

# Recommendations section

from the

## Town of Durham, NY

# 2020 Comprehensive Plan

*Prepared by the Durham Comprehensive Plan Committee*

*As adopted by the Durham Town Board, June 2, 2020*

## Section F: Recommendations

In this section, concrete recommendations are provided for actions by the Town Board that, over the next few years, will help move the town towards achievement of the Vision and Goals.

The Comprehensive Plan Committee sought to produce recommendations that are clearly defined in terms of who needs to do what; that are unlikely to trigger widespread opposition; and that should not have a significant impact on the Town's budget except in cases where external grants can be raised to cover that impact.

As previously mentioned, this Plan does not control the Town Board. The Board can choose not to adopt the Plan, and it can choose to adopt some but not all of the recommendations.

### **Recommendation 1: Work for speedy implementation of this Plan**

**The Town Board should aim to achieve full implementation of some of the recommendations in this Comprehensive Plan within two years of the Plan's being approved, with as many as possible of the remaining recommendations being fully implemented by two years after that. To enhance the chances that these goals will be met, the Town Board should establish a *Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee*.**

Duties that the Town Board should assign to the Implementation Committee include the following:

- (a) Constantly monitor progress in the implementation of the recommendations in this Plan, and support this with coordination, encouragement and assistance as needed.
- (b) Provide a written and verbal report to a Town Board meeting each month. This report should summarize what progress was made in the past month in the implementation of each recommendation in this Plan.
- (c) Seek grants that will help finance implementation of the recommendations in this Plan. (Possible sources of funding include state and federal agencies, private and community foundations, and Durham residents. If the grants have to be made to a nonprofit organization rather than to the town, and if an appropriate nonprofit organization does not already exist, establish and operate a nonprofit organization to request and administer these grants.)

The Implementation Committee should function as follows:

- i. The Implementation Committee should have at least eight members, all unpaid. The Town Supervisor should propose who should serve as Chair and Deputy Chair, and those two people should then propose the remaining members. The Town Board should then approve the entire membership and should provide them with clear terms of reference. The Committee membership should include at least one but no more than two members of the Town Board.
- ii. For each recommendation, the Implementation Committee should set up a work team consisting of a lead person (from the Committee) plus one or more other people (from the Committee or from the community).

- iii. The Implementation Committee should determine priorities and establish desired timelines for implementation of the different recommendations.

## **Recommendation 2: Improve communications**

### **The Town Board should find new ways for residents to be informed of community developments.**

Specifically, the Town Board should:

- (a) Significantly enhance the Durham website so it can serve as the central resource for information-sharing within Durham. (The town has already started on making some improvements to the website. But some of the recommendations here would require more substantial improvements, which might require external funding.)
- (b) Provide at the Durham website, and in downloadable form, information about the town's features and resources. The information provided should be similar in scope to that which is provided in Appendix 1 to this Plan.
- (c) Add to the Durham website an opportunity for residents to live-stream town board meetings.
- (d) Provide further features at the website as discussed in other recommendations below.
- (e) Expand and make effective use of the Town's list of email addresses of residents.
- (f) Provide a regular emailed town newsletter and an occasional print town newsletter.
- (g) Early each year, publish and circulate an Annual Report describing what the Town Board, the Implementation Committee, and others have achieved during the previous calendar year, and what their plans are for the coming year.
- (h) Hold a Special Town Meeting on a weekend day in the spring of each year to present the above Annual Report and to receive feedback from residents. (This meeting should be organized by the Town Board or the Implementation Committee; but it should not be a decision-making meeting OF the Town Board.)

## **Recommendation 3: Increase community activities**

### **The Town Board should request the Implementation Committee to organize and encourage a range of community activities.**

Specifically, the Town Board should ask the Implementation Committee to do as follows:

- (a) In cooperation as necessary with the Durham Community Center Planning Committee, arrange for the provision at the former Durham Elementary School and other Durham locations of a broad range of community meetings, classes and sporting activities.
- (b) Arrange, in particular, for the provision of activities for senior citizens and young people. And seek ways for seniors and young people to provide mentoring and other services to each other.

- (c) Find volunteers, or hire a part-time person, to help manage the activities taking place at the former Durham Elementary School, and to ensure that the building is used in a responsible manner.
- (d) Negotiate with one or more resorts for them to permit Durham residents to use their swimming pool during non-peak hours in exchange for a small seasonal fee.
- (e) Arrange, in cooperation with the Brandow Park Committee, for expanded facilities and services to be provided at Brandow Park.
- (f) Develop options for the provision of trails in Durham that residents and visitors can use for hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, ATVing, access to Catskill Creek swimming holes, and access to historic locations. Where such trails would involve crossing private land, conduct negotiations with the relevant landowners, with the Durham Valley Land Trust, with county and state agencies, and with interested funding sources regarding the possible acquisition of the necessary easements.
- (g) Provide ways at the Durham website for residents to post invitations for others to join them for hiking and other recreational activities (including at Ski Windham, where there are significant discounts on season tickets for local students).
- (h) Organize community-strengthening events and activities. These could include:
  - i. A farmers' market.
  - ii. A "Durham Day," where residents can do a driving tour with stops at various town locations of interest (sometimes with a volunteer available there to provide explanations), ending up at a setting where local organizations have booths to promote their activities, where one or two talks are provided, and where residents can meet each other over food such as hotdogs and ice cream provided by volunteers or vendors.
  - iii. Community pot-luck dinners.
  - iv. Volunteer-based roadside cleanup days.
  - v. "Welcome wagon" visits to the homes of new residents to greet them and to inform them about community activities.

## **Recommendation 4: Enhance economic development**

### **The Town Board should work with local business leaders and organizations for the development of a critical mass of retail, restaurant and other businesses within Durham.**

Specifically, the Town Board should:

- (a) Encourage the provision of a commercial urgent care facility and/or of a doctor's office within Durham.
- (b) Encourage the Durham NY Chamber of Commerce and the Greene County Chamber of Commerce to develop a unified marketing plan for Durham's businesses.
- (c) Evaluate whether to encourage small businesses by offering tax incentives.
- (d) Find ways to capitalize on the increasing popularity of Windham and Hudson by promoting Durham as a side-destination for tourists to those towns.

- (e) Develop pages at the Durham website (and sometimes develop related downloadable materials) that provide:
  - i. all the information that an individual might need when deciding whether to start a small business in Durham;
  - ii. a complete and accessible list of all town laws and regulations;
  - iii. a description of forms of artisanal and homestead farming that could be viable in Durham.
- (f) In conjunction with interested Oak Hill residents, evaluate the costs, possible sources of funding, and benefits of providing more sidewalks, street lights and parking in Oak Hill, primarily in order to encourage more visitors to the hamlet's commercial facilities.

### **Recommendation 5: Advocate for improved broadband and cell phone coverage**

**The Town Board should work actively to persuade existing or new entities to provide cell-phone service and affordable and reliable broadband service that can be accessed by every residence and business within Durham.**

Specifically, the Town Board should request the Implementation Committee to do the following:

- (a) Research and submit to the Town Board a report and accompanying map showing which specific residential and business properties within Durham are currently able to access which forms of cell-phone and broadband service.
- (b) Research ways in which some rural towns within the United States have succeeded in creating new entities, or persuading existing entities, to provide broadband that can be accessed by all. Research also whether some other Greene County towns might be interested in collaborating on such a venture.
- (c) Then submit to the Town Board a second report proposing what actions should be taken, and by whom, to provide access to cell-phone service and to affordable and reliable broadband service for those Durham residents who don't currently have such access.

### **Recommendation 6: Encourage better property maintenance**

**The Town Board should work to enhance the beauty of Durham's streets and buildings to benefit local residents and to encourage tourism and new residents.**

Specifically, the Town Board should:

- (a) Strengthen and more effectively and evenly enforce local laws regarding unregistered vehicles and derelict properties.
- (b) Arrange for the Town to accept or collect unwanted vehicles and other large items once or twice a year at no charge.

- (c) Develop a page at the Durham website describing building and code enforcement requirements.

## **Recommendation 7: Improve historic preservation**

**The Town Board should encourage the development of a unified approach to historic preservation.**

Specifically, the Town Board should:

- (a) Evaluate a possible integrated strategy for the work of some or all of the following: the Durham Historic Preservation Commission, the Town Historian, the Oak Hill Preservation Association and the Durham Center Museum.
- (b) In association with the above organizations, develop a page at the Durham website containing an accurate and current map showing historic places in the Town.
- (c) In association with the above organizations, seek sources of funding that will help property owners renovate historic structures.