

WHERE IS THE VILLAGE OF CHESTNUT RIDGE GOING?

The Village of Chestnut Ridge is relatively new, incorporated in 1986. The Village's residents wanted to control their destiny by creating their own zoning laws. But 91% of the Village's residential units were built prior to the Village's 1986 incorporation, meaning that only 9% of existing residential units were built during the Village's zoning laws. Also, very little new infrastructure such as roads were built since the Village was formed. Nor did the Village adopt a formal Comprehensive Plan or Capital Program. The large vacant developable parcels in 1986 are still the same large vacant developable parcels today which under the Village's zoning laws require subdivision approval from the Planning Board pursuant to Local Law 18.

The essence of Local Law 18 is embodied in two sections. Section 12 - Policy states **"...land shall not be subdivided until available municipal services, facilities and improvements exist and proper provision has been made for drainage, water, sewerage and capital improvements such as schools, transportation, parks and other needed improvements.** The existing and proposed public improvements shall conform to the Official Map.

Section 17 - Conditions states **"The subdivision of land is a privilege conferred upon the developer by the Village.... It is the developer who is seeking to acquire the advantages of lot subdivision and upon him/her rests the duty of compliance with reasonable conditions laid down by the Village Planning Board for design, dedication, improvement and restrictive uses of the land so as to conform to the physical and economic developments of the village and to the safety and general welfare of the future plot owners in the subdivision and of the community at large"**. Note the Village Planning Board is the entity that processes and approves the subdivision application and the duty to is protect future plot owners and all community residents.

As stated above there have been few if any significant subdivision approvals since the Village was formed. Only in 2021 after vigorous urging by Village residents did the Village Board consider developing a Comprehensive Plan to guide the future development of the existing developable parcels and/or the re-development of already developed lots. Note the sharp contrast in language and intent in the final

draft Comprehensive Plan published June 8, 2022 to the original 1987 sub-division rules. Section 1.1 - Background states **“Recommendations include changes to promote appropriate development of the Red Schoolhouse Road corridor to provide economic development and employment opportunities, and to establish improvements to the zoning code to provide better management of residential areas”**. When and why did the purpose of the subdivision of land shift from “being a privilege conferred upon the developer” to “promoting and providing economic development opportunities”? Who benefits from the so called “improvements to the zoning code”? Do current residents benefit from the changed zoning?

Further, the draft Comprehensive Plan includes a Proposed Planned Unit Development Floating Zoning District (PUD) which is available to the large vacant undeveloped land in existence prior to the Village’s formation. The Proposed PUD essentially turns the Village’s original sub-division approval process upside down since the approval would be granted by the Village Board, not the Planning Board. The Board can approve the PUD based on a simple Concept Plan prepared by the developer. The Planning Board’s rigorous subdivision process will be thrown in the dust bin. The Village Board’s PUD approval follows the stated objectives below:

- a. The creative use of land.....than would be possible through the strict application....of the Zoning Code
- b. Innovation, flexibility....of mixed use development living environments
- c. Increase the diversity of housing options....by permitting multi-family and rental housing options.....
- d. Provide an increase in opportunities for commercial development.....
- e. Maximize....tax ratables as integral parts of newly constructed residential communities. Note the Equestrian Estates PUD application contemplates hundreds of millions of dollars of development yet the project is only projected to produce a paltry \$132,00 additional Village tax revenue.
- f. Create a development pattern in harmony with the planning objectives of the Village.....

The proposed PUD Process is nothing more than a re-write of the Village’s original zoning laws and significantly increases density and new uses which are to the developer’s financial advantage but not protective of the current residents or the

original character of the Village. The objectives above are contrary to the public survey results conducted during the Comprehensive Plan process.

The Village Board is basically stating their vision of the Village's future is better than the Village residents and the existing zoning laws. The Planning Board and the Zoning Board of Appeal are stripped of their legitimate functions by the Village Board who can approve a PUD based on a Concept Plan assembled by the developer. The approved PUD is then referred to the Planning Board who have only 60 days to provide its recommendation. The Zoning Board of Appeals is completely removed from the process. The proposed Comprehensive Plan and PUD process is simply a re-write of the Village's original sub-division rules.

Why is that necessary? To whose advantage is such a change? Why attach such sweeping zoning changes to the proposed Comprehensive Plan described as incomprehensive and incomplete by professional land planners engaged by CUPON of Chestnut Ridge. Where is the Village of Chestnut Ridge going? Stay tuned for further articles on this subject in this newspaper and the CUPON of Chestnut Ridge website.