

## VI. IMPLEMENTATION

The action strategies of this Comprehensive Plan describe programs designed to achieve the vision for the future of Rockland County over the next 20 years. Achieving this vision will require implementation measures as wide ranging as the various recommendations proposed. The following section describes implementation measures organized by the level of government involved -- either County, Local, State or Federal. For each level of government, specific implementation measures are grouped under the categories of (1) capital improvements; (2) regulatory actions; and (3) management actions. Recognizing that many issues transcend municipal boundaries, implementing the recommendations of the County's **River to Ridge Comprehensive Plan** will require ongoing coordination and cooperation among Rockland's municipalities, between the various levels of government, and with not-for-profit groups and citizens. This municipal cooperation is vital to the successful implementation of the Plan given the high number of municipal governments for such a small county.

### A. County Implementation Measures

Potential actions of the County to implement Plan recommendations range from its advisory land use review powers under General Municipal Law to the direct creation of facilities that address critical region-wide needs under its capital budget powers, legislative powers related to tax and fiscal policy changes, and its funding programs under its budgetary and federal pass-through role. In those cases where local municipalities have affirmatively endorsed the County Plan or have adopted municipal plans that are consistent with the County Plan, priority status will be given for funding projects within that community. The following four categories of implementation measures outline steps that the County can take to accomplish the goals of this Plan.

#### 1. Capital Improvements

The most direct method of implementing plan proposals is through funding capital improvements such as upgrading infrastructure or creating new facilities. Acquisition for open space preservation is another example of an action that has fiscal ramifications. For instances where these projects would have major budgetary impacts, the County can consider alternative funding approaches such as the issuance of bonds or the use of public-private partnerships. Examples of capital improvements that should be undertaken by the County include the following:

- **County Waterfront Park** - The County should acquire, design and construct a waterfront park with active recreational facilities not currently available to all County residents.

- **Infrastructure Improvements to Strengthen Downtown Centers** - The County should assist selective local projects, such as Community Development Block Grant projects. Earmark CDBG funds to those projects and those communities that support the vision and goals of the Comprehensive Plan. These projects can create transit hubs, improve downtown traffic flow and off-street parking resources, and upgrade pedestrian areas to revitalize downtown centers such as the Villages of Haverstraw and Spring Valley.
- **Transportation Investments** -The County should promote transportation investments that lay the foundation for an integrated, intermodal transportation network, such as:
  - Assisting in the restoration of commuter rail service on the West Shore Rail Line, as this will not only increase mobility but will boost revitalization on the Hudson waterfront.
  - Making investments that promote east-west roadway capacity through provision of left-turn lanes, improving sight distances and other safety improvements. The planned extension of New Hempstead Road east to Route 304 is a key part of this strategy.
  - Promoting Park-and-Ride opportunities between auto and rail in Suffern (Bergen/Main), Pearl River, Nanuet and Spring Valley (Pascack Valley), and the Palisades Center Mall (West Shore).
  - Promoting Park-and-Ride opportunities between auto and express bus stops, ie., adjacent to interchange 12 and 13 of the Palisades Interstate Parkway.
  - Promoting Park-and-Ride opportunities between auto and ferry service in the Village of Haverstraw, and potential future ferry service in Rockland Lake State Park and other Hudson waterfront communities.
  - Promoting the ferry between the Village of Haverstraw and the Metro-North regional rail system located on the eastern side of the Hudson River in Westchester County.
  - Developing feeder and other bus routes that link residential and employment concentrations. An example of a route that could link residential, employment and higher education clusters was discussed in Chapter V.

The effectiveness of this route could be increased by pedestrian and bicycle projects that increase accessibility through the construction of side walks, protected bus shelters, bicycle storage facilities (at both ends of the trip), and the provision of buses with bike racks.

- Promoting Intelligent Transportation Technologies that increase the flow of information about service and routing alternatives. The current projects being undertaken by TRANSCOM and the Thruway Authority in Rockland County can serve as a strong foundation, especially if aggressively extended to transit.
- **Housing Assistance** - The County should address unmet housing needs and foster affordable housing development as follows:
  - Providing housing rehabilitation assistance for existing owner-occupied housing, particularly for the elderly
  - Providing housing rehabilitation assistance to allow elderly homeowners to develop accessory apartments
  - Establishing financing mechanisms such as a revolving loan fund or a public/private development corporation to foster affordable housing production
  - Providing infrastructure improvements and/or funding to support affordable housing

To implement this agenda, the County can target housing assistance to communities that provide zoning opportunities for denser affordable housing for all age groups.

- **Open Space Acquisition** - The County should acquire land to preserve remaining significant open space areas, farmland, non-publicly owned portions of the Long Path and environmentally sensitive areas such as ridgelines and floodplain areas. The Open Space Guidelines promulgated by the County should establish the framework for implementation of open space preservation in the County. The Guidelines should identify the criteria to be used in prioritizing land to be preserved and the means and mechanisms available for protecting open space. Funds for this purpose could also be used for the purchase of development rights or the establishment of open space easements.

Priority funding for acquisition of open space will be based on those guidelines and the community's commitment to implement these Plan goals and objectives.

- **Bicycle/Pedestrian Improvements** - The County should fund actions to create linear open spaces, bicycle paths and cultural/recreational routes, including the proposed "Rockland Route 200" concept. This includes measures such as roadway improvements to upgrade bicycle and pedestrian safety, the installation of historical markers and signage on rail trails and designated roadways, and bicycle facility improvements including the installation of bike racks in downtown areas, at train stations and on the exterior of TOR buses to enable students and other individuals without cars to combine bicycle and surface transit commuting modes.
- **Sewer Upgrading** - The County should undertake a composite corrections program to replace underperforming or aging sewers.
- **Emerging Government Center** - The County should enhance visitor facilities at the Dr. Robert L. Yeager Health Center by installing informational kiosks and improving directional signage.
- **Historic Resource Preservation** - The County should, in conjunction with improvements to the historic Rockland County Courthouse, continue to improve and enhance the adjacent Dutch Garden, which is a major historic attraction.
- **Facilities Investments** - The County should consider expansion to the Rockland Community College fieldhouse to increase its availability for trade shows.

## **2. Regulatory Measures**

Regulations related to land use generally fall under the purview of local municipalities. However, through its General Municipal Law reviews, the County can make advisory recommendations related to development and land use. The County Drainage Agency has direct regulatory authority related to drainage issues for development within 100 feet of the 100-year Flood Plain. Regulatory measures that should be taken by the County are as follows:

- Continue to use General Municipal Law reviews to encourage developers to treat community character and surrounding area context as important design considerations, to provide adequate buffers and screening separating proposed non-residential projects from adjacent residential uses, and to provide on-site pedestrian connections and recreational amenities
- Expand Drainage Agency reviews for projects to include proposals that may affect all streams or water bodies
- Develop local Wellhead Protection Area and Watershed Protection Programs and incorporate as part of County and local review of development proposals.
- Continue the preliminary goals of the newly created Rockland County Board for Historic Preservation and establish a County Office of Historic Preservation
- Establish a County Historic Roads Program

### **3. Fiscal Measures**

Fiscal measures involve either the direct funding of certain county activities or changes in fiscal monetary and tax activities under the County's purview. Fiscal actions include:

- Funding a county-wide reassessment study.
- Working to amend homestead/non-homestead tax system.
- Lobbying for revision to IDA legislation, giving the County a role in determination of PILOT payments.

### **4. Management Practices**

Ways in which the County can implement recommendations of this Plan is through coordinating efforts of local groups and other levels of government and establishing non-regulatory commissions to promote the Plan concepts and implement the Plan recommendations. In some cases, these are seen as a precursor to the establishment of a specific regulatory approach as evidenced by the establishment of the Rockland County Board for Historic Preservation. Providing technical support to encourage municipalities to adopt innovative zoning and land use regulations

is another example of a management-related implementation action. Examples of management-related implementation measures that can be undertaken by the County include:

- Forming a community planning team related to watershed and wellhead protection in order to designate areas for protection and formulate appropriate regulations.
- Continuing the annual training programs sponsored by the Rockland Municipal Planning Federation for volunteers and elected officials involved with land use decision making.
- Assisting in the expansion and funding of the existing business development programs at Rockland Community College.
- Funding a Parks and Recreation Master Plan Study to identify specific unmet recreational needs of the County's population and actions necessary to meet these needs. This plan could also identify parks that might be appropriate for active recreational facilities, informational kiosks or public facilities.
- Funding a County Highway Plan to develop criteria for designating roads under the County's jurisdiction. This plan could recommend additions or deletions to the existing county road system and develop design standards for county roadways.
- Creating a Rockland Waterfront Planning Council to coordinate environmental programs or waterfront activities and undertake joint marketing efforts. This could include representatives from riverfront municipalities, private businesses, not-for-profit groups and related County agencies such as the Planning Department, Parks Department, Rockland Tourism and Rockland Economic Development Corporation.
- Forming an advisory panel or commission to promote affordable housing that is fairly distributed throughout the County.
- Developing and encouraging municipalities to adopt model zoning regulations related to issues such as protecting scenic view districts, open space resources and environmentally sensitive features; fostering needed tourism related facilities such as bed and breakfast and agri-tourism operations; and controlling the locations of necessary but potentially disruptive uses such as telecommunica-

tions cell towers. Provide technical assistance to municipalities to develop these model zoning ordinances.

- Coordinating efforts between sewer authorities and municipalities to address potential capacity problems in local sewer collection lines, and conducting a composite corrections program to replace underperforming or aging collection sewers. The County should provide for funding of sewer corrections in municipalities most willing to adopt favorable zoning and land use policies and programs that implement plan recommendations.
- Actively participating with regional agencies such as the Regional Plan Association, the Hudson River Valley Greenway Council and the Hudson Valley Regional Council.

The County can also play an active management role in coordinating transportation improvements and policies. Numerous proposed investments such as the Secaucus Transfer Station, double tracking the Pascack Valley line, restoration of passenger rail service on the West Shore line, expanding the Tappan Zee Bridge crossing, creating a new tunnel/bridge over the Hudson, or creating HOV lanes on I-87/I-287, will dramatically impact the County. While most of these investments are not under direct County control, there are various avenues through which Rockland County may pursue its interests:

- C Actively Participate in the Metropolitan Planning Process:** Beginning with ISTEA in 1991 and reinforced by its successor TEA-21, federal transportation planning and funding has shifted increasingly from the state to the local level through an enhanced metropolitan planning process organized through metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs). Rockland County is a member of the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC), the MPO for New York City and the downstate suburban counties in New York State. By ensuring that its priorities are identified in the federally mandated Long-Range Plan and the biennial Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), Rockland County can advance federally funded options. However, because the metropolitan area is split along the Hudson River, Rockland County is also impacted by the decisions of the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA), which the County should monitor. Rockland County's participation in the NJTPA's West Shore Region Major Investment Study is one example.

- **Monitor and Participate in the Activities of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, MTA, NJ Transit, NYS Thruway Authority and the Palisades Interstate Park Commission:** The investment decisions of these five agencies located in two states should be monitored and formal and informal opportunities to participate in their decision-making should be actively pursued. The Access to the Region's Core (ARC) initiative, which is studying ways to expand transit capacity to midtown Manhattan through proposed capacity enhancements at Penn Station and alternative rail projects across the Hudson, and the West Shore Region Major Investment Study (MIS) are two examples.
- **Monitor and Participate in Decision Making Process Regarding Tappan Zee Bridge Alternatives:** Lobby for funding of an independent review of findings of the I-287 Task Force to ensure that the needs of Rockland County residents and businesses are given equal weight with regional needs in the bridge alternatives decision making process.
- **Coordinate with Orange and Bergen Counties:** Rockland County should continue to actively pursue its agenda by working closely with the other two members of the long-standing ORBIT organization. This group should be especially important in developing a common rail agenda for the West Shore and Pascack Valley Lines (Bergen/Rockland) and Main/Bergen/Port Jervis Line (Rockland/Bergen/Orange).
- **MTA study:** A cost benefit analysis has been conducted to determine the level of service given by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) to Rockland County compared to the dollar amount paid by residents to the MTA. The study's results recommended options regarding Rockland's future relationship with the MTA.
- **Develop Integrated Critical Mobility Corridor Plans:** There is an unprecedented list of tools to manage and enhance mobility, each of which has its own benefits and drawbacks. Yet, too often, discussion on mobility enhancements, whether investing in new highway lanes or pedestrian projects, are reduced to debates about the disadvantages of specific strategies. This can be overcome if investment and other enhancement strategies are related to the overall goals of mobility. This allows the public and decision-makers to trade-off the benefits and disadvantages of a range of options and to balance the needs of different modes and groups. The effectiveness of these plans will be increased to the degree that they represent the views and investments of

different jurisdictions and the public. A strong foundation for this approach is provided by NYMTC's Critical Corridors initiative.

- **Develop a Strategic Rail Plan:** In addition to advocating for investment in the West Shore Corridor, the County should develop a comprehensive freight rail position that balances the imperatives of moving goods and people. A strategic rail plan would also seek to preserve future rail opportunities by identifying critical corridors for preservation, including the Piermont branch between Suffern and Spring Valley. Finally, it would identify potential light rail corridors to promote internal mobility, i.e., in the I-87/I-287/Route 59 corridor, including on the Tappan Zee Bridge.

## **B. Municipal Implementation Measures**

Although each has its own local objectives which should ideally be articulated in local comprehensive plans, the towns and villages of Rockland County will play a major role in accomplishing the regional goals of this Comprehensive Plan. Obtaining inter-municipal cooperation should be premised on the realization that the economic success of the County as a whole will depend on the success of individual areas such as the Villages of Spring Valley and Haverstraw. Improvements to regional traffic congestion will require region-wide transit solutions and roadway improvements that tie into regional land use objectives. Potential actions of the municipalities of Rockland County to implement Plan recommendations range from adopting recommended land use policies to participating in joint efforts to protect open space, historical resources and water supply. Implementation measures that the municipalities can take to accomplish the goals of this Plan include the following:

### **1. Capital Improvements**

Several critical capital improvements that are envisioned by localities were described earlier in Section II. These range from the replacement of sewers in growing communities of the Town of Ramapo to construction of a waterfront park in the Village of Haverstraw. Improvements that span several municipalities, such as corridor and greenway improvements or the proposed Rockland Route 200, will require a coordinated inter-municipal approach that can be fostered by the County. The County can form a Rockland Route 200 committee to consist of key personnel of each municipality who would be involved in route implementation. County Planning Department staff could coordinate these efforts. In instances where a project is specific to a locality but has regional implications, such as the revitalization of downtown Spring Valley with transit-related infrastructure improvements, the County could participate in both funding and planning.

## **2. Regulatory Measures**

The willingness of the villages and towns of Rockland County to adopt land use regulations that are consistent with the County-wide land use policies of this Plan will be critical in achieving the Plan's goals. For example, local zoning regulations need to accommodate alternative types of housing and rental housing development to expand living opportunities and channel development to appropriate locations that optimize use of transit and other existing infrastructure. Clustered residential development should be permitted as an alternative to the continued spread of one-acre minimum lot subdivisions that consume open space. Permitting flexibility in the adaptive reuse of structures in established downtown areas is another example of an action that will require updating zoning ordinances. Maintenance of existing non-residential zoning particularly in business park settings should be pursued. This Plan can serve as a guide for such future changes. With the assistance of the County, model zoning provisions related to open space preservation and specific housing objectives can be prepared that would provide more specific guidance. Municipalities that undertake actions that implement Plan initiatives would receive priority funding for underlying infrastructure improvements that support such initiatives.

New regulatory bodies will also be necessary at the local level related to issues such as wellhead protection and historic preservation. In the case of historic preservation, the recommended creation of an advisory County Historic Areas Board of Review could serve as a precursor to the creation of local historic review boards, which would have a more direct role in maintaining historic resources.

## **3. Management Practices**

Municipalities should continue and expand their efforts to work with each other and other levels of government to achieve regional objectives that also have clear local benefits. The proposed creation of a Rockland Waterfront Planning Council is an example of a potential new management effort that municipalities should be encouraged to participate in, building on the successful joint planning that went into the Bicentennial celebration events in the summer of 1998. Local taskforces can also be relied upon to further objectives related to economic development, open space and environmental protection and increased housing options. The riverfront communities should especially be encouraged to coordinate and link their tourism efforts to ensure a balance of activity in towns and villages that can accommodate and manage tourist pressures with those municipalities that cannot. Accomplishing the goals of this Plan will require the acceptance of these concepts by local

leaders and citizens gained through the active management efforts of Rockland's municipalities.

### **C. Other Levels of Government and the Not-for-Profits**

Implementation of the **River to Ridge Comprehensive Plan** will involve higher levels of government as well as non-governmental groups.

#### **1. Federal Government Implementation Measures**

Federal funding will be critical for some of the projects recommended within this Plan. Implementation measures related to the federal government include:

- Assisting in funding major recommended infrastructure projects including improvements to roadways under federal jurisdiction.
- Using federal grants through programs like TEA-21 to support improvements associated with greenway and bicycle facilities planning.
- Utilizing the Federal American Heritage River designation of the Hudson River to solidify environmental protection and waterfront tourism efforts.
- Using Community Development Block Grant funds to implement downtown improvements in places such as the Villages of Haverstraw and Spring Valley and to promote housing rehabilitation and new construction programs.
- Ensuring that all projects involving federal funds recognize the recommendations of the **River to Ridge** Plan and incorporate appropriate measures. For instance, Federal agencies should ensure that future improvements to and use of interstate highways control pollutant and runoff impacts on the surface waters that they traverse, such as the Ramapo River. Projects of the Army Corps of Engineers or any other federal agency should include consideration of providing recreational opportunities in tandem with drain age improvements, where possible. Housing programs through the Department of Housing and Urban Development should be planned to optimize existing transit facilities and provide pedestrian connections to services and adjacent uses.

- Through the U.S. Department of the Interior and the National Park Service, recognizing historic resources through additional listings on the National Register of Historic Places.

## **2. State Implementation Actions**

Implementation measures related to open space preservation, economic development, transportation and housing overlap to varying degrees with state programs and actions of state agencies. The following are implementation measures requiring state input, resources and cooperation.

- Undertake roadway improvements through the New York State Department of Transportation that are consistent with Plan recommendations
- Utilize decommissioned State psychiatric facilities to provide enhanced community services and economic development opportunities
- Work with the County and local municipalities to link open spaces associated with the Palisades Interstate Parkway, such as fostering bikeways leading to the newly created Horn Hill Loop mountain biking trail in Harriman State Park
- Through the New York State Environmental Protection Fund and the Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act, assist the County in the purchase of open space and environmentally sensitive areas and fund projects related to improving the quality of area rivers and ecosystems
- The State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation should continue to identify and designate historic resources
- The Empire State Development Corporation should continue to work with the County to remove barriers to economic development

## **3. Implementation Measures of Not-for-Profit Groups and Others**

Not-for-profit groups and public-private partnerships can be seen as a significant avenue for implementing some of the Plan's recommendations. This is particularly true for recommended actions such as the creation of affordable housing. Not-for-profit land trusts and groups such as Scenic Hudson can also play a key role in preserving open space resources, through direct acquisition or through the purchase

of development rights or easements. Groups such as the Rockland Municipal Planning Federation and environmental organizations can play an ongoing role in working with government agencies to detail Plan proposals and provide guidance to local decision makers and residents on proposals set forth in this Comprehensive Plan.

A non-profit organization comparable to the *Hudson River Towns of Westchester* could be formed to guide the cooperative economic development efforts of the County's waterfront communities.