

# Town of Copake Comprehensive Plan

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Summary of the Community Vision Workshop November 7, 2009

## **Town of Copake Visioning Workshop**

On November 7, 2009 the Town of Copake Comprehensive Plan Committee hosted a community visioning workshop. Introductions were made by Jeanne Mettler, Chair of the Comprehensive Plan Committee. Jeanne acknowledged the Town Board Members, the Town Supervisor and Comprehensive Plan Committee Members. She described the role of the Comprehensive Plan Committee, reviewed the process of establishing the Comprehensive Plan Committee and introduced Margaret Irwin, the planner and facilitator from River Street Planning and her colleagues Leila Jabour and Amy Ferguson who have been retained by the Town to assist with preparation of the Plan. Jeanne informed the group that the Committee has been conducting a series of focus groups over the fall that are adding a lot of additional voices to the planning process in addition to those from the survey and from this visioning workshop.

### **Introduction and Agenda**

At the beginning of the workshop participants were asked to place a dot on the Town Map showing where they lived within the Town. There was relatively good distribution from all parts of the Town. Based on a show of hands it appeared that the participants were evenly split between year round and second home owners. Margaret Irwin explained the key reasons for preparing a comprehensive plan which include establishing a vision, protecting resources, articulating local priorities, coordinating existing plans, encouraging planned growth and ensuring that future zoning is consistent with the shared vision of the community. Margaret explained that comprehensive planning as a simple four step process including development of a community profile, community vision statement, action and implementation plan and process for evaluation.

### **A Snapshot of Copake**

A snapshot of Copake today was presented. The data for this snapshot is provided by Claritas Inc., a company that prepares projections (through 2009) and estimates (through 2014) based upon census data from 2000. Key findings include:

- Population grew 5% to 3,278 in 2000 - Faster than Columbia County, Taghkanic, Claverack, Gallatin, Hillsdale, Ancram
- Population is expected to remain stable through 2014
- Households increased 16% between 1990 and 2009
- 2009 median age is 44.5 years, up from 41 years in 2000
- School-aged children are projected to decrease by 18% between 2000 and 2009
- Preschoolers are projected to decrease by 8% since between 2000 and 2009
- Those over 65 are projected to increase by 4% between 2000 and 2009
- Over 91% of residents have a high school degree or higher educational attainment
- The 2009 estimated median household income is projected to be \$55,078
- The median 2009 home value is projected to be \$172,624
- 3/4 of housing is owner-occupied, and the majority are in single-family structures
- Both rental and owner-occupied housing are becoming less affordable based upon 2009 census data projections. Nearly 40% of renters and 24% of owners are cost burdened (paying in excess of 30% of their income for housing costs).

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- Nearly half of all residents are employed in service industry and sales and office occupations

### **Community Survey**

- Results will also be available at Town Hall, the Library and online
- There were 680 responses
- Slightly more men responded than women
- Most are between the age of 50 and 70 years
- Highest percentage have lived in Copake more than 20 years
- Most are a couple with children no longer at home
- Most lived in Taconic Shores, Copake Lake or Downtown
- Most use their home as their principal residence
- Nearly 95% own their home
- Highest percentages are full time employed (42%) or retired (32%)
- The vast majority work outside of Copake
- The largest percentage have a household income over \$100,000 annually
- Most live or own property in Copake because of:
  - Scenic Beauty
  - Rural Atmosphere
  - Small Town feel
  - Recreation
  - Safe Community
- These values were shared by permanent residents and second home owners, seniors and young families, and residents at all income levels.

### **Visioning**

Margaret explained that visioning identifies the future you prefer. It focuses on shared community values. It expresses possibility and an ideal future participants hope to attain together. It focuses on what is unique in a positive way.

### **What do you love about Copake?**

This question clarifies community values. Participants focused on characteristics, features, qualities they feel passionate about.

- Vision of mountain and valley
- Dad's Diner
- The scenic beauty
- Golf course
- Open space
- Wildlife
- Rural nature
- Having a drugstore
- Peace and tranquility
- Fishing

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- Community spirit
- Library service
- Safety
- Gardening
- The lakes
- Roe Jan Park
- History
- Rail trail and cycling opportunities
- Farms and nurseries
- Dark enough to see stars
- Caring for the common good
- Wonderful services at the post office
- Outdoor recreation opportunities
- State parks
- Nearness to the Berkshires
- Close to nature
- Auction house
- Historic buildings
- Skiing
- Spirit of volunteerism
- Performing arts
- Our Lady of Hope church
- Transportation
- Grandchildren nearby
- Accessibility to other areas and thoroughfares
- Good local farm produce
- Seeing wild animals
- Friendliness of the community
- Walking around the heart of Copake
- Not having the housing development planned for the center of Town
- Protecting cornfields and open space
- My morning walking group
- Good live music
- Best swimming in world
- Everyone chips in when things go wrong
- Close to ponds and lakes
- All churches work together
- Local cookbook was a great success
- Great place to raise children
- Veteran's and VFW organizations
- Non-chlorinated water
- Feeling of coming "home"
- Sunday softball game in park
- The ridgeline on Route 22
- Medical facilities in surrounding communities
- View of Massachusetts and the Berkshires

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- The smell of manure

## **What would you like to change?**

The first step clarifies values and identifies things to preserve. In the second step participants considered the behavior, characteristics, or conditions they would like to change, including untapped opportunities as well as problems.

- Everything needs revitalization in the center of Copake
- Find a use for the old school
- Miss the movie house
- Define the gateway to Copake from Route 22 needs to be improved
- Southern entrance at Route 22
- Trash along roadways/ litter
- Business and light industry needs to come in
- All the names of the roads are confusing. Change Route 7 and 7A
- Viability of commerce and housing in all hamlets
- Only have one doctor in town
- Build community health center
- For amenities have to drive to Great Barrington – would prefer to spend \$ locally
- Need a general store
- Only town where you cannot get a beer and watch football game on Sunday - need a sports bar
- Maybe we don't need development – buy things in Great Barrington and save our open space
- Population base doesn't support the things we want (yet)
- Place to go buy cup of coffee
- Would like to be able to pick up prepared foods
- Rental housing is unaffordable
- Unless you get people who live here to spend money here the Town is not going to succeed
- Need to develop local business
- Without fixing downtown new business isn't going to succeed - "you can put lipstick on a pig, but..."
- Encourage people to buy-local
- Retired people are taking on part time jobs to pay their mortgages
- Spending spikes on weekend but it is hard to maintain a businesses during the week
- Massachusetts State Police take unfair advantage by ticketing New Yorkers who travel to Great Barrington to shop
- Can we get help through State and Federal program grants to help businesses?
- Without improvements the downtown buildings are obsolete
- Can't expect locals to pay high end prices
- Need to appreciate diversity of opinions and debate rather than falling into conflict
- Maintain essential services – the volunteer fire service is great but the firefighters are getting older and we don't have young guys
- There is no urgent care in town – this will become an issue as the population ages
- What's meant by light industry? Light industry assembles products. Heavy industry starts with raw materials.
- Create a tourism destination

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- Attract movie theater
- Encourage mixed use zoning
- Downtown Copake and Copake Falls were bypassed in late 50's
- With good comes the bad - increasing tourism will then increase traffic and bring more people to town
- Need balance. Tourism uses that will have less impact on resources
- 30 years ago people worked locally, but now more people commute and shop near their work
- Encourage businesses to open Friday to Sunday to cater to weekenders
- Young people are bicycling from New York City to B&B's in Copake
- Need young people to move up (as old people move on)
- Need businesses and medical facilities to keep kids here
- If there are new businesses and attractions coming in we can "police" the bad
- Must have a strong center of town
- It is a fact of life that kids leave - we want better for kids in terms of education and work experience and that is why they leave
- Build on attracting visitors because of large bike auction here
- Think of all-season attractions for Copake
- Wealth is a resource. Could a business consortium be created to support infill opportunities and provide seed capital for things like a movie theater?
- Create better access within the Town. Perhaps use the rail tail to connect Copake to Copake Falls, the new library and other community resources
- Take advantage of the huge trend in home-based business and internet-based business (will require improved and reliable telecommunication infrastructure)
- Lot of talent in the area. Would like to showcase local artists, create co-op buildings and mixed use areas
- Encourage more events like the hot air balloon event over Robinson Lake, Music festivals, etc.
- Could the Town become a wedding destination ("We could even give them a parade!")
- Support local entrepreneurs

### **When things have changed...**

In the final step participants envision their preferred future for the Town of Copake. They start by imagining the Town in five years, ten years, twenty years, asking "How will the Town look, feel, and function?"

#### *The Town will smell like....*

- Manure
- Hops
- Farmers Market
- Hemp
- Popcorn from movie theater
- Flowers
- Fresh baked bread and croissants
- Independent living
- Sweat from strong recreational activities
- Fresh cut hay

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- Success

*The Town will look like...*

- Bustling activity
- Prosperous
- Not boarded up
- Strong villages
- A central kiosk full of announcements on ongoing cultural events
- Green roofs that heat water
- Arts center
- Charming-old country
- Norman Rockwell
- Not much different than today
- Community center
- Bus from and to the City
- Green in the spring and summer and golden red in the fall
- Solar panel on roofs
- No wind towers
- Blue sky and water
- Harrington's will still be here despite competition from Lowes and Walmart in Hudson
- Creative
- Younger demographics
- Bicycling and walking paths connected together
- Biking mecca
- Good clean water
- Very good schools to attract people here
- Copake Lake is publicly accessible
- Fishing is a tourism draw
- People see it as a convenient location to NYC, Berkshires, Saratoga
- Need a variety of accommodations
- Need one good resort (may be coming at Catamount)
- Need a community center for seniors, day care, arts. Could it be located in the old school? Old school has an auditorium, cafeteria, and fields.
- There are five separate communities in Copake and they all need focus
- Think about ways people can help others, maybe there are seniors who would like to watch kids?

## **Next Steps**

Planning documents and survey results are available on the web on web at [www.copake.org/cpc.htm](http://www.copake.org/cpc.htm) or by following the link: <http://tinyurl.com/2009copakesurveyresults>.

Focus groups are ongoing and an interactive action-planning workshop is planned for the spring.

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