

COMMUNITY ADVOCATES, INC.

P.O. Box 424
Roslyn Heights, NY 11577-0424
Fax: 516/767-1250
Phone: 516/767-0189
e-mail: rogatz2@aol.com

TO: Jeffrey Greenfield, Chair, Nassau County Planning Commission
Satish Sood, Deputy Commissioner

FAX: 516-571-3839

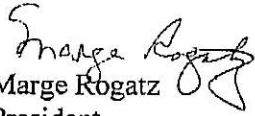
FROM: Marge Rogatz

DATE: December 1, 2010

NUMBER OF PAGES (including this page): **three**

Attached is a copy of our comments on the draft of the 2010 Nassau County Master Plan. The original has been sent by regular mail.

Thank you for giving us an opportunity to comment on the Plan.


Marge Rogatz
President
Community Advocates, Inc.

COMMUNITY ADVOCATES, INC.

P.O. Box 424 Roslyn Heights, N.Y. 11577-0424
 Phone (516) 627-7143 Fax (516) 767-1250
 email: comadvocates@aol.com

To: Nassau County Planning Commission
 Jeffrey Greenfield, Chair
 Satish Sood, Deputy Commissioner

Board of Directors

President

Marge Rogatz

Vice President

Robert A. Murphy

Secretary

Sol Marie Alfonso Jones

Treasurer

Jane E. Schwartz

Founding President

Joan Saltzman

Donna Boyce

Gardenia Culbreath

MaryAnn Dentuono

Jean Kelly

Wendell Knight

Jacqueline Terry Lee

Marcia R. Levine

David Nemiroff

Sandy Oliva

William Pruitt

Dr. Roberta Schroder

Cecile Shore

Rev. Reginald Tuggle

Luis Valenzuela

Evelyn Weinstein

From: Marge Rogatz
 President, Community Advocates, Inc.

Date: December 1, 2010

Re: 2010 Nassau County Master Plan

These comments are informed by my past professional experience as a community development, human services and health care consultant and the various volunteer positions I have held. Since 1986, I have been president/CEO of Community Advocates (CA), a nonprofit organization established in 1972 to assist Nassau's most vulnerable residents in obtaining their basic rights and entitlements and to mobilize collaborative efforts to address unmet needs and combat discriminatory policies and practices. I am a founding board member and officer of ERASE Racism and a member of the Long Island Community Foundation's board and grants committee. I am also a founder and former officer of the Nassau-Suffolk Coalition for the Homeless, Sustainable Long Island and the Long Island Campaign for Affordable Rental Housing. I am the founding chair of the Nassau County 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness and a director of the State of New York Mortgage Agency (SONYMA) where I serve on the Governance and the Program and Finance committees of New York State Homes & Community Renewal, the umbrella agency for NYS housing and community development programs.

Since its founding in 1972, Community Advocates has developed, presented and disseminated a variety of papers, reports and testimony relating to housing issues. We have focused on the lack of affordable housing and homelessness since 1987 and on discrimination in housing in recent years. I and members of the CA board have worked for decades with Nassau County legislators, commissioners, departmental directors and other elected and appointed officials to address homelessness and promote the creation of affordable and fair housing, with emphasis on rental housing and housing for first-time homebuyers and others shut out of the county's costly and often segregated and inaccessible housing market.

We welcome the draft of the Nassau County Master Plan and applaud many of the priorities and action items it identifies, including its focus on rental housing, concentrating development in targeted growth areas and improving transportation alternatives and energy conservation. We will confine our comments to an aspect that we think needs more attention as the Plan develops.

The County not only has to address the scarcity of affordable housing but also the discrimination that prevents people of color – and other classes covered under the County's strengthened fair housing law -- from having equal access to the housing that already exists.

Endemic institutional and structural racism on Long Island has excluded and continues to exclude people of color from decent affordable rental housing and the asset-building opportunity of homeownership. If you are African American and you have the means to rent or buy in your community-of-choice, racist practices often prevent you from doing so. If you are African American and of low or moderate income, it is almost impossible to find housing you can afford except in a segregated community where you have limited access to a decent education, job opportunities and a chance to ascend the economic ladder.

Most of us in Nassau County believe we live by the rule "do unto others as you would have others do unto you." Yet we permit the perpetuation of institutional racism each day that we do not recognize and try to undo it in every aspect of our public, private and community lives. We should not have needed ERASE Racism's landmark study, *Long Island Fair Housing: A State of Inequity*, published in March 2005, or its most recent study, *The Racial Equity Report Card: Fair Housing on Long Island*, published in March 2009, to document housing discrimination in Nassau County. We can see the results of that discrimination with our own eyes all around us. For example, every time we drive south on Washington Avenue through the Village of Garden City, if we're not blind, we can easily see the boundary between Garden City and the Village of Hempstead.

Racial and economic segregation impede the healthy growth of our economy and the quality of life for all of us – the haves, as well the have-nots. If we continue to do "business as usual" in Nassau County, institutional racism and segregation will persist and, in fact, as our African-American and ethnic populations increase, segregation will increase. We must change the structures and access to opportunity so it is no longer racialized and we must do this on a county and a regional level. This does not mean that there cannot be local control, but each locality must be racially just. Although it is difficult, we know these changes can be made, as they have been made successfully in other communities where there are fair-share housing programs with housing distributed throughout the region and near jobs, and tax credits are only given if housing is fair and resources are shared.

Community Advocates is well aware of the land use and other restrictions under which the county operates. Nonetheless, such federal programs as CDBG, HOME, low income tax credits and other federal funding streams require Nassau County to comply with fair housing laws and other equal opportunity regulations as it administers these programs and implements the policies proposed in the Master Plan.

We urge the Planning Commission to give more emphasis to our responsibility for one another in furthering its vision for Nassau County. As this vision becomes operational, step-by-step, site-by-site, it should be creating fairness and justice in housing as well as in all other aspects of our community and economic life.

