

exterior point, the midpoints, or a point four feet from the structure to prevent “berming” up; measuring height from the pre- or post-disturbance, enacting retaining wall and maximum disturbance rules; adjusting the allowable bulk of a structure relative to the area of steep slope; and prohibiting development where the grade is excessively steep. No one option will address every contingency; some combination will no doubt be needed as experience is gained using the most efficacious of the options as soon as possible.

5. **Enact provisions to protect the environment further.** The Village should adopt strict rules with regard to lot coverage (i.e., impervious surfaces such as patios, blacktop, parking, driveways and buildings). These regulations could employ a sliding scale that reduces lot coverage as the lot gets larger. “Critical Environmental Resources” should be identified, to include water bodies, wetlands, floodplains, and steep slopes – also subject to the Resource Protection Ordinance (described in Chapter 4). Land area with Critical Environmental Resources should be considered in calculating yield. The use of conservation subdivisions (as described in Chapter 4) should enable developers to achieve the maximum yield consistent with the mitigation of adverse impacts. The appropriate density should take into account the full potential for mitigation provided by proven engineering technologies. The Village should be diligent in its stewardship of stormwater management, requiring development activities to conform to the substantive requirements of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation’s State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System General Permit for construction activities. Specifically, stormwater runoff catch basins and collection systems should be sited at strategic locations along roads, parking lots, and other paved surfaces, as well as positioned to control point source pollutants such as fertilizers and pesticides in new residential development, golf courses and institutional campuses.
6. **Carry out “green” design principles.** These include orientation to sun, green roofs, etc. As a number of municipalities are now doing, new buildings should encouraged to achieve specific standards such as those proposed by LEED. (LEED refers to the U.S. Green Building Council’s Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System, which includes various levels of compliance (i.e., Certified, Silver, Gold or Platinum)).
7. **Further educate the public with regard to Dobbs Ferry’s history and natural features.** There are a number of places to highlight and interpret the rich features of Dobbs Ferry: the Old Croton Aqueduct and other elements of the trail system described in the

other chapters on Greenways, the railroad station, the waterfront parks and downtown. Such “wayfinding” should include interpretive signs and maps that highlight landmarks, historic places such as the Wickers Creek Archeological Site, the namesake historic ferry landing, the Native American trails, etc.

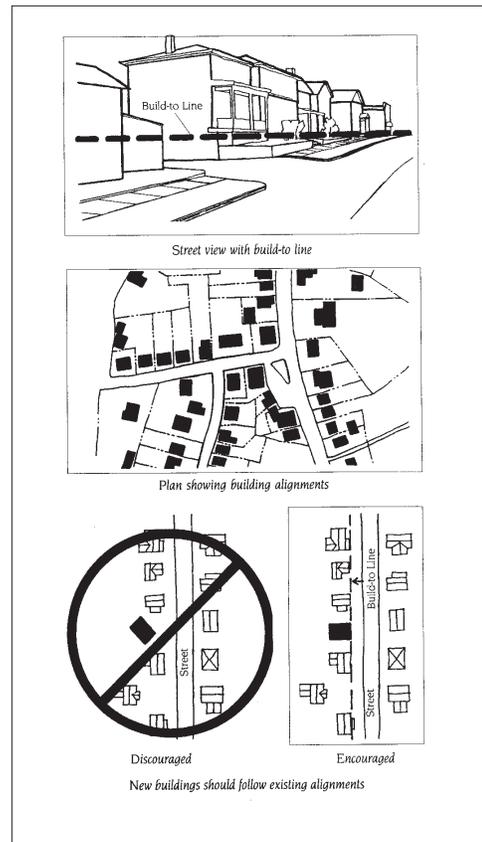
8. **Develop a database of natural resources.** This will take some time, and will require the use geographic information system (GIS) computer-based maps – which the Village does not now use. This GIS could document Critical Environmental Areas, wetlands, water-courses, and steep slopes. Neighboring villages have joined with the Town of Greenburgh and the County of Westchester to prepare a similar GIS database; perhaps the cost and effort could be shared. Consistent with the current code, the Conservation Advisory Board should be included in this process.
  
9. **Clarify the development review process;** and adopt an “Oval Table” for early review of and comment on all applications. Both concepts are explained in Chapter 7 on zoning.

## Design

**The issues raised above for development have as much to do with building design as with site planning; and with the scenery as with the environment.** In addition, residents’ concerns about new development apply equally to new buildings, renovations, expansions, tear-downs, and other manifestations of redevelopment.

**Thus, the Village’s historic fabric is at stake.** Two-thirds of the Village’s housing units were built before 1940. Many were built in a consistent style reflecting the tastes of the time (e.g., the Victorian homes on Clinton Avenue) or as part of an attractive subdivision (e.g., Villard Hill houses inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright). Yet, the Village does not have any form of historic district designation or protection. While many residents worry about what this might mean with regard to how they are permitted to alter their homes, more residents are starting to worry about the potential loss of the Village’s traditional community character.

**The Village’s landmarks are also in jeopardy.** A number of buildings are listed on the National or State Registers of Historic Places, or have been recognized by the Dobbs Ferry Historical Society, Waterfront (LWRP) Committee, or Westchester County. An unusual number are former estate and institutional buildings owned by non-profits. Landmark protection is essential to preserving the scenic quality and heritage of the community; but flexibility will be needed, as this public purpose can run



up against the needs of the non-profit owners of these landmarks. The intent is to provide the tools to encourage appropriate development, while protecting the historic fabric of the community. In Dobbs Ferry, the issue is less the preservation of individual buildings of historic significance than the protection of the neighborhood character. Several neighborhoods possess an integrity derived from buildings that have been woven together over the course of more than two centuries.

**The Village’s dramatic views are not yet designated, or protected.**

One workshop participant noted that the Hudson River is mainly treasured for its views; another that Dobbs Ferry’s “principal product” is views – not just of the river, but also of ravines, wooded hills, landmark churches, etc. These views, which are documented in the LWRP, are part of the community’s heritage and contribute to property values. They too are subject to degradation as development goes forward; and, conversely, can sometimes be enhanced with thoughtful clearing. In a Waterfront (LWRP) Committee survey, fully 77 percent of the residents firmly supported Village regulations to protect views, while only four percent opposed.

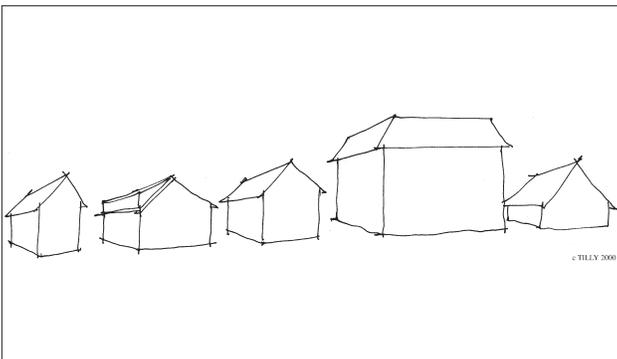
Recommendations:

1. **Adopt regulations and Design Guidelines to address out-of-scale and/or inappropriate development and redevelopment.**

These regulations and guidelines could address “floor area ratio” (FAR) – i.e., the amount of building space relative to land area; “lot coverage” – i.e., the dimension of the building relative to the land area; and length and height of buildings on any one plane – i.e., to avoid large blank walls; etc. Some of these guidelines can be embodied in the general rules for zoning districts. Others will need to be particular to neighborhoods (something that the third chapter addressed). Guidelines alert property owners as to what is expected of them, as well as the regulations in place to protect the character of their neighborhood; and guidelines alert reviewers as to the limits of their authority and interest.

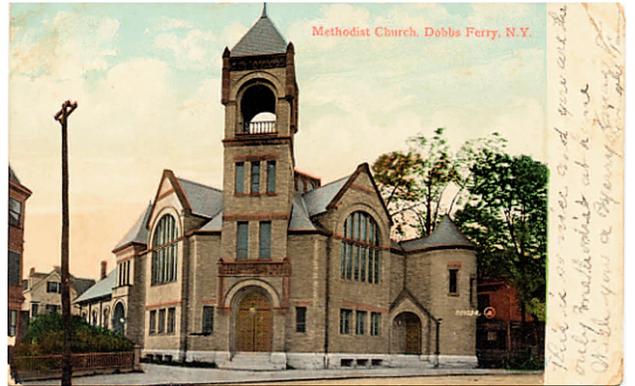
2. **Adopt a “Historic District and Landmark” ordinance and guidelines.**

Buildings and areas listed or deemed eligible for listing on the State or National Registers of Historic Places should be automatically included. The County of Westchester also recommends historic districts in the Cedar Street/Main Street downtown and on lower Clinton Avenue. The Village should commission a survey of its historic resources every decade. Guidelines—perhaps simply those promulgated by the U.S. Secretary of Interior for the National Register—should provide predictability to property owners wishing to alter their building.



Opposite and above: Design guidelines should protect against intrusions like those pictured above. (Illustrations based on work by Joel Russel, Anne Tate and Stephen Tilly).

3. **Provide incentives for historic preservation.** The Village should consider State or National Register listing for all designated districts and landmarks. Listing provides commercial and rental-housing building owners with federal tax incentives for restoration. The non-profits are more problematic. The Village generally supports applications for grants and financial support for landmark restoration. It should be noted that the 2002 New York State Building Code regulations provide additional flexibility for historic buildings and buildings in historic districts.
4. **Include historic resources in the natural resource GIS / database.** The scenic and historic resources should also be tracked to allow easy reference by reviewing boards and applicants. These features should include old-growth trees, scenic views, stone walls, cemeteries, historic structures, historic districts, and archeological resources.
5. **Improve the Village's "Tree Ordinance."** The Tree Ordinance should be adjusted to: incorporate the way that landscaping, planting and clearing can enhance views and community character; to reduce erosion; enhance energy-saving shade capabilities; prohibit "topping off" of trees; preserve old growth trees; promote predominant species; forestall clear-cutting; and protect street trees. Neighbor notification should be provided. The reviewing group should also advise on and encourage selective clearing (!) to open up important views, such as at Memorial Park.
6. **Provide Design Guidelines for each neighborhood.** The intrinsic character of each neighborhood should be defined and catalogued to be used as Guidelines by the Boards in evaluating submissions. These Guidelines should set standards within the neighborhoods intended to reinforce the positive characteristics and resolve the negative characteristics. Since the historic character within a neighborhood would be included in these Guidelines, this may be the fastest and easiest way to establish historic districts. (See Chapter 3, which provides foreshadowing for neighborhood-by-neighborhood Design Guidelines.)
7. **Provide Design Guidelines for commercial development.** These may be specific to the area (as in the case for the Chauncey Park area, discussed in Chapter 3). On a generic level, defining Ashford Avenue and Broadway as being peripheral to the downtown, the guidelines should include limits on the number of curb cuts, off-site lighting impacts, hours of operation, and level of noise. These small commercial uses abut residential areas. While they provide useful services and tax ratables, they should not be allowed to aggravate



Above and opposite: Dobbs Ferry has an impressive array of landmarks and historic resources worthy of preservation.

**A First Stab at a Historic Resources Inventory:**Downtown and Waterfront

|   |               |
|---|---------------|
| Wickers Creek archeological site on The Landing's property              | (pre-history) |
| Oceana Press Building at Main / Chestnut                                | c. 1890s      |
| Washington/former Dobbs Ferry Playhouse at Main/Elm                     | 19th century  |
| Railroad Station, architect Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge                 | c. 1900       |
| "Palazzo" apartment building at 10 Main Street, builder Dominic Altieri | 20th century, |
| Public library (former) at Main/Cedar, remodeled by Betram Goodhue      | c. 1910       |
| Dobbs Ferry Village Hall  | 1926          |
| Manufacturing Plant/Methodist Book Concern at 145 Palisade Avenue       | 1927          |
| Cedar Street movie theater  | 20th century  |
| Masonic Temple (former)/Medical Office Building at the Gateway          | 20th century  |
| Rudy's Beau Rivage  | 20th century  |

Places of Worship

|   |              |
|---|--------------|
| Little White Church Cemetery                                      | c. 1820      |
| Zion Episcopal Church   | 1834         |
| South Presbyterian Church   | 1867         |
| Summerfield Methodist Church                                      | 1863, 1895   |
| Sacred Heart Church   | 1896         |
| Our Lady of the Rosary of Pompeii Church, builder Dominic Altieri | 1926         |
| Tabernacle of Prayer/former Church of Christ Scientist            | 20th century |
| Greenburgh Hebrew Center, stained glass by Naphtali Bezem         | 20th century |

Educational and Institutional Campuses

|   |              |
|---|--------------|
| Ingleside at St. Christopher's, architect Alexander Jackson Davis | 1855         |
| Masters School, various buildings                                 | 1877 onward  |
| Carriage houses at the Masters School                             | c. 1880      |
| Estherwood Mansion at the Masters School                          | 1895         |
| Our Lady of Victory, various buildings                            | 19th century |
| Children's Village/former NY Juvenile Asylum, various buildings   | 1905 onward  |
| Dobbs Ferry Middle/High School                                    | 20th century |
| Mount Mercy College, various buildings                            | 1950 onward  |
| Springhurst Primary School  | 1961         |

Houses (other than those on the Campuses)

|  |              |
|--|--------------|
| Overseer's House on the Old Croton Aqueduct                              | c. 1845      |
| RM Oliphant House  | 1864         |
| Charles Loring Brace House, architect Calvert Vaux                       | 19th century |
| Mead House   | 19th century |
| Gould House on the Ardsley Country Club                                  | 19th century |
| Villard Hill houses, architect David Hankin, Frank Lloyd Wright disciple | 20th century |



### Scenic Views

1. **Dominant “use” of river is visual**
2. **Not just river views**
  - Streams, woods, slopes, stone walls
3. **Part of community heritage**
  - 95% surveyed residents support view protection
4. **View availability study...**

View shed rating:

  - Number of people who enjoyed it
  - Village or neighborhood significance
  - Quality of view in winter and summer

This page and opposite: This plan embraces the work of citizen committees that have catalogued and rated the many scenic views of Dobbs Ferry.



traffic conditions, safety, or the quality of life of their residential neighbors.

8. **Review the Village’s cell tower ordinance and improve it as necessary.** Cell phones are becoming a necessity of everyday living. Cell towers are an unpopular and potentially gross visual intrusion on the landscape. Dobbs Ferry, with its rugged topography and affluence, will invite multiple towers. The attendant regulations should stress protection of scenic views, use of many (especially existing) tall structures rather than a fewer number of taller (and new) towers, and enhancement of the revenue stream in connection with landmarks owned by non-profits.
  
9. **Enact a “View Preservation Ordinance.”** The ordinance should go beyond that recommended in the adopted LWRP, not just “to include all properties that can interrupt others’ public or private access to the River,” but also those that would affect important public views of built and natural landmarks. As recommended by the Scenic Resources Committee and in the LWRP, views should be rated based upon: (1) whether the view features the riverfront or other valued vista; (2) the number of people who enjoy it; (3) the degree of village-wide, neighborhood or historic significance; and (4) the quality of the view throughout the year. Different Guidelines should relate to these different conditions. View preservation should be integrated into Site Plan Review.
  
10. **In general, strengthen the Village’s Architectural Review Board to become the Design and Historic Review Board** Guidelines, no matter how extensive, do not cover every exigency. Sometimes they will prove incomplete; other times they will prove too proscriptive. The Architectural Review Board was formed in 1966. It has stood the test of time by default, but often has little effective input due to its place in the process. Usually, the Architectural Review Board does not review projects until after they have already been acted upon by the Board of Trustees, Planning Board, and Zoning Board of Appeals. By then, it is usually too late on a major project for the Architectural Review Board to have full input on anything more than superficial surface treatments, procedures should be modified so that the Design and Historic Review Board is able to provide input on all applications submitted to the Planning Board and Zoning Board prior to decision being made. Both the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals should be able to refer matters to the Design and Historic Review Board, although referrals should not be mandatory. The Design and Historic Review Board should have broader, clearer and more practically enforceable powers with regard to designated views and historic structures.

## Diversity

**Dobbs Ferry takes pride in its social heterogeneity.** Out of the more than 10,000 people, sizable minorities are constituted of immigrants, ethnic Italians, senior citizens, etc. Extrapolating from the U.S. Census, fewer than one-out-five of Dobbs Ferry households resemble the “Ozzie and Harriet” paradigm that the suburbs were supposedly predicated upon. The need in Dobbs Ferry is new housing focused on the aging Baby Boomers and GenY social groups.

**The Village’s social variety is due to its housing diversity.** In and close to the downtown are apartments. Most of the development is in neighborhoods of small houses on small lots. Large and expensive houses on large lots surround the Country Club and form exclusive enclaves. The proportion of renters is the same as that of single-family homes (at 40 percent each).

**The Village’s social diversity is threatened by Dobbs Ferry’s abiding desirability, compounded by the region’s surge in housing values.** The proportionate value of modest homes has soared even faster than those of the more expensive homes. Condominium and cooperative conversions will most likely follow, reducing the rental stock. Even if the housing price escalation was due to a “bubble,” it is unlikely that housing prices will recede substantially.

**The goal should be to provide affordable housing units in the Village of Dobbs Ferry.** As indicated in the LWRP plan, “opportunities should be provided for the development of a variety of housing types to meet the needs of people at various stages of the life cycle, various income and age levels, and [various] household compositions.”

### Recommendations:

1. **Require future developments of ten or more units to create affordable housing.** “Inclusionary housing” should be financially viable in Dobbs Ferry given the profitability of housing development in Dobbs Ferry, and the high County benchmark of up to \$84,200 yearly income for a family of four – equal to 80 percent of the county’s 2009 median income figure (\$105,300) for that size household. The “inclusionary housing” set-aside should be something like 10 percent of the units for people earning 80 percent of the area median income; developments providing 20 percent should be allowed greater flexibility with regard to unit count, but would not necessarily significantly increase floor area or bedroom count.
2. **Ideally: promote on-site inclusionary housing in a way that may increase the number of units, but does not increase building**

### **Inclusionary housing:**

1. **10% mandated +10% “incentivized” (with unit count bonus)**
2. **County income targeted to households earning 80% median (“workforce” housing)**
3. **Target is 100 units to meet County of Westchester goal for Dobbs Ferry**

Above: Dobbs Ferry is a small but progressive community that chooses to do its fair share for addressing the region’s large affordable housing problem.

**density.** For example, a development of 14 single-family homes could take the step to being ten single-family homes and four clustered units. The four units would be computed as 12,000 square feet and 16 bedrooms. The clustered building would then be reconfigured to be eight units with the same square footage and number of bedrooms. The units would then be able to be sold as smaller more affordable units within a conventional project. Built density would not be compromised, but diversity would be provided. Institutionalized affordable housing as in an entire project of homes required to be affordable should only be a last resort.

3. All the same: **allow flexibility in how the housing requirement is met.** Developers should be given the opportunity to spread their obligation out within the Village; i.e., to build offsite, but without creating concentrations or offloading the impacts. The affordable housing units should be consistent in quality—but not necessarily in size and appointments—with the market-rate units.
4. **Allow ancillary (“upstairs”) housing in Downtown and along Ashford Avenue.** Chapter 4 explains the details of this policy.

## **Transportation**

**Dobbs Ferry’s topography and street pattern channelize traffic to two roads – Ashford Avenue and Broadway.** These two handle most of the thru-traffic in the Village (though studies show that in fact more than one-half of that thru-traffic is really non-Village residents commuting through, to, or visiting Dobbs Ferry). Woe to the driver who must pass through the Ashford/Broadway intersection during peak hours! Traffic is not only bad; it is unavoidable.

**Traffic is also getting worse.** Dobbs Ferry has a sizable number of households that do not own a car (350, representing 9 percent), but even more households who own upwards of three cars (500, representing 13 percent). The average number of trips that each American makes in a car per day virtually doubled during the 1990s. Behavior—more than development—is forcing the failure of suburban road networks. As further proof: in the 1990s, Dobbs Ferry’s number of households grew by 150 to 3,800; the number of locally employed people grew by 100 to 5,200; while the local traffic count grew by the thousands on Ashford Avenue and Broadway. Outsiders cannot be completely blamed: much of the traffic has its origin or destination in the Village.

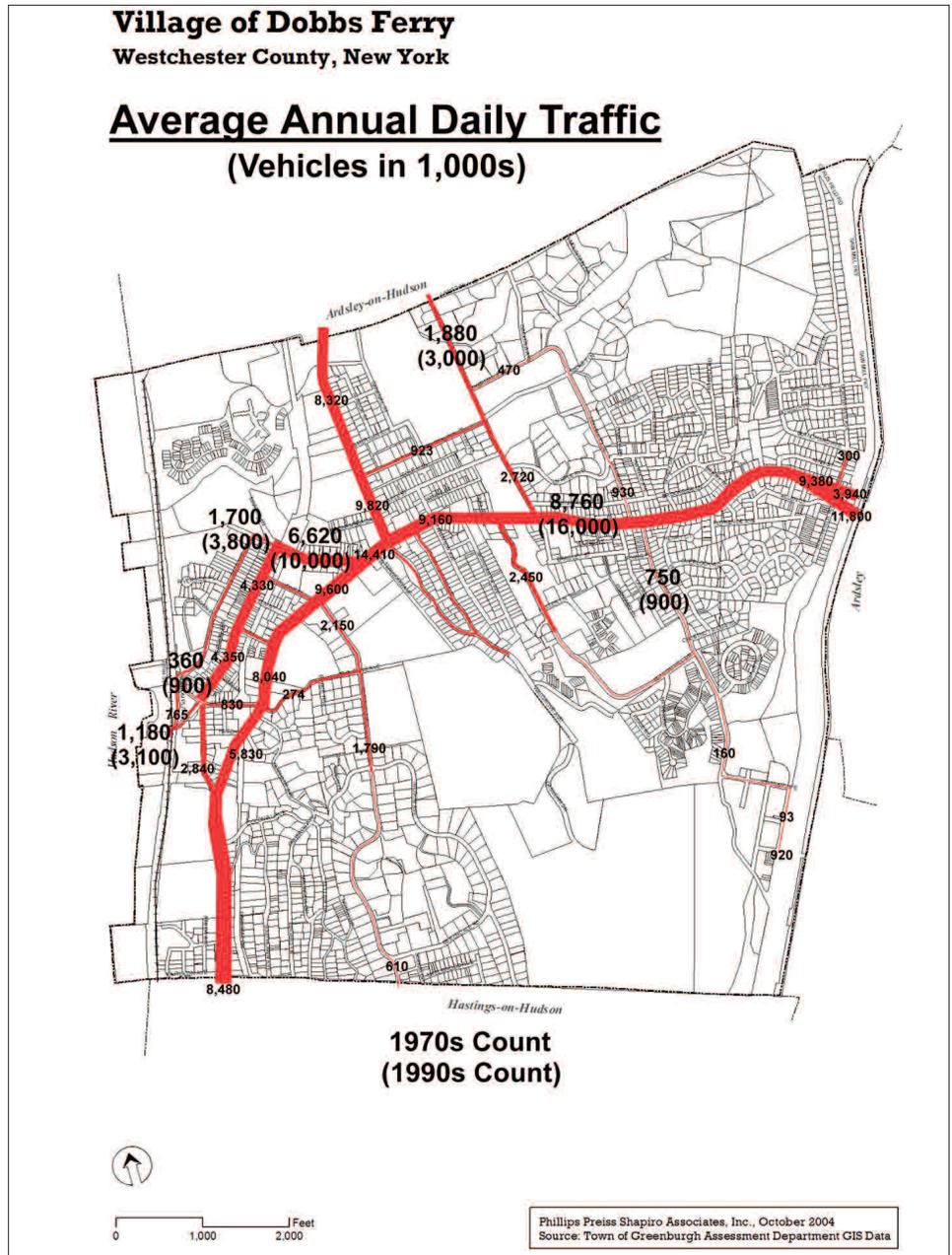
**It is naïve to think that Dobbs Ferry can buck the big trend; but it can make a difference.** Dobbs Ferry is a progressive community, where

it is possible to do the environmentally correct thing for its own sake. Relevant ideas include car-sharing services (e.g., Zipcar, Flexcar), improved mass transit, alternative flexible transit, ferries/water taxis, and more.

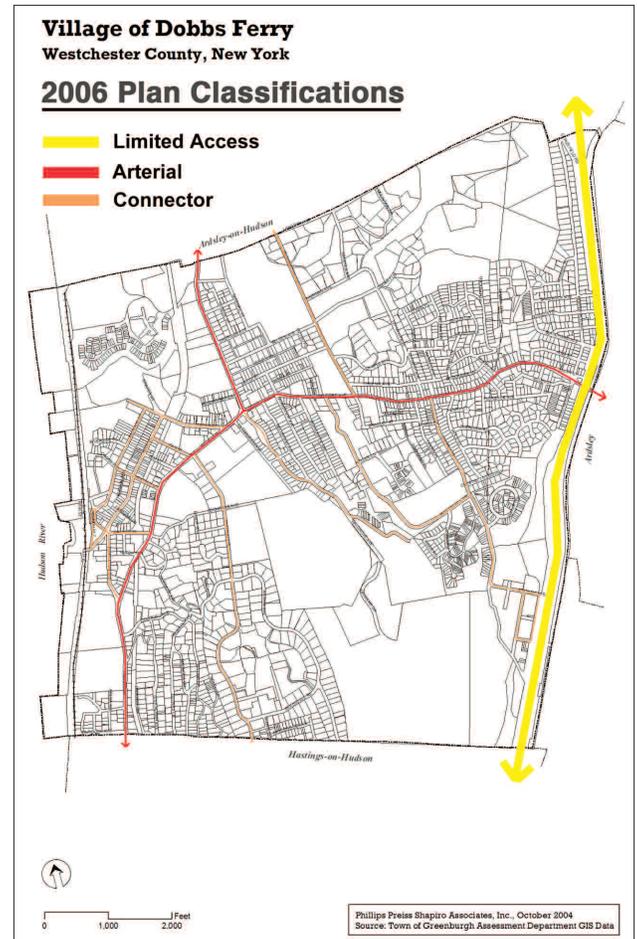
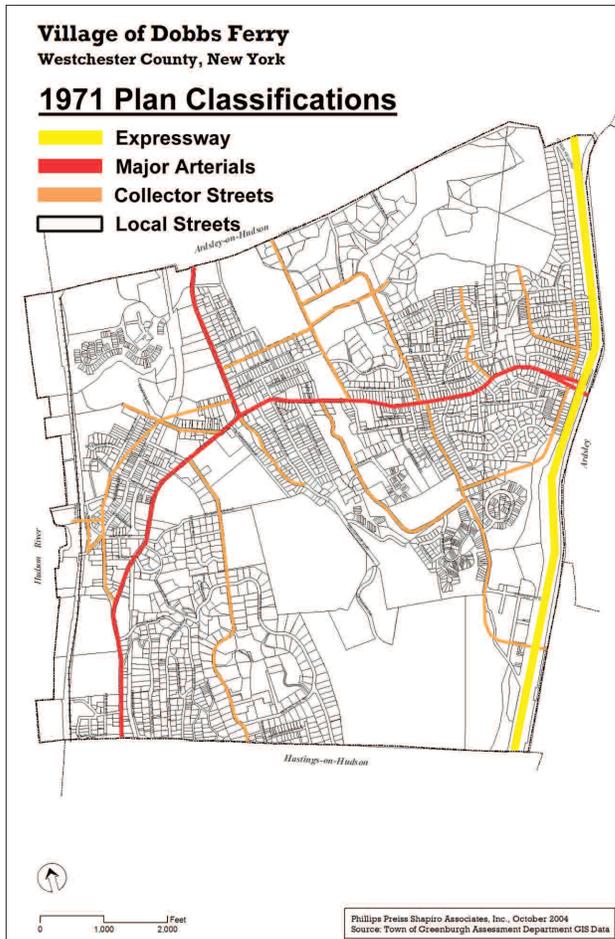
**As to basics: Dobbs Ferry can learn from Irvington’s new traffic management plan.** Traffic does not end at the Village’s border. Thus, there are lessons to be learned from and good reason to coordinate with Dobbs Ferry’s neighbors. In particular, the Village of Irvington finished its own comprehensive plan in 2002; this plan was prepared by BFJ Planning as consultants, with the traffic chapter the responsibility of resident John Canning, who is also an employee of Adler Consulting. As in Dobbs Ferry, the Irvington team grappled with the problems posed by a “gradual but ... unrelenting increase in vehicular traffic [that] has steadily eroded the aesthetic and recreational value of the community’s roads and streets.”

Recommendations:

1. **Adopt an official map and policy for roadways equally concerned with pedestrians and bicyclists, as with traffic and vehicular circulation.** The “Functional Classification” for the map and policy should, where appropriate, dovetail with Dobbs Ferry’s neighbors for through roads.
2. **Improve pedestrian conditions on key roads (“Arterials” and “Commercial Connectors” under the Functional Classification).** The Village should adopt an “Access Management Code” that creates incentives (e.g., reduced parking) for shared parking access/egress between adjacent uses, as well as penalties (e.g., restrictions on use) for additional curb cuts (driveways) near other curb cuts. Excessive curb cuts slow down traffic and reduce safety, especially for pedestrians. The Code should also require sidewalk, street tree, and other improvements that improve pedestrian conditions. To do its part to create a steady and safe flow of traffic, the County Department of



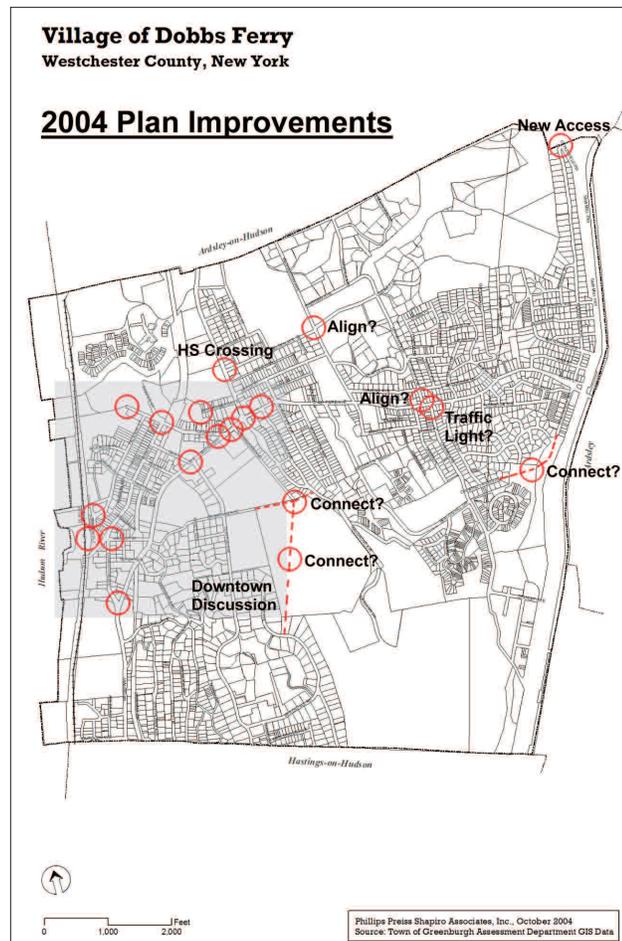
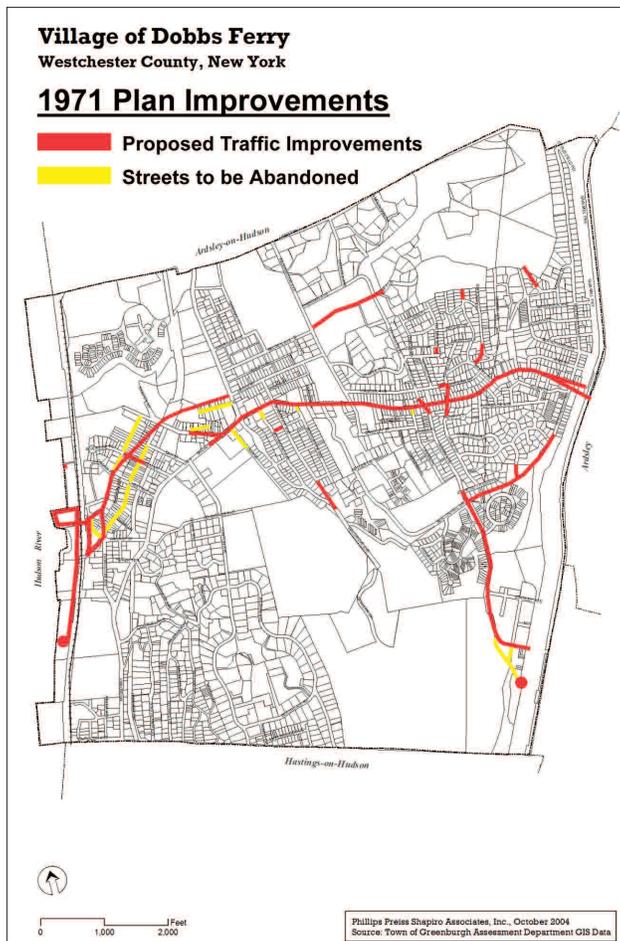
Above: Traffic has grown at a far greater pace than population. Families own and use more cars than ever before.



Transportation (County DOT) and New York State Department of Transportation (NYS DOT) should reduce the speed limit on Ashford and Broadway from its prevailing 40 miles per hour (mph).

3. **Require traffic studies as useful.** At the minimum, a study should be considered if the development involves over 10 vehicles per hour or 10 trucks per day, or if the development is within 100 feet of an accident-prone intersection or other spot.
4. **Encourage new development to make a serious effort to improve, not just offset, traffic and safety problems.** The Village should focus on any development that increases the volume of traffic by more than, for example: (1) 5 percent or ten vehicles in the peak hour for a road with an accident history greater than the statewide average for similar roadways; (2) 10 percent on arterials and connectors; and (3) 25 percent or twenty vehicles in the peak hour on any other road. To avoid the only logical mitigating measure being to downsize development, appropriate actions include contributing to a shuttle service, reconfiguring the

Above: This plan foresees shifting the roadway classification to attend to neighborhood quality of life, not just roadway efficiency.



site plan, carrying out safety mitigation measures, providing off-site pedestrian improvements, encouraging mixed-use projects, etc.

5. **Support the creation of a new bridge connecting Cyrus Field Road and the north end of Northfield Avenue to 9A** in the vicinity of 100B, with ramp connections to both the New York Thruway and Saw Mill River Parkway. While outside of Dobbs Ferry, this bridge would alleviate traffic congestion on Ashford Avenue, to good purpose.
6. **Target roads for traffic-calming.** “Traffic calming” refers to a panoply of tools that generally (1) improve pedestrian and/or bicyclist comfort and safety, (2) reduce the speed and thus noise and nuisance of passing vehicles, yet still (3) allow a steady volume of vehicular traffic. The key roads to target are the collectors – where vehicular speeds undermine the residential quiet of the roads. These include: Beacon Hill Drive, Clinton Avenue, Maple Street, Northfield Avenue, Ogden

Above: This plan rejects the major roadway reroutings and widenings once preferred, for more surgical interventions that (most often) have to do with pedestrian safety, rather than accommodating more traffic volumes.

**Train and Transit  
Parking Spaces:**

1. **375 to 471 spaces in 2001**
2. **25 non-residential spaces (for Ardsley commuters)**
3. **+24 MetroNorth non-resident spaces**



**Bicycles and sidewalks:**

1. **Racks at Train Station and Village Hall**
2. **Require new subdivisions and projects to provide sidewalks or paths**
3. **Sidewalk Committee: emphasis on downtown**

Above: Transit and bicycle improvement are central to a more sustainable environment.

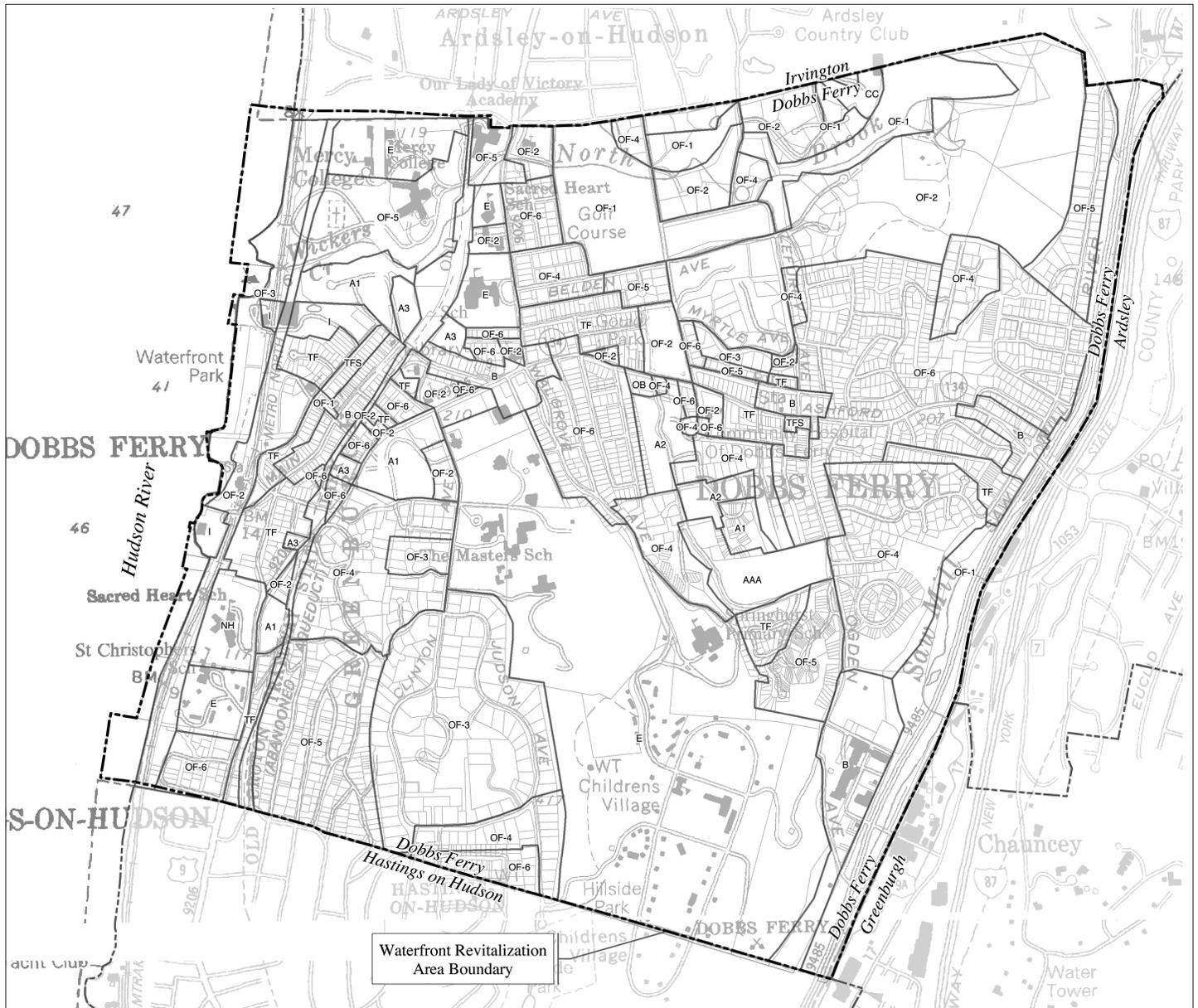
Avenue, Walgrove Avenue, and Washington Avenue.

7. **Prohibit all commercial vehicles on residential roads.** Signs should be posted on roads where this has been a particular problem, such as on Maple Street and Walgrove Avenue.
8. **Dismiss ideas put forward in earlier plans that would create worse problems than they would solve.** A number of ideas have surfaced in prior planning documents going back many years that reflect approaches to planning that have proven ineffective or counterproductive. Understandably, some of these ideas are still floated from time to time in public discussions. Whatever their merits when initially proposed, they would clearly not serve the best interests of the Village at this point in time. For the record, don't: widen Ashford Avenue for its entire length from 50 feet to 80 feet, remove the Bellwood intersection on Ashford, extend Grove Street to Bellwood Avenue, widen Broadway to 80-plus feet for its entire length, build a Livingston Street Extension that plows through downtown, straighten Ogden Avenue as a bypass, and remove on-street parking wherever possible. These earlier recommendations were prepared in the 1960s and 1970s, well before our current appreciation of how traffic can destabilize neighborhoods.
9. **Promote car sharing services and other oddities.** Privileged parking at the train station and in the municipal lot in downtown could promote car sharing services (generally offered by commercial providers such as Flexcar or Zipcar), mini-cars, alternative fuel cars, and the other substitutes for conventional vehicles.
10. **Promote bus and jitney use.** The Westchester Bee Line operates two buses servicing Dobbs Ferry. Attractive bus shelters should be built as a community project in downtown and at major stops such as Mercy College. These shelters could celebrate the history of the Village or its current wealth of artistic talent. In 2001, the Village was awarded the use of a 20-passenger bus for rail commuters. The Villages of Ardsley and Dobbs Ferry share a mini-bus for seniors. The Children's Village operates a shuttle to the train station. Such worthy efforts to promote decentralized transit service within the Village should be continued, and the providers should explore ways to share equipment and service. The Village should also encourage new developments to explore jitney service for residents to Downtown and the train station. Waterfront (LWRP) Committee and Village Jitney surveys both show that an overwhelming majority of residents are in favor of a

jitney alternative; the challenge is how to convert good intentions into consumer behavior.

11. **Create a village “trolley” service running on a regular schedule and providing connections to primary destinations such as the train station, Downtown, schools, and the hospital, as well as the four corners of the Village.** Running perhaps twice an hour, the trolley can encourage more walking by leveling out the hills that can otherwise discourage pedestrians. The trolley can connect with trails and buses, further reducing dependency on the automobile.
12. **Support rail transit.** One out of five working Dobbs Ferry residents uses transit for commutation. It takes only 32 to 42 minutes to travel between Grand Central Terminal and Dobbs Ferry, on the frequent express and local trains operated by MetroNorth. It hardly seems that long a ride – as the trip features spectacular river views that vary with the weather and season. MetroNorth and the Village have successfully expanded the parking field at the train station (from 375 to 471 spaces in 2001, of which 25 spaces are set aside for Ardsley commuters, and 24 spaces are set aside for other non-Dobbs Ferry residents). MetroNorth is now building a new pedestrian bridge across the tracks. The next step is to improve pedestrian access to the train station (see the Downtown section of Chapter 5).
13. **Support the exploration of water taxi service.** The viability of commuter ferry service may not yet be realistic. Ferries are generally far more expensive, run less frequently, and are more affected by inclement weather than commuter rail – which would be virtually next door. Water taxi service to the communities across the river – which don’t have train access – would take 25 minutes. For its part, the Village should be supportive but not invest its own capital in such service. However, since others have initiated water taxis on the Hudson and are even considering commuter services, the Village should work to create a pier that could serve waterborne transportation.
14. **Enhance pedestrian and bicycle use.** The Old Croton Aqueduct Trail and South County Trail are prioritized for pedestrian and bicycle improvements (as discussed in Chapter 4); so is Downtown (as discussed in Chapter 5). Incremental sidewalk improvements should also be made throughout the Village, especially in places like Ashford Avenue, Ogden Avenue and Clinton Avenue, where the pedestrian is now at risk. Incremental bicycle

“infrastructure” improvements (bike lane signs, bike racks) should be made at the MetroNorth train station, library, Middle/High school, and any new retail development. Where practical and appropriate, as in Irvington, “applications to develop or subdivide property should be considered carefully in terms of their potential to develop and encourage pedestrian and bicycle use as opposed to automobile use and to extend the Village’s network of bicycle--friendly walking trails.”



Current Zoning Map

Village of Dobbs Ferry  
Local Waterfront Revitalization Program  
Existing Zoning Map

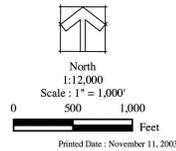
Legend

--- Municipal Boundaries  
- - - LWRP Boundary

□ Tax Parcels

ZONES

- A-1 Apartments
- A-2 Apartments
- A-3 Apartments
- AAA Apartments
- B Business
- CC Country Club
- E Educational
- I Industry
- NH Nursing Home
- OB Office Buildings
- OF-1 One Family Residence (5,000-40,000) min. lot area
- OF-2 One Family Residence (5,000-40,000) min. lot area
- OF-3 One Family Residence (5,000-40,000) min. lot area
- OF-4 One Family Residence (5,000-40,000) min. lot area
- OF-5 One Family Residence (5,000-40,000) min. lot area
- OF-6 One Family Residence (5,000-40,000) min. lot area
- TF Two or Three Family Residences
- TFS Two and/or Three Family Residences with Stores



Note: The Dobbs Ferry Management Plan (DMMP) Boundary has the same northern, eastern and southern boundaries as the LWRP area boundary. The DMMP western boundary extends westward to include all the surface waters of the Hudson River within 1,500 feet of the Village's shoreline.

Source: Dobbs Ferry, New York, prepared by the Planning Board, 2003. The map was prepared by the Planning Board, 2003. The map was prepared by the Planning Board, 2003. The map was prepared by the Planning Board, 2003.

**Zoning is the principal tool with which to implement the Vision Plan;** and if adopted as the official comprehensive plan for the village, the Vision Plan will provide the legal foundation with which to uphold the aggressively innovative zoning drafted by the Land Use Committee and the Planning Board and the Board of Trustees.

**“Innovation” is the keyword.** Here’s why:

- Dobbs Ferry appears built out; but in fact, 350 acres—representing 20 percent of the village’s land area—is held by private institutions,

## *chapter 7*

# **zoning**

who will have evolving space needs, and who historically have spun off land for development. Dobbs Ferry zoning needs to anticipate such events. Assuming an average density of four homes per acre, this could result in 1,400 additional homes in the Village, almost a doubling of the current number of single-family homes.

- Dobbs Ferry appears stable; but in fact as construction on steep slopes, “teardowns” and “McMansions” demonstrate, redevelopment can have a disproportionate impact. Dobbs Ferry’s zoning needs to grapple with the details of design.
- At quick glance, portions of Dobbs Ferry can be mistaken as being suburban: it has neighborhoods of small single-family homes on small lots with two cars in the driveway. A more careful look reveals that, in contrast to being suburban, Dobbs Ferry is really a Hudson River village, which is a very different settlement form.
- The Dobbs Ferry “village character” is enhanced by its residents, who are distinguished by an unusual sense of community, level of involvement, and sophistication with regard to land use and design. Dobbs Ferry’s zoning can draw from this social resource.
- The original Dobbs Ferry Zoning Ordinance (Chapter 12 of the Village Code) is over 60 years old and based on standardized ordinances; then substantially updated in 1966, 1976, 1988, and 1995. Unfortunately, these updates were sporadic and resulted in inconsistencies from one section of the code to another. It is long overdue for a comprehensive review.

Opposite: New zoning can better reflect the Village’s priorities. It can also incorporate new, state-of-the-art model zoning tools. (Map courtesy of the LA Group).

## **Zoning Methods and Regulations**

**Early on, the decision was made to revisit the existing zoning ordinance in a comprehensive way.** That ordinance was a cookie cutter code, and it has been haphazardly amended during the past decades,

resulting in significant inconsistencies, conflicts, and contradictions. The current zoning ordinance has numerous restrictions that are at odds with the self-defined desires of the community, while simultaneously providing little protection from the impacts of development that residents feel is most threatening.

**A number of “model zoning” techniques are instead embraced:**

- **Consolidate zoning, site plan and subdivision regulations:** This change will make development regulations easier to use by residents, development applicants and others, while ensuring that regulations in formerly separate documents are consistent with one another. This model is becoming increasingly more common as municipalities update and modernize their land uses regulations.
- **Predictability:** With the codes and guidelines integrated and a more coordinated review process can come the presuitability of land development that will attract the best developers who are eager to accomplish those goals articulated by the vision plan and new land use regulations. Bad development cannot be prevented by trying to stop development, only good development can prevent bad development.
- **Steep slopes:** The rugged terrain of Dobbs Ferry has invited strange and disturbing solutions where a house looks normal from the upland street, and towers over its downland neighbors. A variety of tools are recommended: steep-slope ordinance, maximum heights and lengths of individual planes, averaging of building heights, etc. While such “belt and suspenders” won’t work for every site, they will mitigate the problem and provide a framework within which homes can be built on sloped sites without adversely impacting downslope neighbors.
- **Overlay Historic and Design Districts:** “Overlay” districts mean that the basic underlying zoning stays the same, but there are extra layers of control for design, consistent with design guidelines. This way, property owners know what to expect; and reviewers know what to emphasize, as development and improvements wend their way through the development approval process. The Downtown should be a first priority.
- **“Cluster Development” zoning for the campuses and the Gateway is encouraged and recommended:** This zoning tool involves a conservative approach to what is allowed as-of-right, and a more rigorous approach to something that is more intensive. That added rigor includes extra consultation with the community, public amenities like plazas, special design consideration, etc.

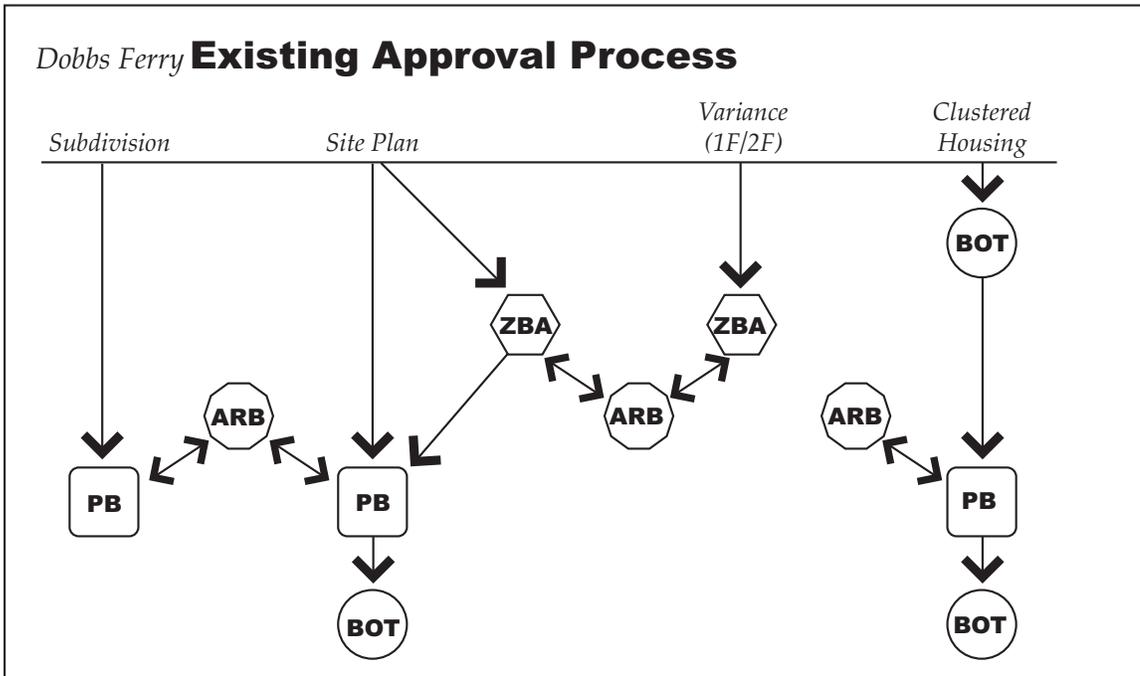


Quality design is contingent on good attention to detail. Local review can provide the needed guidance without being burdensome. The landmark Dobbs Ferry Library (above) has recently been attractively renovated for housing.

- **Scenic views:** Dobbs Ferry's hilly and riverfront topography is one of its distinguishing features and results in wonderful existing and potential long-distant views of the Hudson River and other natural features. All sorts of scenic views from public places have been identified. The new zoning should assure that these views are protected and, in some cases, opened up to the maximum extent practical. This is not just for public enjoyment: the value of many homes is predicated on it.
- **“Transfer of Development Rights” (TDR’s):** There are a few development sites left on the waterfront, and they need to be developed to be consistent with the principles of public access, waterfront trails and parks, and boating and other activities that animate the riverfront. TDR’s can be a useful tool to allow property owners to earn the revenue that they have assumed through off-site building, while the public gets the park and open space that it places priority upon. This tool may also be useful in the development of institutional properties, which might be considered as receiving (though not sending) sites for a TDR building. It may or may not prove to be a practicable tool in Dobbs Ferry, but it should be considered.
- **Upstairs living in downtown:** A “24/7” downtown is jargon for a place which is alive with people every day of the week, most times of the day. Upstairs living will create that ambiance, and may also provide affordable housing opportunities and generate added revenue to downtown business owners which will enable them to better maintain their properties.
- **Shared parking and “Payment in Lieu of Parking” (PILOP) for Downtown:** There are several places where “shared parking” can be provided in downtown, so that with its intensification with more popular stores, civic activities and upstairs living, the place does not become notably inconvenient to the automobile drivers who dominate our culture. PILOPs are one way to not only create lots and garages that these uses share, as they tend to have different peaks. PILOPs can also be used to help pay for the sidewalk, street tree, lighting and other pedestrian improvements that will give people the comfort to walk a block or two from their car to their destination.

## **Process**

**Process is as important as product, when it comes to promoting quality development and allaying property owner and developer fears.** A rational and efficient system for the review and approval of development proposals is highly desirable for many reasons. Village res-

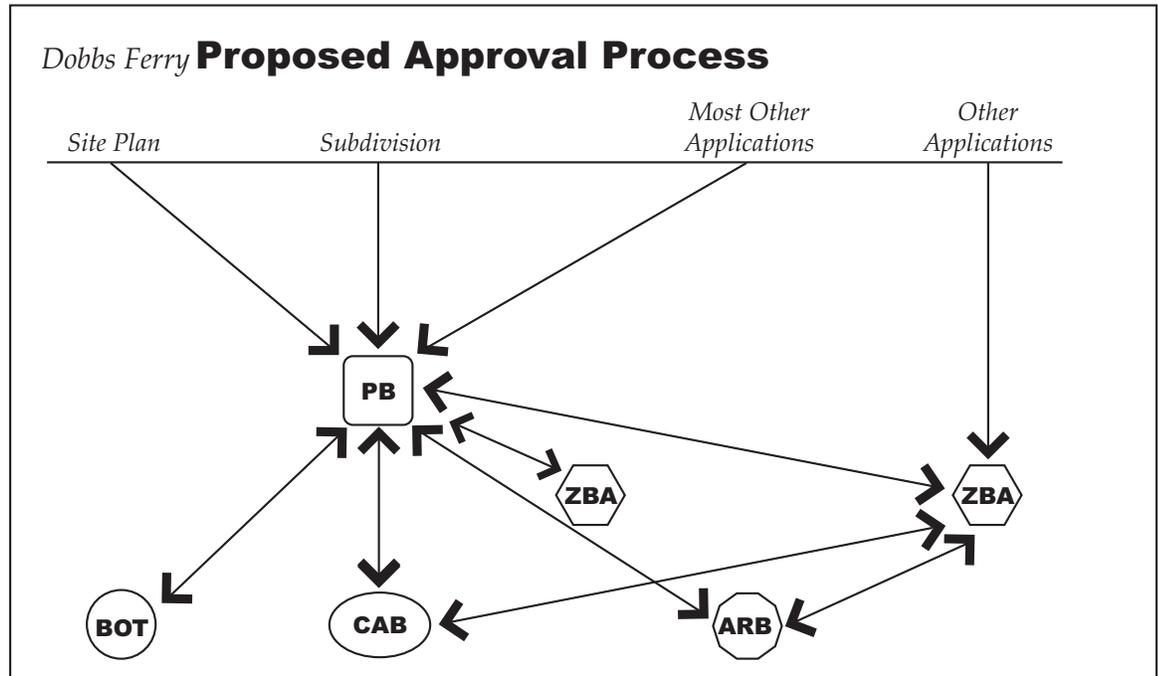


idents who want and need to obtain approvals to improve their properties should be able to do so in a process that is understandable, reasonable and fair. A well thought out and efficient process tends to encourage quality development. Conversely, a review process that is poorly administered and characterized by inconsistencies and labyrinthine procedures will discourage quality developers, leaving the Village to face developers with lower standards willing to fight with the community to fill the gap.

Recommendations in this regard:

- **Oval Table:** The boards should each provide a liaison that would participate in this “Technical Review Committee.” While “ex officio,” the group should be the first stop for any application that will need to go before more than one Board and where the applicant and/or the Boards are likely to benefit from dealing early on with questions about coordinating the review and approval process. The purpose of this step is to provide opportunity for greater coordination for those applications that will be reviewed by more than one Board, and notification to applicants as to key issues that will need to be addressed in the review process. It would be chaired by the Land Use Officer (or a designee), and its intent would be to expedite the process.
- **Planning Board:** The Planning Board should be charged with subdivision review and approval, approval of additions / renovations where scenic or historic resources are involved, or where there are steep slopes or other environmentally sensitive features and review for consistency with the LWRP, where applicable. In larger projects

Opposite and above: The Village would be better served by a more streamlined review process that makes the Planning Board the clearing house for most reviews and advisory board input.



where an environmental impact statement is prepared, the Planning Board should be included in the SEQRA process, the Planning Board should also continue to review all site plan applications and make recommendations to the Village Board.

- **Zoning Board of Appeals:** The Zoning Board should exercise the powers conferred by State law to rule on applications for use and area variances, as well as on special permit applications, but with the ability to refer matters or specific questions to the Design Review Board and Planning Board.
- **Architectural and Historic Review Board:** The Architectural Review Board should now be known as the Architectural and Historic Review Board. Expanding the Architectural Review Boards' authority to include scenic views, historic preservation, and the Tree Ordinance should be considered. Any application submitted to the Planning Board or Zoning Board could be referred to the Architectural and Historic Review Board for input with binding review only in prescribed circumstances. All proposals for the construction of buildings and structures would be submitted to the Design and Historic Review Board, regardless of whether the Design and Historic Review Board had previously reviewed the application as a referral from another Board. The authority and standard of review of this body should be more clearly articulated and should reflect a practicable set of rules that can be understood by all concerned.

- **Environmental review for key situations:** In addition to reviews consistent with the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA), the Conservation Advisory Board should be consulted in instances where the application involves: Critical Environmental Areas, designated open space, public parks, any large parcel or conservation subdivisions. In addition, the Conservation Advisory Board, either at the request of another board or at their discretion, should be consulted in instances concerning any parcel with a water body, designated wetland, steep slopes, or other environmentally sensitive features.
- **Neighbor notification:** All boards should post agendas on the Village website and on bulletin boards at the library and Village Hall. Neighbor notification should include posting a sign at the site and mailings as prescribed.
- **Board of Trustees:** The Board of Trustees will make all determinations relative to site plan review and should be included in early stages of the process at the technical review portion of the review.

**The important thing is that good planning principles won't become a reality unless zoning supports them;** and zoning won't mean much unless the responsible boards have clear authority and responsibility, as well as good communication and coordination between them. Thus, the Vision Plan is being considered by the Village Board for its review as a Comprehensive Plan, with the attendant zoning revisions and supporting analyses (specifically, a Generic EIS, as called for under SEQRA). It is the Land Use Committee's hope that all three will be adopted by the Village Board of Trustees in due time after due public comment and revisions.

**Leadership:** With the leadership of the Mayor and Village Board of Trustees, as well as the continued involvement of the community, this Vision Plan can be a strategic plan to make Dobbs Ferry even more of a civic and civil community by the river.

**Zoning is perhaps the key but still only one tool available to the leadership and community of Dobbs Ferry.** Other tools include:

## *chapter 8*

# **moving forward**

- **Transportation:** Lobby the New York State Department of Transportation (NYS DOT) to do the right thing with Route 9 and the Saw Mill River highway exit configuration (see Chapter 5).
- **Park Grantsmanship:** Seek County of Westchester and NYS Department of State funding for riverfront park improvements.
- **Open space bond:** Use the roughly \$3 million raised by a Village bond passed by referendum. This funding should be used for purchase of key parcels—or to stretch limited dollars further, purchase of easements and deed restrictions—identified by the Village’s Open Space Committee.
- **Historic Incentives:** List the Downtown on the State and National Registers of Historic Places, thereby making property eligible for federal tax incentives for historic-minded restoration.
- **Main Street Management:** Create a “Business Improvement District” (BID) to follow-up on special events, marketing, tenant recruitment and other such plans. If a BID cannot be formed, establish a part-time downtown manager position to accomplish these goals.
- **Main Street Grantsmanship:** Seek County of Westchester, developer and other donations to create the pedestrian-scaled lighting, street trees and other incremental pedestrian improvements. Accept that now is the time to bury the overhead wires. It will not get any cheaper in the future.

### ***What is the Vision Plan?***

- *Consensus plan for the future*
- *Tied to zoning*
- *Problem-solving as well as land use*
- *Optimistic about the future*
- *Public and transparent process*

### ***What the Vision Plan is NOT:***

- *Not starting from scratch*
- *Not a traditional master plan*
- *Not about wish lists*
- *Not about hot buttons*
- *Not about hidden agendas*

### ***Remember, the Vision Plan is:***

- *A 20-year vision that protects what is best about Dobbs Ferry*
- *Problem-solving, as well as zoning*
- *A community driven process*
- *Informed by the Gateway, Downtown, Open Space Committee work*
- *About making decisions in a comprehensive way*

### **Example of How to Bundle Actions:**

#### **Downtown “Placemaking” and the Old Croton Aqueduct**

- Seek Federal (ISTEA) and other grants to pay for this project.
- Build a parking deck behind Village Hall, to be shared with shoppers, merchants, and residents.
- Restore the Aqueduct Trail between the deck and Village Hall.
- Retire all or half of the parking spaces behind the houses between Cedar and Oak.
- Restore the Aqueduct Trail on this block too.
- Build a singular crossing at Cedar Street, articulating the Aqueduct Trail and calming Cedar traffic.
- Clear invasive species and create a flow of steps down to the northern portion of the Aqueduct Trail. This space can double as a naturalistic amphitheater.
- Provide ample bicycle lock space here and at the parking deck.
- Build the upper level of the parking deck at the same grade as the Historical Society, and design it to double as an event space for the Society and others.
- Thus, this one project restores a National Landmark, removes a pedestrian hazard, provides a parking reservoir, traffic-calms the long stretch of Cedar just before the Main Street jog, and creates two event spaces for Downtown.

**Dobbs Ferry FAQs (year 2000)**

Population:

|                |        |     |
|----------------|--------|-----|
| People         | 10,600 |     |
| Households     | 3,800  |     |
| Number of kids | 2,700  | 26% |

Affluence:

|                              |          |     |
|------------------------------|----------|-----|
| Unemployment                 |          | 3%  |
| Graduate/professional degree |          | 26% |
| Median household income      | \$70,300 |     |

Social Diversity:

|   |  |     |
|---|--|-----|
| Foreign born (immigrants)                       |  | 18% |
| “Minority”<br>(1/3 each Asian, Black, Hispanic) |  | 23% |
| “Home” language non-English                     |  | 22% |
| Ethnic Italian ancestry                         |  | 21% |
| Households without kids                         |  | 65% |
| Seniors   |  | 15% |

Housing Diversity:

|                        |       |     |
|------------------------|-------|-----|
| Single-family houses   | 1,610 | 41% |
| Attached single-family | 330   | 8%  |
| 2 units                | 390   | 10% |
| 3-10 units             | 1,120 | 28% |
| 10+ units              | 500   | 13% |

|           |  |     |
|-----------|--|-----|
| Homeowner |  | 59% |
| Rental    |  | 41% |

Built...

|                       |       |  |
|-----------------------|-------|--|
| before 1960           | 2,600 |  |
| between 1960 and 1990 | 2,600 |  |
| in the 1990s          | 100   |  |

Commuting and cars:

|                              |                           |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Transit use for commuting    | 22% of working population |
| Walk to work or work at home | 10% of working population |
| Don't own a car              | 350 households            |
| Own 3 cars                   | 500 households            |
| Average # cars per household | 1-1/2                     |

Opposite: This Vision Plan, especially if adopted as the official Master Plan, can improve both the quality of development and life in Dobbs Ferry.

This page: Dobbs Ferry's housing and population is surprisingly diverse for a traditional suburb. The “innovations” recommended in this plan respond to the Villagers' unique pluralism and volunteerism.

- **Partnerships:** Work with Children’s Village, Masters School, Mercy College and other institutions to create shared recreation facilities available to village residents.
- **Circulation:** Join with the Town of Greenburgh and the Villages of Ardsley, Hastings-on-Hudson, and Irvington to lobby the State and Westchester County with regard to safer Saw Mill River Parkway exits at Ashford Avenue, making Broadway/Route 9 more attractive, and “traffic-calming” Washington Avenue.

**To provide the needed coordination, the Village should consider retaining and/or reconstituting the Land Use Committee, or calling upon it to review progress in implementing these recommendations on a periodic basis.** The Land Use Committee can continue to play a constructive role. It should be reconstituted with some fresh infusion of members, as well as key holdovers. It should remain ad hoc, appointed by the Mayor. It should have representation from each of the boards and active committees. The Board of Trustees itself might be represented, ex officio. It should be charged with thinking about the overall functioning of the Village’s land use review and approval process and related planning issues, and tracking the progress, or lack of it, in implementing various recommendations embodied in the Vision Plan. It should serve as a sounding board for developers – a place where an off-the-record conversation might be held, for instance. And it should help to coordinate the volunteer efforts that go into implementation.

**Regardless, this Vision Plan should stay current with the times.** Market conditions, political priorities, and civic needs change over time. This Plan should be updated every ten years at least – especially if it is adopted as the official Comprehensive Plan for the village.

**Dobbs Ferry has a progressive culture of listening, learning, and leading.** This Vision Plan can help link the efforts of the many for the benefit of all.



Above: The Vision Plan is about the Dobbs Ferry our children and their generation will know as adults.