

MAYOR'S COLUMN

The Bronxville Planning Board recently submitted its draft "Community Plan", a policy guide for future development in the Village, to the Board of Trustees for review and public comment.

In addition to suggestions to guide development, the Plan also provides historical and current data on the physical, economic and social conditions of the Village. It is an extremely informative document that we will make available on our website and hardcopy upon its finalization. The Trustees thank the Planning Board Chairman, Donald Henderson, Sub-committee Chair, Eric Blessing, and Board members Anna Longobardo, Maryann Palermo, Adrienne Smith and James Murray as well as Design Review Committee members Anna Longobardo, Chair, and Jeffrey Faville and John Colquhoun. They spent countless volunteer hours producing a comprehensive, forward looking and professional document.

The Plan begins by tracing Village history from our roots as a prosperous farm community in the 18th century to our role as a commercial center with tannery and cutlery factories adjacent to the railroad. The post World War I housing boom ultimately transformed the Village into the suburban community it is today.

The report is replete with very interesting facts about our one square mile. In contrast to the Town and County, our population has declined in the past few years from 6,543 in 2000 to 6,486 in 2006. This trend actually maintained a decline that began in the 1960's which continues uninterrupted save for a period during the 1990's.

The median age of our population also fell from 38.8 to 38.3 due in part to the growth in the under 18 population and a corresponding decrease in the over 65 sector. The share of the under 18 population rose from 22% in 1990 to 29% in 2000. Concurrently, the 65+ population decreased from 16% in 1990 to 12% in 2000 according to Federal census data.

We now have approximately 2,300 households, 60% of which are single family homes, but over 10,000 area residents use Bronxville as their post office address.

Most residents commute to work by rail with the majority working in three industry sectors – finance, insurance and real estate. Approximately 50% of all married couples have children under 18 and one quarter of our residents live in rental housing.

The Bronxville School had a total enrollment of 1,543 in the 2006-2007 school year, an increase of 5.3% from the 2002-2003 enrollment, though in the past the school has accommodated as many as 1,600 students. Approximately half of the enrollment is in the K to 5 Elementary School.

The Village is home to five churches and a 290 bed hospital that provides emergency care to over 35,000 patients per year. Our tax exempt properties occupy 97 acres or 19.8% of the Villages buildable property.

In addition to the historical comparisons, an integral mission of the Community Plan is to provide guidance on how to maintain the character of our Village.

For example, in response to the increasing concern in the past five years that some housing additions may be incompatible in scale and character to Village neighborhoods, the Committee recommends that we revisit zoning regulations relating to tear downs and out of scale development by making the floor area to open land ratio more stringent.

In an effort to further preserve open space and neighborhood character, the Committee recommends possible site plan approval for significant excavations, earth moving and retaining walls and/or requiring that a specified percentage of each residential property site be an open permeable surface.

Predicting that “green” structures such as solar power and wind power devices will become more prevalent in residential areas, the Plan suggests standards be set to govern their aesthetic and noise impacts. Also, in this category is the need for standards relating to the size and placement of air conditioning units and auxiliary generators.

Upon its completion, the Community Plan will serve as both a guide and a blueprint for action for the Board of Trustees. We held a public hearing on the draft document at the December Trustees meeting and we continue to welcome additional public comment. Hard copies of the draft are available at Village for public review.