could continue to sponsor public forums on specific issues identified as important through the Philipstown 2020 process. The Town Board may want to continue a Philipstown 2020 committee to organize forums and other public outreach efforts associated with the comprehensive plan process. Some possible activities are outlined in the diagnostic study.

*-- Prepared by Joel Russell, Planning Consultant, May 4, 2001*