

Kenneth (Ken) Kuttner

I have lived in Williamstown since 2008, when I joined the Williams faculty. Before moving here, I taught at Oberlin College, in cornfields-bordering-on-exurbs of Ohio; and I have also lived in New York City, Chicago, Boston and California. Having lived in so many diverse places, I have a deep appreciation for what makes Williamstown so special.

The Planning Board makes policies that will shape our town for decades to come: its economy, its character, its built environment and its open spaces. Mainly, it does this through decisions and recommendations on land use. I believe its dual goals should be to promote opportunity and inclusive growth and at the same time preserve the town's rustic character and natural beauty.

Tradeoffs between these two objectives will inevitably arise, of course, and one of the Planning Board's jobs is to strike a balance between them. But at the same time, the Board should seek opportunities to further both objectives: looking for underutilized land near the town center that could be developed, for example; and identifying low-cost opportunities for conserving woodlands and farms.

Since virtually every land use decision has environmental consequences, such as carbon emissions, pesticide runoff, biodiversity, etc., it almost goes without saying that the environment should have a seat at the table in the Planning Board's deliberations.

In addition, I believe we as a community should be doing everything we can to promote racial, ethnic and socioeconomic diversity. There's no magic bullet for this, of course — it's not easy to overcome centuries of history and the inherent inertia in location decisions. But affordable housing, economic opportunity, and revitalization of the town center can only help.