

Village Of Ossining Housing Policy Statement

I. Findings

1. The Village Board of Trustees finds that current prices of housing in the Village of Ossining are too expensive for households of modest means to afford. The Village Board of Trustees is concerned about the shortage of affordable housing within the Village for both rental and ownership units for its residents, including the elderly, school district employees, police, firefighters, EMS volunteers, municipal workers and others who work within the Village. The Village Board is also concerned about the loss of existing affordable units (i.e.: units which have, or will, in the near future, reach the end of their affordability terms). The Village Board's conclusion regarding the present shortage of affordable housing is based on data from 2000 Census data, current rental prices (as reported by Westchester Residential Opportunities), resale prices of single-family, cooperatives and condominiums homes (as reported by the Westchester – Putnam Multiple Listing Service), Village employees' annual salaries, and waiting lists for affordable housing developments and the waiting lists for the Village of Ossining Housing Voucher Programs.

2. The 2000 U.S. Census Report shows a total Village population of 24,010. There are 8,219 households with an average household size of 2.6 people. The largest population group is among residents ages 18-64 (16,419 –68% of the total population). There are 2,659 seniors (11% of the total population). The average home value was reported in 2000 to be \$195,884 and average rent was \$856. Vacancy rates in 2000 were extremely low (3.4% of ownership units and 2.6% of rental units). The total number of cost-burdened households (i.e.: households defined by HUD which spend more than 30% of household income on housing) was 2,597 or 37% of all Village households.

3. For the 4th Quarter 2005 the average advertised rental rates for apartments in Ossining^{[\[1\]](#)} (reported by Westchester Residential Opportunities, which annually reports local rents for each Westchester municipality as advertised in local papers) were: \$918 per month for a studio, \$1100 per month for a one-bedroom, \$1,497 per month for a two-bedroom and \$1,793 per month for a three-bedroom. ***These would require annual household incomes of \$36,200, \$44,000, \$59,880 and \$70,720 respectively for a studio, one, two or three-bedroom rental unit.***

4. The 2005 entry salary for: an Ossining Union Free School District Assistant was \$17,129 (top pay \$25,190); a Teachers Aide was \$15,966 (top pay \$23,073) and teachers were \$45,046 (1st year with a B.A. Degree) and after 1st year with a Masters Degree \$52,148. Village police officers with 1,2,3,and 4 years experience have entry-level wages of \$37,547, \$49,599, \$60,926 and \$72,255 respectively. Other Village employees' salaries for 2005 were reported as follows: office clerk \$33,370; foreman \$40,542; laborer \$33,370; senior account clerk \$37,701; and water maintenance employee \$36,982.

5. The 2000 U.S. Census Report reported that the median countywide income was \$63,582 and estimated as \$70,095 in 2004. The Village of Ossining median income was reported to be \$52,185 in the 2000 Census Report and estimated as \$57,531 in 2004. ***This equals a 10.24% increase in earnings between 1999 incomes reported in 2000 Census and 2004. Wages have not kept up with the rising cost of homes.*** A comparison of wages reported in the Census Report against the reported 2004 median estimations demonstrates a small growth in wages, which is not in parity with substantial rising housing prices. These household incomes balanced against

the advertised 2005 rental rates (and extremely low vacancy rates) create a housing deficit for many essential services workers and others employed in or residing in the Village.

6. Market rate ownership units are often priced too high to be affordable for many young families, such as those households, which are part of the Village's workforce. The Westchester-Putnam Multiple Listing Service, Inc., reported that the 2005 median price for a single family home in Westchester was \$675,000, a condominium \$375,000 and a cooperative \$172,000. Applying a traditional 2.5 to 1 lending ratio to these median numbers -- annual household earnings would need to be \$270,000, \$150,000 and \$68,800 respectively to purchase a single family home, condominium or a cooperative unit. According to a search of the properties on the *Westchester Multiple Listing Service, the current average prices for properties sold over the past 12 month period (4.1.05 – 3.31.06) for single-family homes, condominiums and cooperatives respectively in the Village of Ossining were: \$470,791, \$428,460 and \$150,799. Applying a traditional lender's 2.5 to 1 lending ratio to calculate the annual household income needed to afford the average sale reported herein for a single family home, condominium and a cooperative unit respectively would be: \$188,316, \$171,384 and \$60,320. In all likelihood the trend for spiraling upward prices will continue in the Village in the foreseeable future. The high housing prices (Village and Countywide) render all forms of ownership housing out of the reach for many Ossining residents and Village employees. It is unlikely that current income levels will/could reach the levels needed to enable residents and workers to achieve homeownership.*

7. There is a tremendous demand for existing affordable units and a shortage of supply. There are 521 units of affordable housing in the Village as follows: There are 85 units administered by IFCA, a community based not-for-profit housing organization. *IFCA has 280-300 households on its waiting lists for these 85 units.* There are 282 other non-age restricted affordable units not administered by IFCA, and 154 units of affordable senior housing. Applying a 3% vacancy rate, only 15 units would be available per year for those wait listed households and others. Further evidence of the Village's affordable housing deficit can be surmised from the Housing Voucher Program, which provides for federally funded rent gap subsidies to qualifying households whose earnings fall at or below 50% of the Westchester County Median Income. Many Village residents who participate in the Housing Voucher program have annual household earnings below the 50% benchmark of maximum eligibility. As a practical matter most of the voucher recipients have household earnings at or below 30% of median and are for families not individuals. The Village's Housing Voucher Program currently has a total of 254 vouchers to administer, of which 210 are in use by Village residents leaving a total of 44 vouchers held by the Village in reserve until and if funded. The Housing Voucher Program maintains its own list of applicants for housing vouchers. The Village has not taken new applications for Housing Vouchers since March 2004. The current waitlist of applicants is 126.

8. The issue of preservation of existing affordable units is also a major concern (i.e.: keeping units affordable which are or have reached the end of their affordability term). The potential loss of existing affordable units is adding to the increasing affordable housing deficit. Recently, Snowden House, a Mitchell Lama building of 124 units, nearing the end of its affordability term, agreed to preserve the affordability of its units by adding a minimum of 5 years to the term of affordability -- to year 2011. Second, Claremont Gardens, a 120 unit Mitchell Lama building, whose term of affordability has expired, agreed to offset the harsh impact on existing tenants due to the deregulation. The compromise allows rents to remain affordable for existing tenants. Upon vacancy however, the apartments at Claremont Gardens may be offered to the public at market prices.

9. The shortage of affordable housing is not just a Village-wide need. The Village of Ossining is a member of the Westchester Urban County Consortium. In the Consortium Consolidated Plan 2004-2008, the Village of Ossining (along with 17 other municipalities) is reported to contain 20 areas qualifying for Neighborhood Revitalization as per HUD criteria, i.e.: areas where 51% of the population lived at or below 80% of median income, thereby demonstrating housing and other needs. A family of 4 persons, as per 2006 HUD Guidelines, would earn no more than \$77,200 to qualify at or below 80% of median income. The Plan also reported that the Rutgers University's Center for Urban Policy Research identified a current affordable housing need of 10,898 units by year 2015.

The Village Board of Trustees is therefore concerned about:

1. The diversity of people, which the Village is so proud of, will diminish. Providing a viable and growing mixed housing stock which includes the creation of new affordable homeownership and rental units and preserving the affordability of existing affordable units will strengthen the Village.
2. Children from the community are not able to afford to remain in the community as they enter the workforce and start their own families and older residents have to leave the community having no affordable housing alternatives as they retire from the workforce.
3. The economic revitalization of the downtown will require workers to staff commercial establishments. Providing affordable housing will attract new businesses and reduce staff absences.
4. The lack of affordable housing contributes to overcrowding and deteriorating of the Village's housing stock.

II. Objective

The purpose of this Housing Policy is to provide a framework within which the Village can address the affordable housing deficit and carry out its intent to foster the creation of new affordable units^[2] and the preservation of existing affordable housing to meet the housing needs of the community.

III. Strategies to Achieve Affordable Housing

1. It is the policy of the Village in fulfilling its goal to foster the creation and maintenance of affordable housing to utilize one or more of the following means, in appropriate cases, and after all investigation and legal procedures that may be necessary or appropriate have been made. It will be the policy of the Village to work cooperatively with developers – not-for-profit and for-profit – in accessing governmental and other programs, funds and other resources in seeing how a particular development can help meet the aims of this Policy.
2. The Village will require the inclusion of a reasonable supply of affordable housing in all new single-family subdivision applications and proposed multi-family developments, including substantial rehabilitation developments, or, in its discretion upon a showing of an undue burden of financial hardship to the project, permit a developer to create affordable housing units at another location in the Village or contribute to the Affordable Housing Fund.

3. The Village Board will direct every Board, including but not limited to the Planning Board as part of its Site Plan Approval review, and the Village Zoning Board as applications for special permits and area and use variances are considered, to consider as part of the review process, the need for affordable housing units, by requiring, the inclusion of affordable units (10% rounded up to the nearest whole number) in each such new development proposal of 6 units or more, or, in the alternative, recommend a developer to create affordable housing units at another location in the Village or pay a fee, as a payment in lieu of creating units when appropriate. The Village Board will have final approval authority on the affordable housing component of any development.
4. The Village will have a preference for on site development of affordable housing. If the developer is able to establish that it is not feasible to create affordable housing units on site, the Village's second preference would be to create affordable housing units at another location in the Village. However, a reasonable developer's fee may be negotiated when deemed appropriate, wherein a developer who, establishes to the satisfaction of the Village that it is not feasible to create affordable units on site or develop them at another location, may apply for and be granted an exemption which must be approved by and at the discretion of the Village Board wherein a developer may be permitted to pay a fee into a Affordable Housing Fund. Developers will be encouraged to accommodate a range of affordability up to 80% of the area median income as determined by HUD.
5. The fee schedule will address the costs attendant to building affordable units off-site (including land, construction and soft cost). In calibrating the fee schedule, the size, type and number of units will be considered (i.e.: square footage of units, floor area ratio, and number of bedrooms).
6. Any fees paid by a developer pursuant to this policy shall be paid into an Affordable Housing Fund. Possible uses for these funds shall be construed broadly to achieve affordable rental and ownership housing and may include, but not limited to, new housing construction, down payment assistance, site acquisition, housing preservation, demolition costs, infrastructure improvements, etc.
7. To the extent the law allows and funding sources permit, affordable units created on-site or through the Affordable Housing Fund shall be preferenced, if possible, to Village municipal employees, school district employees, and Village residents.
8. Eligibility for the affordable units shall be determined according to the annually published HUD Income Guidelines, based on Westchester County Area Median Income (see footnote #2 to paragraph 11).
9. Affordable units built onsite or at another location should be distributed in the same proportion as other one, two, three bedroom units, etc. The affordable units must be materially similar to non-affordable units so as not to distinguish them as a class from other units.
10. Affordable housing units will remain affordable "in perpetuity" to the extent the law allows.
11. The Village shall prepare Affordable Housing Rules and Regulations to govern the affordable housing units, i.e. the offering for sale or resale and the rental or re-rental to qualifying applicants, deed restrictions, as well as matters relating to compliance and annual reporting, income guidelines, preferences and any other matters relating to the administration of this Housing Policy.

IV) Application of Village Housing Policy

It is not the intention of the Village to apply this Housing Policy to developments, which have received final site plan approval or final subdivision approval prior to the date of the adoption of this Policy.

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^[1] The Westchester Residential Opportunity chart only references Ossining rents generally and does not break down by Village of Ossining vs. Town of Ossining rentals.

^[2] For the purposes of this Policy Statement “affordability” shall be defined as households which have earnings which do not exceed 80% of the Westchester County Area Median Income as published annually by HUD, (i.e. in 2006 a family of 1,2,3,4,5 & 6 persons could have household earnings of no more than \$54,080, \$61,760, \$69,520, \$77,200, \$83,360 or \$89,520 respectively to qualify financially for affordable housing. Some projects may be capped at a lower income eligibility level.

April 14, 2006