

TOWN OF CHESTER, NEW YORK

Comprehensive Plan Update 2026



Prepared by the Town of Chester Comprehensive Plan Committee with
Technical assistance from Lanc & Tully Engineering and Surveying, PC

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 General

Approximately 50 miles north of the City of New York, the Town of Chester was formed in 1845, from parts of the towns of Blooming Grove, Goshen, Monroe and Warwick. For the past 168 years, the Town of Chester has evolved from a rural agricultural community into an agricultural, commercial, industrial and residential center within Orange County, one of the fastest growing counties in New York State.

The growth pressure in the Town is the result of a growing regional economy and proximity to the New York metropolitan area, which will continue to draw more businesses and residents to the community. Chester's challenge and planning vision is to accommodate responsible growth while retaining its unique heritage and enhancing the Town's character and quality of life.

The Town's unique character is defined, in part, by its natural resources, built environment and population. With respect to natural resources, mountains and hillsides such as Goosepond Mountain, Sugar Loaf Mountain, Snake Mountain and Pine Hill help to form the backdrop to Chester's landscape. Glenmere Lake, Black Meadow Brook and other waterbodies contribute to a healthy ecosystem and also form the basis of Chester's identity and character.

Throughout the Town, one can still catch glimpses of Chester's agricultural heritage through its historic farm buildings, which dot the landscape. A few of these structures are part of active farm operations, but many stand neglected. While some farm buildings have been converted to other uses, countless others will be lost without a concerted effort to retain them.

The Town's character is also defined by its commercial centers including the Village of Chester and the hamlet of Sugar Loaf. The Sugar Loaf hamlet provides a compact and energizing mix of land uses; its business center is aesthetically pleasing and conveniently human scaled; its unique shops and eateries, along with historic buildings, invite walking; its Sugar Loaf Performing Arts Center attracts patrons from the surrounding region; and the Warwick Valley Rail Line and train station harken back to a time long gone when visitors arrived by rail. The Sugar Loaf Hamlet stands in contrast to the surrounding countryside yet is visually harmonious with it.

"Among the most important powers and duties granted by the legislature to a town government is the authority and responsibility to undertake town comprehensive planning and to regulate land use for the purpose of protecting the public health, safety and general welfare of its citizens."

- NYS Town Law

Other portions of the Town have a different character. The industrial parks in Chester were built on a model of uniform uses set upon separate lots with big box buildings that dominate the landscape. In recent decades, a large portion of the Town's farmland was converted to residential development, which was largely built upon the 20th Century subdivision model where like uses and building styles, curved streets and/or cul-de-sacs define the landscape.

The Town is also fortunate to have large open spaces and public parkland (e.g. Goosepond Mountain State Park, Orange County reservoir lands, Black Meadow Creek, Knapp's View) as well as active farmlands, which provide a scenic backdrop to the built environment – helping to retain the rural character of Chester.

Chester's quality of life reflects resident perceptions about cultural, economic, health, physical, social and environmental features of life. Quality of life is therefore a contextual concept, having no independent or absolute value, but is rather a statement about the relative well-being of a community. The general sentiment is Chester offers its residents a good quality of life.

The planning vision for the Town of Chester is to continue to allow for growth in a manner that reflects the best qualities of the Town's built environment, while maintaining a high quality of life by providing for economic, employment and housing opportunities, providing a full range of community services and facilities, protecting natural and heritage resources, ensuring the right-to- farm and efforts to keep agricultural lands in production; and protecting the community against negative environmental impacts resulting from new development and/or natural disasters.

1.2 Purpose of the Plan

This Comprehensive Plan is meant to build upon the Town's 2015 Plan and is intended to guide the Town for the next 5 to 10 years. In accordance with NYS Town Law §272-a, Comprehensive Plans are intended to be general in nature and may include, but are not limited to, the designation of land uses; the establishment of goals, objectives and policies for agricultural, cultural, historic and natural resource protection; transportation systems; housing needs, inventory and assessment of community facilities, recreation facilities and parkland, and specific strategies for improving the local economy.



Above (top to bottom): View looking northeast towards Brookview Farm; view looking southeast from McBride Road toward Goosepond Mountain State Park and Sugar Loaf Performing Arts Center in the Hamlet of Sugar Loaf. Chester's unique identity is defined, in part by its agricultural heritage and scenic and cultural resources.

A Comprehensive Plan serves as the Town's official policy document providing a concise statement of a community's vision for development, along with goals, objectives, principles, guidelines, policies, standards, devices and instruments for the immediate and long-range implementation of the vision. Goals provide general direction based upon the aspirations of the community, and objectives and policies provide further direction for achieving an aspect of a goal.

This Comprehensive Plan also serves as the general guide for the Town Board in its legislative and budgeting role, the Town of Chester Planning Board ("Planning Board") in its site plan and subdivision review and approval role, the Zoning Board of Appeals in its quasi-judicial role, along with Town staff, citizens and landowners with respect to directing development and redevelopment within the Town of Chester.

As a policy statement of community intent, the Comprehensive Plan serves these purposes:

- It operates as an overall guide to be used in day-to-day development decisions;
- It serves as a coordinating mechanism for officials responsible for implementing elements of the plan;
- It provides residents with information on how their community will develop;
- It gives the public and private sectors a clear statement of what the community will expect in development proposals;
- It provides a legal basis for the specific land-use regulations and other local government functions, which will govern the structures of the community in the future.

The full implementation of some of the plan objectives necessitates modification of certain land-use regulations, preparation of more specific plans, or research of additional implementation methods. The additional efforts needed to do these are detailed in the implementation chapter of this plan, which outlines the timeframe for implementing objectives along the party responsible for taking a leadership role in the implantation thereof.

1.3 The Comprehensive Planning Process

NYS Town Law clearly states the participation of citizens in an open, responsible and flexible planning process is essential to the designing of the optimum town Comprehensive Plan. A Comprehensive Plan is, in part, a public process to define what is important to the community. By carefully examining current conditions and issues in the context of citizen involvement, the Plan can establish justifiable recommendations for future action. Its purpose is to guide growth and progress consistent with community goals.

The first Comprehensive Plan for the Town was adopted in 1974. An update of the 1974 Plan was commenced in the summer of 2001 with final revisions adopted by the Town Board on May 1, 2003. In January 2013, the Town Board

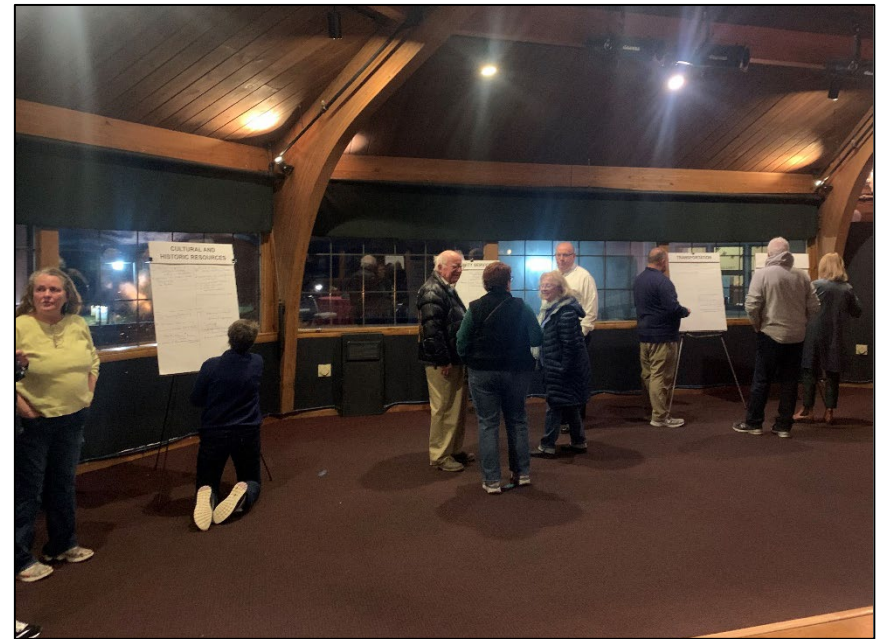
appointed seven residents to a Comprehensive Plan Committee to review and update the 2003 Comprehensive Plan which resulted in the current Town Comprehensive Plan which was adopted in 2015.

The current Comprehensive Plan Committee, hereafter referred to as the “Committee,” held regularly scheduled meetings and engaged the public in several ways including a survey and multiple public engagement sessions.

The basic vision of the 2015 Plan has not changed; however, some refinements were necessary to address community conditions and priorities, which continued to evolve since the last update. This 2024 Comprehensive Plan update is not intended as a departure from the 2015 Plan. Rather it is intended to incorporate and build upon the goals, recommendations and policies set forth in the 2015 Plan. Therefore, it should not be viewed as a change of direction but, rather, as a refinement of the course already established.

The first phase of the Comprehensive Plan update includes a relevant document review by the planning consultant with input from the Comprehensive Plan Committee and Planning Board, as well as Town staff members. Those elements of the 2015 Comprehensive Plan that no longer were relevant were removed and those that were outdated (e.g. population and housing data) were updated to reflect current trends.

The Comprehensive Plan Committee held its first Public Engagement Sessions on March 20 and 23, which were attended by approximately 50 members of the community. The purpose of the visioning session was to solicit input from the public with respect to community priorities and preferences. A “SWOT” (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis was conducted during the session, which provided a basis to help the Committee focus on those aspects of the Comprehensive Plan that needed to be preserved, updated, refined or better evaluated. The results of this analysis are provided in an Appendix of this plan. A website was established with a general overview of the planning process which provided a link to a public survey and email address to send additional comments which generated 441 responses. These expanded means of public engagement were a focus of the first phase of the planning process and are intended to create a plan that reflects the views of the public as much as possible.



2.0 Portrait of Chester

The Portrait of Chester provides a brief summary of the history of the Town in order to provide a context to the forces that have shaped Chester's growth and the demographic trends that are likely to shape the growth of the Town over the next decade.

2.1 Yesterday

Geological processes shaped some of Chester's distinctive geographical features. The ebb and flow of glaciers over the eons, the last of which sculpted our hills and valleys. Following the retreat of the glaciers, low-lying areas became a series of large glacially impounded lakes. Over time slit and decaying vegetation accumulated, becoming huge swampy wetlands, rich in flora and fauna. Preserved is evidence that mammoth and caribou were on the landscape in Orange County possibly as far back as 18,000 years ago. They would have needed tundra productive enough to support a population of animals that would then get fossilized, so the glaciers most likely receded before this date. While Chester does not have a bunch of fossil localities, there were certainly large and small mammals in Chester. Two mastodons have been excavated from Chester's 'black dirt' soils: The first discovered in 1805 "upon the farm of Mr. Yelverton, near Chester, a village in the town of Goshen." And the second in 1972: "Sugar," the Sugar Loaf Mastodon (Nicotra Farm) currently on display as Orange County Community College. Orange County had giant beaver, caribou, mastodon, sloth, stag moose, peccary, etc. These all would have inhabited Chester during the end of the Ice Age. There are certainly many more Ice Age fossils in Chester's black dirt, but the mere act of disturbing these fragile soils tends to render them agriculturally unusable for decades.

These huge swampy wetlands were a fabulously rich resource for the early peoples who thrived here beginning roughly 12,500 years ago, as evidenced by a fluted spear point found in 1964 at the mouth of a Lookout Mountain cave in the Town of Goshen and dated to that time.

The Chester area has been occupied by a long series of cultures, beginning with the Paleo-Indian culture through to the Lenapehoking culture (Lenape), which came into the region about 700 years before Europeans reached the Americas. The Lenape were an egalitarian society that tended to work for consensus in decision-making, maintaining broad access to resources, equitably redistributing wealth, and discouraging ingrained hierarchy. Being agrarian in nature they cared for, and benefited from, the valley's then much older-growth forests and fertile soils.

Between the time of first European contact in the fifteenth century and the arrival of European trappers and traders in the late 1600s, an estimated 80 to 95% of the indigenous population had been lost to diseases introduced from Europe. The first recorded settler was Dr. Samuel Staats, who built a dwelling bearing a date of 1700 on roughly an 11,000-acre portion

of the Wawayanda Patent which included the southern part of the present Town of Chester. Daniel Crommelin built an Inn and a house in what is currently Blooming Grove around 1721, but much of Crommelin's 3,066 acres was located in the northern part of the present Town of Chester. Settlement in the Sugar Loaf area began few years later. John Yelverton built an Inn in 1765 at the intersection of the main regional trails or routes: one connecting the Hudson River in New Windsor to Philadelphia -known as the Wawayanda Path or, later as King's Highway and the other being the Minisink Path connecting New York Harbor to the Delaware River Valley. Local businessmen provided food, shelter, supplies, and horses to travelers along these trails from which our hamlets grew.

In 1794, the first post office was established in Chester. A roadside historical marker was erected at that site by the State Education Department on Brookside Avenue in 1935.

Another marker on Main Street identifies a major Revolutionary War military site active from June-November of 1779 serving as a Continental Army artillery park supplying artillery for such battles as the Battle of Stony Point.

Early settlement of the Chester area was advanced by the development of turnpikes such as Orange Turnpike (1800), Nyack-Goshen Road, New Windsor and Blooming Grove Turnpike (1801) and public roads such as King's Highway (1739), Trenton, N.J. to Newburgh, which greatly improved access to markets for area farmers. In 1806, the Orange Turnpike was extended south to the New Jersey line and north near the hamlet of Chester further improving access to the community.

During the early 1800s Chester remained largely an agrarian farming community with the main dairy product being butter. This would change with the arrival of the railroads, which would alter the nature of farming and commerce in the Town for years to come.

In 1840, the Erie Railroad reached Greycourt, then known as Chesterville. It took until 1841 for the railroad to traverse east one mile to Chester, due to the difficulty in constructing a stable rail bed over the intervening muck lands. The railroads provided vital passenger rail service to Chester stimulating commerce and residential growth. The railroads also enabled local dairy farmers to ship milk directly to New York City before refrigeration, which grew the dairy industry.

DAIRY INDUSTRY

"By the late 1800's Chester's Dairy Farming Industry had grown into an innovative center for cheese production"



4548 CHS Neufchatel Cream Cheese Imprint Plate

Over time, the muck lands were drained, and farmers used the Black Dirt farmland to produce a variety of crops, including beets, cabbage, carrots, celery, onions, parsnips and potatoes that were shipped to New York City daily.

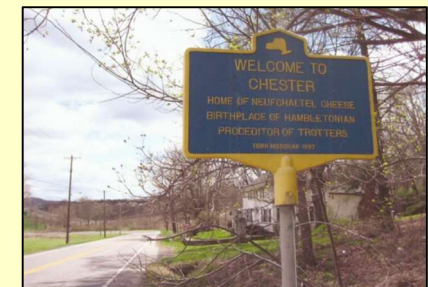
In 1850, the Erie Railroad completed a branch line from Greycourt to Newburgh. In 1862, the Warwick Valley Railroad (WVRR) was extended north to Sugar Loaf and Greycourt Station. In 1882, the WVRR merged with the Lehigh & Hudson River Railroad (L&H RR) and ran south to Maybrook, New York and south to Belevidere, New Jersey. The major commodities on the L&H RR were iron and coal.

The Town of Chester was formally established in 1845, its bordered encompassing roughly twenty-five square miles -formerly parts of the Towns of Blooming Grove, Goshen, Monroe and Warwick.

Perhaps the most famous Chester born celebrity was a horse, Hambletonian 10, known as “the great progenitor of trotters.” On May 5, 1849, Hambletonian 10 - the founding sire of the Standardbred horse breed – was foaled on a farm in Sugar Loaf, N.Y. Hambletonian produced about 1,331 foals in his 24 seasons at stud. He died on March 27, 1876, at the age of 27.

In 1862, William A. Lawrence, a dairyman in the Town of Chester, created the first American cream cheese as a result of an attempt to create a richer batch of Neufchatel Cheese using cream as well as milk. By 1872 both Willaim A. Lawrence and Charles H. Green were among the first to commercially produce cream cheese. W.A. Lawrence marketed his cheeses as Cow Brand Neufchatel Cream and Star Brand Cream Cheese. Mr. Green marketed his under the “World” brand. The Kraft Heinz Company bought the rights for Lawrence’s cheeses and continues to market them under the “Philadelphia” brand.

In 1892, the hamlet of Chester was incorporated into a village. The catalyst for the incorporation of the Village of Chester was a series of disastrous fires that destroyed much of downtown Chester. “The creation of the Village was the mechanism used to provide fire protection through the formation of Walton Hose Company, and Chester’s gravity-fed water system with fire hydrants located throughout the built-up sections of the village.” (Durland, Frank. A Short History of the Township of Chester and the Incorporation, Village Water Works, etc. 1941)



Above (top to bottom): View of segment of the Orange County Heritage Trail as seen from Greycourt Avenue in the Village of Chester, Hambletonian-10 panting by J.H. Wright and historical ‘Welcome to Chester’ posted by Town Historian.

With the opening of the Tappan Zee Bridge in 1955, part of the New York State Thruway, and conversion of Route 17 from a two lane route to the limited access highway, known as the “Quickway,” the population increased dramatically transforming Chester from primarily an agrarian to a bedroom community, the increase in population largely from families of commuters to jobs in nearby New York City and Northern New Jersey.

It was spring, 1984, that the last passenger Metro North train passed through Chester. The tracks were removed the following year from the Erie Mainline Right-of-Way. The roughly five mile section of the Orange Heritage Trail built on the former Erie Mainline Right-of-Way from Goshen to Chester’s 1915 Erie Station formally opened and was dedicated June 7, 1997. Freight service is still provided along the former Lehigh & Hudson River Railroad that passes over the Orange Heritage Trail at Greycourt.

2.2 Today

The Town of Chester has a geographic area of 25.2 square miles (including 2.1 square miles in the Village of Chester), of which, 25.1 square miles is land and 0.1 square miles island under water. According to the 2020 Census by the U.S. Census Bureau, Chester's population, including the Village of Chester, consisted of 12,646 people. This represents a 5.6% increase from the Town's population in 2010. This was slightly lower than the overall growth rate of 7.1% in Orange County. Table 2-1 shows how the Town of Chester, Village of Chester and surrounding municipalities have grown since 1980.

Between 1960 and 1980, the Town of Chester's population growth (excluding the Village of Chester) outpaced the County growth rate by a 2:1 margin. Between 1990 and 2000, the Town's growth rate outpaced the County's by 3:1. Chester's slight population decrease between 2000 and 2010 is an anomaly and reflects the closing of Camp LaGuardia and the loss of its group quarters population.

Since the 1980s, there have been a series of annexations of Town of Chester lands into the Village of Chester, which have skewed the growth rate between these municipalities. The large population increases in the Village in recent decades is more a reflection of annexation than growth from within. This growth would have occurred in the Town without annexation. For this reason, Table 2-1 includes the population counts for the Town/Village combined and individually.

Table 2-1: Population Change 1980-2020									
	1980	1990	% Change	2000	% Change	2010	% Change	2020	% Change
Orange County	259,603	307,647	18.5%	341,367	11.0%	372,813	9.2%	401,310	7.1%
Town of Chester (Town only)	4,940	5,868	18.8%	8,695	48.2%	8,012*	-7.9%	8,653	7.4%
Village of Chester	1,910	3,270	71.2%	3,445	5.4%	3,969	15.2%	3,993	0.6%
Total Town of Chester	6,850	9,138	33.4%	12,140	32.9%	11,981	-1.3%	12,646	5.6%
Town of Blooming Grove	12,339	16,673	35.1%	17,351	4.1%	18,028	3.9%	18,811	4.3%
Town of Goshen	10,463	11,500	9.9%	12,913	12.3%	13,687	6.0%	14,571	6.5%
Town of Monroe	14,948	23,035	54.1%	31,610	37.2%	39,912	26.3%	21,387**	-46.4%
Town of Woodbury	6,494	8,236	26.8%	9,460	14.9%	11,353	20.0%	12,197	7.4%
Town of Warwick	20,976	27,139	29.4%	30,764	13.4%	32,065	4.2%	32,027	-0.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

* Decrease due to the closure of Camp LaGuardia

** Decrease due to the annexation of the Village of Kiryas Joel into the Town of Palm Tree

Between 1980 and 1990, the annexation of Whispering Hills condominiums (circa 1984) development into the Village increased its population growth rate by 71.2% - nearly doubling the Village's population.

Census data also shows Chester's population is aging as was projected by the previous Comprehensive Plan. In 2010, nearly 11% of the population was over the age of 65 – up from 7.7% in 2000. Based on the most recent data from the American Communities Survey (2022), the Baby Boomer population aged 65 and older accounted approximately 16% of the population. Chester will likely continue to see increases in residents over the age of 65 in the next decade due to the aging Baby Boomers and increases in life expectancy. The data also shows that the percentage of school-aged children declined since 2010 from 23.2% to 19.6%.

Table 2-2: Age of Population

Age Cohort	Percent of Population
Under 5	4.9%
5-19	19.6%
20-24	5.4%
25-49	32.6%
50-64	21.3%
65-74	10.5%
Over 75	5.6%
Median Age	
Town of Chester	38.9
Orange County	36.9

Source: 2022 American Communities Survey

The 2022 American Communities Survey estimates that the Town of Chester has 4,757 total housing units, 3,098 units are outside of the Village of Chester. Of the Town's housing stock, 92.5% are occupied by the owner of the dwelling unit, and 71.5% of all housing in the Town are single-family detached homes. Just over 38% of the Town's housing stock was constructed prior to 1970 with minimal housing being constructed since 2020. The percentage of owner-occupied units and percentage of single-family detached units is higher in the town than throughout the County as a whole, which is to be expected, but similar to surrounding Towns with limited public utilities.

Table 2-3: Selected Housing Statistics

Town of Chester	
Total Housing Units	4,757
Housing units excluding the Village	3,098
Percent of Owner-Occupied Housing	92.5%
Single-family Detached Housing Units	71.5%
Vacant Housing Units	7.5%

Source: 2022 American Community Survey

Hudson Valley, and bought homes at a cost well above the typical asking price. At the same time, the supply of homes for sale is limited causing housing affordability concerns and subsequently driving up the rental market. Housing supply and affordability are on the forefront of municipal agendas across the state.

Median Housing value in the Town of Chester is estimated at \$371,600 for 2022. Housing value in the Town is slightly higher than Orange County as a whole. A breakdown of housing value is provided in Table 2-5 below. Median rent is also slightly higher in the Town than the overall County median. Housing market value across the Hudson Valley has increased since 2020, driven in large part by pandemic-related factors. Much of the upward pressure on the real estate market was driven by people eager to escape their densely populated urban centers and the related pandemic restrictions¹. Thousands of city residents looked north, to the

Table 2-4: Comparison of Housing Statistics

	Town of Chester	Orange County
Median value of owner-occupied housing	\$372,500	\$371,600
Gross median rent	\$1,658	\$1,565
Median household income	\$141,261	\$89,037

Source: 2022 American Community Survey

Table 2-5: Town Housing Value Breakdown

Value	% of housing stock
Less than \$99,999	2.6%
100,000 - \$199,999	6.4%
\$200,000 - \$299,999	22.8%
\$300,000 - \$499,999	44.1%
\$500,000- 999,999	24.1%
\$1,000,000 +	0.5%

Source: 2022 American Community Survey

¹ Pattern for Progress Regional Housing Market Report

2.3 Tomorrow

The Town's population has grown steadily in recent decades and this growth is anticipated to continue in the decades ahead, albeit at a slower pace. The Town's growing retirement population could result in additional needs for seniors, resulting in the demand for the provision of additional community services to serve this population. Future growth in retirees may also influence market demands for new housing styles, such as smaller patio homes or maintenance free developments that can better meet the needs of the Town's aging population, but smaller homes can also attract young professionals and reflects the decrease in average household size.

Public facilities such as senior centers, active and passive parks, free outdoor concerts and strong schools are the types of facilities that generally contribute to quality of life and continue to drive population in the Town. But as the population continues to grow, so too will the demand for community services such as fire, police, ambulance, parks and schools. As is the case in most communities, the most suitable sites for development in the Town were the first to be developed. These sites are becoming increasingly scarce – leaving less desirable sites (i.e. those with environmental or other site constraints) for development. Development on such sites will require careful review and consideration to protect natural resources such as steep slopes, important viewsheds, wetlands, and ground water resources.

The Town has many assets and with careful planning it is well positioned to proceed in a manner that will strengthen the community's economic and social vitality for years to come. The following chapters provide a broader discussion of natural resources, transportation, cultural and historic resources, parks and recreation, community facilities and economy. Each of these chapters will frame the challenges facing the Town of Chester in the years ahead as well as policies that it can put in place to help meet these challenges.

2.4 Vision and Goals

While history, population trends and demographic data are important considerations in the development of this Comprehensive Plan, the Plan itself is a forward---looking document intended to guide and manage future development and population growth in a manner that is consistent with the Chester's vision for the future.

With recent land development, the Town has experienced stress on municipal factors such as water, sewer, traffic and other infrastructure issues. Therefore, it is imperative that any future development be evaluated through the lens of fiscally responsible growth to ensure the Town simultaneously addresses appropriately proportional increases in its infrastructure. This approach will help alleviate the band-aid approach to development where problems are addressed as they arise, rather than being proactively considered.

Simply stated, Chester's vision is to:

“Preserve Chester's rural character by protecting its open spaces, historic heritage and natural resources as well as improving quality of life for our residents while accommodating fiscally responsible growth.”

The objectives of this Comprehensive Plan are as follows:

- 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.
- Engage with the three primary school districts to communicate development projects when they are proposed.
- Preserve Black Dirt farmland areas to the greatest degree possible.
- Encourage the preservation of prime farmland and Chester's farming industry within the context of current economic conditions by clustering development away from prime farmland and to encourage an expanded number of farm-oriented or agri-tourism uses which preserve active farming.
- Encourage the preservation of sensitive environmental resources including ridgelines, wetlands, floodplains, stream corridors, groundwater supply and scenic vistas which contribute to the overall character and quality of life for the Town.
- Coordinate planning with the surrounding communities including Monroe, Blooming Grove, Goshen and Warwick as well as Orange County, but most importantly with the Village of Chester.
- Encourage a mixture of housing types, while maintaining the town's character and quality of life.
- Balance the Town's economic base and encourage businesses growth in appropriate locations.

- Continue to support and enhance public services and recreation facilities.

In addition to the specific objectives listed on the previous page, the following *values* are reflected throughout the Town of Chester's Comprehensive Plan:

- Chester strives to be a community where all the necessities of life, including housing, employment and retail opportunities, and access to health care, a good education system, recreational amenities and locally grown produce can be obtained within the Town's borders.
- Economic development in Chester will strive to diversify the Town's economic base with an emphasis on agribusiness development, downtown revitalization of Sugar Loaf, industrial park and planned office development as well as small--scale industries, which complement the unique character of the Town.
- Environmental stewardship that protects the Town's natural surroundings, open space, watersheds, ridgelines and viewsheds will be made possible by best management practices, cluster development, purchase of development rights or conservation easements.
- Chester will encourage regional cooperation to extend and link the trail systems within the Town of Chester to surrounding municipal systems and/or regional and national trail systems.
- Chester will support a culturally stimulating environment within the Hamlet of Sugar Loaf, in particular, but also throughout the Town.
- Chester will document its cultural and historic resources for future generations.
- Chester will strive to preserve its rich heritage for future generations by encouraging the preservation of historic structures.

2.5 Achieving Chester's Vision

The Town of Chester faces a variety of challenges in achieving its vision for the future. These challenges include managing growth and redevelopment and protecting agricultural, historic and natural resources; providing employment and housing opportunities; providing necessary infrastructure and services to meet the needs of a growing population; and expanding cultural and recreational amenities throughout the Town. This plan must be viewed as the first step in the achievement of the above vision and objectives. In order to be successful and effective, the Town should actively apply the recommendations of this plan to guide growth in a manner consistent with the policies laid out herein. Achieving each of these will require balancing, what in some instances will be competing interests and priorities to ensure the Town's social and economic vitality is protected for years to come.

3.0 Natural Resources

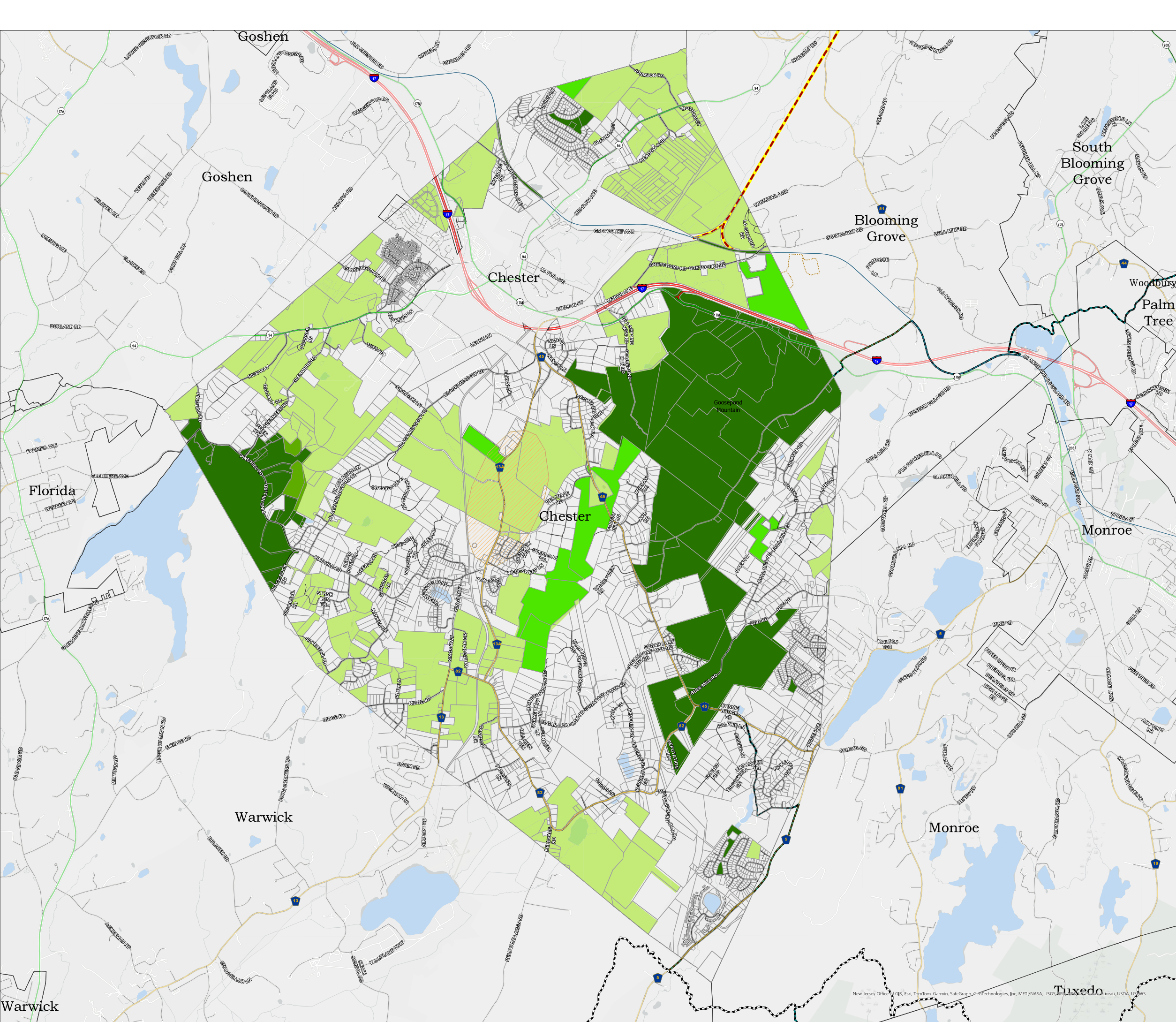
Clean air and water, scenic resources and natural areas are essential to the health and well-being of a community. The Town of Chester in many ways is defined by a rural landscape with high aesthetic value, which contains agricultural, recreational, natural and wildlife areas. The Town is actively engaged in efforts to preserve these areas and protect them from development. Residents have access to many of these natural resources, including Goosepond Mountain State Park, Chester Commons Park, Knapp's View and conservation lands and nature preserves, all of which contribute to the unique character and quality of life in the Town. This chapter highlights the natural resources found within the Town, including land resources (i.e. open space, trails and scenic roads), geologic features (mountains, hillsides and backdrops) and water resources (wetlands, floodplains, aquifer, streams and water bodies). This Plan recommends incorporating natural resources into decision making and planning towards preserving the natural heritage and ensuring a healthy and resilient ecosystem for future generations.

3.1 Land Resources

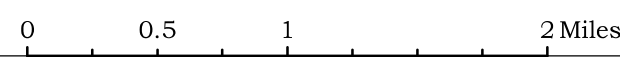
Open Space

Open space helps to connect the community and revitalize its economy and social connectivity in addition to the myriad of environmental benefits. Public environmental benefits include flood control, air and water pollution abatement, recreational opportunities and safeguards to the health and diversity of wild animals and plants in the area. One of the reasons the Town of Chester has been able to retain its rural character is due, in part, to the number of open spaces and agricultural lands within the borders of the Town. Open space in the Town can be categorized in the following ways:

- 1) Privately owned open space associated with farms, resorts (e.g. Glenmere Mansion) or conservation easements, which generally are not open to the public or that have limited public access.
- 2) Common recreational facilities associated with residential developments, which are typically reserved for use by the residents within the development.
- 3) Undeveloped forest, mountain and open fields owned by the Town, County and State that includes open space intended for passive recreational use by all residents in the community.



Town of Chester Open Space



Legend

- Roads**
 - Interstate
 - Federal Highway
 - State Route
 - County Road
 - Local Road
- Parcels
- Municipalities
- Railroads
- Waterbodies
- Heritage Trail
- Highlands Trail
- Schunnemunk Trail
- Orange County Land Trust Trails
- Appalachian Trail
- Public Parkland
- Scenic Areas
- Conservation Easements
- Agriculture



Orange County Planning Department

The County of Orange makes no warranty whatsoever as to the accuracy or completeness of any information depicted on this map. Data depicted here may have been developed in cooperation with other County departments, as well as other Federal, State and Local government agencies. The County of Orange hereby disclaims liability for any loss or damage resulting from the use of the information and/or representations contained herein.

The locations of tax parcel lines are approximate only and are presented solely as a general aid in understanding their approximate location in relation to other mapped features. No reliance whatsoever should be placed on the tax parcel depictions shown herein. The parcel lines are neither intended to be nor are they representations of the County's official tax maps prepared and maintained by the County Real Property Tax Department.

Map Created: 2 April 2024 by M.Olmos



Steven M. Neuhaus
County Executive

- 4) Public Parks and recreational lands, including lands currently used for active recreational purposes or intended for future active recreational lands (e.g. Chester Commons Park, Orange County Heritage Trail, etc.).
- 5) Private recreation lands, such as nature preserves and hunting camps, which have limited or restricted public access.
- 6) Water Resources including surface waters and surrounding water shed areas, protection zones around the wellheads for subsurface water, wetland areas and buffer zones, 100-year floodplain areas, vernal pools, streams, rivers and lakes. These areas can encompass large tracts of land and can be protected through a variety of protective measures that limit development but do not forbid all uses.

The protection of each of these types of open space is important and each contributes to defining the unique character of Chester (see Open Space Map following this page). These open spaces also help to preserve and protect natural features such as aquifer recharge areas, steep slopes and wildlife habitats. The protection of these resources is necessary to maintain the overall quality of life in the Town. This plan supports the creation of a Community Preservation Fund where the Town collects certain taxes or fees into a fund which can be used to acquire and preserve additional open space in the future through a PDR or other means of property acquisition. The following is a discussion concerning specific land resources in Chester.

Trails

The Orange County Heritage Trail is a 19.5-mile multi-use rail trail, which runs along the former Erie Railroad Main Line from Harriman to Middletown, New York with an access point at the Village of Chester former Chester railroad depot. This Plan supports the continued extension of the Heritage Trail as a recreational resource, as well as future enhancements along it (visitor amenities, landscaping, parking areas, trail-related land uses, etc.), which would make the trail more attractive to users. Trails and greenways provide healthy recreation and transportation opportunities, economic development and environmental benefits. Therefore, this Plan recommends the Town continue to identify future corridor connections between public parks and natural areas to protect wildlife and enhance the recreational trail network in the area.

Based on the recent Orange County Bikeway Vision Plan (2023), the County, in a joint venture with Open Space Institute (OSI), plans to acquire a 10-mile segment of the abandoned railroad line from the Town of Cornwall to the County-owned Camp LaGuardia site in the Town of Chester, recognizing that the proposed Schunemunk Rail Trail would intersect with

the Heritage Trail at Camp LaGuardia and expand access to several municipalities¹. Plans are currently moving forward for this project with construction scheduled for 2024. This Vision Plan also confirms Camp LaGuardia is also slated to become a new county park ideally located at the confluence of the Heritage Trail and Schunnemunk Rail Trail.

Two long-distance hiking trails go through Chester. The Long Path begins in NYC and shares a route with the Heritage Trail in the Village of Chester as it heads North towards the Adirondacks. A portion of the Highlands Trail runs from New Jersey into Sterling Forest State Park and north into the Town of Chester to Goosepond Mountain State Park before continuing northeast as part of the Appalachian Trail network. The Town is fortunate to host these regionally significant trail systems spanning multiple states and connecting various parks, open spaces and activity centers.

Also in the planning stages is a trail access to the recently acquired Sugar Loaf Mountain. According to the Orange County Land Trust, the trail will start at a parking lot to be constructed off Kings Highway Bypass approximately 1.25 to 1.5 miles to the scenic mountain's summit. Improvements are also planned that will connect this area with the Hamlet of Sugar Loaf as well as the to the adjacent Goosepond Mountain State Park and the Highlands Trail. This Plan also supports development of trailheads, hiker parking and footpaths to improve access to Goosepond Mountain State Park, Sugar Loaf Mountain from the Sugar Loaf hamlet and improvements to the Highland Trail to tie directly into the Appalachian Trail. This plan recognizes that these areas may contain sensitive cultural or environmental resources which should be respected in any trail extensions or land disturbance.

Scenic Roads and Setbacks

The Town includes several areas of distinctive scenic beauty, usually encompassing mountainous or hilly areas or areas that afford sweeping, expansive, panoramic views of natural settings. The scenic, or aesthetic resources of the Town contributes to the quality of life and sense of pride in the Town. These include views along portions of Kings Highway, including Sugar Loaf Mountain, and portions of Gibson Hill Road and Pine Hill Road, which offer panoramic views.

The Plan supports the preservation of natural buffers and historic rock walls along scenic roads.

¹ County Bikeway Vision. Orange County Department of Planning. 7/25/2023

3.2 Geologic Features

Mountain, Hillsides and Backdrops

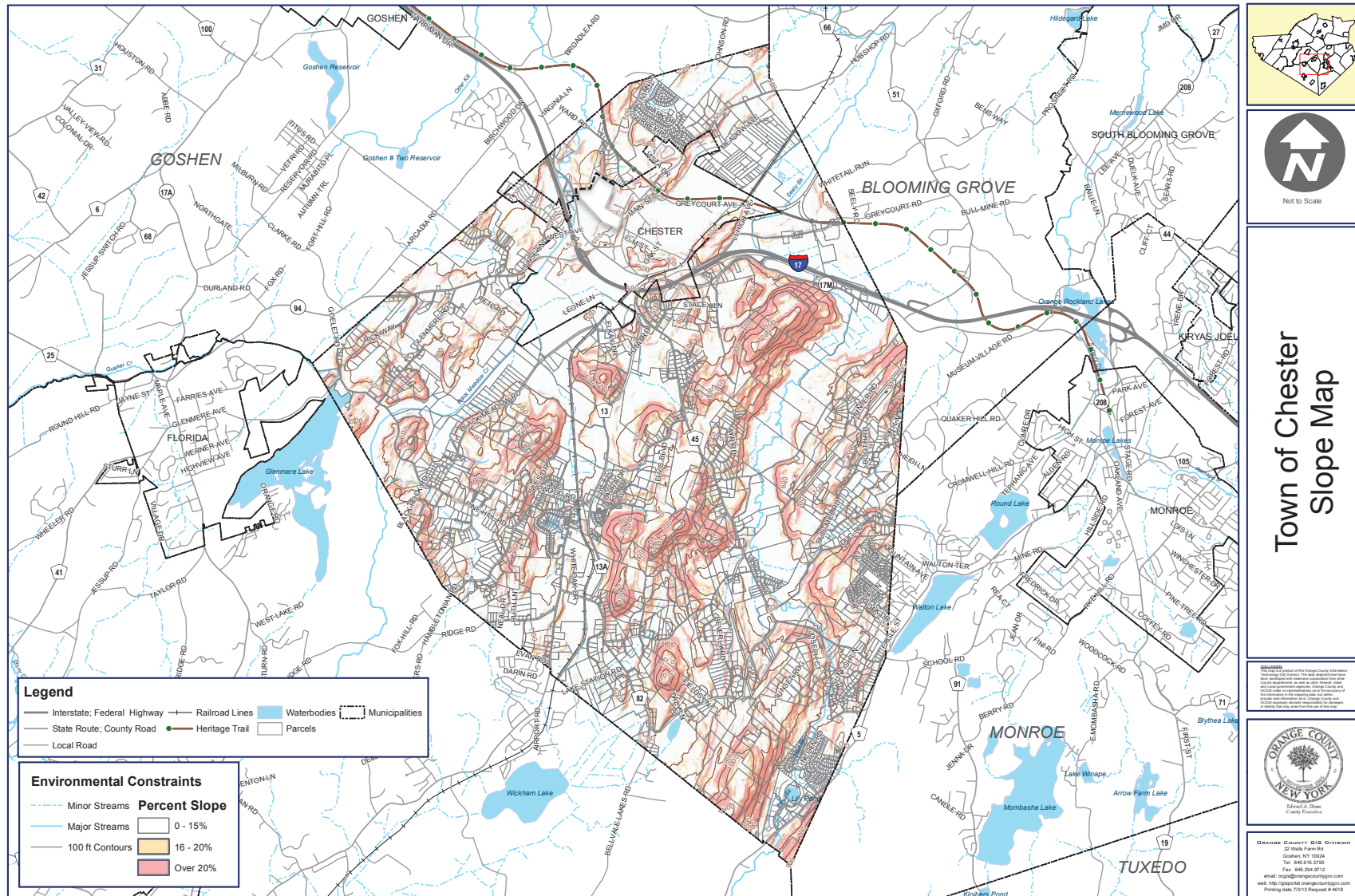
Areas with steep slopes and the ridgelines above these slopes are depicted on the Slope Map on the next page. These areas with slopes over 20% and areas of the Town where the overall elevation exceeds 600 MSL are generally wooded, but have shallow soil over bedrock, and are highly susceptible to erosion. In their wooded natural state, they form an attractive backdrop, or setting, so important to Chester for both medium and low-density development.

At low levels of density, such as the Town currently allows in Open Area Developments, and subject to the requirements that the Town currently applies to Open Area Development subdivisions, modest use can be made of these steep slope lands without destroying their very nature. In contrast, higher densities of as little as one unit per acre, along with the necessary roads built to municipal slope requirements, could result in the need for extensive grade changes in steeply sloped areas, most likely involving retaining walls or long disturbed slopes that would require extensive vegetation removal and stabilization. This outcome would be inconsistent with the Town's character and environmental goals.

In order to protect the Town's natural elevations and sweeping views of the ridgeline the Town enacted Ridge Preservation Overlay District Regulations. These regulations require Planning Board review of structures which may have visual impact both from the ridge and those which may result in re-grading and impact the ridge itself. The regulations require applicants to provide a visual impact analysis to assist the planning board in understanding impacts. This Plan recommends the current Ridge Preservation Overlay District be refined to address the loophole that allows for nonresidential and multifamily developments to disturb mountains, hillsides and steeply sloped backdrops and also supports regulations for major re-grading or fill of properties where no Planning Board approval is required.

This Comprehensive Plan encourages the protection of mountains, hillsides and steeply sloped backdrops, and the adoption (or refinement) of measures to avoid the wholesale re-grading and disturbance of these areas for any land use. This Plan also encourages the adoption of provisions in the subdivision regulations to reduce and avoid steep slope disturbance, and to encourage the sensitive siting of dwellings and their access ways in a manner that respects the natural contours of the land and reduces slope disturbance. This Plan further supports refinement of Visual Assessment criteria to guide Planning Board review and assist them in blending developments into hillsides.

The Comprehensive Plan recommends the Town's current criteria for Open Area Developments (OAD) be extended to apply to all new development in steeply sloped areas as a means of achieving its goal of protection consistent with the reasonable



use of these sensitive lands. Other criteria may be appropriate, as needed, to account for a higher level of disturbance that would be possible in non-OADs. This Plan also recommends the OAD policy be reviewed with respect to the sequence of SEQR, Planning Board and Town Board reviews.

3.3 Water Resources

Wetlands

Both the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) and the United States Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) regulate wetlands. All development within the vicinity of NYSDEC and federal wetlands must consult with and comply with the associated relevant regulation of the respective authority. This Plan supports full compliance with these regulations. This Plan also supports the Town's Floodplain and Ponding Area Environmental Subdistrict regulations, which provide additional protections to areas that are subject to periodic inundation and ponding². The general location of wetlands are identified in NYSDEC and ACOE available online mapping and databases or each agency can be consulted directly. When wetlands are identified on, or near a property, they should be delineated in the field during the subdivision or site plan review process to ensure protection both during construction and on a long-term basis through Best Management Practices.

This Plan recommends the Planning Board continue to evaluate the need for wetland delineation at the earliest time possible during the review. Wetlands serve three primary functions: 1) to filter and clean water; 2) to provide wildlife habitat; and 3) to provide stormwater storage and retention. Wetlands are necessary parts of our ecosystems. Their development, outside of the occasional road or access driveway where no other alternatives are feasible, must be limited and resisted. They also serve a vital function in retaining large amounts of runoff during the spring thaw or major storm events. In this respect, wetlands help to reduce peak flood flows and decrease flood damage. Wetlands also provide scenic viewsheds, which help to define Chester. Where wetlands are to be preserved on development sites, these areas should be clearly marked during construction to protect against inadvertent encroachment and the Planning Board should evaluate how to best demarcate these areas for long term protection.

Floodplains

This Plan urges protection of floodplains for the benefit of the Town's present and future residents, as well as Chester's neighbors, both downstream and upstream. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has identified potential flood hazard areas in the



Images: (top to bottom) Walking path in Goosepond Mountain State Park (photo by the Orange County Land Trust), view looking southeast from McBride Road towards Goosepond Mountain, view from Pine Hill Road looking at Black Meadow Creek.

Town of Chester, which are shown on FEMA maps. Flooding results from snow melt, heavy rains or other weather conditions. By identifying areas that are prone to flooding, it is possible to restrict development to open space uses, including passive recreation and agricultural uses, which don't obstruct water flow and are tolerant of flooding.

It is important to do this in order to mitigate both financial loss and the potential loss of life that might occur as the result of periodic flooding. FEMA defines the likelihood of flooding into two broad categories: 1) lands within the 100-year floodplain; and 2) lands within the 500-year floodplain. Lands within the 100-year floodplain have a 1% probability of a flood exceeding a certain depth in any given year. Where the threat exists of potential loss of life or property, the construction of houses and other buildings, including civic buildings, should be discouraged. The Town Planning Board must factor in the presence of floodplains when it reviews site plans and subdivision applications. The Planning Board must mandate mitigation measures for any development within floodplains or flood-prone areas. Finally, the Town's Freshwater wetlands, and Floodplain and Ponding Area Environmental Subdistrict regulations should be periodically reviewed and, if needed, revised so they are responsive to changing community needs and consistent with available state and federal mapping.

Streams, Water Bodies and Riparian Zones

Major stream complexes in the Town of Chester include Black Meadow Creek, the Otter Kill, Seely Brook and Trout Brook (all sub-watersheds of the Moodna Creek) and Wawayanda Creek. In general, the primary factors that influence water quality include the presence and structure of riparian vegetation, percent impervious surface of the watershed or sub-watershed (areas with a high percentage of impervious surfaces are associated with low water quality), discharges of inadequately treated wastewater, soil or groundwater contamination, and siltation. The 'Otter Kill/ Black Meadow Creek and tributaries' was listed in the NYSDEC Priority Waterbodies List which identifies water quality impairment based on local sampling and biomonitoring data. The Moodna Creek Watershed Management Plan stresses that these streams and their tributaries are in need of enhanced protections to prevent further degradation and to restore their integrity.

A riparian zone is the border between land and a flowing body of surface water that is densely vegetated with plant species. Perhaps one of the most important qualities of the riparian buffer zone is its ability to control erosion and filter stormwater, and thus, to prevent pollution and sediment laden stormwater into the stream. Research shows riparian zones are instrumental in water quality improvement for both surface runoff and water flowing into streams through subsurface or groundwater flow; particularly the attenuation of nitrate or denitrification of the nitrates from fertilizer. Intricate root systems can prevent erosion and undercutting of banks during flooding, while woody stems and grasses help to physically trap sediment by slowing down the water runoff from the surrounding area, allowing the sediment to settle out.

Decaying leaves and low-growing vegetation form a ground cover that further lessens the erosive force of raindrop impact. This groundcover slows runoff, increasing the amount of water absorbed into the soil, and then releases slowly into the stream, groundwater or atmosphere.

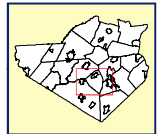
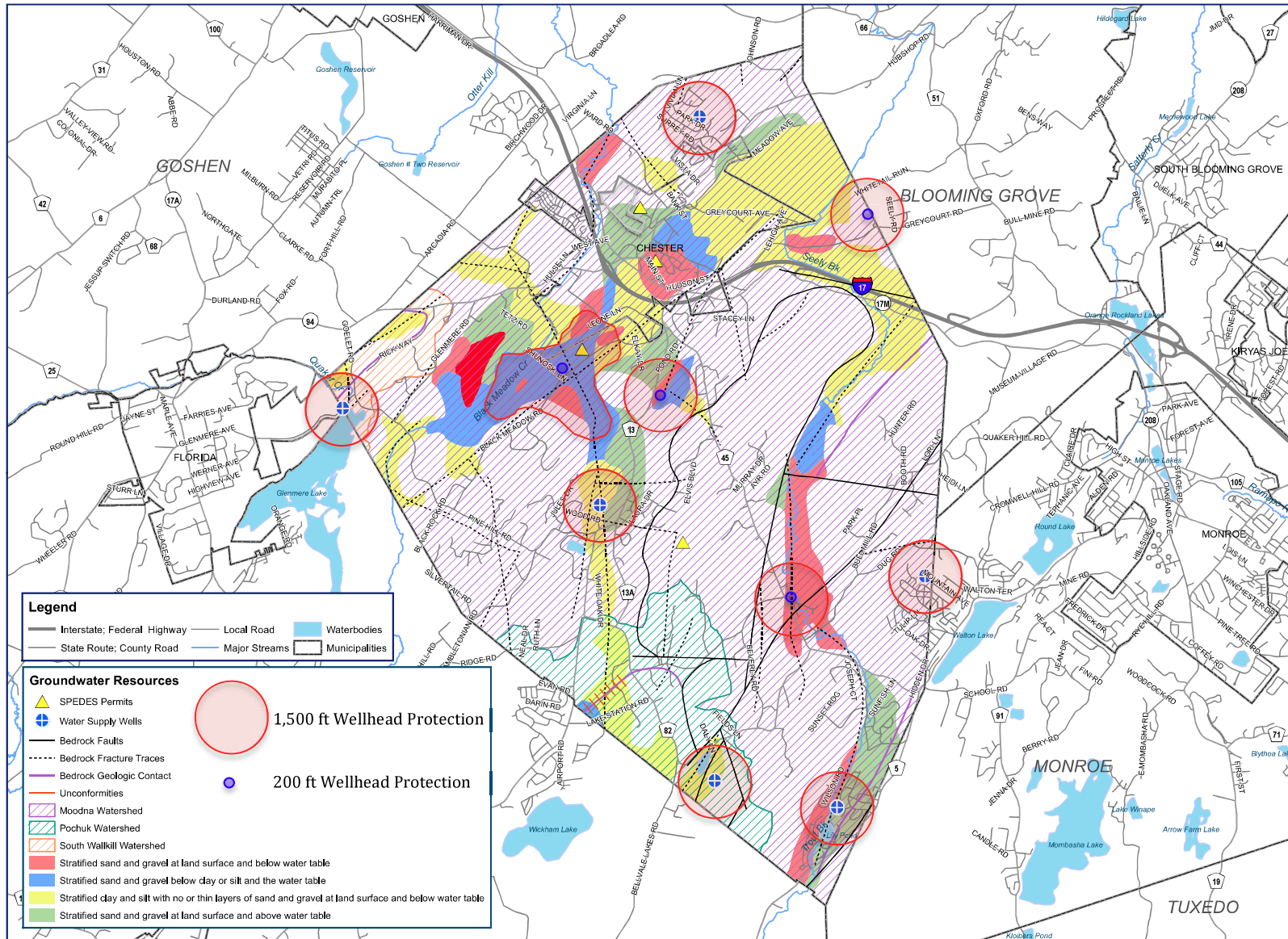
The water that is absorbed may contain nutrients, pesticides and other pollutants that will eventually be taken up by plants or broken down over time. By slowing runoff, trapping sediments, and increasing absorption, these plants act as a living filter to protect water quality. Riparian zones along the water courses in the Town play a vital function in helping to protect the water quality in these streams.

Waterfront vegetation also enhances habitat for wildlife and increases opportunities for wildlife viewing. Plants along waterways provide food and shelter for a variety of insects, amphibians, reptiles, songbirds, mammals and fish.

This Plan recommends riparian zones be established and maintained along all major streams, including Seely Brook, Quaker Creek, Black Meadow Creek, Trout Brook and their tributaries, to prevent stream bank erosion and mitigate damage during major flooding events. While the Town Zoning Code does establish setbacks from both permanent and intermittent streams (§98-30.F(2)(b)[4][f]), this plan recommends updates to this regulation on how best to measure setbacks for intended purpose such as control soil erosion, improve water quality, avoid property damage from flooding and protect habitat. This regulation could also include how to select the right vegetation if landscaping in riparian buffer is needed to achieve desired goals. Land use activities allowed within the riparian zone might include passive recreation and other limited-impact activities that would not adversely affect native plant species within the riparian zone. Passive linear parks would be appropriate within the riparian zone, provided the design protects native plants, etc. The Town should strictly limit or prevent filling or construction within the riparian zone.

Aquifer and Wellhead Protection

The Town of Chester relies on groundwater wells for potable water supply. Wellhead areas for public water supplies are shown on the Groundwater Resources map following this page. Groundwater and wellhead protection is vital to the longevity of underground water resources and protection against pollution or contamination. Around each of these sites is a 1,500-foot radius protection boundary within which greater concern and review should occur in the development and use of land. The Village of Chester's public supply wellhead protection area is larger and more amorphous based upon detailed ground water study for that well.



Town of Chester Groundwater Resource

Disclaimer: This map is a representation of the data provided to the Town of Chester by the Orange County Department of Planning and Economic Development. The Town of Chester is not responsible for the accuracy or completeness of the data provided. The map is for informational purposes only and should not be used for legal or financial decisions.



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This Plan supports the protection of the Town's critical natural resources, particularly its aquifers and groundwater quality. Wellhead protection legislation should be adopted to provide an additional measure of protection for these irreplaceable water resources. Cooperation between the Town and Village of Chester is necessary to properly protect these groundwater resources. The development of intermunicipal wellhead protection laws is supported by this Plan.

The Town should consider public education and outreach programs to make landowners aware of the types of activities that may impact ground water wells and the Town should strictly monitor development to ensure Best Management Practices are adhered to in order to reduce or eliminate spills, eliminate the use of fertilizers or pesticides and provide proper storage containment of contaminants such as road salts, fuels and other chemicals within the identified wellhead protection area.

Such a local law could be enacted as a zoning overlay district defining and delineating wellhead areas and establishing additional setbacks or restrictions applicable to certain potentially hazardous uses within these areas. This Plan supports wellhead and groundwater protection measures and the development of more detailed plans and studies to protect these vital resources.

The plan also supports the establishment of a well-testing protocol prior to the approval of both residential and commercial development projects in order for the Planning Board and its engineer to understand potential limits on development and ensure new wells can provide enough water for the proposed development and to ensure that the new wells will not adversely affect existing wells in the surrounding area.

Stormwater Management

Stormwater is water that accumulates on land as a result of storms or melting snow. The porous and varied terrain of natural landscapes like forests, wetlands and grasslands trap rainwater and snowmelt, and allow it to slowly filter into the ground. Runoff tends to reach receiving waters gradually. In contrast, nonporous landscapes like roads, bridges, parking lots and buildings don't let runoff slowly percolate into the ground. Water remains above the surface, accumulates and runs off in larger volumes.

Chester's stormwater collection systems includes piping, catch basins and other infrastructure within neighborhoods and roadside swales in the more rural areas of the town that are designed to quickly channel runoff from roads and other impervious surfaces. These devices are important to control high flows that may be a threat to public safety or property. Unfortunately, there are adverse environmental impacts associated with traditional stormwater management that discharges

sediment laden stormwater directly to surface water or wetlands. Runoff gathers speed and can collect trash, bacteria, heavy metals and other pollutants which are on road and roof surfaces. When stormwater is not properly treated, large volumes of untreated, high-velocity stormwater can erode stream banks and deposit sediment loads and result in higher water temperatures. It is thus important to control stormwater runoff associated with development.

In New York State, any construction operation that will disturb or expose one or more acres of soil requires a State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) permit for stormwater management discharges from construction activity. Soil disturbance includes clearing vegetation, grubbing, filling, grading, excavation, demolition and any current or proposed construction activity. Non-residential projects proposing over one acre of disturbance and single-family residential projects proposing over five-acres of disturbance will also require the development of a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP). A SWPPP addresses both construction and post-construction activities. During construction activities, erosion and sediment control devices such as silt fences are used to prevent silts from soils from being carried off the site during storm events and ending up in water resources.

Stormwater treatment is the capture and reduction of pollution in stormwater runoff prior to discharge into receiving waters, typically surface water resources and groundwater aquifers. Stormwater treatment practices as recommended by the NYSDEC Design Manual, are used to ensure that post-development runoff rates from a site do not exceed pre-development rates. The most recent NYSDEC stormwater design manual requires the use of green treatment practices such as bioretention basins, rain gardens, green roofs, bioswales and the use of porous pavement. The EPA defines Green Infrastructure as “us(ing) vegetation, soils, and natural processes to manage water and create healthier urban environments...at the scale of a neighborhood or site, green infrastructure refers to stormwater management systems that mimic nature by soaking up and storing water.” Preservation and supplemental planting of mature vegetation can also play an important role in stormwater management on a site as well as reducing pavement temperatures through shading to keep stormwater cooler as it enters the storm sewer system.

Rain gardens are shallow vegetated basins that collect and absorb runoff from rooftops, sidewalks, streets, lawns, and parking lots. Rain gardens mimic natural hydrology by allowing infiltration and evapotranspiration of runoff, and can be installed in almost any unpaved area. Bioswales are vegetated, mulched, or xeriscaped channels that provide treatment and retention as they move stormwater from one place to another. Detention basins are dry basins that fill with water during a storm event. They work by delaying the stormwater so that it is released at a rate that mimics predevelopment flow. Retention basins hold water in a pool and release water through an overflow spillway during storm events. These basins provide for the release of runoff at controlled rates to protect the quality of surface waters and to prevent flooding during storm events.

Within off-street parking areas, catch basins are used to retain and filter contaminants before they leave the site. Infiltration trenches also treat runoff through a soil medium and pea-gravel-filter layer before it is discharged. This Plan supports the use of low impact design alternatives such as rain gardens, open grass drainage swales, permeable pavement where soils conditions are appropriate and replacement of mature vegetation to decrease potential stormwater runoff, flooding, surface water pollution and groundwater pollution related to future development. Where road-side drainage swales are proposed along rural roads, they should be pushed back from the edge of pavement to allow for shoulders and buffering from traffic.

As the Planning Board reviews development applications, it must ensure that appropriate stormwater management measures, based on the specific site characteristics and consistent with the NYSDEC Stormwater Design Manual, are put in place. Such measures will help to protect surface and ground water resources and mitigate potential damage during major storm events. Where post-construction stormwater infrastructure is to be constructed on private property, this plan recommends legally binding maintenance agreements be required to ensure infrastructure is maintained into the future.

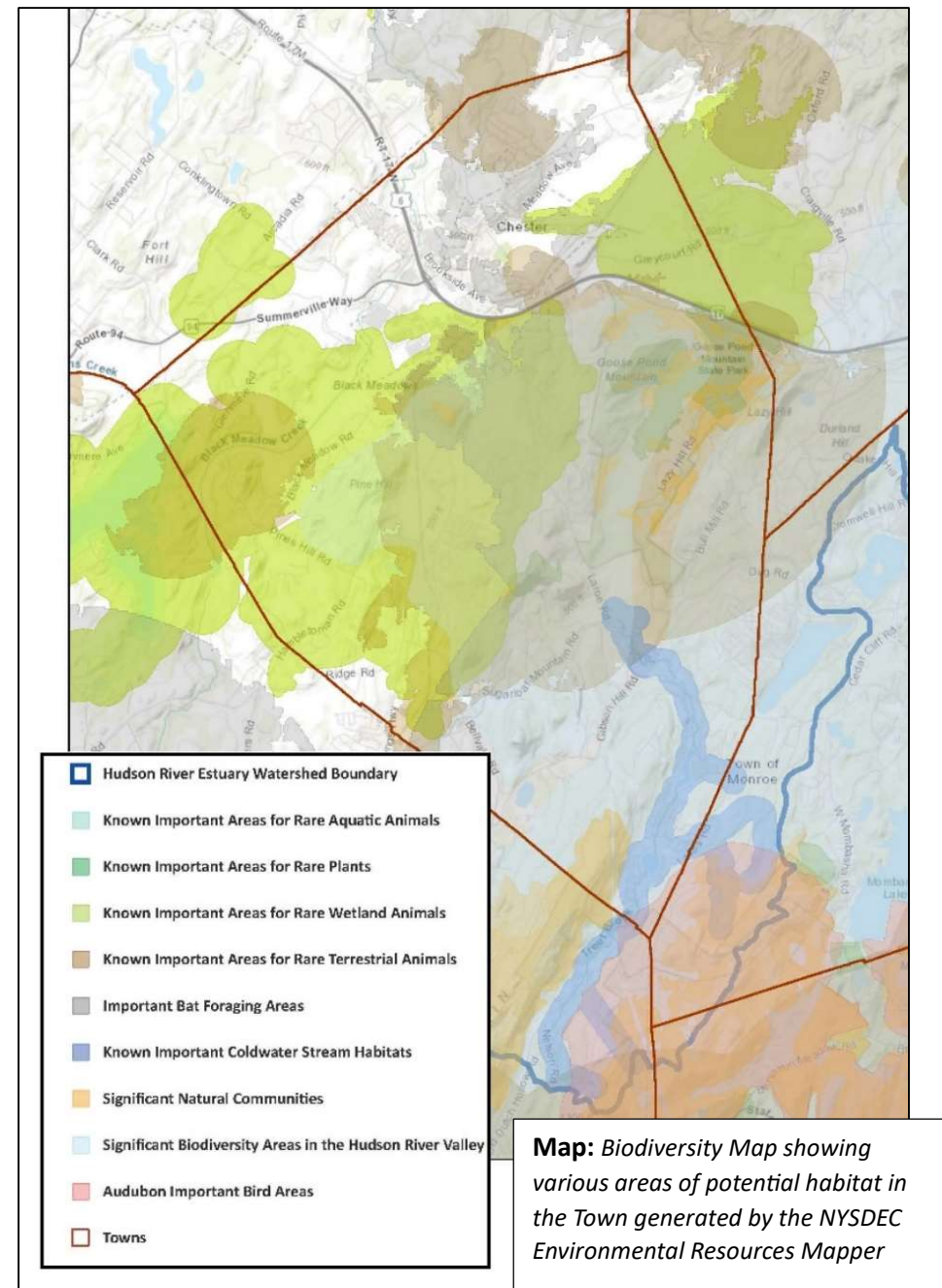
3.4 Natural Habitat

The quality of life in the Town of Chester will be enhanced by thoughtful management of the Town's natural resources, including the diverse habitats and natural systems. Preservation of wildlife and protecting the integrity and value of significant wildlife habitats is integral to the health and welfare of the community, and contributes to the natural beauty and character of the Town of Chester. The map below from the NYSDEC shows that more than half of the Town is identified as a “significant biodiversity area of the Hudson River Valley (shown in light blue). The Orange County Open Space Plan has identified the southern half of the Trout Brook watershed as a core biological diversity area (Orange County Department of Planning 2004). Moodna Creek, together with its tributary the Otter Kill Creek, is identified in the Orange County Open Space Plan as a Priority Aquatic System (June 2004). This plan as well as the Southern Wallkill Biodiversity Plan (Miller et al. 2005) also identifies several areas within the Moodna Watershed as Biological Diversity Hotspots, including Goose Pond, Bellvale, Sugar Loaf Mountains within the Town of Chester and the Otter Kill, Seely Brook, and Black Meadow Creek corridors. In addition, the Biodiversity Plan identifies the Moodna/Otter Kill corridor as a Potential Wildlife Corridor. Streams and their riparian areas, as discussed above, support a high abundance and diversity of plants and animals, and are used as wildlife transportation routes if suitable habitat remains. The wood turtle has been found in stream corridors of the Black Meadow Creek, Otter Kill and Seely Brook. The Watershed and its stream corridors are also home to important bird species such as harrier and short eared owls, as well as the Indiana bat (NYS Endangered), and possibly big brown bat, little brown bat, and the rare eastern small-footed bat (NYS Special Concern)².

² Moodna Creek Watershed Management Plan. Orange County Water Authority. 2010

NYSDEC Environmental Resource Mapper identifies three areas of designated Significant Natural Communities within the Town of Chester: Appalachian Oak-Hickory Forest (red, white, and black oaks, hickories, white ash, red maple, Eastern hop-hornbeam, with dogwood, witch hazel and shadbush) located on Bellvale Mountain, Rocky Summit Grassland located on Sugar Loaf Mountain and Oak-Tulip Tree Forest located in Goosepond Mountain State Park. These communities are mapped in the DEC database if they are either rare in New York State or are an outstanding example of a more common natural community.

This Plan supports protecting high priority species of greatest conservation need, as listed on NYSDEC databases, through sound scientific practices. As the Planning Board reviews development proposals, it must first assess whether there is likely to be any State threatened or endangered species on the site, or NYS Species of special concern. When such species, identified by the NYSDEC online database or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services as having the potential to be present on a site, evaluations of the presence of these species should be undertaken by the applicant and the NYSDEC should be consulted where necessary to ensure measures to protect and conserve critical habitat are put in place. These measures may include modification of development design to avoid sensitive habitat, conservation easements, stormwater quality measures to protect surface water habitats, protection of mature vegetation and more specifically maintaining wildlife corridors of natural vegetation, restrictions on tree clearing or pesticide usage and full cut-off light fixtures or dimming light fixtures during overnight hours to protect nocturnal species.



Night Sky

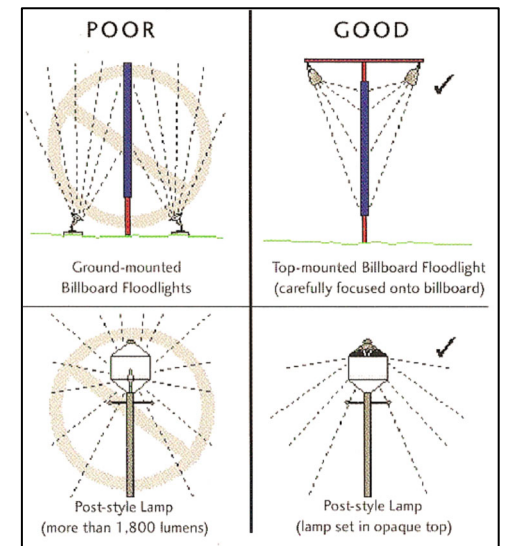
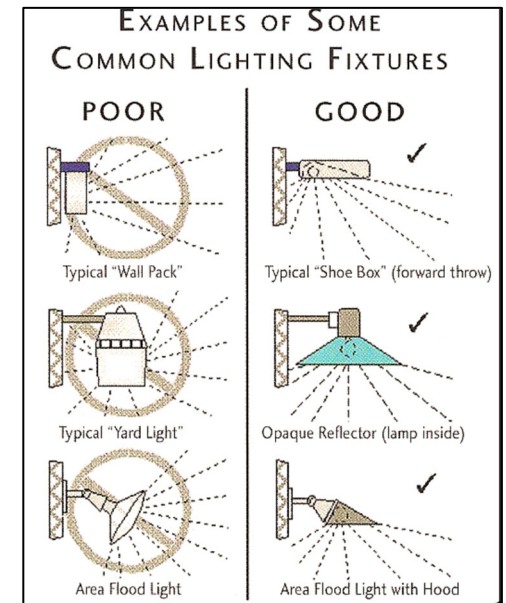
The inappropriate or excessive use of artificial light – known as light pollution – can have serious environmental consequences for humans, wildlife, and our climate. The dark, star-filled night skies that still prevail in the more rural areas of Chester are an important but diminishing, natural resource.

This Plan supports the regulation of exterior lighting in a manner that balances nighttime visibility and security needs while protecting the night sky, natural environment and wildlife habitats. The plan further supports the use of warmer color lights (lower Kelvin value) when possible to mimic more natural light.

The Planning Board can do its part to preserve night-sky by ensuring that lighting is sufficient for the proposed land use but not excessive. To this end, it is recommended that all outdoor light fixtures be downward facing and shielded or otherwise covered by a structure to avoid upward light pollution or 'spill' beyond the property line. Lighting should be limited to 2.0 foot-candles within off-street parking areas and be designed in a manner that keeps the light entirely on the subject site, away from adjoining properties, and out of the night sky. Further, lighting in large commercial parking lots which are unused or where use is reduced during overnight hours should be dimmed or turned off during overnight hours.

In addition to light fixtures, signage can also cause light pollution. It is recommended that lighting associated with signage be indirect, such as downward-facing goose neck lights, as opposed to the sign itself being illuminated. Digital or animated signs should be limited as much as possible. The current sign code measures lighting levels using nits or candelas per square meter. As alluded to above, this plan recommends regulating lighting by foot-candles which is the current industry standard.

By taking simple steps to regulate outdoor lighting, Chester can preserve the night sky, reduce energy consumption and protect wildlife habitat where darkness is essential to migration and reproduction of many nocturnal species.

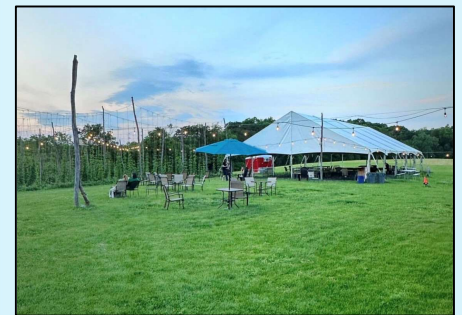


4.0 Agricultural Resources

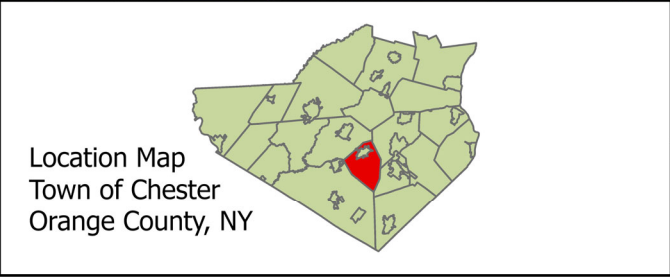
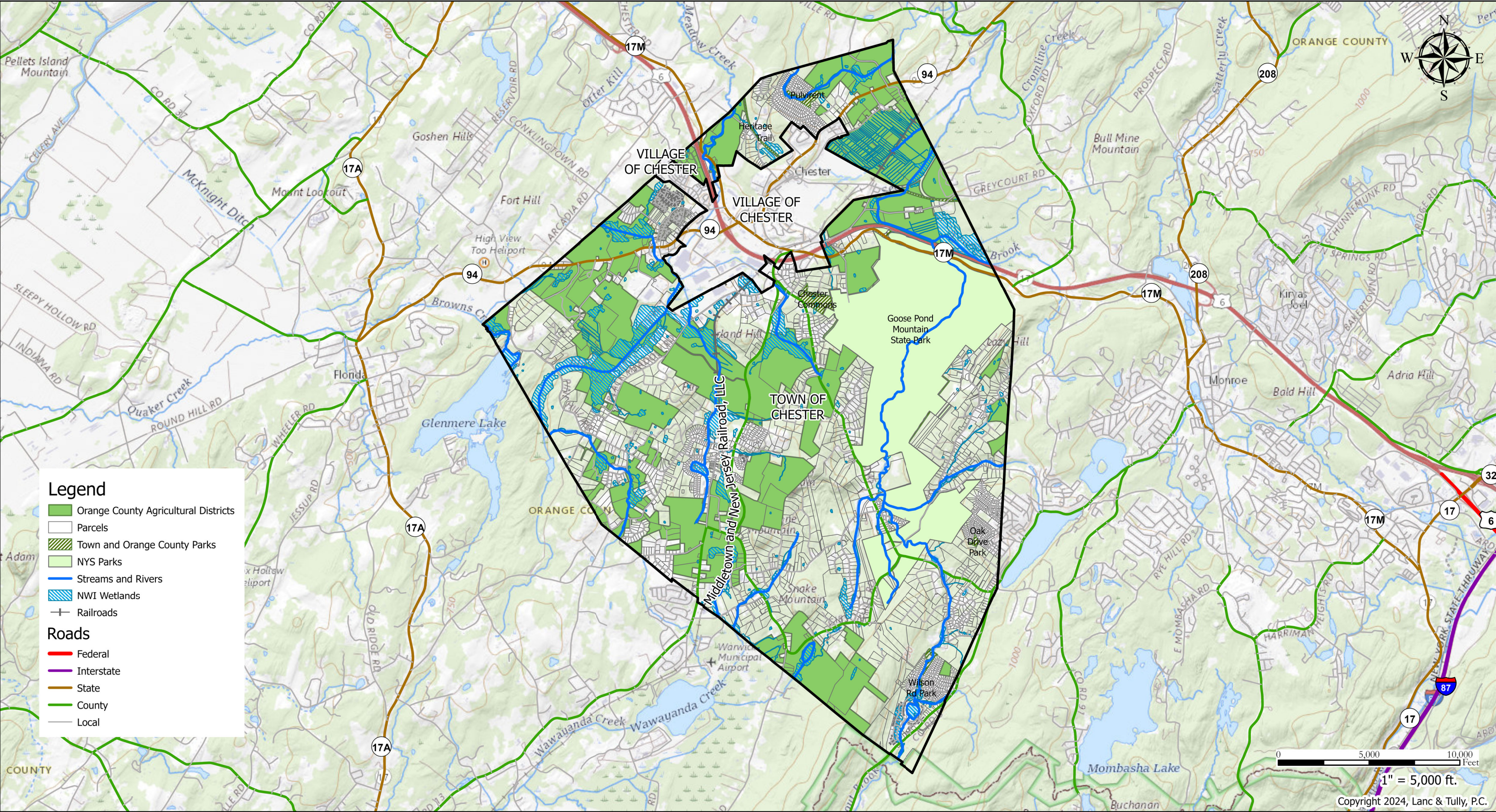
Orange County has a long history of farming, and agriculture has shaped many aspects of the County as it exists today. Agricultural operations throughout Orange County include field crops such as corn, wheat, oats, rye, barley, hay, potatoes, dry beans and sod, vegetables and fruits, horticultural operations, including shrubs, ornamental trees and flowers; livestock and livestock products such as wool, milk and eggs, bees and beekeeping operations, aquaculture products and forestry products including maple syrup and Christmas Trees. Although today there is much less farmland and many fewer farms than historical highs, farming remains a dynamic, growing, and viable industry in the County. The Orange County Farmland Preservation Plan (2015) reports approximately 658 farms working and 88,000 acres of farmed land (17% of the County). Based on County Office of Real property data the Town of Chester has approximately 4,408 acres used for agricultural purposes.

Chester's farmers and its agricultural lands provide an important part of the community's economic base and contribute to the unique character of the Town. Agriculture in Chester has historically focused on dairy, equine and vegetable crops, but the variety of agricultural activities and the very nature of farming is changing in the Town of Chester as it has County-wide.

Agriculture is an important part of the Town's history, economy and environment providing locally grown produce and other agricultural products along with valuable open space that enriches the quality of life for Town residents. The Town's farm buildings (including its farmhouses, barns, silos and other out buildings) also enrich Chester's landscape and help to define the rural character its residents have come to appreciate. Chester's farmland can be divided into two distinct categories: 1) fertile uplands consisting of sands, silts and loams, and 2) lowlands consisting of poorly drained silts, clays and organic matter, locally referred to as "Black Dirt." Both the uplands and lowlands contain prime agricultural soils, which are highly suitable for agriculture production. This Plan seeks the long-term preservation of the Town's agricultural resources, promotes diversity of farm types, and supports the economic viability of the farming community and the profitability of each farm. However, only the uplands are suitable for development, which has placed these lands at greater risk for development.



Images: Oceane vineyard that once was known as Cold Spring Farm on Kings Highway, Brookview Farm on Route 17M, Long Lot Farm Brewery on Johnson Road.



Agricultural Resources

Town of Chester, Orange County

Coordinate System: NAD 1983 2011 StatePlane New York East FIPS 3101 Ft US



Engineering and Surveying, P.C.

Date: 4/22/24

Proj. No.: 242460

The local agricultural industry, particularly the local dairy industry, experienced decline in the early 2000s due to dramatic increases in feed, fuel, labor and equipment costs, declining revenues and development pressure. These challenges have resulted in conversion of farmland and pastures into other uses. Though development rates have slowed since 2007 with the most recent recession, development pressures continue due to the Town's excellent highway access and relatively low taxes compared to locations closer to New York City.

Since 2003, a number of upland farms in Chester were sold to developers and subsequently subdivided for residential purposes. In most cases, the farmland simply became part of the residential building lots and was lost for agricultural purposes. In a few instances, however, agricultural lands were saved through the use of the conservation cluster subdivision process. A case in point is the Eagles Crest subdivision, where a large lot was reserved for agriculture purposes. This Plan recommends amendments to the conservation cluster subdivision regulations to require the mapping of agricultural lands and prime agricultural soils for the preservation of these resources where possible based on the characteristics of the property being subdivided.

The Town's Black Dirt farmers have fared better, but they too are prone to rising costs for fertilizer, fuel, equipment and labor. The greatest threat to Black Dirt farmland is not development pressure, but rather the ability to maintain the economic viability of these vegetable farms and safeguard them from the impacts associated with periodic flooding and climate change. While most of the Black Dirt in Chester is still in production, there is a growing amount of Black Dirt that is sitting fallow and at risk of reverting back to brush land or wetlands. Another challenge raised by the farming community is the lack of farmworker housing. To address this issue, the Chester Agricultural Center has recently been exploring options to construct housing for their employees. Such proposals should be reviewed through the Town's municipal planning process.

The owners of existing farms have had to diversify their operations in an effort to sustain their family farms. For example, in 2013 the C.F. Johnson & Son Farm established the Peace and Carrots Farm, a community supported agriculture (CSA) farm. Under a CSA, consumers can buy locally grown produce by paying up front for a share of each year's harvest. The Johnson Farm is now home to Long Lot Farm Brewery which grows hops as well as other crops, brews its own craft beers and has a small tasting room with outdoor space for tables with the occasional food truck and local music in warmer months.

This plan supports and encourages farming in all forms, attracting new farming ventures, protecting farmland and environmentally sound farming practices. Recent interest has fueled a growing market in Orange County for locally-based food production, agri-tourism, and direct-sale opportunities, particularly as there is increased public interest in organic products and how food is grown and delivered to the consumer. Such new uses in Chester include the above mentioned,

Long Lot Farm Brewery and Oceane Winery on Kings Highway which are both active agricultural properties which sell products that are grown onsite. This allows the farm to be able to sell directly to consumers providing an increased revenue stream to local farmers. This also brings people to the area who may visit other local locations and allows for a better appreciation of local agriculture and farmland. The ability of farms to expand their uses was also heavily supported by the public at the public SWOT analysis held as part of this Comprehensive Plan's development.

The town should encourage this use of local farms and review of zoning to ensure a range of agri-tourism uses are permitted. This plan also supports the retention and use of barns and other historic farm buildings as part of the re-use or expanded use of these properties. Any uses which may involve larger events should be required to apply to the planning board to ensure adequate infrastructure is in place and no impacts will occur to the neighbors as many of these properties are in residential areas.

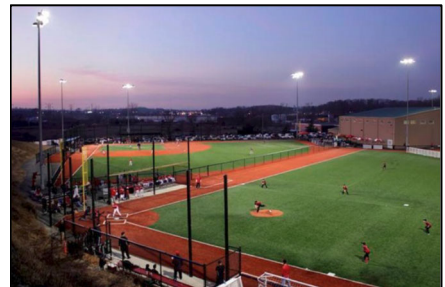
The Chester Agricultural Center is a major supporter of the local and regional agricultural community and a resource for those involved with the agricultural community. Located on 270 acres of land off Greycourt Avenue in the Village of Chester, the Chester Agricultural Center leases land to local farmers, teaches organic and sustainable farming practices and has an on-site store for direct-to-consumer sales. This plan supports sustainable and regenerative farming practices and supports education in agricultural practices. The Town library also has a community garden, started by local girl scouts, which also serves as an educational tool for young people interested in cultivation. The Town should help to facilitate and support agricultural education and other organizations that support the farm community such as Cornell Cooperative Extension, Orange County Land Trust, Orange County Farmland Protection Board and the Hudson Valley Agri-Business Development Corporation.

5.0 Parks and Recreation

Chester offers a variety of public and private recreational opportunities for its residents. There are five parks in the Chester area, encompassing approximately 135.8 acres. Four of the parks are located in the Town: Chester Commons Park, which includes a pavilion, two electric vehicle charging stations, sports fields, senior exercise equipment, story book walk, and a playground on a 24-acre site on Laroe Road, Pulvirent Field which includes a baseball field on 1.4 acres, an enclosed dog park adjacent to Town Hall, and Oak Drive Park which includes a basketball court and playground on 3 acres and Knapp's View which includes 91-acres of passive recreation and open space. The fifth park – Chester Community, “Carpenter Park” (16.4 acres) – is located in the Village of Chester and includes 2 baseball fields, a T-ball field, pavilion, playground, tennis court, 2 pickleball courts, basketball courts, bocci ball court, a book exchange stand, 9-11 Memorial and other memorial sites dedicated by various community members. The Town also recently constructed a senior center on Laroe Road which hosts regular classes and events for seniors and the County has purchased the 689-seat Sugar Loaf Performing Arts Center on Creamery Pond Road and its surrounding 8-acre property for use as a theater and cultural center which also hosts municipal events.

Other recreational opportunities available to Chester residents, albeit with more limited accessibility, are the 459-acre Black Meadow Reservoir located off Pine Hill Road, owned by Orange County, the 1,477 acre Goosepond Mountain State Park, which is maintained the Palisades Interstate Park Commission, and the Orange County Heritage Trail. The Orange County Land Trust has also recently acquired over 300 acres of land on Sugar Loaf Mountain with the intent of transferring the land to Orange County for recreational purposes. Private recreational opportunities include The Rock Sports Park, The Castle Fun Center, Camp Monroe, Glenmere Mansion, Capelli Sports Complex and the Monroe-Chester Sportsmen Club.

The Town has a ‘Payment in lieu of Parkland’ regulation (Section 83-24-A(2) of the Town subdivision regulations) for all subdivisions where additional dwellings are proposed. This fee is intended to off-set impacts of additional residences on the Town’s parks and recreation programs and can only be spent on parks and recreational improvements in the Town. This



Images (top to bottom): The trailhead to Goosepond Mountain State Park; the Town of Chester’s Knapp’s View; and view of The Rock Sports Park at the corner of Kings Highway and Black Meadow Road (Photo from Frozen Ropes Web site).

In 2005, the Town's Parks, and Recreation Commission spearheaded the development of a Town of Chester Recreation and Open Space Plan, which was adopted by the Town Board in December 2007. The Town's Recreation and Open Space Plan includes an inventory of Town, State, Regional and private recreational resources, along with five recreation and open space goals, which are provided below:

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.

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.

This 2024 Comprehensive Plan continues to support these general goals of the 2007 Recreation and Open Space Plan, but recommends this plan be updated periodically so that it remains relevant to the needs of the Town of Chester and its residents. This plan also supports the specific recommendations below.

- Emphasize park maintenance and optimization of existing park and recreation facilities.
 - This includes better marketing and communication of the resources that the Town has and how the public can access these resources.
 - Improvement of signage in all public parking areas so the public knows parking is legal with signage to direct hikers to trailheads where applicable.
 - Ensure parks are easily accessible by sidewalks, bike paths or other pedestrian links where safety permits.
- Renovation at Chester Commons Park
 - Improvement of playground equipment and drainage
 - Renovation of the grass field including drainage improvements.

- Renovation or replacement of the playground equipment at Carpenter Park and Oak Park.
- Encourage creation of pocket parks within new residential developments during the subdivision review process so that children can walk to and from parkland from their homes.
- Development of a new pocket park in Sugar Loaf.
- Ensure ADA complaint pathways and incorporate facilities for people of all abilities.
- Additional movie nights and educational and fitness classes should be added to recreational scheduling.
- Continue to participate in planning efforts of Camp LaGuardia with applicable County agencies.
- Develop a long-term plan for Knapp's View that includes passive recreation and sitting areas.
- During Site Plan review, the Planning Board should consider the impacts of new development on adjacent Town, State and County parklands including noise and visual impacts from these public open spaces.
- Pursue grants for park improvements.
- If the Town obtains real property, it should first give due consideration to protecting portions of open space on the property with a conservation easement or by other means, when such lands further the goals and objectives of the Town's Recreation and OpenSpace Plan or Comprehensive Plan.

6.0 Cultural and Historic Resources

The preservation of historic and culturally significant structures contributes to the architectural integrity of Chester, promotes economic development, and contributes to the unique identity and overall quality of life of the Town.

The 2015 Comprehensive Plan offered the following goals for cultural and historic resources.

- Promote the Sugar Loaf historic area as both a cultural resource and an economic development tool.
- Provide support for a rich variety of cultural opportunities and activities for all groups and individuals in the community.
- Provide support for the Chester Public Library to ensure it continues to meet community needs.
- Strive to identify, conserve and protect significant public and privately owned historic structures, landmarks and farm buildings in recognition of their contribution to the Town's identity.
- Promote the preservation, appreciation and sustainable use of historical resources.
- Work with property owners to upgrade and renovate historic properties and farm buildings within the Town of Chester, including adaptive reuse options.

The current plan continues to support these goals.

6.1 Cemeteries

The Town of Chester's rich history is preserved in its historic cemeteries, houses, barns and other structures, which can be found throughout the Town. While private owners maintain many of these historic structures in good condition, others are threatened by lack of owner maintenance and pressure for redevelopment.

The Town has taken proactive measures to protect its historic cemeteries and burial sites with the adoption of Chapter 40 A – Cemeteries on April 1, 2003. The Orange County



Photos (top to bottom): Sugar Loaf Performing Arts Center, Moondancer gift shop in Sugar Loaf and musicians performing at the Sugar Loaf Festival.

Genealogical Society prepared a map of the Town's cemeteries and burial sites, but cemeteries and burial sites continue to be discovered in the Town. The Cemeteries Law establishes a 100-foot setback between cemeteries and new residential or nonresidential structures, and empowers the Planning Board to require fencing, plantings or other visual barrier between developable lands and cemeteries. The Cemetery Law also compels the building inspector not to issue a building permit for any structure within 200 feet of cemeteries without first referring the matter to the Planning Board for review and approval. This Plan continues to support these laws, which protect the Town's cemeteries and burial sites and suggests additional language to the law to consider the disturbance for any excavation proposed within the 100 feet setback and consultation with the Town Historian to assist in any site plan review process.

6.2 Historic Properties

The National Register of Historic Places is the U.S. government's official list of districts, sites, buildings and structures worthy of preservation maintained by the National Park Service. According to the National Register of Historic Places there are several National Register-listed properties in the Village of Chester, including the Yelverton Inn, which hosted Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr, as well as George Washington during the American Revolution. Within the Town, one property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the Fury Brook Farm, located on Kings Highway, near the hamlet of Sugar Loaf. This farm complex was first established along the old Wawayanda Path in 1731. The property embodies distinctive architectural characteristics and is historically significant as it chronicles the tenancy of locally important families as well as the settlement and evolution of agriculture in the Town of Chester from the eighteenth century into the twentieth century.

There are many other structures in the Town that are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places including multiple houses on Laroe Road, Black Meadow Road, Glenmere Road, including the Goelet Estate (Glenmere Mansion) as well as Chester Cemetery. This plan supports the preservation of stone walls, historic landmarks, and other remnants of local, state or national history including archaeological sensitive areas. Development proposals adjacent to or including historic sites should identify and mitigate adverse impacts. For those property owners interested in being on the historic register,



Images (top to bottom): Sears pre-fabricated house built c. 1910, Goelet Estate (Glenmere Mansion) and Greek Revival structure located at 1353 Kings Highway. All of these buildings are eligible for listing on the National Historic Register of Historic Places.

nominations can be submitted to State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) from property owners, historical societies, preservation organizations, governmental agencies and other individuals or groups. To be considered eligible, a property must meet the criteria for evaluation, which involves the examination of the property's age, significance and integrity. Generally, properties eligible for listing on the National Register are at least 50 years old; properties less than 50 years of age must be exceptionally important.

The benefits associated with the formal designation as a National Historic Site include access to grants, tax incentives, access to technical preservation advice from National Park Service staff which provides an additional layer of review and protection in the event someone proposes to modify a building in the future

This Plan supports efforts by property owners to have their properties listed on the State or National Register of Historic Places and supports promotion of the preservation, appreciation and sustainable use of historical or heritage resources.

For a discussion of the historic Hamlet of Sugar Loaf, please refer to Chapter 10.

7.0 Transportation

The Town of Chester's transportation system is comprised of its highways, streets, freight rail line, bus routes, sidewalks and recreational trails. Transportation systems have the ability to shape land use development patterns and the character of an area. This chapter discusses the relationship of traffic impacts with land use policies and incorporates policies that protect existing roadway capacity and reduce the effects of increased traffic as the result of new growth.

7.1 Highway and Roadway Improvements

The following intersections in the town have various challenges and are recommended for upgrades or careful monitoring in light of current conditions and community needs.

7.1.1 Sugar Loaf Bypass

The 1974 Town Comprehensive Plan recommended the construction of a bypass road to protect the Sugar Loaf business area with its busy shops and heavy pedestrian traffic. The first segment of the Kings Highway Bypass (County Route 13A) running north-south from the Sugar Loaf Firehouse to Bellvale Road (CR 82)] is completed. The bypass provides one 11-foot-wide travel lane in each direction with four-foot-wide shoulders. Turn lanes are not provided at any intersections or driveways and the posted speed limit is 45 miles per hour. The Bellvale Road/Kings Highway Bypass intersection, similarly to the intersection of Bellvale Road and Kings Highway, is a three-legged unsignalized intersection with stop-sign control on the southbound approach. While the 2003 Comprehensive Plan recommended improvements to these intersections, due to the fact that both intersections are operating at acceptable levels of service and based on sensitive habitat in the vicinity of the intersection of Bellvale Road and Kings Highway Bypass, no additional improvements are recommended for these intersections at this time.

7.1.2 NYS Route 17/ I-86 Exits 126 and 127

In October of 2021, the NYSDOT issued a report of the NYS Route 17/ I-86 corridor within Orange County known as the Planning and Environmental Linkage ("PEL") Study. This study made recommendations for each of the intersections with the overall objective of addressing the operational deficiencies along the corridor due to increases in traffic, recognizing that traffic congestion causes traffic diversion or "spill over" which negatively impacts adjacent local roads and communities. It is noted that neither of Chester's highway interchanges were identified as High Accident Locations based on crash data analysis in the PEL Study.

The PEL study recommends closing the Greycourt Road exit and reconstructing Exit 128 (Oxford Depot) to a full-access interchange. Access between the interchange Exit 127 area and the new interchange at Exit 128 (Oxford Depot) would be via NYS Route 17M. The Town is not in favor of closing Exit 127. However, this plan also acknowledges that additional improvements along the Route 17M corridor would be necessary given the increased traffic that would be diverted to this road including the Kings Highway intersection.

Despite identifying poor levels of service at the 126, Route 94 interchange, no physical improvements were recommended at this location.

The PEL Study also recommends expanding the Chester Park-and-Ride facility as counts show this lot regularly at capacity, and replacement of the existing bus shelter as well as the provision of electric vehicle charging stations

7.1.3 NYS Route 94 at Conklingtown Road

A majority of the traffic generated from the recently-approved 431-unit Greens at Chester housing development will access Conklingtown Road at its intersection with Route 94. This intersection lies at a 45-degree angle at a curve on Route 94. Based on this increase in traffic, it is recommended that Conklingtown Road be extended to meet Route 94 farther east at a 90-degree angle. This proposed improvement should be undertaken, as the project develops, to accommodate traffic increases from Conklingtown Road onto Route 94.

7.1.4 Kings Highway/CR13 and Pine Hill Road

The roadway geometry at the intersection of Pine Hill Road and Kings Highway/CR 13 in Sugar Loaf has long posed a safety concern due to curves, sight distance and other alignment problems, as well as the lack of sidewalks and cross walks to facilitate safe pedestrian movements. The Preliminary Streetscape Plan for Sugar Loaf identified some possible solutions that need further evaluation. This Plan recommends the Town secure funding to advance the Preliminary Streetscape Plan for Sugar Loaf to the final design phase. The final design should address the alignment, pedestrian movement issues and traffic calming needs at this intersection.



7.2 Road Capacity

Road capacity reflects the amount of traffic a road can safely carry based upon its physical design characteristics and travelled speed. Factors that affect road capacity include physical design parameters such as the alignment of the road, width of the road pavement, and number of travel lanes, shoulder width, road surface and other factors. The number of curb cuts or driveways also affects road capacity, as cars slowing to accommodate the needs of turning vehicles may impede traffic flow along roadways.

Road capacity can be increased by making physical improvements to the road, such as widening, adding lanes or removing curves or other obstacles. However, the cost of retrofitting road improvements or building new roads is high, and where serious regulatory barriers exist (e.g. wetlands, endangered species habitat, etc.) even large expenditures of money may not be able to increase available capacity where it is needed. Also, it must be understood that widening roads and/or adding lanes can sacrifice the rural character of the road and can unintentionally encourage higher rates of speed. All of these factors should be reviewed when making roadway improvement recommendations.

Where a development application may have an impact on traffic, it is recommended that the Planning Board require a traffic assessment. This assessment should discuss and analyze more than just road capacity and traffic volume. A traffic impact

study should include an assessment of road and intersection geometry, structural integrity and susceptibility to accidents, particularly where large vehicles or tractor trailers may need to access a site and will be mixing with residential traffic.

7.3 Street Classification

Roads are generally described by their functional classifications, which describe the intended purpose of each type of road. Each and every highway and street plays an important role in moving goods and people within and through the Town. The Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) has created a functional classification system for roadways that is described below. Understanding the Town's roadways in the context of the ITE system is helpful when analyzing transportation needs.

Interstate and Limited-Access Highways: This type of highway moves large volumes of traffic at relatively high speeds to and from locations outside the region. Such highways have limited access via designated exits with no at-grade intersections. An example is NYS Route 17.

Arterial: The function of an arterial is to carry medium-to-heavy volumes of traffic at moderate to high speeds and provide access to major traffic generators. Examples in the Town include NYS Route 17M, NYS Route 94 and CR 5.

Major Collector: Provide connections between arterials and local roads at relatively higher speeds. Examples include Laroe Road (CR 45) and Bellvale Road (CR 82).

Minor Collector: These roads provide connections between arterials and local roads at comparatively slower speeds and carry moderate volumes of traffic (e.g. Black Meadow Road, Bull Mill Road, Dug Road, Glenmere Road, Sugar Loaf Mountain Road and Pine Hill Road).

Local: This type of road provides direct access to abutting properties and channels local traffic to collector roads (e.g. residential streets). Local roads are typically town roads and they may even function as a minor collector where they carry through-traffic within a subdivision (e.g. Surrey Meadows Road).

The Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) defines traffic calming as the combination of mainly physical measures that reduce the negative effects of motor vehicle use and improve the conditions for non-motorized street users. This Plan recommends the incorporation of traffic-calming measures to slow traffic without relying on speed limits or enforcement measures in more dense developments. Traffic calming measures include physical improvements such as raised crosswalks or textured surfaces that are used to alert drivers when they are approaching a pedestrian crossing. Raised

crosswalks are speed humps with flat tops marked for pedestrian crossings. They are designed to slow traffic down as they approach a crosswalk. Textured surfaces are installed flush with the roadway surface and are used to accent the pedestrian crosswalk. These are typically used in conjunction with electronic crossing signals. In general, roads should be designed to handle the anticipated traffic volumes based upon their street classification and connection to the existing transportation system.

7.4 Design Criteria

The design criteria described below should be incorporated into the subdivision regulations applicable to new roads, driveways and intersections created during the subdivision review process. Similarly, such design criteria should also be utilized to address new driveways and private roads that are part of any site plan not involving a subdivision. The descriptions below are designed to help illustrate the serious concerns related to traffic safety and the need to apply these criteria throughout the Town.

7.4.2 Sight Distance and Stopping Criteria

Sight distance is the distance along a roadway that an object of special height is continuously visible to the driver. This distance is dependent on the height of the driver's eye above the road surface, the specified object height above the road surface, and the height of sight obstructions within the line of sight. For measurement of both stopping and passing, sight distances assume the height of the driver's eye to be 3.5 feet. For stopping sight-distance calculations, the height of the object is considered to be 6 inches above the road surface. For passing sight-distance calculations, the height of the object is considered 4.25 feet above the road surface. Sight distance is a critical issue in the design and review of new roads, streets and driveways in new developments. This Plan recommends the Planning Board in its review of development proposals utilize the standards from the American Association of State Highway and Traffic Officials (AASHTO), which may be amended from time to time. These principles are illustrated in Table 7-1 Sight Distances at Entrances and Table 7-2 Sight Line Criteria, on the following pages.

7.4.3 Sight Obstructions

On tangents, the obstruction that limits the driver's sight distance is the road surface at some point on a crest vertical curve. On horizontal curves the obstruction that limits sight distance may be the road surface at some point on the crest vertical curve or it may be some physical feature outside the traveled way, such as a bridge-approach fill slope, tree, foliage, or the back slope of a cut section. Accordingly, all road construction plans should be checked for both vertical and horizontal sight-

distance obstructions. While each roadway should be reviewed on an individual basis, the below intersection sight distance charts from the NYS DOT Highway Design Manual (2015) provide a general indication of the necessary sight distance from a stop position on a minor road. Inadequate sight distance from a proposed public driveway may require vegetation pruning or turning restrictions.

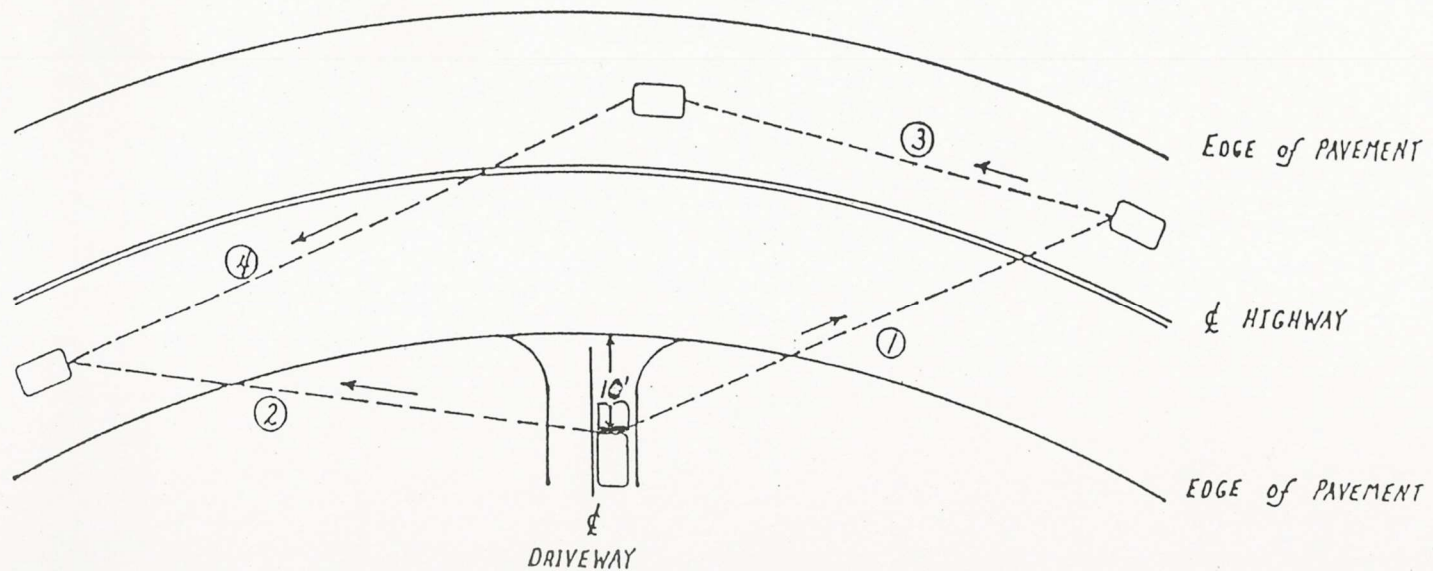
Table 5C-3 Design Intersection Sight Distance (in feet) - Case B1 - Left Turn From Stop

Design speed (mph)	Passenger Car Lanes Crossed			Single-Unit Truck Lanes Crossed			Combination Truck Lanes Crossed		
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
15	170	180	190	210	225	245	255	270	285
20	225	240	250	280	300	325	340	360	380
25	280	295	315	350	375	405	425	450	475
30	335	355	375	420	450	485	510	540	570
35	390	415	440	490	525	565	595	630	665
40	445	475	500	560	600	645	680	720	760
45	500	530	565	630	675	725	765	810	855
50	555	590	625	700	750	805	850	900	950
55	610	650	690	770	825	885	930	990	1045
60	665	710	750	840	900	965	1015	1080	1140
65	720	765	815	910	975	1045	1100	1170	1235
70	775	825	875	980	1050	1125	1185	1260	1330

Table 5C-4 Design Intersection Sight Distance (in feet) - Case B2 - Right Turn From Stop and - Case B3 - Crossing Maneuver

Design Speed (mph)	Passenger Car Case B2-- Lane Entered Case B3 -- Lanes Crossed			Single-Unit Truck Case B2-- Lane Entered Case B3 -- Lanes Crossed			Combination Truck Case B2-- Lane Entered Case B3 -- Lanes Crossed		
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
15	145	155	170	190	205	220	235	250	265
20	195	210	225	250	275	295	310	330	350
25	240	260	280	315	340	365	390	415	440
30	290	310	335	375	410	440	465	495	525
35	335	365	390	440	475	510	545	580	615
40	385	415	445	500	545	585	620	660	700
45	430	465	500	565	610	655	695	745	790
50	480	515	555	625	680	730	775	825	875
55	530	570	610	690	745	805	850	910	965
60	575	620	665	750	815	875	930	990	1050
65	625	670	720	815	880	950	1005	1075	1140
70	670	725	775	875	950	1020	1085	1155	1225

SIGHT LINE CRITERIA



- (1) Exiting Sight Line at 10 feet from the edge of pavement looking right to the approaching vehicle.
- (2) Exiting Sight Line at 10 feet from the edge of pavement looking left to the approaching vehicle.
- (3) Rear end Sight Line from the left turn entering vehicle to a vehicle approaching from the same direction.
- (4) Sight Line from the left turn entering vehicle to a vehicle approaching from the opposite direction.

Note:

Height of driver's eye is 3.5 feet.

Height of object in the center of the object's lane is 4.25 feet.

7.5 Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety

Most of Chester is rural and its dispersed residential areas are not conducive to pedestrian and bicycle transportation use. The exception is the hamlet of Sugar Loaf, where the dense settlement pattern could accommodate better pedestrian circulation with sidewalk and trail improvements. This Comprehensive Plan recommends explicitly accommodating pedestrian and bicycle transportation needs in the higher density areas of the Town.

Section 83-20 of the Town Subdivision regulations provide street specifications for roads created by new subdivisions. This section of the code requires all new roads be “...graded and improved with pavements, curbs and gutters, sidewalks, storm drainage facilities, water mains, sewers, streetlights and signs, street trees and fire hydrants, except where waivers may be requested, and the Planning Board may waive, subject to appropriate conditions, such improvements as it considers may be omitted without jeopardy to the public health, safety and general welfare.” However, sidewalks are only required in the SR-6 zone, planned adult communities and other locations in proximity to destinations where such sidewalks make sense.



Where sidewalks are not proposed, this plan recommends paved shoulders of at least four feet be provided, in order to promote the safety of pedestrians and cyclists. These lanes should be striped, or otherwise marked, to identify them as the pedestrian realm and to keep cars from parking in these areas.

Bicycle routes along roadways complement dedicated bicycle paths such as the Orange County Heritage Trail. Such lanes are intended to encourage alternative transportation options and discourage recreational users from using the on-street system. Arterials and major collector roads with generally higher speeds do not lend themselves to bike routes and are mostly under either State or County jurisdiction. However, conflicts between automobiles, pedestrians and cyclists can occur where adequate facilities for cyclists are not provided. Therefore, the goal should be to establish areas within the Town where an integrated system of bike routes could be established. When County or State roads are planned for significant upgrades, the redesigned roads should be designed as “complete streets”, which take into account pedestrian and bicycle

needs, if possible. This Plan supports future planning and development of both on and off-road bicycle routes, including the expansion of the Heritage Trail along the Erie Railroad branch line.

The Town is currently evaluating sidewalk construction where none currently exists along Kings Highway in order to have a complete sidewalk system from the Sugar Loaf PAC to the intersection of Pine Hill Road. This Plan strongly supports appropriate pedestrian improvements in the Sugar Loaf hamlet (i.e. sidewalk improvements, which complement and do not overpower the historic character of the hamlet). This Plan encourages accommodating bicycle access along the Kings Highway corridor to Sugar Loaf and the NYS Route 94 corridor into the Village of Chester. This Plan also supports pedestrian connections to Town Hall and the Chester Public Library.

7.6 Public Transportation

Local and regional public transit options are important to Chester's quality of life because they provide transportation alternatives to the private automobile for residents, employees, students, and staff, as well as visitors to the Town. The various transit services discussed below are now available in the Town and provide connections to Orange County and beyond.

7.6.1 Bus Service in the Town of Chester

Commuter service to the Port Authority Bus Terminal (8th Avenue at 42nd Street, Midtown Manhattan) is available from Chester via Coach USA-ShortLine. Residents in the Town of Chester also have access to local bus service within Orange County on the County's Main Line Trolley Bus (operated under contract by Coach USA-ShortLine), which stops in Chester. The Main Line runs seven days a week between Middletown and Harriman with stops in Middletown, Goshen, Chester, Harriman, Monroe and Woodbury Common. Orange County Dial-A-Bus also provides bus services to numerous communities in the county. Passengers must call ahead to reserve a ride. In Chester, service is provided Monday through Saturday with hours of operation adjusted from time to time.

Coach USA-Short Line's new state-of-the art office and garage complex was recently opened in the Chester Industrial Park. The new location enabled the bus company to consolidate office, maintenance and operations personnel in one centralized location. This Plan supports the expansion of bus service within the Town, where feasible to do so. With respect to the existing service, this Plan strongly supports efforts to increase the number of stops with amenities such as shelters, benches and other means of weather protection. Such efforts will improve overall safety and comfort of riders and may also increase ridership on these buses.

7.6.2 Park & Ride Facilities

There is a 97-space Park & Ride lot in Chester off of NYS Route 17, Exit 126, along with nearby facilities in Monroe and Goshen. These facilities are overcapacity, but NYSDOT recently opened a new 60-space Park & Ride in Monroe and as discussed earlier in this chapter, the DOT has plans to expand the Chester facility as well. This Plan recommends ongoing Town coordination with NYSDOT and the OCTC to ensure adequate spaces are provided to accommodate growing commuter demand. The expansion of existing lots or creation of new lots is supported by this Plan.

7.6.3 Passenger Rail Service in the Town of Chester

There is no passenger rail commuter train service to the Town or Village of Chester. However, New Jersey Transit's Port Jervis line has a station at nearby Harriman, which is available to Chester residents who commute to New York City. All trains require a transfer to reach the city. Transfers are available at Secaucus for NJ Transit Trains to Penn Station and from Hoboken for PATH trains to 33rd Street and the World Trade Center. This Plan strongly supports bus-to-rail connections from Chester to existing train stations served by NJ Transit and the MTA.

7.6.4 Rail Service (Freight and Passenger)

Today, freight rail service is provided to Chester along the Lehigh & Hudson River RR line, which runs between northern New Jersey and terminates in Maybrook, N.Y. The L&HR provides service to a number of Chester businesses. This Plan supports the continued operation of the L&HR for freight service. The Town should support efforts by the railroad to obtain State and federal dollars to continue to operate this vital component of the Town of Chester's transportation system.

Currently no passenger rail service is provided to the Town. The closest terminal for passenger service is located in Harriman, approximately 10 miles southeast of Chester. The Erie Railroad branch line provided rail access to the Town up until the early 1980s. The Erie line has since been converted to the Heritage Trail rail trail.

Additional bus connections to regional passenger rail are desired to meet the growing demand from commuters. The Plan recommends a dedicated bus service-rail connector be established with stops in Sugar Loaf and the Village of Chester, which would then provide limited peak hour bus service between Chester and the NJ Transit Harriman Station.

Long term, this Plan also recommends the Town explore possibilities to provide passenger service to the Town – perhaps along the Lehigh & Hudson River Railroad active freight line or via a branch line to the NJ Transit-operated Port Jervis line along the Erie Railroad branch line to Salisbury Mills. Passenger rail could increase heritage tourism in the area and be helpful in decreasing traffic congestion on NYS Route 17 (Future I-86).

8.0 Community Facilities and Services

The Town of Chester seeks to provide public facilities and services that are accessible and responsive to community needs in a cost-effective and efficient manner with an overall goal of ensuring development in the town does not exceed the capacity of the services and infrastructure. The Town provides a broad range of facilities and services to its residents and businesses, including general government, water supply, parks and recreation, police and a public library. The Town's highway department also maintains a system of Town roads, which are a vital part of the community's overall transportation system.

There are a variety of other services provided to Town residents by Orange County along with a variety of special districts (e.g. drainage, fire, lighting, sewer, etc.) and potentially areas where the Town could coordinate with the Village to save tax-payers money. It is the Town's desire to provide, or coordinate with others to provide, sufficient facilities and services to all residents and businesses as efficiently as possible, in a timely manner.

This Plan recommends the Town Board continue to assess the needs for its community facilities and when necessary to plan for capital improvements to meet those needs. This plan also recommends the Town Planning Board assess potential impacts of proposed developments on town infrastructure and where a development requires expansion or improvements of Town infrastructure, all costs should be borne by the developer.

8.1 Town Hall Services

The Town provides a wide variety of basic government services, including policy and day-to-day management, voter registration/elections, records management, dog and marriage licensing, site plan and subdivision review, community financial management (assessment, taxation, collections, borrowing, etc.), justice court, and code enforcement and new construction inspection and permitting. Most general government services are housed in the Town Hall. Chester also provides a variety of community services such as recreation programs and general information on available County or State programs. The Town-owned municipal complex provides a central location for citizens to access Town services. The municipal



Photos: Town Hall on Kings Highway which houses the Supervisor's Office as well as the majority of Town Departments and services, Town Highway Department on Laroe Road and Town of Chester Police Officers.

complex includes Town Hall, which houses Town administrative offices, and the Chester Public Library which is housed in a separate building on the same site. The municipal complex requires renovations and modernization to better improve service. As the population continues to grow, Town facilities will likely need to expand to meet community needs in the future.

8.2 Chester Public Library

The Chester Public Library is situated within the municipal complex at 1784 Kings Highway. A five-member library board of trustees sets the general policy, and a staff of twelve, which includes two full-time librarians and one full-time clerk, manages the day-to-day operations. The library is a member of the Ramapo Catskill Library System, a regional lending library system consisting of 47 member libraries, that gives Chester residents access to member-library collections in Orange, Rockland, Sullivan and Ulster counties.

Beginning in 2018, the library opted to take its budget to the voters in what is referred to as a Chapter 414 or “municipal ballot vote”. Chapter 414 refers to the chapter of the laws in New York State in which Education Law 259 was amended to enable libraries of any type to empower the citizens of a municipality (village, town, city, or county) served by the library to decide how much to tax themselves for library services. The ballot is required to be re-approved annually, however, if the library chooses not to or if the vote is negative, the library resumes the funding of the last successful vote.

The last major renovation of the library was in 2004. Since then, minor upgrades have occurred to lighting, security, bathrooms, and general aesthetics of the interior. When the Senior Center moved out of the building, the library gained full access to both floors. The intention was to renovate the lower level, and provide room for expansion. However, due to moisture levels, no collection can be housed in the space. The board has been discussing ideas for renovating the space strictly for programming.

In recent years the board has also been exploring the idea of moving the library back into the Village of Chester. Not only to provide space for expansion that the current building cannot provide but, also to increase foot traffic. The current location is only safely accessible by vehicle.

8.3 Police Department

The Chester police headquarters is located between the Town Highway Department Garage and the Senior/Recreation Center on Laroe Road. Renovations were completed in 2018 to relocate the police department here from Town Hall. The police department is headed by a chief of police and consists of an administrative sergeant, three patrol sergeants, one detective, fifteen officers (10 full-time and 5 part-time), two part-time court officers and two part-time administrative clerks. Specialty units include a police k9 unit, a school resource officer, UTV patrol, bicycle patrol and a commercial vehicle enforcement unit. Today the headquarters meets the needs of the department, however, there is limited room for expansion in the building. There is a direct relationship between increased population and the number, frequency and type of crimes committed and a need for additional emergency safety resources. As development is proposed, studies should be conducted to determine the impact of an increasing population on police services and whether more officers are needed to support the mission of the department.

8.4 Fire

Fire protection in the Town and Village of Chester is provided by the Chester Fire Department. Since the fire district boundaries do not coincide with municipal boundaries, Chester's fire district ("District") includes portions of land located outside of the Town. The Chester Fire Department consists of three all-volunteer fire companies: Walton Engine & Hose Co. #1, located in the Village and serving the northern portions of the Town; Sugar Loaf Engine Co. #2, serving the hamlet and surrounding area; and Trout Brook Engine & Hose Co. on Lakes Road (CR 5), serving the Trout Brook area and lands accessible through Monroe. The Town and its residents should continue to support high-quality volunteer fire services that are adequately staffed with trained and properly equipped personnel.

8.5 Ambulance

Ambulance service is provided by Empress EMS, a for-profit ambulance company, without a standing contract dedicating their services to Chester. The Chester Volunteer Ambulance Corp is no longer active. Volunteer companies in the region are finding, there are concerns with the adequacy of volunteer staff numbers during certain times of the week, especially during weekdays. Individuals with long commutes are often not able to devote the time to training and service. As of this writing, the Town is in the process of establishing, or contracting with, a full-time dedicated ambulance service.

8.6 Water Service

The Town of Chester provides water services through five water districts: 1) Surrey Meadows, 2) Sugar Loaf, 3) Lake Hill Farms, 4) Walton Lake Estates, and 5) Fieldcrest (see map of districts on the following page).

The Surrey Meadows Water District includes approximately 240 service connections and is supplied by three ground water wells. Two of the wells are in service with one backup well. The supply is treated by a chlorination system and green-sand filtration to remove iron and manganese. The current water supply is sufficient to meet the current water demand of the district.

The Sugar Loaf Hills Water District includes approximately 185 residential and non-residential service connections which does not include the majority of the Sugar Loaf business district. The district is supplied by two groundwater wells that yield up to 250,000 gallons per day. While these wells have the highest capacity of any of the Town's water districts, the district has capacity concerns and is regularly placed on water-usage restrictions to conserve water. The water district has one good well and a backup well that has tested positive for bacteria and is only used for emergencies use. A second back-up well was drilled but demonstrated significant interference (impacts to surrounding wells) and was not pursued further. The Town is also pursuing an extension of municipal water to the Sugar Loaf PAC which will increase demand on the system. The PAC is currently on a fairly high-yield private well that could also be evaluated for incorporation into the water district. Additional treatment of this well would be required in order to meet the standards of a public well. There is a critical need to provide an additional backup well capable of providing potable water to the district users. The town is currently evaluating options for improving both the current system and the existing back up well that includes digging the well deeper. This Plan strongly supports these efforts so that the potable water needs of residents and businesses within the Sugar Loaf area are met.

The Lake Hill Farms Water District includes approximately 400 service connections and is supplied by two shallow wells, which presently yield sufficient volumes of water to meet the needs of district users. However, the expansion of the water district to serve new users would require additional water sources. An expansion of the water district should only be considered by the Town after additional water sources needed to support any expansion are identified.

The Walton Lakes Estates Water District which includes approximately 191 service connections, is served by two main groundwater wells with two wells used only for emergencies. This district is in dire need of new or additional water supplies. This water district has experienced severe water shortages in recent years, as well as, issues with high concentrations of

iron, manganese and salt. It is a top priority of the Town to try to resolve this water supply shortage. Town officials previously explored expansion of the King Tract water system, a privately owned and operated water system off of Laroe Road. While this was ultimately deemed not feasible, this remains a possibility for the future. In 2022, the Town drilled additional wells on nearby Town owned land with good results. The town has recently secured a DASNY grant and is pursuing additional funds through the NYS DEC Environmental Facilities Corporation to connect these wells to the Town's water treatment plant and upgrade treatment capacity.

The Fieldcrest Water District serves the Fieldcrest subdivision with approximately 30 houses, off of Laroe Road. While the Town of Chester owns and operates the water district, water supply is from the Village of Chester. The water supply for this water district is presently sufficient to meet existing needs.

While development pressure will continue in the town, this plan recommends the Town focus on maintenance and improvement of its existing infrastructure as well as good stewardship of water resources which includes protection of ground water resources and incorporation of water conservation measures in all new residential and nonresidential developments. This Plan also recommends additional water-storage capacity for each district, so each system has at least two large tanks for storage capacity and built-in redundancy. Such redundancy is needed to avoid water-service interruptions during routine maintenance or emergency repairs.

Finally, this Plan recommends the Town adopt a well testing protocol to be implemented by the Planning Board during project review. Well testing should ensure ground water resources have the capacity to serve the development proposed and monitor surrounding wells and adjacent surface water resources to ensure proposed wells will not adversely impact existing homes or surround environmental resources.

8.7 Sewer Service

Sewer collection is provided by the Moodna Joint Basin Operation and Maintenance Commission (“Moodna Commission”), which provides sewer services to the Town, as well as the Village of Chester and portions of the Town of Monroe and Blooming Grove. Moodna Commission wastewater flows to the county- operated Harriman Wastewater Treatment Plant, which discharges into the Ramapo River. The Harriman Plant has a permitted capacity of 6.0 MGD with an average daily flow of 5.2 MGD. The County is in the planning stages of expanding the Harriman Wastewater Treatment Plant by an additional 3-million gallons per day to accommodate additional growth within the district. Based on conversations with the Moodna Commission, the Town of Chester’s sewer discharge allotment in the district is 410,000 gallons per day and the Town’s current average discharge is 329,000 gallons per day.

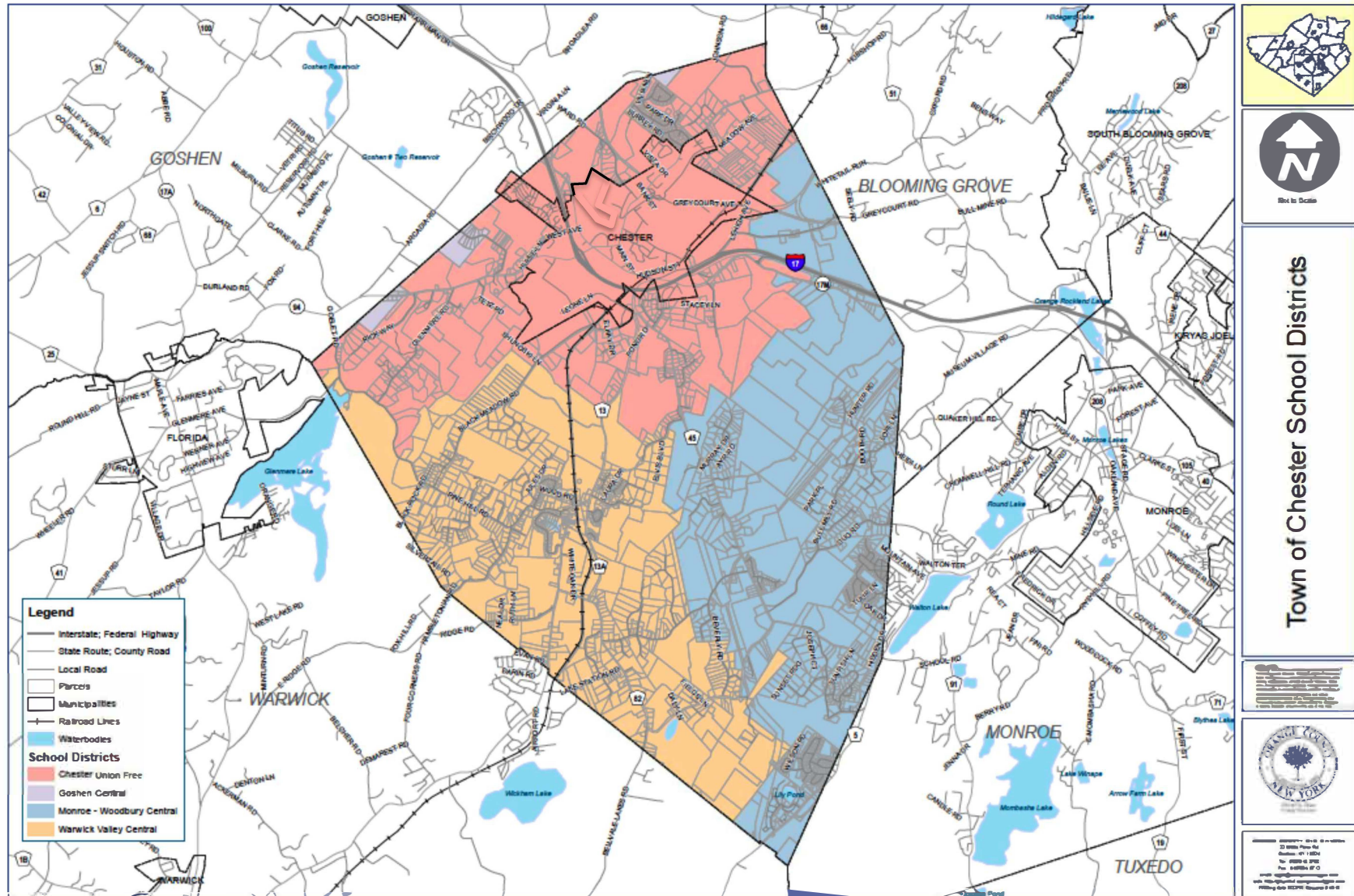


Wastewater in the Sugar Loaf area is collected and conveyed to the Village of Chester Wastewater Treatment Plant.

This Plan recommends prohibition of the construction of privately-owned wastewater treatment facilities in the Town. The Town’s previous experience with such facilities has not been good as facilities are often not run and/or maintained correctly, which could have significant impacts on the residents and environment. Surrey Meadows and the King Tract once had their own treatment plants that developed problems, and many other communities in the region have had similar experiences.

8.8 Schools

Four school districts serve the Town of Chester: Chester Union Free, Goshen Central, Monroe-Woodbury Central and Warwick Valley Central (see School District Map on the following page). Town land within the Goshen Central School District



is limited to small areas along the northern boundary of the Town. According to the NYS Education Department¹ the Chester Union Free School District enrollment for the 2022-23 school year was 937 total students. This total is down from the 2015 enrollment of 1,068 students. The schools in the district include Chester Elementary School (grades K-5) and Chester Middle/Senior High School (grades 6-12). The Monroe – Woodbury Central School District has a total K-12 enrollment of 6,430 which is also down from the total reported in the 2015 plan of 7,382 students. There are seven schools in the Monroe-Woodbury District: Central Valley School, Monroe-Woodbury High School, Monroe-Woodbury Middle School, North Main Street School, Pine Tree Elementary School, Sapphire Elementary School and Smith Clove Elementary School. Total enrollment in Warwick Valley Central is 3,725 students with four schools in the district: Park Avenue Elementary, Sanfordville Elementary, Warwick Middle School and Warwick Valley High School. Student enrollment totals for Warwick are up from the 2015 enrollment of 3,625 but are down from a high of 4,681 from 2004.

Shrinking school districts are a general pattern across the Hudson Valley as Pattern for Progress reports school enrollments have shrunk in 97 of 120 school districts in the Hudson Valley Region and there are at least 28,000 fewer children under the age of 14 living in our region now than in 2010. As residential developments are proposed in the Town of Chester, it is important that the Planning Board utilizes the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) law to assess potential impacts on student enrollment within the appropriate school district. When impacts are anticipated, the developer should provide appropriate mitigation measures to help ensure districts can continue to offer the highest quality of public education available to its residents. This Plan recommends the Town cooperate with its school districts to reserve land for schools when planning future development. This will help to ensure that school facilities are in harmony with the Town's vision of future land use.

8.9 Broadband and Wireless Communications Network

A town-wide state-of-the-art broadband and wireless communications network is an important goal of this Plan. The Town should insist its franchised broadband providers continue to expand the broadband network town-wide and not just to the most densely populated areas. Cellular service also needs to be expanded to address areas where there are gaps in coverage. Cell towers should first be considered on existing structures (e.g. water tanks, silos, steeples or existing towers). The placement of new wireless towers must be planned to mitigate potential visual impacts and should be designed to be inconspicuous in nature through tower placement or stealth design. Increasing reliance on cell phones makes cell service a must for public safety in the Town.

¹ New York State Education Department website: www.data.nysed.gov

9.0 Economic Development

For Chester to prosper, future growth within the community has to involve new investments in infrastructure, the agricultural sector, commercial gateways, business and light industrial parks, and the Sugar Loaf Business District. Also, key to local economic development, is the Town's ability to capitalize on the region's tourism-based economy by creating links to public parkland and hiking trails which attract thousands of visitors to the area. This plan recognizes that the areas of the town for traditional industry are limited and that the nature of the economy is constantly shifting.

Outside of the Hamlet of Sugar Loaf, the Town's commercial areas are zoned Industrial, Industrial Park (IP), General Commercial (GC) with a limited area of Local Business (LB).

This plan supports an environment that fosters growth in agriculture, agri-tourism and other businesses that support the local agricultural community, business and industries, which create local employment opportunities. This Plan also recognizes successful economic development must also include diversified housing opportunities for employees at various economic levels.

9.1 Trends in employment and industry

In 2011, nearly 50% of Chester's civilian labor force of 6,557 people was employed in three industries: educational and health services (23%), retail trade (14.2%) and professional services (10.8%). The high percentage of employment in these industries reflects the nature of the area's major employers and the strong service and retail- based economy.

The Mid-Hudson region is a physical and economic bridge between downstate and upstate New York. The Town of Chester is strategically located along NYS Route 17 in the center of Orange County, approximately 50 miles from New York City. The Town's proximity to New York City is an important asset, as it expands job opportunities for commuting residents and markets for its businesses. According to the Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Council, healthcare remains the largest industry sector in the Mid-



Photos: Various businesses located in the Town of Chester Industrial District.

Hudson Region, gaining 20,000 jobs over the last decade, and will likely continue to grow and the aging population in the region demands additional medical services. Other industries currently thriving in the region include bio-tech, distribution, agri-business and the food, beverage and hospitality industry that support the tourism sector.

Challenges to economic development across the region include shortfalls in infrastructure and cultivating a workforce that has the skills necessary to meet the evolving demands of business.

9.2 Economic Development Goals

Chester's economic development efforts must continue to build upon the Town's assets: diverse agricultural sector; vibrant Sugar Loaf Business District as a specialty retail and cultural destination; open space and recreational resources as tourist destinations and direct access to the NYS Route 17 corridor and L&HR freight line, along with vacant and underdeveloped industrial sites to attract new businesses.

At the same time, the Town must make careful decisions among those strengths in order to create a diverse economy and enhance the quality of life for its residents. It must also ensure that new commercial and industrial development is well planned so it enhances rather than detracts from the unique character of the Town. Jobs within industrial and business parks will continue to be important to Chester's competitive position as an employment center in the Hudson Valley but opportunities exist with the ongoing expansion of Woodbury Common and the recent development of LEGOLAND New York to benefit from spillover business. The arts, entertainment & recreation and agricultural industries will continue to expand across the region, particularly where these industries overlap.

This Plan recommends that commercial, office and industrial development be limited to areas already designated for such purposes. The exception would involve the expanded commercial use of agricultural properties, adaptive reuse of farm buildings or historic properties which this Plan supports. This Plan supports the Town's current zoning district designations and encourages development within these districts consistent with the provisions of the zoning law and changes as discussed below to support the overall goals of this plan. Over time, a diverse economy will result in a more balanced, fiscally stronger community that is less prone to vacant buildings, abandoned properties or a dramatic decline in any one industry.

Industrial and Industrial Park Development

The Town of Chester zoning map designates a number of areas throughout the Town for industrial, industrial park or office park use. While there is not a significant amount of vacant land in this area, there is land that could be redeveloped in the future. Generally, this Plan recommends that industrial, industrial park and office park uses should be limited to areas already designated for such purposes. Chester's industrial park has excellent transportation access from NYS Route 17 (Future I-86) for light industry and warehouse distribution facilities. This light industrial park also has access to central water and broadband, which are prerequisites for many industries.

As part of this Comprehensive Plan process, the committee is reviewing the zoning tables to ensure a broad and modern range of uses are permitted in order to attract new businesses to the industrial zones and broaden the Town's tax base while expanding employment opportunities. New uses to consider in these areas include a range of medical office uses, indoor and outdoor recreation uses and facilities for film production, which is an emerging industry in the region.

Agriculture

As discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 herein, agriculture is an important part of the Town's economic base. This plan strongly supports the expansion of permitted accessory uses such as on-site retail sales of products grown on site, tasting areas, wreath-making, hayrides, 'pick-your-own' events, catered events and educational space as well as the expansion of agricultural-supportive or related uses in the industrial zones such as drying, processing, packaging or production of processed farm products including jams, cheese, yarn, cider, beer and spirits. This plan further supports improved communication with the agricultural community to best understand their needs so the Town can ensure the local zoning allows for long-term economic vitality and sustainability. In order to support and encourage the agricultural industry, this plan specifically recommends expanding the permitted commercial agricultural uses in the AR-.3 zone and ensuring consistency with



Photos (top to bottom): Tasting room at Oceane Vinyard on Kings Highway, hayride and pumpkin picking at Soons Orchard in Goshen and a farm dinner at Blooming Hill Farm in Blooming Grove.

NYS Agriculture and Markets Laws to expand development opportunities with proper Planning Board oversight.

Service and Retail Industries

The Town's zoning map designates areas along Route 17M and CR 13 (south of the Village) as General Commercial (GC) and a small area north of the Village on Route 17M as Local Business (LB). These districts allow for banks, office buildings, schools, excavation and mining operations, retail stores, hotels, motels, car washing facilities, gas stations, auto repair, personal service establishments and restaurants, subject to site plan review. The GC Zoning District (District) provides for the largest variety of permitted uses.

This Plan supports continued growth of commercial development within the areas already designated for such purposes with a focus on tourism, hospitality and recreational uses. Zoning tables should be reviewed to ensure a broad range of contemporary commercial uses which encourage and support these targeted industries. Bars, outdoor dining and recreation uses should be permitted in these zones. Auto-centric uses (gas stations, car washes, automotive repair, etc.) and uses which may have a negative impact on these industries and the overall public enjoyment of the commercial district, such as excavation and mining operations, should no longer be permitted in the commercial districts. This plan also supports the adoption of design guidelines for these commercial corridors in order to provide guidance for creating aesthetically pleasing and functional commercial corridors. It is recommended such guidelines include both standards (requirements) and guidelines (suggestions), to guide the Planning Board's review of new commercial developments.

10.0 SUGAR LOAF

The Hamlet of Sugar Loaf is an important and unique, specialty craft, retail and cultural center, which is a very important component of the Town of Chester's diversified economic base. The business district consists of approximately 50 acres of land developed with retail, personal service shops, offices, restaurants and art galleries. Many of the structures are converted residences, dating back to the 1800s, currently developed with residences on upper floors and commercial businesses on the ground floor. This plan strongly supports the live/work environment and efforts to retain the unique character of the hamlet while supporting and growing the arts, entertainment & recreation industry in Sugar Loaf.

10.1 Zoning

The Hamlet of Sugar Loaf contains its own business zoning district, Local Business – Sugar Loaf (LB-SL) which covers the area from the Sugar Loaf Fire House on Kings Highway south to Creamery Pond Road. This zoning permits bed and breakfasts, day care centers, offices, schools for art, dance and music, restaurants, retail, banks, personal services, non-personal services (excluding motor vehicle repair), manufacturing, assembling and processing of products by artisans or craftspeople for retail sales, auction houses, antique stores, theaters and mixed-use buildings as well as single family homes and one two-family. Given the unique nature of the hamlet it is critical that this zoning be flexible enough to accommodate a range of uses to support this area and allow it to flourish. This zoning should be regularly reviewed to ensure it meets the needs of the hamlet. This plan recommends galleries be expressly permitted and any use which supports the tourism, arts or hospitality industries.

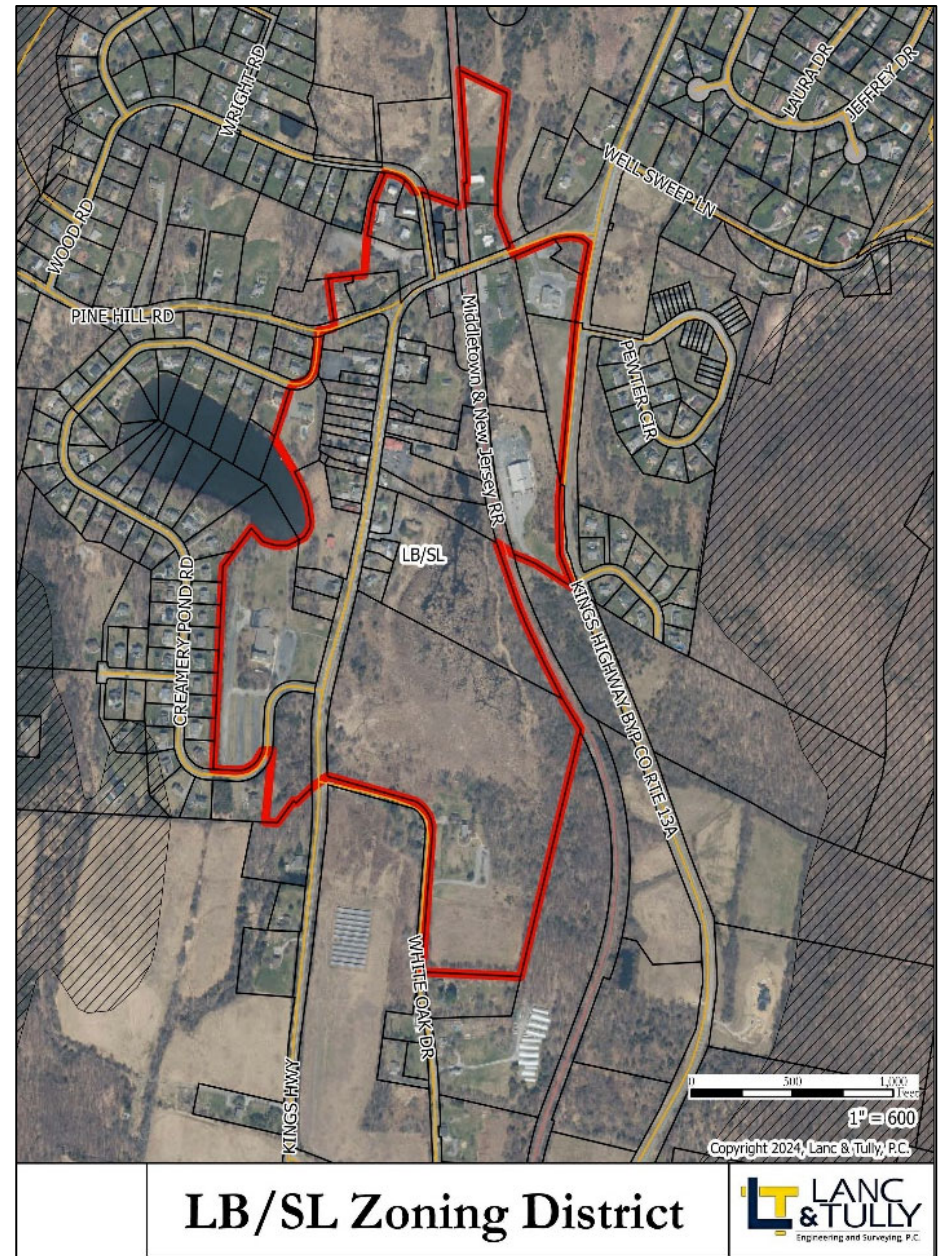
As the Sugar Loaf business district is unique within the Town in terms of character, the parking regulations should also be unique to this area. The small lots, pedestrian orientation and walkability of the area are key to its character and should be preserved by not permitting parking spaces to be located in the front yard of any structure. As Kings Highway allows for on-street parking, many small retail, personal services and offices uses do not require any additional parking. The zoning should be reviewed to allow these small-scale commercial uses no off-street parking requirement. To maximum efficiency of the existing parking stock, the Planning Board could allow the internal connection of existing parking lots, behind commercial developments, with cross-access easements.

Orange County has recently purchased property located on the south end of the district which is to be used for public parking. This lot is not currently paved or striped, but a sign has been installed to denote that the lot is intended for public use. As visitors to the area will be more reliant on off-site parking, it is suggested that the Town evaluate the ability to create ADA accessible parking spaces in a centralized location along Kings Highway to ensure accessibility.

As discussed in more detail below, this plan recommends the creation of design guidelines for both new construction and redevelopment to protect the unique character of the area into the future. In addition to the physical appearance of buildings, it is also recommended that buildings be located towards the street to continue the pattern of pedestrian orientation in the corridor and sidewalks should be required to be installed by the developer. This plan further recommends the sign code also be reviewed and updated. Similar to most aspects of the Hamlet, the sign code must also be unique to Sugar Loaf to reflect the scale and character of the area.

10.2 Infrastructure

Kings Highway has one travel lane in each direction with wide paved shoulders which accommodate on-street parking. While the town recently expanded the sidewalk network, pedestrian infrastructure in the hamlet remains limited, with no uniform material or width and three painted crosswalks. The existing sidewalk system within the hamlet could be seen as an impediment to new investment, since the current system is not cohesive and, in many areas, not ADA compliant. This plan supports efforts to provide additional sidewalk enhancements



and crosswalks, within the business district to ensure individuals of all abilities can access the district with the understanding, such improvements respect the unique characteristics of the hamlet center. It is recommended that new development be made to construct sidewalks along their street frontage where none exists. As discussed in Chapter 3, this plan also supports a pedestrian connection from the hamlet to Sugar Loaf Mountain which can also attract trail users back to Sugar Loaf for dining and shopping.

As discussed in more detail in Chapter 8, the lack of central water and sewer is yet another impediment to stimulating new investment, especially in attracting more restaurants, which have high water and sewer demands. Central water is also needed for fire protection. The Town of Chester and Sugar Loaf business organizations have discussed the possibility of providing central water to the business district, but steps to design or implement such improvements have not advanced. The Town should coordinate with Orange County, Sugar Loaf business organizations and other interested parties to move forward with a feasibility study for the extension of water and sewer service to the business district.

10.3 Historic Character

The Hamlet of Sugar Loaf was founded in the late 1740's as a waypoint along Kings Highway. It has evolved into a unique, mixed-use enclave of artisans and small businesses. A portion of the Hamlet of Sugar Loaf has recently been designated as a National Historic District. This area, shown on the figure to the right, has 34 structures which have been listed on the National Register of Historic Places (identified with yellow dots) and which form the basis for the Sugar Loaf National Historic District.

The benefits associated with the formal designation as a National Historic District include access to grants, tax incentives, access to technical preservation advice from National Park Service staff, the creation of an additional layer of review and protection in the event someone proposes to modify a building, bringing additional attention to the Sugar Loaf and the attraction of additional tourists based on marketing as a National Historic District.

This Plan supports efforts by property owners to have their properties listed on the State or National Register of Historic Places and supports promotion of the preservation, appreciation and sustainable use of historical or heritage resources.



Image: Sugar Loaf National Historic District as delineated by the NYS Cultural Resources Information System

Presently, Chester does not have regulations that address exterior alterations to new or existing structures which means there is little in the way of standards to guide exterior alterations to historic properties or to ensure new development fits into the character of the hamlet. The Town should consider regulations for review of both new and proposed modifications to structures within Sugar Loaf in order to protect the historic integrity of this area. Any building under discussion for demolition should also be evaluated for historical significance prior to issuing any permits.

This plan recommends the re-establishment of an architectural review advisory committee to review proposed modifications to structures and protect the integrity of the historic district into the future. This committee should consist of three to five

residents within the architectural, landscape architectural or planning professions or from the local historical society. This plan also recommends the Town continue to promote the cultural and historic value of Sugar Loaf to attract tourism and appropriate economic development consistent with the character of the hamlet.

This Plan recommends the following principles be used to establish historic preservation guidelines to guide landowner decisions with respect to exterior alteration buildings within the historic district, if established, or they could be applied more generally to structures with the LB-SL Zone and to help building owners better understand historic-preservation techniques. The guidelines would describe the renovations and specify the appropriate types of building materials to be used. It would also describe the architectural elements to be preserved or those that could be incorporated into new construction to ensure new development blends into the district.

The following general historic preservation guidelines are offered to guide renovations within the historic district (adapted from National Register Guidelines):

Respect Original Architecture of the Building.

- Determine which elements are essential to its character and preserve these; and
- Avoid masking over original materials.

Avoid removing or altering any historic material or significant architectural features or adding materials, elements or details that were not part of the original building.

- Rehabilitation work should preserve and retain original wall and siding materials; and
- Details such as decorative millwork or shingles should not be added to buildings if they were not an original feature of that structure.

Maintain existing architectural elements of the historic building.

- The best preservation technique is to maintain historic features from the outset so that intervention is not required;
- Use treatments such as caulking, limited paint removal and reapplication of paint and rust removal;
- Repair only those architectural features that are deteriorated;



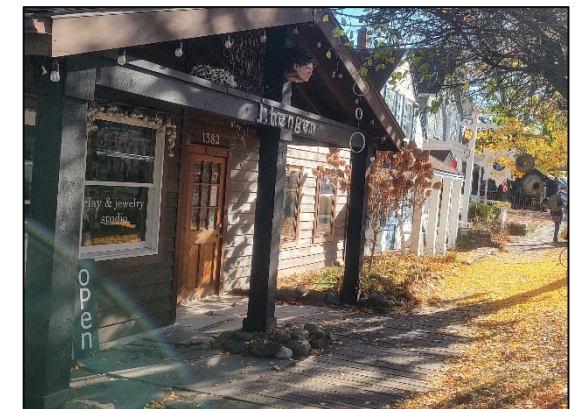
Images: Various businesses in the Hamlet of Sugar Loaf housed in buildings that are eligible for listing on the National Historic Register and which could contribute to a Historic District. This plan recommends preserving the character of this unique area.

- If portions of wood siding must be replaced, be sure to match style and lap dimensions of the original;
- Only replace those features that are beyond repair or missing;
- Patch, piece-in, splice, consolidate or otherwise upgrade the existing material, using National Trust Preservation Standards; and
- Building Permits for vinyl or aluminum siding on historic buildings should be prohibited.

The original window openings, muntin and mullions should be preserved where feasible.

- Do not modify the original window openings to accommodate a stock window that does not fit the building;
- Where windows have previously been inappropriately replaced, allow replacement windows that will fit the original opening.
- Retain original window style when replacement is necessary.

Historic character can also be preserved through the zoning tables. Mixed-use buildings, those with commercial development on the ground floor with residential units above, should be encouraged along Kings Highway, with buildings oriented towards the street to maintain the historic development pattern. New development and major renovations should be required to construct sidewalks where none exist today or where sidewalks are in poor condition.



Images (courtesy of Veronica Mott): Streetscape in Sugar Loaf with an eclectic mix of mixed-use buildings and small businesses.

10.4 Marketing Efforts

Orange County is strategically located an hour north of New York City which allows it to attract not only individuals who live in the city, but also tourists who may be looking for other stops on the way to, or from their visit to New York City. Major regional attractions include LEGOLAND New York, Woodbury Common Premium Outlets, West Point Military Academy and Storm King Arts Center which are all within a 20-minute drive of Chester, so the town is in a position to try to attract spillover tourism from these attractions to its own locations of interest if appropriate amenities are available.

Arts and cultural resources are well-known economic development generators. Sugar Loaf and the Town should market the hamlet's uniqueness as a competitive advantage to leverage new investment and attract visitors. Marketing efforts, particularly social media, has become a useful way to attract new visitors to an area. The Town can support local events by allowing temporary closures of Kings Highway to allow for outdoor art exhibitions, music or simply to encourage gathering in the area, applying for tourism or other art-supportive grants on Sugar Loaf's behalf and investing in infrastructure such as water, sewer and sidewalks to ensure these areas are not obstacles to business expansion. Coordination with key surrounding businesses such as the Sugar Loaf Performing Arts Center, Tin Barn Brewing, local non-profits such as the Sugar Loaf Community Foundation and Chamber of Commerce and regional non-profit organizations such as Vision Hudson Valley and the Orange County Art League to piggy-back on events as well as the Orange County Department of Tourism which has a broad following, can help with marketing and attract a wider range of people to local events.



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SHOPPING & ANTIQUES



Discover the many different ways to shop in Orange County, NY!

From Sugar Loaf Craft Village to Woodbury Common Premium Outlets, Orange County offers a wide range of shopping options to choose from.



Town of Chester, Orange County, New York

11.0 Zoning and Land Use Policy

11.1 Current Residential Zoning and Land Uses

Agricultural and Rural Residential Areas (AR-.3 Zone): These areas make up the majority of the land within the Town. Existing land uses include low-density residential development, agricultural uses and publicly owned and protected parks, trails and open space that give Chester its rural character. This land generally contains a broad range of environmental constraints as discussed throughout this plan. None of the land is served by public water or sewer which also restricts the amount of development that can occur. The AR-.3 zone currently permits single-family dwellings on lots of at least 3 acres as well as commercial agricultural operations as-of-right and bed-and-breakfasts, bed-and-breakfast inns within 1 mile of Sugar Loaf, veterinarian offices and kennels, solar energy systems, excavation and mining and cluster subdivisions with Site Plan Approval subject to various regulations within the code. This plan supports this rural zoning in areas of the town which are encumbered by environmental constraints and not served by public utilities.

Suburban Residential Areas (SR-1, SR-2 and SR-6 Zones): There are pockets of mainly detached, single-family dwellings at suburban residential densities spread across the Town including established neighborhoods of Walton Lake Estates on the east side of the Town, Surrey Meadows on the north side of the Town, Lake Hill Farms, Warwick Ridge, houses off of Paradise Lane and Ridge Road and within the Hamlet of Sugar Loaf. Many of these areas have access to municipal water and sewer services making them more appropriate for higher densities.

The SR-1 and SR-2 Districts allows single-family dwellings with no water or sewer services on a minimum of one acre of land with reduced lot areas where central water or sewer are provided and clustered subdivisions where developments meet the other requirements of Section 98-25 of the zoning code. The SR-1 District also permits bed-and-breakfasts and bed-and-breakfast inns, veterinarian offices and kennels, religious institutions, schools, annual membership clubs providing outdoor recreational facilities, small-scale solar energy systems and excavation and mining operations. The SR-2 District also allows two-family dwellings, bed-and-breakfasts and bed-and-breakfast inns, planned adult communities, senior housing developments, senior assisted care facilities, annual membership clubs providing indoor and outdoor recreation, religious institutions, schools, excavation and mining operations, day care centers, nursery schools and small-scale solar energy systems.

The SR-6 District also requires a minimum of 1 acre of land for single family dwellings without public water or sewer with lot sizes for lots with public water and sewer even further reduced from the SR-1 and SR-2 in order to provide higher, suburban

densities on appropriate sites areas close to shopping and transportation services. The district also permits two-family dwellings clustering of one and two-family dwellings and the remaining other uses permitted in SR-2. In large part, this plan recommends maintaining the current zoning districts with only minor changes discussed below.

Senior Housing

The Town has multiple specialized housing options for seniors. Planned Adult Communities (PACs) are permitted by Special Permit in the SR-2 and SR-6 zoning districts on lots of at least 5 acres with direct access to a state or county road and central water or sewer. These developments must consist of at least 60% single family detached housing but may also include single family attached housing (townhouses/ rowhouses) or multi-family housing (apartments) at a maximum density of 3 units per acre for single-family and six units per acre for attached housing in the SR-2 Zone and six units per acre for single-family and eight units per acre for attached housing in the SR-6 zone.

Senior housing developments are permitted on lots of at least 25 acres, at a maximum density of four units per acre for single-family in the SR-2 Zone and eight units per acre for single-family in the SR-6 Zone while one-bedroom apartments are permitted at a maximum density of 12 units per acre and two-bedroom apartments are permitted at 10 units per acre in both zones. These developments are designated Affordable Housing regulated by New York State and residents must be over 60 years old.

Senior, assisted-care facilities are permitted on lots of at least 5 acres in the SR-2 and SR-6 zones or as part of a Planned Adult Community or senior housing development.

11.2 Recommended Code Amendments

The following recommended zoning and subdivision code amendments are recommended to support the goals and objectives of this plan as well as many of the more broadly stated recommendations in previous chapters of this plan.

11.2.1 Residential

- Lots 17-1-21, 17-1-20.1 and 17-1-20.2 should be rezoned from IP to SR-2.
- Rezone lot 14-7-22.1 from LB-SL to SR-2 to be more consistent with the character of the area and surrounding residential properties.

- Amend the AR-.3 zoning table to expand the range of permitted agricultural uses, as discussed further in Chapter 8 herein, to ensure consistency with NYS Agriculture and Markets Laws and to ensure flexibility and profitability of local farms.
- In order for the Planning Board to understand the full context of a site proposed to be subdivided and in order to ensure protection of sensitive environmental features, Chapter 83 of the Code shall be amended to specify all elements required to be provided on a subdivision plat. Requirements should apply to both minor, major and cluster subdivisions. Elements should include basic items such as owner information, tax lot identification, north arrow, easements, plan preparer information, a site location map, adjoining road names, as well as environmental information such as wetlands and any required buffers, watercourses, floodplains, forested areas, isolated mature trees, rock walls and topographical data.
- Town Cluster regulations (Section 98-25.C) should require a Yield Plan, which should also contain all required plan elements of a standard subdivision plan as recommended above.
- Review the identified “Buildable Area” for subdivisions in Section 83-22 to ensure each residential lot will have adequate space for house development, utilities and useable yard space.
- Fix references to the PAC floating zone in Section 98-29N. This language is held over from when this use was only permitted as a floating zone but now that it is permitted as a Special Permit use in the table, it does not require the Town Board to approve the development.
- A recreation component should be required for the development of Planned Adult Communities (PACs). This could either be indoor or outdoor amenities but should be active not simply grass and the zoning should specify a per-unit requirement.
- Review regulations for short-term rentals to ensure registration and inspection requirements.
- Regulate the residential (non-agricultural) keeping of fowl, livestock and total animals.
- Review overall residential zoning for compliance with state and federal regulations.

11.2.2 Recommended Commercial Zoning Amendments

- Review the Town's Use Tables to specifically allow a modern range of medical office uses, recreational uses, outdoor dining and film production studios.
- In the LB-SL Zone, clarify that mixed-use must be residential with commercial use on the ground floor of the structure to reinforce the mixed-use character of the hamlet.
- Create broad design guidelines for the GC and LB zones to ensure aesthetically pleasing design.
- Add definitions to the zoning code (Section 98-2) where uses are permitted in the table and currently not defined.
- Review definitions and special permit criteria (Section 98-29L) for hotels, motels and bed and breakfast inns to ensure modern design and amenities while protecting neighbors.
- Review regulations for long-term, outdoor storage of products and equipment on industrial sites.
- Review the Town's special permit criteria and approval process to ensure consistency with state and federal regulations.
- Define data centers in the code, separately from warehouses or other industrial uses.

11.2.3 Environmental Zoning Text Amendments

The feedback received from local residents, as expressed throughout this planning process, strongly supported conservation of the myriad of environmental resources discussed throughout this plan in order to preserve the quality of life benefits received from them. In order to implement the goals of this plan, consistent with the public feedback received, this plan recommends the following regulations to achieve the protection which ultimately will benefit both the environment and Town as a whole.

- Create a tree preservation law which requires a tree inventory and regulates the clearing of mature trees both within and outside of the site plan review process.

- Amend the Town's Ridge Preservation Overlay District Regulations (Section 98-26.C) zoning to provide more direction on the expectations and deliverables associated with the visual impact assessment.
- Develop a well-testing protocol to be implemented by a developer and reviewed by the Planning Board during the SEQR review process, to understand the pumping capacity of a well and its ability to serve a project or impact adjacent sites, prior to site plan approval.
- Designations of Scenic Roads and creation of associated additional setbacks.
- Revise Section 98-30F(2)(b)[4][f] to measure buffers from the center point of a stream or some other more clearly defined point.
- Create a net lot area calculation which removes wetlands, surface water features and steep slopes from the total lot area to ensure lots which contain these sensitive features can accommodate development.
- A clearing and grading permit process should be created to ensure oversight when a property owner is importing fill or grading large portions of a property when site plan approval is not required to ensure erosion and sediment control is being implemented properly, fill is clean and neighbors are not being impacted by changes to drainage patterns.
- Review zoning code regulations for solar arrays and provide regulations for storage of solar batteries. Ensure local emergency service providers have adequate equipment and training on such uses.

12.0 Plan Implementation

In order for this Comprehensive Plan to be effective, the Chester Town Board must actively apply the policies that are contained within the Plan. Furthermore, its Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals must use the Plan as a framework to guide their decisions with respect to the review of development proposals.

Certain recommendations contained herein will require the Town Board to enact revisions to the Town code and other land-use regulations. Other actions, such as the protection of natural resources, recreation improvements or historic preservation programs, will require the collaboration between the Town, County, State and not-for-profit entities. These actions are outlined in the implementation tables contained within this chapter along with the party responsible for taking a leadership role in the implementation of the policy or program.

Each member of the Town Board, Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals should have a copy of this Comprehensive Plan. The Town Board should appoint a Comprehensive Plan Subcommittee to meet bi-monthly to review progress on the implementation of this Comprehensive Plan and coordinating efforts with other entities where necessary.

The following pages provide a summary of the major recommendations that are part of this Plan. The recommendations are organized by chapter of this document. For each chapter there is a list of specific recommendations, along with an indication of when the recommendation should be implemented and the party responsible for ensuring that the recommendation is followed. The schedule for the implementation plan will help the Town Board to set priorities for the subsequent actions that will be necessary to implement this Comprehensive Plan.

Some recommendations should be implemented immediately, including the recommended revisions to the Town's Zoning Law. Other measures will be implemented in the "short-term" defined as within two years of adopting this Comprehensive Plan. There are still other recommendations that are "long term" in nature- meaning they would be completed over a two-to-five-year timeframe. It is not reasonable to assume that all the recommendations contained herein will be implemented

“In order for this Comprehensive Plan to be effective, the Town Board, its Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals must actively apply the policies that are contained within the Plan”

immediately. The implementation of the Plan is meant to be a process that will occur over a period of years. Setting priorities ensures the process will get underway.

Town of Chester Comprehensive Plan Implementation Schedule				
No.	Recommendation	Action	Priority	Responsibility
Chapter 3 - Natural Resources				
1	Incorporate natural resources into decision making and planning towards preserving the natural heritage and ensuring a healthy and resilient ecosystem for future generations and seek input from the Town's Conservation Advisory Committee where appropriate.	Policy	On-going	Town Board / Planning Board
2	Creation of a Community Preservation Fund which can be used to acquire and preserve additional open space in the future through a PDR or other means of property acquisition	Program	Short-Term	Town Board
3	Continue to identify and enhance future corridor connections between public parks and natural areas to protect wildlife and enhance the recreational trail network in the area.	Policy	On-going	Town Board/ Planning Board
4	Expand Ridgeline Preservation Regulations to apply to commercial development in addition to residential and clarify requirements for a visual impact assessment.	Policy	Immediate	Town Board
5	Review Visual Impact Assessment Criteria of 98-26.C to provide more guidance to the Planning Board on the expectations and deliverables of the Visual Impact Assessment.	Policy	Immediate	Town Board
6	Wetlands shall be delineated by a qualified professional and incorporated into the Site Plan or Subdivision Plans when there is reasonable likelihood of wetlands on a property. Where wetlands are to be preserved on a site, they should be clearly marked in the field prior to construction.	Policy	Immediate	Planning Board
7	The Town's Freshwater wetlands, and Floodplain and Ponding Area Environmental Subdistrict regulations and mapping should be periodically reviewed and, if needed, revised so they are responsive to changing community needs and consistent with available state and federal mapping.	Policy	On-going	Town Board
8	Riparian zones need to be identified and protected along all major streams and tributaries. The measured setback requirements needs to be reviewed and updated.	Policy	Immediate	Town Board
9	Wellhead protection legislation shall be adopted to provide an additional measure of protection for areas immediately around water supply wells.	Policy	Immediate	Town and Village Board
10	Public education program to ensure residents understand the types of activities that may impact ground water wells	Program	Ongoing	Town Board
11	All outdoor light fixtures shall be downward facing and shielded or otherwise covered by a structure to avoid upward light pollution or 'spill' beyond the property line. Lighting should be limited to 2.0 foot-candles within off-street parking areas and be designed in a manner that keeps the light entirely on the subject site, away from adjoining properties, and out of the night sky.	Policy	Immediate	Town Board/ Planning Board

12	Lighting associated with signage be indirect, such as downward-facing goose neck lights, as opposed to the sign itself being illuminated. Digital or animated signs shall be limited as much as possible.	Policy	Immediate	Town Board/ Planning Board
Chapter 4 - Agricultural Resources				
13	Preserve and protect the Town's agricultural resources. Promote diversity of farm types and support economic growth of farm community. Require the mapping of agricultural lands and prime farm soils on all subdivision plans.	Policy	Immediate	Town Board and Planning Board
14	Review of zoning to ensure a range of agri-tourism uses are permitted in the Town.	Policy	Immediate	Town Board
15	Encourage the retention and use of barns and other historic farm buildings as part of the re-use or expanded use of farm properties. Any uses which may involve larger events should be required to apply to the Planning Board to ensure adequate infrastructure is in place and no impacts will occur to the neighbors	Policy	On going	Town Board/ Planning Board
16	The Town shall help to facilitate and support agricultural education and other organizations that support the farm community such as Cornell Cooperative Extension, Orange County Land Trust, Orange County Farmland Protection Board and the Hudson Valley Agri-Business Development Corporation.	Policy	On going	Planning Board Village Board
Chapter 5 - Parks and Recreation				
17	Regular review and update of the Payment in Lieu of Parkland fee to ensure consistency with surrounding municipalities.	Policy	On-going	Town Board
18	Improve marketing and communication of parks and recreational resources to the public	Plan	Ongoing	Town Board/ Town Parks Department
19	Improvement of signage in all public parking areas.	Capital Improvement	Short-term	Town Board/ Town Parks Department
20	Ensure parks are accessible by sidewalks bike paths or other pedestrian links where safety permits.	Capital Improvement	Long-Term	Town Board/ Town Parks Department
21	Improvement of playground equipment, grass field and drainage at Chester Commons Park.	Capital Improvement	Long-Term	Town Board/ Town Parks Department
22	Renovation or replacement of the playground equipment at Carpenter Park and Oak Park.	Capital Improvement	Long-Term	Town Board/ Town Parks Department
23	Encourage creation of pocket parks within new residential developments during the subdivision review process so that children can walk to and from parkland from their homes.	Plan	Ongoing	Town Board/ Planning Board
24	Development of a new pocket park in Sugar Loaf.	Capital Improvement	Long-Term	Town Board/ Town Parks Department
25	Ensure ADA complaint pathways and incorporate facilities for people of all abilities.	Capital Improvement	Ongoing	Town Board/ Town Parks Department
26	Enhance recreational opportunities by adding additional movie nights or educational and fitness classes to recreational scheduling.	Program	Ongoing	Town Board/ Town Parks Department
27	Continue to participate in planning efforts of Camp LaGuardia with applicable County agencies.	Plan	Ongoing	Town Board

28	Develop a long-term plan for Knapp's View that includes passive recreation and sitting areas.	Plan	Short-Term	Town Board/ Town Parks Department
29	During Site Plan review, the Planning Board shall consider the impacts of new development on adjacent Town, State and County parklands including noise and visual impacts from these public open spaces.	Policy	On going	Planning Board
30	Pursue grants for park improvements.	Plan	On going	Town Board
Chapter 6 - Cultural and Historic Resources				
31	Consider an amendment to the Town Cemeteries Law to prohibit any disturbance within 100 feet of any cemetery.	Zoning Amendment	Immediate	Town Board
32	Development proposals adjacent to or including historic sites should identify and mitigate adverse impacts.	Policy	On-going	Planning Board Village Board
Chapter 7 - Transportation				
33	Conklingtown Road should be extended to meet Route 94 farther east at a 90-degree angle.	Capital Improvement	Long-term	Town Board
34	The intersection of Kings Highway and State Route 17M should be redesigned to permit free flow of traffic and eliminate backlogs	Capital Improvement	Long-term	Town Board, Village Board, County, NYS DOT
35	The Town should address alignment, pedestrian movements and traffic calming at the intersection of Kings Highway and Pine Hill Road.	Capital Improvement	Long-term	Town Board
36	The Planning Board shall require traffic assessments for development projects which may have traffic implications. Traffic studies should analyze road and intersection geometry, structural integrity and susceptibility to accidents, particularly where large vehicles or tractor trailers may need to access a site and will be mixing with residential traffic, in addition to traffic volume.	Policy	On-going	Planning Board
37	Incorporation of traffic-calming measures to slow traffic without relying on speed limits or enforcement measures in more dense developments.	Policy	Long-term	Town Board / Planning Board
38	The Planning Board shall ensure new roads and driveways meeting AASHTO standards for sight distance, width and shoulders.	Policy	On-going	Planning Board
39	Accommodate non-motorized transportation needs in the higher density areas of the Town and support future planning and development of both on and off-road bicycle routes, including the expansion of the Heritage Trail along the Erie Railroad branch line.	Policy	On-going	Town Board
40	Where sidewalks are not proposed, paved shoulders shall be provided in residential subdivisions.	Policy	Long-Term	Town Board / Planning Board
41	Bus service within the Town should be expanded, where feasible to do so and to increase the number of stops with amenities such as shelters, benches and other means of weather protection. Bus service is specifically recommended which connect the Village of Chester and Sugar Loaf to the Harriman Train Station.	Plan	Ongoing	Town Board

42	The Town should support efforts by the railroad to obtain State and Federal dollars to continue to operate freight rail service in the Town.	Plan	Ongoing	Town Board & County
43	Explore possibilities to provide passenger train service to the Town – perhaps along the Lehigh & Hudson River Railroad active freight line or via a branch line to the NJ Transit-operated Port Jervis line.	Policy	Long Term	Town Board and County
Chapter 8 - Community Facilities and Services				
44	Continue to assess the needs for its community facilities and when necessary to plan for capital improvements to meet those needs.	Plan	Ongoing	Town Board
45	Assess potential impacts of proposed developments on town infrastructure and where a development requires expansion or improvements of Town infrastructure, all costs should be borne by the developer.	Policy	Immediate	Town Board
46	Improvement of the current water system and back-up well so that the potable water needs of residents and businesses within the Sugar Loaf area are met.	Plan	Immediate	Town Board
47	Adopt a well testing protocol to be implemented by the Planning Board during project review.	Zoning Amendment	Immediate	Town Board / Planning Board
48	Prohibition of the construction of privately-owned wastewater treatment facilities in the Town.	Policy	On-going	Town Board / Planning Board
49	Cooperate with school districts when planning future development.	Policy	On-going	Town Board / Planning Board
Chapter 9 - Economic Development				
50	Commercial, office and industrial development shall be limited to areas already designated for such purposes except for the expanded commercial use of agricultural properties, adaptive reuse of farm buildings or historic properties.	Policy	On-going	Town Board
51	Consider permitting a range of medical office uses, indoor and outdoor recreation uses and facilities for film production, which is an emerging industry in the region.	Zoning Amendment	Immediate	Town Board
52	Expansion of permitted accessory for agricultural uses such as on-site retail sales, tasting areas, hayrides, ‘pick-your-own’ events, catered events and educational space as well as the expansion of agricultural-supportive or related uses in the industrial zones such as drying, processing, packaging or production of processed farm products including jams, cheese, cider, beer and Spirits and allowing for related education in these industries.	Zoning Amendment	Immediate	Town Board
53	Allow expansion of permitted and accessory agricultural uses in the AR-0.3 zone to expand development opportunities with proper Planning Board oversight.	Zoning Amendment	Immediate	Town Board
54	Support continued growth of commercial development within the areas already designated for such purposes with a focus on tourism, hospitality and recreational uses.	Policy	On-going	Town Board
55	Review zoning tables to ensure a broad range of contemporary commercial uses which encourage and support these targeted tourism, hospitality and recreational industries.	Zoning Amendment	Immediate	Town Board
55	Permit bars, outdoor dining and recreation uses in the GC and LB Zones.	Zoning Amendment	Immediate	Town Board

56	Auto-centric uses and uses which may have a negative impact on the tourism, hospitality and recreation industries and the overall public enjoyment of the commercial district, such as excavation and mining operations, should no longer be permitted in the commercial districts.	Zoning Amendment	Immediate	Town Board
57	Create design guidelines for the LB and GC zones in order to provide guidance for creating aesthetically pleasing and functional commercial corridors. It is recommended such guidelines include both standards (requirements) and guidelines (suggestions), to guide the Planning Board's review of new commercial developments.	Zoning Amendment	Immediate	Town Board
Chapter 10 - Sugar Loaf				
58	Retain the unique character of the hamlet while supporting and growing the arts, entertainment & recreation industry in Sugar Loaf.	Policy	On-going	Town Board / Planning Board
59	Galleries should be permitted in the LB-SL Zone and any use which supports the tourism, arts or hospitality industries.	Zoning Amendment	Immediate	Town Board / Planning Board
60	Parking for commercial uses shall not be permitted between the structure and the road (front yard).	Zoning Amendment	Immediate	Town Board / Planning Board
61	Exempt small-scale commercial uses from the off-street parking requirements.	Zoning Amendment	Immediate	Town Board / Planning Board
62	Consider permitted connections and shared parking between commercial parking lots with easement agreements with consideration for environmental concerns.	Policy	Short-Term	Town Board / Planning Board
63	Evaluate the ability to create ADA accessible parking spaces in a centralized location along Kings Highway to ensure accessibility.	Plan	Short-Term	Town Board/ County
64	Creation of design guidelines for both new construction and redevelopment to protect the unique character of the area into the future. This should include signage with the district.	Plan	Immediate	Town Board
65	Provide sidewalk enhancements, crosswalks and amenities within the business district to ensure individuals of all abilities can access the district.	Plan	Immediate	Town Board/ County
66	Require new development to construct sidewalks along their street frontage where none exists	Policy	On-going	Planning Board
67	Establishment an architectural review advisory committee to review proposed modifications to structures and protect the integrity of the historic district into the future.	Policy	Immediate	Town Board/ Planning Board
Chapter 11 - Zoning and Land Use Policy				
68	Rezone Lots 17-1-21, 17-1-20.1 and 17-1-20.2 to SR-2 to be more consistent with the character of the area and surrounding residential properties.	Zoning Map Amendment	Immediate	Town Board
69	Rezone Lot 14-7-22.1 from LB-SL to SR-2 to be more consistent with the character of the area and surrounding residential properties.	Zoning Map Amendment	Immediate	Town Board
70	Amend the AR-0.3 zoning table to expand the range of permitted agricultural uses to ensure consistency with NYS Agriculture and Markets Laws and to ensure flexibility and profitability of local farms.	Zoning Amendment	Immediate	Town Board
71	Chapter 83 of the Code shall be amended to specify all elements required to be provided on a subdivision plat, including Yield Plans for cluster subdivisions.	Code Amendment	Immediate	Town Board/ Planning Board

72	Review the identified “Buildable Area” for subdivisions in Section 83-22 to ensure each residential lot will have adequate space for house development, utilities and useable yard space.	Code Amendment	Immediate	Town Board
73	Remove outdated references to the PAC floating zone in Section 98-29N	Code Amendment	Immediate	Town Board
74	A recreation component should be required for the development of Planned Adult Communities (PACs).	Code Amendment	Immediate	Town Board/ Planning Board
75	Review regulations for short-term rentals to ensure registration and inspection requirements.	Code Amendment	Immediate	Town Board
76	Regulate the residential (non-agricultural) keeping of fowl, livestock and total animals.	Code Amendment	Immediate	Town Board
77	Review overall residential zoning for compliance with state and federal regulations.	Zoning Amendment	Immediate	Town Board
78	Review the Town’s Use Tables to specifically allow a modern range of medical office uses, recreational uses, outdoor dining and film production studios.	Zoning Amendment	Immediate	Town Board
79	In the LB-SL Zone, clarify that mixed-use must be residential with commercial use on the ground floor of the structure to reinforce the mixed-use character of the hamlet.	Zoning Amendment	Immediate	Town Board/ Planning Board
80	Create broad design guidelines for the GC and LB zones to ensure aesthetically pleasing design.	Zoning Amendment	Short-Term	Town Board/ Planning Board
81	Add definitions to the zoning code (Section 98-2) where uses are permitted in the table and currently not defined.	Zoning Amendment	Immediate	Town Board
82	Review definitions and special permit criteria (Section 98-29L) for hotels, motels and bed and breakfast inns to ensure modern design and amenities while protecting neighbors.	Zoning Amendment	Immediate	Town Board/ Planning Board
83	Review regulations for long-term, outdoor storage of products and equipment on industrial sites.	Zoning Amendment	Immediate	Town Board/ Planning Board
84	Review the Town’s special permit criteria and approval process to ensure consistency with state and federal regulations.	Zoning Amendment	Immediate	Town Board/ Planning Board
85	Define data centers in the code, separately from warehouses or other industrial uses.	Zoning Amendment	Immediate	Town Board/ Planning Board
86	Create a tree preservation law which requires a tree inventory and regulates the clearing of mature trees both within and outside of the site plan review process.	Code Amendment	Immediate	Town Board
87	Amend the Town’s Ridge Preservation Overlay District Regulations (Section 98-26.C) zoning to provide more direction on the expectations and deliverables associated with the visual impact assessment.	Zoning Amendment	Immediate	Town Board/ Planning Board
88	Develop a well-testing protocol to be implemented by a developer and reviewed by the Planning Board during the SEQR review process.	Code Amendment	Immediate	Town Board/ Planning Board
89	Designations of Scenic Roads and creation of associated additional setbacks.	Zoning Amendment	Immediate	Town Board/ Planning Board

90	Revise Section 98-30F(2)(b)[4][f] to measure buffers from the center point of a stream or some other more clearly defined point.	Zoning Amendment	Immediate	Town Board/ Planning Board
91	Create a net lot area calculation which removes wetlands, surface water features and steep slopes from lot area.	Zoning Amendment	Immediate	Town Board/ Planning Board
92	A clearing and grading permit process shall be created to ensure oversight when a property owner is importing fill or grading large portions of a property when site plan approval is not required	Code Amendment	Immediate	Town Board
93	Review Town Zoning Code regulations for solar arrays and provide regulations for Solar Battery storage system and implement standards, training and equipment for addressing emergencies	Zoning Amendment	Immediate	Town Board
Immediate – 1 year Short-Term – 1-2 Years Long-Term - 2-5 Years				

APPENDIX I: SWOT Analysis Summary

Public SWOT Analysis Summary

March 20 & 23, 2024

A public SWOT analysis was held on March 20, 2024 from 7PM to 9PM and March 23, 2024 from 1pm to 4PM to solicit public opinions on Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats on each of the chapter topics covered in the Town's Comprehensive Plan. This information is intended to guide the Comprehensive Plan Committee as they endeavor to update the 2015 plan. The following is a summary of the public response provided.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Natural Resources			
• Undeveloped properties • Wetlands • Black dirt • Sugar Loaf Mnt • Proximity to NYC/ Agri-tourism • Ridge overlay district • Beauty of the rural landscape • Recent preservation efforts • Trails/ hiking/ heritage trail • Clean well water • Open space/ Knapp's View • State protected wildlife • Community interest in protecting resources	• Over development • Loss of wetlands / floodplains • Privately owned critical areas • Lack of [ground] water • Lack of trees along Rt. 17 • Garbage on roadsides • Too much impervious surfaces in development • lack of conservation efforts • wellhead protection zoning & enforcement	• Smart development • Better classification of zoning • Preserving water supply sources • Work with county • Integrate and support conservation and climate action plan • Improve s/w runoff • Address flood-prone areas • Encourage use of open space • Trails / trails to top of Sugar Loaf Mtn • Volunteer groups to maintain trails • Rooftop solar on industrial buildings • Grants to improve trail linkages (bridges needed over streams and wetlands)\ • Tree preservation law • Better protection of federal wetlands • Proactive land preservation	• Proximity to NYC • Overdevelopment • Runoff/contamination into streams • Artificial lighting impacting humans and wildlife • Need to conserve energy • E-bikes on trails • Protection of trails when building new trails • Wells threatened by new large water users • Groundwater pollution • Areas of flooding that never flooded before • Annexation • Deforestation

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Agriculture			
• Local produce • Black dirt • Herbs and perennials • Beauty of farmland contributes to quality of life • Orchards • Buying local food • Community with open spaces/active farmlands	• Conversion of productive farmland to housing • Water issues (excessive water use for irrigation contamination from chemicals) • Setbacks between residential areas and farms should be on residential side to mitigate vermin control	• Support from Cornell Cooperative Ext. • Encourage more farming and younger farmers • Return Chester to Ag. Past. • More places in town to buy local produce • Education on Ag/ Meadow Ave. Ag District • Community Gardens and food Co-Ops • Encouraging new generation of farmers to take over for those retiring.	• Conversion of productive farmland/ black dirt to housing • Need to preserve black dirt • Evaluate proximity/impacts of agro-tourism sites to surrounding residential • Taxes and regulations making farming unprofitable
STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Transportation			
• Proximity to Rt 17/I-86	• Not enough roads [served by] dial-a-bus • Not enough bussing from county / other services • Not enough sidewalks from Village areas • No sidewalks to library / Kings Hwy Bypass	• Expand dial-a-bus • Better sidewalks in Sugar Loaf • More scheduled county transport to other towns • More sidewalks / bike paths • Heritage Trail • Improve Kings Hwy/ 17M	• Lack of public transportation • Proximity to Rt 17 • Road congestion / road deterioration

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Parks and Recreation			
• Heritage Trail • Knapps View • Sugar Loaf Mnt • Town Park • Goosepond Mnt State Park – gorgeous • Open space areas – Knapps View	• Landscaping • Street trees along 17M – throughout Chester • Need more events • Town pool • More programs for adults • Goosepond parking lot / park maintenance • Sugar Loaf area lacks playgrounds • Lack of collaboration with Sugar Loaf • Walking paths not paved	• Volunteers to improve landscaping/ streetscape • Trees in Knapps View • Camp LaGuardia • Playground in Sugar Loaf • More bike trails / connect Sugar Loaf to Heritage Trail • Shade trees • YMCA	• Lack of plan for Knapps View –could be taken over by brush and invasive plants • Loss of open space and farmland

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Community Services			
• Library • Fire works • Snow plowing • Village and town police response time • Responsive and helpful highway dept. – good maintenance • SLPAC	• Charging for recycling that doesn't get recycled • Poor ambulance service • State police response time • Lack of consistent treatment for all citizens • Trash along roads • SL water district is over used- should not add new users until new wells are developed • Contaminated well • Need an emergency alert system to advise of road or school closures	• Create more entertainment opportunities - kids movie night, sip & paint, jewelry making • Safe positive opportunities for teens- music/ dancing • Farm co-op service for delivery of produce • Need more speed enforcement in SL	• Mental health services • Need activities for teens to socialize • More events at parks for families
STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Housing			
• Blend of single family, apartments and commercial / housing diversity	• Don't bias against renters • Lack of senior housing *** • Lack of rentals • Lack of review board for design • Need more flexibility to reuse existing structures	• Better education regarding Satmar • More senior housing where it can be walkable to services • Landscaping / pollinators • Reuse of Camp LaGuardia	• Housing that markets to specific groups • Turning SL commercial development into residential • Property maintenance • Large lots with extensive manicured lawns / leave areas as natural land

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Zoning and Land Use			
• Open space • Range of zoning classifications	• No senior housing • Limited land for central community • Ability to re-subdivide • Cluster lots too small • Religious tax exemptions • Lack of enforcement • No zoning for Accessory Dwelling units to increase senior housing • No limit on house size • Lack of diversity of housing design within subdivisions • Exemptions within Noise Ordinance • Insufficient setback from wetlands	• Need to update zoning • Let plan be guidebook for PB • Better clarification of zoning and definitions • Protect live/ work space in SL • Encourage building smaller homes • Stop clear-cutting/ impacts to natural habitat • Need mixed use • Better coordination with developments in bordering areas • Define what is appropriate in each Zone • Senior housing • Creative solutions to cross wetlands • Protect existing neighborhoods from out of scale development • Change zoning on Lake Station Road to protect residential area from commercial development	• Clear cutting existing lots • Warehouse impacts • Commercial / industrial uses next to residential • Loss of SL character • Noise pollution • Gun club in a residential neighborhood / lead / stray bullets • High density housing • Potential use of wetlands and floodplains

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Economic Development			
• Sugar Loaf plan –slow down traffic, add parking and sidewalks • Farming as economic development	• Lack of sidewalks • Too many warehouses • Too much truck traffic • Lack of water in SL • Lack of ADA compliance in SL • Lack of good-paying jobs	• Shopping in SL • Promote tourism • Partner with OC Arts Council • Artist studio/ live/ work space	• Lack of protections for Sugar Loaf • Protection of surrounding neighborhoods from impacts • Lack of affordable housing • Development in neighboring towns
STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Cultural and Historic Resources			
• Different organizations and groups working together • Historic district designation for Sugar Loaf • Historic buildings, archaeological assets	• Lack of coordination b/w levels of government • Preservation of Scott's Meadow Farmhouse and Red Barn • Zoning needs to protect historic structures and water resources	• County ownership • Preservation • Bring artists back to SL • Study and preserve McGinnessburg Rd cemetery / locate lost resources • Create landmarks law	• Government oversight • Adversarial approaches • Signage • Development adjacent to known historic sites • Need funding to preserve threatened areas