



2010 Special Edition

Commissioner's Special Edition

By: Roger Akeley, Commissioner



I am retiring on January 15 after nearly 26 years as Commissioner. I feel privileged to have been your Commissioner of Planning and Development all these years. It has been my good fortune to have worked for two intelligent, competent and dedicated County Executives during this time, and also with a series of legislatures which have given unfailing support to the purposes and implementation of good planning principles.

I am particularly appreciative of the legislative bodies under the leadership of Harry Schroeder and Brad Kendall when the County's first Master Plan, *Directions*, then the Greenway initiative and establishment of the Partnership for Manageable Growth were passed.

To me, the local governments of Dutchess County have certainly improved their lot since 1984. The master plans, zoning ordinances and subdivision regulations do more to protect the environment; and decisions made by local citizen boards are based on better information and higher standards than they were years ago. Results are obvious in the improved architecture, site plans and open space programs throughout the County.

We have tended to work more in the localities which have solicited our help. But almost without exception, the Planning Department enjoys a good working relationship with all local communities. To me, nothing has been more professionally satisfying.

County planning has matured over the years. Most notable is the progression of our land use management initiatives. Policies in our original plan, *Directions*, evolved into the Greenway Program, and *Greenway Connections* is constantly improving through the development of more guides, additional training through the Planning Federation, and through better and more accessible data from our Geographical Information System (GIS).

I want to draw your attention to our latest greenway initiative, the Centers and Greenspaces Program. We have taken the best available land use, regulatory, ownership and environmental data in each community and constructed two opportunity sets – the best areas for future

residential and commercial development and the best areas for continuing agricultural and other rural uses.

The result is that favored development locations are in about 80 locations, or priority growth areas, within our 30 municipalities. We have begun confirming the open space program and favored growth areas with you on a town-by-town basis. Since our local regulatory capacities have been improving, we are better able to meet the challenge of wise, sustainable land use into the future.

The great efforts of Michael Klemens at the Cary Institute and Hudsonia in functional landscape evaluation – biodiversity analysis – combined with the “new urbanist” approach to sensible, compact growth, best championed by John Clarke in this Department, have given our countywide greenway initiative more substance and rationale against sprawling growth. We will be expanding and profiting from these new capabilities in the years ahead.

Like always, land use policies and decisions are being established and carried out at the local, not the county, level. We welcome future dialog as we continue our joint greenway endeavor.

We strive to plan for people first and the automobile as convenient, but subordinate, to our well-being. The convenience of an automobile-centered society has to be weighed against the enormous environmental and safety costs, the huge energy footprint of a car-centered environment versus the light, companionable tread of our feet in our neighborhoods and downtowns. The drama between motorized convenience and community is played out in every site plan and plot we review, no matter how mundane they seem.

I am proud that the County has been able to develop and work with you on achieving sustainable land use practices, not just expedient ones.

Thank you for the years of support for the County, the Department and me, personally. Your good work, our times together and our combined dreams, I take with me. The results of our cooperation have often been fruitful and are now embedded in our shared landscape. The Department of Planning and Development will go on – strong as ever. I am so appreciative of the depth and breadth of the competence and commitment of the County planning staff. They serve the County well and have been an inspiration to me. I will remember you and our encounters over the years with respect and affection.



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This newsletter was developed by the Dutchess County Department of Planning and Development, in conjunction with the Dutchess County Planning Federation.

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