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Harmon Revitalization Plan Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Harmon Revitalization Plan?

The Harmon Revitalization Plan is designed to transform the Harmon Business District into a vibrant, inviting small scale neighborhood shopping and dining district.

It is a set of initiatives that will strengthen the community by encouraging the right kind of development and attracting the types of businesses residents want.

Strong, local business means a stronger *commercial* tax base, which *relieves the tax burden on the residents*.

It is key to protecting and growing property values, and to making Croton a better place to live, visit and raise families.

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What initiatives make up the Harmon Revitalization Plan?

1. Amended Zoning – to encourage the creation of small, economical commercial spaces
2. Streamlining – the removal of burdensome red tape that can deter property improvements and new businesses
3. Access – improved automobile, pedestrian and bicycle traffic flow and safety

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Rezoning: what are the key changes vs. the current zoning?

With the changes, a property owner would be able to construct a mixed-use building (either new or working with an existing structure), as long as they meet other requirements, such as height, parking, sidewalks, etc. The property owner may just expand their building's width, or add a second or third floor. This makes it easier for property owners to create the type of spaces needed for local business growth.

Parking and sidewalk requirements will actually encourage parking to be in the **back** of a building and encourage sidewalks that support safe and easy walking along each block.

It's important to note what does NOT change:

- Height: There can be no building any higher than what we already have in Harmon!
- Mixed Use: There are mixed use buildings currently in Harmon (although most are larger than what would be allowed under the Harmon Revitalization Plan).
- Special Permit Process: There is still a process by which Village boards will review any changes to ensure all requirements are met and can consider traffic, parking, noise, economic impact, open space, and quality of life issues on a project by project basis.

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What types of businesses are in demand in the Harmon Business District?

Studies and community conversation show that restaurants, cafes, pubs, boutiques, professional office space, artist studios and other small scale unique, niche types of businesses are in demand in the area.

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Why does the Harmon re-zoning focus on “mixed use” buildings?

The types of businesses that are in demand in the area require smaller, more economical spaces than those typically found in shopping centers. Although in demand, these types of spaces have not been built under current zoning because current property owners and/or real estate investors would lose money doing so.

Mixed use buildings, which allow both commercial and residential space, provide a mix of income sources for property owners and enable them to create and offer the smaller, more economical spaces that retailers desire.

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What will be the tax impact on the Village of Croton?

Expanded buildings will generate higher tax revenue, which directly translates to improved services in the Village. The higher tax revenue is commercial based, and can therefore help to relieve residents of the high tax burden they have today.

Today there is actually *lost revenue opportunity*, since the many vacant lots and underutilized properties in Harmon are not bringing in as much tax revenue as possible.

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Will there be an impact on the infrastructure of the Village?

Professional consultants did analyses on three developmental scenarios in Harmon, including one that reflects building to the fullest size allowed on every property lot. In each case, the existing Village infrastructure could accommodate all new development and would therefore even yield a significant **positive tax impact** for the Village (tax revenue exceeds the cost of village services required).

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How will the Westchester County HUD Settlement Impact the Harmon Revitalization Plan?

It is important to distinguish between what is ***possible vs. probable***. There are a wide array of affordable housing programs sponsored by a multitude of federal, state and county government agencies. It would be disingenuous to say that no form of affordable housing could ever be built in Harmon, just as it would be disingenuous to make such a statement under current zoning. However, there are a number of substantive reasons why it is not ***probable*** that Affordable Housing would be built in Harmon.

1. County Executive Astorino recently reported that 540 of the 750 affordable housing units required to be built under the HUD settlement with the federal government are already in the development pipeline. Of those 540 units, ***not one*** is located in a mixed use building. To say it another way, all 540 units are in residential-only buildings, which are ***prohibited*** under the proposed Harmon re-zoning law.
2. There are fewer affordable housing funding programs for mixed use development than residential only development.
3. The small lot sizes in Harmon do not provide for the economies of scale required to take advantage of many subsidized housing project funding methods available.

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What will be the impact on the Croton Harmon School District?

Professional consultants did analyses on three development scenarios in Harmon, including one that reflects building to the fullest size allowed on every property lot. Given the low % of 2-bedroom units allowed, the maximum number of additional school children could be accommodated by existing school facilities and would yield a net **positive tax impact** for the District, i.e. *tax revenue exceeds any school facilities/services cost.*

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What is the status of removing red tape for potential new businesses?

In 2011, the village passed a series of 19 “green tape” measures to remove unnecessary obstacles and expenses for new businesses looking to open in Croton. An example is that a small retail shop looking to open in the Harmon Business District will no longer have to spend time and money seeking Special Permit approval.

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How will access and safety be improved in the Harmon Business District?

The Harmon zoning amendments will facilitate increased pedestrian safety by discouraging active driveways, curb cuts and front parking lots (rear parking is encouraged). The village has a secured \$1.5M grant from the federal government to aid in the cost of 2 new traffic lights, improved sidewalks and bicycle lanes along Croton Point Avenue.

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What is the alternative plan put forth by those residents who oppose the Harmon Revitalization Plan?

In the 5 years since the Harmon Revitalization Plan was first introduced, no alternative plan has been put forth. Those in opposition to the Harmon Revitalization Plan want to keep the existing zoning in place and send back the \$1.5MM grant to improve traffic flow in the area to the federal government.

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So what is the delay in implementing the Harmon Revitalization Plan?

A small group opposing any change to current zoning filed legal proceedings (“Article 78”) after the original plan was approved by the Village Board. These proceedings resulted in extensive duplication of reviews and delayed any progress for the past 2 years. The original proposal was revised based on continued feedback from the community, yet this group vows to continue litigation; this litigation has already spent taxpayer time and money to resolve and will incur greater expense and inaction if any litigation continues.

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What is the current status of the Harmon Revitalization Plan?

This revised Revitalization Plan has been approved by the Village Planning Board, County Planning Board, and Waterfront Advisory Committee multiple times each, and will be voted on by the Village Board of Trustees sometime after the May 14th 2012 public hearing is held.

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What can I do to help?

If you want to shop locally, to enjoy good food locally, to park once and walk to all you need, to have a downtown that reflects your passion and character, you can help!

Spread the word among fellow Croton residents.

Invite friends to “Like” the Harmonize Facebook page.

Sign our petition [by clicking here](#)

Share this document.

Come to public meetings and speak out!

Write letters of support in the Gazette.

Blog, blog, blog.....

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Have more questions?

Join the *Harmonize* Facebook page and just ask!

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