

VILLAGE OF SUFFERN LIMITED COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

As Recommended by the Suffern Comprehensive Plan Committee to the Village Board of Trustees; and approved by the Board of Trustees, February 7, 2005, for purposes of referral to the Rockland County Department of Planning under Section 239 of the General Municipal Law



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Rockland County, New York

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Village of Suffern is a 2.09 square mile incorporated village located in the Town of Ramapo, Rockland County, New York. The village is located at the foot of the Ramapo Mountains on the New York/New Jersey State line.

The Limited Comprehensive Plan will help to guide development within the Village for the foreseeable future. Its major goals include the protection of the natural character of Suffern, the examination of vacant and underutilized properties, the equitable distribution of parking for shoppers, merchants, commuters, residents, and visitors, and the enhancement and beautification of the downtown area of the Village to promote increased economic activity and promote downtown Suffern as a destination.

1. Development Potential

Fieldwork was performed to determine which of the lots in the Village may be suitable for additional development. Each of the zoning districts in the Village, except for MR-15 and MR-50, were determined to have lots with development potential.

The analysis indicated the potential for approximately 68 additional residential lots in the Village. The development potential analysis also examined non-residential use properties.

There are very few properties within the Village with the potential for additional development. The most significant potential for further development exists on a vacant parcel located in the northern portion of the Village off Memorial Drive opposite Memorial Park; a vacant lot currently owned by the Ramapo Central School District, located in the southeast portion of the Village at the end of Chatham Street; and several properties located west of the railroad tracks near the ball fields.

The Plan recommends that the Village consider designating these properties as Critical Environmental Areas (CEAs), along with the Village's quarry property, owned by Yonkers Contracting Company, based on their numerous environmental sensitivities. It is also recommended that the Village change the zoning for the Bett property from R-7.5 to R-10. For the small vacant and oversized lots scattered throughout the Village, no additional land use controls appear to be necessary to control the development of these lots.

2. Parking

There has been growing concern in the Village regarding the availability of parking serving downtown businesses, how best to supplement the current inventory of parking spaces used by businesses in the downtown area, and how additional spaces should be located and funded if they cannot be practically provided on the lot where the business is located.

It is recommended that the Village give parking preferences to its businesses, customers, merchants, and resident commuters before others and that the Village explore additional parking options for the future.

In addition to the business district parking, Village officials, in cooperation with the Rockland County Department of Transportation (RC DOT) have been exploring options for providing additional parking in the downtown area, mainly to address commuter parking shortages.

The Village code outlines three options that are available to the Planning Board during the site plan approval process for addressing parking. These options include: requiring off-street parking, granting waivers from the parking requirement, or providing a fee in lieu of parking spaces. The Plan recommends that the Village increase the choices for the provision of parking by new business and expanding businesses that require additional parking per code:

- The preferred method-new businesses provide their required parking on their own properties;
- Alternative 1: New businesses requiring parking, but unable to provide it on the lot, pay a fee in lieu of parking;
- Alternative 2: New businesses provide their own parking on an owned or leased, privately owned parcel within a reasonable distance, as determined by the Planning Board;
- Alternative 3: New businesses purchase monthly or annual permit space from the Parking Authority.

A parking garage for 1,250 cars was built and opened several months ago in Ramsey, N.J. along Route 17 on the same railroad line as Suffern, with an additional station. Initially, it has been lightly used, probably in large measure because of the difference in cost of parking with older parking areas at the Ramsey and Suffern stations. The Plan recommends several strategies to be implemented:

- Continue the parking management approach of re-designating existing parking in specific locations to better serve overall needs;
- Provide pedestrian safety and aesthetic improvements at selected locations to encourage pedestrian movement from parking areas to destinations, in particular the rail station;
- Consider increasing commuter parking fees for non-residents, where possible, to encourage their shift to the Ramsey Route 17 garage, and re-designating some commuter spaces for business district use;
- Provide small scattered new parking lots in and around the business district as need arises and opportunities are presented.

Increasing the efficiency of parking is the equivalent of providing additional spaces, without the full cost of constructing additional spaces, and without increasing impervious

surfaces, at least to the same extent. The Plan recommends some ways of increasing the efficiency of parking:

- Obtain pedestrian easements across private property to enable the construction of pedestrian walks;
- Improve and upgrade existing pedestrian walkways;
- Add or improve lighting, landscaping, sitting opportunities or other features that will encourage walking, either to and from parking lots or along commercial streets.

It is suggested that the Planning Board be involved in the selection/determination of improvements to be made, and that these activities be part of a Business Improvement District (BID) or Main Street Program, if undertaken (refer to No. 4 below). The Plan also recommends that the Village Board/Parking Authority undertake periodic review of parking fees in Suffern and comparable communities, and adjust fees accordingly to help manage and direct parking utilization and allocation.

3. Alternative Vehicular Access Options

With the intention of improving vehicular and pedestrian safety and traffic flow along Route 59, particularly in the eastern portion of the Village, the following are recommended by the Plan:

- Provide a service road behind the Esther Gitlow Towers, proposed Gloria Office Park, and Telephone Company properties for access to new buildings;
- Permit only one-way access to Lafayette Avenue from Oakdale Manor;
- Consider a new bypass road traversing the Village from Old Mill Road (the Novartis access) at Hemion Road to Route 202 under the NYS Thruway. The road would run adjacent to the NYS Thruway on its southbound side in back of the Novartis and quarry properties. The road would provide a secondary access to the quarry and a convenient way to travel to and from Route 202 and Hemion Road without the need to travel through downtown Suffern;
- Provide sidewalks along Route 59 and preserve stonewalls and large trees, particularly at the eastern side of the Village.

4. Downtown Improvement Options

A Business Improvement District (BID) is a special tax district, which includes every property within a defined district, with funding earmarked to provide special or supplemental services to the properties within the district, in addition to municipal services already provided through other taxing entities. Most commonly a BID is used to revitalize older core commercial areas of downtowns that are threatened by loss of business.

For Suffern, establishment of a BID would allow the Village to provide a proven means of equitable distribution of costs associated with improvements that have not been

covered by other means of funding while increasing economic activity and the beautification of the Village's downtown area.

The Plan recommends that a BID should be considered to provide a minimum of services that would have a significant visual impact in the main core of the businesses district, focusing primarily on commercial properties fronting Lafayette Avenue, with inclusion of side streets that have a significant number of commercial properties. In addition, the Plan recommends that the BID should provide funding for seasonal activities not hosted by the Chamber of Commerce, and provide for funding of promotional and downtown business recruitment activities that compliment the efforts of the Chamber of Commerce.

Downtown Suffern competes with other local downtowns for merchants, business owners, and customers; this is a difficult process where the community needs to look at its goals, current and long-term trends and then evaluate where opportunities lie.

The Main Street Center Program is a program administered by the National Trust for Historic Preservation whose goal is to revitalize downtown areas. Suffern may wish to consider this Program as an alternative technique to continue the revitalization of its downtown area.

II. BACKGROUND

The Village of Suffern is a 2.09 square mile incorporated village located in the Town of Ramapo, Rockland County, New York. The village is located at the foot of the Ramapo Mountains on the New York/New Jersey State line (refer to Figure II-1, Basemap, following page II-1).

New York State law provides for the preparation of comprehensive plans. Section 7-722 of the Village Law states that a Comprehensive Plan is one that will "identify the goals and objectives, principles, guidelines, policies, standards, devices and instruments for the immediate and long-range protection, enhancement, growth and development" of a village. Preparation of a Comprehensive Plan is not mandatory. If one is prepared and adopted by the Village Board of Trustees under the provisions of Section 7-222, subsequent land use regulation must be in accord with the adopted Comprehensive Plan.

The Board of Trustees, the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Building Inspector, Village Engineer and other officials make decisions related to site plans, subdivisions, street improvements, locations for public buildings, expansion of community facilities and services, open space and other functions and concerns that impact the overall pattern and character of development in the Village. A comprehensive plan is intended to provide a framework for their decisions.

This Limited Comprehensive Plan will help to guide development within the Village for the foreseeable future. Its major goals include the protection of the natural character of Suffern, the examination of vacant and underutilized properties, the equitable distribution of parking for shoppers, merchants, commuters, residents, and visitors, and the enhancement and beautification of the downtown area of the Village to promote increased economic activity and promote downtown Suffern as a destination.

The Comprehensive Plan Committee, made up of six residents and officials of Suffern including the Mayor and Assistant Village Attorney, is responsible for reviewing the Plan, optionally presenting it to the public, revising the document based on public comment, and submitting it to the Village Board of Trustees for their consideration. The Committee held its public hearing on January 25, 2005.

The final phase of the comprehensive planning process is adoption of the plan. The Village Board is responsible for reviewing the Limited Comprehensive Plan, revising it if necessary, and holding a public hearing to solicit additional public comment. The Village Board public hearing was held on January 25, 2005. In addition, the Limited Comprehensive Plan is subject to review in accordance with the regulations implementing the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQRA) Act. Once public and environmental review is completed, the Village Board may adopt the Limited Comprehensive Plan.



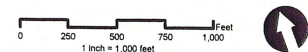
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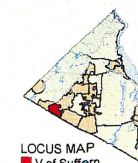
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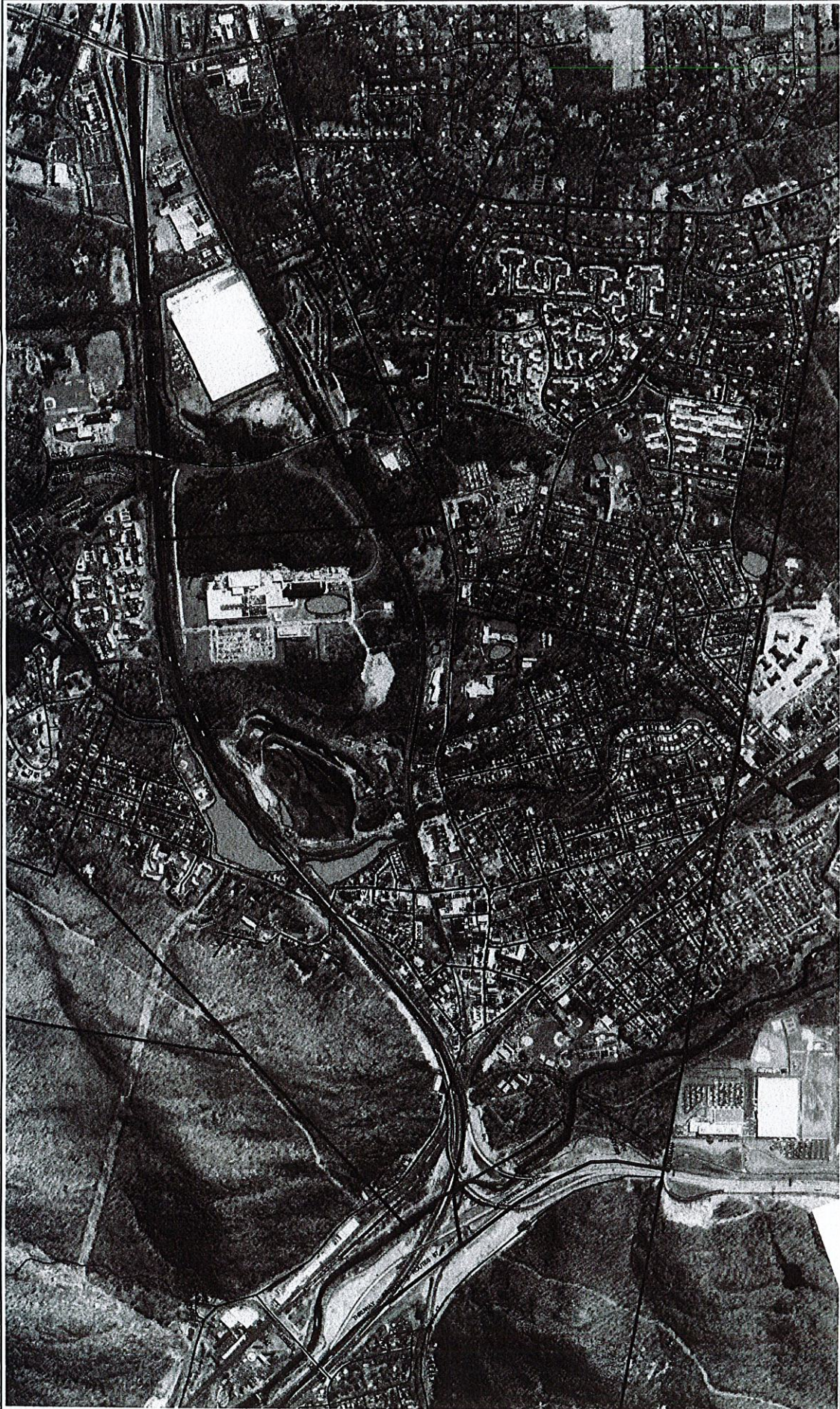
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- Parcels
- Waterbodies
- Municipal Boundaries
- NYS Thruway
- Roads
- Streams/Rivers



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FIGURE II-1