

**Town of Chester**  
**Orange County, New York**  
**Recreation and Open Space Plan**

**December**  
**2007**

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4 Computer Drive West  
Albany, New York 12205  
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# 1. INTRODUCTION

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## 1.1 THIS PLANNING PROCESS

### 1.1.1 *What is a Recreation and Open Space Plan?*

In recent years the preservation and conservation of natural resources and the outdoor environment has become a high priority for many communities. Accompanying this has been a growing realization that the environment is a fragile resource that must be protected. Community parks provide an important means to protecting valuable natural resources and preserving safe, scenic areas for a variety of uses. Developing an inventory of open space parcels protects the land from development, is a form of preservation and, together with local parks, increases the quality of life in a community.



There has also been a growing recognition of the important role outdoor recreation plays in people's lives. In an increasingly busy, technological era, access to outdoor recreational facilities is regarded as an important quality of life asset. Outdoor recreation is known to provide a healthy outlet for everyday pressures, as it provides people with opportunities for socializing, participating in sports, exercising, and decompressing from stress.

A Recreation and Open Space Plan is an important community planning tool. A community develops a Recreation and Open Space Plan to evaluate the existing condition of its parks and recreational resources and identify what changes it would like to see in the future. Through an ongoing public participation process, community residents are invited to provide feedback to the community on what types of resources they would like to see at their local parks (e.g., ball fields, playgrounds, basketball courts, etc.); what types of open space areas they would like to see preserved (e.g., open fields, nature areas, water access, etc.); and, finally; what types of trails they would like to see developed and where. In gathering and addressing the residents' expressed needs, A Recreation and Open Space Plan can function as a detailed blueprint to guiding the Town's future park and recreational development.

### 1.1.2 *Town of Chester Parks and Recreation Commission*

The Town of Chester Parks and Recreation Commission is the authority that oversees the recreational needs of the Town of Chester. Formed during the 1970s, the 7-member Commission's mission statement is as follows:

*Provide, promote and present to the community of Chester social, cultural and recreational activities. Provide Park and Leisure venues that allow individuals and families to recreate through organized or self-promoted activities.*

The Commission meets regularly to discuss customer needs and how well the Town is meeting those needs. The Commission monitors the condition of park resources, such as equipment and playground infrastructure, as well as general park maintenance. The Commission is responsible for evaluating “wear and tear” on Town facilities and deciding when new equipment must be purchased. They directly oversee the activities of the Town’s Parks and Recreation Department.

In 2005, the Commission identified the need for Chester to develop a Recreation and Open Space Plan. The purpose of this Plan would be twofold: 1) to identify goals for the Town and Village parks and recreation areas and 2) to provide community leaders with guidance on future decision-making related to the community’s park system.

## **1.2 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The foundation of a good Plan is the incorporation of public input early and often throughout the Plan’s development. To ensure that a plan is founded upon common goals and objectives, it is imperative to obtain feedback from the community. Three methods were used to solicit community input during the Chester planning process: a resident survey, stakeholder roundtable discussions, and a public open house workshop.

In addition, local news and media outlets were used to promote the public participation events and to keep people informed about the ongoing planning process. Flyers were posted throughout the community and press releases were sent to local newspapers to notify residents and business owners of the meetings. Several newspaper articles are included in the Public Participation Appendix.

### *1.2.1 Recreation Needs Survey*

In May of 2005, a survey was distributed to Chester’s residents. The survey was designed to assist the community in identifying the types of resources presently lacking at its community parks. In addition to providing feedback on what activities they presently engage in at the Town’s parks, survey respondents were invited to comment on what types of activities they would like to see at the Town’s parks. A copy of the survey and the cover letter is included in the Public Participation Appendix.

The 3-page survey was mailed out to approximately 4,200 property owners using the Town tax assessor’s database. In addition, another 500 copies of the survey were made available at the community’s rental housing communities. Completed surveys could be returned via mail to the Town’s Park and Recreation Department, or through four drop-box locations at the Town Hall, Village Hall, Senior Center and the Chester Free Library. As of July 8, 2005, 320 surveys had been returned to the Town Parks and Recreation Department. This represents a return rate just

under 7%. This feedback was instrumental in helping the plan consultants develop an overview of both user as well as non-user populations in the Town.

### 1.2.2 Roundtable Discussions

On June 4, 2005, project consultants conducted three 90-minute roundtable discussions with individuals identified as stakeholders in the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan process.

A stakeholder is any group or individual that has a stake in or may be impacted by recommendations developed through the planning process. In general, stakeholders represent municipalities, local government departments, residential communities, business associations, and other local organizations, such as nonprofits, school representatives, volunteer committees, or special interest groups.



During the roundtables, participants were asked to provide feedback on how well Chester's park and recreation resources currently served their needs and to identify ways in which the park system could be improved. Participants included individuals and representatives from local groups and associations with direct interests in the following:

- Open Space & Passive Recreation
- Local Government Agencies
- School Functions/ Active Youth Recreation

Participants involved in the daylong roundtables included representatives from the senior citizens group, the Kiwanis, the Sugar Loaf Vision, the Preservation Collective, the Historical Society, locally elected officials from the Village and the Town, local police representatives, the local school district, and members of the Parks and Recreation Commission. Although invited to attend the roundtable, there was sparse attendance from the Town's local sports and athletic leagues.

A copy of the kick-off questionnaire is included in the Public Participation Appendix. A detailed discussion of the feedback from the roundtables is included in Section 5.

### 1.2.3 Visioning Open House Workshop

Approximately 30 community members attended the June 16, 2005 visioning workshop held at Town Hall. This workshop was designed to obtain feedback from Chester residents on exactly what resources they would like to see at the community's parks.

At the workshop, “park stations” were set up around the Town Hall’s meeting room. There was a poster board for each of the Town’s major parks, with photographs of the park’s existing recreational resources as well as photographs of resources that *potentially* could be developed at the park in the future. Blank sheets of paper and pencils were placed at each table and workshop participants were asked to jot down their ideas for what they would like to see at each of the parks. Participants were also asked to identify where within the parks they envisioned such resources being developed. The “park stations” included the following:

- Chester Commons
- Community Carpenter Park
- Pulvrent Field
- Broadview Estates
- Oak Drive Park
- Butch’s Field
- Chester’s Trail system

Additional details on the ideas that emerged from this process are included in Section 5.

#### *1.2.4 Additional Community Feedback*

The Preservation Collective is a community advocacy group that identifies its mission as promoting the preservation of scenic and historic lands throughout Orange County. To raise public awareness about preservation, the group developed a website and other materials designed to keep residents informed of both proposed development and open space preservation options. Some of the group’s ideas include: linking protected open space areas via greenways; linking the Town’s existing trails; preserving Chester’s Native American archaeological resources and scenic vistas; and developing bike/hike paths connecting Sugar Loaf, Chester Village, and the Town Hall/Library area. The Preservation Collective indicates residents are interested in facilities to accommodate horseback riding; community sledding; pond fishing; dog runs; and exercise paths.

Through a public outreach process held when the Town first began considering the acquisition of Broadview Estates in 2004, a number of potential uses for the site were identified. According to the Preservation Collective, members of the public identified the following potential uses:

- Maintain as open space,
- Creation of hiking trails;
- Horseback riding;
- Build pavilion with municipal building space (possibly new police station if Town and Village merge);
- Construct additional park facilities (soccer field); and
- Lease out for a 9-hole golf course.

The Preservation Collective developed its own Conceptual Design of Broadview, focusing on preserving the land as open space. The group's design included pavilions, historical kiosks, picnic areas, walking trails, fitness stations, and garden areas.



In addition, younger residents are playing a role in lobbying for recreational facilities. Approximately 35 of the Town's youngest residents submitted a signed petition to the Parks and Recreation Commission in spring 2005 indicating their desire for the Town to develop a skate park. One skateboard enthusiast developed this petition, which he then brought to Chester Elementary school where he was able to gather the additional signatures. Most of these residents reside within the Chester Union Free School district.

### 1.3 PREVIOUS PLANS AND STUDIES

#### 1.3.1 *Town of Chester Comprehensive Plan, 2003*

In July of 2003, the Town of Chester adopted an update to its 1974 Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan Committee included members of the Planning Board, Zoning Board, and Town Board, as well as members of community. The Committee worked with a consultant to develop a plan that would guide Chester into the future. The primary issue the 2003 plan sought to address was to ensure the Town continues to maintain its rural character in the face of dramatic population growth; 4.8% annually during the 1990s. As a result, the fundamental goal that emerged from this planning effort was to:

*Retain and preserve the open spaces, parklands and natural features which provide a scenic backdrop for the Town's residential areas while accommodating Chester's fair share growth of residential, commercial and industrial uses within the capabilities of its existing and planned infrastructure.*

Of the nine objectives identified in the Plan, two are directly related to this Recreation and Open Space Plan. These include the following:

- To maintain a proper relationship between the rate of growth and the Town's ability to provide essential services such as roads, water, sewer, parks and municipal facilities.
- To maintain black dirt farmland areas to the greatest degree possible and to encourage the preservation of prime farmlands areas within the context of current economic conditions by clustering development in adjacent areas away from prime farmland and to encourage an expanded number of farm-oriented uses.

To foster development patterns consistent with the fundamental goal of the Plan, a number of implementation techniques were identified. In addition to the basic tools of zoning and subdivision regulations, special techniques identified included Transferable Development Rights (TDRs) and Cluster development. In its evaluation of Chester's parkland, recreation, and open space, the 2003 plan indicated that the Town needed an additional 300+ acres of recreational land to meet the needs of its existing and future residents (at full population build-out).<sup>1</sup> Additional recommendations from the 2003 Comprehensive Plan that are specific to existing parks and recreational resources are discussed elsewhere in this Plan.

### *1.3.2 The Art of Planning: A Healthy Infrastructure Plan for Sugar Loaf, 2004*

The SUNY Albany Planning and Design Studio developed this planning study in the fall of 2004 as a graduate student project. The study sought to identify ways to enhance the Sugar Loaf community. The two "critical themes" identified through this planning process were: 1) developing a "healthy infrastructure" and 2) highlighting the community's unique, artistic character. In developing a healthy infrastructure, the plan identified measures to promote physical activity (walking, biking, etc.); improve visual environment; and increase economic activity in the hamlet.

This planning study focused on three areas: 1) King's Highway; 2) the Creamery Pond Neighborhood; and 3) Trails and Open Space. Key recommendations to improve King's Highway included sidewalk development and improvement; parking improvements; traffic calming; and streetscape improvements and amenities. The primary recommendations to improve the Creamery Pond Neighborhood included installing sidewalks; developing a walk school bus program; instituting a greenery campaign; and revising home occupation zoning in the area. Three new community parks were proposed as part of the Plan: 1) Creamery Pond Park; 2) Bus Stop Park and Playground; and 3) Wood Road Ballfield.

The proposed Creamery Pond Park is adjacent to Creamery Pond. A brick walkway already provides access to the area, which includes a path through the woods. A tree-fort was identified as one facility that children would enjoy having at the site. Fishing is another recreational activity identified for the site.

The proposed Bus Stop Park and Playground would be located at the intersection of Pine Hill Road and Creamery Pond Road at the rear of a parcel that fronts onto King's Highway. Twice a day parents with (or without) children converge at the site as they wait for the school bus. Rather than leaving these people to gather in the street, a park would present a safer, friendlier alternative. Proposed park amenities include benches, playground facilities, and a decorative fountain and possibly a children's tree fort.

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that this amount does not take into account the additional 91 acres acquired by the Town through its purchase of Broadview Estates in 2005.

The last park proposed as part of this plan is the Wood Road Ballfield. The Town of Chester owns a parcel of land on Wood Road could potentially be developed for recreation. This park could include a soccer field and a baseball or softball diamond. A public restroom is also proposed for this site, as it would also serve tourists on busy weekends. Although the Sugar Loaf plan also indicated that the site could be used for overflow parking, this may not be feasible given the presence of wetlands onsite.

The final section of the plan was the Trails and Open Space section. As part of the effort to develop “healthy infrastructure”, a comprehensive trail network in and around Sugar Loaf was proposed. In addition to providing alternate pedestrian routes to shops in the center of Town and serving to link the hamlet to the surrounding neighborhoods, this network would also ensure public access to Sugar Loaf Mountain and ultimately to Goosepond Mountain State Park and the Appalachian Trail.

The proposed Minisink Trail would run behind properties on King’s Highway and connect the Bertoni Sculpture Garden to the Barnsider Tavern. A paved multi-use trail, this facility would accommodate inline skaters, cyclists, pedestrians, strollers, etc. This trail would require two stream crossings, one of which has already been constructed on the Barnsider property.

Queen’s Lane is a proposed alley that would run parallel to the Minisink Trail and would possibly extend to the south, connecting with Scott’s Meadow. The plan identifies several other resources that would be developed in conjunction with this alley. These resources include additional parallel parking spaces or pocket lots; new retail frontage; and an alternate entry point to the Scott’s Meadow retail complex.



The Sugar Loaf Mountain Trail System would consist of a dirt trail originating from the south end of Sugar Loaf at King’s Highway. This path would travel south to White Oak Road, crossing the railroad and the Sugar Loaf Bypass to eventually connect to the existing Sugar Loaf Mountain trail system. An additional spur to this trail network is proposed to run between the Minisink Trail and the railroad tracks, then connecting with the main trail. It was also recommended that connections

be established to Goosepond Mountain State Park to the east and to the Appalachian Trail to the southeast. Temporary trails along utility easements could be created prior to establishing permanent pathways.

An infrequently used rail line crosses many of the proposed trail sites. To ensure pedestrian safety, a pedestrian crossing is needed. Existing abandoned abutments over the tracks could be used to help defray the costs associated with constructing the needed pedestrian bridge.

The proposed Creamery Pond Trail would connect the Methodist Church with Creamery Pond Road, to the rear of the Lycian Centre. Providing access to the Creamery Pond waterfront, this

trail would have spurs connecting to Romer's Alley, the Lycian Centre, and the south end of the Sugar Loaf business district.

The final trail proposed as part of this plan is the Lycian Centre Trail. This pedestrian link, the shortest one proposed, would primarily be an improvement and extension of an existing walkway. While a footbridge was identified as already existing at the site, poor drainage hinders its use. Suggested improvements include, potentially, the development of a wooden walkway. This trail would connect the Lycian Centre's parking lot with the Creamery Pond Trail.

Additional recommendations from the Sugar Loaf Plan that are specific to the Town's existing parks and recreational resources are discussed elsewhere in this Plan.

### *1.3.3 Southern Walkkill Biodiversity Plan, 2005*

The Wildlife Conservation Society completed a biodiversity study of the Towns of Chester, Goshen, and Warwick in 2005. Its subtitle was "Balancing Development and the Environment in the Hudson River Estuary Watershed." The intent behind the plan was to identify vital biologically diverse areas for conservation purposes and to establish a regional, multi-town approach to land use planning to promote wildlife and habitat conservation. The project sought to address the impacts of sprawl on natural ecosystems by: (1) proving baseline scientific information; (2) developing innovative tools; and (3) integrating these elements into the land use decision-making process. These initial three steps are to provide a platform, so that there may be more thorough municipal and inter-municipal discussions, and collaborative efforts to address challenges and pursue opportunities, in the future.

To ensure the protection of biodiversity (and to ensure that development supports biodiversity) the report calls for the accommodation of both "core wildlife habitat areas" and "connective corridors." These connective corridors, broad swaths of habitat that connect habitat hubs, enable dispersal of animals among the hubs, maintaining the gene pools and preventing localized species extinctions. While not as undisturbed or intact as the habitat hubs they connect, these swaths do provide secondary habitat in addition to their important linkage function.

The plan identified five areas in Chester that are important for biodiversity. These included: (1) Glenmere Lake/Black Meadows Creek, which houses a thriving population of a state listed amphibian but is threatened by development occurring in northwestern Chester; (2) Goosepond Mountain State Park, which is an "excellent" habitat, primarily due to its undeveloped status; (3) Sugarloaf Mountain presents both a scenic backdrop as well as an important diverse habitat, but is threatened by residential development pressures on its eastern slopes; (4) the confluence of Young's Brook and Seeley Brook, abutted to the north and east by large, high-quality wetlands, is challenged by the routing of U.S. Route 6; and (5) wetlands of central Chester, which have historically housed declining and listed species.

The plan recommends Goosepond Mountain State Park remain undeveloped. If recreational uses are developed at the park, the plan recommends that a Unit Management Plan be prepared that incorporates all available biodiversity data and has biodiversity protection as its primary goal. The plan also recommends discouraging further development on Sugarloaf Mountain's eastern slopes.

#### *1.3.4 Recreation and Open Space Planning Project, 1993*

Prepared by Dr. Rod Warwick from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, this document inventoried the Town's existing recreational resources. Initiated in October 1991, the project was finalized in January 1993. The analysis of the project included site inventory, preliminary lifestyle market, census analysis of the community and an evaluation of current holdings based on national standards and projected needs for short-term, moderate and long term planning purposes. The study also included a number of recommendations to address the identified needs.

This study sought to identify whether or not the Town's then-existing recreational resources met the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) standards. Based on a standard of 10 acres per 1,000 residents, Chester should have had an estimated 92 acres of developed recreational land. However, at the time, the Town had only 43.1 acres of developed recreational land, thus experiencing a shortfall of 48.9 acres. Adding an additional 28.5 acres of passive recreation lands, brought the Town's total to 71.6 acres. This supply was still deficient by more than 20 acres.

A more stringent NRPA standard used at the time required 30 acres per 1,000 residents for rural areas. Held to this standard, Chester should have had approximately 275 acres of developed recreational lands at the time of the study. The Town fell far below this amount, accommodating only the aforementioned 71.6 acres (inclusive of passive recreation lands).

Finally, a rural community standard devised by the NRPA called for a 25% land set aside for recreation, open space, and/or conservation land use. Inclusive of both active and passive recreation lands, under this standard Chester would need to have 3,669 acres dedicated to such uses. At the time the Town had only 2,221 acres that met the requirements. Thus, the Town was short by nearly 1,450 acres.

The parkland assessment included a total of 22 sites. Of these 22 sites, seven were Town recreation/park managed sites including three outdoor facilities, one indoor use, and three open space sites. Four sites were Town-protected sites but were neither owned, nor managed by the Town. One site was identified as a private recreation site used by Town residents. Five sites were identified as private recreational sites that were not open to the public at that time. The last classification consisted of "other" protected sites not being used for recreation at the time.

The amount of lands under control of the Town for recreational uses was divided into two major categories: 1) Active recreational lands under control of the Town; and 2) Town owned open

space (environmentally sensitive areas). The first category consisted of 43.1 acres, while the second consisted of 28.5 acres.

Whereas the report identified a need for additional resources to meet needs for the entire community, several “population growth areas” were specified as high priority. These included the Sugar Loaf area; Walton Park or Lake subdivision; and the south central area of Town (including the Camp Monroe area, Townsend/Able Noble Drive subdivision area). In general, the study identified a need for additional parks and recreational resources in the southern, western, and eastern sections of the Town as these areas were underserved.



According to the NRPA per capita guidelines on recreational resources, Chester was deficient in its provision of badminton, volleyball, archery, skeet, and swimming facilities. Other resources determined insufficient were running track facilities and trails. Conversations with stakeholders and park users indicated the Town was experiencing high demand problems related to its recreational field and court facilities. The study identified securing a swimming

facility as the highest priority for the Town.

Recommendations identified in the study included the following:

- **Regional or Dispersed Parks:** One potential solution to meet Chester’s park deficiency called for the development of a regional park. At a minimum of 200 acres, this park could contain a swimming area, softball/baseball field complex, tennis/racquet sports complex, picnicking areas, playground/tot lot area, outdoor event or open space area, hiking and walking area or trail system and conservation/natural areas. Other ideas could include a public nine-hole golf course to support parking, restroom facilities/bathhouse and concession building. If the Town, instead, opted to develop dispersed community or neighborhood parks, such parks should be developed in the Sugar Loaf area, the Walton Park/Lake area and within the southern section of Town.
- **Recreation Staff:** This study, in 1993, recommended that the Town hire a full time recreation and parks staff personnel.
- **Development Fee:** The Town’s recreation impact fee at the time, \$200 per house, was identified as inadequate. Lands dedicated to the Town were deemed of “little value”, providing only buffer land or wildlife habitat, but not sufficient for park development. It was recommended that the Town more carefully monitor where these funds go, through the development and implementation of a recreational facilities capital development plan.
- **Additional Facilities/Amenities:** Designating area for badminton, street hockey, skating, and signing existing trails and pathways are identified as several “low cost solutions” to meeting

some of the community's needs. Developing a recreation master plan, with appropriate public input, is one way the Town can identify its most critical needs. A trail network, a running track, open space play areas, passive nature and wildlife areas, and a swimming facility were identified as high priorities through this assessment. Demand-driven needs included softball/baseball fields, tennis courts, basketball courts, multipurpose court, a community picnic area, and an open space/special event staging area.

- The Orange County Parks Assessment Task Force – In 1988, the task force recommended that Glenmere Lake and Glenmere Estates be targeted for future park and recreation development. This could include, potentially, a public beach and swimming area. Chester should continue to support this recommendation.
- Facility Maintenance and Handicapped Accessibility: Chester should develop a maintenance and restoration plan for the existing park system.
- Acquisition or Acceptance of Recreation/Open Space: Chester will need more developed recreation land in the coming two decades. A continuation of the fee collection system at the current rate will not provide sufficient funds for land acquisition. Investing funds collected might present a higher rate of return. One potential solution to ensure the quality of subdivision parklands dedicated to the Town would be to engage a landscape architect to ensure that the Town acquires desirable, serviceable, and developable recreation areas.
- Completion of the Open Space and Recreation Master Plan: The process of completing an open space and recreation master plan should be the next phase.

### *1.3.5 Orange County, New York Open Space Plan, 2004*

The Orange County Department of Planning completed the first Orange County Open Space Plan in July 2004. The document stands as a formal supplement to the County Comprehensive Plan. As the County has been experiencing substantial population growth that is projected to continue, the Plan, as was indicated in its Introduction, was designed to accomplish the following:

- Define the uniqueness and environmental characteristics of the County as they relate to quality of life;
- Define future open space needs; and
- Recommend County and other priority actions needed to protect key open spaces.

Developed around the same time, there was some overlap in the issues addressed through the County's 2003 Comprehensive Plan and the 2004 Open Space Plan. These areas of concern included:

- Better management of development patterns - providing guarantees that land development location and design is consistent with open space needs and,

- The future of agriculture – supporting farmland protection efforts that complement lead efforts to support the economic, business vitality of agriculture.

The County Open Space Plan is a five-year plan, matching the five-year horizon of the County Comprehensive Plan. Recommendations in the Open Space Plan include early action items (to be implemented in one year) and longer-term, five-year actions. Recommendations also include low-cost actions as well as actions requiring a commitment of financial and/or staff resources. Four of the major resource areas for consideration include Water Resources, Recreation, Landforms and Landscapes, and Biological Diversity (Biodiversity). The following highlights are excerpted from the Plan’s executive summary. A more detailed discussion of the farming issues and agricultural soils follows.

Water resources include the surface waters and watershed areas; protection zones around well heads; wetland areas and buffer zones; 100-year flood plain areas; vernal pools; streams; rivers; and lakes. Such water resources can encompass large tracts of land and can be protected through a variety of protection measures that may limit some land uses, but not prohibit all land uses from occurring in an area.

Recreation includes a variety of lands, both in type and in size. Local parks and urban open spaces include a range of large parks with natural areas, playing fields, playgrounds, and small “passive” parks with trees and benches. Within these open spaces, there may be community gardens, and paths for walking and biking through woodland and along streambeds.



Significant landforms and landscapes are natural features that were formed through dramatic changes in the earth’s surface. The features may include palisades, steep inclines, rock out-cropping, prominent mountaintops and valley vistas. Some of these features may include agricultural areas where land has been cleared for farming or man-made buildings were constructed to create picturesque landscapes. Other areas may be connected with historical events such as military battlefields or industrial activities.

Biodiversity is a shortened version of the term “biological diversity”. The concept encompasses the complex community of individual species and their habitats, acknowledging the variability within and among the species. Orange County contains unique features and circumstances that produce exceptional biodiversity. These include its geology, an ecological crossroads, low-density development and active agricultural uses.

As indicated in the County Open Space Plan, Orange County has increasingly become concerned with encouraging a balanced land use development pattern, one that accommodates population and housing growth while fostering economic development and maintaining the open space and rural character of the County. Maintaining the County’s prime soils as active agricultural lands is

a related challenge. In reviewing development patterns over the past twenty years, it becomes apparent that much of the County's new residential development has occurred outside the core urban areas. In 2000, approximately 18% of the County's population resided in the cities, while 61% lived in the towns, and the remaining 21% resided in the villages.

An estimated total of 15,322 building permits were issued for the period 1990-2000, resulting in an annual average of about 1,392 building permits. If current trends continue, new housing development will occur on another 5% of the County's remaining 522,000 developable acres over the next 20 years. Much of this growth will occur in Monroe, Chester, Warwick, Blooming Grove, Woodbury, Montgomery and New Windsor areas. Other, more rural areas, such as Deerpark, Greenville, Wawayanda, Minisink and Mount Hope, are also likely to experience some growth in residential development. There is also the possibility that large-scale residential developments in the southeastern part of the County could further skew the geographic distribution of growth over the next decade.

Orange County has a wide range of soil qualities and conditions, anchored by the highly productive muck lands or "Black Dirt," and, as a result, agriculture remains an important feature of the County's economy and landscape. The County has just over 522,000 acres of farmland, of which 224,000 acres have a USDA land capacity classification of I through III. (Classes I-III of seven classes are considered prime). Approximately 20,000 acres of generally unbuildable "black dirt", of which 14,000 is farmed, is located in the Towns of Goshen, Warwick, Wawayanda, Minisink and a small part of Chester. These Black Dirt soils are highly productive and suitable for a wide variety of vegetable and field crops. Found in large contiguous blocks within the "Black Dirt" regions, these soils support little development potential and are likely to remain highly suitable for farming into the foreseeable future.

Although agricultural activity occurs primarily in the Wallkill River Valley, it is also common in other areas. Soils with high land evaluation scores are scattered throughout the upland portions of Orange County, with concentrations existing in upland valleys and throughout the Wallkill River Valley. According to the County Open Space Plan, these upland soils are the most prone to development.

As the County Open Space Plan indicated, prime and productive soils account for 43% of all soils in the County. Most of the soils are deemed prime to fair for one or more of the following: flowers, vegetables, or fruit and tree fruit production. Prime and productive soils are highly desirable for residential and commercial construction. These soils are present to some degree in almost every town with large blocks in Warwick, Goshen, Wawayanda, Minisink, Montgomery, and Newburgh. These towns are also under high development pressure.

While small farmland protection efforts were identified as being under way, the Plan indicated that larger efforts would be necessary to keep ahead of the growing development pressures.

## **2. COMMUNITY PROFILE**

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### **2.1 TOWN LOCATION**

The Town of Chester is located about fifty miles northwest of New York City in the middle to southern part of Orange County, nearly to the New Jersey border. The Town encompasses approximately 25 square miles, with the Town being bordered by the Town of Goshen, Town of Blooming Grove, Town of Florida, Town of Monroe and the Town of Warwick.

New York State Route 17&6 provides easy east-west access from New York Thruway at the Town of Harriman. Route 17 winds itself up past Sullivan County and Route 13 travel south to it meets Route 94 and passes into New Jersey. The New York State Thruway allows easy access to and from Albany and New York City.

### **2.2 TOWN HISTORY**

Chester was originally a small hamlet in the Town of Goshen. John Yetverton was the first landowner in what was to become the Village of Chester. He bought the land from John Ensign on May 19<sup>th</sup>, 1755. After John Yetverton's death in 1783, his grandson Abijah was given an acre of land in and in 1798 he erected the First Presbyterian Church.

Still a hamlet in the Town of Goshen, the number of inhabitants in Chester grew. Saw mills and gristmills appeared, deriving much needed water power from the Otterkill in West Chester. The mills sparked additional population growth and a country store, hotel, and blacksmith shop soon opened in the Village. The first post office opened in 1794 with a tannery on the same lot.



The Town was created in 1845 from parts of the Towns of Blooming Grove, Goshen, Monroe and Warwick. The Village of Chester was incorporated in 1892. Mr. James Gray was elected the first Supervisor to represent the Town of Chester, which at that time was 20,000 acres.

Demand in onions grew in the 1860s and 1870s, with the end of the Civil War. The industry took off and was very successful. Today Chester onion fields continue to produce an average of 60,000 bushels yearly.

### **2.3 TOWN ENVIRONMENTAL AND GEOLOGICAL FEATURES**

Recreational needs are very much dependent upon the natural and environmental features of the local community. Environmental features, such as terrain, climate, and water bodies, often determine the types of recreational activities that will occur in an area. A region that has a longer winter climate will gear its recreational opportunities towards winter activities. Similarly, a

region with a milder climate will more likely be geared towards summer based recreational activities. The Town of Chester's location offers a diverse climate, providing for both winter and summer recreational opportunities.

### 2.3.1 Topography

Mountains in Chester act as an important scenic backdrop to the community, providing beautiful ridgelines. Typically wooded, Chester's areas of steep terrain have shallow soil over bedrock that is highly susceptible to erosion. The majority of the ridgelines are located in the southern part of the Town with residential development located outside of the steep slope area. Some of the most prominent Mountains in the Town are Goosepond Mountain, Durland Hill, Pine Hill, Sugarloaf Mountain, Snake Mountain and Bellvale Mountain.

### 2.3.2 Scenic Roads

The Town of Chester has many scenic roads that offer views of the mountains and natural settings throughout the town. Scenic viewing areas are located along portions of Kings Highway, which offers views of Sugarloaf Mountain, and Lakes Road, which offers views of Taylor Mountain and Bellvale Mountain. Panoramic views of the meadows are visible along portions of Gibson Road and Pine Hill Road.

### 2.3.3 Wetlands

Wetlands include areas that are commonly known as bogs, swamps, marshes, wet meadows, floodplains and areas of water logged soils. There are many wetlands throughout both the Town and Village of Chester, some of which are regulated by the State DEC while others are regulated by the United States army Corp of Engineers. The wetlands are found in all areas, but are primarily located along Black Meadow Creek, Seely Brook and Youngs Brook.



According to the 2003 Town of Chester Comprehensive Plan, these areas of wetland serve Chester in three positive ways, they filter and clean water, provide wildlife habitat and provide stormwater storage and retention. Given the sensitive nature of such areas, development on wetland areas should be limited to the occasional road or driveway.

### 2.3.4 Floodplains

For the most part, floodplains in Chester follow the Town's existing streams, waterways, and wetlands, extending further in low-lying areas. The largest continuous flood plain follows the Black Meadow Creek and its tributaries, in the western half of Town, encompassing much of Sugar Loaf and much of the southeastern quadrant of the Village. A second series of floodplains cover Seeley Brook and its tributaries in the low-lying areas of southeast Chester. The Northern

part of Town also houses a large floodplain north of NYS Route 6. This flood plain overlaps into the neighboring Town of Blooming Grove.

**2.3.5 Rare and Endangered Species**

According to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Division of Fish, Wildlife, & Marine Resources Natural Heritage Program, there are a number of state listed rare animals, plants and significant habitats located in the Town of Chester. These species and habitats are recorded as endangered or threatened by New York State. An endangered species is any native species in imminent danger of extinction in New York or any species listed as endangered by the US Department of the Interior. A threatened species is any species, likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future in New York, or listed as threatened by the US Department of Interior. An unlisted status means that the species, while noted as existing in the community, is not listed as endangered or threatened. The endangered and threatened species and significant habitats are recorded by NYSDEC and grouped into several categories, Communities, Amphibians, Reptiles, Vascular Plants and Mammals. The specific location of the species is considered confidential.

The following table summarizes the NYS Heritage Program findings:

**Table 1: NYS Heritage Program**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Species</b>	<b>NYS Legal Status</b>
<b>Communities</b>	<i>Oak-Tulip Tree Forest</i>	Unlisted
	<i>Rocky Summit Grassland</i>	Unlisted
	<i>Red Cedar Rocky Summit</i>	Unlisted
	<i>Appalachian Oak Hickory Forest</i>	Unlisted
<b>Amphibians</b>	Two un-named sensitive elements	Endangered
<b>Reptile</b>	Un-named sensitive elements	Threatened
	Three un-named sensitive elements	Endangered
<b>Vascular Plant</b>	<i>Side-oats Grama</i>	Endangered
	Un-named Sensitive Element	Endangered
	<i>Davis' Sedge</i>	Threatened
	<i>Violet Wood-sorrel</i>	Threatened
	<i>Small-flowered Crowfoot</i>	Threatened
<b>Mammal</b>	<i>Allegheny Woodrat</i>	Unlisted

Source: New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, division of Fish, Wildlife, & Marine Resources Natural Heritage Program

**2.4 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE**

**2.4.1 Population**

At the time of the 2000 Census, the Town of Chester’s population was estimated to be 12,140. The 1990 population for the Town was 9,138. This indicates a significant increase of 32.9%

between 1990 and 2000. During the same ten-year period, the population of Orange County showed an increase of 11%, growing from 307,647 persons to 341,367 persons. The Town's 2005 population estimate is 12,971, a five-year increase of 831 persons. The 2004 Orange County Open Space Plan projects a 2010 population for Chester of 14,593 and a 2020 population of 17,541. This current and projecting population increase has had and will continue to have a dramatic impact on the community's resources, particularly its parks and recreational resources.

### 2.4.2 Age Distribution

Detailed age information is useful in planning a community's amenities. Looking at age group forecasts is useful in determining the size and amount of parklands needed for a range of age-specific uses, such as playgrounds for toddlers, little league fields for older children, and walking trails and community rooms for seniors.



Table 2 indicates a number of interesting characteristics about the Town and Village of Chester's population. At present there appears to be a smaller amount of individuals in the age cohort 15-24 in the Town as compared to the other age cohorts. This population comprises 10.8% of the Village's population and 13.4% of the State's total population and only 10% of the Town's population. In contrast, half of the Town's population is in the age group 25-54: 50.9% of the Town's residents fall in this age group, as compared to the Village's population with 50.1% and 44.2% of the State. The Town of Chester is one the fastest growing areas in Orange County.



The 65 and over age group comprises a smaller proportion (7.7%) of the Town population, as compared to both the Village (10.9%) and the State (12.8%). Please see Table 2.

**Table 2: Town Population by Age, 2000**

Age	Town		Village		New York State	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Under 5	866	7.1%	235	6.8%	1,239,417	6.5%
5-9	971	8.0%	242	7.0%	1,351,857	7.1%
10-14	938	7.7%	215	6.2%	1,332,433	7.0%
15-19	767	6.3%	181	5.3%	1,287,544	6.8%
20-24	453	3.7%	188	5.5%	1,244,309	6.6%
25-34	1496	12.3%	625	18.1%	2,757,324	14.5%
35-44	2604	21.4%	638	18.5%	3,074,298	16.2%
45-54	2086	17.2%	464	13.5%	2,552,936	13.5%
55-64	1029	8.5%	280	8.2%	1,687,987	9.0%
65-74	568	4.7%	215	6.2%	1,276,046	6.7%
75-84	277	2.3%	127	3.7%	860,818	4.5%
85 & Over	85	0.7%	35	1.0%	311,488	1.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,140</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>3445</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>18,976,457</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

### 2.4.3 Educational Attainment

National trends have indicated that more individuals are attaining higher levels of education, while those having a high school level education or less has been steadily decreasing.

Table 3 compares the educational attainment for the Town of Chester with Orange County and New York State. The percentage of the Town that has received some college education is higher (30.5%) than both Orange County (28.3%) and New York State (24%). Chester (at 14.1%) also has a fewer percentage of persons that have a 12<sup>th</sup> grade level education or less, as compared to the State at 20.9% and the County at 18.1%. Orange County as a whole has the highest percentage of persons graduating high school, when compared to both the Town of Chester and the State.

**Table 3: Comparison of Educational Attainment, 2000**

Attainment Level	Chester	% of Total	Orange County	% of Total	New York State	% of Total
Less than 12th grade	1,145	14.1	38,629	18.1	2,626,324	20.90%
High School Graduate	2,405	29.5	66,119	31.1	3,480,768	27.80%
Some College	2,495	30.5	60,115	28.3	3,002,232	24.00%
Bachelor's and higher	2,113	25.9	47,953	22.5	3,433,212	27.40%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,045</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>212,816</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>12,542,536</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

2.4.4 Income

Chart 1 compares the median household income for the Town of Chester, the Village, Orange County and the State for 1990 and 2000. The Town of Chester holds the highest Median Household Income in both 1990, \$51,537 and 2000, \$69,280. The State has the lowest Median Income at \$43,393 in 2000 and \$32,965 in 1990. Interestingly, the Village of Chester’s Median Income is lower than the Town; it stands at \$55,417 a 20% difference from the Town. Orange County falls in between the State and the Village at \$39,198 in 1990 and \$52,058 in 2000.

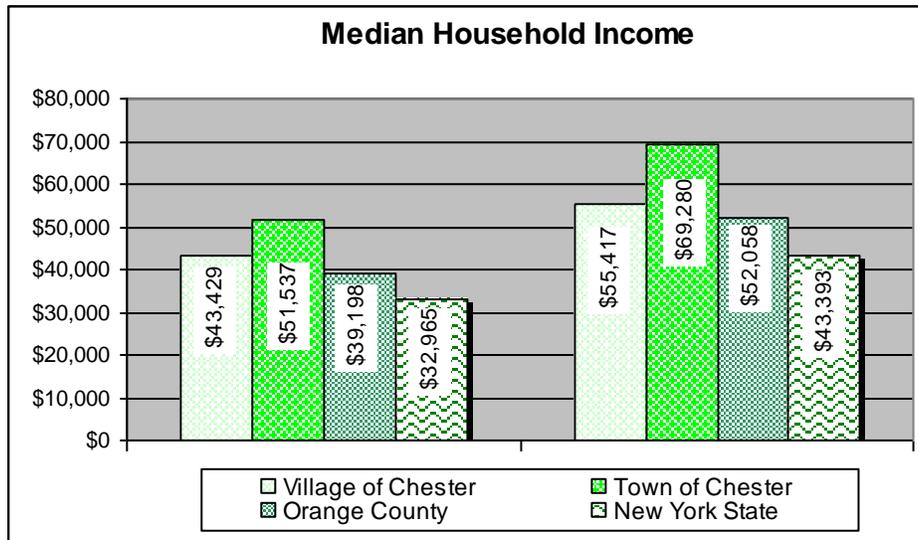


Figure 1: Median Household Income, 1990 and 2000

2.4.5 Housing

At the time of the 2000 Census, the housing stock in the Town of Chester consisted of 3,984 homes, of which, 3,848 were occupied. Of these, 3,051 housing units, or 79.3%, were owner-occupied while the remaining 797, or 20.7%, were renter-occupied units.

Table 4 summarizes the vacancy status of the Town of Chester’s housing inventory. Although the number and percentage of vacant units in the Town decreased by 40% during the 1990s, the portion of units identified as seasonal homes grew by 5.4% while those identified as other vacant in 1990 and 2000 increased by 12.9%.

**Table 4: Town of Chester Housing Inventory, 1990 and 2000**

Housing Units	1990		2000		% Change (1990-2000)
	#	%	#	%	
<b>Total housing units</b>	<b>3236</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>3984</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>23.1%</b>
Occupied housing units	3006	92.9%	3848	96.6%	<b>28.0%</b>
Vacant housing units	230	7.1%	136	3.4%	<b>-40.9%</b>
<b>Occupied housing units</b>	<b>3006</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>3848</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>28.0%</b>
Owner-occupied	2345	78.0%	3051	79.3%	<b>30.1%</b>
Renter-occupied	661	22.0%	797	20.7%	<b>20.6%</b>
<b>Vacant housing units</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>-40.9%</b>
For rent	38	16.5%	24	17.6%	<b>-36.8%</b>
For sale only	80	34.8%	25	18.4%	<b>-68.8%</b>
Seasonal, recreation, occasional	37	16.1%	39	28.7%	<b>5.4%</b>
Other vacant	31	13.5%	35	25.7%	<b>12.9%</b>

Source: 1990 &amp; 2000 US Census

As is evident in Table 5, New York State housing is older, on average, than housing in the Town and Village of Chester, as well as in Orange County. Most of Chester housing stock was built between 1980 and 1989 (21.7%). The second largest time period for building homes was 1970-1979 (19.5%). The Village shows the same trend as the Town in housing construction. Unlike the Village and the Town, Orange County and New York State show that the majority of the homes were constructed before 1939.

**Table 5: Comparison of Year Structure Built**

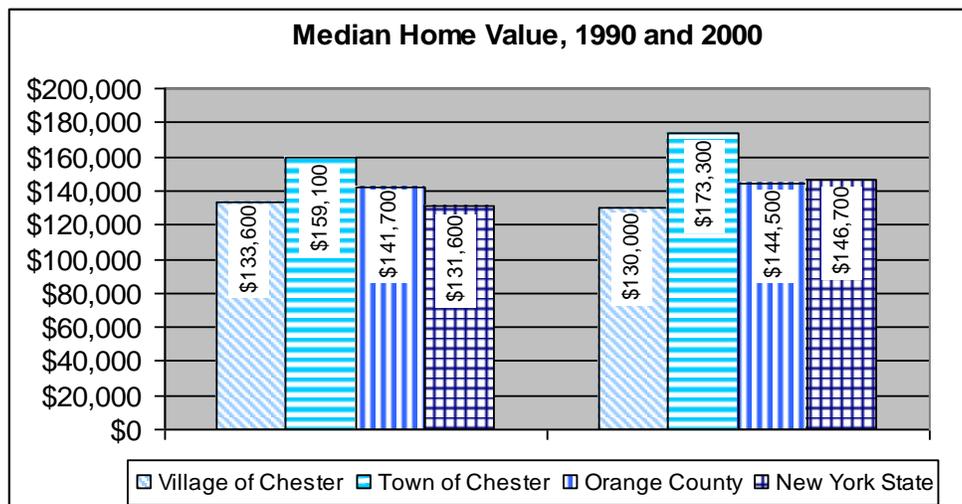
Year Structure Built	Chester (T)	Chester (V)	Orange County	New York State
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
Built 1999 to 3/2000	3.7%	2.5%	2.0%	0.9%
Built 1995 to 1998	7.9%	3.6%	5.3%	2.6%
Built 1990 to 1994	9.6%	8.3%	6.1%	3.4%
Built 1980 to 1989	21.7%	26.5%	15.3%	7.7%
Built 1970 to 1979	19.5%	19.3%	15.6%	11.3%
Built 1960 to 1969	16.3%	8.0%	13.3%	14.6%
Built 1940 to 1959	7.7%	9.7%	18.5%	28.3%
Built 1939 or earlier	13.6%	22.1%	23.9%	31.2%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 2000.

The median selling price for homes is determined by taking the middle-selling price of all homes sold annually within a given area. In 1990, the Town of Chester had a median house value

(\$159,100) that was 19% higher than the Village of Chester's median house value (\$134,500) and 12% higher than the County's value (\$141,700). In 2000, it appears that the gap in housing value between the Town and the Village, County and State widened. At \$173,300 the median price of houses in the Town is much larger than the value in both the Village (\$130,000) and the County (\$144,500).

Although not available at the local level, average residential sales price data is available at the County level. According to the Greater Hudson Valley Multiple Listing Service, the average sales price for a single-family home in Orange County increased by 6.3% between May 2004 (\$301,246) and May 2005 (\$320,189). The average sales price in the mid-Hudson Valley area (including Orange, Rockland, Sullivan, and Ulster Counties) grew by 11.0% during that period from \$341,255 in May 2004 to \$378,945 in May 2005.



**Figure 2: Median Home Value, 1990 and 2000**

## 2.5 EXISTING ZONING, LAND USE, AND LAND USE REGULATIONS

### 2.5.1 Zoning Districts

The Zoning regulations for the Town of Chester were originally adopted on February 2, 1974, and subsequently amended through the years with the last revision being done in 2005. [It should be noted that several recent modifications to the Town's Zoning were completed in response to recommendations outlined in the Town's 2003 Comprehensive Plan. These changes include the adoption of the Ridge Preservation Overlay District and the allowance of Cluster Development.] The Town of Chester is divided into 15 classes of zoning districts, which are shown on the official zoning map dated December 3, 2003. A list of the districts follows:

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AR-.3	Agricultural-Residential District
SR-1	Suburban-Residential District
SR-2	Suburban-Residential District
SR-6	Suburban-Residential District
RO	Residential Office District
LB	Local Business District
LB-SL	Local Business District (Sugar Loaf)
GC	General Commercial District
OP	Office Park District
IP	Industrial Park District
I	Industrial District
AI	Agri-Industry District
FP	Floodplain and Ponding Area Environmental Subdistrict
RPOD	Ridge Preservation Overlay District
PAC	Planned Adult Community Overlay District

According to the latest revision of the Town of Chester Current Zoning Map, the Town's largest zoning district is the Agricultural Residential District (AR-.3). This district allows 2 to 5 acres lots with the majority of the district being located south of the Village to the Town of Warwick and the Town of Monroe borders.

Cluster development is allowed in this district by site plan approval and must preserve at least 50% open space with cluster lots limited to a minimum of 21,780 square feet. Permitted uses include single family dwelling, municipal buildings including fire station, offices, libraries, parks, museums, etc. and public schools. Commercial agricultural operations with no odor are also permitted in the district. Membership clubs providing outdoor recreational facilities and private schools, colleges and day care center are permitted but require site plan approval from the planning board. Several of the parks are located in this district including, Chester Commons, Goosepond State Park, and part of Broadview Estates.

The Town of Chester Suburban Residential (SR-2) District has the second largest land area. This district is scattered throughout the Town and allows two dwelling units per acre with higher densities for senior housing as well as Planned Adult Communities (PAC). Permitted uses in this district are single-family and municipal buildings, and municipal or public uses including: fire stations, offices, libraries parks museums and public schools. Uses requiring site plan approval include: cluster subdivisions with Town Board approval; two-family dwellings; senior housing; and day care centers. Two parks are located within this district, Pulvrent Field and Oak Drive Park.

As previously mentioned, the Ridge Preservation Overlay District was created as a direct result of the 2003 Comprehensive Plan. The majority of the overlay district is located within the AR-.3 district with a small amount of land in the SR-1 and SR-2 District. The purpose of the Ridge Preservation Overlay District is to protect the dramatic ridgeline elevations that afford the

sweeping views of the countryside. These views form a scenic backdrop and are considered an important element of the Town. One important restriction of this regulation is that any new structure requiring a building permit must be located so that it is not visible from any point on Pine Hill Road, Bull Hill Road, Black Meadow Road or from any State, County or interstate highway. The planning board must review and approve proposed dwellings and structural locations and assess their visual impacts either during the subdivision process or prior to the issuance of a building permit. The Appalachian Trail, Oak Drive Park and Broadview Estates are located within the Ridge Protection Overlay District.

A section of Broadview Estates and the Appalachian Trail are located in the third largest District, Suburban Residential (SR-1). Permitted uses include single family dwelling with one acre lots, municipal buildings including fire station, offices, libraries, parks, museums, etc. and public schools. Uses requiring site plan approval are: clustered development with Town Board approval; churches; private schools and annual membership outdoor recreational clubs.

### 2.5.2 Summary of Land Use (2004)

This section of the Chester Recreation and Open Space Plan provides an analysis of land use through the use of (2004 - Geographic Information System (GIS) data). The *Town of Chester Land Use Map* was created using 2004 Geographic Information System (GIS) parcel-based Real Property Assessment data from Orange County.<sup>2</sup> Each individual land parcel was assigned a land use category based upon the New York State Real Property Type Classification Codes. The following land use categories were used to color code all of the *Land Use Map* (2004) for this study:

1. Agricultural – Property used as a part of an operating farm that does not have living accommodations and is uses for the production of crops and/or raising of livestock
2. Commercial – Property used for hotels, restaurants, automobile services, storage, retail, banks, offices, funeral homes, etc.
3. Community Services - Property used for schools, libraries, places of worship, cultural facilities, welfare services, hospitals, clinics, government, police, correctional facilities, shelters, cemeteries, etc.
4. Industrial - Property used for the production and fabrication of durable and non-durable goods, mining, quarrying, etc.
5. Multi-Family Residential - Property used for apartments, and all types of residential dwellings that have more than two dwelling units.
6. Public Service - Property used for electric or gas power generation or transmission, public drinking water and water treatment facilities, communications, train, and waste disposal sewer treatment, etc.

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<sup>2</sup> This was the most recent data available from Orange County at the time of this plan's preparation in 2005. Accuracy and completeness of this information is not guaranteed, as the information is only updated on an annual basis.

7. Recreation - Property used for parks, bowling centers, YMCA's, ice rinks, athletic fields, motion picture centers, health spas, campgrounds, etc.
8. Family Residential - Property used for single-family, year-round residence.
9. Vacant Lands - Property that is not in use, in temporary use, or lacking permanent improvement

The Town's development patterns have been greatly influenced by the natural terrain, existing railroad, road network and availability of public water and sewer service. As of 2004, the majority of land area in the Town is either categorized as vacant, family residential, community or agriculture.

Table 6 breaks down the Town properties in to ten (10) classifications. According to the Orange County Real Property Assessment GIS data, in 2004, the Town contained 3,723 tax parcels which comprised approximately 16,023 acres. These figures are taxable parcels only and do not include land area covered by rivers and hydrologic features.

The largest land use category was **Residential**, which made up 30.8% of the total area, or approximately 4,930 out of 16,023.9 acres. The land-use category Residential includes one, two and three-family residences, mobile homes, residential-multi-purpose/multi-structural, estate residences, seasonal residences, rural residence with acreage and apartments.

As indicated in Table 6, and visible on the Existing Land Use Map, the second largest land area consisted of **Vacant Land**. This classification totals approximately 29.3% of the total land area, or about 4,696.9 acres.

**Table 6: Existing Land Use in Chester, 2004**

Land Use Category	# Acres	% of Total	# Parcels
Agricultural	2,848.6	17.8	206
Commercial	375.5	2.3	121
Community Services	275.8	1.7	34
Industrial	322.1	2.0	39
Office	8.9	0.1	7
Parks	1,524.9	9.5	61
Public Service	375.8	2.4	97
Residential/Possible Subdivision	4,930.6	30.8	2,266
Roads	664.8	4.2	268
Vacant Land	4,696.9	29.3	624
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,023.9</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>3,723</b>

Source: Orange County GIS Database, Town of Chester Real Property Assessment Data, 2004.

Properties assessed as **Agricultural** covered approximately 2,848.6 acres, or 17.8% of the total land within the Town. The majority of the Agricultural property was located in the north and

northwestern corner of the Town around the Village boundary lines. There was a significant amount of agricultural land located to the west of Route 13 and adjacent to Goosepond State Park.

Properties assessed as **Parks** represented 9.5% of the total Town area, or 1,524.9 acres. The Park land is somewhat scattered throughout the Town and Village. Recreational opportunities within the Town include Chester Commons Park, Oak Drive Park, Goosepond State Park, Pulvrent Field and the Appalachian Trail. The park within the Village is Carpenter Community Park.

Properties that are classified as Roads make about 4.2%, or 664.8 acres. This classification includes all the road networks in the Town and Village.

**Public Service** covered approximately 375.8 acres of the Town. This land use category includes facilities such as Sewer Treatment Plants, utility right-of-ways and infrastructure, and railroad properties.

**Commercially** assessed parcels within the Town totaled approximately 2.3% of the total Town area, or 375.5 acres. The concentration of commercial development occurred along the Route 6&17 corridor, in the Village of Chester. There were two other main spots of commercial development located in the Hamlet of Sugar Loaf and in the southern end of Town East of Route 82 and the Town of Monroe border.

Properties assessed as **Industrial** comprised about 2% of the total area of Town, or 322.1 acres. The largest Industrial land use was located adjacent to 6 & 17 across from the commercial areas in the Village of Chester. There was also a large industrial area off of Route 45 near the intersection of 82 in the southern portion of Town.

Property assessed as **Community Services** made up 1.7% of the total land area, or approximately 275.8 acres. Properties categorized as Community Services include, the Town and Village government office buildings, the United States Post Office, Fire and Police Stations, School-owned properties, and various religious properties.

### *2.5.3 Development Pressure*

Orange County has been experiencing a significant growth phase in recent years. According to the Orange County Open Space Plan, this growth is driven by several major factors: 1) continuing regional population growth; 2) radial growth from the New York City metropolitan area with Orange County representing the “outer ring of affordable single-family residences”; and 3) the fact that southern neighbors, Rockland, Putnam, and Westchester Counties are approaching full build-out.

During the 1990s, the growth rate in Chester was three times the growth rate of Orange County (33% as compared to 11%). With its increase in population of 3,002 (from 9,138 in 1990 to 12,140 in 2000), the Town of Chester was the third fastest growing Town in the County. Only

rural Hamptonburgh, which grew by 47%, with the addition of 1,496 residents to its 1990 base of 3,190; and the Town of Monroe, which grew by 36%, from 23,035 to 31,407, had faster growth rates.

Table 7 lists recent building permit issuance activity in the Town of Chester. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the average household size in the Town in 2000 was 2.92 persons while the average family size was identified as 3.31. Assuming 3-person households occupy these homes, this indicates an approximate additional of 927 residents to the Town. Assuming a more conservative family size of 2.5, this indicates additional 772 residents in Chester. With this addition, the Town's current population range could be anywhere from 12,912 to 13,067. ESRI Business Information Solutions, a data service provider that is a division of ESRI, estimated the Town's 2005 population to be 12,971 and forecasts a 2010 population of 13,969.

**Table 7: Town of Chester Building Permit Data**

Year	April 2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	Total
Single-Family Permits	14	49	48	55	42	101	309

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005.

#### *2.5.4 Open Area Development Law (1984)*

According to the Town's 2003 Comprehensive Plan Update, the Open Area Development Law was adopted as part of the Town's subdivision regulations in 1984. The purpose of this law was to help implement goals of the 1974 Comprehensive Plan by incorporating low-density development into the Town's hilly wooded areas. Open Area Developments are large lot subdivisions of tracts in excess of fifty (50) acres where private roads are allowed to access lots of five acres or more. The intent was to locate these developments where steep slopes and other limiting features hindering the ability to construct roads that met Town standards. This type of open area development results in the preservation of extensive areas of hills and wooded backdrops for the benefit of the public.

Since 1984, Open Area Developments and large lot developments have provided for 274 dwellings on lots over 5 acres. When the 2003 Comprehensive Plan was written, 10% of the Town consisted of open area development and large lot development. The 2003 Comprehensive Plan proposed that these open area developments continue to be allowed in both the Conservation-Residential District as well as the Agriculture/Rural Residential District.

#### *2.5.5 Cluster Zoning Development*

The Town adopted a "Cluster Zoning Development" law in compliance with the recommendations of the 2003 Comprehensive Plan. Cluster zoning provides a benefit by allowing the dimension and area requirements of single-family residences to be lowered, allowing more units on a smaller land area. This conserves land that would otherwise be included in larger residential parcels. The intent behind the regulation is to preserve the scenic and open quality of the Town's rural landscape and protect its historical and agricultural resources.

In general, Cluster development provides many benefits when it is enacted properly. Cluster development provides ownership and maintenance of open space; encourages subdivision plans that preserve environmental, historical and scenic features; and allows for other regulations that to designate, plan, and use subdivision open space parcels.

According to the Town's Zoning Ordinance, Cluster development was developed to encourage flexible design and promote development that makes the most appropriate use of the land. Cluster development is allowed in all of the zoning districts, with the Town Board's approval. The Planning Board issues approval over cluster developments simultaneously with subdivision plat approval. Bonus cluster developments are permitted in the AR-.3 District, provided 50% of the site's buildable lot area is preserved.

## 2.6 TRANSPORTATION

Recreational facilities and parklands should be accessible to its users. The transportation network and its facilities can have a significant impact on who will use the parks and recreational facilities. The Town and Village's primary local access roads are described in the following paragraphs.

### 2.6.1 Main Roads and Highways

There are several major highways that traverse the Town and Village of Chester. NYS State Route 6 and Route 17 (a major four-lane highway) provides east-west access into and out from both the Town and Village at Exit 127.

State Route 17M is a two-lane road that runs parallel to Route 6 and 17, is another main route for residents to travel. Route 17M allows direct access to the walking trail at Goosepond Mountain State Park and access to other main roads.



Laroe Road, also known as County Route 45, is a two-lane road that travels north to south. Route 45 intersects with Route 13 in the north and routes 82 and 5 in the south. Route 82 runs west off of Route 45 and connects with Route 13 at the southern section of Town. The entrance to Chester Commons Park is located adjacent to the highway garage directly off of Route 45. Oak Drive Park is also accessible by traveling Route 45 to Route 5.

Kings Highway, also known as County Route 13, is a two-lane road that runs south to north through the Town of Chester. Kings Highway travels through the Hamlet of Sugarloaf into the Town of Warwick. The Town recently purchased Broadview Estates for open space. Public access to the site, when developed, will be located off of Route 13.

State Route 94 is another two-lane road located in the northern part of town that runs through both the Town and the Village. This Route intersects Route 6 and 17 and 17M in the Village in a west to east path. Several schools and parks are located off of Route 94 in the Village. Chester Community Carpenter Park is positioned in the heart of the Village on Vadella Road by way of Route 94. Pulvrent Field is located off of Park Road and Surrey Road off of Route 94 just outside of the Village boundary.

### *2.6.2 Pedestrian and Bike Routes*

The Town of Chester is a rural Town with roads that are not conducive to pedestrian and bicycle traffic due to high speed of vehicles and the lack of sidewalks. Currently there are no designated bike routes along the roads of the town. According to the 2003 Comprehensive Plan update, the residents in the Town use bicycles as more of a recreational sport rather than for transportation purposes. The Heritage Trail is currently the only bicycle route that provides a paved bikeway path that is accessed for safe bicycle travel.

## 3. EXISTING PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) recommends identifying a park system’s strengths and weaknesses early on in the process by conducting an “environmental scan.” As part of the inventory and analysis phase, an environmental scan was conducted at each of Chester’s parks. To assist the consultant team evaluate the park system, an Individual Park Inventory Form was completed for each park. A blank copy of this form is included in the Park Analysis Appendix. As Chester’s parks were evaluated according to park standards identified in the New York State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), as described in the following chapter, the parks have been classified according to categories established in the SCORP (See Table 10 in Chapter 4). In some instances, appropriate classifications did not exist in the SCORP. *Natural Resource Areas* and *School Parks* were classified according to NRPA standards.

### 3.2 TOWN OWNED PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

The following sections describe the Town of Chester’s five parks, which total approximately 136.6 acres. Of the five, Chester Commons, Pulvrent Field, Broadview Estates, and Oak Drive Park are located within the Town, while Chester Community Carpenter Park is located in the Village. All but Oak Drive Park and Community Carpenter Park are on lands owned by the Town of Chester. Oak Drive Park was developed on lands owned by the Town Water Board, while the Village and Town own Community Carpenter Park jointly.

Park Name	Parcel ID	Park Use Acres
<b>Developed Parks (Community Parks)</b>		
Chester Commons	4-1-8.2 (34.1 acre parcel)	28
Carpenter Community Park	108-3-18	11.1
<i>Total Community Parks</i>		39.1
<b>Developed Parks (Pocket Parks)</b>		
Pulvrent Field	1-1-1.12	1.4
Oak Drive Park	8-1-24	3.1
<i>Total Pocket Parks</i>		4.5
<i>Total Developed Park Lands</i>		43.6
<b>Natural Resource Areas</b>		
Broadview Estates	7-1-45.11 (91.3 acre parcel)	91.3
Wilson Road cluster lands	28-3-12	7.7
Wilson Road cluster lands	28-2-6	2.5
<i>Total Natural Resources Area</i>		101.5

### 3.2.1 Chester Commons

Chester Commons is located south of the Village, off Laroe Road. The 24-acre park is adjacent to the Town's highway garage in a primarily residential area. While roadside signs direct patrons to the park, the entrance itself lacks any signage. This is due to the fact that the Town owns a very narrow segment of road frontage, and has been unable to obtain an easement that would allow for an appropriately sized park entrance sign.

The park offers a variety of recreational opportunities, including two multi-station play sets for children, a swing set, a 15' by 15' concession stand, barbecue grills, and horseshoe pits. There are several picnic tables dispersed throughout the park. League users are able to store athletic equipment in two storage sheds located adjacent to the concession stand.

In addition to the dispersed tables, there is a picnic or event pavilion that is located on a slight hill, overlooking the playground and concession stand. The pavilion area contains a concrete floor, tables, exterior lighting, and two horseshoe pits. A concrete building adjacent to the pavilion houses the park's only restroom facility. The restrooms are well fed throughout the season. A leachfield is located downhill from the facility, uphill from the playground. The septic system, which was installed when the park was first developed 25 – 30 years ago, was pumped several years ago. However, it is not pumped or serviced on a regular schedule.



The park's premier resource is the 210' by 420' combination football/soccer field, which is home to the Chester Soccer Club, open to both residents and non-residents. The field currently accommodates 24 teams with 334 players, with games often scheduled all day on weekends. There are two benches on the field for team use and one small set of bleachers in front of the concession stand provides spectator seating. Permits are required for use of the park facilities.

The football/soccer field has lighting to accommodate night games. The pavilion and the restrooms have light fixtures both outside and inside. Although the paved roadway that leads up the hill, providing access to both the restrooms and the pavilion, has a light pole, the illumination provided may be inadequate for guiding one's way up the hill at dusk or later. Floodlights provide lighting for the concession stand.

With a mixed terrain, the park is hilly by the pavilion, horseshoes and restrooms, but is flat by the parking area, field and playground. Aside from the field, the park has a substantial amount of tree cover.

Unstriped and unsigned, the park's primary parking area can accommodate an undetermined number of vehicles. There are two striped spaces reserved for those with disabilities located in front of the playground area. There is an unpaved lot that provides additional parking located just

off the main entrance road. A recurrent problem indicated by the Town RPC is the fact that people often park their cars along the park's access road, which is adjacent to the playground.

Chester Commons Park is used for the community's annual Easter Egg Hunt, Cub Scout camp, and concerts. The Easter Egg Hunt has become an area draw, attracting non-residents as well as



residents and ranging in size from 300 to more than 1,000. Police detail is often arranged to assist with such large events. The all-purpose field accommodates a mix of users including Pop Warner football, and recreational and travel soccer, with players aged from kindergarten to 10<sup>th</sup> grade. About 30 local groups regularly rent out the pavilion for special events and picnics throughout the season.

The playground equipment appears to be new and in relatively good condition. The park's pavement is intact, and trashcans are strategically placed around the park. During the spring of 2005, several new steel and plastic picnic table/bench sets were installed in the pavilion to replace several aged and worn sets. A new table set was also placed near the playground.

There are, however, a number of randomly placed safety hazards located throughout the park. These metal posts, poles, and tree branches are at ground level, easily accessible to younger children. In addition, there is a noticeable drainage problem to the right of the entrance just before the field. The ground level dips, allowing water to pool next to the small rock wall.

Beyond the two designated parking spaces, little else is done to make the park compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). For example, not only is the pathway that provides access to the restroom facility not ADA-compliant, but it is also uphill, making accessing the facilities difficult for the elderly and individuals with disabilities. [It should be noted that as of August 2005, the Town was allocated \$25,000 in State funds for the expansion of the concession stand located at the base of the hill to include men's and women's restrooms.]

Finally, while the park provides soccer and football users with a space to play, the park lacks basketball, skating facilities, and a number of other recreational amenities. Aside from the picnic tables in the pavilion and some seating around the soccer/football field, the park lacks benches and other casual seating areas. In addition, the park could benefit substantially from improved landscaping. While the tall trees and bushes contribute to a rustic feel, it also lends itself to a secluded environment, which some residents may find away too isolated.<sup>3</sup>

The 2002 Comprehensive Plan recommended conducting an analysis of the site's topography around the parking area and field to determine if the development of additional fields is possible. As a result of these recommendations, the Town has been proceeding on a plan to develop a

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<sup>3</sup> In a recent study described in the December 2005 issue of "Planning," the American Planning Association identified that people generally prefer "Olmstedian" landscapes in their parks. That is, landscapes that are "covered with scattered trees, smooth ground covers, water, and visual depth."

second, smaller non-regulation sized) 200' by 165' combination field. The plan also recommended extending the park's existing paved drive to connect to a future park to the rear of the site, on an adjacent property, identified as the McNeil property. This proposed park extension would allow for a continuous park/greenway connection between Chester Commons and Goosepond Mountain State Park.

This park is owned by the Town of Chester and has been jointly maintained by the Town Highway Department and Parks and Recreation Department. This park is classified as a *Community Park* under SCORP classifications.

### 3.2.2 Chester Community Carpenter Park

Chester Community Carpenter Park is located in the heart of the Village at the end of Vadella Road, directly adjacent to an onion field. The only park in the Village, this 16.4-acre park is close to the Village's commercial district and is within walking distance of several residential neighborhoods. Butch's Field is located near the park's entrance. In addition to the league games, other events held in this park are tennis camp and little league all-stars games.

This park offers a number of amenities including two baseball/softball fields, four tennis courts, a bocce ball court, two multi-station play structures and one swing set. In addition, the park offers a concrete court that has two basketball hoops and is used for ice-skating in the winter. This park also has a September 11th tribute and memorial. Several of the park's amenities are lit for nighttime use. These include one baseball field, the ice rink/basketball court, the parking lot, and the concessions/restroom building. Non-lit facilities include the tennis courts and the playground. There are several picnic tables and trash receptacles located throughout the park. The lighting around the concessions/restroom building is inadequate.



There are two regulation ball fields located at one end of the park. One is a little league field, while the other is a senior league field. Only one of these fields is irrigated. Each field has two enclosed dugouts and two sets of bleachers. Recently, windscreens were installed along the ball fields to protect game spectators. The fields themselves appear to be in good condition.

The field dugouts are in poor condition, posing a safety hazard to users. The dugouts' flat roofs and the inadequate drainage of the surrounding areas have resulted in significant water damage along the dugout walls. In addition, segments of the fields' metal fencing has rusted.

The ice rink/basketball court's concrete floor is in need of repair, and the basket hoops are in poor condition. The multi-use nature of the facility is problematic, as the floor curbing necessary to pool water for the ice rink, presents a hazard when the facility is being used as a basketball court. This is especially true of the edge of the court/rink that lies adjacent to the onion field, where the

topography changes drastically, culminating with a steep drop. The tennis courts, too, could use some rehabilitation.



The playground structures are relatively new and the parks department takes care in ensuring their maintenance, cleaning and painting when necessary. However, the playground does lack lighting and sufficient seating.

The park's primary parking area, which is unstriped, can accommodate an undetermined number of vehicles. The former Chester Union Free Elementary School, located within close proximity to the park, is used for overflow parking during special events. As the parking lot is located in the center of the park, this lack of clearly delineated pedestrian ways poses a threat to pedestrian safety. The park also lacks attractive

landscaping for the passive enjoyment of the park.

Jointly owned by the Town and Village, the Village turned over maintenance of this facility to the Town. The Town's Highway Department and Parks and Recreation Department have jointly maintained the park. About 5.3 acres of the property are presently being used for onion farming and a fenced-in mulching area, leaving about 11.1 acres for park uses. This park is classified as a *Community Park* under SCORP classifications.

### 3.2.3 Pulvrent Field

Pulvrent Field is located just outside the Village on Park Drive. Park Drive is in the northern section of Town off of Route 94. This park is only 1.4 acres and is one of the smallest parks in Chester. Surrounded by a residential neighborhood known as Surrey Meadows, the park is sometimes referred to as "Surrey Meadows" by residents. The park is surrounded partially by publicly owned lands, as several fenced-in municipal wells are located behind the field's backstop. An unpaved roadway extends through the wooded area to a town owned water treatment facility.



This park contains only one baseball/softball field. There is some open space adjacent to the field. The field is in good condition with a set of bleachers for game spectators. There is one portable toilet facility and one trash receptacle. The field lacks lights and has limited parking.

Behind the outfield fence there is a drop that leads to a small creek. This creek flows on to the edge of the property. This creek and other water bodies located nearby leads to a particularly severe mosquito infestation during the summer months.

While the field is in relatively good condition, the park is not ADA-compliant. It is not suitable for night games as it lacks lighting. The entrance is not well marked or signed, nor is the parking area well signed. There is also indication from community residents that parking for the field is insufficient, as park-goers often park their vehicles too close to residences, often on neighboring lawns or too close to driveways, hindering homeowners' ability to pull out of their driveways.

This park is owned by the Town of Chester and has been maintained jointly by the Town Highway Department and the Parks and Recreation Department. This park is classified as a *Pocket Park* under SCORP classifications.

### 3.2.4 Broadview Estates

Broadview Estates, located on Kings Highway roughly in the center of Town, is Chester's most recent addition to its park and recreation lands. Former farmland, the 91-acre parcel was up for development when the Town opted to acquire it for open space and recreation uses in 2005 at a cost of \$4 million.



An unpaved, uneven roadway provides access to the site, which, currently, is characterized by rolling hills.

A small old cemetery is located at the site. At present, the Town does not have a master plan to develop the site.

During the fall of 2005, the Town Parks and Recreation Commission reallocated \$10,000 to provide for a wintertime recreational activities at Broadview. To facilitate snowboarding, cross country skiing, tubing, and sleigh-riding, road and drainage work was done and parking was developed. Portable fencing, rented portable restrooms, and an emergency call box were installed.

This parcel is owned by the Town of Chester and is not presently maintained. As it is primarily undeveloped, this land presently qualifies as a *Natural Resource Area* under the NRPA classification guidelines. Given its size, central location, and accessibility, it would make an optimal site for a Large Urban or Large Community Park, a park designed to serve the entire community.

### 3.2.5 Oak Drive Park

This park, located on Oak Drive in the southeast tip of Town, is about 3 acres. However, much of this land is unimproved forestland. Owned by the Town's Water Department, a non-regulation basketball court was constructed a number of years ago. A small paved area provides limited parking. Although recently cleaned up with the help of local Eagle Scouts, for a long time this park was strewn with debris, old furniture, tires, rusted bicycles, and the like. In October a new

entrance sign was ordered for the park. The previous sign identified the park as “Chester Commons” and was likely just an extra sign placed at the site for the purpose of posting the Town’s park regulations.

The basketball court serves its purpose and appears to be used regularly by local teens. Recently resurfaced, the court is in good condition, while the fence and backboard were recently repainted. The court’s previously torn nets have been replaced with new nets. Although there is a plan to remove them, unenclosed water department tanks and structures remain onsite. The court itself is only partially fenced in, with trees and a slight drop off presenting a potentially dangerous situation. A trash receptacle and bench were recently placed in the park. There are no restroom facilities at the park, nor is the site ADA-compliant.



This park is owned by the Town of Chester Water Department and has been maintained by the Town Highway Department. This park is classified as a *Pocket Park* under SCORP classifications.

### 3.2.6 *Lake Hill Farms Cluster Land*

This parkland includes two parcels --one is 2.5 acres, while the other is 7.7 acres. These lands were deeded to the Town as permanent open space when the Lake Hill Farms residential subdivision was developed off Lake Road. The two parcels are accessible via Wilson Road and Tyler Place, respectively. Covered with waterbodies and wetlands, these parcels are unusable for the development of active recreational resources. However, they may be usable for passive recreation uses.

The Town of Chester owns this park. This park has been identified as a *Natural Resource Area* under the NRPA classification guidelines.

## 3.3 **SCHOOL OWNED PROPERTIES**

The Chester Union School District owns several sizable recreational facilities in Chester. This includes facilities located at the existing Chester school and at the former high school in the Village. Many of the classrooms in the former high school are presently being leased to the local BOCES. The former high school houses a gymnasium as well as several outdoor fields. Unfenced, the fields are open to the general public for “pick up” games, but organized leagues must get permits from the School District.

### 3.3.1 *Chester Union Free Elementary School*

The Chester Union Free Elementary School is located on Herbert Drive off of Surrey Road in the Town. Just outside the Village, the school is near the Goshen Town boundary. This school is

surrounded by residential neighborhoods. While the school site is 33.7 acres, not all this land is dedicated to park and recreation uses.



There is a large ball field that is used for general field purposes and baseball/softball games. Adjacent to the field there is a small playground that contains one multi-station play structure and three spring animals. On the opposite side of the school building, there are two multi-station play structures and a round climbing apparatus. The field and the playground both lacked lighting.

Overall, the condition of the park area was very good. The playground equipment was in very good condition, while there were no visible problems with the spring animals.

This park is owned and maintained by the Chester Union Free School District. This park has been identified as a *School Park* under the NRPA classification guidelines.

### 3.3.2 *Chester Academy High School*

The Chester Academy High School is located on Hambletonian Avenue in the Town, southwest of the elementary school. Although recently developed, the high school lacks many recreational amenities that have generally come to be regarded as standard, including a running and cross-country track as well as a football field. The School District uses Chester Commons' soccer field for football, while the Town uses the Chester Academy building to house its summer camp program. The school also uses the tennis courts at Chester Community Carpenter Park for throwing and conditioning several times throughout the year.

These facilities are owned and maintained by the Chester Union Free School District. This park has been identified as a *School Park* under the NRPA classification guidelines.

### 3.3.3 Butch's Field

Owned by the Chester Union Free School District, this field is located in the Village to the rear of the former high school building. The field is located within close proximity to the Chester Community Carpenter Park, and has one regulation-sized field that is used for girls' softball.



The Chester Union Free School District maintains the field. This park has been identified as a *Pocket Park* under the NRPA guidelines.

### 3.3.4 Former High School Field

Adjacent to Butch's Field is another field owned by the School District. Although it lacks lights and a concession stand, this field is used to accommodate soccer contests, as well as varsity and junior varsity sports.

The Chester Union Free School District maintains the field. This park has been identified as a *Pocket Park* under the NRPA guidelines.

## 3.4 OTHER PUBLICLY OWNED PROPERTIES

Orange County and New York State both own properties in the Town of Chester that function as recreation and open space resources. More information on these resources follow.

### 3.4.1 Black Meadow Creek Reservoir

Orange County owns a 459-acre parcel of land in the western section of the Town, by its shared boundary with the Town of Warwick's Village of Florida. This land surrounds Glenmere Lake and encompasses County-owned reservoir lands. The property is classified in the 2004 Orange County Open Space Plan as temporarily protected open space.

The Town's 2002 Comprehensive Plan recommended that the land, if it is not to be used for reservoir purposes in the imminent future, it should be opened for hiking trails, fishing and other passive recreational uses. If the land is no longer withheld for reservoir purposes, Orange County should develop it for active parkland and recreational use.

There has been recent discussion between the Town of Chester and Orange County to develop a portion of these lands as a waterfront park for Chester residents. This land would be used for cartop boating access and picnicking.

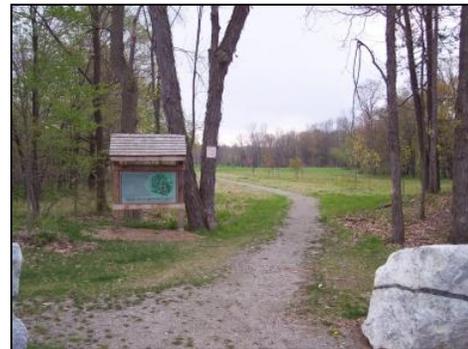
These lands that are located in the Town of Chester continue to be owned by Orange County and are maintained by the County. This land has been identified as a *Natural Resource Area* under the NRPA classification guidelines.

### 3.4.2 Goosepond Mountain State Park

Goosepond Mountain State Park is located in Chester, south of Route 17M and north of Route 45 in the eastern portion of the Town. The 1,471.5-acre State Park maintained by the Palisades Interstate Park Commission (PIPC), a steward of more than 100,000 acres of parkland in New York and New Jersey, including seven parks located in Orange County. The land was acquired in the 1960s, through the use of a Legislative Bond Act.

According to Chester’s 2002 Comprehensive Plan, the park was intended to have extensive active and passive recreational activities. However, money was never allocated to develop these facilities. The park does house the Hudson Highlands Trail, a former road, that runs 2.5 miles from Laroe Road to Route 17M. This is the park’s only official trail although equestrians ride along several other unofficial trails. The main trail varies in surface between asphalt, gravel, sand, and hard pack, with sections washed out from heavy rains in the fall of 2005.

The Orange County Open Space Plan states that Goosepond Mountain State Park is specifically designated as a “passive park” due to its size and location. According to the County, Goosepond Mountain State Park is used by area residents for passive activities such as fishing, hiking, horseback riding, bird-watching, and model airplane flying. According to the Park Ranger, there has been some illegal camping, mountain bike trail blazing, and ATV use in the park. The park does not have a trail register to count hikers, although they do provide “guesstimates” to the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation.



Goosepond Mountain State Park is currently undeveloped except for an area directly off of Route 17M. This area includes walking paths that run through an area of mitigated wetlands. These wetlands were developed to compensate for wetlands that were filled in to develop the Route 6 & NYS Route 17 interchange. There is a small gravel path that provides access to a wooden boardwalk that also functions as a scenic overlook. This overlook provides onlookers with a view of wetlands that extend far into the state park. There are small information signs describing the park’s vegetation and wildlife.

NYS Department of Transportation constructed a small parking area as part of the mitigation project. Another parking area is located across 17M from the entrance, near Craigsville Road (formerly Oxford Depot Road). According to the park ranger, these parking areas generally accommodate between 1-2 vehicles for the smaller lot and 2-3 vehicles for the larger lot. The only times the lots may get crowded is when there are several horse trailers.

The park does not have picnic areas or restrooms. The park stewards do not want visitors using the park for anything other than what it is currently permitted, because they do not have the resources allocated for such activities. Several years ago, an illegal campfire resulted in the loss of about two and a half acres. Illegally painted blue mountain bike trail blazes had to be removed. There is known to be illegal ATV use in the park, presenting a potential hazard to wildlife and other park visitors.

This park is owned and maintained by the PIPC. This park has been identified as a *Natural Resource Area* under the NRPA classification guidelines.

### **3.5 PRIVATELY OWNED PROPERTIES**

There are several privately owned properties in Chester that should be noted as existing or potential recreation resources. Each of these properties has been identified previously for the contribution they make or for the contribution they would make to Chester's park system if they were to be acquired for public use.

#### **3.5.1 Camp Monroe**

The 147-acre Camp Monroe, located off Trout Brook Road, served many years as a private religiously affiliated summer camp. Recently sold for development, there has been an ongoing discussion to develop approximately 2/3 of the site (about 97 acres) as a public park. Actively used to accommodate approximately 300 campers as recently as the summer of 2005, the 147.7-acre camp houses a number of outdoor as well as indoor facilities, that are regarded as being in good to excellent condition.

Camp Monroe's facilities include several tennis courts, several ball fields, two indoor gymnasiums, and a swimming pool. The site can also accommodate a neighborhood park and picnic facilities, as well as hiking areas along the stream and up the hillsides to the west. There is also a lake that is used for swimming and boating. Acquisition of the camp would greatly enhance the Town's existing recreational offerings.

This facility continues to be privately owned and is presently not open to the public. As of summer 2005, it no longer functions as a camp. If it continues to be a privately owned recreational facility but is open to the public, then it would be classified as a *Private Park/Recreation Facility* under the NRPA classification guidelines. However, if the Town acquires the site or portions of the site, these facilities could be developed as a *Special Use Park*.



### *3.5.2 Windridge Condominium Lands*

This property includes six parcels that total approximately 85 acres. These parcels, at the Town's southernmost tip adjacent to the 17.4-acre Appalachian Trail parcel, are presently owned by OMAT, Inc., a company based out of Tuxedo Park, New York. Similar to the Lake Hill Farms Cluster Land, these lands were left undeveloped in exchange for the higher densities permitted when the 300-unit Windridge Condominium development was constructed. The lands should have been turned over to the Windridge Condominium Homeowner Association upon completion of the multi-phase development in 2000, but instead the lands were transferred to OMAT, Inc.

### *3.5.3 McNeil Property*

The 160-acre McNeil property lies at the end of Goosepond Mountain Road. During the development of the Town's most recent Comprehensive Plan (in 2003), this site was envisioned as a link between Chester Commons and Goosepond Mountain State Park. That plan recommended acquiring this site to develop and expand both active and passive recreation activities for the Town. The plan recommended acquiring the property via a combination of grants and funds from the town's recreation impact fees; or using Transferable Development Rights (TDR) or through the use of a different zoning incentive.

### *3.5.4 Monroe-Chester Rod and Gun Club*

The Monroe-Chester Rod and Gun Club is located in Chester on Sugar Loaf Mountain Road. According to the Town of Chester assessor, the property is comprised of three parcels totally 138 acres. The land is maintained as wild and undeveloped for hunting. There is a NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (480[a]) term easement over the property that runs in perpetuity as long as the owners of the facility choose to maintain it as a hunting facility and continue to renew the easement.

### *3.5.5 Privately Protected Open Space Parcels*

According to the Orange County 2004 Open Space Plan, there are two privately protected open space parcels in the Town of Chester. The 30-acre Gunz property is part of a residential lot on Kings Highway, located not far from Town Hall. Privately owned, the easement on this land mandates that the property cannot be subdivided for further residential development. It is not open to the public.

The second private easement is located at the corner of Bellvale Road and Kings Highway. This parcel consists of two land areas: one totals about 29.7 acres while the second is about 21.3 acres. This property is owned by the Orange County Citizens Foundation.

### *3.5.6 Sugar Loaf Community Areas*

The 2004 *The Art of Planning: A Healthy Infrastructure Plan for Sugar Loaf* identified a number of properties in the Sugar Loaf hamlet that, while privately owned, were open to the public for

their passive recreational enjoyment. As identified in that study, these properties include the following:

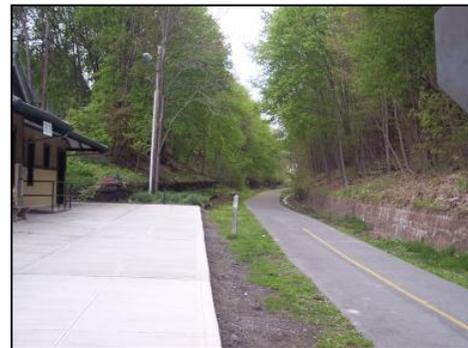
- Lycian Center. This facility has installed public benches along Creamery Pond.
- Bertoni Sculpture Garden. This art studio has a publicly accessible open space complete with sculptures. This space, as the plan indicates, presents a safer pedestrian alternative to walking along the shoulder of King's Highway at a dangerous bend in the road.
- Methodist Church. This church constructed a stairway at the rear of their parking lot that provides pedestrians with easy access between the Creamery Pond neighborhood and the Sugar Loaf business district.
- The Scott's Meadow Complex. This retail area includes a large outdoor gathering space with several tables and chairs.
- Endico Water Color. This studio constructed a small patio with several benches outside their building.

### 3.6 PUBLIC AND PRIVATE TRAILS

The Town of Chester houses a variety of trails through its hillsides and ridges. These trails include both publicly owned and maintained facilities as well as private facilities that are not open to the general public. The facilities range from multi-use converted rail right-of-ways to pedestrian only nature hikes through sensitive ridge areas.

#### 3.6.1 Orange Heritage Trail

The 9-mile Heritage Trail connects the Town of Goshen, west of Chester, with the Town of Monroe, located east of Chester. This paved "rail trail," located primarily off road, has a hill index of 1.6 and is considered "gentle." Scenic and safe, the trail is ideal for family biking and is also regarded as suitable for inline skates, roller skates, wheelchairs, or walking with a stroller. Navigating several high-speed road and driveway crossings requires care. These are principally located along the segment that runs between Goshen and Chester. Financed by the Rails to Trails program, proposed expansions will extend the trail along the former Erie Mainline out to Middletown and Harriman.



Chester's trail entrance is located on Main Street at the Village's Erie Railroad Station. The 1915 building, known now as the Chester Depot Museum, was restored in 1999 and currently houses exhibits of local and historical interest. The Chester Historical Society has their monthly meetings at the museum and space is available to local groups. The museum itself is open Saturday mornings six months of the year, or by appointment

The concrete train platform adjacent to the station building is in good condition, free of cracks. There is a gravel parking area with a portable toilet facility. Other trail entrances are located in Goshen and Monroe.

The entrance to the trail is wide enough for two people on bikes. There is a concrete block that sits in the middle of the entrance that separates ingress and egress. There is a sign stating the rules of the trail off to the right side of the entrance. There is a small bike rack to secure bikes. This is a break station where riders may secure their bicycles and walk into the village to get something to eat or shop. General landscaping and clean up near the entrance is needed. Additional signage throughout the community might be warranted, as the trail location is not readily apparent to visitors.

The trail has been the subject of safety concerns in the past due largely to the transient population residing at Camp LaGuardia, a homeless shelter operated by New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS), which is located in the northeastern section of Chester. The trail is fenced on both sides with 911 call boxes placed every ¼ mile. DHS monitors footage from safety cameras, which are located along the trail. Open dawn to dusk, the facility is unlit at night. The local police departments conduct regular quality of life patrols along the trail and have observed a marked decrease in the amount of illegal activity and the number of arrests made along the trail since the patrol's initiation in 2003. Despite this, many residents run or jog the trail west to Goshen rather than east and pass Camp LaGuardia.

The Trail is owned by the Orange County Parks Department. Orange Pathways, Inc, a not-for-profit based in Goshen, maintains the trail. This trail has been identified as a Type II *Park Trail* under the NRPA classification guidelines.

### *3.6.2 Appalachian Trail*

The Appalachian Trail was initiated at Harriman-Bear Mountain State Park in the Hudson Valley in 1923 and completed in 1937. Founded by Benton Mackaye, it was developed through the help of volunteers. The complete trail is 2,174 miles and runs from Maine to northern Georgia. A footpath, the trail is used by hikers that want to experience short-term hikes ranging from hours to a couple of days or long-term hikers that wish to hike the entire trail in one season. Orange County offers 35 miles of trail that includes scenic views from Greenwood Lake to the Bear Mountain Wildlife Center.

The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference, a volunteer, not-for-profit organization, maintains the Appalachian Trail in New York and New Jersey. Through a network of hiking clubs and devoted individuals, volunteers continue their maintenance of this National Scenic Trail under a cooperative agreement with the Appalachian Trail Conference and the United States National Park Service. The National Park Service owns several miles of the trail corridor outside of the State Parks.

As a pedestrian-only hiking trail, this facility has been identified as a Type III *Park Trail* under the NRPA classification guidelines.

### *3.6.3 Highlands Trail*

The Highlands Trail traverses a number of scenic areas of the Hudson Valley's rugged highlands region, including many parks, forests and natural areas. The trail travels along segments of the Appalachian Trail, converted rail-trails, through Museum Village, over Schunemunk Mountain, through Black Rock Forest and finally to the top of Storm King Mountain overlooking the Hudson River.

Once completed, the proposed 150+ mile trail will connect Storm King Mountain with Phillipsburg, New Jersey, on the Delaware River. The route will connect major scenic attractions in both states. According to the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference, a network of trails including alternate routes and multi-use paths is ultimately envisioned.

The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference identifies the Highlands Trail as a combination of co-alignment on established trails, new trails, and on-road facilities. The co-aligned sections bear both trails' blazes, except for the Appalachian, Sterling Ridge, and Allis Trails, which have plastic Highlands Trail logos at critical points. Hikers must pay attention at intersections as the Highlands Trail often leaves one trail to join another.

As camping is not permitted along the Trail, thru-hikers must stay at bed-and-breakfast facilities along the route, or at established State Park campgrounds. No fires, horses, bikes, or motorized vehicles are permitted on the Trail unless specifically allowed by local regulations.

In the Town of Chester, in addition to several independent segments, the Highlands Trail is comprised of segments of the Orange Heritage Trail, the Appalachian Trail, and abandoned Lazy Hill Road in the Goosepond Mountain State Park. Parking is located at Laroe Road (County Route 45).

As a pedestrian-only hiking trail, this facility has been identified as a Type III *Park Trail* under the NRPA classification guidelines.

### *3.6.4 Sugar Loaf Mountain Trail System*

There are presently several existing private trails located at the base of Sugar Loaf Mountain behind the new residential developments off the Sugar Loaf Bypass. A 2004 study done by SUNY Albany recommends trail connections be made between developments as well as connecting them to mountain trails. As recognized by the study, the plan is flexible and envisions that if any easements are established, they be with the consent of landowners and respect the property rights of individuals affected by the trail system.

### 3.7 OTHER RESOURCES

This final section describes several additional note-worthy resources that provide recreational opportunities to Chester residents. These include the Town’s combination library/senior center and several historic properties that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

#### 3.7.1 *Library and Senior Center*

The Town received State funding to construct a joint library/senior center in the 1980s. Located on Kings Highway in the center of Town, this facility sometimes performs double duty. As Chester lacks a community center, this 1984-facility is occasionally used for community events. Discussions to increase the parking and install a picnic table at the center failed to materialize due to the presence of wetlands and sensitive habitat areas to the rear of the center.



#### 3.7.2 *National Register Sites*

Chester, according to the State Historic Preservation Office, has three National Register Sites.

##### **Old Yelverton Inn**

The Old Yelverton Inn was built circa 1765 on land purchased by John Yelverton. The inn remained in the family with his grandson, Abijah, running it during the Revolutionary War. The inn, located on Main Street, was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1980. The inn is significant due to several events that occurred there during Revolutionary Era, and also as an example of that era’s architecture and engineering.

The inn hosted several events that were important not only to Chester’s history but to the nation as well. On November 3, 1774, residents from the Orange County communities of Goshen and Cornwall assembled at the Inn to vote on whether or not they would send someone to the first Continental Congress to protest the unjust taxation levied by the British. A majority determined that they would and Henry Wisner was sent to Philadelphia. On four different occasions, the continental troops were ordered to gather at the Inn, where they received orders to cooperate with General Lee. In 1785, due to boundary disputes between the Wawayanda and Cheese cocks patents, a trial was held at the Inn. During this trial, Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr, counsels for the Wawayanda patentees, were entertained at the Inn.

### **First Presbyterian Church of Chester**

Located on Main Street, the First Presbyterian Church of Chester was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1998. In 1783 Abijan Yelverton donated an acre of land for the construction of a church but the church was not built until after the Revolutionary War. The church and its congregation came under the care of the Hudson River Presbytery and became part of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of the USA in 1810. In 1819, land was purchased at the junction of High St. and Hambletonian Ave. and a parsonage was constructed. The house was later to become an active station on the Underground Railway for escaped slaves before and during the Civil War. Of Greek revival architecture, the still-functioning house of worship is historically significant as an example of the era's architecture and engineering.



### **Fury Brook Farm**

Eight-acre Fury Brook Farm, located on Kings Highway at the foot of Sugar Loaf Mountain, was added to the National Register of Historic Places in September 2004. Dating its history back to 1731, the current Fury Brook Farm consists of several 18th century homes and barns. The site was once home to one of the earliest settlers along the old Wawayanda Path. Early farmers raised horses for Revolutionary War soldiers. According to the site's historical account, General George Washington's scout, Nathaniel Knapp, killed a bear either on the site, or on adjacent farmland.



## **3.8 TOWN OF CHESTER PARKS AND RECREATION**

The Chester Parks and Recreation Commission is responsible for overseeing community-wide recreational programs available to Chester residents. These programs vary by season and location. Independently organized leagues, both for youths and adults, offer a variety of recreational opportunities. The Park and Recreation Department schedules facility use.

### **3.8.1 Parks and Recreation Commission and Department**

A Parks and Recreation Director and one Office Assistant staff the Town's Parks and Recreation Department. The Department is responsible for maintaining the recreational facilities and structures located at the Town-owned and operated parks. The Town's Parks Administrator, also the Town's Highway Administrator, is responsible for maintaining the park grounds.

### 3.8.2 Town Recreation Department Funding

The Park and Recreation Department is funded in part by an annual line item allocation for parkland maintenance. Historically, these monies have gone to the Parks Administrator (a joint position with the Highway Administrator) to pay for highway department staff to mow the fields and clean up debris at the Town's parks. This system was changed in 2005, with monies now going directly to the Parks and Recreation Department for parks maintenance. This change is most evident in the Park Maintenance Contractual line item in Table 9.

**Table 9: Parks and Recreation Budget Allocations, 2005 and 2006**

<b>Park Maintenance</b>	<b>2005 Budget</b>	<b>2006 Budget</b>	<b>Change</b>	<b>2006 Per Capita<sup>1</sup></b>
Director/Office Assistant	\$43,100	\$45,400	\$2,300 (5.3%)	\$3.50
Buildings Maintenance	\$10,200	\$11,000	\$800 (7.8%)	\$0.85
Grounds Maintenance	\$42,000 <sup>2</sup>	\$11,000	-\$31,000 (-74%)	\$0.85
Summer Grounds	\$4,500	\$2,000	-\$2,500 (-55.6%)	\$0.15
Operations/Services	\$48,440	\$67,386	\$18,946 (39.1%)	\$5.20
Equipment	\$15,000	\$28,000	\$13,000 (86.7%)	\$2.16
Contractual <sup>3</sup>	\$59,000	\$100,080	\$41,080 (69.6%)	\$7.72
<b>Total Park Maintenance</b>	<b>\$122,440</b>	<b>\$195,466</b>	<b>\$73,026 (59.6%)</b>	<b>\$15.07</b>
<b>Summer Program</b>	<b>2005 Budget</b>	<b>2006 Budget</b>	<b>Increase</b>	<b>2006 Per Capita</b>
Services	\$44,007	\$52,220	\$8,213 (18.7%)	\$4.03
Equipment	\$3,500	\$4,500	\$1,000 (28.6%)	\$0.35
Contractual	\$20,000	\$20,000	0	\$1.54
<b>Total Summer Program</b>	<b>\$67,507</b>	<b>\$76,720</b>	<b>\$9,213</b>	<b>\$5.91</b>

<sup>1</sup> Using 2005 estimated population of 12,971 persons. <sup>2</sup>This figure is derived from the allocation dedicated to parks maintenance in the 2005 Highway Department payroll. <sup>3</sup>This increase reflects the absorption of maintenance accounts including garbage, electricity, lease equipment, seed, fertilizer, topsoil, infield clay, etc.

The Town's second source of recreation funds is its recreation impact fee. A fee is collected for each new unit of housing constructed in the Town. This impact fee is determined and collected by the planning board when a proposed plat, plan, or site plan will result in additional units.

One of the tasks of the 1993 *Recreation and Open Space Planning Project* was to evaluate the Town's recreation impact fee (\$200 per house at the time) and determine whether or not the amount was adequate. The study not only found the amount of the fee to be inadequate, but it also dismissed the Town's land dedication program, as the donated lands were of "little value", providing only buffer land or wildlife habitat, inadequate for park development. Although the recreation fee increased following this study, it was still only \$500 - \$750 as recently as 2004.

In 2004, Chester, like many other communities in Orange County, decided to increase the amount required for recreational mitigation. The Town's fee currently stands at \$2,000 per housing unit. Due to recent residential construction activity, the Town's recreation fund, as of August 2005, was approximately \$100,000. These funds can be used for park capital improvements or maintenance activities, or to sponsor recreational programming or special events.

It should be noted that recreation impact funds, as they are collected to mitigate new residential development in the Town, may only be used for improvements and activities in those areas of the Town that are outside the Village. As a result, recreation impact funds may not be used toward improvements at Chester Community Carpenter Field, nor may they be used to acquire additional lands within the Village. Therefore, even if it wished to do so, the Town could not use this money to acquire additional parklands in the Village (such as Butch's Field or the former High School field from the Chester Union Free School District).

### *3.8.3 Town Recreational Activities*

Recreational Programs are an important part of the Town and Village park and recreation system. These recreational programs offer organized activities for children and adults and are held at locations throughout the Town (including Town Hall and the former high school gymnasium on Walnut Street in the Village). The following leagues/group activities were scheduled for different times throughout 2005:

Adults:

- Men's Basketball (over 30)
- Women's Softball (18 +)
- Co-Ed Volleyball (18 +)
- Tennis camp (19 – 45)

School Programs:

- CAP-Kids Program (children's after school program)
- CUFSD – Soccer
- CUFSD - Football
- Baseball/Softball (HS – aged 13 – 17)

Youth Activities:

- Summer Camp
- Little League
- Cub Scout camp
- Summer Baseball Camp
- Youth Soccer
- Youth Football
- Kids Baseball
- Tennis camp (7 – 18)

Seasonal activities include Outdoor Ice Skating, which is offered during the winter months at Chester Community Carpenter Park. The Parks and Recreation Department sponsors Tai Chi classes (\$8/per class), which are held in the Town Hall on weekends. In addition, the Town hosts a number of special events throughout the year. Every spring an Easter Egg Hunt is held at Chester Commons. The Kiwanis hold a 5K Road Race during May. During August a Soccer/Recreation Week ½ day program is held. September includes a Concert in The Park at

Chester Commons as well as a Kiwanis Kids Day. Other holiday-oriented festivities include Halloween Safe Night Out and a Santa Visit.

#### *3.8.4 Chester Summer Camp Program*

During the summer (from mid-June through to the end of July), the Town sponsors a 5-week summer camp open to all Town residents. For \$125 per child, residents can register children aged 5 up to 13 for two-week camp sessions held between 8:30 AM and 2:30 PM. This program is run at the Chester Union Free School District's Chester Academy on Hambletonian Ave. The Town had approximately 300 children registered for the program for summer 2005.

The Town has had an arrangement with the Chester Union Free School District on use of the Chester Academy for the program. The school district uses the Town's field at Chester Commons for its sports leagues, while the Town has uses the school for summer camp. In 2005, due to concern over the proposed 2005 –2006 school budget, the Park and Recreation Department was forced to consider the potential impacts of the budget being defeated. Had the budget been voted down, the school district, by law, would have been forced to charge all groups for use of its facilities. The Park and Recreation Department would have been forced to pay the school district about \$25,000 for use of the school facilities to accommodate the summer camp program (approximately \$900 - \$1,000 per day).

## 4. NRPA AND SCORP ASSESSMENTS

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### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

Since 1983 the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) has published a *Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines* publication to assist communities in developing park and recreation plans. Through this publication, the NRPA looks to ensure that communities know how to secure “the right kind of land” to meet their community needs. To ensure that this occurs, the NRPA recommends a systems approach be used in planning a community park network. Several steps of the NRPA’s multi-step planning process have been undertaken as part of this planning effort. These efforts are described in Section 4.2.

It is likely that the Town of Chester will pursue grants and other funding opportunities available through New York State. To best facilitate this, the standards used to assess the adequacy of the Town’s parks are those established in the New York State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). These standards and classifications are described in Section 4.3, while Chester’s parks are assessed using the SCORP standards in Section 4.4.

### 4.2 MULTI-STEP PARK PLANNING PROCESS

Under the systems planning model, the NRPA has identified a multi-step process that results in effective parks and recreation planning. The first four steps, which are directly related to developing the parks plan, are described in the following paragraphs.

#### 4.2.1 Identifying Customers

**Step #1 involves identifying customers.** According to the NRPA guidelines, this includes Participant Users (individuals that participate in a structured manner, i.e., sports leagues); Direct Users (those that use a facility in an unstructured manner, such as hiking or picnicking); and Non-Users (those that do not use the park directly and may or may not recognize the benefits the park system brings to the community.) Non-users may also represent latent need for specific types of resources, including, for example, facilities that are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

As the authority that oversees the recreational needs of the Town of Chester, the Town’s Recreation and Park Commission (RPC) meets regularly to discuss customer needs and the condition of park resources. As part of this planning process, the consultants met with RPC to discuss expressed community needs. A demographic profile was developed, providing for a synopsis of the community’s population. Specific characteristics analyzed included population trends, age, income, household composition, and education.

In addition, a 3-page resident survey was developed and distributed to Town residents. As of June 2, 2005, approximately 310 surveys had been returned to the Town Parks and Recreation

Department. This represents a return rate of about 6.6%. This feedback was instrumental in helping the plan consultants develop an overview of both user as well as non-user populations.

#### *4.2.2 Obtaining Customer Involvement*

**Step #2 includes obtaining customer involvement and developing relationships.** In order to meet the actions required of this step, a day of roundtable discussions with various user groups was held on June 4, 2005. In addition, a public workshop open to all Chester residents was held on June 16, 2005. The intent behind both these public forums was to obtain feedback from users and non-users on what they would like to see at the Town's various parks and recreational facilities, including improvements to existing resources and development of new amenities, both now and in the future.

#### *4.2.3 Assessing Need*

**Step #3 involves assessing need.** Once the information from the public workshop, the stakeholder roundtables and the resident surveys had been compiled and summarized, this information was integrated into a usable form. Common themes regarding potential inadequacies in the system were identified. The plan consultant then evaluated the community's resources in the context of customers' expressed desires (as indicated through the public forums). Through interaction and communication with the Town, RPC, and the Parks and Recreation Department, the plan consultants attempted to balance customer perceptions and feedback with information about ongoing recreation activities and programs. For example, the perception that the Town does not allocate sufficient resources to special outdoor events may only indicate that not all areas of the community are well informed about such events.

#### *4.2.4 Developing the Strategic Plan*

**Step #4 is developing the strategic plan.** As part of this planning process, using the feedback obtained through the various public forums, a community vision for the Town's parks and recreation system was identified. Based on the values and ideals residents have identified throughout the public participation process, as well as the critiques and shortcomings identified, the strategic plan will provide viable solutions to rectify inadequacies in Chester's park and recreation system. Implementation techniques, including policy development, capital improvements, development of new funding sources, and any proposed land acquisitions, are included in the final six steps of the systematic planning process. *The Recreation and Open Space Plan* that has been developed as part of this process will include a matrix of appropriate implementation techniques to facilitate the development of the Town's park system.

### **4.3 INTRODUCTION TO NRPA PARK CLASSIFICATIONS**

Table 10 which follows identifies a breakdown of the NRPA's classifications for both types of parks and trails. As the NYS SCORP classifications were used to measure adequacy, this table is provided primarily for informational purposes. For park types whereby appropriate SCORP classifications have not been established, NRPA park classifications were used in assessing the Town's existing parks in Chapter 3.

**Table 10: NRPA Parks, Open Space, and Pathways Classifications Table**

<b>Parks and Open Space Classifications</b>			
<b>Classification</b>	<b>General Description</b>	<b>Location Criteria</b>	<b>Size Criteria</b>
<b>Pocket Parks</b>	Used to address limited, isolated or unique residential needs	Less than ¼ mile distance in residential setting	Between 2,500 s.f. and 1 acre
<b>Neighborhood Parks</b>	Basic unit of the park system & serves as the recreational & social focus of the neighborhood. Focus is on informal active and passive recreation.	¼ to ½ mile distance and not interrupted by non-residential roads or other physical barriers.	> 5 acres and < 10 acres is optimal.
<b>School Park</b>	Depending on circumstances, pursuing joint opportunities can fulfill space requirements for variety of park classification needs (e.g., neighborhood, community, or sports complex.)	Determined by location of school district property.	Variable, depends on function.
<b>Community Parks</b>	Serves broader purpose than neighborhood park. Focus is on meeting community-based recreation needs, as well as preserving unique landscapes & open space.	Determined by quality & suitability of site. Usually serves two or more neighborhoods at ½ to 3-mile distance.	As needed. Often 30- 50 acres.
<b>Large Urban Parks</b>	Serve a broader purpose than community parks and are used when smaller parks are inadequate. Focus is on meeting community-based recreation needs, as well as unique landscape/open space preservation.	Determined by quality & suitability of site. Usually serves entire community.	> 50 acres and < 75 acres is optimal.
<b>Natural Resource Area</b>	Lands set aside for preservation of significant natural resources, landscapes, open space.	Resource availability and opportunity.	Variable.
<b>Greenways</b>	Effectively tie the park system components together to form a continuous park environment.	Resource availability and opportunity.	Variable.
<b>Sports Complex</b>	Consolidates heavy programmed athletic fields & associated facilities to large multipurpose sites.	Strategically located in community-wide facilities.	25-acre minimum. > 40 acres and < 80 acres is optimal
<b>Special Use</b>	Area for specialized or single purpose recreation activities such as campgrounds, golf courses etc.	Variable depending on specific use.	Variable
<b>Private Park/Recreation Facility</b>	Privately owned facilities that contributes to the public park and recreation system.	Variable depending on specific use.	Variable

<b>Pathway Classifications</b>		
<b>Classification</b>	<b>General Description</b>	<b>Description of Each Type</b>
<b>Park Trail</b>	Trails located within greenways, parks, & natural resource areas. Focus is on recreational value and harmony with nature.	Type I: Separate/single-purpose, hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians/cyclists/ skaters. Type II: Multi purpose hard surface trails. Type III: Nature trails for pedestrians. Hard or soft surfaced.
<b>Connector Trails</b>	Multipurpose trails emphasizing safe travel for pedestrians throughout community. Recreation & transportation focus.	Type I: Separate/single-purpose, hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians/cyclists/ skaters located in independent ROW. Type II: Separate/single-purpose hard surface trails typically in independent ROW.
<b>On-Street Bikeways</b>	Paved segments of roadways that serve as a means to safely separate cyclists from cars	Bike Route: Designated portions of the roadway for preferential/exclusive use of cyclists.
<b>All-Terrain Bike Trail</b>	Off-road trail for all-terrain (mountain) bikes.	Singe-purpose loop trails usually located in larger parks and natural resource areas.
<b>Cross Country Ski Trail</b>	Trails developed for traditional and skate-style cross-country skiing.	Loop trails usually located in larger parks and natural resource areas.
<b>Equestrian Trail</b>	Trails developed for horseback riding.	Loop trails usually located in larger parks and natural resource areas. Sometimes developed as multipurpose with hiking and all-terrain biking where conflicts can be controlled.

Source: National Parks Recreation Association, Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines. (1996)

#### 4.4 INTRODUCTION TO SCORP STANDARDS

The New York State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) establishes standards to provide guidance to communities developing recreational resources. These recommended guidelines suggest minimum population densities needed to support specific recreational activities; the approximate number of acres needed to support the recreational activity; the recommended standard size per 1,000 population; the maximum travel time of a potential user; and the appropriate means of accessing the resource. The SCORP also provides suggestions on how such recreational resources may be further enhanced. The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation developed these guidelines through researching the various recreational activities, working with the public, and obtaining feedback from other government agencies with a vested interest in open space and recreation.

The SCORP guidelines look to maximize the social and economic benefits of recreation while minimizing the adverse impacts to the resource. These standards provide communities with information to assist them develop specific recreational resources and ensure the success of the

resources or facility. Through comparing the community’s characteristics, population density, and land availability with the SCORP standards, communities can better identify the likely need for a proposed resource. If the community specifics differ greatly from the recommended standards, and fall short of the SCORP minimum standards, the potential success of that proposed resource is questionable.

Table 11 and Table 12 present the SCORP standards for Facility Development Standards and Recreational Opportunity Standards. These tables are generalized tables that are used by all of New York State and not all of the items listed in these tables will apply specifically to the Town of Chester.

**Table 11: SCORP Facility Development Standards**

<b>Facility Type</b>	<b>Instant Max. User Density</b>	<b>Standard Per 1000 Pop</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Skating Areas (natural)</b>	500 users/acre	1 site/2500	This category includes non-refrigerated rinks Density figures based on 5 sites per acre, 4 users per site
<b>Camping</b>	20 users/acre	N/A	
<b>Picnicking</b>	35 users/acre	N/A	Density figures based on 10 tables per acres, 3.5 users per table
<b>Boating</b>	6-8 acres/boat	N/A	This figure is for both powered and sail boating. There are generally 3 users in each boat.
<b>Skiing</b>	30 users/acres of developed slope	N/A	This figure is for both powered and sail boating. There are generally 3 users in each boat.
<b>Big Game Hunting</b>	1 hunter/5 acres	200 acres/1000	
<b>Fishing (Stream)</b>	5 users/mile	.5 mi. stream/1000	
<b>Golf Course</b>	8 users/hole	.5 holes/1000	
<b>Field Games</b>	15 users/acre	3 acres/1000	The following may be provided through off-peak use of school facilities
<b>Swimming Pool</b>	1 user/25 sq. foot	750 sq. ft./1000	The following may be enclosed to extend seasonal use
<b>Tennis Courts</b>	4 users/court	1 court/2000	The following can be lighted and converted for ice skating
<b>Basketball (Courts)</b>	16 users/court	1 court/1999	

**Table 12: SCORP Recreational Opportunity Standards \***

Facility Type	Min. Pop. Density	Size In Acres	Standard Per 1000 Pop.	Max. Travel Time	Means of Access	Comments
Play lot	2500/sq. mi.	1-2	2 acres	10 min.	By foot or By bicycle	Combined with residential development or school
Pocket Park	2500/sq.mi.	.25-.50	.25 acres	10 min.	By foot or by bicycle	For office workers, shoppers, neighborhood
Neighborhood Park	2500/sq.mi.	4-7	1 acre	20 min.	By foot or by bicycle	Should contain passive areas with landscaping, as well as active areas such as play fields, court games, tot lots, etc.
District Park	500/sq. mi.	20-100	2 acres	30 min.	Car, Mass transit, bike, hiking or trail	Should include comfort station, interests for all ages; 1/3 capacity for winter activities (e.g., ice skating, sledding)
Community Park	**	50-100	5 acres	30 min.	Car, transit, bike, hiking or trail	Extensive day use areas
Large Regional Parks	**	40+	15 acres	1-2 hrs.	Car, charter bus, transit, or major trail	Camping, picnicking should include water access and selected winter activities ski touring, snowmobiling
Metro	10,000/sq.mi.	25	.124	30 min.	Limited auto access or any non-auto mode	Urban parks emphasizing special recreational cultural or historical themes and activities, day and evening operation during all seasons

\* Partially derived from National Recreation and Parks Association

\*\* Not applicable

#### 4.5 COMPARISON OF CHESTER TO SCORP STANDARDS

Although there are additional types of parks identified in Table 12, only the parks regarded as appropriate or applicable to the Town of Chester have been included in the assessment. Applicable park categories included in the assessment are: Play Lot/Tot Lot; Pocket Park; Neighborhood Park; and Community Park. Categories excluded from the evaluation include District Parks, Large Regional Parks, and Metro Parks. Population figures used include estimates and projections for 2000, 2005, and 2020. In evaluating the Town’s parks and recreational resources according to the SCORP recommended guidelines, the Town’s resources fall far short.



The Town presently has no Play Lots or tot lots located in any of its neighborhoods, nor does it have any Neighborhood Parks. This lack is not unmissed as approximately 44% of survey respondents indicated that the Town needs local playgrounds. (See Chapter 5 for additional information on the survey results.)

Although both Pulvrent Field and Oak Drive Park qualify as Pocket Parks, meeting the SCORP recommended acreage for Pocket Parks, each one is a single-use park, thus with limited appeal. With Chester Commons and Carpenter Community Park, the Town has two respectably sized Community Parks. However, even with a combined total of 39.1 acres, the Town experiences a deficit of 25.8 acres in Community Parks. Both Chester Commons and Carpenter Community Park each have areas that are dedicated to non-park uses (A 34.1-acre parcel Chester Commons covers about 28 acres while the Town Highway Facility and the Emergency Services Facility cover the rest; 5 acres of Carpenter Community Park are presently used for onion farming.)



Since the NYS SCORP Guidelines do not have a "Natural Resource Area" classification, Broadview was not included in a specific park classification. If a portion of the 91.3-acre Broadview parcel is developed with active park resources, this may be one way to address the Town's shortfall in developed parklands, including Community Parks. In addition to Broadview, the Town also has 10.2 acres of undeveloped parklands on Wilson Road dedicated as open space. Although not Town-owned, Chester residents also have easy access to Goosepond Mountain State Park, a 1,472 –acre undeveloped nature area that is open for hiking and passive recreation.



In evaluating the Town's opportunities for recreational activities, the Town has a similar deficit. The Town lacks a swimming pool and golf or putting range. The Town does not meet the recommendations on tennis courts, nor basketball courts, as there is an existing deficit of both.

According to the SCORP guidelines, Chester should have 3 acres of fields for every 1,000 residents. This puts the amount of field space needed to accommodate the Town's estimated 2005 population at 38.9 acres. This is in sharp contrast to the Town's supply of fields, which is 8.4 acres. [A 1.6-acre non-regulation combination football/soccer field was developed in Chester Commons, bringing the previous 6.8 acres total to 8.4 acres] These figures do not take into account any of the fields owned by the Chester Union Free School District. While those fields are used for practice and some team play, it should be noted that they are not necessarily open to the public and may be sold or developed at any time.

**Table 13: Chester Parks Evaluated Using SCORP Standards\***

Park Type	Standard Per 1000 Population	Existing Park Capacity	Existing Need (Estimated 2005 Pop = 12,971)	Existing Surplus or Shortfall	Projected Need (Projected 2020 Pop = 17,541)	Projected Surplus or Shortfall
Play Lot/Tot Lot	2 acres	0	25.9 acres	-25.9 acres	35.1 acres	-35.1 acres
Pocket Park	.25 acres	4.5 acres	3.2 acres	1.3 acres	4.4 acres	0.1 acres
Neighborhood Park	1 acre	0	13.0 acres	-13.0 acres	17.5 acres	-17.5 acres
Community Park	5 acres	39.1 acres	64.9 acres	-25.8 acres	87.7 acres	-48.6 acres
<b>Total Park Land</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>43.6 acres</b>	<b>107 acres</b>	<b>- 63.4 acres</b>	<b>144.7 acres</b>	<b>-101.1 acres</b>

Notes: Chester Commons and Carpenter Community Park are both classified as Community Parks. Pulvrent Field and Oak Drive Park are both classified as Pocket Parks.

In reviewing a comparison of the results of the 1993 *Recreation and Open Space Planning Project* and the calculations conducted as part of this planning process, it becomes evident that the Town of Chester’s park and recreation inventory has not improved, but, in fact, has worsened. While the Town was identified as having a parkland deficit of 48.9 acres in 1993, this shortfall has grown to 63.4 acres today. Despite the Town’s population increase of about 41.9 % (3,833 residents since 1993), its parkland inventory has remained relatively unchanged. It should also be noted that the figures included in Table 14 for 1993 are the most conservative. A second alternative for estimating rural community parkland need (with a 30 acre per 1,000 residents standard) resulted in an identified shortfall of 231.9 acres. In 2003, for the Town’s Comprehensive Plan, it was estimated that the Town needed another 300 acres of parklands to accommodate its growing population.<sup>4</sup>

While the Town of Chester, is similar to the rest of Orange County and the Hudson Valley Region, has experienced unprecedented population growth in the past 10-15 years, the community has done little to ensure that it can maintain itself as a high-quality residential community. Access to recreational resources is increasingly regarded as an important element contributing to quality of life. Not only has the Town not added to its inventory of active park and recreation resources, it has done little to upgrade its existing resources.

Developing new parks on existing Town-owned property is one way Chester can increase its total parkland. The Town, or Town departments, own land throughout the community that may present opportunities for both new park development and park expansion. For example, there are Town-owned lands adjacent to Carpenter Community Park and Water



<sup>4</sup> Although a detailed analysis was not included in the 2003 Comprehensive Plan, that assessment was likely calculated using a higher needs ratio, such as the 30 acre per 1,000 residents standard.

District-owned lands adjacent to Oak Drive Park that may be developable for parks. Additional suggestions and recommendations related to enhancing the Town’s inventory of recreational resources is located in Chapter 6.

**Table 14: Historical Assessment of Chester Parks Evaluations**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>1993</b>	<b>2005</b>
Population	9,138	12,971
Standard Per 1000 Residents*	10.1 acres	8.2 acres
Developed Parks Needs	92 acres	107 acres
Existing Capacity	43.1 acres	43.6 acres
Identified Surplus or Shortfall	<b>-48.9 acres</b>	<b>-63.4 acres</b>

\* This estimate was calculated by dividing the Town’s estimated population totals by 1,000. This figure was then divided into the number of total acres of parklands needed in the Town.  
Sources: Recreation and Open Space Planning Project, 1993.

**Table 15: Chester Recreational Facilities Evaluated Using SCORP Standards\***

Recreational Facility	Standard Per 1000 Pop.	Existing Park Capacity	2000 Need (2000 Population = 12,140)	2000 Surplus or Shortfall	Existing Need (Estimated 2005 Population = 12,971)	Existing Surplus or Shortfall	Future Need (Projected 2020 Population = 17,541)	Projected Surplus or Shortfall
Golf Course	.5 holes/1000	<b>0</b>	6 holes	-6 holes	6.5 holes	-6.5 holes	9 holes	-9 holes
Field Games (Baseball, Softball, Football, Soccer)	3 acres/1000	<b>8.4 acres</b>	36.3 acres	-27.9 acres	38.9 acres	-30.5 acres	52.5 acres	-44 acres
Swimming Pool	750 sq. ft./1000	<b>0</b>	9,075 sq. ft.	-9,075 sq. ft.	9,730 sq. ft.	- 9,730 sq. ft.	13,125 sq. ft.	-13,125 sq. ft.
Tennis Courts	1 court/2000	<b>4 courts</b>	6 courts	-2 courts	6.5 courts	-2.5 courts	9 courts	-5 courts
Basketball (Courts)	1 court/1999	<b>2 courts</b>	6 courts	-4 courts	6.5 courts	-7 courts	9 courts	-7 courts

Notes: To develop acreage for existing fields, approximate sizes of the fields at Pulvrent (1 field), Carpenter Community (2 fields), and Chester Commons (2 fields) were tallied.

## 5. COMMUNITY OUTREACH

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The feedback received at the workshops, along with the information garnered through the resident survey, stakeholder interviews, and steering committee meetings, forms the foundation of this Recreation and Open Space Plan’s goals and objectives.

### 5.1 COMMUNITY ROUNDTABLES AND WORKSHOP

As described previously, several roundtable discussions and workshops were held throughout the planning process to obtain stakeholder and resident input on the state of the Town’s existing parks and recreational system and what they would like to see in the future.

#### 5.1.1 Roundtable Discussions

##### **Town and Departmental Coordination**

There were many concerns expressed regarding how the Town’s Parks and Recreation Department currently functions. People indicated a need for improved communication between the Parks and Recreation Department staff and Recreation Commission and the Highway Superintendent—who functions as the Parks Superintendent, as well as better communication between Recreation and the Town Board and the Planning Board. Many supported the idea of establishing an independent Parks Superintendent to ensure direct accountability for appropriate and safe park maintenance and oversight.

##### **Park Maintenance**

Since the funding provision allocated for park maintenance is relatively small, many feel that it is not a priority: the lawn is mowed, but little else is done, with branches and debris sometimes sitting for months, even years. There was consensus that the resources allocated to park maintenance is inadequate, and that the Town should prioritize maintaining its existing resources rather than focusing on acquiring additional properties. There is a need to balance costs and identify other



funding mechanisms to implement necessary improvements. Several roundtable participants expressed concern about the potential liability associated with the poor condition of several of the Town’s parks (particularly the basketball courts at Oak Drive and Community Carpenter Park).

##### **Growth Impacts**

Some expressed concern that the Town and the Chester Union Free School District have been slow to respond to residential growth, ignoring opportunities to develop additional fields and facilities. The School District, especially, was characterized as being shortsighted for not developing additional facilities when it constructed its new high school campus. The high school’s ongoing use of Chester Commons soccer field for its football team is perceived as

placing an additional burden on the overused field. In the absence of a track, the high school cross-country team runs on the Heritage Trail.

### Identified Recreational Needs

Although residents suggested a variety of additional resources that would be welcome in Chester, most expressed a need for additional *fields*. There is fear that between the school and organized



league schedule, there is limited opportunity for the general public to use existing ball fields. While several participants indicated a need for passive areas, many asserted that Orange County and the surrounding region provide many opportunities for passive recreational activities, such as hiking. Many viewed the potential acquisition of Camp Monroe and a section of Glenmere Lake as worthwhile endeavors that would greatly enhance the Town's holdings.

Some stakeholders expressed the desire for a centrally located, integrated *community center* with activities and resources targeted to youths, adults, and seniors. Converting the former high school is regarded as infeasible due to congestion, inadequate parking, and its non-central location in the Village.

Some indicated a desire for *more family friendly resources*. One idea was to enhance options available in Sugar Loaf, to make the hamlet more suitable for family outings. Several participants suggested an age-sensitive park design whereby recreational resources are laid out by age group, making it easier for guardians to keep watch over toddlers and pre-schoolers. Fencing around the parks' tot lots was also suggested.

Many seniors indicated a need for additional *senior recreational facilities*. Plans to expand parking at the Town's senior center were curtailed by the presence of wetlands and sensitive animal habitat. There continues to be a need for additional parking, as well as a desire for more resources, such as a bocce court and a picnic area. In general, there is a need for more benches and shaded seating throughout the parks, and more accessible restrooms.



Roundtable participants identified a number of *other resources* they would like to see developed, including a fenced in dog park and a running or walking track.

Many identified the need for more activities for pre-teens and teens, so they are not relegated to playing basketball or roller hockey in the streets. Finally, one person identified the need for a Town-sponsored "welcome letter" to greet new residents and introduce them to the Town's resources, parks, and events schedule.

### Existing Park Needs

All the parks were identified as needing a variety of infrastructure and maintenance upgrades. All fields were identified as needing improved maintenance and landscaping to address drainage and irrigation issues while both basketball courts were identified as needing repairs. The park restrooms (located in Chester Community Carpenter Park and Chester Commons) are often unclean and the drinking fountains are not always operable. Modern, more conveniently located restrooms are desired for the Commons especially, rather than its current hilltop location. Chester Community Carpenter Park and Pulvrent Field need additional parking. [The Commons recently had a cleared area covered with Item 4 to provide for additional parking.] Carpenter needs additional ball fields and the Commons needs a second football/soccer field.<sup>5</sup> The fencing at Pulvrent Field is somewhat deteriorated, while Carpenter needs fencing along the basketball court, to protect players from the significant slope drop. For younger residents, there is a need for more fenced tot lots and playgrounds. Many roundtable participants indicated a desire for additional benches, lighting, picnic tables, and pavilions.



### Broadview Estates

There were several different suggestions regarding Broadview Estates. While some support maintaining the area as a passive recreation resource—only 21 acres at the top are level, with the rest of the park characterized by hills—many indicated a desire for some active recreation at the site. Suggestions included campgrounds, a BMX track, a walking trail, and children’s playgrounds.

#### 5.1.2 Visioning Open House Workshop

For ease of summarizing, the feedback received from the public via the workshop has been classified under five major categories. These categories are: Improvements to Existing Parks; New Active Recreational Activities; New Passive Recreational Activities; Trail Ideas; and Other. The Other category includes suggestions that did not fall under any of the four primary categories. A more specific summary of the feedback –including exactly which resources participants wanted at each park-- is included in the Public Participation Appendix. This Appendix also includes a copy of the presentation boards used for each park station.

<sup>5</sup> An additional, non-regulation sized field was subsequently developed at Chester Commons.

Residents suggested a number of enhancements they would like to see at the Town's existing parks. These included some general improvements such as more visible and descriptive park signs; flags on the flagpoles; improved picnic areas; better restrooms; more drinking fountains; improved parking; and enhanced landscaping. There were also a number of specific suggestions for improvements to the Town's existing recreational facilities. These included improvements to the ice rink, basketball courts, tennis courts, ball fields, playgrounds, and the dugouts.

Public workshop attendants had a variety of suggestions for New Active Recreational Activities they would like to see developed in Chester. These included: a swimming pool, skateboard park, exercise trail with stations, sleigh riding/tobogganing<sup>6</sup>, BMX trails, volleyball and trail biking.



Passive Recreational Activities generally encompass a wide range of low-intensity activities often occur on conservation or naturally preserved open space lands. Ideas from workshop attendees on New Passive Recreational Activities included: walking trails, horseback, public hiking and public nature trails.

As the Town houses so many trails –including the Heritage Trail, a small sliver of the Appalachian Trail, and the lesser-known Highlands Trail which cuts through Goosepond State Park-- it was determined that it was important to include this as its own category. Workshop attendees had plenty of suggestions on how to improve the Town's trail system. Some of these actions focus on better coordination efforts, including working with the Orange County Citizens Foundation, creating a Town trail map, and developing regional trail connections, e.g., linking Sugar Loaf with Chester, Warwick with Wickham Lake, etc. Several specific improvements were suggested for some of the Town's existing trails. These included: opening Sugar Loaf Mountain to the public and developing walking trails around its wetlands; developing trail connections between Goosepond State Park and Chester Commons and between the Chester Library and Broadview Estates; and enhancing the trails with benches and drinking fountains.



As mentioned previously, the Other category was created as a catchall for all the ideas that did not fit in elsewhere. These ideas included a variety of new amenities at the parks. Some of the proposed resources, such as historic markers, history kiosks, and pavilions, are relatively low-key. Others, including open-air concert stages, movable stage and/or bandshell, are not. To improve ballgames, a filming tower, scoreboards and a public announcement system were suggested.

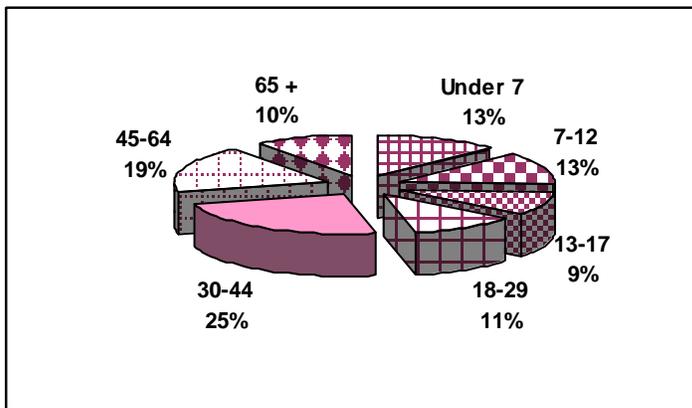
<sup>6</sup> Infrastructure improvements were made to Broadview Estates during the fall of 2005 to facilitate snowboarding, cross-country skiing, tubing, and sleigh-riding.

Other ideas included several new types of parks, including: a dog park, bird sanctuary, community center and pocket parks. Several participants indicated a need for one major community park to unite the Town’s far-flung resident population.

Finally, but most importantly, a number of participants indicated a need to improve the Town’s existing park and recreation system. A full-time Parks and Recreation Department is needed. Additional funds are needed to develop the Town’s park and recreational resources. Exploring alternative revenue streams, such as seeking sponsors was identified as one alternative.

## 5.2 RESIDENT SURVEY

In spring 2005, a survey was distributed to Chester residents to find out what they would like to see at the Town’s parks. This section includes a summary of the survey results.



**Figure 3: Chester Park and Recreation Users By Age**

According to the responses received, the largest group of park users in Chester is in the 30-44 age range (25%), while about 19% of park users are in the 45 - 64 age group, and 10% are over 65. Children (under the age of 18) represent 35% of park users, while young adults (aged 18 to 29) account for 11%.

Chester Commons and 36% use Goosepond State Park. The least-used park is Pulvrent Park with only 9.3% of respondents indicating that they use the park. This low response for Pulvrent Park is likely due to the small size and limited resources of the park, which houses only one ball field. Parks outside Chester that respondents use include: Warwick Parks (including Stanley Deming Park), Smith Clove Park, Monroe Parks, and Goshen Parks.

Of the residents surveyed, 60.2% use the Heritage Trail, 43.8% use



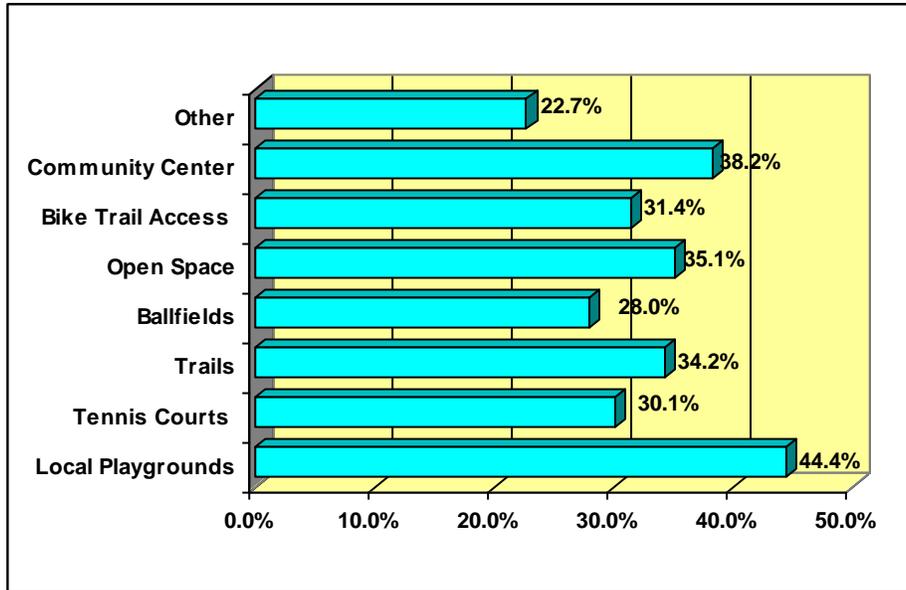


Figure 5: Resources Desired by Survey Respondents

Residents were asked to indicate what recreational facilities they think is needed in the Town. Local playgrounds, 44.4%, and a community center, 38.2%, were the top two facilities identified as needed. Open Space, trails, and bike trail access rounds out the top five. See Figure 5 for the complete response.

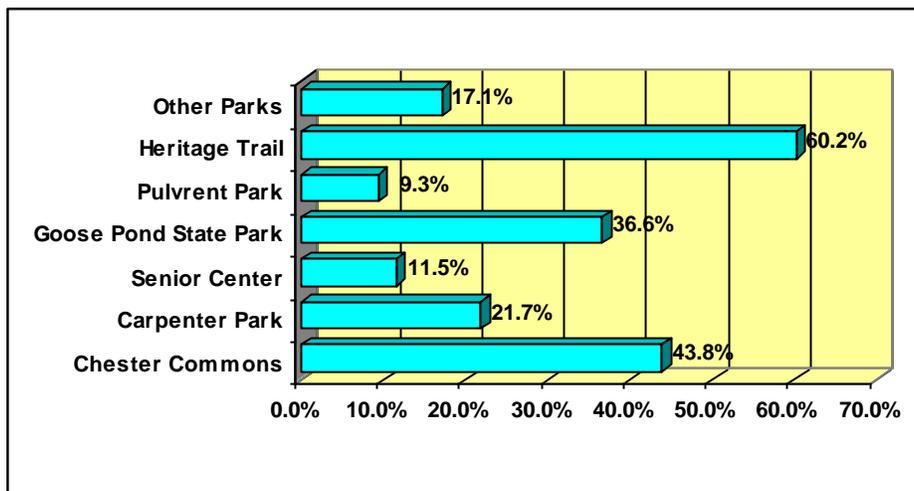


Figure 4: Parks Used by Chester Residents

A significant percentage of respondents (73.6%) indicated that they would like the Town to develop additional parks with Town funds while 26.4% stated they did not want to use Town funds to develop additional parks.

An overwhelming 91.4% of survey respondents indicated they would like the Town to apply for assistance through grant opportunities. About 8.6% stated they did not want the Town to pursue grants, while 19 persons did not respond to that question.

In response to whether or not they would support using transfer of development rights, easements and land donations to acquire open space and parklands, a large majority of respondents, 87.8%, did favor pursuing such options, while 12.2% did not. Forty-four people did not respond to the question.

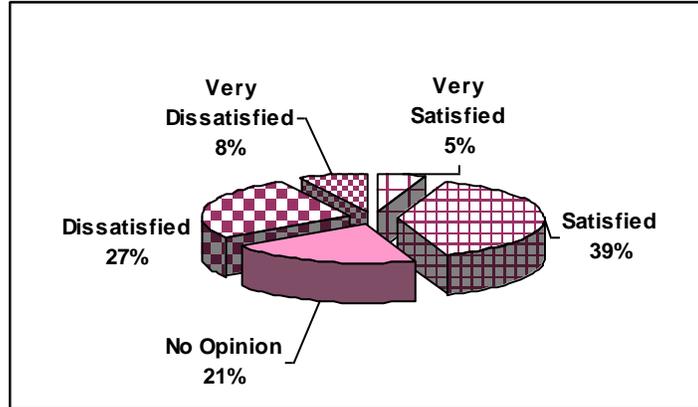


Figure 6: Overall Level of Park Satisfaction

Survey respondents were asked if they were satisfied with the quality of the Town’s parks. About 39% stated that they were satisfied, while 9% were very satisfied. About 27% were dissatisfied and 8% were very dissatisfied. About 21% indicated they had no opinion.

In response to a question regarding the accessibility of Chester’s parks, 37% of respondents indicated they were satisfied while 6% said they were very satisfied with current accessibility.

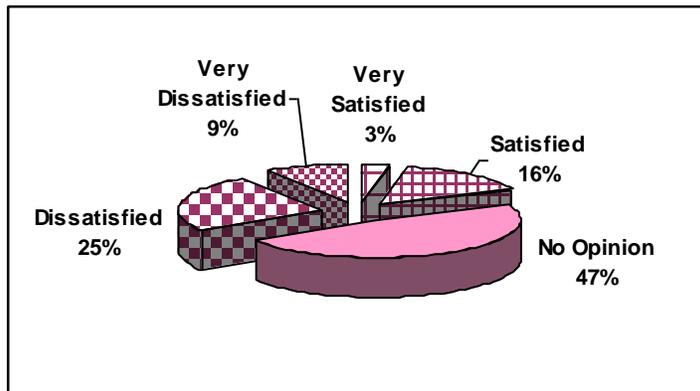


Figure 6: Satisfaction with Children’s Program

Approximately 25% felt dissatisfied and 9% were very dissatisfied with the accessibility. About 23% expressed no opinion.

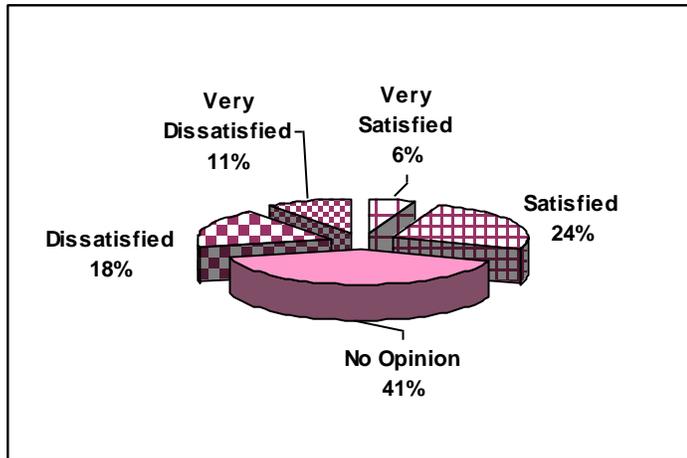
Almost half of all respondents (49%) indicated that they had no opinion on the quality of the Town’s recreational programs. About 22% were dissatisfied and 10% were very dissatisfied. About 15% were satisfied and another 4% were very satisfied.

The majority of respondents (66%) indicated they had no opinion on the quality of the Town’s senior recreational programming. About 13.8% and 4.2% indicated they were dissatisfied and very dissatisfied, respectively. About 11.9% were satisfied, while only 3.8% were very satisfied.

When asked about the quality of children’s programs in the Town, 47% of respondents did not have an opinion. About 25% felt dissatisfied and another 9.4% felt very dissatisfied. About 16% indicated they were satisfied with the programs, and about 3% were very satisfied.

Half of all respondents (53%) stated they had no opinion on the quality of programs for teens in the Town while 27% were dissatisfied and 9.6% were very dissatisfied. Only 8.4% of respondents indicated they were satisfied with the programs and 1.6% were very satisfied.

About 30% of the survey respondents indicated that they were dissatisfied while 11.2% were very dissatisfied with the amount of open space in Town. About 21.9% were satisfied and 6.2% were very satisfied with the Town’s current open space provisions. About 30% had no opinion.



**Figure 7: Quality of Parks Safety**

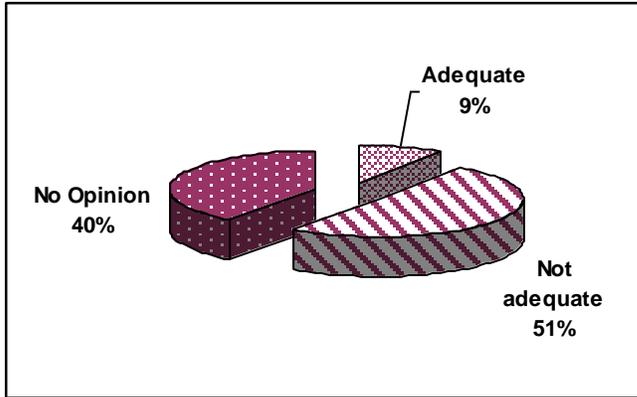
Approximately 29.5% of respondents indicated they were dissatisfied with the level of service in the parks, while another 9.3% were very dissatisfied. About 20.9% were satisfied while 3% were very satisfied. About 37.3% had no opinion.

In response to a question regarding the quality of park safety, 24.5% of respondents were satisfied while 5.7% were very satisfied. About 17.7% were dissatisfied and 10.6% were very dissatisfied with safety in the parks. About 41.5% of respondents held no opinion.

When asked about recreational facility usage, a significant percentage, 75.9%, stated they use outside, or non-Chester, facilities and 24.1% stated they did not. The outside recreational facilities residents visit include: Monroe Parks, Bear Mountain State Park, Harriman State Park, Warwick Parks and Smith Clove Park.

Survey respondents were asked their opinion on whether or not the Town provides sufficient recreational opportunities for children, teens, families, adults, and seniors.

The majority of respondents (48.1%) indicated that the Town’s recreational opportunities for children were insufficient. About half that number, 24.8%, indicated that they were sufficient, while 27.1% had no opinion.

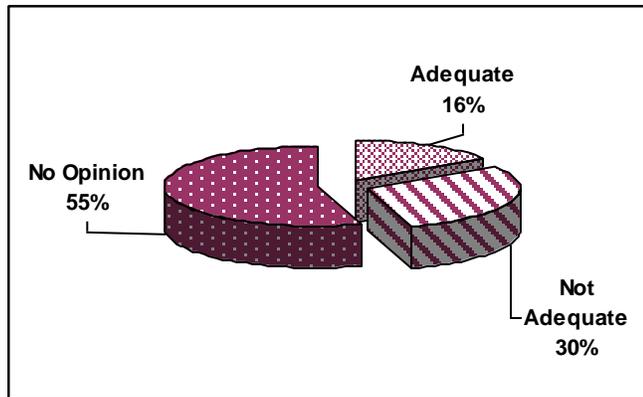


For teens aged 13-18, 50.6% of respondents indicated that recreational opportunities were insufficient, while 9.4% felt they were. Approximately 40% indicated that they did not know whether these recreational opportunities were adequate or not.

**Figure 8: Recreational Opportunities for Teens**

sufficient recreational opportunities for families, while 18.4% felt they were sufficient. Another 28% had no opinion.

Survey respondents were asked to indicate whether they felt the recreational opportunities provided for adults 18-64 were sufficient. About half (53.6%) indicated they were inadequate, while 17.3% deemed them adequate. About 29.1% had no opinion.



About 53% of respondents indicated that the Town did not provide

**Figure 9: Recreational Opportunities for Seniors**

Survey respondents were asked whether or not they felt the Town’s recreational opportunities for seniors 65 and older were adequate. About half, 54.7%, had no opinion. About 30% felt that these opportunities were insufficient, while 15.7% identified them as sufficient.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

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### 6.1 MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of a mission statement is to state the ideas, beliefs, and values that govern the way in which an agency, organization, or company conducts its business. The existing mission statement for the Town of Chester Parks and Recreation Commission is as follows:

*Provide, promote and present to the community of Chester social, cultural and recreational activities. Provide Park and Leisure venues that allow individuals and families to recreate through organized or self-promoted activities.*

However, in examining the mission statement with other ideals revealed throughout the planning process, additional fundamental values emerged that ought to be expressed. The mission statement should acknowledge that serving the recreation needs of the community is a group effort, requiring the cooperation and coordination of several departments and committees. The Recreation Department, the Town Board, and the Planning Board are three entities whose actions or lack thereof play an integral role in the quality of Chester's parks.<sup>7</sup>

It should also be acknowledged that the provision of parks, recreation facilities, programs, and events is an essential service that contributes directly to quality of life and, as such, is a valid public function that should not be relegated to the oversight of part-time positions. For any community to be considered a desirable place to live, work, or play, it must have a variety of active and passive recreational resources. As telecommunications infrastructure enables more people to work from home and more companies to settle outside of major urban areas, these quality of life aspects are taking on more significance.



### 6.2 RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE GOALS

To assist the Parks and Recreation Commission, Department staff, and other local agencies and officials proactively address Chester's recreation and open space needs, the following goals have been identified:

Goal 1: Create a park and recreation system that meets the needs of Chester's residents, providing them with top quality parks and recreational facilities.

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<sup>7</sup> Until recently, the Highway Department was responsible for performing necessary park maintenance functions. However, in December 2005, these functions were transferred to the Parks and Recreation Department with new funding allocations.

Goal 2: Through efficient and appropriate park planning, provide Chester residents with attractive, diverse, and safe parks and facilities.

Goal 3: Provide a variety of structured recreation programs, both active and passive activities, for individuals and groups to participate in.

Goal 4: Create an efficient and responsive park and recreation department that provides quality resources and user-friendly customer service, ensuring timely responsiveness and safe provision of recreational facilities.

Goal 5: Follow adopted Town policies to the extent possible and practical to establish parks and recreation as a premier community service.

### **6.3 SYSTEM WIDE RECOMMENDATIONS**

This section identifies a number of recommended actions that are potentially applicable to all the parks located in the Town of Chester's park and recreation system. Dependent upon the individual park characteristics, it may be appropriate to incorporate the following changes at each of the Town's existing and future parks.

#### *6.3.1 Design Improvements*

There are a number of proposed improvements that are applicable to all of the Town's parklands. These recommendations are listed below:

- DI 1. Develop uniform park signage to identify the park entrances, parking areas, and rules and regulations.
- DI 2. Add additional seating, picnic areas, drinking fountains, trash receptacles, lighting, and other amenities to the Town's parks.
- DI 3. Enhance the Town's existing parks by developing landscaping plans with separated pedestrian ways to make them more inviting and safe and enhance their functionality.
- DI 4. Develop permanent restroom facilities that are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- DI 5. Incorporate Town History into park design via historic markers or information kiosks.
- DI 6. For final design, survey park properties to do site plans and incorporate new facilities, amenities, and landscaping that takes into consideration existing storm drainage, irrigation infrastructure, and topography.

#### *6.3.2 Maintenance Improvements*

One commonly espoused view throughout the public participation process was the sentiment that the Town must develop a proactive program to better maintain its existing parklands and recreational resources before setting out to acquire new properties.

- MI 1. Clean up the parkland of discarded furniture, trash, tree limbs, and any other debris.
- MI 2. Provide adequate maintenance to ensure that the parks' restroom facilities are clean and stocked with supplies and the drinking fountains are operable.
- MI 3. Develop a local law prohibiting the dumping of refuse, defining refuse to include leaves and yard waste.

### *6.3.3 Organizational Improvements*

Throughout the planning process, many expressed concern or dismay by the inadequacy of the oversight and maintenance efforts extended to ensure the continued safe operation of the Town's parks. To address some of these concerns, the following changes are recommended for the Town's recreational organizational structure:

- OI 1. Create an independent, Parks and Recreation Department, under the direction of a fulltime Parks Director and fulltime staff as needed. At a minimum, this should include a fulltime Director and assistant, a fulltime parks superintendent, and four seasonal part-time employees.
- OI 2. Provide adequate resources to staff the Parks and Recreation Department for oversight and coordination activities to ensure that park resources, such as the ball fields and tennis courts, are sufficiently open and available for "pick up" play, not monopolized by leagues and organized teams.
- OI 3. Develop mechanisms for improved communication between the Parks and Recreation Department, the Town Board, and the Planning Board to ensure Chester residents' needs are met.
- OI 4. Develop an open space acquisition program by which the Town will be able to purchase additional lands as needed in the future. This can be purchase through fee simple acquisition or through purchase of development rights.

### *6.3.4 Planning and Resource Development Improvements*

As the Town's population continues to grow, the Town should have a system in place to examine its existing park resources and identify ways to develop additional resources to meet increasing need and make existing facilities more accessible. As was noted previously, despite a population increase of 41.9% (3,833 people between 1993 and 2005), its parkland inventory has remained relatively unchanged. As a result, the amount of park and recreation land in the Town is currently inadequate.



- RD 1. Examine existing Town-owned parcels that are presently underutilized and may be redeveloped into parks or permanently preserved as open space. See suggestions outlined on the Existing and Proposed Park System Map.
- RD 2. The Town should proactively look for opportunities to acquire field space as parkland dedication when approving large-scale subdivisions.
- RD 3. Develop a recreational facilities capital improvement plan to ensure additional resources are added and improvements are made in a timely fashion and that the funds collected through the impact fee are spent in a way that provides the most benefit to Town residents, such as ensuring all park resources are made compliant with existing ADA accessibility laws.
- RD 4. Develop an open space priority inventory so that the Town is prepared to acquire quality open space parcels as they become available.
- RD 5. Develop an informational brochure to provide information on the Town's resources, parks, and calendar of events to new residents.
- RD 6. Develop a Chester Recreation and Trails Map.

### *6.3.5 Financing Improvements*

There was much consensus that the resources allocated to parks maintenance, in general, are woefully insufficient. To address this, the following recommendations are made:

- FI 1. The Town's current recreation impact fee of \$2,000 is comparable to the amount collected by many of its neighboring communities. The County surveys local municipalities to find out how much is presently being charged. The Town should regularly check with the Orange County Planning Department to keep apprised of the average recreation impact fee amount.
- FI 2. Modify the recreation impact fee law (Parkland Fees) to allow the Town flexibility to invest the monies collected (if appropriate to do so) and to limit funds expenditure to acquisition and capital improvements. As currently drafted, the law is sufficiently open ended so that the funds could be used for salaries or maintenance costs.
- FI 3. Through use agreements established with local Little Leagues and other organizations, the Town should encourage the pursuit of local sponsors (such as landscapers) to help defray the costs of field and grounds maintenance.
- FI 4. Pursue sponsorship opportunities for ball fields, benches, signs, etc.
- FI 5. Investigate providing Town-run concession stands in each of Chester's community parks to provide the Town Parks and Recreation Department with an additional revenue source.
- FI 6. Investigate the organization fee structure currently in place in the Town to determine whether the amounts should be increased, or modified to reflect residential participation in the organizations.
- FI 7. Develop additional revenue streams via storage facility rentals at the Town parks.

- FI 8. The Town should investigate levying a Recreational User Fee Program for appropriate resources. Appropriate resources could be the Camp Monroe facility, if the Town is successful in acquiring it, and if the Town establishes a seasonal beach at Glenmere Lake.

#### **6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS TO MEET CHESTER'S RECREATIONAL NEEDS**

Many residents indicated a need for additional active recreation resources. (See Chapter 5.) To address some of this need, the following is recommended:

- RN 1. Develop a centrally located, integrated *community center* with activities and resources to appeal to youths, adults, and seniors. Housing sports facilities, classrooms, and meeting space, such a facility would also serve to unite the community's residents. Although Camp Monroe is not central, it could, if acquired by the Town, be used to meet these needs.
- RN 2. Develop new and refurbish existing *playgrounds* using age-sensitive park design and safety fencing.
- RN 3. Develop *pocket parks* for neighborhood use in the Town's more densely populated areas. Suggested neighborhoods include Sugar Loaf, Surrey Meadows, and Lakes Road. Such pocket parks could include playgrounds/tot lots, seating, fishing, fields and/or game courts. The Sugar Loaf Plan identified three potential pocket parks that should be supported:
- Wood Road Ballfield.
  - Creamery Pond Park.
  - Bus Stop Park and Playground, at the intersection of Pine Hill and Creamery Pond Roads.
- RN 4. Expand parking at the Town's *senior center* and provide a picnic area.
- RN 5. Continue efforts to acquire the Camp Monroe property for creation of a *Town Recreation Complex*. Given the Town's deficiency in parkland, the acquisition of about 97 acres of the Camp Monroe site, with its existing 5 tennis courts, 5 basketball courts, 3 ball fields, 2 soccer fields, 2 indoor gymnasiums, and swimming pool would go a long way toward meeting some of the Town's unmet recreational needs. The camp also accommodates fishing, horseback riding, and gym hockey, and houses a 9-hole miniature golf course and a go-kart track. The Town could easily charge a Recreational User Fee or Membership fee to users, prorated to residents.

#### **6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS TO MEET CHESTER'S OPEN SPACE NEEDS**

Open space lands play an important role within a community. Open space lands serve an environmental purpose, an aesthetic purpose, and a psychological purpose. In addition, they result in little demand for municipal services and infrastructure. As development pressures have been growing in the Town of Chester, as they have throughout Orange County, maintaining a healthy balance of open space requires effort and advance planning.

- OS 1. Develop planning techniques and funding mechanisms by which the Town may acquire properties for open space preservation or active parkland. Suggested techniques the community could investigate include: tax abatement easements<sup>8</sup>, Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs) or Purchase of Development Rights (PDRs)<sup>9</sup>, or fee simple land purchase.
- OS 2. Investigate the creation of an Open Space and Parkland Fund utilizing the 0.75% transfer tax now allowed for NYS municipalities. These monies could then be used to pay for land outright via purchase or via purchase of development rights (PDRs).
- OS 3. Use the Town's Recreation Impact Fee funds to create a revolving funding mechanism to acquire lands to add to the Town's inventory of both open space and active parklands.
- OS 4. Work with existing property owners to ensure that quality open space parcels, that is, those that provide habitat and house wetland resources, are preserved.
- OS 5. Require cluster-style development in environmentally sensitive or aesthetically valued areas including quality habitat areas, prime agricultural lands, wood lots, wetlands, and hillsides.
- OS 6. Develop and/or promote incentives, such as the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) or the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (480[a]) term easement program to encourage the development of a wildlife refuge area or a bird sanctuary.<sup>10</sup>
- OS 7. Work with the Windridge Condominium Association and OMAT, Inc. to ensure that the 85 acres at the Town's southernmost tip that were supposed to be dedicated as parkland as a result of the Windridge development, are so maintained. These lands could potentially be developed into a Community Park.
- OS 8. The Town should pursue the development of a waterfront park in Chester at the Orange County owned Black Meadow Creek reservoir lands. The area, which includes several hundred acres of land, could be opened for hiking trails, fishing, cartop boating, picnicking and other passive recreational uses.

## **6.6 CHESTER'S EXISTING TRAIL NETWORK**

The Orange Heritage Trail, a rail-to-trail multiuse path traverses the Town in a east-west direction, while the Highlands Trail provides a north-south link to the Appalachian Trail in southmost edge of Town. As the Town has such a strong existing trail network, it should look for opportunities to enhance this network and develop both regional and local trail connections.

- T 1. Investigate acquiring an easement through the McNeil property to develop a trail link between Goose Pond State park and Chester Commons.

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<sup>8</sup> Tax abatement easements allow owners to apply for tax abatement in exchange for temporary conservation easements on their land.

<sup>9</sup> TDRs and PDRs are two variations on a similar concept. Landowners are compensated for their development rights.

<sup>10</sup> **WHIP** is a voluntary program to develop and improve wildlife habitat primarily on private land. The United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service provides both technical assistance and up to 75% cost-share assistance to establish and improve fish and wildlife habitat. WHIP agreements between NRCS and participants generally last from 5 to 10 years from the agreement date.

- T 2. Work with trail operators on identifying appropriate amenities and improvements, such as drinking fountains, benches, and restrooms along the Orange Heritage Trail, Highlands Trail and others that may be developed.
- T 3. Work with the NY-NJ Trail Conference on establishing the easements necessary to develop a comprehensive trail network in and around Sugar Loaf, connecting Sugar Loaf Mountain and ultimately to Goose Pond Mountain State Park and the Appalachian Trail.
- T 4. Investigate the viability and pursue as appropriate the trails identified in the Sugar Loaf Plan. These include:
- The proposed multi-use Minisink Trail would run behind properties on King’s Highway and connect the Bertoni Sculpture Garden to the Barnsider Tavern.
  - The proposed Queen’s Lane would run parallel to the Minisink Trail, possibly connecting with Scott’s Meadow.
  - The proposed Sugar Loaf Mountain Trail would include a dirt trail connecting the south end of Sugar Loaf at King’s Highway with the existing Sugar Loaf Mountain trail system.
  - Proposed trail linkages connecting Minisink Trail and the main trail and Goose Pond Mountain State Park to the east and to the Appalachian Trail to the southeast.
  - The proposed Creamery Pond Trail would connect the Methodist Church with Creamery Pond Road, to the rear of the Lycian Centre.
  - The Lycian Centre Trail would improve and extend an existing walkway. Drainage issues currently hinder the use of the footbridge already existing at this site. This trail would connect the Lycian Centre’s parking lot with the Creamery Pond Trail.

## **6.7 POCKET PARK RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Town of Chester has a deficiency in the number of parks, acres of parklands, and variety of available recreational resources. To address the lack of both Play Lots or Tot Lots and neighborhood parks, the Town should investigate increasing the resources available at its existing Mini- Parks, Pulvrent Field and Oak Drive Park. If the Town is able to acquire land adjacent to these existing parks (or, if applicable, existing Town-owned property can be rededicated as parkland), Pulvrent Field and Oak Drive Park may be upgraded to Neighborhood Parks.

### *6.7.1 Pulvrent Field Recommendations*

- PF 1. Use the adjoining Town and Water Department-owned lands that abut Pulvrent Field to increase the size of the park.
- PF 2. Investigate and address the irrigation problem near the dugout.
- PF 3. Repair deteriorated fencing.

- PF 4. Develop parking.
- PF 5. Develop a playground/tot lot.
- PF 6. Replace the flag on the flagpole.
- PF 7. Address the mosquito problem.
- PF 8. Develop an additional ball field.
- PF 9. Develop a footbridge and multi use trail on the natural lands adjacent to the creek.



### 6.7.2 Oak Drive Park Recommendations

- OD 1. Fix the deteriorating basketball court.
- OD 2. Reconfigure and repave the parking area.
- OD 3. Investigate expanding the existing park by acquiring adjacent publicly owned land.
- OD 4. Develop a playground/tot lot
- OD 5. If the Town is able to expand the park, it may want to develop additional resources such as a volleyball or tennis court.
- OD 6. Remove or paint the site’s obsolete water department infrastructure.

## 6.8 COMMUNITY PARK RECOMMENDATIONS

Although both classified as Community Parks, the 24-acre Chester Commons and 16.4-acre Chester Community Carpenter Park each perform very different roles. Located in the Village, Chester Community Carpenter Park is a short walk away from the Village’s 3,445 residents. Located on a busy stretch of Kings Highway, the Commons is mostly accessed by automobile and predominantly attracts park goers who use its combination soccer/football field. The Commons is also the site of several of Chester’s large seasonal events, such as the Easter Egg Hunt and the End of Summer Concert.

### 6.8.1 Chester Commons

- CC 1. Acquire an easement along the road frontage to place a more visible (and lit) park entrance sign along Laroe Road.
- CC 2. Reassess the lands presently dedicated to Chester Commons and conduct a land survey platting out the park. According to the Town Assessor, Chester Commons is part of a 34-acre parcel currently classified as “Highway Garage.” As this is the case, these lands, potentially could be developed to meet future highway department needs.
- CC 3. Add lighting to the park driveway and to the pedestrian path leading to the pavilion.
- CC 4. Position bollards or boulders to deter drivers from parking or stopping adjacent to the playground or parking on the field edge.

- CC 5. Remove the existing storage sheds from their current, highly visible location. Install Town-owned storage sheds at the edge of the property. These sheds can be rented on a seasonal basis to league field users.
- CC 6. Fill in the low areas to address the park's drainage and pooling problems, and extend drains to a retention basin.
- CC 7. Improve the parks picnic area, replacing deteriorated tables and benches as needed and improving the pavilion.
- CC 8. Continue with existing, ongoing efforts to add a second, ADA accessible restroom at the park's lower level.
- CC 9. Continue with existing, ongoing efforts to add a second combination football/soccer field. A second field is needed to allow for proper maintenance, seeding, and regular aeration of the existing field.
- CC 10. Continue with existing, ongoing efforts to install field lighting at the proposed new combination field.
- CC 11. Develop additional hiking and walking trails in the eastern side of the park.
- CC12. Study the feasibility of improving the park's existing game fields, including adding bleachers, a scoreboard, a public announcement system, and a filming tower.
- CC13. Develop a separate tot lot and playground and enhance their security by adding fencing.
- CC14. Improve the park's pavilion area by adding a second pavilion and identifying ways to improve access to the existing pavilion. One possibility is to cut a staircase into the hill. Removing the chain link fence adjacent to the DPW driveway would allow pavilion users to pull up to the pavilion by vehicle to make deliveries.
- CC15. Develop a Town-run concession stand.
- CC16. Construct an enclosed *dog park* with amenities, including benches and fencing.

### 6.8.2 *Chester Community Carpenter Park*

- CP 1. The basketball court, which doubles as an ice rink, should be repaired with, new hoop nets, and fencing to separate it from a steep grade drop. The poorly maintained court (when functioning as an ice rink) suffers from drainage issues, while its metal drainage plot presents a hazard to court users. The ice rink should be discontinued, and the curbs and drainage infrastructure should be removed.
- CP 2. Develop additional parking areas and repave and stripe the existing parking lot.
- CP 3. Develop additional picnic facilities, including a pavilion, tables and benches, and barbeque pits.
- CP 4. Expand the park by dedicating adjacent Town-owned land to park use.
- CP 5. Make necessary improvements to the existing fields. The backstop fences and dugouts must be repaired or replaced.

CP 6. Develop additional ball fields, including a dedicated girls softball field.

CP 7. Develop two new basketball courts.

CP 8. Develop a skate park.



### 6.8.3 Broadview Estates

Recently acquired by the Town, this parcel is approximately 91 acres. However, only 21 acres, located at the top, are level; the remaining lands are hilly. The site is home to a viewshed that many residents would like to see preserved. This land's hilly topography also presents an opportunity to develop wintertime recreational activities, something presently lacking in Chester. Given the size of the parcel, it definitely presents opportunities for a multiple activity park.

BE 1. Investigate the possibility of PAR 3 golf course or driving range, complete with clubhouse/concession stand.

BE 2. Investigate the option of developing a movable bandshell for summer performances and concerts.

BE 3. Develop picnic areas with benches and tables for passive recreation users.

BE 4. Develop a series of trails at the site, including a pedestrian trail with exercise stations, and a multi-use (hiking, walking, running, skating, biking, horseback riding) recreation loop around the perimeter.

BE 5. Develop securely fenced tot lots and playgrounds.

BE 6. Improve accessibility to the park via Restdale Road and pedestrian links to the library.

BE 7. Develop winter activities at the park including sleigh riding, cross-country skiing, sledding, and tobogganing.

BE 8. Develop volleyball court, bocce court, and horseshoe court.

## 6.9 OTHER PARKS AND RESOURCES

Although the Town does not presently own the following parkland and recreation resources, they do contribute greatly to Chester's existing resource inventory and should not be overlooked.

### 6.9.1 Goosepond State Park

As documented in the Southern Wallkill Biodiversity Plan, recently released by the Wildlife Conservation Society (and summarized in Section 1.4.3) Goosepond State Park houses a widely diverse habitat area in large part due to the fact that the park remains undeveloped. For this reason, the development of active recreational resources is discouraged. According to the park ranger, the State never allocated funds for the development of recreational facilities and, as a

result, none were ever developed. For these reasons, we recommend the Town not pursue the development of active recreational facilities at Goosepond State Park.

The Town should identify ways to get more enjoyment and use of the park. One way to do this, which would also serve to strengthen the region's habitat connectivity, would be to develop open space trail links between the park and other adjacent open space/ trail areas. Given the scarcity of designated trails in the park (limited to former Lazy Hill Road), the Town must work with the Palisades Interstate Park Commission on developing a few additional pedestrian-only hiking trails to connect to these trail links. Another way to promote use of the park would be to include the park's existing resources, including designated parking areas, the nature walk, and marked trails, on any recreational and trail maps that the Town develops.

### *6.9.2 Open Space Trail Connections*

As mentioned previously, there is great potential in Chester to develop additional trail linkages that will present greater opportunities for residents, visitors, and even wildlife. One privately owned parcel that is ideally positioned to provide connections between existing open space areas is the McNeil property, situated between Chester Commons and Goosepond State Park. The Town, with assistance from local open space and trail advocacy groups including, possibly the Orange County Land Trust and the New York New Jersey Trail Conference, could acquire a linear easement along the center of this parcel that would allow for the development of a trail to connect to the western edge of Goosepond State Park.

There are several privately held parcels that people currently use to access and hike up Sugar Loaf Mountain. The Town should work with the Orange County Land Trust and the New York New Jersey Trail Conference on establishing easements on these properties to connect Sugar Loaf Mountain with Goosepond State Park.

### *6.9.3 Butch's Field*

As of October 2005, the Chester Union Free School District indicated it had no plans to sell any of its current land holdings. Should this situation change in the future, the Town and Village might consider acquiring Butch's Field and adjacent lands. Given their proximity to Chester Community Carpenter Park, such an acquisition would provide the community the opportunity to develop a very dynamic Community Park. The former Junior/High School building may be developed into a community center or, if not a full-range community center, portions of the building may be developed as a youth center. The facility's relative accessibility to the Village, northern Town neighborhoods, and the existing Chester Academy makes this a viable option.

## **6.10 IMPACT OF PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS ON EXISTING INVENTORY**

The recommendations included in this Plan have sought to address both the public comments received from residents and other stakeholders throughout the planning process as well as the needs evidenced through the SCORP analysis conducted in Chapter 4. The following two tables

identify the extent to which the recommendations satisfy the needs indicated by the SCORP analysis.

#### 6.10.1 Impact of Plan Recommendations on Existing Parklands Inventory

The recommendations provide for an additional 44.6 acres of developed parklands, more than doubling the Town's existing developed park inventory of 43.6 acres. This would bring the total of developed parklands to 88.2 acres. Including the Town's existing passive, or undeveloped parklands, in the inventory brings the total acreage up to 159.7 acres.

**Table 16: Proposed Recommendations Impact on Chester Parks Inventory**

Type of Park	Name	Parcel Identification Number	Acres Classified Park/Recreation	Park Addition	Proposed Total
Community Parks	Carpenter Community Park	108-3-18	11.1	5.3	16.4
	<b>Total Carpenter Park</b>				<b>16.4</b>
	Chester Commons	4-1-8.2 (34.1 acre parcel)	28	0	28
	<b>Total Chester Commons</b>				<b>28</b>
	Broadview Estates	7-1-45.11 (91.3 acre parcel)	0	30	30
	<b>Total Broadview Estates</b>				<b>30</b>
	<b>Total Community Parks</b>				<b>74.4</b>
Pocket Parks/Mimi Parks	Oak Drive Park	8-1-24	3.1	0	3.1
	Oak Drive Park Expansion	8-1-22	0	4.3	4.3
	<b>Total Oak Drive Park</b>				<b>7.4</b>
	Pulvrent Field	1-1-1.12	1.4	0	1.4
	Pulvrent Field Expansion	1-1-1.11 (9.4 acre parcel)	0	3	3
	<b>Total Pulvrent Park</b>				<b>4.4</b>
	Wood Road Park Proposed	30-1-19 (3.4 acre parcel)	0	2	2
	<b>Total Wood Road</b>				<b>2</b>
<b>Total Pocket Parks</b>				<b>13.8</b>	
Natural Areas	Broadview Estates	7-1-45.11 (91.3 acre parcel)	61.3	0	61.3
	Wilson Road cluster lands	28-3-12	7.7	0	7.7
	Wilson Road cluster lands	28-2-6	2.5	0	2.5
	<b>Total Natural Area</b>				<b>71.5</b>
<b>Total Parkland in Chester (both Developed and Natural)</b>					<b>159.7</b>

As discussed in Chapter 4, the Town of Chester, with its current population, needs 107 acres of developed parkland to meet resident needs. To meet this remaining shortfall of nearly 20 acres, the Town should investigate developing additional active resources at Town owned properties or properties the Town is interested in acquiring. If the Town is successful in securing 97 acres of the 147-acre Camp Monroe, that will more than meet this outstanding need. If the Town pursues acquisition of a portion of the 85-acre Windridge lands, this land may be used to develop active

parklands as well. Due to the parcel’s proximity to a potential water supply, developing active recreation uses at any potential Glenmere Lake Waterfront Park is unlikely.

**6.10.2 Impact of Plan Recommendations on Existing Recreational Facility Inventory**

The Plan sought to identify opportunities to better utilize existing Town-owned parklands. By reconfiguring existing resources, acquiring adjoining lands, and pursuing an organized development program, the Plan sought to promote the highest and best use of existing parklands. Following these principles, it was possible to incorporate a number of additional active recreational resources into the Town’s existing parks.

However, even with absorbing adjacent lands at Carpenter Community Park, Pulvrent Field, and Oak Drive Park, due topographical and space limitations, it was not possible to meet all outstanding recreational need through more intense use of the Town’s existing parklands. It is recommended that the Town pursue acquiring several existing resources to meet this need. Acquisition of a portion of Camp Monroe, with its complete inventory of both indoor and outdoor resources, (including 5 basketball courts and 5 tennis courts) would not only meet the Town’s existing need, but it would also meet the Town’s estimated need at full-buildout.

Camp Monroe’s 5 fields (3 softball and 2 soccer) and the Chester Union Free School District’s property (including Butch’s Field) would greatly meet existing demand for field space. However, it may not meet all existing need. The Town will have to remain diligent in pursuing opportunities for additional field acquisition.

**Table 17: Proposed Recommendations Impact on Chester Recreational Resource Inventory**

<b>Recreational Facility</b>	<b>Existing Need (Estimated 2005 Population = 12,971)</b>	<b>Existing Park Capacity</b>	<b>Existing Surplus or Shortfall</b>	<b>Recommended Additions to Meet Needs</b>	<b>Recreational Resource Total</b>
Golf Course	6.5 holes	<b>0</b>	-6.5 holes	PAR 3 Golf at Broadview	PAR 3 Golf at Broadview
Field Games (Baseball, Softball, Football, Soccer)	38.9 acres	<b>8.4 acres</b>	-30.5 acres	1 softball, 1 multi-use at Carpenter; 1 LL at Pulvrent; 3 LL fields and 2 Multi-use fields at Butch's Field/School property; 3 softball fields and 2 soccer fields -Camp Monroe	13 additional fields/ ~14 acres
Swimming Pool	9,730 sq.ft.	<b>0</b>	- 9,730 sq.ft.	Camp Monroe	1 swimming pool
Tennis Courts	6.5 courts	<b>4 courts</b>	-2.5 courts	5 courts (Camp Monroe)	9 courts
Basketball (Courts)	6.5 courts	<b>2 courts</b>	-4.5 courts	2 courts at Carpenter; 5 courts at Camp Monroe	9 courts

# 7. PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

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## 7.1 IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

This section includes a list of achievable park and recreation actions. In the Implementation Action Matrix that follows, the implementation actions have been identified by type of action and characterized as either “short-term,” “mid-term,” “long-term,” or “on-going.” These terms are defined as follows:

S – Short (or near) term – within the next two years, through to the end of 2007.

M – Midterm (or intermediate): within the next three to five years, through to 2010.

L – Long term: within the next six to ten years, through to 2015.

O – On-going. On-going actions should begin immediately, in the short-term and continue as necessary.

The schedule of the proposed improvements was developed upon close review of the public feedback obtained through the recreation survey, the stakeholder roundtables, and the public workshop. The expressed preferences of Chester residents influenced the priorities established in the action matrix that follows.

The proposed implementation actions were further delineated by Phase. Phase I actions include maintenance activities associated with existing parks and infrastructure. Phase II describes upgrades and modifications to existing parks and infrastructure. Phase III identifies new development or construction or acquisition activities. In addition, a responsible or lead party has been designated for each action item.

Given many residents hesitancy to commit additional resources to new parks and recreational resources without first seeing some benefit from prior expenditures (such as the Town’s \$4 million acquisition of the Broadview Estates parcel), it is recommended that the Town first engage residents’ support and buy-in into the park and recreation process. The Town must demonstrate its intent to follow through on existing parks maintenance and upgrades. The Town must demonstrate to residents that it cares about the places and spaces residents currently use to meet their recreation needs. The plan recommends the creation of a full-time Parks and Recreation Director position to oversee implementation of the Plan and ensure that park maintenance continues to be a priority.

## **8. FUNDING SOURCES**

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This chapter provides detailed information on the funding sources available to municipalities looking to develop or enhance their park and recreation systems.

### **8.1 NEW YORK STATE OFFICE OF PARKS RECREATION & HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

The New York State Office of Parks Recreation & Historic Preservation (OPRHP), through state and federal funding sources, administers a number of grant programs. Regional Grant Officers are available to provide assistance on applications and program details.

Applications may be downloaded from the OPRHP website, or may not be filed electronically. All applications must be submitted to the OPRHP in accordance with each program's grant submittal guidelines.

#### *8.1.1 NYS Environmental Protection Fund*

##### **Parks Program**

A matching grant program for the acquisition or development of parks and recreational facilities for projects to preserve, rehabilitate or restore lands, waters or structures for park, recreation or conservation purposes. Funds may be awarded to municipalities or not-for-profits with an ownership interest, for indoor or outdoor projects and must reflect the priorities established in the NY Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).

##### **Historic Preservation Program**

A matching grant program to improve, protect, preserve, rehabilitate or restore properties listed on the National or State Registers of Historic Places. Funds are available to municipalities or not-for-profits with an ownership interest.

##### **Heritage Area Program**

A matching grant program for projects to preserve, rehabilitate or restore lands, waters or structures, identified in a management plan approved by the Commissioner of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. Projects must fall within a New York State Designated Heritage Area.

##### **Acquisition**

A matching grant program for the acquisition of a permanent easement or fee title to lands, waters or structures for use by all segments of the population for park, recreation, conservation or preservation purposes. To be used for all three program areas where acquisition is of more importance than development.

### **Zoos, Botanical Gardens and Aquariums**

A program for the funding of collections care or special projects at municipal or not-for-profit institutions that house, care for and interpret for the public, systematically organized collections of living things.

### **Barns Restoration and Preservation Program**

A matching grant program for the restoration and preservation of agricultural buildings, including barns, sheds and silos, that were constructed at least fifty (50) years prior to the date of the grant application, and in need of repair. The applicant must have a significant ownership interest in the property.

### **Snowmobile Trail Grant Program**

A grant program that allocates funds to local governments that engage in the development and maintenance of snowmobile trails designated as part of the State Snowmobile Trail System. The authorization for the program is found in Article 27 of NY Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Law. Funding is allocated on a pro-rated basis.

### **Legislative Initiatives**

A program for recipients pre-designated by the State Legislature. For additional program information contact your local Assemblyperson or State Senator.

## **8.1.2 Federally Funded Programs**

### **Land and Water Conservation Fund Program**

A matching grant program for the acquisition, development and/or rehabilitation of outdoor park and recreation facilities. Funds are available to municipal public agencies and Indian tribal governments. Funded projects must reflect the priorities established in SCORP and be available to the general public. Source of funds: The National Park Service.

### **Recreational Trails Program**

A matching grant program for the acquisition, development, rehabilitation and maintenance of trails and trail-related projects. Funds are available to non-profit organizations, municipal, state and federal agencies, Indian tribal governments and other public agencies and authorities. Funded projects must be identified in, or further a specific goal of, the SCORP and must be available to the general public. Source of funds: Federal Highway Administration.

### **Certified Local Government Program**

A matching grant program for the expansion and maintenance of the National Register of Historic Places and support of historic preservation activities, to include survey and inventory. Only Certified Local Governments may apply. Source of funds: The National Park Service.

## **8.2 NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

### *8.2.1 Quality Communities Grant Program*

This is a grant program that in 2005 awarded \$3 million for planning projects statewide. Eligible applicants are counties, cities, towns, villages, Indian-Tribes/Nations, local public authorities, public benefit corporations, and not-for-profits (under certain circumstances). These funds are designed to assist local governments with planning efforts to: encourage community growth, improve community centers, promote inter-municipal growth, enhance mountain communities preserve open space and more.

Information and an application is available from: [www.qualitycommunities.org/index.asp](http://www.qualitycommunities.org/index.asp)

### *8.2.2 Shared Municipal Services Incentive Grant Program (SMSI)*

The SMSI grant program may be used by two or more municipalities to cover legal and consultant services, feasibility studies, capital improvements and other necessary expenses related to costs associated with cooperative agreements, mergers, consolidations, and dissolutions. The program has defined eligible municipalities as a county, city, town, village and school district. Grant application request can be made in an amount not to exceed \$100,000. Grant recipients are required to provide a ten percent match of the total approved cost.

Information and an application is available from: [www.dos.state.ny.us/lgss/SMSI/html](http://www.dos.state.ny.us/lgss/SMSI/html)

## **8.3 NEW YORK STATE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE FOR SMALL CITIES**

### *8.3.1 Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG)*

New York State's CDBG Small Cities Program is divided into three separate components: the Annual Competitive Round which includes Comprehensive Grants, the Open Round for Economic Development Grants, and the Strategic Planning Technical Assistance Grants available once each year.

Applicants applying for a competitive round grant must address and resolve specific community development needs within the following three areas: (a) Housing, (b) Public Facilities, or (c) Micro-Enterprise. Competitive round applications may consist of more than one activity under one of two conditions. First, if the additional activity is incidental to the primary activity and second, if the activity involves two or more related activities to be carried out in a coordination manner to address a substantial community development need within a defined area or areas (comprehensive application).

Through the public service facilities category, applicants can seek funding for structures to house or serve special-needs populations; senior services; child care centers; removal of architectural barriers for the disabled (lifts, automatic doors, ramps, etc.); and multi- purpose buildings housing several qualifying activities for low- and moderate-income persons. Small Cities funds can be

used for construction or renovation of facilities, but cannot be used to cover the day-to-day operational costs nor can funds be used for buildings that are primarily used for the general conduct of government business (i.e. town halls).

Additional information on the CDBG Program is available from: [www.nysmallcities.com](http://www.nysmallcities.com)

## **8.4 NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

### *8.4.1 Transportation Enhancement Program*

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) provides funding to New York State through the federal Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA). New York State through the Transportation Enhancement Program (TEP) distributes the funds to successful applicants. For a community to be considered eligible for funding, a project must fall into one or more of the following categories:

- Provision of facilities for bicycles and pedestrians, including safety and educational activities for bicyclists and pedestrians
- Acquisition of scenic easements and scenic or historic sites
- Scenic or historic highway programs and provision of tourist and welcome center facilities
- Landscaping and other scenic beautification
- Historic preservation
- Rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation buildings, structures, or facilities
- Establishment of transportation - related museums
- Preservation of abandoned railway corridors, including conversion and use for pedestrian and bicycle trails
- Control and removal of outdoor advertising
- Archeological planning and research
- Mitigation of water pollution due to highway runoff
- Environmental mitigation to reduce vehicle-caused wildlife mortality while maintaining habitat connectivity.

The term "historic" in the context of eligibility means either in the National Registry of Historic Places or ruled as eligible for inclusion in that Registry by the State Office of Historic Preservation. TEP funding will cover 80% of the capital improvement costs for eligible projects on a reimbursement basis.

Additional information on the Transportation Enhancement Program is available from:  
<http://dot.state.ny.us/programs/tep.html>

## **8.5 PRIVATE FOUNDATION GRANTS**

### *8.5.1 Open Space Institute*

Through its Loan and Grant Programs, the Open Space Institute (OSI) acts as a broker of both capital and ideas, helping to facilitate strategic land purchases and the development of efficient new approaches to land conservation. OSI provides interim and permanent funds to qualified land trusts for fee acquisition and easements across North America with individual loan funds in New Jersey, the Northern Forest, the Southern Appalachians, western Massachusetts, and Greater Hudson Valley and grants available in the Northern Forest.

Open Space Institute  
1350 Broadway, Suite 201  
New York, NY 10018-7799  
Phone: (212) 290-8200  
Fax: (212) 244-3441

### *8.5.2 Baseball Tomorrow Fund*

The Baseball Tomorrow Fund (BTF) is a joint initiative between Major League Baseball and the Major League Baseball Players Association that was established in 1999 through a \$10 million commitment by Major League Baseball and the Major League Baseball Players Association.

The mission of BTF is to promote and enhance the growth of youth participation in baseball and softball throughout the world by funding programs, fields, coaches' training, and the purchase of uniforms and equipment to encourage and maintain youth participation in the game. Grants are designed to be sufficiently flexible to enable applicants to address needs unique to their communities. The funds are intended to finance a new program, expand or improve an existing program, undertake a new collaborative effort, or obtain facilities or equipment. BTF provides grants to non-profit and tax-exempt organizations in both rural and urban communities. BTF awards an average of 30 grants per year totaling more than \$1.5 million. The average grant amount is \$51,000. MLB and the Players Association fund BTF annually.

Baseball Tomorrow Fund  
245 Park Avenue  
New York, NY 10167  
Phone: (212) 931-7878

### *8.5.3 United States Tennis Association: Community Outreach Grant*

The United States Tennis Association (USTA) administers this program, the purpose of which is to offer funding to programs that provide individuals with tennis and life skills development

opportunities. Eligible applicants must have a year-round program and must have a history of conducting effective tennis programs in the underserved community.

#### **8.5.4 United States Tennis Association: Tennis in the Parks Initiative**

USTA and National Recreation and Park Association have developed the *Tennis in the Parks Community* Initiative to support local park and recreation agencies eager to increase participation by improving the quality of their community tennis programs.

Every 1st year park and recreation agency or organization is required to complete an online assessment of their programs and community needs. Agencies or organizations designated as a *Tennis in the Parks Community* are required to complete an online evaluation and renewal to retain their Tennis in the Parks Community designation.

All agencies and organizations designated as a *Tennis in the Parks Community* will be eligible to receive resource allocations to assist with improving community tennis programs. Possible resource allocations include: cash grants for instructors, advertising, equipment and/or building/renovating facilities, scholarships to training workshops, program materials, consulting sessions, promotional materials, and toolkits.

Additional information is available from: [www.usta.com](http://www.usta.com)

#### **8.5.5 Kaboom Playground Planner**

This website provides communities with design assistance through its playground planner tool to organize, inform and build community playgrounds. Easy and comprehensive, the online tool allows communities to use Kaboom's time-tested process, which provides guidance, practical advice, cost-cutting tips, checklists and timelines.

Once the project has been established, a community can login as often as necessary to manage volunteers, donors, contacts, budgets, expenses, tasks, events and most other aspects of the community-build playground project.

The Kaboom Technical Assistance Playground Planner is available at: <http://planner.kaboom.org/>

#### **8.5.6 The Allstate Helping Hands Program – Allstate Foundation**

The Allstate Foundation awards program grants that focus on personal safety and security, neighborhood revitalization and financial planning, and education. Examples of funded projects include: softball field improvements; child safety advocacy; structured after-school programs with initiatives to safeguard against gangs and delinquency; automobile passenger safety; and anti-drinking and driving programs. The Helping Hands program organizes volunteer events not only for employees, but also for their families and friends. Volunteer activities include renovating and rehabilitating homes, working in soup kitchens, conducting food and clothing drives, tutoring children and adults and teaching disaster preparedness. Allstate targets inner-city communities

with special investment programs that focus on: 1) child care facilities, 2) economic development, and 3) housing. Eligible applicants are local non-profit organizations.

Allstate Corporation  
2775 Sanders Road  
Northbrook, IL 60062-6127  
800-574-3553  
www.allstate.com

## **8.6 IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS MATCHED WITH FUNDING**

### *8.6.1 Design Improvements*

- Allstate Helping Hands Program.
- NYS Parks Recreation & Historic Preservation: Parks Program.
- NYS Parks Recreation & Historic Preservation: Land Water Conservation Fund.

### *8.6.2 Maintenance Improvements*

- NYS Department of State – Quality Communities Program.

### *8.6.3 Organizational Improvements*

- NYS Department of State – Quality Communities Program.
- Open Spaces Institute.

### *8.6.4 Planning and Resource Development Improvements*

- NYS Department of State – Quality Communities Program.
- Shared Municipal Services Incentive Grant Program.

### *8.6.5 Financing Improvements*

- NYS Department of State – Quality Communities Program.
- Shared Municipal Services Incentive Grant Program.
- Baseball Tomorrow Fund.
- Allstate Helping Hands Program.
- Open Spaces Institute.

### *8.6.6 Recommendations to Meet Chester's Recreation and Trail Needs*

- NYS Small Cities - Community Development Block Grant.
- NYS Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation: Parks Program.
- NYS Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation: Acquisition Program.
- NYS Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation: Land Water Conservation Fund.
- Transportation Enhancement Program.

- Allstate Helping Hands Program.
- Kaboom Playground Planner.

**8.6.7 Recommendations to Meet Chester's Open Space Needs**

- NYS Department of State – Quality Communities Program.
- Shared Municipal Services Incentive Grant Program.
- NYS Governor's Office For Small Cities – CDBG Program.
- Open Spaces Institute.