

Section II Inventory and Analysis

General Information

The Hudson River, "one of the most beautiful rivers in the world," forms the western boundary of the Village of Ossining. Richly endowed in its setting, Ossining is located 31 miles north of New York City on the rolling hills which characterize the eastern shore of the Hudson Valley. The Village has three miles of riverfront land with some of the most spectacular views in all of the Hudson's 315 mile length: the Palisades lie on the western shore; the Manhattan skyline is to the south; and Croton Point is upriver. However, the waterfront area has been long neglected and most of Ossining's residents have had little opportunity to enjoy the pleasures which the river has to offer. Recently, attempts have been made to provide waterfront park land; however, the riverfront is still underutilized as a people resource.

When the railroad came through Ossining, in 1849, it separated the community from the river, both physically and economically. The Hudson was no longer quite as accessible nor would it ever again play as big a role in the transportation of goods and people between Ossining and the communities to its north and south. The railroad was largely constructed on fill placed along the water's edge and only in a few places is there enough land west of the tracks for buildings or for recreational uses. Within the Village of Ossining, there is a 0.6 mile stretch of land west of the railroad tracks which can be reached via two vehicular bridges. This land contains the Louis Engel Waterfront Park, some private marinas and small industries. This is the only land west of the railroad tracks within the Village of Ossining which is easily and safely accessible to the public. The other large parcel of land directly on the water is utilized by the Tappan Facility which is part of Sing Sing Prison. The release of this land by the State would give the Village the opportunity for major waterfront development.

The only other potentially usable land within the Village of Ossining lying west of the tracks is 1½ acres of parkland known as Sparta Dock. This land is inaccessible except by climbing over the railroad tracks. A bend in the tracks just south of Sparta combined with the live third rail makes this extremely dangerous. East of the railroad tracks the land rises quite steeply up to Route 9. The Village's oldest neighborhoods and its historic downtown shopping area lie here along with a few parcels available for development.

The land uses in the Village are much more mixed than in the surrounding Town of Ossining which is primarily residential (see [Map 2](#)). In the Village there are single-family, two-family and multi-family dwellings along with commercial and industrial uses. Manufacturing is almost entirely confined to the western portion of the Village along the riverfront and railroad tracks. Commercial land use consists mainly of retail and neighborhood oriented service establishments along portions of Route 9, Main Street and Spring Street. The central business district of the Village is located on Main Street and Spring Street, with additional commercial development along Broad Avenue. Although there are still a few undeveloped and underutilized parcels between Route 9 and the Hudson River, this is basically a built-up area. There are no commercial fishing facilities or agricultural lands.

Air quality appears to be good in Ossining; however, there is no local monitoring. Ossining is part of the New York Metropolitan Region which has attained acceptable levels of air quality regarding all pollutants except photo-chemical oxidants. Parts of the region have unacceptable levels of carbon monoxide and total suspended particulates.

Route 9, which forms the eastern boundary of the Ossining Waterfront Area, is a major north-south arterial and has been undergoing improvements. This state road connects with the New York State Thruway via the Tappan Zee and Beacon- Newburgh Bridges and was nominated for designation as a Scenic Road by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. Revolutionary Road in Sparta was also nominated; however, neither of these roads was so designated. The area also contains two railroad stations with a third station, the Croton-Harmon, just to the north. All of the Ossining Waterfront Area has public water service and all but the Beach Road area in the northern waterfront is served by public sewers. A new county-owned secondary sewage treatment plant, next to the Tappan Facility of Sing Sing Prison, was completed in 1983 with sufficient capacity to handle Ossining's projected needs. Certain terrain conditions make the installation of sewer lines infeasible in areas of low density; however, new development would not be limited anywhere within the waterfront area due to the lack of sewer service.

Over the past fifteen years, a great deal of effort and money has been devoted to improvements to the Village's infrastructure. New sewers have been laid and a schedule of road rebuilding as well as repaving has been set up. These infrastructure improvements have been especially obvious in the Village's historic downtown section where decorative sidewalks and lighting along with plantings have been included in the infrastructure rebuilding. During 1985, the telephone company brought the latest state-of-the-art equipment into an addition which they built into their Main Street facility. Their improvements encouraged the redevelopment of vacant land within the Village's Central Business District. Money and effort has also gone into improving the Village's water system. The water filtration plant was recently enlarged and upgraded and is fed by New York City's Croton Reservoir and the Indian Brook Reservoir. The Village has also instituted back-washing the filters in the water filtration plant at the Indian Brook Reservoir as a means of reducing the daily amount of water that flows into the County Wastewater Treatment Facility.

Ossining is built on hills and in no place is this more obvious than in the waterfront area. Only west of the railroad tracks and in the Water Street area of the Village is there flat land and this is prone to flooding. East of the railroad are steep slopes and occasional deep ravines. The deepest of the ravines was cut by the Sing Sing Kill as it flowed west to the Hudson River. This stream is classified as "D" as is Sparta Brook, Ossining's only other classified stream. This classification indicates that they are not clean enough for recreation. However, these streams are being considered for upgrading to "C" based on a proposed generic upgrading of all perennial streams to reflect the fact that nearly all are capable of sustaining at least some fish life. Both streams empty into the Hudson River which is classified as "B" which means that it is suitable for swimming and other water related activities but not pure enough for drinking. The steep slopes do at times cause stormwater run-off problems but this situation has, for many years, been handled by storm sewers with only occasional overflow problems. More recently, new developments have been required to install stormwater retention and/or detention best management practices so that storm water will percolate into the soil rather than cause run-off problems. There were serious erosion problems on the steep embankment

between Hunter Street and Barlow Lane in the Village which led to a land-slide in 1984. Since then, new storm sewers have been laid and sheet pilings installed. Other embankments throughout the Village appear to be stable; however, if disturbed by construction, precautions will have to be taken.

The Hudson River represents one of the most dynamic, viable, and resource-rich estuaries found in the Northeast. Off Ossining's shores is the Croton River and Bay habitat which has been designated by the State Coastal Management Program as a Coastal Fish and Wildlife Habitat of Statewide Significance. This habitat is one of the largest shallow bay areas in the lower Hudson River that is sheltered from strong river currents and, to some extent, from prevailing winds. Consequently, the area provides favorable habitat for anadromous fish species, such as blueback herring, and also for resident warm water species, such as largemouth bass. The river and bay are very popular for recreational fishing. (See Appendix A for the full description of the habitat.) Just outside Ossining's northern village boundary, which extends to the center of the Hudson River, is the Harverstraw Bay Significant Coastal Fish and Wildlife Habitat. Because the Hudson is tidal, Ossining's shoreline depths, of 2-9 feet, vary with time. The same action affects the 30-40 foot deep center channel. Average tides are 3.1 feet but can be as much as 5 feet during the spring and autumnal equinoxes. In the event of extreme flood conditions associated with 100 year storms, the river rises 7.8 feet above its mean high water mark flooding most of the downtown waterfront west of the railroad tracks.

The Ossining shoreline is in a constant state of change. Much of the land west of the railroad tracks is fill-in placed there during the days when Ossining was a busy shipping area with many docks and warehouses along the riverfront. This fill erodes rapidly under the action of the severe northwest winds common to the region. However, some areas are being built up with silt and sand carried down by the Sing Sing Kill and the Croton River. In addition, there is a unique current situation in the waters adjacent to the downtown waterfront area. This is due to cross currents off Croton Point and can make certain boating activities difficult unless the landing and docking areas are well protected and supervised.

Within the waterfront area, the Village has two resources which have played a unique role in the development of New York State: the Old Croton Aqueduct and Sing Sing Prison. Together they led to the selection of Ossining as one of eighteen State Heritage Areas, formerly known as Urban Cultural Parks (UCPs). With the help of the State, they are being groomed to attract visitors, shoppers and economic development to Ossining.

As part of the State Heritage Area program, the right-of-way of the aqueduct is being improved and the manmade conduit, which carried the vitally needed water from the Croton River into New York City, has been opened for tours. This first American aqueduct enabled New York to grow and provided employment for thousands of early nineteenth century emigrants. In 1825, over 10 years before the aqueduct came through Ossining, Sing Sing Prison came into being. One hundred prisoners were brought in by barge and put to work constructing their own cell block out of stone quarried on the site. This cell block still remains, although current prisoners are housed in quarters constructed during the first half of the twentieth century.

To the south of Sing Sing is the locally designated Sparta Historical and Architectural Design (HADD) District. Also, several prehistoric and historic archeological sites, designated as sensitive

on the New York State Archeological Site Location Map, are scattered throughout the waterfront area.

Major Issues

The major issues confronting the Village of Ossining Waterfront area are access, station parking, appropriate redevelopment, and the protection of the land from erosion.

1. **Public Access:** The railroad divides the rest of the Village from the river. When the railroad was first built, there were on-grade crossings. As time went on and railroad traffic increased, these on-grade crossings were closed and the requirements for vehicular and pedestrian crossings became harder and more expensive to meet. The Village feels that the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) has an obligation to provide alternate access to riverfront lands isolated by the railroad tracks.

Access to the river is further limited in the Village by the location of Sing Sing Prison on approximately 55 acres of prime waterfront land. Twenty of these acres are west of the tracks, right on the river. Thus, access to the Village's largest piece of shoreline land is totally denied to the general public. The Village of Ossining feels that this land should be released by the State for appropriate redevelopment.

2. **Railroad Station Parking and Circulation to and from the Railroad Station:** Increased housing construction in northern Westchester County has overcrowded the railroad parking lots and put a burden on commuters, railroad station communities and, in some cases, the waterfront. Parking for the Ossining Railroad Station has overflowed the boundaries of the parking lots and threatens the downtown waterfront while still not providing as many spaces as needed by commuters. Local communities are not in a position to solve the commuter parking problem; it must be addressed on a regional basis, and redevelopment emphasis should be on transit oriented development. Furthermore, vehicular circulation to and from the train station is narrow and should be simplified.
3. **Redevelopment:** Much of the Village of Ossining's waterfront was developed in the early days of the community when the river was the area's main transportation corridor. When the railroad came through, it became the primary carrier of goods and people and further encouraged the development of industry and warehousing along the river. Now that trucks are the main carriers of most products, most industrial and commercial uses, except those which are truly dependent on a waterfront location, no longer need to be sited there.

In recent years, people have developed a greater awareness and appreciation of the river giving added financial value to waterfront lands. This is bringing development and redevelopment to lands along the river or with views of the river. It is important

that this new development be appropriate to its site, not interfere with others' enjoyment of the river, and preserve the existing water- dependent uses.

In 1990, a new zoning map and zoning law were adopted to better guide the redevelopment of the waterfront. A mixed use waterfront development zone was developed to protect existing businesses while encouraging gradual upgrading of the area. In 2009 the Village of Ossining developed new waterfront districts that address the inadequacies in the 1990 waterfront zoning, including reexamination of bulk standards for height and setbacks, adding provisions for permitted uses and view preservation, encouraging public access, RiverWalk, open space, shoreline and streambank stabilization, waterfront recreation, affordable housing and historic preservation.

4. **Protection from Erosion:** Since the Village has very little land between the railroad tracks and the river, and since much of this land is fill-in, erosion control is very important. The Louis Engel and Sparta Dock parks are positioned to be in special danger if not monitored and maintained. Measures were taken at the Louis Engel Park to assure its continued existence.

Waterfront Areas

Ossining was first settled due to its location on the river, and it is hoped that the river will play an important role in its revitalization. [Map 3](#) shows the Village's public park lands and recreational facilities.

On the following pages, the different areas of Ossining's waterfront will be described in greater detail. [Map 4](#) shows the location of these areas.

A. Unincorporated Town of Ossining Waterfront

Not included in LWRP

B. Northern Waterfront

The northern waterfront is an expansive area of open spaces and wooded hills, running from the Town/Village boundary line south to the Edward M. Wheeler Crawbuckie Nature Preserve Area, and from the Hudson River east to Route 9 (see [Map 5](#)). All the land is east of the railroad tracks, and many of the holdings are large parcels ranging from 10 to 57 acres. All of the properties in this area are easily reachable from Route 9 and within close proximity to the Croton-Harmon Railroad Station and the junction of Routes 9 and 9A. As a result, this is one of the most accessible regions of Ossining from outside the Village.

The northernmost parcel consists of a cluster development called Mystic Pointe that was developed in the 1990's. The other large parcel within this section of waterfront is owned by the Catholic Church. The Dominican Sisters of Hope have their buildings on the western portion while the remainder of the 57 acres is beautiful open space. This land could become available for development

in the future. BASF, formerly the Mearl Corporation, land is approximately 21 acres and is a very lovely section with views of the river and easy walking through wooded areas and across the broad lawn of the BASF property. Kane House, a beautiful, two story stone house built in 1843 and used by Mearl for offices is also located on this property.

The northern parcels have either recently been rezoned to the low-density (Conservation Development District (CDD) or are still zoned PRD and OR. The northernmost parcels run from the Town/Village boundary line south to Snowden Avenue. The western boundary is the Hudson River and the eastern boundary is at varying points Route 9, the Croton Aqueduct Trail, and Snowden Avenue. The recent developments in this area have taken advantage of the river views. A development of luxury condominiums known as Eagle Bay was completed in the mid-1980. Other recent development on the northern waterfront has been for private conference centers, senior facilities, and a small corporate headquarters.

The CDD promotes the following for this district:

- Requires open space as part of the development and smaller multiple story buildings, in order to make cluster development possible.
- Encourages uses such as office, conference centers, hotels, or low density residential uses.
- Preserves the area's unique, natural environmental features by:
 - not allowing wetlands to be considered developable land;
 - minimizing development on steep slopes, and
 - having a lower permitted density (up to 8 dwelling units per acre with incentives) than the rest of the waterfront districts.

The water, sewer and other services needed for further development within the northern waterfront are in place along Route 9 and will be accessible to developers. Many parts of this area contain steep slopes down to the railroad tracks with occasional gullies and intermittent streams. Care would have to be taken during construction to prevent erosion, and holding basins would be necessary in any fairly dense development.

The Old Croton Aqueduct runs through this section of the waterfront in a north-south direction. The right-of-way of the Old Croton Aqueduct is on the National Register of Historic Places and is under the protection of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP). Any plans to develop the Dominican Sisters property would be reviewed by the Taconic State Park Commission to insure that the developer provides protection for the aqueduct against blasting, the movement of heavy equipment, or other construction activities that might be injurious. Any serious problems noted by the Commission would be referred to the OPRHP central office and handled at that level.

The Croton-Harmon Railroad Station is located about one mile north of this section, while the Ossining Station is two miles to the south. (Frequent train service is available into Manhattan and to upstate New York from Croton-Harmon, and it would tend to be the preferred station to serve this area.) There is also bus service along Route 9.

The northern waterfront with its good access, open spaces and views of the river has been the scene of much change during the past fifteen years. The future promises a continuation of this pattern with housing consuming a large portion of the vacant parcels or underdeveloped parcels with the possibility of office and commercial uses along the Route 9 corridor.

C. Edward M. Wheeler Crawbuckie Nature Preserve Area

The Edward M. Wheeler Crawbuckie Nature Preserve Area (see [Map 6](#)) is a magnificent and unique 12-acre parcel of dedicated passive park land located at the end of Beach Road on the Hudson River side of the roadway. In 2006 the Village expanded the park with (respectively): (1) a 12-acre NYS Department of Transportation property, and (2) a 15-acre parcel, 95 percent of which is underwater and the remainder consists of a small piece of sandy land above the high-water mark. The water off shore in this area is very shallow due to silt deposited by the Croton River, but is an important area for recreational fishing from boats due to its proximity to the Croton River, which has been designated as a Fish and Wildlife Habitat of Statewide Significance. Railroad tracks, running along the westerly portion of the property, prevent direct access to the waterfront in the Edward M. Wheeler Crawbuckie Nature Preserve Area. Immediately to the east of the railroad is a marsh area, and east of the marsh is a steeply sloped, heavily wooded area which extends as far as Beach Road. The Edward M. Wheeler Crawbuckie Nature Preserve Area is located at the bottom of Beach Road and can be reached on foot by way of the Old Croton Aqueduct Trail or by car via Route 9. There is no vehicular or pedestrian crossing along this section of the railroad tracks and the western portion of the Edward M. Wheeler Crawbuckie Nature Preserve Area gets virtually no use.

Although the Edward M. Wheeler Crawbuckie Nature Preserve Area contains no official freshwater wetlands, immediately to the east of the railroad tracks is a 2 acre marsh area. East of the marsh, the land becomes steeply sloped and heavily wooded up to Beach Road. This section contains a number of unique trees and shrubs, making it of special interest to both naturalists and casual hikers. In addition, the lower portion has a special "micro-climate" and enjoys slightly more moderate weather than is experienced elsewhere in Westchester County, with plants flowering and trees coming into leaf 2-3 weeks ahead of similar species in the surrounding areas. There are two nature trails running through the park however, they are occasionally blocked by large branches or tree trunks and also suffer, in certain places, from wash outs.

Although the Edward M. Wheeler Crawbuckie Nature Preserve Area is the largest of the Village-owned waterfront properties, it is little used and many Ossining residents are unaware of its existence. Current plans of the Village incorporate this area into the Westchester County RiverWalk trailway. The nature area is located at the bottom of Beach Road and can be reached on foot by way of the Old Croton Aqueduct Trail or by car via Route 9. However, Beach Road is poorly delineated at its intersection with Route 9 and is flanked by a gas station and an automobile and motorcycle dealership which tend to obscure the entrance way, making the nature area difficult to locate. A person walking through the Edward M. Wheeler Crawbuckie Nature Preserve Area quickly forgets its proximity to development and to Route 9 and feels the peace and tranquility of the woods while enjoying occasional glimpses of the river through the trees. The more physical aspects of the area needs to be preserved if the other wooded areas to the north of the Edward M. Wheeler Crawbuckie Nature Preserve Area become developed. The Edward M. Wheeler Crawbuckie Nature Preserve

Area is to a large extent protected to the north and south by steep slopes which rise up from the nature area. To the north, the slope rises to a flat plateau of Dominican Sisters land.

It must be kept in mind that this is a fragile area located at the bottom of a quiet residential street. Although more regular maintenance is needed to keep the trails passable and improved marking of the unique trees and shrubs would increase the area's educational value, the general feeling is that its use should remain low and that it should be preserved as a quiet retreat for Ossining residents.

D. The Snowden Area

Estates, small private homes, retail businesses, subsidized housing, and open space co-exist on this multi-use section of the Ossining waterfront which runs from just south of Beach Road down to the Double Arch and Ossining's historic shopping area (see [Map 7](#)). There is virtually no land west of the tracks and that to the east is wooded and extremely hilly with deep gullies running through it.

Although the Snowden Area as a whole contains many uses, most sections have a clearly defined character. The low lying area just east of the railroad tracks is primarily industrial, the properties by Route 9 are largely business, while the space in between is residential. A high ridge running between the industrial and residential areas forms an almost perfect buffer between the two of them and causes all the industrial enterprises to rely solely on Water Street for their access, while the rest of the area is accessible from Route 9 or from Snowden Avenue, a residential thoroughfare with a community park at its southernmost end. There are no freshwater wetlands in this section of the waterfront. Density of development is low in the northern portion. There are approximately 19 contiguous acres of vacant land available for development. The privately owned undeveloped properties of Snowden area will be fairly difficult to develop due to the steep grades; however, the land could be considered for housing located on the upper portions near Snowden Avenue and portions of land near the Edward M. Wheeler Crawbuckie Nature Preserve Area should be left in its natural state and connected through a pathway to the nature area. Special care should still be taken in the review of any development plans involving these properties. The land is mostly zoned CDD which allows residential development with densities including incentives up to 8 units per acre.

The Vireum property at the intersection of Snowden Avenue and Water Street was developed as condominiums. The attractive, 1870 mansard roofed Vireum School building has been rehabilitated into twelve units. Zoning on this property remains multi-family.

Although there is an industrial area along the railroad tracks, it is low-lying and separated from the residential area by a ridge which makes it all but invisible. Some of the industrial buildings in this area have historic significance. This is especially true of those which remain from the Brandreth Pill Factory Complex on the North Water Street Extension. At one time the pill factory used a small stream running through the site for power, and most of the factories used the river and later the railroad for transportation. The Brandreth industrial buildings are on the National Register and are overlooked by two historic homes located on large parcels of land which are owned by descendants of the Brandreth family. There is currently a redevelopment proposal for the Brandreth Pill Factory.

The southern portion of the Snowden Area primarily contains older homes on small pieces of land. Quite a bit of rehabilitation work has been done here with both private and public money and, although there are still a number of buildings in need of work, there has been a definite improvement in the appearance of this neighborhood.

The Old Croton Aqueduct runs through this section of the waterfront in a north-south direction. As mentioned in Section B, this aqueduct land is under the protection of the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and this agency will become involved once development plans are formulated. A number of interesting older buildings are located near the aqueduct further south, but none of them are listed on the National Register. Probably the most significant are the Victoria Home for the Aged, which may have been the original estate in the area, and the North Side Firehouse, a WPA project built in the Spanish style with a tile roof. A Historic Preservation Study, conducted in 1974, classified the Victoria Home, "McAlpin House", as a Village landmark and did not consider it for potential National Register listing. The North Side Firehouse was not included in this study.

This is the most varied of the waterfront areas. It is also undergoing change and it is likely that it will be totally built up within the next five years with housing filling the vacant and underutilized parcels described above. It is also possible that the immediate waterfront might undergo change. Although the land along the railroad tracks will probably remain industrial for a while to come, a drastic upgrading is possible with future developers spanning the tracks to take advantage of river views. The future might also see a pedestrian linkup between the Edward M. Wheeler Crawbuckie Nature Preserve Area and the waterfront parks to the south via a RiverWalk pathway that would be located along the waterfront when possible.

E. The "Crescent"

The "Crescent" is the Village of Ossining's historic downtown shopping area, so called due to the curve Main Street makes as it approaches Route 9 (see [Map 8](#)). This area has been the location of the bulk of the Village's Urban Renewal and Community Development activity. The roads have been rebuilt, including decorative sidewalks and planters, along with new water mains and sewer drains. Many of the buildings have had their facades revitalized with public funds, linear parks have been built, and new businesses have moved into the area.

Urban Renewal in the 1970s led to the demolition of buildings along the south side of Main Street at the intersection with Spring Street. The Post Office and accompanying parking lot were added on a portion of one renewal site. There are a few Village owned parcels, zoned VC (Village Center), that remain to be developed on Main Street in the downtown area. They are a Market Square (Municipal Lot 6) located on the southeast corner of Main and Spring, which is used for the seasonal farmer's market and parking, a parcel located on the southwest corner known as Municipal Lot 5 that is used for parking, and the "We Can Do It" site at 147-155 Main Street (Municipal Lot 16) former site of a fire that occurred in 1995 and destroyed the building located there. Creating a village green on a portion of the Village owned parking lot at the southwest corner of Main and Spring Streets would keep open the views of the outstandingly historic north side of the Crescent. It would also serve as the place for the popular farmer's market in the spring, summer and fall. Development of infill

buildings along the Market Square lot and along Spring Street could take place. All infill should have commercial/retail on the ground floor and residential/office uses above. This infill development will fill in the gap in the streetscapes along Main Street. The farmers' market should be moved to the Village Green site, offering synergistic benefits to both uses.

Portions of the currently vacant land between State and Spring Streets south of St. Paul's Place are also used as parking. Two existing historic structures are located in the area: the Calvary Baptist Church and its Annex, both of which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and W.A. Slater's survey office on State Street, originally the library for the Mt. Pleasant Military Academy which had occupied this site until the early 1900's.

This section of Ossining's waterfront contains many historically significant structures. The Old Croton Aqueduct plays an important role in this area and most of its right-of-way has been transformed into a linear park. Just north of the Crescent, the aqueduct is carried over the deep gorge of the Sing Sing Kill on a magnificent bridge. In crossing over Broadway, this aqueduct bridge forms a double arch with the Broadway Bridge, giving Ossining its beloved symbol. An overlook has been constructed to give views of these arches (see [Map 9](#)). At the north end of the aqueduct bridge stands a weir chamber which has been renovated to accommodate tour groups and provide access to the conduit of the aqueduct; to enable people to actually enter the manmade pipe which was constructed 150 years ago to carry fresh water from the Croton River to the thirsty people of New York City (see [Maps 10](#) and [11](#)). In addition, the area around the weir chamber has been reconstructed. This National Register structure is one of two primary resources in Ossining's Heritage Area, part of a statewide system designed to preserve New York's unique historic resources and use them not only as educational and recreational tools, but also to attract visitors and economic development to their communities. Ossining's other primary resource is Sing Sing Prison which will be described in a later section. A Heritage Area Visitor Center has been constructed in a portion of the Ossining Community Center at 95 Broadway.

The Crescent commercial area itself, with its nineteenth century buildings has been listed on the National Register as an historic district.

Two churches in this section of waterfront are on the National Register; the First Baptist Church, a High Victorian Gothic brick structure dedicated in 1874 and located at Church Street and Route 9, and the Calvary Baptist Church, a Gothic Revival Church on St. Paul's Place designed by Calvin Pollard and built of locally mined Sing Sing marble. There are many other interesting structures including the Ossining Bank for Savings at Main and Route 9, built in 1908 in the Beaux Arts style with probably the best executed cartouches in Westchester County. A less attractive, but more historic building is the Olive Opera House at Central and Brandreth Streets which was built in 1865 and was the site of many Ossining functions.

The deep gorge of the Sing Sing Kill (also known as Kill Brook) runs in a westerly direction through this section of the waterfront. It crosses under Route 9, runs to the north of the Community Center and pool complex, runs under the Double Arch where a spillway from the conduit enters it, runs behind privately owned structures where the banks are frequently littered with debris, enters Village owned land by the former Department of Public Works yard, runs between buildings by the railroad tracks and finally enters the Hudson River where it has been forming a small delta. This usually

shallow stream has a "D" classification and it is doubtful that it will ever be eligible for a higher rating although past sewer work in the Village has eliminated contamination from this source. The Kill Brook is currently not utilized by the general public because it is physically inaccessible and in need of streambank stabilization. If it were made physically accessible through the development of a trail, and if it were cleaned up in order to enhance its appearance, it could serve well as a nature trail linkage between the Main Street area and the waterfront. Such an ambitious project is not likely to take place until all of the existing retail/commercial area is built up and occupied.

Steep hills lead from the Crescent business area down to the railroad tracks where a new station parking lot was constructed in the early 1980's; however, the demand for parking now exceeds the number of spaces available. Much of the area by the tracks is industrial, although some of it is owned by the Village and is the former location of the Department of Public Works and the Building Department. The area is low-lying and is in a flood zone.

The area has recently been rezoned for Planned Waterfront Subdistrict PW-b. This area includes the Ossining Metro-North Station which includes stops on the Bee-Line bus service and Ossining-Haverstraw ferry, the Hudson Wire Building and former Department of Public Works, Metallized Carbon and the Sing Sing Kill. Steep hills lead from the Crescent business area down to the railroad tracks. The new zoning provides the opportunity to take advantage of its location adjacent to the train station by increasing densities and decreasing parking requirements.

This is the first part of Ossining to be seen by people arriving by train. The improved parking lot helps Ossining's image and gradual improvements to the buildings have taken place. However, the area could benefit from additional facade and streetscape improvements such as those which have taken place on upper Main Street. Long range plans call for the street improvements along upper Main Street to be brought on down to this area, at least in a modified form, with new sidewalks, plantings and improved lighting.

Hunter Street, part way up the hill from the railroad station, has been the scene of some recent improvements. Hunter Street enjoys magnificent views of the river and is one of the area's most obvious from the river. Although primarily residential, until recently it was zoned Waterfront WD-2. Areas of Hunter Street were recently rezoned PW-c (Central Waterfront- Hillside), and T (two-family).

The Crescent section of Ossining has been the scene of many changes during this century. As the nineteenth century buildings got run down they were occupied by marginal businesses and slum apartments. Much money and effort has been expended to reverse this trend and evidence of this is visible in new roads, a modern community center, rehabilitated stores and new businesses. However, the job is not finished and this too is visually evident in a few vacant or deteriorated buildings and vacant parcels. A recent increase in interest in these properties promises a productive future for Main Street.

F. The Downtown Waterfront

This is the most visible and by far, the most accessible part of the Village of Ossining shoreline (see [Map 12](#)). It is the keystone to both the development of waterfront recreation within the Village and to the redevelopment and revitalization of Ossining's entire waterfront.

The river is more accessible here than at any other place within the Village of Ossining. Near to the central business district, it can be reached via two vehicular bridges over the railroad tracks and is adjacent to the Ossining Railroad Station. The Downtown Waterfront is 0.6 miles in length and contains 23.8 acres of flat land which is almost entirely fill soil. It runs from the Shattemuc Yacht Club in the north, south to the County Treatment Plant, and from the Hudson River, east to the railroad tracks and includes Louis Engel Waterfront Park. The National Flood Insurance Program has classified most of this section as a flood hazard area, and the western portions of some of the properties tend to flood periodically. As a result, building is concentrated along Westerly Road on the eastern portion of the land.

Ossining's largest stream, the Sing Sing Kill ("Kill" meaning stream in Dutch), enters the Hudson midway through the area. This is sometimes a turbulent stream and flows between steep, lightly wooded banks, carrying silt from its upper reaches down to the Hudson where it forms a small delta. The water is very shallow at this delta area and can be described as beach-like at low tide. However, the water becomes fairly deep off shore along the rest of this stretch.

Recent activity has concentrated on the Town-owned Louis Engel Waterfront Park which is located within the Village of Ossining. This is a long narrow strip of land running along approximately 600 feet of the waterfront with a paved walk along the water's edge and has undergone recent shoreline stabilization. There are also two observation decks, a boat launching ramp, a boat club, two playgrounds, picnic tables, a spray park, a sandy beach-like area and a comfort station. One of the former guard towers from Sing Sing Prison is located on County-owned land near the tot lot. This is the most significant waterfront recreational area within the Town, and a considerable amount of money has been devoted to improvements including stabilization of the shoreline. The level of resident use has increased as a result of the improvements. The Louis Engel Waterfront Park is also within the Heritage Area boundaries and the provision for the retention of the guard tower is important in this aspect; however, the tower is leased from the county and their agreement with the Town prohibits any current use of the tower other than a passive one due to unsafe conditions within the tower. There is a small beach area on the PAL Beach section of the Town Park, which, although not officially open for swimming, gets a lot of usage during hot weather. The County Sewage Treatment Plant, which has recently been completed at the south end of the Downtown Waterfront, is a secondary plant which has led to the phasing out of four local primary plants. This has made the river cleaner. There are some problems with odor from the plant and, at the base of Snowden Avenue, from a line leading to it.

It was hoped that the downtown waterfront properties could be connected via a waterfront walkway, RiverWalk, which would be part of a larger circular waterfront-aqueduct trail. Developing RiverWalk throughout the Village of Ossining is a focus of many of the recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan. There will be an incorporation of a RiverWalk trail into the recently approved

One Harbor Square development. A waterfront walkway may be feasible in the future, around Sing Sing if the prison is ever phased out or if the Tappan portion of the prison is decommissioned.

With the passage of the zoning law in December 1990, this property was rezoned Waterfront Development -1. It is now rezoned as RDD (Riverfront Development District). The zoning for this district maximizes opportunities for waterfront recreation and parks, and encourages the construction of portions of RiverWalk, restricts the heights of new buildings to not extend higher than three stories, setbacks new buildings from the river to minimize flood conditions, orients new buildings to preserve and provide views towards the Hudson River and Palisades, encourages reuse of historic buildings, such as the Mobil Oil warehouse, and allows for a mix of commercial, residential and recreational uses.

Since the adoption of the LWRP in 1991, the Village of Ossining began acquiring several previously privately-owned, small contiguous parcels to assemble into an approximately 5.6 acre parcel in order to facilitate redevelopment of the Downtown Waterfront area. For decades, a portion of this site was used as an oil storage/transfer facility (known as Maue Oil). Other former uses on the site included a fragrance manufacturer and a commercial bus depot and storage facility parking. Approximately 0.51 acres of this site has been dedicated as Village-owned parkland. This redevelopment area is bordered on the west by the Hudson River, on the north by the Sing Sing Kill, on the east by the Metro-North railroad tracks and on the south by the Ossining Boat and Canoe Club, and is within the RDD zone.

In 1998, the Village issued a request for proposals seeking proposals for a mixed-use development of the redevelopment area. The selected developer proposed a project known as the Harbor Square Project. This mixed-use development planned for the site includes market rate and affordable rental units, commercial space (restaurant, shops and fitness center), on-site parking and over 2.7 acres of publicly accessible open space. Of the 4.6 upland acres, 4.05 acres will encompass the development parcel. The .51 acre undeveloped Village-owned Harbor Point Park will be retained by the Village. Ownership and control of all underwater property will also be maintained exclusively by the Village. Access to the site will be provided via the Secor Road ramp and Westerly Road on the eastern boundary of the site.

The proposed project realizes the vision for the revitalization of the Ossining waterfront – a vision that has included enhancing public access, eliminating nonconforming uses, protecting and encouraging water-dependent uses and promoting the development of intensive, more urban mixed-use residential and retail commercial uses on this portion of the waterfront. The mixed use concept is consistent with the Village’s planning objectives for the waterfront parcel.

To facilitate revitalization of the Downtown Waterfront, the Village amended the Zoning Law to establish a new overlay special use in the then WD-1 District subject to special permit approval, entitled “Planned Waterfront and Railway Development” (“PWRD”). The PWRD special use will also include, among other things, design standards and bulk and area requirements for such use. In order to encourage the revitalization of this area and fulfill the goals of the LWRP in creating maximum open space, meaningful public access and intensive mixed-use, additional height and density will be permitted under the PWRD special permit use so long as the proposed use meets all the criteria set forth in the PWRD.

In addition, in 2000, a ferry service was established between the Village of Haverstraw, Rockland County and the Village of Ossining, utilizing an existing on-site pier, with passengers walking through the existing open space area to the adjacent Metro-North railroad station.

The area surrounding the Metro North station is a very important section of Ossining's waterfront. For the many people arriving by train, and by boat and ferry, this is their introduction to Ossining. For the thousands of people traveling through the area on the train, this is Ossining. If the prison property to the south is released, this will have a profound effect on this area. A more wide-spread recognition of its worth may also bring about dramatic change. At the present time, minor improvements to its appearance are continuing and greater usage is being cultivated by occasional events within the present industrial/marina/park mixed-use framework.

G. The Spring Street Neighborhood

The Spring Street neighborhood lies just south of the historic downtown and was a target rehabilitation area (see [Map 13](#)). It contains many lovely older homes, some of which are very well kept up and others which have been neglected. One block overlooking the river has very fine and beautifully maintained examples of Victorian architecture.

The Interfaith Council for Action (IFCA), a neighborhood preservation corporation, has been very active in this neighborhood, buying badly deteriorated properties, rehabilitating them and then either renting the apartments or selling the rehabilitated buildings to live-in owners. Many of the neighborhood's worst properties have been made livable again in this way with decent housing replacing substandard units. In addition, the Village's neighborhood rehabilitation program, and the County program which superseded it, have helped with many improvements in the area through their loan and grant programs. The recent reconstruction of the streetscape along Spring Street connects it in a more pleasant way to the "Crescent" business area. State Street is also scheduled for new sidewalks. Improvements to Broad Avenue between State and Spring Streets were just completed.

The Old Croton Aqueduct runs through the Spring Street neighborhood and was the cause of two parks being located along its diagonal route from Spring Street east to Route 9. Nelson Park and the Nelson Sitting Park are the sites of many activities including games and concerts. They provide a large green belt in the middle of a built up area with an elementary school to the north, multi-family housing to the east and single and two-family housing to the west and south. The area as a whole is zoned for two-family housing.

There are many other historic structures in the Spring Street Neighborhood with many interesting older houses, including several National Register-eligible properties, but only one building actually listed on the National Register. This building is located on the south-west corner of Route 9 and Maple Place and is known as the Squire House. Built in 1872, it is an early example of concrete construction and was designed in an eclectic manner reminiscent of a Rhine castle.

There are a number of lovely old Victorian Houses on Hamilton Avenue, just north of the prison and overlooking the river. The County's historic preservation planner has researched these houses and

the west side of the block has been deemed eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. However, this designation has not been formally applied for.

The Spring Street neighborhood is a highly developed residential neighborhood constructed primarily in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The twentieth century saw many of the homes in the area broken up into small, frequently overcrowded apartments. Current efforts at rehabilitation and code enforcement along with an increased interest in the older houses on the part of buyers are making a noticeable improvement in the area.

H. The Sing-Sing Correctional Facility

The Sing Sing Correctional Facility dominates this section of the waterfront with its massive buildings and towering concrete walls (see [Map 14](#)). The prison owns 20 acres of land west of the MTA tracks, one of the largest and most important parcels directly on the Hudson shore. In addition, this land is high and therefore not subject to flooding. There are another 35 acres on the east side of the tracks in a series of steep slopes topped with flat buildable plateaus, each with a striking view of the Hudson. Between the east and west sections of the property, the railroad tracks are recessed, which has the effect of making them much less obtrusive. However, the presence of the Sing Sing Correctional Facility has prevented the development of this site and prohibits the Village from realizing its full potential.

As a result of the important role it played in the development of New York State, the prison is one of the main resources in the Ossining Heritage Area. The western portion of the prison land still contains the cell block which the early prisoners constructed between 1825 and 1828, first quarrying the stone and then building their own confining cells. The death house, site of 614 of the 695 electrocutions ordered by New York State, is located just south of the original cell block, and is used as the prison's training center.

Back in the late 1960's, New York State planned to phase out this ancient facility and was willing to sell the western portion of the land. This plan has since been altered. At the present time, the prison has 1,500 inmates and, during the 1980s, money was expended on the eastern portion to enable the reopening of previously closed cell blocks.

The Sing Sing Correctional Facility section of the waterfront has more growth potential than any other site within the Village of Ossining. Several years ago, the Chamber of Commerce Development Corporation estimated that, if fully developed with retail stores, offices, theaters, restaurants and 1,000 units of housing, at 1977 rates, the Sing Sing site could yield approximately \$1.5 million in real property taxes.

In their 1977 Waterfront Redevelopment Plan, the Ossining Community Development Department recommended that the Village work toward the phasing out of the prison and the redevelopment of the site for private housing and/or commercial development in addition to public waterfront recreation. The topography would also make it possible to locate both housing and offices on the land with the steep slopes acting as natural buffers. In a 1985 report, planners hired by the Village to help with planning for the Urban Cultural Park (UCP, now Heritage Area), suggested that, in the

later stages of UCP development, the western portion of the prison property should be used as a museum with a waterfront park and dockage for boat tours. They would convert the historic cell block, death house and Warner building into a major museum on prison reform with a direct involvement of the Department of Corrections. They also suggested parking for 350 cars in this area.

Currently, the prison is zoned as IR (Institutional Redevelopment) that ensures that, in the event that Sing Sing Correctional Facility is ever closed, future plans for the site are consistent with other plans for the waterfront and is consistent with the intent and guidelines for the waterfront area identified in the Comprehensive Plan including, public park areas, water related uses, mixes of commercial and residential uses. The Comprehensive Plan suggests that the Village make Sing Sing Correctional Facility an asset rather than a liability. This not only includes the extension of RiverWalk along or through the site, but also preservation of historic structures including the walls, and reuse for large-scale tourism, consistent with what has been accomplished at the Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia, PA and Alcatraz, in San Francisco. This would greatly boost the viability of Ossining as a stop on rivertown tours, as it would tie into other existing riverside tourist attractions that are, under a variety of plans, to share marketing and boat access.

The existing road network serving the prison area is poor. No road presently goes straight through from Route 9 to the prison and the two main gates are off Hunter Street to the north and Hudson Street to the south. The relative seclusion of the site is beneficial to its present use and has thus been fostered in the past. In the redevelopment of this site, it may be necessary to provide direct access from Route 9. The existing track crossing within the prison would need to be drastically improved to provide access into the western portion if it were to be utilized fully without putting a substantial strain on the Main Street - Secor Bridge route. Since there is no way of knowing if the prison property will be released three years from now, twenty-five years from now or one hundred years from now, or how the property will be developed once it is released, no definite plans are being made for the road network to serve its future use. However, the possible future need for such access will be kept in mind during the review of other development proposals which might have a limiting effect on the Village's options for this property. Residents of Ossining hope to see the prison property released during this decade.

I. Southern Waterfront

Sparta, Ossining's most historic neighborhood, is located in the southern waterfront along with much of the Village's newest development (see [Map 15](#)). Two parcels of land were developed in this area. One is a nine acre parcel which has been the home of the warden of Sing Sing Prison and the other is located across Spring Street adjacent to an old quarry. The warden's property is now known as Hudson Point and 93 low-rise condominiums were constructed to take advantage of truly outstanding views of the Hudson River. Another developer bought the Quarry property across the street from Hudson Point for a similar type of development called Liberty Knolls. Both properties had their zoning changed from Industrial Park to PMRD (Planned Multiple Residence District) and now, are zoned PRD (Planned Residence District).

Frederick Philipse acquired title to what is now Sparta on August 24, 1785, incorporating it into his vast holdings. For a number of years, he allowed settlers to use the land rent free in return for their using his flour and saw mills. By the eighteenth century there was a thriving community located here with a busy dock just north of where Sparta Brook empties into the Hudson. The Old Albany Post Road (now Revolutionary Road in this area), as well as the River, linked Sparta with settlements to the north and south. Many of the present homes date from the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The Jug Tavern, the area's oldest building, is on the National Register and Sparta is Ossining's only locally designated historic district. Sparta is also part of the Ossining Heritage Area.

The Sparta Recreation Area is located within this historic neighborhood. It consists of 3.25 acres of waterfront land plus 0.75 acres of underwater land and is divided into two pieces by the MTA tracks. At one time, there was an on-grade crossing at the tracks; however, such crossings are now against railroad policy, and the planks have been removed and the break in the third rail filled in. This is currently the most popular of the Village-owned waterfront parcels, even though the crossing is extremely dangerous since, in addition to the third rail, there is a bend in the tracks to the south which obscures on-coming trains from view. The Village was awarded a Waterfront Implementation Grant for the preliminary engineering and design work needed to provide a pedestrian crossing over to the west side of the tracks, and has been using the resulting report in its attempts to obtain grant money for the crossing which is expected to cost approximately \$950,000 (1991 estimate). However, the cost for such a bridge is extremely expensive for the Village to currently undertake but it still remains a priority. The parcel on the west side, which has been known historically as Sparta Dock, is 2.4 acres of dedicated park land, including the underwater lands. The land projects approximately 380' into the Hudson giving magnificent views downriver of the Tappan Zee Bridge with the New York City skyline in the background. There is a large rock ledge projecting to the south from the peninsula which was the foundation of the original dock. Scrubby growth covers most of the remaining area.

To the east of the tracks is slightly over 1.5 acres of Village-owned park land bounded by private property to the north, Hudson Street to the east, Liberty Street to the south and the railroad tracks to the west. The land rises 50 feet in elevation from the railroad tracks up to Hudson Street with the incline gradual at first, then becoming steep and finally flattening out at the higher elevation. This eastern portion of the land affords excellent views of the Hudson with the Palisades beyond, while the lower portion has been set up as a picnic area.

Just north of Sparta Park on the eastern side of the railroad tracks is a small privately owned parcel which had been the location of a sewage treatment plant. This plant was phased out with the opening of the new secondary plant next to the Louis Engel Waterfront Park. This property contains a very small cove connected to the Hudson River by a viaduct under the railroad tracks and is also the site of one of the old mine openings. The parcel is flat at its western end adjacent to the tracks and then rises steeply up to Hudson Street. The mine opening is off a plateau area about half-way up the rock wall. This opening presents something of a hazard. It is excavated in such a way that a person or animal could fall in and be trapped. Further, the mine is filled with water and the walls are unstable. Nonetheless, it is a remnant of an activity which was important in the history of the Village.

All of the Sparta historic area is residential with the exception of Sparta Park. One of the houses was converted a number of years ago into a restaurant. Just north of Sparta, Hudson Street was zoned

Waterfront Development-2 however, this zoning has recently been changed to PRD . Although not located in historic Sparta, this area is separated from the rest of the Southern Waterfront by a steep embankment and its primary access is through Sparta. The only remaining industrial property is the site of an old Texaco tank farm, currently the offices of Testwell Craig Laboratories, that contains a helipad in the area of the former dock and is for sale for development. The Village would like to see a public park on the Testwell-Craig helipad via a public easement involving the existing pedestrian bridge. This space is both extraordinarily scenic and relatively secluded, and best considered for picnic and other passive uses.

The Sparta area is an interesting, quiet residential area whose residents are very proud of their heritage. Its resources are protected and appreciated and favored with its inclusion in the Ossining Urban Cultural Park (now known as State Heritage Area). A number of the residents are very interested in the waterfront - aqueduct walkway and see it as a way of enhancing their resources and tying the waterfront together without disturbing the tranquility of the area. The neighborhood association is a very active, concerned group working hard for the benefit of Sparta.

Much of the land just south of Sparta has been developed within the past 20 years, first with the Arcadian Shopping Center on Route 9 and then with a 240 unit apartment complex and 120 units of town houses. Both of the residential developments are now under condominium or co-operative ownership and both provide luxury housing which takes advantage of river views.

Sparta Brook runs between Scarborough Manor Apartments and Kemeys Cove Condominiums and was once the site of a mustard mill. This area is now under private ownership but could possibly be included in a waterfront - aqueduct walkway.

Kemeys Cove, a large tidal cove about 12 acres in size and very shallow, lies at the southern end of this waterfront area, adjacent to the Scarborough Railroad Station. The cove is a mud flat at low tide and popular as a stopping place for migratory birds. The north half of the cove is owned by Kemeys Cove Condominiums.

Most of the zoning in Sparta and to the south is residential with the shopping center zoned for business.

This section of the waterfront is convenient to shopping and to transportation. Many of the residents belong to active and concerned neighborhood associations or condominium groups.