

B. COMMUNITY CHARACTER AND RESOURCES

1. Overview

When asked in the Public Opinion Survey to name the most important issues on which the Village should take action the number one response was “community appearance/beautification.” Sixty-three percent (63%) of the respondents identified “community appearance/beautification” as an important issues. Following is a discussion of specific issues and opportunities identified by the Comprehensive Master Plan Committee relating to community character and resources:

- a. *Appearance of the Route 9A corridor.* People traveling through the Village may likely form an impression of the Village based on the appearance of the Route 9A corridor. While certain properties contribute positively to the character of the Village, other properties do not. In general, the appearance of Route 9A does not match the character of Buchanan’s neighborhoods.
 - Lack of Architectural/ Site Design Standards - There are currently no guidelines prescribing to Village boards (e.g., the Planning Board) or to prospective builders the desired architecture and site design in the Route 9A corridor.
 - Route 9A Streetscape – Improvements to the Route 9A “streetscape” could help improve the appearance and function of this corridor. Such improvements could involve attractive lighting fixtures, planting of street trees, sidewalk improvement/ expansion, curbing improvements.
 - Route 9A/ Bleakley Avenue Intersection – The appearance of the commercial uses in this area (e.g., the parking/storage of numerous cars and trucks on site and along the roadway, the appearance and nature of the uses, hours of operation) do not contribute positively to the character of the Village.
 - Billboards - The appearance of the Route 9A corridor is compromised by the existence of billboards.
 - Appearance of Vacant Sites (e.g., the “Velardo” site). There are a number of vacant or undeveloped sites along the Route 9A that have become overgrown.
- b. *Preservation of Historic and/or Architecturally Significant Buildings.* Certain buildings in the Village, such as the Village Hall, St. Christopher’s Church Hall, the Methodist Church, the Lane House, the Gallon Measure, and Westchester Industrial Complex, provide a link to the past and contribute to the character of the Village.

- c. *Greentown Road Industrial Area.* The condition of the Greentown Road Industrial Area (i.e., particularly the undeveloped properties also known as Buchanan Industrial Park) does not reflect positively on the character of the Village. The undeveloped properties have become overgrown and dumping of materials has occurred. The lands north of Bleakley Avenue between Route 9A and Broadway were subdivided and approved for a variety of commercial/industrial buildings in the late 1980s. Unfortunately, only one of the six approved sites has been developed as intended. The remaining parcels have considerable development potential and represent one of the most significant opportunities for development. It is important that future development of these properties contribute positively toward the character of the Village. Preservation and enhancement of the old Clay Hole pond at the corner of Bleakley and Broadway, and the steep slopes and rock outcrops just north were identified as important to the character of the area.
- d. *Parks/recreation.* When asked in the Public Opinion Survey to name the most important issues on which the Village should take action, “recreation” was identified by thirty-nine (39%) of the respondents. Improvement to recreation facilities was also a common response in the Survey where residents were asked to name improvements they would like to see in the Village. By far the most common example provided by residents was improvements to the Village pool and pavilion (e.g., general improvements to the facility including maintenance and replacement of rusty equipment, new landscaping, decking, aesthetic improvements, addition of concessions were specifically recommended). Residents also suggested improved and/or additional playground equipment; better recreational opportunities for teens; and bike paths. The Master Plan Committee also identified improvement/ expansion of Lent’s Cove Park (including improved access to the Hudson River) and public access to Lake Meahagh as additional improvements to park/ recreation facilities that should be pursued. It is noted that the Village received a grant of approximately \$135,000 to replace aging play equipment at the community center and that the Village is in the process of preparing a plan with the Village Engineer to renovate the Highway Garage and recreation area for the summer camp.
- e. *Other Village services and facilities.* When asked in the Public Opinion Survey to name the three things that residents like best about living in the Village, the third most frequent response mentioned (at 54% of the respondents) was village services. Maintaining the level of community services is an important objective in maintaining the quality of life within the Village, as is improvement of certain Village services such as roadway cleaning, leaf pick-up, and enforcement of speed limit and other traffic laws.
- f. *Tax base/ tax burden.* The need for an appropriately balanced tax base (i.e., between residential, commercial, industrial and utility land uses) is certainly an important planning consideration for any community. When asked in the Public Opinion Survey to name the three things that residents like best about living in the Village, the second most frequent response mentioned (at 69% of the respondents) was low taxes. The Village enjoys very low local taxes as a result of the Indian Point energy plant which is by far the largest land holder and tax payer in the Village.

- g. Code Enforcement.* The Public Opinion Survey revealed that this as an important concern. When asked in the Public Opinion Survey to name the most important issues on which the Village should take action, “code enforcement” was identified by forty-two percent (42%) of the respondents. When asked what improvements residents would like to see in the Village, code enforcement was the third most common response provided (behind only improvements to the Village Circle and roadway improvements). It has been observed that there appears to be a general lack of policing unless someone makes a specific complaint. In addition, it is believed that residents commonly do not know whom to call when a violation of Village law is observed.
- h. Open Space Preservation.* The issue of open space preservation garnered the second most responses in the community survey. While largely developed, the Village still retains a considerable amount of largely undeveloped lands and important environmental features that warrant acknowledgement, protection, preservation and enhancement. These include the views of and access to the Hudson River, Lake Meahagh, Dickey Brook; and large areas of relatively contiguous forest (e.g. Bleakley Woods) including steep slopes and wetlands, particularly on lands owned by Con Edison as part of its energy distribution system.

2. Planning Objectives:

- #1:** Maintain the quality of life in the Village by enhancing and preserving the character of Buchanan’s neighborhoods and commercial areas.
- #2:** Ensure that additional development occurs at a scale and in a manner that is appropriate to the area and that serves to preserve and enhance the character and diversity of Buchanan’s neighborhoods and commercial areas.
- #3:** Support new businesses, facilities, programs and events that serve the social, religious and cultural interests of Buchanan’s residents.
- #4:** Provide an appropriate range of recreational and social facilities of such type and in such locations that are needed, wanted and accessible to the widest possible range of Buchanan’s residents.
- #5:** Maintain the high quality of community services and facilities provided to Village residents.
- #6:** Protect, preserve and enhance access to and use of the remaining opens space lands.

3. Planning Recommendations:

- #1: *Develop architectural/ site design guidelines for multi-family and non-residential development.*

The Village should investigate the development of architectural and site design standards that prescribe to Village boards and to prospective builders the desired architecture and site design in the Village Circle and along the Route 9A corridor. Such guidelines should address building appearance, building placement; and placement/ design of on-site parking, signage, lighting, and other site elements. The design guidelines are typically included in a special reference document with photographs and figures to illustrate both desired and discouraged examples of design. This document would be used mostly by the Planning Board during its site plan review and approval process. The design guidelines reference document is intended to facilitate the design and review and approval process for Boardmembers and applicants, alike.

The following is an outline of the essential elements of such design guidelines:

1. Site layout – Building and Parking.
 - a. Follow existing and traditional village pattern of buildings at or near street and sidewalk with parking at the side and rear.
 - b. Buildings can and should define and create public spaces.
 - c. The location of buildings near the sidewalks and the street add scale and create well defined public spaces via sidewalks and small plazas and even pedestrian alleys.
 - d. Buildings should be encouraged to build to similar setbacks (a “building line” or “build-to line”) and next to each other, where possible, to strengthen the continuity of pedestrian space and to maximize building space and efficiency. Where not adjacent, buildings should provide appropriate separation and improvement as pedestrian-ways or alleys.
 - e. Parking should be coordinated between properties to maximize the number of available spaces and access thereto, to maximize the space available for buildings and other amenities, and to limit sidewalk and curb cuts, turning movements and vehicular conflicts.
 - f. On-street parking should be provided wherever space permits.
2. Streetscape.
 - a. Continuous sidewalks, street trees and street lights to promote easy pedestrian travel, window shopping, and reduce pedestrian and vehicular conflicts.
 - b. Sidewalks should be a minimum 5 feet wide in open and/or residential areas and 8-15 feet in mixed-use and commercial areas built close to the street.

- c. Street amenities such as benches, sitting walls, planters, waste receptacles and bike racks should be coordinated with the overall plan.
 - i. Benches should be anchored by planters or other substantial to provide a sense of enclosure and protection to make their use more inviting. Benches can also be clustered where space is available.
 - ii. Sitting walls can also create important senses of protection and enclosure and can add to the public outdoor to private indoor transition.
 - iii. Outdoor seating for seasonal dining should be encouraged. Tables, moveable chairs should be permitted and encouraged where space is available.
3. Building Design. Building design for new and renovated or expanded buildings should reflect good design and traditional elements of the area and the Village. Buildings should not all be the same architectural style, but rather should be varied for interest and character.
 - a. Massing. Two- to three-story buildings are appropriate for the Village Circle area. The multi-story height of buildings is important to establish a sense of place, critical mass and scale. The construction of new 1-story buildings should be discouraged as an inefficient use of valuable and limited space. Upper story spaces should be encouraged for residential and office uses. Balconies and terraces should be encouraged for aesthetic and visual interest and function. First floor spaces should have tall ceiling heights generally 12 to 14 feet or greater.
 - b. Fenestration – Windows and Doors. Inviting doorways and large windows for display and indirect illumination of the adjacent sidewalk are important to create an inviting pedestrian environment. Doors and entryways should be recessed from the façade where possible.
 - c. Public/Private Transitional Space. Awnings, canopies, covered arcades and recessed doorways are design elements that help provide a transition between public outdoor and private indoor spaces and protection from the elements. Such features should be encouraged, if not required for all or a portion of each building façade.
 - d. Materials and Colors. Stone, brick, masonry, and clapboard siding are typical and traditional materials found throughout Buchanan. These materials should be encouraged as part of new construction.
4. Lighting.
 - a. All lighting should be of a decorative nature.

- b. Street lights should be consistent with the design already begun by the Village.
 - c. Building mounted lighting and lighting of signage should be by decorative lamps only.
 - d. Spot lights and security lighting should not be permitted. Building mounted lights shall not be used for lighting of parking areas or for security lighting.
 - e. Accent lighting should also be encouraged.
 - f. Light source types should be chosen to suit the specific area and/or activity to be lit, with metal halide lighting used sparingly. In general, low pressure sodium lights should be used for general purpose lighting and wherever color rendering is unnecessary; high sodium pressure lights for sports parks, tennis courts, larger parking areas and where some color rendering is necessary; metal halide only where color rendering is critical, such as display lighting or some sports lighting; and well shielded incandescent lighting for low-wattage applications such as porch lights and infrequently used lighting.
 - g. No horizontal glare shall be permitted from any lighting fixture.
 - h. Goose lamp and other exterior lighting sources shall be encouraged for signage and decorative and area lighting.
5. Signage.
- a. All signage shall be designed to fit into and not obscure the architectural features of the building. The size and shape of signs shall be proportionate to the building and the business.
 - b. Signs shall not be permitted above a roof line, and shall be prohibited above the first floor of a building.
 - c. Signs boards should be of a composite material that allows for carving or relief of the message and decorative features.
 - d. Generally, light colored lettering on a dark background field will be preferred over a dark letter on a light colored background.
 - e. Messages should be kept short and simple, such as the name and street number. Phone numbers and lists of goods and services should be discouraged.
 - f. Signs in doors and windows should not be allowed to result in a cluttered appearance.
6. Landscaping. Business owners should be encouraged to provide and maintain seasonal plantings in planters and hanging baskets as well as within designated areas between the street and building.

Examples of the above should be illustrated with photos of existing examples and/or sketches of improvements to existing locations within the Village Circle.

#2: Improve the appearance of the Route 9A corridor through streetscape improvements.

The Village should evaluate potential sidewalk improvement/ expansion and other streetscape improvements along the Route 9A corridor. The Village should investigate potential funding sources for such public improvements. Coordination with the Westchester County Planning Department may be helpful in the identification of potential funding sources. Coordination with the New York State Department of Transportation will also be critical.

- The Village should work with NYSDOT to improve the appearance of Route 9A. All main roadways should be considered as critical greenways that enhance the appearance, function and character of the area. A continuous and consistent streetscape plan should be prepared and implemented. The plan should include new curbing, sidewalks and street trees and landscaping. Lighting standards should also be considered.

#3: Improve the appearance and function of the Route 9A/ Bleakley Avenue intersection and surrounding properties.

The Village should evaluate potential measures to address the appearance and function of this area of the Village. For example, the expansion of sidewalks into this area may help curtail parking in the right-of-way. However, certain impediments such as the shallow depth of the lots and minimal building setbacks may affect potential improvements to this area. The Village should encourage the auto repair establishment to store cars behind the building (not in front of the site and within the road right-of-way).

The northbound left turn from Route 9A to Bleakley Avenue regularly results in extended backups of northbound through traffic. The Village should evaluate opportunities to provide an adequate left turn lane to avoid and minimize such delays. Coordination with the New York State Department of Transportation will also be necessary.

#4: The Village should beautify areas within the Village that are visible to Village residents and passers-by.

The following areas within the Village have been identified as areas that could be improved in appearance:

- Gateway locations into the Village including entrances along major roadways including Route 9A, as well as gateways into the Village Circle area;
 - The existing concrete and asphalt medians near the railroad overpass should be rebuilt to include trees and shrubs to celebrate this gateway into and out of the Village.
- Route 9A, particularly the area across from the high school;
- Island/ median at Lent's Cove and Broadway;
- The area around the pavilion and pool;
- The parking lot for the pool and recreation center;
- The island in the middle of Tate Circle;
- The public parking lots along Tate Avenue;
- The railroad bridge on Route 9A;
- Monroe Park on the north side of the Village Circle; and
- Improve the appearance of guide rails located along certain roadways (e.g., Bleakley and Westchester Avenues) to a type that is more aesthetically pleasing (e.g., wood guide rails).



- Sidewalk and streetscape and landscaping along the west side of Tate Avenue in front of the Village Hall and the commercial buildings to the south.

The Village would, of course, need to consider how this would be accomplished, funded and maintained. It is recommended that this work be funded and maintained by Village staff and Highway Department. Consideration should be given to establishing and promoting an Adopt-a-Spot program where local businesses, organizations and individuals would sponsor a professionally designed and maintained landscape plan for a particular location.

In addition, the Village should encourage an improved appearance for the frontage of the Indian Point Energy Center. It would appear that certain relatively minor modifications could greatly improve the appearance of the facility along Broadway without impacting security objectives. Improvements worthy of consideration include:

- Replacing or treating the chain link fence so that fence is black or dark green so that the fence blends in better with vegetation behind it (as opposed to the current shiny silver finish of the fence);
- Improve the maintenance and/or screen the appearance of run-down looking buildings located near Broadway; and
- Use of more attractive bollards and/or planters in lieu of concrete blocks.

#5: Continue to monitor and enforce the required elimination of billboards as part of the 7-year removal plan. Earlier removal can be achieved through condemnation and/or purchase of the signs, and development of the properties with buildings and appropriate uses.

#6: Amend Requirements of the C-2 District.

The Village should review the requirements of the C-2 District (e.g., the list of permitted uses, the dimensional requirements, parking requirements and recommend modifications to it that it deems appropriate to further the goals of the plan. For example, the Village should consider elimination of mobile home as a permitted use in the C-2 District.

#7: Improve enforcement of Village laws (e.g., property maintenance, trash disposal/recycling, parking/storage of vehicles, etc.).

The continued, and increased, enforcement of the Village's existing laws (e.g., property maintenance, trash disposal/recycling, traffic speed laws, storage of unregistered vehicles, "temporary" buildings and sheds, parking, etc.) has been identified as a critical means of protecting the character of Buchanan's neighborhoods. As described above, the Public Opinion Survey revealed that this as an important concern raised by Village residents. It is noted that as a result of the community survey, Master Plan Committee meetings and public workshops, the Village has already initiated revisions to the Village's Property Maintenance Law and is developing ways to improve the enforcement process. The Master Plan Committee recommends the consideration of the following with regard to improved enforcement of Village's Building and Zoning Code:

- The Building Inspector should be made more aware of his/ her responsibility as a code enforcer;
- The Building Inspector should be given direction/ discretion to be more proactive than reactive in enforcement of Village Building and Zoning Codes. Regular and routine inspections for violations should be conducted by the police, Code Enforcement Officer and Village Administrator with a focus on early detection and prevention of violations and problems; and
- The Village's regulations are in need of revision. The Zoning Code is out-of-date and self-contradictory which likely impedes the Building Inspector's ability to enforce the Code.
- Increase accountability and response to enforcement issues and complaints. A complaint and resolution tracking system, possibly using email and/or the Village web site is recommended so residents and officials alike can objectively determine the effectiveness of the enforcement system. Regular reports are also recommended.

#8: Amend the Village's signage regulations.

The sign regulations included in the "Sign Schedule" at the rear of the Zoning Code should be revisited in order to ensure that it permits, encourages and requires appropriate signage through property time and place restrictions while protecting free speech rights. A review of the "Sign Schedule" indicates the following signage standards that may need reconsideration:

- "Freestanding signs" in residential zones are permitted to be up to 6 square feet in size and 5 feet in height;

- One freestanding sign per entry drive for institutional and municipal uses in residential districts is permitted - each such sign is permitted to be up to 30 square feet in area and 12 feet in height;
- Window signs in the C-1, C-2, M-1 and M-2 Districts are permitted to occupy up to 400 square feet in area;
- Wall signs in the C-1, C-2, M-1 and M-2 Districts are permitted to be up to 60 square feet in size;
- The standards for freestanding, canopy, marquee and projecting signs in the C-1 District are not consistent with the existing or desirable pattern of development (e.g., encouraging such signs to be located far back on the lot). Consideration should be given to prohibiting freestanding signs from the C-1 District all together.
- “Changeable-copy” signs are permitted in the C-2 District;
- The C-2 District allows two freestanding signs per lot;
- The M-1 and M-2 District allows a freestanding sign at each entrance drive - each such sign may be up to 40 square feet in size.

#9: *Improve parks and recreation in accordance with recreational needs and desires of Village residents.*

The Hudson River is one of the world’s greatest rivers, and is a National and State treasure. The Village of Buchanan is one of the very few communities with a significant amount of accessible Hudson River waterfront land. While this is undoubtedly one of the Village’s greatest physical assets, it has not been optimized.

Indian Point has become synonymous with the Con Edison and Entergy corporations’ nuclear energy generation plant. It is helpful to remember that before the energy plant, Indian Point was known for its peninsula and adjacent bay to the north, Lent’s Cove. Where the energy plant now exists was an amusement park with a pier, providing public access to the Hudson River on a large scale to general public. Although the future of the energy plant is likely to remain industrial for the foreseeable future, there is a large area between the plant and Lent’s Cove Park that is undeveloped.

This natural portion of Indian Point is approximately 45 acres in area, contains one-half mile of Hudson River waterfront, is largely forested and contains areas of steep slopes, wetlands and a large pond. It also enjoys spectacular views of the Hudson

River. This rare and extremely valuable physical asset should play a more prominent and positive role in the character of the Village of Buchanan.

- This plan calls for the preservation of this land as open space. The Village should seek to improve and increase access and use of the property for passive trails and park, and enjoying the views and waterfront, as a logical extension of Lent's Cove Park. This area should be integrated into the proposed Hudson River Walk Greenway Trail which is proposed to run along Broadway. (See Figure II-4)

<http://www.westchestergov.com/planning/docs/RiverWalk/RivWalkMap.pdf>)

The Village should working closely with the County, Peekskill and Cortlandt in developing the trail. Measurable objectives or milestones, such as a monetary and/or time period for a certain action, are useful in making commitments.

- The Village should seek to preserve the area known as Bleakley Woods. Located west of Westchester Avenue, this area is large, forested, contains trails and significant areas of steep slopes and wetlands. Most of the land is owned by Con Edison. Any future development of the property should provide naturally vegetated buffers along the rear of the homes along Westchester Avenue.
 - The Village should investigate ways to control the goose problem at Lent's Cove Park.
 - The Village should seek protection of the pond located east of NYS Route 9A near the Village's southern boundary and the school bus repair garage. This pond has historically been used for fishing and ice-skating. The Village should seek improved access and use of the pond for fishing and ice-skating.
- #10: *Improve Water Distribution System.* The Village should budget the upgrading of water lines on a regular basis in order to reduce potential ruptures in water lines. Also, improvements to correct low pressure areas, possibly via improved connection and looping of dead end areas, should be investigated.
- #11: *Improve Communication.* The Village should continue to improve communication with residents. The new village web site should be amended to include notices, board agendas, copies of the newsletters and current and searchable versions of the Village's Comprehensive Master Plan, studies, and laws and regulations.
- #12: *Update the Zoning Code* – The Zoning Code is out-of-date and self-contradictory and is therefore is significant need of substantial revision. The zoning code should be reviewed and updated comprehensively to eliminate and correct errors and contradictions; improve and update standards, procedural requirements, and

OPEN SPACE COMPONENTS



COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

Village of Buchanan, Westchester County, NY

Note: Tax parcel data obtained from the Town of Cortlandt.
Map created in ArcView software and is intended to be used for GENERAL PLANNING PURPOSES ONLY.

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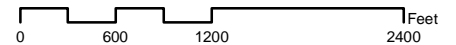


Figure II-4

enforcement; make it more user-friendly; and to incorporate revisions that reflect and implement the recommendations of this plan.

#13: *Participate with Greenway, Hudson River Towns of Westchester (HRTW) and other regional planning efforts.*

- Hudson River Valley Greenway Compact. The By Local Law adopted December 1, 2003, the Village adopted as its policy the elements of the Westchester County Greenway Compact Plan, and amended the Zoning Law and the Subdivision Regulations to reference the Compact Plan. By doing so, the Village has agreed to make its plans, laws and regulations consistent with the Compact Plan as they are amended, created or revised, and in so doing, become eligible for technical and financial assistance from the Greenway.
- Hudson River Towns of Westchester (HRTW). The Historic River Towns of Westchester, HRTW, is a consortium of 13 municipalities along the east bank of the Hudson River, including Peekskill, Cortlandt, Buchanan, Croton-on-Hudson, Town and Village of Ossining, Briarcliff Manor, Sleepy Hollow, Tarrytown, Irvington, Dobbs Ferry, Hastings-on-Hudson, Yonkers and Historic Hudson Valley. The HRTW is a non-profit organization comprised of representatives of the 11 municipalities noted above. The unique combination of riverine environment and cultural wealth has been attracting visitors to the HRTW region for years. Until recently, there were no area-wide comprehensive and coordinated tourism marketing efforts. Historic River Towns of Westchester was established in 1994 to address this issue.

The Village should work closely with the HRTW on planning efforts, including the HRTW coordinated signage plan.

For further information, contact:
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More about the HRTW can be learned at the following websites:

www.westchestergov.com/planning/regionalplan/HRTW.htm

www.hudsonriver.com/rivertowns/welcome.html

- #14: *Develop measures to preserve and celebrate buildings having local historic and/or architectural significance.*

Measures worthy of consideration include:

- Develop and promote specific standards regarding the preservation of historic and/or architectural significant buildings in architectural review guidelines.
- Formation of a Historic Preservation Law and Commission to make recommendations and decisions regarding preservation of historic properties in the community. Once established, the Village may wish to pursue Certified Local Government (CLG) status which enables CLG communities to obtain financial and technical assistance from the State toward preservation of the Villages historic resources.
- Place markers in front of historic and/or architecturally significant buildings.

- #15: *The Village should seek to place power lines underground.*

While undergrounding of existing overhead wires is an expensive proposition, the Village should seek to do so whenever feasible, particularly in the Village Center area. All new power lines within the Village should be placed underground.

Where placing existing overhead lines underground may not be feasible, the Village should seek opportunities to improve the appearance of poles. One opportunity for undergrounding and improvement is along NYS Route 9A as part of reconstruction of the substation facility.