



New Castle Historical Society ♦ PO Box 55 ♦ 100 King Street, Chappaqua, NY 10514
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February 22, 2021

Town of New Castle
200 South Greeley Avenue
Chappaqua, NY 10514

Dear Town of New Castle Town Board Members:

It must be stressed that the New Castle Historical Society takes no position either in favor of or against the proposed revision of the Chappaqua zoning code as a whole. Nonetheless, the Society, in keeping with its mission, does wish to comment on several aspects of the proposal, our interest arising not only from the potential effects that the change would have on our property, but also from our special perspective as recorders and preservers of the community's history and traditions. We therefore offer the following for consideration:

Traditionally, Chappaqua has always been a modest, low-rise village with clear vistas from the downtown streets to the surrounding hills, and for almost a century its most prominent visual feature has been the Robert E. Bell school. Most stores and other businesses have never risen more than three stories high, and buildings in the village are of varying styles almost always constructed in whatever styles were popular at the time.

At present, the proposed form-based code contains no mention of historically significant sites within the zoned districts. We encourage that such sites be given special consideration whenever they are planned for alteration or demolition, in accordance with the current landmark preservation law. There are now three town landmarks within these districts: the Horace Greeley House, the railroad station and its plaza, and the Church of St. Mary the Virgin. In addition, there are a few sites that could be considered potential landmarks. They include:

- The New Castle Community Center, formerly the Chappaqua Library, built in 1931 and enlarged in 1957
- The former Chappaqua firehouse, built in 1931
- The corner building at 39 King Street and Greeley Avenue, constructed about 1925, which was the first New Castle Town Hall
- The building containing the Opportunity Shop and apartments at 61 North Greeley

Avenue, a former store typical of the 19th century

- The Scattered Books store at 29 King Street, which was originally the home of Amos Tompkins and his descendants and is now the last intact remnant of the old wooden Chappaqua
- 1 King Street, a Tudor Revival building, that exemplifies Chappaqua's exuberant growth in the 1920's

Preservation of such sites should be encouraged, even if it cannot be mandated. They serve a valuable function by connecting the past to the present and providing historical context to the village.

The map of the proposed zoning districts contains properties that because of deed restrictions, long tradition, or other considerations will almost certainly never be built upon. They include:

- The middle school playing fields
- The Town ball field, which not only provides for many community recreational activities but also serves as an extension to the school playing fields
- The railroad station and its adjoining plaza
- The front yard of the Church of St. Mary the Virgin

To clarify any discussion of the potential impact of form-based development on these properties, we encourage they be clearly identified, by color coding or the like, on the proposed map.

While we would welcome more people living or visiting in the proximity of our museum, we are concerned that higher density development could have very negative consequences for the Society with respect to parking. In the immediate neighborhood of our headquarters, there are only enough parking places, on site and on the street, to meet day-to-day needs. Whenever we schedule a special event, we must be careful to schedule it in non-business hours. If the firehouse next door, or any other neighboring structure were to be replaced by a taller, mixed-use building, the competition for parking would become even more problematic.

Sincerely,

New Castle Historical Society Board of Trustees