



Town of Washington
Conservation Advisory Commission

May 19, 2022

To: Comprehensive Plan Review Committee
Town of Washington Town Board

Re: Comprehensive Plan Review Committee Charge

Dear Committee Members and Councilmembers,

The Town of Washington (Town) Conservation Advisory Commission (CAC) is writing to the Town Board and the Comprehensive Plan Review Committee (CPRC) to express its views on the matters described in the current CPRC charge relating to hospitality. Specifically, Section 5(2) of the local law establishing the CAC says that the CAC shall “advise the Town Board or the Town of Washington on matters affecting the preservation, development, and use of the natural and man-made features and conditions of the Town insofar as quality, ecological vistas, and other environmental factors are concerned.”

After considering the matters raised in the CPRC charge and the 2015 Comprehensive Plan (Plan), the CAC does not believe that revising the Plan to consider hospitality is necessary. The Plan already explicitly supports tourism and anticipates hospitality uses in appropriate areas of the Town and Village. Specifically, one of the four goals of the Plan is to “Strengthen the Village Center,” with the objectives of “sustain[ing] the Village in its role as the concentrated site of the Town’s commercial activity” and “promot[ing] tourism as an important regional economic driver and expanding market for the Town and Village.” Importantly, the Plan acknowledges that the rural beauty of the Town is what drives tourism, and therefore the Plan discourages development and commercial uses in rural areas in order to protect the reason to visit the Town. In addition, allowing expanded commercial uses outside the Village center, if implemented, would increase vehicular traffic and land use in new areas, requiring substantial investment in monitoring local water supplies and road maintenance. The resulting consequences of increased traffic, whether it be on the smaller roads in the rural areas or on the major arteries surrounding the Village of Millbrook, will have a detrimental effect on the quality of the human as well as the natural environment, and traffic increases do not fit in with the Plan’s vision of remaining a rural community with great scenic beauty and a healthy natural environment. The CAC believes that the objective in the existing Plan, “Keep our roads rural in form, use and appearance, minimizing the impact of motor vehicles,” and the related

explanation on pages 41-42 of the Plan highlight the risks and detriments associated with increased traffic.

The CAC also notes that the CPRC charge asks whether the Plan should be amended to support adaptive reuses of historic structures. The CAC believes that the existing Plan supports adaptive reuses of historic buildings that are not on a registry of historic places and provides for a balanced approach to development of and near historic properties. On page 40, the Plan specifically encourages “reuse and rehabilitation of existing buildings and sites” rather than new developments. Under Goal IV, Maintain A High Quality of Life, Objective 3, Protect and Preserve Historic Resources, the Plan specifically endorses “compatible” new developments or redevelopments adjacent to historic buildings and landscapes (see page 56 of the Plan).

The CAC is mindful of the important issues raised in the CPRC charge relating to the Town property tax base and viability of businesses in the Town and Village. The CAC urges the Town Board to consider solutions which do not impair Town's natural resources, as those resources are the foundation of the Town's real property values as well as its appeal to tourists.

Thank you for considering our comments and we are available to answer any of your questions.

Sincerely,

Conservation Advisory Commission