



FERRANDINO & ASSOCIATES INC.
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANTS

TOWN OF HARRISON DRAFT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMMENTS

Remarks Prepared by Vince Ferrandino, AICP, Principal

Ferrandino & Associates Inc.

On behalf of PEPA

March 5, 2007

Introduction

Good evening everyone.

My name is Vince Ferrandino and I am principal of Ferrandino & Associates Inc., Planning and Development Consultants based in Elmsford, New York. I am a professional planner and member in good standing of the American Institute of Certified Planners. My firm provides an array of planning services to municipalities, private corporations, not-for-profit agencies, institutions and private developers. The firm's range of consulting expertise includes comprehensive planning, land use and zoning studies, urban design, environmental planning, community development, economic development, market research, real estate analysis, GIS and site feasibility (see attached bio). My firm has represented the Town of Harrison in the past and this evening we are representing the Purchase Environmental Protective Association (PEPA) in providing comments on the Town's *draft* Comprehensive Plan prepared by the Town's consultants.

The *draft Plan*, on page 2-1, lays out its agenda:

- Resolving remaining planning issues since the 1988 update;
- Identifying and resolving critical new issues; and
- Incorporating any new Town projects into the Plan.

As I understand it, this meeting is intended to convey to the Town public comments on the *draft Plan* in response and as a follow up to a sector meeting held on October 27, 2005 in which PEPA provided input on concerns pertaining to the Purchase area of the Town. By letter dated November 27, 2005 to Anne Gold, Executive Director of PEPA, Celia Curtis of the Mayor's Office transmitted notes of that meeting reflecting the several recommendations made with respect to Purchase. There were subsequent communications with the Town's consultants and PEPA regarding the inclusion of certain recommendations in the Plan. To the Town's credit, several of the suggestions made by PEPA have been incorporated into the draft. However, there are many omissions which we hope will be addressed when the draft Plan is revised and transmitted to the Planning Board for public hearing purposes.

My comments this evening are three-fold:

- I) Factual omissions/errors in the *draft Plan*.
- II) Reiteration of previously made recommendations by PEPA that are not included in the *draft Plan*.
- III) Other recommendations.

A copy of my comments will be provided to the Town following this meeting.

I. Factual Omissions/Errors

1) Census Tract Characteristics

Table 2-3 *Selected Census Tract Characteristics*, in Section 2.6 of the *draft Plan* compares four areas of the Town and how they have changed since 1990. While the data appear in the table, there is no accompanying comparative analysis which would show that the Purchase/Park Lane Tract (86.02) has experienced the most significant demographic changes of any area of the Town since 1990:

Table 2-3: Selected Census Tract Characteristics

	84.03 84.04 Downtown Harrison	84.01 85.00 South of Hutchinson River Parkway	86.02 Purchase and Park Lane	87.00 Silver Lake/ West Harrison
Total Population	8,456	5,658	4,660	5,380
% Population change 1990-2000	6.4	6	39.5*	5.6
Percent White alone	86.7	94.2	86.3	92.9
Percent Black or African American alone	0.6	0.9	4.7	0.5
Percent Asian alone	9.5	3.3	4.6	2.0
Percent under Age 5	6.3	7.8	7.1	5.8
Percent Age 15-24	9.1	8.1	30.6	9.1
Percent Age 65+	14.9	15.9	9.4	17.5
Median Age	37.8	41.1	23.8	37.6
Median Family Income	\$78,615	\$179,752	\$166,492	\$69,375
Average household size	2.5	3.1	3.2	2.6
Percent 1 person households	11.4	3.7	2.3	10.6

* The 2000 Census data does not reveal any figures for Census Tract 86.01, which equates to SUNY.

- 39.5% increase in population (6 times greater than other area)
- Second most diverse ethnic population overall (9.3% minority)
- Highest cohort in 15-24 age bracket (30.6%)
- Lowest cohort in 65+ age category (9.4%)
- Lowest median age (23.8)
- Second highest median income (\$166,492)

- Largest average household size (3.2)
- Smallest percent 1 person household (2.3%)

As the fastest growing area in the Town, with a young, family-oriented and affluent population, Purchase has specific needs. And these are significant statistics that should be culled out to provide a foundation for future land use, recreation and other public facilities planning in the area.

2) Lack of Comparative Analysis of Land Use Changes by Census Tract: 1990-2000-2006

Table 2-7 (*Generalized Land Use*) in Section 2.7.1 of the draft Plan breaks down land use by category in 2006.

Table 2-7: Generalized Land Use

Use	Approximate Acres, 2006	Percent
Residential	4,989	44.8%
Commercial, Retail & Office	809	7.3%
Institutional/Recreation/Open Space	2,338	21.0%
Airport	327	2.9%
Vacant	637	5.7%
Circulation	1,479	13.3%
Water supply	164	1.5%
Cemetery	20	0.2%
Waterbodies	373	3.3%
	11,136	

Sources: Westchester County GIS, 1996; BFJ 2005 and 2006 site visits.

It would be helpful if comparisons for residential, commercial, retail and office, institutional/recreational/open space and vacant land from 1990-2000-2006 were provided to show what areas, by Census Tract, have experienced the most change in the last 15 years.

3) Inclusion of Ophir Farm Trail and Manhattanville Walking Tour as a designated Greenway in April 2005.

The draft Plan fails to mention the inclusion of Ophir Farm and Manhattanville Walking Tour as a designated Greenway, as well as the potential connection of the Ophir Farm – Manhattanville Tour to the Hutchinson River Parkway Trail, a mile away, the latter being a part of the East Coast Greenway Trail system (see attached Hudson River Valley Greenway News Release dated April 13, 2005).

PEPA believes it is worth discussing the significance of this designation in the draft Plan.

The designation of the Manhattanville College Historical Walking Tour as an official segment of the New York State Greenway Trail System represents a triumph for the preservation of Ophir Farm as well. The inclusion provides widely acknowledged recognition to the site and walking tour. The historical walking trail contains 14 locations including Reid Castle, assigned to the National Register of Historical Places in 1974, and surviving structures from the “Model Farm Group.” This well-preserved sample of the model-farm era includes the dairy, stable/ coach house and farmhouse. Also featured is the Ann Holladay Stone Chapel, a Norman Gothic-style building and one of only three remaining family chapels in Westchester County. Maya Linn, the architect and creator of the Vietnam War Memorial, restored the 140 year-old stone chapel along with the creation of a neighboring solar powered classroom in the surrounding environmental park. In September of last year, the Manhattanville College Environmental Park was dedicated as a learning space to develop ecologically sustainable ways to preserve the past, present and future (see attached press release).

Manhattanville and PEPA are currently working together to preserve Ophir Farm Estate's historic structures and cultural landscape, much of it co-located on the college campus. Anne Gold, executive director of PEPA and aide to the president of Manhattanville College, created a book, *Ophir Farm and Manhattanville College*, to celebrate the land's rich history and recent advances while identifying noteworthy sites on the Purchase campus to incorporate into a public walking trail.

PEPA financed the printing and mailing of the book, which was sent to every household in Purchase, local educators, supportive organizations and government officials. The Ophir Farm and Manhattanville College book and the Historic Walking Tour are used as educational tools by Manhattanville professors, school groups and community organizations, including the Purchase Elementary School and the Harrison Girl Scouts. Trail visits and special interactive workshops help future generations learn respect for our common heritage, and develop a sense of time and community. The book and walking tour also help Manhattanville College pursue related grant proposals and have introduced the staff and students to historic preservation techniques and trail maintenance.

4) Joint Water Works Project

There is no mention in the *draft* Plan of the large scale Water Works Plant that has been approved since the 1988 Plan was adopted. We understand that a site close to the airport near Route 120 in Purchase has been chosen, but is being challenged by nearby landowners. Given the significance of this project, PEPA believes it warrants mention in the Comprehensive Plan.

5) There is only passing mention of the Harrison Schools in the *draft* Plan.

Factual correction: Purchase Elementary School also serves hundreds of households outside of Purchase: i.e. West Harrison.

To the extent that information on the School District's Comprehensive Plan becomes available, that data should be included in Section 2.9.2 of the *draft* Town Comprehensive Plan.

6) White Tail Deer Issues.

Other than scant mention of deer on page 2-44 of the *draft* Plan, there is no reference to this problem, especially prevalent in the Purchase area. We are aware of a County study commissioned by the Planning and Parks Departments and monitored by the Westchester County Forest Regeneration Citizens' Task Force, headed by Bill Greenawalt (see attached press release). We are also aware of a separate study, to be conducted in conjunction with PepsiCo's one-year trial (to expire in May 2007) of the fencing permit granted to the corporation's Purchase campus. What is the status of both studies? Has any coordination between the two studies been affected?

PEPA recommends that this be included in the *draft* Plan's recommendations for addressing this problem in Harrison, and more specifically, in Purchase.

II. Reiteration of Previously-Made Recommendations by PEPA That are Not in the *Draft* Plan

1) Traffic.

There is no mention in the *draft* Plan of closing Manhattanville Road at Purchase Street as was promised to PEPA following the public input meeting in October 2005.

The 1988 Master Plan states that the rural nature of Purchase Street is severely impacted by traffic volumes on it and that a goal and objective for the Town is to preserve the rural aspect of the street. In fact a 1999 study by BFJ, the Town's planning consultants, prepared on behalf of the Purchase Preservation Society, stated that:

1. A sizeable percentage of traffic on Purchase Street is related to the office developments on Manhattanville Road, a Town road that connects Purchase Street and I-684.
2. Regional traffic uses Purchase Street and Manhattanville Road as a shortcut to and from I-684.
3. The conclusion of the *Purchase Street Traffic Study* conducted by BFJ states on page 47:

“On the basis of the findings detailed in the report we professionally believe that the connection of Manhattanville Road to Corporate Park Drive and the closure of Manhattanville Road at the intersection with Purchase Street is to be recommended as the most effective way of reducing traffic impacts on Purchase Street. Additionally we believe that it is justified for the following reasons:

1. it re-establishes Purchase Street as a residential collector road that is more fitting with the rural nature of Purchase;
2. it results in a more efficient usage of the local road network, with commuters using Westchester Avenue and the regional expressways and local traffic using Purchase Street; and
3. the connection and closure results in less congestion than either the future No Change scenario or the future connection scenario.”

Accordingly, this study and proposed project, sanctioned by Westchester County DPW, DOT and NYSDOT, concluded that connecting Corporate Park Drive to Manhattanville Road and disconnecting Manhattanville Road from Purchase Street would achieve this overall goal of reducing traffic along Purchase Street, thus maintaining its rural character.

This is a critical element in the future of Purchase and should be included as a recommendation in the current Comprehensive Plan Update.

2) Lack of Public Parks/Open Space in Purchase.

PEPA applauds the recommendation to establish a Committee to investigate a Park and Recreation Plan and looks forward to representation on this Townwide Committee. However, contrary to PEPA’s recommendation in October 2005 to encourage acquisition of private land for public open space purposes, there is no such recommendation in this *draft* Plan. Although there are private open space parcels in Purchase (country clubs, private schools and universities), these parcels provide limited access to residents and there are no

public open space parcels or parks per se in Purchase. Given the demographics of the Purchase area as the fastest growing hamlet in the Town, especially with respect to youth population cohorts, it would appear that open space acquisitions by the Town and/or a land trust would be appropriate.

PEPA reiterates its request for the Town to be more affirmative in this regard.

On parcels currently occupied by country clubs and large estates, PEPA also supports rezonings to a recreation district, as is the case in the Town of Mamaroneck, so that in the event of potential development on these parcels, the new underlying zoning (recreation district) will prevail. PEPA also supports the use of conservation easements, open space subdivisions and special purpose districts (for recreation only) as a means of preserving open space.

3) Issue of Town Homes.

The *draft* Plan references the need to diversify the Town's housing stock. In this regard, the inclusion of a new zone permitting town homes has been suggested for further study, although not much detail is provided. PEPA is skeptical of this provision, at least in the Purchase area, as it would adversely affect neighborhood character, as defined in the *draft* Plan. More information on this townhouse concept should be provided, if it is going to be considered by the Town. We are also aware of the *Harrison Corridor Studies: Potential Townhouse Development* that was presented to the Town/Village Board on March 28th, 2006. Does the Town intend to incorporate any of the research findings or conclusions from this study into the Master Plan? What is the status of the legislation (not yet passed) for a floating zone for Town Homes?

4) Provision of a Police/Emergency Services Sub-station in the Purchase Area.

The size of Harrison is huge (approximately 22 sq. miles). Consequently, emergency response times are slow. A sub-station in Purchase for police and emergency services was suggested by PEPA in October 2005, but is not recommended in the *draft* Plan. PEPA believes this should be considered as an expansion of services at the Firehouse or on the quarry site.

In its correspondence to PEPA of November 22, 2005, the Town of Harrison acknowledged the concern of the Purchase community voiced during the public outreach process on October 27, 2005 for the 2007 Master Plan update regarding the current status of emergency services. It was specifically noted that the response time of emergency services to incidents in the Purchase area can be slow due to the fact that these services are centralized in downtown Harrison, a considerable distance from Purchase. Although a centralized location for such services was proposed (location off I-287) to improve response times, no action was undertaken.

This condition further emphasizes the need to adequately address impacts on emergency services from the Proposed Action, as such impacts might exacerbate already identified problems, including slow response times. Slow response time is of particular concern on roads where traffic congestion is identified as exacerbating potential emergency response issues.

III. Additional Recommendations

PEPA recommends the following:

1) Creation of special overlay district to include the Manhattanville Campus, parts of Purchase Street and Parcel B as an historic overlay district.

Given what has been previously presented, with respect to Ophir Farm, the Walking Tour and Greenway Connection, PEPA urges consideration of this concept.

2) Preservation of Natural Features.

Preservation of nature trails, stone walls and other natural and built features that contribute to Purchase's neighborhood character should be included in zoning, site plan and subdivision regulations to supplement the currently required 100 foot open space buffer setback from the road right-of-way.

3) Potential Office Expansion in the Purchase Area.

Include as a Comprehensive Plan recommendation, as communicated by the Town's consultants to PEPA in November 2005:

"Areas recommended for commercial/office expansion include the southern portion only of the Whitelaw Reid property, and only on the condition that access is provided through Manhattanville Road to Westchester Avenue and Manhattanville Road is closed at Purchase Street."

4) SEQRA Process

It is assumed, given the extent of changes from the 1988 Plan and given the impacts that are likely to occur from these changes, that the Town will undertake a thorough SEQRA review, that is, a full GEIS, before the 2007 Comprehensive Plan is adopted.

Thank you for your attention.