

**SUMMARY OF:
BOROUGH OF WOODCLIFF LAKE
MASTER PLAN VIRTUAL KICKOFF WORKSHOP
WEDNESDAY, MAY 12, 2021**

This document provides a summary of the proceedings and results of the Borough of Woodcliff Lake Master Plan Virtual Kickoff Workshop, which took place on May 12, 2021 via Zoom. The purpose of the workshop was to introduce the community to the new Master Plan development process, and to provide a public forum for residents to provide suggestions and feedback to help guide the development of the Master Plan. A video recording of the meeting can be viewed via this link: <https://youtu.be/UHXtuwG7R-k>

Proceedings of the Master Plan Virtual Kickoff Workshop

The workshop consisted of four main sections. All sections, excluding the Breakout Group Session, were recorded and available for public viewing. The Breakout Group Session was not recorded to provide residents a space to voice their visions, opinions, and concerns without reservation.

1. Introduction (Recorded)

- Remarks by Councilwoman Josephine Higgins, representing the Master Plan Subcommittee
- Presentation by Elizabeth Leheny, AICP, PP, from the planning consulting firm of Phillips Preiss Grygiel Leheny Hughes, LLC.

2. Breakout Group Session (Not Recorded)

- Participants were randomly assigned into one of 8 Breakout Groups and asked to discuss 5 questions.
- Each group was asked to elect one Chairperson to serve as the facilitator;
- Each group was also assigned 1-2 Master Plan Subcommittee members, who served as Recording Secretaries and took notes of the discussion in each group.

3. Report Back Session (Recorded)

- All participants were brought back from the Breakout Groups into one room.
- The Recording Secretary of each Breakout Group provided summaries of responses to each question of their respective groups.

4. Public Q&A (Recorded)

- The Master Plan Subcommittee and planning consultant team answered questions from residents.

Summary of resident responses during the Breakout Room Session

The following sections detail the responses to the 5 questions given by each Breakout Group, as recorded by the Recording Secretaries of each group and shared during the Report Back Session. A summary of the most common topics/issues mentioned by participants are also provided for each question. Note that the Breakout Groups were consecutively numbered 1-9, with #5 being an empty group; as such, no responses from “Group 5” were recorded.

1. *What image does Woodcliff Lake currently project? Has this image improved or deteriorated in the past 5-10 years?*

Most Commonly Mentioned Across Groups

- Upscale, affluent, small town, residential
- Rural, bucolic, green
- Great schools
- Broadway corridor is an eyesore
- Deterioration of traffic conditions and sidewalks
- Concerns on recent litigations and negative image they have brought

Group 1

- Upscale residential character – should be maintained.
- Image has not deteriorated
- Keep town feel
- More residential
- Some concerns on zoning – restrictions should be maintained, avoid too many variances – control look/feel
- Concerns on road improvements

Group 2

- Peaceful, rural, small town feel, charming character.
- Image has not deteriorated, but concerns on issues with recent litigations (e.g. Chabad) and news regarding the Borough. Feel that those negative images are not part of who we are as a Borough
- Want to be a warm and welcoming place for all and maintain it that way.

Group 3

- Very beautiful and green.
- Concerns on image of Broadway corridor:
 - A hodgepodge, no standards, mish mash.
 - Sidewalks all broken up, embarrassing and trip hazards
 - Complete eyesore. Should bring in viable businesses or clean it up somehow
 - 300k was earmarked for Broadway corridor beautification
- All white, wishes for more diversity.
- Trees along causeway look nice but are poorly maintained
- Abandoned gas station is an eyesore.

Group 4

- The image has both improved and deteriorated in different ways.
- Generally more prestigious than neighboring towns, because not overdeveloped with apartment complexes similar to Park Ridge and Montvale
- Broadway corridor is an eyesore in an otherwise prestigious and beautiful town
- In many ways, the lack of selective and appropriate development is holding the town back
- Concerns over traffic chokepoints, like the Reservoir
- Facilities and services available to residents are not commensurate with the increase in taxes over the last couple of decades.

Group 6

- Great schools
- Great park and rec
- Upscale community, affluent town
- Positive image
- A little snobby
- High taxes
- A little fractured
- Not as much a community as it has been in the past
- Concern on vacant properties and Broadway corridor
- Lacks a “center of town”
- Glad that there is no “center of town”
- Litigious community
- Quiet, peaceful place
- Galaxy Gardens project is moving too slow
- Concern on Borough spending

Group 7

- Positives:
 - Great town, small, good community
 - Green, open space
 - Town used to be run well
 - Bedroom town sense
 - Great school system
- Negatives:
 - Stuck in a rut and need to get projects going: Galaxy Gardens, Broadway, Lydecker House, Barn near train station, project around the Reservoir
 - Stumbling blocks are lack of funds and priority – do one at a time
- Improved/deteriorated:
 - Opinions divided between Breakout Group participants
 - Traffic has increased and grown even prior to development
 - Concerned with developers' desire to exploit Broadway – property values will be impacted
 - Disparity between the 2 business corridors: Chestnut Ridge and Broadway. Should have standard uniformity.

Group 8

- Upscale, affluent, bedroom community to Manhattan
- Wonderful family town with fabulous people that are very diverse
- Great school system
- Split between whether the image has deteriorated or improved: some thought there was no deterioration; others thought the in fighting and negative problems were causing image deterioration.
- Should concentrate on preserving trees and no overdevelopment.

Group 9

- Breakout Group residents were diverse in terms of time they have been in town and age groups.
- Like the fact that there is a diversity of age throughout the town
- Beauty of trees
- Good schools
- Concerned about Broadway, seems unimportant to the town, tons of attention should be given.
- Traffic has worsened, concerned about traffic coming down from Park Ridge
- Railroad area is a little scary
- Did not like the housing that went up on County Road behind Tice.
- Need to replace sidewalks because people actually enjoy walking.

2. *What are Woodcliff Lake's best assets?*

Most Commonly Mentioned Across Groups

- Existing character: upscale, residential, friendly, have sense of community
- Proximity and access to NYC
- Schools
- Services, particularly the Department of Public Works
- Recreational facilities and programs (pool, parks, athletic fields, Reservoir & Causeway)
- Trees
- Tice Center

Group 1

- Residential – upscale residential character
- Schools
- Close knit community
- Events/recreational facilities (pools, fields, etc)
- Friendly atmosphere
- Services are very good, in particular the DPW & Police
- Tax level/stability – esp for the property sizes.

Group 2

- Schools, especially good regional high school. But concerned about high school funding formula and tax burden to Woodcliff Lake residents.
- Town pool
- Parks & rec department and recreational programs
- Active volunteers (like Tri-Boro Ambulance Corps)

Group 3

- The people of the town, good neighbors, sense of community
- Schools
- Recreation (Wood Dale Park, camp, town pool, etc)
- Old growth trees
- A vibe of peacefulness and greenery.
- Good location, easy access, parks and hospitals all within easy drive.
- DPW is friendly and helpful, especially like the driveway pickup.
- Oktoberfest and community events implemented over last few years.
- Tice mall, Chestnut Ridge Corridor

Group 4

- Reservoir and Causeway
- The pool
- Train and bus routes into the City
- Tice
- Schools

- BMW and other corporate tenants
- Athletic fields along Werimus
- Ecology Center
- Town services (especially DPW, police and fire departments)
- Proximity to Wood Dale Park
- Low crime environment, responsiveness of police
- Quality and vigilance of our residents

Group 6

- Population of the town: talented people, upscale community
- Schools
- Police and fire departments
- Open space
- Little traffic congestion
- Friendly community
- Small town feel
- Great volunteerism
- The Causeway
- Our location, proximity to NYC
- Tice Center

Group 7

- School system and the fact that we have one school so everyone knows each other
- Recreational facilities
- People & community
- Green space - preserve it
- Reservoir is a wonderful asset and a park should be built overlooking it
- Pool
- Single family homes
- Quiet, safe streets
- Senior program and how active in the community the seniors are
- Friendliness
- Bucolic
- Park services
- Police force, DPW, and EMT
- Neighborhoods that people are out and about in.

Group 8

- Excellent school system, school is dedicated to youth and their development
- Good neighborhood vibe
- Nice mix of open space, residential and corporations
- Easy access to highways
- People have beautiful homes

- Nice tree canopy
- Ability to live and work in town and bring up a family
- High quality of life

Group 9

- Beauty of the trees
- That we are listening to the residents
- Wonderful school system
- Convenience of getting into the City. Trains and buses frequent, but need more parking at railroad station.
- Safe place to live – good police department
- All the open spaces along Werimus Road
- Excellent sports and fields, except the fields by Learning Lane.
- Pool and camps
- Sense of community
- Diversity – all ages get along well
- We are close to Demarest farms and wishes there could be a farm

3. *What are the most pressing issues Woodcliff Lake faces now? What might be the biggest challenges in the next 5-10 years?*

Most Commonly Mentioned Across Groups

- Overdevelopment and affordable housing obligations
- Improving Broadway Corridor and general streetscape beautification
- Vacant properties; attracting and retaining businesses and corporate tenants
- Improvements to sidewalks, roadways, and intersections
- Balancing population growth with impacts to schools and municipal services
- Taxes and the current school funding formula
- “Zoning by Variance”

Group 1

- COAH / Affordable Housing
- Possibly conduct a survey of properties to ensure single family residential (low-density)
- Commercial property – changes occurring, particularly along Chestnut Ridge corridor.

Group 2

- Making sure fields are all top quality and that female sports are given same priority.
- Making sure there is oversight over the Ecology Center
- Roads are in need of repair
- Taxes and the school funding formula
- Be as proactive as possible to address reasonable development that encourages Broadway corridor to be cleaned up, but not overdevelopment or too many apartments.

- Affordable housing obligations

Group 3

- Dangerous intersections: Werimus & Old Mill should be a 4-way stop, by train station, and the offset by Highview
- Overdevelopment.
- Concern on schools and class sizes:
 - Kids concerned about getting their own school for Woodcliff Lake
 - Schools can handle few more children
 - More people are moving into town with children
 - Need to stay under 20 students per class
 - Worried we would lose things like the stem lab, imagination lab, etc.
- Need more viable businesses
- Would be nice to have restaurants in town to not have to go to other towns
- Would like express train, takes almost an hour to get into the City.

Group 4

- Tax increases over last couple of decades have not been commensurate with services
- The beautification of Broadway corridor
- Predatory developers
- Zoning by variance
- Increases in traffic, both vehicular and pedestrian – may lead to safety issues
- Potential impacts to school systems and sewer systems in the future
- Tax impacts due to “inequitable” fee sharing arrangement with the regional high school

Group 6

- Overdevelopment, both residential and commercial.
- Overdevelopment in other nearby towns is also affecting Woodcliff Lake.
- Traffic on Chestnut Ridge Road
- Affordable housing
- Office buildings and lack of occupancy.
- School funding formula
- Maintaining ratables
- Town has spending issue
- Chabad litigation is still ongoing

Group 7

- Overdevelopment
- Do we want WCL to look like Hillsdale, Park Ridge, Montvale where they are building up over green space?
- No spot zoning
- Whatever happens to Broadway or Chestnut Ridge affects the whole town

- Threat of multi-family homes which are currently prohibited in every zone - will ruin character of the town, increase congestion, slow police response, wreck the school system and create higher taxes
- Why is there a new Master Plan being prepared right now? Thinks there is hidden agenda to this process, needlessly spending money, the current plan is compliant

Group 8

- Attract young families
- Take care of seniors, make sure that seniors can continue to afford to live in Woodcliff Lake once their children leave – possibly affordable rentals/condos for seniors.
- Improve public transportation
- Regional traffic study needed – possibly on Chestnut Ridge Road, Kinderkamack, Broadway
- Lighting by train station should be amended to alleviate traffic
- Maintain property values.
- Maintain corporate businesses and attract more to Woodcliff Lake
- Stop variances from changing zoning laws
- Master Plan must be updated

Group 9

- Overdevelopment
- Some houses were built too large for their area
- Tear down old DPW by railroads
- Sidewalks and lighting along Broadway
- Remove old gas station on Broadway
- Remove abandoned buildings
- Don't buy anymore property until we know how we are going to use it. Mayor + Council have fiduciary responsibility to go out for grants and know exactly why we need the property and what we will do with it.
- Work out better arrangement with the High School Board of Education.
- Learning Lane fields have severe drainage problems – girls' sports teams were not able to play.

4. *In the next 5-10 years, my vision for Woodcliff Lake is...? I want Woodcliff Lake to have...?*

Most Commonly Mentioned Across Groups

- Maintain existing character: upscale, mostly single-family residential, bucolic
- Library
- More walkability, especially along Broadway
- Revitalization of Broadway corridor
- More diverse mix of businesses, especially restaurants

- More community events
- Completion of projects like Causeway, Lydecker House, and Galaxy Gardens

Group 1

- Maintain upscale residential feel
- Recreational amenities important, want to see event/community functions to bring folks together
- Walkable area
- Broadway area upgraded – possibly a unified streetscape along the area (something similar was done in Northvale)
- Any apartments in Broadway area should be limited to 2 over 1 (2 stories of residential over 1 story of commercial) to control density.

Group 2

- More restaurants where people could come together, maybe in the Broadway area
- Maintain the current bucolic nature of the town
- Avoid too much development
- Proactive in protecting the town with the Master Plan from developers that may try to put in too much housing and too much development
- Improve Broadway.

Group 3

- Replace and maintain sidewalks on Broadway
- Maintain single family design of the east side
- More diversity
- Wish had sidewalk from Kinderkamack to Wood Dale Park
- Affordable housing is welcome but no other housing
- Library – wish we could share with another town/partner with another town and get into Bergen County Cooperative Library System
- Would like to have Borough leaders to respond to public comment and have them after the meeting, discuss the items and then have public comment
- Concerns about schools handling the growth that likely is coming - maybe build a new school.
- Zoning – keeping residential areas residential, and not having encroachment of bigger buildings, whether its multi-family housing or expansion of facilities, that will bring traffic, which will unleash further development.

Group 4

- Maintain small town charm
- Maintain majority single-family homes

- Selectively and appropriately develop certain areas that could improve the town's overall value
- Make Woodcliff Lake more of a "walking town" – allowing for sidewalks or pathways in certain high traffic areas like thoroughfares to the parks, the pool, and fields.
- Something needs to be done at the intersection of Werimus & Old Mill – a very dangerous intersection
- Attract and retain prestigious, high tax paying corporate tenants
- Strong desire for the town to have a library

Group 6

- Vacant properties be taken care of
- Stabilize taxes and generate revenue
- Betterment of the Lydecker House
- Expanding use of the Tice Center for different uses and classes
- Establishment/further development of a Historical Society
- Improvements to Galaxy Gardens
- Smart development
- More people involved in government

Group 7

- Remain a peaceful, bucolic town
- More cultural and community events like the Cherry Blossom Festival
- Useable space near the Reservoir
- Be able to walk on Broadway, and have sidewalks in other parts of town.
- No spot zoning
- Finish projects like Galaxy Gardens, Reservoir walkway, Lydecker House
- Left off of the Parkway, especially at commuting hours
- Library
- More streetscape beautification.

Group 8

- Greater transparency to changes in the community, reduce special interests and in-fighting
- Maintain a strong and happy community
- Maintain high safety level – very valuable to community, police do a great job
- A mix of businesses, residential homes, and green spaces
- Maintain bucolic community, forest levels, remain a "green community"
- Maintain and support good services, police, DPW
- Improve our reputation – we are not racist, we are an open, gentle, and loving community.
- Business community should grow and be strong, a more diverse business mix.

- Public transportation should be improved

Group 9

- Open the Lydecker House for the community for events, groups, art, etc.
- A toddler group and other groups where residents with children can meet
- Retain tree lined residential areas
- Our own library or have one with another town. Possibly approach the Board of Education and allow the community to use their library when children are out of school.
- Causeway will be our gateway and should have nice sidewalks and lighting that match up with Broadway.
- Indoor areas at schools for sports during the winter, both for children and adults
- Seniors to continue to have breakfast made by our police at the Tice Center.
- More town get-togethers like Oktoberfest.
- Make Broadway “a real center of town.”

5. *Any additional topics that you would like to bring to the Borough’s attention?*

Most Commonly Mentioned Across Groups

- Affordable senior housing to enable senior to age in place in the community
- Future prospects of losing/attracting office/corporate tenants and impacts to ratables
- Transparency and participation in government

Group 1

- Possibly townhomes in right locations
- Middle of town should stay residential (single family)
- Not pricing out seniors so that they can stay

Group 2

- Improve hours of the Ecology Center

Group 3

- Feels there are back room deals, doesn’t trust town officials and professionals because of connections between the town and some developers/owners.
- More places for kids, possible rec center
- Concerns with runoffs, especially with global warming.
- Trees that are growing into or over the powerlines, need a plan to cut back those branches, or stop planting trees right under those powerlines.
- West Hill has a high water table, has issue growing grass - “root rot”
- Town website is horrible, difficult to navigate.

Group 4

- Underutilization of the Reservoir, including the Barn.

- How to better use the Lydecker House.
- Deer population and the need for fencing, which takes away from small town charm
- Forecasting on corporate tenants, and how we plan around potentially losing businesses/corporate tenants in the future
- How we incentivize our current corporate tenants to stay and how we incentivize tenants to come.

Group 6

- More people in the community should be involved in government. It's always the same people involved in everything.

Group 7

- Set standard for maximum density through the town - no high density
- How to get tax revenue back when we lose it, especially with all the empty buildings and spaces (Eisai, Tice, etc). How to court people?
- Uncertain future of BMW
- Own zone for office/research
- Road maintenance – shouldn't get to a really bad point before it gets fixed; account ofr weather erosion; stop patching, take an overall look at streets and needs of the town.
- Change the zoning regulations for in- ground pools – 20 feet from property line is unfair to houses on smaller lots and needs to be re-examined

Group 8

- Development and how it is being handled is crucial.
- Structure and school system best for community
- Families of all ages want to live here
- Seniors, empty nesters can still afford to live here
- Demand for variances should be stopped and litigation curtailed.
- Keep population at a level that does not drain our services and ensure that Borough facilities can operate efficiently.
- DPW is fantastic – keep it that way.

Group 9

- Continue great recycling program
- Get more grants
- HIP bus service to City that takes reservations, has wifi, comfortable
- Do things with properties we have already purchased
- Fix up the Lydecker House, use it for lessons, clubs, groups, community activities, etc.
- "First friends" program for newcomers to town, meet and make new friends in town, get acquainted with town.
- Housing for seniors should be a priority.