



# UNINCORPORATED MONSEY, HILLCREST, AND WESTERN RAMAPO COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

## MEETING SUMMARY

<b>Purpose:</b>	Public Open House #1
<b>Date and Time:</b>	February 27, 2025, 6:00 – 8:00 PM
<b>Location:</b>	Town of Ramapo Town Hall Council Room, 237 Route 59, Suffern NY

### 1. Project Overview

#### Discussion

The Town of Ramapo has initiated an update to its 2004 Town of Ramapo Comprehensive Plan to reflect the needs of today and to identify a vision for the unincorporated Monsey, Hillcrest, and Western Ramapo area's future. The Comprehensive Plan Update and Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) for the unincorporated Monsey, Hillcrest, and Western Ramapo areas will serve as a roadmap for future land use, housing, transportation, and other infrastructure policy and investment. The update will address emerging challenges while ensuring growth aligns with the community's vision and goals.

The Comprehensive Plan Update process is being developed by the Town of Ramapo and a consultant team led by M.J. Engineering, Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and Land Surveying, P.C.

On Thursday, February 27, 2025, the first public open house for the Comprehensive Plan Update was held. The event took place at the Town of Ramapo Town Hall Council room from 6:00 – 8:00 PM. Approximately 30 residents, property owners, business owners, and other stakeholders participated in the event.

The open house format allowed participants to informally walk through eleven (11) activity stations to learn about the project at their own pace and provide their input and ideas. A Participant Guide was provided to attendees to guide them through the various stations.

The activity stations included:

- Station 1 – Project Overview
- Station 2 – Community Profile
- Station 3 – Community Vision
- Station 4 – Challenges and Opportunities



# 1. Project Overview

## Discussion

- Station 5 – Places We Gather
- Station 6 – Serving the Generations
- Station 7 – Getting around Town
- Station 8 – Idea Center
- Station 9 – Kids Table
- Station 10 – Take the Survey
- Station 11 – Other Thoughts and Ideas

Additionally, participants had the opportunity to speak with Town staff and the Project Team and share written ideas and/or comments on comment cards.

Common themes arising from all input received include (in no particular order):

- Concerns regarding rapid growth and overdevelopment and the need to enforce existing zoning regulations
- Concerns regarding traffic congestion and infrastructure capacity
- Desire for more open spaces, environmental protection, and recreation opportunities
- Need for additional multi-use trails and safer sidewalks for pedestrians
- More community-oriented spaces and activities for the younger generation
- More sustainable development practices
- Preserving community character

# 2. Community Profile

## Discussion

This station provided an overview of the Town demographics and growth trends. The Town population, population growth, and housing comparisons were displayed using tables and infographics and accompanied by a brief narrative.

# 3. Community Vision

## Discussion

This Vision station provided an opportunity for participants to share their Vision for the unincorporated Monsey, Hillcrest, and Western Ramapo areas to be like in the next 5, 10, or 20 years.

**Common themes included:**

- Preserving rural character and open space
- Focus on sustainable development

**Ideas expressed through this exercise include (in no particular order and presented as written):**

- Diverse community with affordable housing and open space



### 3. Community Vision

#### Discussion

- Even 20 years from now we need to have somewhat of a rural feel to life is here wooded areas, minimal street lights, minimal sidewalks, stars visible at night
- Western Ramapo need to remain rural. Trees are necessary to produce oxygen. The wildlife needs a place to live
- Monsey is already filled to capacity. Nothing else can be added here
- Keep our trees and forests. Don't change zoning in already populated areas
- In the next 5 years the area to be intellectually/environmentally driven. Properties and structures that encourage thinking and innovation
- Traffic to be all below level F. Traffic is FAR, FAR to much
- Keep Hillcrest Single Family, no more down zoning

### 4. Challenges and Opportunities

#### Discussion

This station encouraged participants to share their insights about challenges and opportunities for the unincorporated Monsey, Hillcrest, and Western Ramapo areas.

**Common challenges and concerns raised include:**

- Traffic and overdevelopment concerns
- More enforcement of zoning
- Preserving community character

**Challenges identified include (in no particular order and presented as written):**

- Traffic too FAR too much and the uncontrolled development must stop
- Ramapo Board, Don't buy land in Western Ramapo and over building of houses – as was done in Monsey/Spring valley area
- Traffic, increasing affordable housing, retaining open spaces
- Cultural enclaves that create castes system and no economic growth for residents
- Traffic is impossible. Building has to be done sensibly. Don't change the zoning in developed areas.
- Way too much traffic, noise pollution
- The Town reluctance/failure to firmly enforce zoning violations
- The need for a buffer between single family houses + PUD's on other multifamily housing
- The Town willingness to approve almost all zoning variances
- Balancing development with the need to maintain a rural feel + a sense of community
- Too many houses are being purchased by investors who rent them out. The investors are only concentrated on the financial return – not the fabric of the community. The tenants through no fault of their own are not active in the community in a "traditional way"
- Storm water management need to target 0 runoff
- Maintaining a sense of community
- The increase in communities that do not want to integrate in any aspect of life except commerce
- The Town history of approving most, if not all requests to down zone
- A lot of things would be ok if built to the bulk table requirements. The problem is that the zoning board of appeals grants variances to make them much larger

## 4. Challenges and Opportunities

### Discussion

**Common opportunities and strengths raised include:**

- Diversity within the Town
- Access to green spaces and educational programs regarding the environment

**Opportunities identified include (in no particular order and presented as written):**

- Green spaces, environmental studies for educational purposes, agricultural learning
- Diversity is a strength

## 5. Places We Gather

### Discussion

Participants used stickers representing a variety of activities to identify on a map the places they gather in the community and what they are doing there. The activities represented education, religious and spiritual, shopping, recreation, socializing, dining, and neighborhoods.

**The following highlights locations where attendees gather most and what they do there:**

- Visit parks in the Town of Haverstraw, Village of Pomona, Village of Wesley Hills, and Village of Montebello
- Participate in recreation in Harriman State Park
- Sports complex within Western Ramapo
- Dining and socializing in the Village of Suffern
- It was noted there was a new development along Rte 17 in Western Ramapo
- Many attendees live in areas outside of Western Ramapo
- Recreation in Viola Town Park and other parks located within the Monsey/Hillcrest area
- Socializing at Rockland Community College
- Shopping along Route 59

## 6. Serving the Generations

### Discussion

This station encouraged participants to share their insights about generational needs. Generations tend to share similar characteristics and have similar needs for services, housing, shopping, learning, healthcare, and transportation. The generations are categorized by birth year and include Traditionalists or Silent Generation: Born 1945 and before; Baby Boomers: Born 1946-1964; Generation X: Born 1965-1980; Millennials or Generation Y: Born 1981-1996; and Generation Z: Born after 1996.

**Common themes identified between multiple generations include:**

- Desire for affordable housing options
- Light pollution and environmental concerns
- Strained infrastructure and public services



## 6. Serving the Generations

### Discussion

- Need for more community and recreational spaces

**Traditionalists or Silent Generation: Born 1945 and Before (in no particular order and presented as written):**

- None noted

**Baby Boomers: Born 1946-1964 (in no particular order and presented as written):**

- Affordable condo's or apartments for seniors would allow seniors to stay in the community + free up their houses for sale
- Too much lighting on 202 harms wildlife + quality of life
- Too much street lighting for wildlife
- Too many new street light fixtures along route 202 from 306 – Suffern light pollution is overwhelming

**Generation X: Born 1965-1980 (in no particular order and presented as written):**

- School district is overwhelmed
- Congestion, pollution, and sanitation have become major issues
- Lack of water quality + quantity – limited supply
- Fire safety lack of water

**Millennials or Generation Y: Born 1981-1996 (in no particular order and presented as written)**

- None noted

**Generation Z: Born After 1996 (in no particular order and presented as written):**

- Housing
- Art spaces
- Leisure spaces

## 7. Gathering Around Town

### Discussion

Participants used stickers representing different modes of transportation to identify on a map how they travel. The modes of transportation include walking, biking, and public transportation.

**The following highlights how attendees travel throughout the Town:**

- Many attendees drive to get around Town
- Attendees will take the Palisades Interstate Parkway (PIP) instead of local roads to avoid traffic despite it being more miles
- Many attendees noted they used to walk around their neighborhoods but not as much anymore due to safety concerns
- There are unsafe sidewalks throughout the Town, particularly on 238 Old Nyack Turnpike
- Biking within neighborhoods or along camp hill road though it is not the safest
- There are significant car crashes along Rte 202 at the corner of Lime Kiln Road, making it unsafe to walk



## 7. Gathering Around Town

### Discussion

- An attendee uses the 94 bus to get to work
- There are significant congestion issues westbound on Old Nyack and along route 306, route 59, and the intersection at N Main Street and New Hempstead Rd
- The Village of Kaser transit service has expanded

## 8. Idea Station

### Discussion

At the Idea Center, participants were asked to share ideas about a variety of topic areas including:

- Economic Development
- Infrastructure and Transportation
- Neighborhoods, Housing & Recreation

#### **Common themes in Economic Development include:**

- Desire for more community spaces and parks
- More opportunities to support local artists

#### **Input received about Economic Development include (in no particular order and presented as written):**

- More art space for artist to make income
- Hillcrest need community parks
- Need low density housing to protect water supply
- Stop lights are better than traffic jams

#### **Common themes in Infrastructure include:**

- Concerns regarding aging infrastructure and capacity
- Concerns regarding traffic congestion
- Need to protect waterways and wetlands

#### **Input received about Infrastructure include (in no particular order and presented as written):**

- Building can only be done in new places. Building multiple family dwellings on single home property does not address water, parking, etc.
- The school busses cause far too much traffic
- Single family housing only
- Sewers that were put in in the 60's and 70's will need to be replaced costing millions of dollars the developers should have to pay for this
- Do not allow any more traffic no more car, trucks, school buses
- NYSDOT category F intersection, by DOT rules, are not to allow by local approvals to add any more traffic
- I challenge every board member to drive from Good Sam. Hospital to Nyack Hospital at 5 PM to experience how horrible the traffic is
- All of Rockland County's water comes from within the county. Will there be enough to sustain the large population in Monsey
- Will there be enough electricity, taking Gov Kathy Hochul's genius idea to eliminate fossil fuels



## 8. Idea Station

### Discussion

- No more schools without reduction of school buses
- Structure to protect our waterway- live along Ramapo River
- Need to protect wetlands to protect limited water supply
- Water system (supply) can not support any more development
- Can not expand Route 59
- Water infrastructure, quality + quantity not adequate

#### **Common themes in Transportation include:**

- Pedestrian and walkability improvements
- Expanded public transportation
- Roadway improvements to support safety and improve traffic flow

#### **Input received about Transportation include (in no particular order and presented as written):**

- All streets in unincorporated Ramapo should have sidewalks
- More walk paths with green infrastructure, trees, flowers, native plants
- You need to start a local bus service to serve the residents of Spring Valley
- Hoverboards and electric bicycles should not be allowed to ride on sidewalks as it is dangerous to the people who are walking on the sidewalk
- More turning lanes
- Traffic to far too much. Development must be smart + not uncontrolled

#### **Common themes in Neighborhoods and Housing include:**

- More parks, trees, and open space within neighborhoods
- Desire for more single-family housing

#### **Input received about Neighborhood and Housing include (in no particular order and presented as written):**

- Western Ramapo, we need trees and open space to help clean the air. There should be no changes in zoning in Western Ramapo
- No more multifamily housing
- Hillcrest needs community parks
- Monsey is filled to capacity now, traffic is the same as New York City. Ramapo should not be all multi-family. Hillcrest should remain zoned single family

#### **Common themes in Recreation include:**

- Additional parks and open spaces
- More activities for the youth

#### **Input received about Recreation include (in no particular order and presented as written):**

- More parks are needed, Saddle River pool needs to be made into a park. The houses in Monsey are so large there is no yard for the children to play
- Activities geared toward millennial - gen z and young adults
- Maintain open spaces



## 9. Kids Table

### Discussion

This was a place for kids to be creative and share their ideas.

## 10. Take the Survey

### Discussion

This station included a board enabling participants to take the online community survey via a QR code to provide more thoughts and ideas about their community. The community survey is also available at [www.Ramapo.org](http://www.Ramapo.org) on the project webpage. Paper copies were also made available.

## 11. Other Thoughts & Ideas

### Discussion

This station included an opportunity for any additional thoughts and ideas. The thoughts shared are listed below (in no particular order and presented as written):

- Ramapo can be compared to a six-quart pail – only so much can fit. When you overfill it spills over and causes a mess
- Smart development, stop the uncontrolled development by planning board
- Change R-15A to allow 2 accessory units to allow younger families
- Keep our parks and trees
- Planning Board should focus on more shade trees
- All developments should have off-street parking
- All large projects should include solar panels
- Even high-density housing should include a garage for at least 1 car garage as cars are very expensive. The garage should at least accommodate to set up for charging electric or rechargeable hybrids

## 12. Input Provided on Written Comment Cards

### Discussion

In addition to gathering input via maps and station boards, participants had the opportunity to provide input on written comment forms. Below is a list of written comments received (in no particular order and presented as written):

- Code violations are not followed by all. 2 separate laws. With Onox have there own one religion taken over. Board favor one religion.
- Although housing is an issue, I would like to see more sustainability practice, more impact studies conducted as a norm when developments are being built. More green spaces for leisure. If the park-unincorporate area can be used as a campground, trailways, and green leisure spaces rather than housing





## 12. Input Provided on Written Comment Cards

### Discussion

- Traffic congestion is a little nightmarish. There are not enough parks for this many people – and the parks that are, they are not so easy to get to
- It feels like the plan is to develop a city... without checking in with the citizens... only acquiescing to the desires of the citizens or even consulting with them
- Development by variance bypasses the rule of law and impedes the democratic process
- Would like to see a network of bicycle paths or multi-use trails, especially in the Monsey/Hillcrest area

This meeting summary conveys our understanding of the items discussed and agreements reached at this meeting. Please forward any additions, corrections and/or questions to my attention.

Submitted by:

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cc: Consultant Team, Town File

