

Village of Tuckahoe

Mayor Omayra Andino



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Mayor

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Dear Governor Hochul,

We believe that new housing in this region is critically important for the health of our communities. Suburban attitudes about housing development are not the same as they once were. In fact, many Westchester communities are already exceeding your housing targets and many others are working diligently to do so. We support your desire to make progress on this issue and would like to work collaboratively with you on this important initiative. Unfortunately, the Housing Compact in its current form can be detrimental to communities like Tuckahoe. Without significant changes, it simply will not work.

The suburbs are not monolithic, nor are we merely satellites for New York City. Each of our municipalities has different housing needs and different obstacles to overcome, and no plan will be successful without taking into account the relevant local context.

As Mayor of the Village of Tuckahoe, I am writing on behalf of the entire Board of Trustees to express our concerns with the hopes that you will consider some changes.

Transit Oriented Development (TOD)

The TOD zoning mandate included in the Housing Compact must be removed. Using conservative estimates, the mandated level of density would require us to permit development that would likely increase our total number of housing units. This level of change would require a fundamental re-examination and overhaul of our delivery of public services (schools, traffic, transportation, fire, police, sewers, etc.). Given that the TOD requirements would be exempt from the State Environmental Quality Review process and availed to future developers “as-of-right,” we would lose our ability to properly assess potential impact and make the changes necessary to accommodate such a transformation.

As an alternative, we recommend adding TOD type zoning as a Preferred Action to achieve Safe Harbor as one of several options related to the growth targets. Many communities have already zoned for TOD with the goal of increasing the opportunity for housing and mixed-use density near train stations and we would be receptive to this approach.

Nuanced Housing Targets

A 3% housing target may not be appropriate for all communities and targets may need to be higher or lower depending on the realities of specific communities. The growth percentage needs to be calibrated to take into account other factors such as:

- Current housing/population density
- Current number of subsidized and income restricted units
- Current cost of housing related to County average
- Existing local ADU zoning and the number of units built
- Lack of infrastructure affecting a three-year target completion
- Available land for new construction

Preferred Action to Achieve Safe Harbor

Preferred Action should reward rezoning that encourages the development of additional housing and in particular affordable housing. Municipalities should be able to choose from a broad menu to craft a path that works for each of us. In that we should simply be required to demonstrate the ability to increase our housing stock to the target level based on zoning changes.

Municipalities should also be able to select from a range of potential zoning modification options, including the following:

- Accessory Dwelling Units
- Housing Lot Splits
- Smart Growth Principles
- Adaptive Reuse (this should also be broadened and include conversion of other types of properties, including summer residences to year round affordable homes)
- Transit Oriented Development
- Affordable Housing Set Asides of More than 10%
- Comprehensive Plans that Include Smart Growth Strategies

Timelines

The timeline for implementation is too tight. We, in Tuckahoe, have of experience with developers who sometimes struggle to complete projects due to personal, economic or market conditions unrelated to municipal constraints. In each of these cases the project must start afresh, and the time invested is lost. Municipalities should not be penalized if developers do not follow through on their plans.

Expand Financial Support for Infrastructure

Funding is needed to support upgrades to infrastructure that has, in many cases, been neglected for decades resulting in needed costly improvements. The current engineering estimate for some municipalities is between \$70,000 and \$100,000 per residential sewer hookup. If only 10% of the 800,000 residences built need new sewer infrastructure or

improvements to existing sewer systems that cost is approximately \$5.6B to \$8B. Expanding water and sewer systems, adding parking structures, evaluating and modifying traffic patterns, adding bike lanes, are just a few of the very expensive projects associated with the increase in housing.

We recommend that each municipality be required to reach a specific target based on a formula that takes into account existing population density and local housing stock and any other relevant considerations. The focus should be incentive-based, and municipalities should be rewarded for demonstrating that they are encouraging appropriate and needed development through a broad range of actions - the Safe Harbor provisions should be expanded to recognize these actions.

Legislation like this is best established when created in an open, collaborative manner without artificial time constraints. Given the complexity of this challenge, any proposal of this magnitude should be debated and adopted separate from the budget process.

Though we want to support the Housing Compact and recognize the desperate housing needs in Westchester as we hear from constituents often, we cannot agree to your proposal in its current form and request the vital changes highlighted above be incorporated.

Sincerely,

Omayra Andino
Village of Tuckahoe Mayor