

4.0 PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations draw on the results of the public workshops, resident survey and research conducted over the course of the comprehensive planning process. Throughout the public participation program, a common theme was identified among Croton-on-Hudson residents: that of an overall sense of comfort and satisfaction with the Village as it is today. Although many issues were raised and specific suggestions for improvements made by residents, the vision for Croton-on-Hudson shared by most residents emphasizes the following basic goals: ***preserving Croton-on-Hudson's traditional qualities, strengthening its assets, and protecting its resources.***

Many of these issues and goals expressed by Croton-on-Hudson residents are similar to those identified in the 1977 Master Plan for the Village. That Plan recognized that, "the essential character of Croton-on-Hudson is a community of individual house-owners, residing in single-family dwellings on separate lots." It stated that "this essential character should be preserved, with a modest increase in the number of town houses, attached dwellings and small apartments." It also deemed it "desirable that the Village have an identifiable 'core' and that this core contain relatively greater density of commercial and residential use, with such density gradually diminishing as the distance from the center increases." It also stated that "It is the conclusion of the Planning Board that the Village ought not to attempt to function as a regional, or quasi-regional focus for shopping, attracting shoppers from outlying towns or villages."

With one or two notable exceptions, the Village has generally adhered to those aspects of the original Master Plan's vision of the last quarter century and this updated Comprehensive Plan strongly endorses them. To continue to preserve those goals, this Plan makes specific recommendations for improving the Village's existing commercial amenities, residential areas and natural resources. The Plan also strongly recommends that the Village discourage any further large-scale residential developments and that, in the future, no rezoning should occur which would permit commercial development outside of those areas currently zoned for commercial development (with the possible exception of the eastern section of Grand Street, as indicated on page 83). Both recommendations are vital to preserving the Village's character, particularly as development pressure in northern Westchester has intensified.

4.1 Defining Goals, Objectives, And Issues Through Public Participation

One of Croton-on-Hudson's defining characteristics is the strong involvement of its residents in the life of the Village. The soliciting of public opinion throughout the comprehensive planning process was a critical feature in the development of the Plan. The research and public participation tasks of the first twelve months of the Croton-on-Hudson comprehensive planning process (including review of past plans, interviews, three public workshops, and analysis of residential survey results) provided the basis for the articulation of vision and overall goals for the Village's planning process.

a. Public Workshops

The first workshop on August 15, 2000, helped delineate a number of issues to be addressed in the Plan under the following topics:

- Environment, Open Space, Trails
- Transportation
- Residential Areas and Design
- Commercial and Office Areas
- Community Facilities and Services
- Visual and Historic Character
- Waterfront

The second workshop, held in January 2001, focused on the Village's commercial areas, developing specific recommendations for each area. The third workshop, held on March 8, 2001, followed up some of the concerns expressed in the surveys and the earlier workshops, and focused on housing, transportation (particularly traffic concerns), and parks and recreation. These open workshops for discussion on issues generated a useful profile of issues, strengths and weakness, objectives and initial recommendations on Plan topics.

b. Residential Survey

In addition to public workshops, a Village-wide survey of public opinion was undertaken. A survey questionnaire was mailed to all Croton-on-Hudson residential households in August 2000. The primary objectives of the survey were to gain the community's perspective on all aspects of the physical development and character of the village, opinions on the issues and problems that needed to be addressed by the comprehensive plan, and how to rank them as priorities for the plan. The 25% response rate was very high (typically such surveys average closer to a 15% response

rate, based on BFJ's experience with comprehensive plan surveys). The survey findings can serve as a reasonable (if not perfect) estimate of what the entire population of Croton-on-Hudson thinks about the following range of topics relevant to the Village's character and future development:

- Commercial areas and retail amenities
- Public facilities
- Recreational facilities
- Environmental issues
- Village objectives and spending priorities
- Strengths and weaknesses of Croton-on-Hudson

These survey responses provide an overall guide to residents' viewpoints and the local issues receiving the most attention. As a general indicator of public opinion, the survey can help further refine the issues and content of the Comprehensive Plan. The thoroughness of public involvement enabled Croton-on-Hudson residents to voice their concerns and ideas for community goals, and to advocate recommendations at critical points in the planning process.

4.2 Village Wide Recommendations

Although numerous issues, viewpoints, and objectives were presented over the course of the planning process, the vision for the Plan shared by most participants to date emphasizes the following basic goals: **preserving traditional qualities, strengthening assets, protecting resources**. To realize these goals, the Plan emphasizes Croton-on-Hudson's unique features as key elements to be protected, maintained, and enhanced to the greatest extent possible: the waterfronts; greenery, open space and trails; low key, small-town quality; historic qualities and character; transportation and pedestrian access; economic diversity and tax base. The following village wide recommendations incorporate the key issues and opportunities to be addressed in the Plan:

1. **Protect natural resources, maintain/improve parks, preserve natural character.** These goals were generally viewed as paramount, since the natural environment was described as one of the defining features of Croton-on-Hudson, fundamental to the local quality of life. Other general recommendations include improving access to open space resources, with better signage, improved trails and links between these resources and the rest of the Village, and establishing a tree trail map.
2. **Expand public recreation uses of the Hudson River waterfront park areas,** and improve access to the waterfront.

Although the acquisition of the Seprieo property has significantly expanded public waterfront parkland, access by auto and for pedestrians remains very limited.

3. ***Maintain economic diversity.*** Part of the Village's unique character stems from the economic diversity of its residents. The Village should employ a balanced approach is made in selecting future spending programs, so that residents are not "priced out" of the Village through resulting tax increases.
4. ***Preserve the historic character of Croton-on-Hudson.*** The history and small town character of Croton-on-Hudson was viewed as central to its distinctive charm. Building upon Croton-on-Hudson's historic assets and character throughout the Village is a central objective, to be realized through historic preservation efforts including the sensitive renovation of older structures, and the creation of architectural review standards and preservation ordinances in commercial zones where appropriate. As part of the effort to improve the overall appearance of the Village, the Village should maintain and renovate its municipal structures, such as the Municipal Building and firehouses, in a way that is consistent with the design standards developed for commercial buildings.
5. ***Improvements to signage throughout Village.*** The existing signage regulations help protect the aesthetic qualities of the Village. This Plan recommends strict enforcement of these regulations after giving commercial owners sufficient time to comply with the requirements of the law. As an additional step, the Village should design and place informational and directional signs in strategic locations, such as the Gateway areas, to direct residents and visitors to shopping areas and points of interest.
6. ***Improve the visual quality of Croton-on-Hudson,*** particularly in commercial districts and in the Upper Village as a means to create identifiable gateways and promote business attraction, as well as preserve the historic character and scale of the Village. Efforts should be made to reduce or eliminate "visual clutter" such as inappropriate, unnecessary or duplicated signs, overhead utility wires, and building designs that are not compatible with the character of the Village. The Village should also undertake the development and implementation of design guidelines for municipal and commercial buildings and consider, as a long-term option, the burying of utility wires in commercial areas, as discussed in Section 4.3.

7. ***Establish architectural review standards.*** As part of the effort to improve visual and built quality in Village, the Village should establish specific architectural standards to encourage good qualities of exterior building design and appearance, to relate such design and appearance to the site and surroundings of such structures, to permit originality and resourcefulness in building design and appearance which are appropriate to the site and surroundings, and to prevent such design and appearance as are unnecessarily offensive to visual sensibilities. The Planning Board should be given the powers of an Architectural Review Board to avoid redundancy in the application process. This power of architectural review should encompass all non-residential properties and also include new residential construction and major alterations in residentially-zoned districts.
8. ***Enhance the function of the Upper Village area, generally recognized as the "heart" of the Village.*** Although not the only commercial area, the Upper Village remains the historic and administrative center of the Village. Small-scale specialty retail and office development is suggested as a means to enhance the tax base, and provide greater diversity of shopping options.
9. ***Improve commercial areas.*** Croton-on-Hudson should not develop regional or semi-regional shopping centers, or attract more chain stores. However, there is a need for new stores in existing commercial areas meeting neighborhood shopping needs was identified, as was providing more retail diversity. Meeting these goals should co-exist with the character of the Upper Village shopping area (which might focus on certain types of specialty shops such as arts related activities). Increasing the variety and quality of retail shopping is viewed as an important step to keep local shoppers and spending within the Village.
10. ***Creation of additional appropriately-scaled office space,*** especially space serving small businesses currently located at home, is viewed as important to sustaining such business activity within Croton-on-Hudson, and also to enhancing the tax base.
11. ***Enhance the pedestrian connections within the Village,*** via additions to the trail system and new and/or improved sidewalks, and better crosswalks. Such pedestrian links are seen as ways to sustain Croton-on-Hudson's small town character and "walkability," as well as address pedestrian safety. Pedestrian improvements within certain shopping

areas were also recommended. Many cited the importance of linking different commercial areas to each other via more sidewalks, as well as creating better pedestrian connections between shopping areas, residential neighborhoods, schools, libraries, and parks and waterfronts. Of particular concern is safety for children near schools and libraries. Consistent with the goal of improving pedestrian connections to commercial centers and open space areas, the Village should identify parcels that serve as links to these areas and explore the possibility of securing pedestrian access along these parcels, either through easements or purchase of the property. Possible connections include a path between Beekman Avenue and Municipal Place, and a link along Newton Street (currently a paper street) from the library to Maple Street.

12. ***Improve traffic flow and parking.*** The absence of adequate parking in some areas is seen as a serious constraint, and traffic congestion is cited frequently as a problem, particularly in commercial areas. One element to be addressed in this regard concerns the use of on-street parking spaces for the storage of vehicles. The Village should ensure that commercial vehicles, or vehicles undergoing repair, are parked on the premises of businesses. Addressing these issues is seen as important both for the success of retail and other businesses, and for pedestrian safety.
13. ***Upgrade older utilities,*** especially sewer systems, as needed. The Village should review the possibility of extending the sewer system into certain areas with septic systems. In addition, the Village should evaluate drainage, flooding, and stormwater run-off conditions in priority areas of the Village and consider a plan to address these conditions based on the new EPA stormwater regulations on nonpoint source pollution.
14. ***Update of Village Zoning Code and Map.*** After adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, the Village should examine the current Zoning Code for consistency with the Comprehensive Plan and implement updates where necessary. As part of this update, Croton-on-Hudson should explore rezoning certain areas of the Village to better reflect community goals. These areas include Croton Point Park (a county park) and Hudson National Golf Course, two major open space areas which are both zoned RA-40, as well as a parcel adjacent to Half Moon Bay that should be a part of the Waterfront Development District (WDD). For the golf course property, the Village should review the option of

upzoning the property to create larger-scale lots that take into consideration the topography and slopes of the site. The Village and County authorities should also explore the option of rezoning the Croton Point Park parcel as a Parks, Recreation and Education (PRE) district to reflect its use as a public recreation area. The Village should also consider rezoning the property owned by the railroad to limit or control future alternative development on the property. In addition, the Village should explore upzoning the permitted lot size in residential sections of the Village where there are numerous lots that are significantly larger than the minimum permitted lot size. Upzoning residential districts will help retain the development pattern and density of the neighborhoods; further study will be required to define the suitable lot size for these areas. A new official zoning map should also be created that reflects zoning changes made since the 1992 Map was adopted. The Village should also consider creatively encouraging property owners, over time, to conform to the zoning code. For example, this could be accomplished through the possible long-term amortization of certain uses.

15. ***Improve visual quality at the railroad station.*** The Village should consider landscaping and pedestrian improvements. Attention should be paid to reduction of excessive signs and visual clutter.
16. ***Energy conservation awareness.*** The Village should be cognizant of energy conservation strategies in considering plans for the future.

The following sections summarize the Plan Recommendations for five key elements of the Village: commercial districts, natural resources, transportation, residential areas, and community facilities and services.

4.3 Commercial Districts

A number of the underlying goals for the Plan, noted in Section 1.4, focus on the need to improve the quality, function, and appearance of the following major commercial retail and office districts in the Village, so that residents can be better served:

- Upper Village
- Municipal Place/Croton Commons
- North Riverside
- Harmon/South Riverside
- North End Office District

The specific planning strategies for these areas focus on business attraction, pedestrian access, retail mix, and visual quality. This Plan also recommends, as a broad goal for the entire Village, that no new rezonings occur that would permit commercial development outside of those areas currently zoned for commercial development, with the possible exception of the eastern section of Grand Street, currently zoned RB, where some of the properties are presently utilized for commercial purposes. A business consultant, retained to study this area, should make this possible rezoning one of its focus points. However, any study of this rezoning possibility should take into account the commercial interactions between the various commercial sections of the Village and the effects of this rezoning on other areas of the Village. If rezoning to commercial is done in the future, the scale and massing of the existing structures should be maintained. Specifically, the assembling of the multiple parcels which would enable large-scale retail development should be prohibited.

a. Gateway Districts

In addition to the general planning strategies, this section also addresses the commercial “gateway districts” to be established for several Croton-on-Hudson commercial areas. Gateways mark a sense of arrival, and connection to a community, and establish an image for the community. The defining characteristics of Gateway Districts in the Village include:

- Vehicular entry points into Croton-on-Hudson from Routes 9/9A
- Commercial uses oriented toward automobile traffic
- Guidelines and concepts for new development when and if opportunities arise

Based on these criteria, three existing commercial areas have been designated as Gateway Districts for Croton-on-Hudson. These are shown in Figure 4.1:

- ***Harmon/South Riverside***, running along Croton Point Avenue between Route 9 and South Riverside Avenue, and along South Riverside Avenue between Croton Point Avenue and Benedict Boulevard. The area is an important link to the train station via Croton Point Avenue and to the Harmon neighborhood. It also joins historic Van Cortlandt Manor to the south.
- ***Municipal Place Shopping Area***, consisting of lots on the north and south sides of Municipal Place between Route 9 and Maple Street, and the commercially-zoned portion of the block on the east side of Maple Street. The Municipal Place Shopping Area is an important entrance to the Village from Route 9. It connects to the Upper Village via Maple Street and to the surrounding neighborhoods.
- ***North End of Village along Albany Post Road (9A)***, consisting of the eight lots between Routes 9 and 9A, the Village boundary and Warren Road. This area marks the entrance to the Village from the north along Routes 9 and 9A.

The primary purposes of designating these as gateway areas are: upgrading the image and function of commercial areas, defining the entry into the Village, strengthening the overall visual identity of the Village, and improving linkages to adjacent residential neighborhoods.

The site plan designs for the Gateway Districts are included in this Plan as Figures 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5. Any future development in an overlay district could follow the plan guidelines. The zoning code would reference the site plan guidelines as provided in the Comprehensive Plan.

Descriptions of the gateway overlay recommendations are discussed in context with the overall planning recommendations for all of the Village commercial areas on the following pages.

b. Upper Village

Most residents recognize the Upper Village as the “heart” of Croton-on-Hudson, and support the need to strengthen its identity and function as a local retail and community center. Historically the Upper Village has served as an important mixed-use area, with “over the store” apartments, single-family homes and local retail stores. The Upper Village has also more recently experienced an increase in the number of professional office uses, such as doctors’ offices and real estate businesses. However, the physical

constraints of its small-scale buildings and the existing infrastructure have severely limited its ability to attract traditional retail uses. This suggests that the Upper Village should focus on an alternative strategy that encourages small-scale retail uses such as specialty stores, cafes, personal services and other uses that relate to the scale and character of the area's architecture and pedestrian ambiance. Revitalization of retail in the Upper Village should be the starting point for a business consultant retained to study this area, as recommended in Section 4.2. These uses would build on the existing modest base of specialty stores such as Wondrous Things, the Book Hut, the Cornelia Cotton Gallery, as well as the mix of cafes and small-scale restaurants that are clustered in the Upper Village area.

Achieving this goal will require a commitment from the Village and from business owners to upgrade the appearance of the area in order to create a special and unique sense of place that reflects Croton-on-Hudson's history and character. The Village should retain a consultant to develop a specific plan to strengthen the identity, quality and commercial mix of the Upper Village. This plan should include proposals for:

- ***Placement of Utilities Underground***

Despite the Village's recent streetscape improvements, the overhead utility lines remain a dominant visual feature in the streetscape of this Upper Village. Pedestrian-scale streetlights are dwarfed by nearby utility poles and equipment. Engineering studies and an examination of potential funding sources should be undertaken to review the feasibility of placing utilities below grade. These studies, and any resulting improvements, could be a forerunner to a broader program of utility replacement along Route 9A.

- ***Extending Streetscape Improvements***

The existing streetscape improvements, including brick treatments for sidewalks and ornamental street lighting, are concentrated along Old Post Road South, between Maple Street and Grand Street. These improvements should be extended further west along Grand Street, past the Holy Name of Mary Church, and further east as far as Mount Airy Road, to connect with restaurants, the firehouse and other amenities (see Figure 4.2).

- ***Improving Quality of Façade Design, Store Window Display***

Businesses should be encouraged to upgrade facades and improve the quality of window displays in order to create a consistent and attractive image for the Upper Village area. The recently enacted signage ordinance should be vigorously enforced after giving merchants sufficient time to understand and comply with the ordinance.



Overhead utilities in Upper Village mar the image despite other streetscape improvements.



Village of Croton-On-Hudson, NY

Figure 4.2. Upper Village Proposals

- Buildings
- Existing Trees
- Existing Sidewalk Improvements
- Cross Walks
- Proposed Expansion of Streetscape Improvements

- ***Improving Parking and Reducing Traffic Congestion***

Although the Upper Village shopping area has municipal parking lots and on-street parking, there is still a perceived shortage of parking spaces for shoppers. The Village should work in cooperation with business owners and merchants in the area to assess the extent of parking demand and develop solutions that will accommodate shoppers and provide business owners with needed employee parking. One possible solution is to designate specific merchant parking locations outside of the immediate Upper Village area to make more spaces available to shoppers. The Village should also consider creative acquisition of appropriate properties on both Maple and Grand (east of Dobbs Park) to create a one-way street that would provide circulation around the Upper Village. The road should be wide enough to provide parking on one side. The Village should also study parking opportunities in the middle area between Dobbs Park and Grand Street.

Traffic congestion on the roads through the Upper Village is also a deterrent to potential shoppers. Traffic is heaviest during rush hours, particularly during peak morning rush hours, when commuters travel to the train station and highways and store owners receive their deliveries. The Village should work with merchants in the Upper Village to coordinate merchandise deliveries to avoid conflicting with the heaviest traffic times.

- c. ***Municipal Place Shopping Area***

The Municipal Place shopping area is viewed by many residents as the major commercial hub of the Village, due to its central location within Croton-on-Hudson and the range of stores and services available, including the Village Post Office.

The Village has recently proposed designating this area as a "Gateway District" given its high visibility and convenient access to Route 9. However, the area's role as a potential "center" for the village as a whole has remained largely unfulfilled, due in part to the fragmented nature of the various plazas and adjoining commercial sites which lack a coordinated pedestrian network and/or consistent streetscape treatment.

The vacant Katz Property located on the north side of Municipal Place, adjacent to Maple Street, presents an important opportunity to create a focal point for the area. It may also be possible to upgrade other sites within this area due to vacancies and possible relocation of businesses. In particular, an opportunity exists in the shopping plaza across from the Katz property to alter the commercial-retail mix. The Grand Union supermarket located there closed in early 2001. The space is slated to be filled by the CVS pharmacy that currently occupies space in another part of the

shopping plaza, with the result that the CVS space will become available for additional retail use.

The following site improvements to the Municipal Place shopping area are recommended:

- ***Katz Property***

Significant upgrading of this gateway area could create an opportunity to develop needed community facilities, and the Village could consider purchase of this 2.4 acre site. Developing a portion of the site as a community center, possibly coupled with office use, would help establish this area as a mixed-use center. In addition, the development of a landscaped park would result in a conveniently located meeting place for Village residents. Figure 4.3 shows one possible layout for the site, incorporating community facilities and office uses, parking, and a landscaped park. To the extent necessary, this property should be rezoned to promote these recommended uses.

Figure 4.4 shows a possible site layout for this property and includes the following features:

- A mixed-use building on Maple Street that could include professional office as well as community facility space
- A park and meeting area oriented to the Municipal Place-Maple Street intersection
- Convenient pedestrian access to both the proposed building and park, and connecting via a crosswalk to the stores on the east side of Maple Street
- A landscaped parking area set back from Maple Street with buffer planting to isolate it from nearby housing.

- ***Create a Pedestrian Network***

The current layout of the Municipal Place shopping area discourages pedestrian access and instead requires shoppers to drive from one plaza area to another. A network of pedestrian routes should be established that provides safe and attractive links between the various shopping plazas and other commercial sites as well as other major destination points such as schools, the library, and recreation areas. These routes should link directly to store entrances and include landscaping, signage and seating areas that encourage pedestrian activity, as shown in Figure 4.3. As a first step in this program, the Village has already approved the construction of a sidewalk along the south side of Municipal Place, linked to new sidewalks along the east side of Riverside Avenue.



Village of Croton-On-Hudson, NY

Figure 4.3. Municipal Place Concept

-  Existing Buildings
-  Landscaped Plaza
-  Potential New Building
-  Pedestrian Routes



- ***Adapt Municipal Place Facility for Recreational Use***

The Municipal Place facility (recently used as a leaf composting area by Village residents) is located on the west side of South Riverside Avenue across from the automobile dealership. This area should be developed in a manner consistent with Gateway guidelines.

- ***Prepare Long Term Redevelopment Guidelines***

In the longer term, redevelopment opportunities may occur which could help establish Municipal Place as a more pedestrian oriented road with new buildings creating a more traditional “street wall,” thereby screening parking lots to the rear (see drawing below). The Village should monitor potential redevelopment in this area and take advantage of opportunities that arise to re-orient this area from an automobile-based layout to one that better reflects Croton-on-Hudson’s historic development and character.



Figure 4.4. Possible long-term redevelopment strategy for Municipal Place shopping area

As illustrated above, the Municipal Place center would reflect the more traditional layout of buildings, open space and roads that occurs in older commercial areas such as the Upper Village. Lining Municipal Place with buildings and landscaped sidewalks would also establish an attractive entry road leading from Route 9 to Maple Street and the Upper Village area.

d. North Riverside

The importance of North Riverside as a local commercial center has been recognized in recent years by the installation of new sidewalks and lighting that have helped to emphasize the area's historic character. The proximity of the Brook Street pedestrian overpass and the nearby Senasqua Park, and a future waterfront park at the Village parcel, will allow the North Riverside district to play an increasingly important role as a link between the Upper Village and the Hudson River waterfront. New development or improvement should emphasize the area's proximity to the waterfront, and relate to the pedestrian scale of the existing streetscape and architecture without obscuring the views to the river from uphill locations. The Village should also consider acquiring and developing the land at the junction of Brook Street and North Riverside for development as a pocket park and off-street parking area, to improve pedestrian and car access to the shopping area and enhance links to the Upper Village.

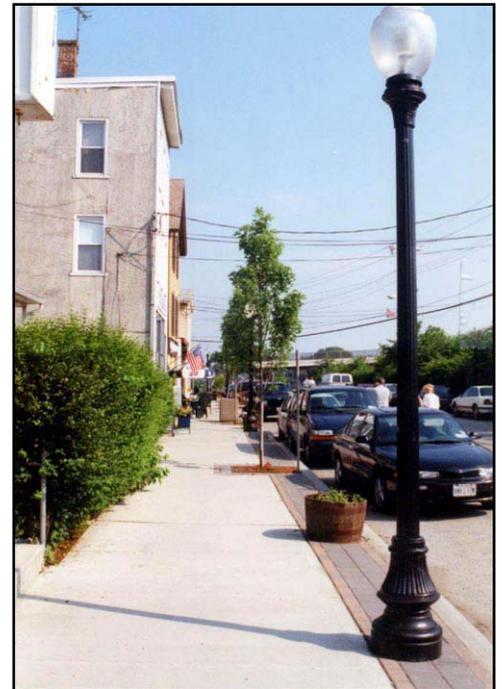
Future streetscape improvements should expand on the sidewalk, lighting and signage improvements already undertaken by the Village. A planted buffer between Riverside Avenue and NYS Route 9 is recommended. New informational signs and landscaping should be considered for the pedestrian approaches to the Brook Street overpass leading to Senasqua Park and the rest of the waterfront. Guidelines encouraging a more consistent quality in building façade design and signage should be developed and implemented by the Village. Future infill and renovation efforts should respond to guidelines that emphasize a marine-oriented theme, such as the use of clapboard and selection of streetscape furniture and other features that would give this area a distinctive character reflecting its close relationship to the river.

e. South Riverside/Harmon

The South Riverside/Harmon area acts as an important image-defining gateway to the Village due to its strategic location on Route 9A and its accessibility to the railroad station, Route 9 and Croton Point. A key section of this area is proposed as a "Gateway District" subject to special zoning district overlay regulations related to signage, landscape and other design requirements. This gateway district encompasses the lots fronting the north side of Croton Point Avenue east of Route 9, and properties on either side of South Riverside Avenue north of Croton Point Avenue to Benedict Boulevard.



Streetscape improvements on North Riverside



Improvements to North Riverside have included attractive, pedestrian-scale lampposts and brick pavers along the sidewalk

The Plan recommendations for this area focus on improvements along South Riverside (Route 9A), given its role as a major access route into the Village. Route 9A's high visibility has led to the development of several service facilities as well as a mix of retail outlets. As a result, much of the street frontage is dominated by parking areas, driveways and service areas that are often unscreened from the roadway. The following improvements should be undertaken by the Village for this area:

- ***Streetscape Improvements***

A well-designed streetscape program should be initiated as a priority action for South Riverside to encourage pedestrian use and improve the image of this gateway district. Recommended streetscape improvements are listed below and shown in Figure 4.5.

- Additional landscaping including street trees and new planting and screening adjacent to parking and service areas.
- Sidewalk improvements should include paving treatments consistent with the sidewalk design incorporated in other Village commercial areas. The Village should explore the feasibility of installing sidewalks along the west side of South Riverside Avenue, south of Croton Point Avenue, to improve the pedestrian accessibility of this portion of Harmon/South Riverside. The Village should also consider installing crosswalks at the intersection of Croton Point Avenue and South Riverside Avenue (as indicated on Figure 4.5) to improve walkability.
- Reducing the number and scale of curb cuts where feasible in order to maintain stronger pedestrian path continuity.
- Encouraging the use of distinctive and attractive commercial signage.

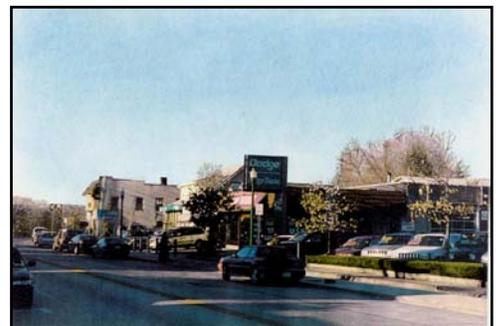
In the longer term, the Village should undertake a study to determine the feasibility of placing the overhead utility lines that extend along Route 9A underground. This action would result in a dramatic improvement in the visual quality of the corridor, as illustrated in Figure 4.5.

- ***Improve Pedestrian and Bicycle Links***

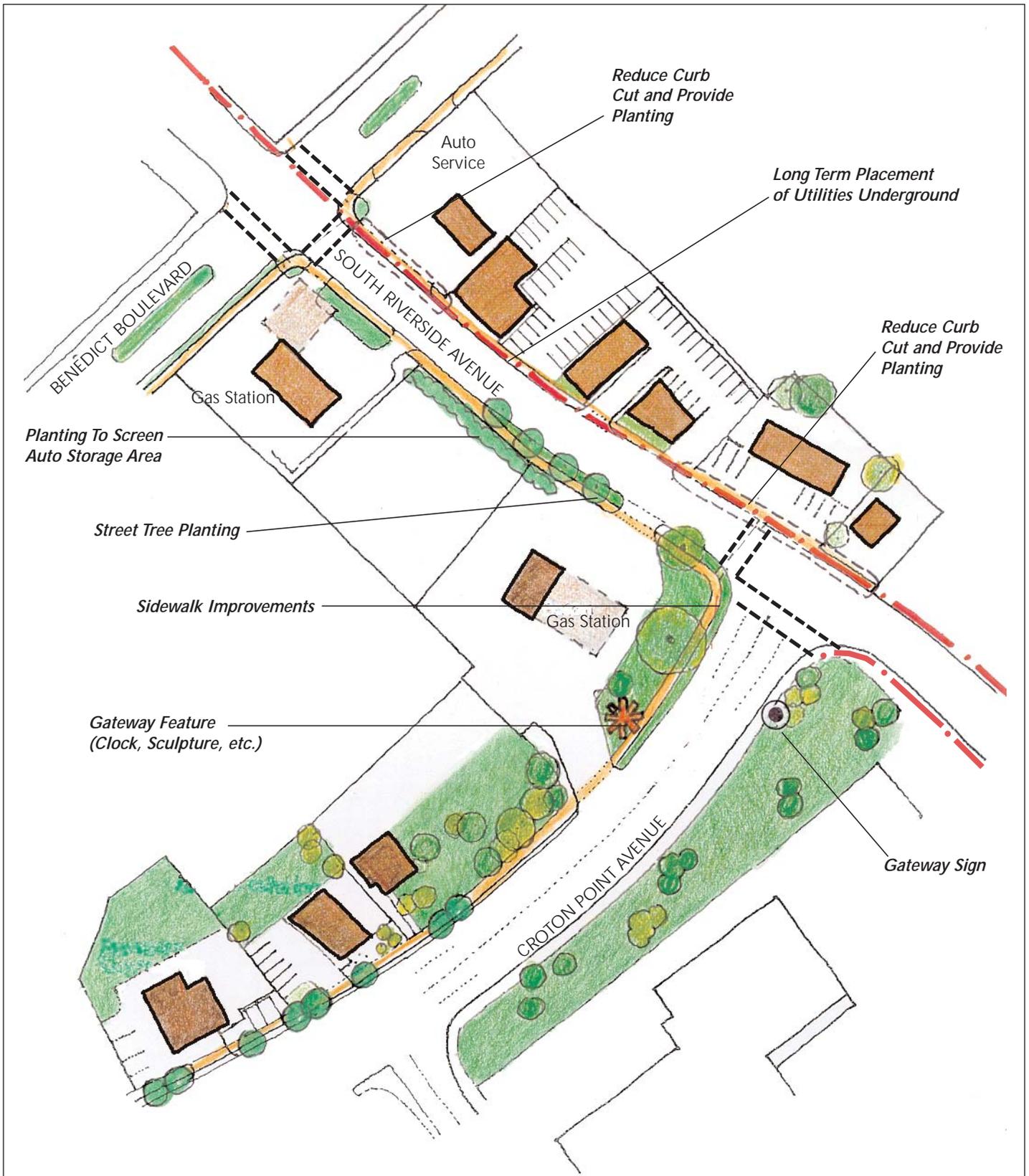
Many residents of the Harmon neighborhood have noted the need for improved pedestrian and bike routes between the South Riverside/Harmon commercial district and nearby residential areas. The Village should also examine the feasibility of establishing a clearly identified bike route on both sides of Croton Point Avenue, including connections to the railroad station and to the shopping area south of Croton Point Avenue.



Overhead utility wires mar the streetscape along South Riverside Avenue.



Burying overhead utility wires and requiring landscaped buffers along parking lots would create a more attractive, pedestrian-friendly streetscape along South Riverside.



Village of Croton-On-Hudson, NY

Figure 4.5. South Riverside / Harmon Gateway Proposals



- ***Reinforce Gateway Identity***

The area's role as a major gateway should be reinforced through additional signage and other streetscape features. Consideration should be given to the placement of attractive gateway signage at the junction of Croton Point Avenue and Route 9A, and the addition of a distinctive feature within the landscaped area adjacent to the Exxon Gas Station to give prominence to the pedestrian link leading to the railroad station.

f. North End Office District

The office zone at the north end of Croton-on-Hudson is limited to the west side of Route 9A and is only partially developed. Additional office use should be encouraged given the good access provided by Route 9A and the attractive, wooded nature of this section of the Village.

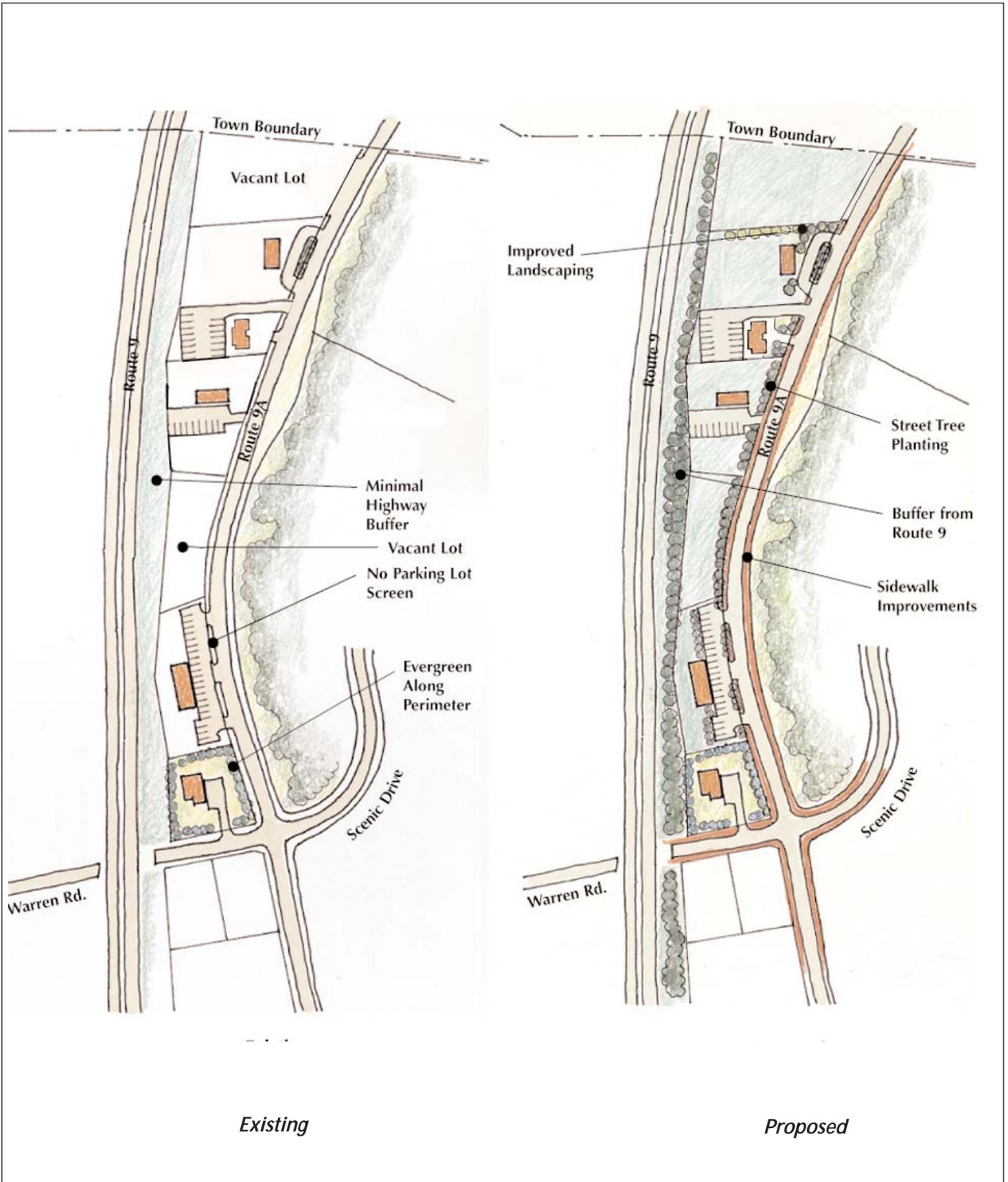
The Village should therefore ensure that future office development is appropriately sited and attractively designed, and that generous landscape planting is provided in order to maintain the rural quality of the area. The Matra Building along Route 9A (Albany Post Road) offers a good example of an office use that has been attractively integrated into the area. The use of low stone walls along property lines to screen parking should be strongly encouraged as a means of providing a special identity for this gateway area and visually linking the area to similar features south of Warren Road on 9A. In addition, the gateway overlay should include a provision for the continuation of the farmers' market, which is a valued feature of this section of the Village. Proposed streetscape and landscape improvements are shown in Figure 4.6.

g. Building Appearance and Maintenance

The revitalization plans described above will enhance and improve the character and appearance of the commercial and office areas. The Village can take several additional steps to further encourage the revitalization of these areas.

- ***Design Guidelines***

The Village should develop a set of design guidelines for its commercial areas that includes recommendations for building design and ornamentation, façade styles, preferred materials and renovation styles, and signage. The guidelines should provide a way to unify building appearance through common design elements but still have enough flexibility to allow the individual character of the business, building, and the neighborhood to come through. The Village should consider establishing an architectural review standards in commercial areas to develop guidelines and oversee implementation.



Village of Croton-On-Hudson, NY

Figure 4.6. North End Gateway Proposals



- ***Façade Maintenance Incentives***

While façade maintenance and building improvements are the responsibility of private property and business owners, the Village can offer incentives to encourage and facilitate improvements that fit with the established design guidelines and revitalization plans. These incentives can take the form of monetary subsidies, such as grants or loans for building improvements, or procedural guidance with obtaining any necessary approvals. The Village can also help direct property owners toward private grants and loans that can assist with building renovation efforts.

- ***Architectural Review***

As discussed in Section 4.2, the Village should establish specific architectural standards to encourage good qualities of exterior building design and appearance, to relate such design and appearance to the site and surroundings of such structures, to permit originality and resourcefulness in building design and appearance which are appropriate to the site and surroundings, and to prevent such design and appearance as are unnecessarily offensive to visual sensibilities. These standards should be enforced by the Planning Board, which should be given the powers of an Architectural Review Board to avoid redundancy in the application process. This architectural review should pertain to all commercial properties and also include new residential construction and major alterations in residentially-zoned districts.

4.4 *Natural Resources, Open Space and Trails*

The natural features of Croton-on-Hudson are considered some of the defining elements of the Village: the waterfront, open space, trails, and parks. Many of the comments received addressed the natural landscape, and the importance of access, protection, and enhancement of these invaluable resources. As discussed in the Introduction to this Plan, the general recommendations of the Plan are as follows: protect natural resources, maintain/improve parks, preserve natural character. The following sections elaborate on these objectives, providing more specific recommendations, as follows.



Croton Point Park

a. Respond To and Expand Upon LWRP Objectives

The Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan, adopted in 1992, describes specific state and local coastal zone policies in detail, and outlines the following overall objectives for Croton-on-Hudson's open space, recreation, and visual resources:

- link waterfront parks and waterfront recreational areas
- increase recreational facilities within the Village and improve waterfront access
- redevelop or restore underutilized coastal area lands
- protect scenic views of and to the Village
- facilitate the planning process by updating the Village's master plan for consistency with the LWRP and the development goals for the Village.

Other LWRP objectives address parking, traffic and roadway conditions, air quality, and stormwater:

- improve the parking situation at the railroad station
- assess the air quality of the Croton-on-Hudson area
- study the stormwater system of the Village

The following projects, noted in the LWRP, are currently being undertaken to implement the above objectives:

- ***Croton River Gorge Trail.*** Create walking trail from Silver Lake to Black Rock.
- ***Investigate additional sites for waterfront recreation areas.*** The Village property ("Seprieo") site north of the yacht club was purchased in 1996, and has been the subject of extensive planning studies. The Croton Waterfront Feasibility Report addresses this site, as discussed in Section 3.8

- ***Improve Croton Bay Boat Ramp and Village-owned land south of Metro-North parking areas*** (public access of village-owned land for recreational uses). This small area off Croton Bay has historically been utilized for boat access and passive recreation including fishing. A Concept Plan for Croton Bay Boat Launch was developed as part of the Greenway Vision Plan for Croton-on-Hudson, recommending cleanup of debris, weeds, secondary tree growth and stockpiles, improved vehicular and pedestrian access, and restoration with native plantings. These improvements have been undertaken.
- ***Installation by NYS DEC of an Air Quality Monitoring Station.*** The nearest monitoring station # 590204 *is* in White Plains.
- ***Study of Village Stormwater System*** to track discharge into coastal waters. A study of the entire Village's drainage areas into the Hudson and Croton Rivers and Furnace Brook is being conducted in 2002 by the firm of Dvirka and Bartilucci. It will result in specific recommendations for improvements to the stormwater drainage system.
- ***Designation of Route 9 (in Croton-on-Hudson) as NYS Scenic Road***
- ***Traffic & Roadway conditions study*** (identify improvements to facilitate traffic flow). A traffic calming study undertaken in 1999-2000 evaluated roadway conditions within the Village and recommended traffic calming measures.
- ***Update of the 1977 Master Plan to ensure consistency with LWRP***

This 2003 Comprehensive Plan updates the 1977 Master Plan to ensure consistency with the LWRP objectives and other policies. This Plan also addresses the open space and recreation objectives of the LWRP, as described below.

b. Conserve and Protect Natural Resources

As discussed in Chapter 2.0, Croton-on-Hudson has undertaken extensive planning efforts to protect the local natural environment, and has participated in several national and regional programs, as follows.

Croton-on-Hudson's Environmental Conservation Policy

In addition to the above-cited policies of the LWRP, Croton-on-Hudson's Environmental Conservation Policy was adopted by the Village, to conserve, improve, and protect the local environment.

The specific policies emphasize the need to coordinate the environmental plans and programs of the Village, with Federal, State, regional and local governments, other public and private organizations. The policies note that patterns of development that minimize adverse impact on the environment, including such unique resources as the Croton River and its estuary, and the Hudson River and its shoreline, should be promoted.

Croton-on-Hudson is a model Greenway community. The Hudson River Valley Greenway Program is guided by the following key principles:

- Open space networks and natural, cultural resource protection
- Local planning undertaken in a regional context, and regional planning undertaken in a local context
- Economic development, including agriculture, tourism, and urban redevelopment
- Reclamation of the waterfront and access thereto

The recently completed Westchester County Greenway Compact Plan provides strategies for regional economic development, waterfront renewal and downtown revitalization. The Compact was adopted by Croton-on-Hudson in November 2001.

Croton-on-Hudson is a Tree City USA, a national designation. The trees throughout the Village reinforce the natural character of much of the Village, even in the Upper Village. A tree trail map is proposed to help reinforce the value of the local trees, and also help enhance their protection. Such a study is being prepared by the Conservation Advisory Council. It would also add to the existing trail system.

The Plan recommends preservation of the Croton River Gorge as a priority. The Village should also explore agreements with municipalities on the opposite side of the Croton River to protect the viewshed and its character.

c. Trails and Links

A common thread in comments in workshops and in the survey was the “walkability” of the Village, and the need to further enhance connections between parks, shopping areas, and residential neighborhoods. In addition to the poor condition of many sidewalks, there is also the safety concern where the lack of sidewalks forces pedestrians to walk along the side of busy roads. Improved pedestrian access to the waterfront was also frequently cited. New links should be created between existing trail segments.

The LWRP specifically notes that waterfront parks and recreational areas should be linked, and waterfront access improved. The Open Space Inventory, prepared in 1996, identifies links needed to expand the Village trailway system.

Croton-on-Hudson has two distinct areas with sidewalks: the Upper Village and Harmon. To continue the tradition of a “walkable community,” the Plan recommends the following.

- ***Build upon existing connections within Village***

Safe pedestrian connections between shopping areas, residential neighborhoods, parks, and schools is particularly desirable; sidewalks and safe crosswalks should be created where appropriate. An overall pedestrian linkage study is recommended to review and define those areas most in need of such improvements. Recommended links from the 1996 Open Space Inventory should also be included.

- ***Complete Village trail network***

Complete trail links and connections to the open space network, particularly along the waterfront. As described earlier, the enhancement of the trail system requires the completion of several key links in the Village trail system. These should be identified and prioritized, and funds obtained to build these links.

- ***Improve sidewalk and trail maintenance.***

Residents should be encouraged to maintain the sidewalk areas adjacent to their homes. A maintenance plan for trails should also be developed.

- ***Improve trail system signage***

The trail map should be included in signs to help orient walkers. A schematic trail system map could be posted at sites throughout the system, providing specific location arrow (“you are here”) and indicate the relationship of the trail to other links in the Village. Uniform signage (arrows, indicators) should be provided throughout the trail system and on key streets throughout the Village. The trail map could also be posted on the Village web site.

- ***Create better pedestrian/bike connections at RR station***

Install bike parking at the train station, and provide better signage and trail maps to help guide visitors arriving by train.

d. Improve Waterfront Access

A common thread in public comments was the need to improve access to the Hudson River waterfront. Although there have been some recent improvements (notably the Brook Street pedestrian



Upper Village pedestrian links

bridge), in general, access to the waterfront is limited, and unsafe in some locations. Recent waterfront projects at the north and south end offer some new opportunities to improve access for vehicles and pedestrians: Half Moon Bay second phase of condominium development, and the planned new waterfront park. The following recommendations build upon these projects.

- ***Create county trail providing access to Croton Point Park***

This trail would run from Croton Point Park, and connect to the Half Moon Bay trail running north. It would be developed in concert with the pedestrian paths to be constructed during the final phase of the Half Moon Bay condominiums.

- ***Develop proposed new Half Moon Bay access road***

A new access road off Half Moon Bay would provide another connection to the Half Moon Bay trail and Croton Point Park. This new roadway would run from the Municipal Place/Route 9/Half Moon Bay Condo Access Road intersection north to Senasqua Park and eventually to the new Village waterfront park. As recommended by the Gateway Plan (see Section 3.8), this new roadway would provide safer vehicular access than the present Brook Street at-grade railroad crossing (scheduled to be closed) and would free up the Senasqua tunnel for pedestrian and bike use only. The new roadway would be two-way and would accommodate bike traffic as well.

Since portions of the waterfront trail would be located along a new roadway, clear definition of road and pedestrian/bike paths is recommended to promote safety. The entire waterfront trail would also connect to Ossining to the south, utilizing the walkway portion of the Croton River Bridge. If possible, easements should be obtained to enable the trail to run north of the new waterfront park along the shoreline.

- ***Utilize Senasqua tunnel for bicycles and pedestrians only***

The one-lane Senasqua tunnel, located under the Metro-North tracks, is approximately eight feet wide with a vertical clearance of 6 feet 10 inches, which only accommodates standard-sized automobiles. It cannot be used for two-way traffic flow, and is subject to periodic flooding. With the construction of a new access road, the tunnel should be reserved for pedestrian and bicycle use, thereby improving safety and efficiency of use.

e. ***Recommendations for new Waterfront Park***

The Hudson River waterfront has been the focus of recent intensive planning efforts, initially with a ***Greenway Vision Plan*** (1997-98) focusing on Croton's underdeveloped Hudson riverfront property north of the Croton Yacht Club.



Senasqua Tunnel

This vacant site, formerly known as the Seprieo property, was previously used as an asphalt batching plant and as a snack bar/beer garden, although the narrow strip at the north end of the property remained mostly undeveloped. The southern portion is owned and controlled by the Village; the north portion is owned by the Beaverkill Conservancy, and is to be reserved as a natural area for outdoor recreation. This property, because of its natural resources, has been designated a Critical Environmental Area.

A feasibility study for the site entitled ***Feasibility Study for the Village Waterfront Property*** was prepared in 2001 by Imbiano Quigley Landscape Architects and AKRF. As described in Section 3.8.b of this Plan, the feasibility study evaluated four alternative recreational uses of the site, and developed a “preferred alternative” based on public input and review by the New York State Department of State. This Plan recommends a mix of (a) passive recreational uses as contemplated in the Preferred Alternative of the Waterfront Feasibility Study, and (b) waterfront-related uses.

4.5 Transportation (Traffic Calming, Pedestrian Facilities, Transit)

As was evident in the workshop discussions and survey responses, residents' concerns and issues relating to transportation in Croton-on-Hudson primarily focused on: speeding, pedestrian safety, the need for an improved and more extensive sidewalk and pedestrian networks, greater transit options, and improvements to the railroad station.

a. Sidewalks and Pedestrian Networks

Sidewalk Improvement Program

The Village has a sidewalk/walkway improvement program in place to upgrade the conditions of existing sidewalks and other paths and walkways. The sidewalk improvement program should be expanded in the future to focus on those parts of the Village where walking is most prevalent: the commercial districts, school areas, and the area surrounding the rail station. Areas within a quarter-mile distance from retail uses, schools, and the train station are prime candidates for improvements. In the commercial center these improvements can be combined with more off-site parking, thereby encouraging shoppers to park at an off-site location and walk to several destinations. New pedestrian links creating short cuts for pedestrians should also be studied.

Enforce Sidewalk Maintenance by Adjacent Sidewalk Owners

As required by Article IV, Section 197-24 of the Village Code, property owners are required to maintain the public sidewalk areas in front of their homes. This law should be enforced more rigorously. It is suggested that the Village undertake an information campaign informing all property owners of their obligations and establish a grace period to give property owners time to undertake any needed repairs. At the end of the grace period, the law should be more strongly enforced.

b. Road Network

Traffic Calming and Access Management along State Highways

Routes 9A and 129 are major arterials traversing the Village and acting to some degree as the commercial arterials. The following strategies are recommended for these arterials:

- Reduce speeds (without reducing capacities)
- Reduce the number of driveways
- Make arterials more pedestrian friendly

To reduce speeds along these arterials, the effective and visual width of the roadways should be narrowed at key points of the Village.



Pedestrian crossings in Upper Village



Neckdowns and pedestrian signage facilitate pedestrian crossing

Speed reduction can be accomplished by building “neckdowns” or entrance gates at the major entry points. These entrance gates act as “pinch points” and slow down traffic as they enter into the village core. Neckdowns (or curb extensions) can be provided at those locations with pedestrian crossings. Where there is on-street parking, the neckdown can extend the full width of the parking lane.

Where highway width allows, on-street parking can be encouraged along the commercial areas of these roads, as a means of traffic calming and reinforcing the commercial nature of those areas.

An access management program should be undertaken by the Village to reduce the number of driveways along the state highways. This program would make these arterials safer for vehicles and pedestrians and would also improve traffic flow. Whenever a commercial property owner applies to the Planning Board for a site plan approval or another type of application, the Planning Board should investigate opportunities to eliminate or consolidate driveways, and to provide vehicular and pedestrian connections between adjacent commercial properties.

Traffic Calming along Collectors and Residential Streets

Traffic calming devices should also be considered for those residential streets and collectors that suffer from high traffic volumes and speeds. For these types of streets, other physical measures can be implemented such as speed humps (an elongated form of the older speed bumps that are bicycle friendly and can be plowed) or median islands and chicanes. All these devices force vehicles to slow down through changes in the horizontal or vertical alignment of the road. Speed humps are legal in public streets, and they have shown to be effective in reducing speeds and improving safety. Some municipalities have also developed one-way traffic circulation systems to reduce traffic congestion. However, one-way traffic circulation is not recommended for Croton-on-Hudson’s traffic issues, as it can result in increased speeding and reduced access to shopping areas. Further study of collector and residential streets in the Village should be undertaken to identify where traffic calming measures should be implemented.

Reduce Congestion at Key Intersections

The key intersections in the Village where traffic congestion is prevalent should be reviewed for improvements. However, for the intersections in the Village core, the emphasis must remain on the pedestrian friendly nature of the location. Within the commercial centers of the Village, access and safety of pedestrians should be of the highest priority in any traffic improvement plan.



Elevated crosswalks and speed humps slow traffic and improve safety

c. Public Transportation

Access to the Railroad Station

The Metro-North railroad station is an important asset for the Village. To minimize the negative impacts related to the commuter traffic to and from the station, the following improvements should be considered:

- ***Improve bicycle and pedestrian access to the station.*** Bicycle facilities (shoulders, lanes and paths) should be added to the major routes leading to the station and in the parking lot. Both sides of Croton Point Avenue should be improved to accommodate this type of traffic, provided that safety requirements are met. In addition, safe bicycle racks should be added at the station.
- ***Recommend adjustments to Beeline service.*** The communities that use the Croton-Harmon Metro-North station, including Croton-on-Hudson and adjacent towns, should recommend that the commuting needs of residents from these municipalities be reviewed. The residential origins of the commuters using the Croton-Harmon station should be plotted on a map compared to the Westchester Beeline service. Recommendations for more frequent Beeline service from the adjacent towns to the station should be made, tailored to the existing demand.

The above improvements will reduce the traffic impacts of the station, will reduce the parking demand at the station and will increase accessibility to the station and to the rail system. The Village should also ensure that any proposals for expanded parking facilities at the train station include a specific plan to redirect traffic away from the main arteries through the Village.

Improvements to Bus Service

The transit needs of the transit-dependent population should be assessed, including the needs of the elderly, low-income and young residents. The need for bus shelters should be reviewed for key locations, as well as the overall signage for bus service (indicating bus stops and schedules).

4.6 Residential Neighborhoods and Housing

In Croton-on-Hudson, the diverse and visually appealing housing styles, mature trees, and winding residential roads help create the sense of small town character and natural beauty for which the Village is known. Many Croton-on-Hudson homes have a historic or architectural significance as well, and serve as a visual link to the Village's history.

In the Resident Survey and public workshops conducted for this Plan, many residents cited preserving the Village's character and beauty as a priority for its neighborhoods and commercial areas. At the same time, residents expressed a concern over the cost of affordable housing for senior residents, young families and Village personnel. Recommendations for housing in the Village therefore focus primarily on two areas: maintaining the scale and character of Village neighborhoods, and exploring affordable housing opportunities.

a. Neighborhood Scale and Character

The strategies described in this section focus on preserving the scale and character of Croton-on-Hudson's neighborhoods. These specific strategies include:

1. Preserving historic and architecturally significant homes;
2. Ensuring renovations and new homes are appropriate to the style and scale of the neighborhood in which they are situated;
3. Issuing housing scale requirements to limit the bulk of new buildings;
4. Updating the home occupation provisions in the zoning code;
5. Updating off-street parking provisions for residential areas.

This Plan also recommends that any further large-scale residential developments, other than the approved extension of Half Moon Bay, be discouraged, so that the existing development pattern in the Village can be preserved and that no further gated communities be approved.

Promote and Encourage Preservation Measures.

Critical to a successful preservation plan is the promotion of the historic and architectural heritage of the Village, so that residents are more aware of the overall historic character of their neighborhoods, and thus more motivated to participate in preservation efforts. A first step is to work with civic groups and community members to develop criteria for significant homes and buildings in the Village. These criteria can then be used to develop



In Harmon, the compact, smaller scale of the homes and green quality of the streets contribute to the charm of the neighborhood.



a current list of historic and architectural resources, including buildings and neighborhoods. The federal, state and county lists of historic places, as well as the work of the Croton Historical Society, provide a valuable starting point and can be expanded to identify places of local importance.

For the property owner, historic preservation efforts focus on renovating and maintaining the buildings so that their historic or architectural integrity is preserved. It is recommended that participation be voluntary to avoid imposing extra costs on property owners. The Village can encourage participation by developing a set of design guidelines for renovating and maintaining historic buildings. The guidelines should describe the housing types found in the Village and detail building materials (such as for facades, windows, and ornamentation) and renovation styles that are appropriate to these housing styles. The Village should also consider offering financial incentives for preservation efforts.

Establish Architectural Standards

As part of the effort to improve visual and built quality in the Village, the Village should establish specific architectural standards to encourage good qualities of exterior building design and appearance, to relate such design and appearance to the site and surroundings of such structures, to permit originality and resourcefulness in building design and appearance which are appropriate to the site and surroundings, and to prevent such design and appearance as are unnecessarily offensive to visual sensibilities. The Planning Board should be given the powers of an Architectural Review Board to avoid redundancy in the application process. This power of architectural review should encompass all non-residential properties and also include new residential construction and major alterations in residentially-zoned districts.

In addition, the Village should also consider setting additional design guidelines to address building size and materials as well as design preferences for details such as building ornamentation, fencing, walkways and vegetation. As with historic preservation, adhering to design guidelines should be optional. General design guidelines can be developed as a separate handbook or combined with historic preservation guidelines.

Establish Housing Scale Requirements

Although Croton-on-Hudson's residential neighborhoods are substantially built out, there is concern about the size and scale of new homes built on the remaining lots as well as expansions of existing houses. In cases where large new residential structures have been erected within the Village, the visual and aesthetic integrity of the local neighborhood surrounding these large homes has been harmed and the individual lots look overwhelmed.

The current zoning code controls residential development through minimum lot sizes, setbacks for yards and accessory structures, and height controls. The Village should review the appropriateness of these standards in light of the recent trend in housing scale. The Village should also consider instituting bulk controls through a floor area ratio (FAR), bulk setback requirements, and lot coverage percentages. FAR refers to the total floor area of a building on a zoning lot divided by the lot area of that zoning lot. The benefit of using an FAR is that it continues to provide the property owner with flexibility and choice on how the property is developed while providing the village with stricter control over the building's bulk. Prior to implementing this approach, the Village needs to study the practical effects of instituting FAR and bulk setback requirements on both existing and potential structures in the Village.

Home Occupations

Croton-on-Hudson's zoning code includes definitions of customary home occupations and requirements for operating such in residential neighborhoods. With changes in work habits enabled by improvements in technology, including telecommunications and personal computer capabilities, more and more homeowners are in a position to conduct their business from their homes. The customary home occupation regulations should be revised and a new definition of home occupations created to reflect these current needs and current realities. The update should reflect the Village's priority of protecting neighborhoods against the negative impact of commercial enterprises in residential areas. Rather than specifying particular occupations that are acceptable, it should include standards that must be met to preserve the quality and character of residential neighborhoods. These standards should address the following:

- customer, visitor, and delivery traffic volumes
- parking coverage
- on-site parking of commercial vehicles
- signage
- exterior alterations to the home
- number of on-site employees
- permitted equipment

Limitations on the size of home occupations should be such that they minimize impacts on the surrounding neighborhood and encourage growing businesses to move to offices in mixed-use areas as more space is needed. There should be an amnesty period to provide an opportunity for existing non-complying businesses to come into conformity.

Update Residential Off-Street Parking Requirements

The Village should also review its residential off-street parking requirements for parking and storage of boats, trailers and commercial vehicles so that these vehicles can be parked without disrupting the appearance or character of a neighborhood.

Article VIII, §230-49 of Croton-on-Hudson's Zoning Code (Permitted Accessory Parking) contains requirements for parking of commercial vehicles and boats in residential areas. Commercial vehicle parking in residential areas is limited to one vehicle of no more than three-fourths ton capacity which can be parked within a private garage or on a lot. A provision should be added that prohibits the parking and storage of large-scale construction equipment (such as backhoes and cement mixers) on residential lots.

For boat storage on residential lots, the Code establishes a minimum distance from which the boat must be set from the rear and side lot lines. The provision should be amended to add a front yard restriction.

b. Affordable Housing

The concept of "affordable housing" relates to making housing available to individuals and families with an income equal to 50% or 80% of the median county income, adjusted for family size, assuming various formulae allocating approximately 40% to 50% of income for housing needs. Ensuring that housing is available for a range of income groups helps preserve the economic diversity and social fabric of the community and allows long-time residents to remain in the Village, even as their financial situation changes.

The Village of Croton-on-Hudson has long worked, in a variety of ways, to promote affordable housing in the community. Indeed, the Village has been in the forefront of those few municipalities to adopt and move to implement guidelines suggested by Westchester County for the creation of affordable housing. To that end, 20 units have already entered the marketplace, with four additional units now planned, towards the suggested goal of 32 units for the Village. The Village should build on its successes by continuing to maintain and improve on the existing economic diversity of housing stock

The Village, in partnership with the Croton Housing Network, has identified and employed a variety of opportunities to advance the creation of this affordable housing in the Village. These have included: new construction, Village-contributed land, developer-contributed land, homes built by developers, use of derelict Village property, and developer-included units. These strategies, along

with the possibilities for acquisition of existing buildings for conversion to affordable units should be identified and explored.

The population and income groups whose needs are not currently being met should be identified through the evaluation of currently available information and the independent acquisition of data by the Village. Creative study of the existing situation will aid in understanding the need for affordable housing in the future and in identifying opportunities for expansion of the affordable housing stock. Studies should be designed to identify the economic groups now living in the Village as well as their living conditions. This should include an inventory of existing rental stock, both legal and illegal under current rules, with a determination of the rents being charged and the income of the occupants. Analysis of this data will prove invaluable in the ongoing effort to identify and meet affordable housing needs.

Future planning for affordable housing in the Village should include exploration of opportunities to create choices allowing senior citizens to "age in place" and remain in the community as well as for new families to enter the community.

4.7 *Community Facilities and Services*

In the Resident Survey and public workshops conducted for this Plan, Croton-on-Hudson residents indicated that they were satisfied with the level of community facilities and services, praising Village services such as the police and fire departments, the library, and the beauty of the Village's parks and open space areas. However, residents noted the need for a community center and improvements to the parks system and water and sewer systems. Recommendations to address such improvements are described below.

a. Community Center

Croton-on-Hudson residents, particularly senior citizens, would be well-served by a community facility that provided a central place for meeting and activities. In addition, Croton-on-Hudson residents have expressed an interest in an arts and cultural facility that could showcase local artists and provide performance space.

As discussed in Section 4.2, and the Recreation Master Plan dated December 12, 2002, the Katz property in the Municipal Place/Croton Commons commercial area of the Village is one possible location for a community center. The 2.4-acre site, which is presently vacant, is centrally located on the north side of Municipal Place adjacent to the automobile dealership, within walking distance of the Harmon neighborhood and Upper Village. Development of the site for community use, possibly coupled with office use, would help establish the Municipal Place area as a mixed-use center. The Village could consider purchasing the site and developing it for these uses.



Katz property at Municipal Place

b. Parks and Recreational Facilities

Recommendations for parks and recreation focus on two areas: improving maintenance and accessibility at existing facilities, and expanding recreational facilities to meet additional demand in the Village.

Park Maintenance

Croton-on-Hudson's parks and open space areas are heavily used and valued by the community. To ensure the maximum enjoyment of the Village's open spaces and parks, the Village should commit to fully funding the maintenance of each of its existing and future parks. Maintenance plans at Duck Pond Park should be expanded to address improving the water quality of the pond and landscaping throughout the Park. At Senasqua Park, the dirt and noise caused by the large geese population should be addressed. At Black Rock Park, a plan for making it more user-friendly should be developed.



Senasqua Park playground

New Recreational Facilities

Residents are satisfied with the existing recreational facilities in Croton-on-Hudson but feel there is a need for additional facilities. In particular, interest in swimming facilities, bicycling trails, additional playing fields and an ice skating area was frequently expressed in the Resident Survey and public workshops conducted for this Plan. The need for skateboard facilities and additional fields for soccer and Little League practices was also expressed. Village government should work with the community and Recreation Department to prioritize needed facilities, identify new opportunities and evaluate their viability, in terms of location and cost.

c. Village Utilities: Water and Sewer Supply

The water and sewer systems adequately serve the Village at the present time. However, the demand for water and the age of the sewer system have prompted concerns over potential service stoppages. New upgrades, as described below, could pre-empt service problems and help ensure that the systems continue to operate in peak condition.

The Village's water supply is provided by a three-well water system (a fourth well is not active) that was upgraded in 2001 to add an automated pumping system. These wells are currently able to meet daily water demand, although peak demand during summer months brings the wells closer to capacity. If mechanical problems were to shut down one of the three wells, the supply to the Village would be significantly reduced. The Water Department has requested funds to install a fourth well, to ensure adequate supply of water if one of the three wells is out of service.

The sewer system is currently upgraded on a localized basis, addressing problems as they arise. However, most of the Village's sewer pipes are between 70 and 80 years old and are beginning to show signs of age. Some pipes are cracking and need to be re-lined. Portions of the Village rely on private septic systems instead of the Village sewer system.

The Village government should continue work in conjunction with the Public Works Department to address needed upgrades and evaluate the need to extend the sewer system. Capital improvements should be prioritized to ensure continually smooth operating of these systems and avoid the need for more capital-intensive work in the future.

4.8 Implementation of Recommendations

- ***Adoption of the Village Comprehensive Plan***

A necessary first step in implementing the Comprehensive Plan is its adoption as official Village policy by the Board of Trustees, once the SEQOR process has been concluded (see below). Once the Plan is formally adopted, Croton-on-Hudson can begin to implement the wide range of Plan recommendations using multiple approaches, including changes to land use controls and zoning, recommended capital improvements, continuing planning efforts (including targeted studies of areas and conditions identified in the Plan), cooperation with other government agencies, special gateway district recommendations, private development where appropriate, and architectural review boards. Many of the Plan's recommendations are preliminary, since they recommend further study before a final recommendation can be pursued.

- ***Municipal Compliance with the SEQOR Process***

By state regulation, in order for a comprehensive plan to become local public policy and a legal document, SEQOR (State Environmental Quality Review) must be complied with as a part of the plan's implementation. The Village Board of Trustees will serve as lead agency for purposes of reviewing the plan under SEQOR. They authorize the preparation of an Environmental Assessment Form, and based on their review of that document, will issue a negative or positive declaration on the potential impacts of the plan's recommendations. The negative declaration states that the impacts of the Comprehensive Plan are entirely beneficial to the social, economic, and physical environment of the village and that a generic environmental impact statement would not be warranted. A positive declaration would entail the preparation of a generic Environmental Impact Statement to identify any potentially significant impacts.

- ***Continuing Planning Efforts and Recommended Capital Improvements***

The Plan has identified a number of studies to be undertaken to continue to refine the recommendations of the Plan, including pedestrian/traffic safety, a pedestrian linkage study, the potential extension of the sewer system, existing housing conditions and need for affordable housing, and recreational facilities. The findings of these studies would provide the basis for specific capital improvements relating to Plan objectives.

- ***Zoning***

One of the most effective means of implementing a plan's objectives is through zoning. Following the adoption of the Plan, the Village will review the existing zoning code for consistency with Plan goals

and recommendations, and consider rezoning certain areas of the Village to reflect these, as appropriate.

- ***Public Improvements***

The plan recommends a series of public improvements, including the preferred alternative for the creation of a waterfront park on the Village property, and also recommends future studies to refine improvements, as noted above.

- ***Gateway District Recommendations***

Croton-on-Hudson's commercial districts play a dual role in the Village, as sources of retail and services for residents and as defining "images" of certain areas of the Village. The Plan presents recommendations for improvements to several of these centers, as zoning district "overlays" for image-defining "gateways" to the Village. To establish the guidelines for these special districts, the Plan includes site plan designs for the Gateway Districts as Figures 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5. Any future development in an overlay district must follow the appropriate site plan, which illustrates signage, landscaping, access, and design elements. The zoning code would reference the site plan as provided in the Comprehensive Plan.

- ***Visual Conditions***

The development of architectural standards for commercial properties, and for new construction and major alterations in residential areas, will help implement the Plan's recommendations for achieving a consistent and attractive streetscapes and neighborhoods. This would also be implemented by the development of general design standards for commercial and residential buildings, as well as creation of streetscape recommendations for specific neighborhoods.

- ***Involvement with Other Initiatives***

The Village is also the subject of other initiatives, programs, and plans which are referenced in the Comprehensive Plan. These include the Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan, the Westchester County Greenway Compact Plan (adopted by Croton-on-Hudson in November 2001), Tree City USA, and the Feasibility Study for the Village Waterfront Property. These initiatives are consistent with the overall goals of the Plan, and thus the Village's continuing involvement with these programs and plans implements many of the recommendations of the Plan.