



COUNTY OF DUTCHESS
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

February 17, 2017

To: City Council, City of Beacon
Re: **Referral #ZR17-020 Comprehensive Plan Update and #ZR17-023 Update Zoning Ordinance**
Parcels: Various - see application

The Dutchess County Department of Planning and Development has reviewed the submitted referral for countywide and intermunicipal impacts as outlined in General Municipal Law (Article 12B, §239-l/m).

ACTION

The City is proposing an update to the 2007 Comprehensive Plan including associated zoning changes. Much of the focus of this plan update and proposed zoning revisions revolves around the waterfront, train station and their connection to Main Street.

COMMENTS

We are pleased to see that the City has reviewed and proposed changes to its planning documents in response to changing times. In addition to the changes proposed within its municipal borders, the Plan recognizes the importance of regional connections between the City and neighboring municipalities, especially the Town of Fishkill. The City, in concert with input from its residents, staff and volunteer committees, has provided a thorough review with well thought-out and specific recommendations to implement as they move forward.

Waterfront Districts

One of the most significant changes proposed in this update is regarding the area in and around the train station and waterfront.

- Properties immediately adjacent to the Hudson River including Dennings Point, Riverfront Park, and Long Dock Park are proposed to be rezoned from Waterfront Development (WD) to Waterfront Park (WP) and will permit a limited amount of waterfront uses.
- The Waterfront Development (WD) district has been redrawn as two areas further east (inland) and would include some (and portions of) the Metro-North owned parcels. This district would permit TOD supportive uses, including multifamily housing.

The City has examined viewsheds and has included profile information regarding building heights and topography to ensure that new development will be respectful of the natural and built environment. It appears that the zoning proposed for this area, including allowable building heights and "stepdown" approach to siting buildings, as well as the types of uses allowed, combined with comprehensive architectural design standards, will suitably integrate new development with existing development by preserving views and providing appropriately scaled and designed uses to support new transit-oriented development in and around the train station.

Main Street and Linkage District

The City has also studied the connection between the waterfront and Main Street which is important to establish, and is implemented via the Linkage (L) District. Residents, as well as visitors, would benefit if a more pleasant walking environment were to be implemented that knitted the natural beauty of the waterfront, with the many stores and shops along Main Street. Encouraging a pleasant, walkable connection will stimulate further economic development.

The City has identified many methods to accomplish an improved connection including new buildings, improved sidewalks, pedestrian-scaled lighting, benches, street trees, etc. In addition, the Comprehensive Plan recommends a revival of the rubber wheeled trolley to run the length of Main Street to the waterfront, with attractive trolley stops at various locations including the Dutchess County Center parking lot. The relocation of a bus stop along Main Street would also be required. This future effort should be coordinated with the County to ensure that County services will not be negatively impacted.

With regard to the Linkage District regulations, we are pleased to see streamlined site plan review for those applications that comply with the general intent of the Linkage Plan, and that site plans are not required for "change of use" applications for existing buildings that will not be expanded and where the minimum number of off-street parking spaces required is not more than 25% greater than the requirement for the existing use. New standards have been proposed regarding minimum lot size, lot width, and floor area ratio. We suggest that these standards may not be necessary.

In addition to these major items, the City has also referenced the provision for, "a variety of housing opportunities that are accessible to a wide variety of income levels" as one of the goals of the 2017 Comprehensive Plan update. As the City is well-aware, having a variety of housing types at varying price-points is critical for a successful community. We understand that the City is studying the affordable housing section of its Code, and we look forward to reviewing those regulations in the near future.

A minor comment is that any reference to "Dutchess County LOOP" buses should be changed to "Dutchess County Public Transit" buses.

RECOMMENDATION

The Department recommends that the Board rely upon its own study of the facts in the case with due consideration of the above comments.

Eoin Wrafter, Commissioner

By



Jennifer F. Cocozza

Deputy Commissioner

c: Bob Balkind, DCDPW Commissioner (via email)
Cynthia Ruiz, DCPT Administrator (via email)