Realizing the vision / Achieving the goals
Plan Recommendations

Vision without action is a daydream. Action without vision is a nightmare.

Japanese Proverb

Goal: Protection of rural beauty and natural environment

Catskill's rural beauty – its farms, mountains, waterways and woodlands – is one of the most important quality-of-life assets described by residents at public workshops. A large majority of people responding to the community survey also ranked "natural features" as a very important reason why they enjoy living in Catskill.

The natural environment is also a vital economic asset. Preserving the open space bolsters the local farm economy as well as contributes to the tourism economy. Also, studies show that parks and rural character are highly sought after amenities when owners seek to relocate their small businesses.[1]

In addition, hunting and fishing are important to residents and tourists. However, as residential developments push their way into more rural environments, these activities become increasingly threatened. Development impacts waterways and can make it harder for game and fish to survive. Buildings and roads fragment wildlife habitats, increase the occurrence of nuisance encounters between humans and animals, and reduce the amount of available hunting areas.

Rural character has another economic benefit. It is one of the most tax efficient land uses. A series of studies done in New York show that for every dollar generated in tax revenues, farmlands and open space farms cost taxpayers a small amount in services compared to homes.

Costs of services by land use

Studies in the following counties found that $1 collected in property taxes costs the following in services.

	Onondaga County	Schoharie County	Tompkins County
Farms	$0.21	$0.08 to $0.52	$0.15 to $0.40
Homes	$1.21	(not studied)	$1.09 to $1.56

These figures should not be surprising. Cows and trees do not go to school. Farms need fewer roads as well as less water and sewer infrastructure. A hundred acres of farmland will naturally generate fewer police and fire calls then a subdivision of one hundred homes.

Does this mean that we pull up the drawbridge and not let anyone build a house in Catskill? No, this is not the most appropriate course of

[1] John L. Crompton, Lisa L. Love and Thomas A. More (1997), "An Empirical Study of the Role of Recreation, Parks and Open Space in Companies (Re)Location Decisions," *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration, 15 (1), pages 37-58.*

action. Homes and the families in them are vital to our ongoing success. They spend the money that supports local businesses. The people in those homes are also the workforce needed to attract and support commercial or industrial growth. As with many things, planning a community requires balance.

We also recognize the vital functions performed by Catskill's natural environment. These functions (sometimes referred to as 'natural services' or 'eco-services') actually protect our homes, businesses, and drinking water supply. The natural functions of wetlands, for example, help protect communities against polluted water and flooding. Similar functions are carried out by other natural features, such as stream corridors and floodplains. If these natural services were valued in monetary terms, they would be far cheaper than the design, construction, and maintenance of equivalent engineering projects to control flooding or provide clean water.

The cost of natural services is free. However, communities must protect these natural services by providing reasonable restrictions on the location of certain developments in order to protect Catskill's natural wealth. In this light, reasonable land use laws and economic prudence are one and the same.

Over the long term, many communities realize that vital aspects of their character and economy may suffer due to changes in the earth's climate – Catskill fits squarely into this category. Changes in plant and wildlife habitat will certainly threaten to alter the natural beauty and agricultural productivity of the Hudson River Valley in general and Catskill in particular. The town and village need to take steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and prepare for changes, particularly in terms of increased storm intensity and effects on low lying areas due to flooding and rises in general water levels.

The Town of Catskill zoning and land use regulations as of 2006 do little to preserve the natural environment and beauty of the community. For example, the current 1.5-acre Rural/Agricultural zoning is extremely likely to promote sprawling suburban development and not protect rural character. In addition, there are no subdivision rules. These rules need to be updated to bring them into line with the goals and objectives of this comprehensive plan.

Recommendation 1.1: Activate a joint Village / Town Conservation Commission

The Catskill community prizes its wide-open spaces and natural habitats. The right conservation tools and sustainable land use practices will help keep Catskill a great livable place where residents may enjoy the outdoors. However, the organization and commitment necessary to take full advantage of the many resources available at the local, state, and federal level for environmental initiatives are often absent.

Establishing a Joint Village/Town Conservation Commission will help Catskill fill the critical niche of promoting the collaboration and coordination that links preservation programs and people at the local level. This commission could simply be recreated by appointing people to the "Town of Catskill Commission for Conservation of the Environment", which was created in 1972 and has been dormant in recent years. The only change would be to ensure the inclusion of village representation.

The commission members, at various times, would play the role of facilitators, educators, intermediaries, and organizers. As facilitators, commission members would provide the administration and oversight needed to achieve the environmental goals of the community. As educators, commission members would provide outreach to the public and stakeholders, and explain the costs and benefits of environmental programs in terms of environmental principals, community goals, and resources. Furthermore, they would identify and publicize other environmental issues and opportunities for meaningful local action. As intermediaries, commission members would actively promote linkages between people and programs. For example, linking economic development, historic preservation, and environmental conservation efforts can be an effective method for leveraging limited funds to deliver multiple goals.

In other communities, the Conservation Commission also organizes and oversees particular programs at the behest of the town and village elected officials. For many of the activities listed below, the commission could be the conduit to available local help such as the Greene County Soil and Water Conservation District and Cornell Cooperative Extension of Greene County.

In Catskill, commission initiatives might include the following:

Oversee a conservation-mapping program. A joint town/village conservation-map will be an inventory of natural resources, such as geology, aquifers, streams, topography, wetlands, soil types, ecological communities, flood plains, and scenic resources. This information will guide decision makers in the wise use and conservation of Catskill's natural resources. The data will also aid project reviews. For example, in the site plan review process, the public and public officials will be able to make sure that

proposed development avoids sensitive natural areas. Likewise, the developers will save time and money in the design process by providing site plans that avoid sensitive natural areas.

Develop a long-term open space conservation plan. Often, development decisions by builders and/or public officials only take details of a particular site into account. It often becomes a case of not seeing the forest for the trees – conservation goals achieved at the site level may in fact diminish the larger landscape. A long-term open space conservation plan provides guidance for the future land development based on landscape-scale features such as habitat connections, river and stream buffers, wetlands and steep slopes. Places where development should be focused will become evident and form the basis for targeting efforts and stretching limited dollars. Other recommendations may target specific lands for outright acquisition or through other preservation techniques.

Secure funding for conservation and stewardship efforts. Funding is a troublesome issue for communities. An established commission can demonstrate to funders that a local conservation effort is underway, is committed and is consistent with a comprehensive plan. The commission can provide local organizations as well as the village and town governments with the leverage needed to secure funding. Either as grant writer, facilitator, or coalition builder, the commission can be an important catalyst in bringing home dollars for local conservation and stewardship efforts. The commission may also study the feasibility of local funding mechanisms. Other communities have initiated a development mitigation fee for open space preservation or some form of land banking.

Develop and administer a voluntary easement program. Property owners may voluntarily limit the conversion of their farms or forests to future development. This is accomplished through voluntary easements that restrict, for example, the number of homes on a piece of property or the location of buildings. An easement can be temporary or permanent, and can prohibit either all or specific kinds of development. Often, there are significant federal and state tax advantages that can make this an attractive option for property owners wishing to 'leave a legacy' to the community. To provide additional incentives, local governments can tax land at its value without certain development rights.

Endowments may be established to monitor and enforce conservation easements. One way to bolster an easement program is to conduct a community-wide fiscal analysis showing where it is more cost effective to purchase easements than to support the municipal services necessitated by suburban growth. Last, some communities offer public recognition of donated easements. A local land trust organization can help

devise and administer a program. This land trust could also be the entity that holds title to any leases, thus insuring that open space stays undeveloped.

Acquire and oversee management of recreational land. Some communities ask their conservation commissions to oversee the acquisition of recreational lands and to partner with the Department of Public Works or Highway Department on improvement and maintenance. Potential acquisition should be prioritized by its value for hunting, fishing, hiking, bird watching, and scenery.

Advise on development proposals. Some town or village planning boards ask their conservation commissions to review development proposals as part of the site plan review process. Their expertise on environmental issues is used to render an opinion on whether or not the proposed development fits into the conservation goals of the community.

Recommendation 1.2: Focus residential and commercial development in village and hamlet areas.

It costs money to install and maintain water and sewer pipes, build roads and bury power lines. Many communities find they can limit such costs to their taxpayers by using their infrastructure more efficiently. One way communities carry this out is by promoting development around existing infrastructure in places like villages and hamlets.

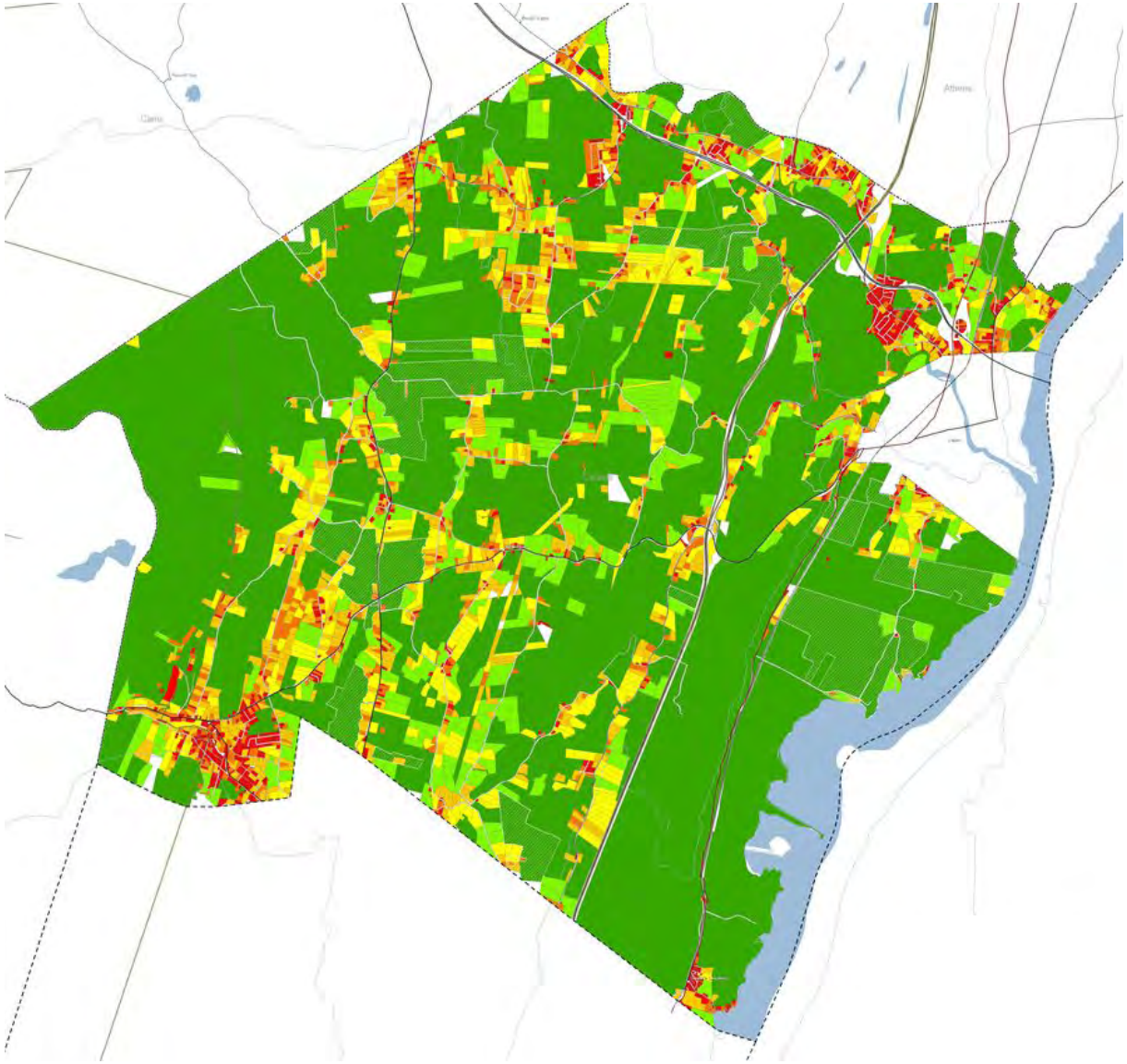
A well-designed, compact neighborhood that makes efficient use of existing public infrastructure provides advantages for residents, the municipality, and the environment. Residents incur fewer taxes than they otherwise would have if development sprawls onto green fields. More roads and more utilities mean higher construction costs and higher maintenance costs. Such neighborhoods also benefit from nearby retail options and municipal services. This creates more opportunities to leave the car at home for quick errand and it promotes neighborliness and safety by having more 'eyes on the street.'

These are the aspects of neighborhood living that many people in public meetings hoped to boost in Catskill. Municipalities benefit because it is expensive to install and maintain physical and service infrastructure for sparse populations. By focusing development in appropriate areas, existing pipes, power lines, and emergency services can be more fully and efficiently utilized. The environmental benefit comes from accommodating growth away from Catskill's open spaces and sensitive habitats.

Recommendation 1.3: Zone density in rural areas appropriately

Rural character—exemplified by its woodlands and farms—are central to Catskill's sense of place. Many communities find that lot sizes of even two to five acres can quickly fragment the landscape with roads, driveways, and lawns. For many people these changes seem small and ordinary, but over many years they erode rural character. Today's Catskill recognized for its open spaces and scenic vistas may seem very different to residents and visitors 15 years from now under current zoning rules.

The following map illustrates that most of the land in the Town of Catskill consists of parcels of ten acres or larger. (On the map, these are shown in light green and dark green.) The current zoning for most of these lots is one home per 1.5-acre. If the countryside were developed at this density, the result would be typical suburban sprawl. The town should rezone certain rural parts of the town to a density that preserves the rural character of the landscape.



Town of Catskill

Sizes of parcels

Parcel Size

ACRES

- 0 - 1
- 1 - 2
- 2 - 5
- 5 - 10
- 10 - 20
- > 20

Recommendation 1.4: Require conservation subdivision design for residential development.

The advantages of a conservation subdivision coincide closely with goals described by the Catskill community – the protection of rural character. Both the community and the developer benefit. The genius of a conservation subdivision lies in the fact that a developer would not lose the right to build any of the houses they are allowed by the zoning code. However, the developer and the community (through the planning board) would work together to make sure that buildings are appropriately arranged on the land. Ultimately, the land and its limitations will drive the design.

Advantages of conservation subdivision design include:

> Open space conservation
> Preservation of rural character
> Natural resource protection of the environment
> Reduction in construction costs by minimizing road and utility infrastructure for the developer
> Reduction in amount of impervious surface and reduced stormwater runoff, better stream protection, and easier compliance with federal and state rules.
> Preservation of home value for the homeowner

Conservation Subdivision Design

Both the conventional subdivision (left) and the conservation subdivision (right) have the same number of lots: 16. Source: Conservation Design for Subdivisions: A Practical Guide to Creating Open Space Networks (1996) by Randall Arendt.

1. Protects natural features and resources on the site

2. Allows homes on smaller lots, but with scenic views

3. Preserves rural character from public roads

4. Saves developers money because less roads and other infrastructure are needed

A planner or landscape architect first identifies the conservation areas when designing a conservation subdivision. Usually, environmentally sensitive areas, such as wetlands or steep slopes, are not counted in a project's density calculation. At a minimum these open space conservation areas should comprise 50 percent of the entire subdivision and be largely

contiguous. A conservation map and/or an open space preservation plan will help the designers organize the open space in a way that makes the most sense for the community at large rather than just a particular site.

With conservation areas set aside, the second design step involves pinpointing house locations to maximize the value of the project to the homeowners and the community. Homeowners in the subdivision will want to enjoy the scenic vistas or privacy of wooded areas. The public may want their views of the landscapes maintained, trails preserved or waterways buffered.

Next the roads and trails are laid to minimize expensive and environmentally unfriendly roads as well as utility and other infrastructure runs. Finally lot lines are drawn.

The open space in a conservation subdivision can be owned and maintained a number of ways. The simplest is to make it private property with a conservation easement or deed restriction placed upon it. The town, village, or a non-profit such as a land trust can own the easement and make sure the land remains undeveloped. A deed restriction makes a permanent note in the property's deed that the land is to remain open. It is legally binding and enforceable by the municipality, especially if a notation is made on the site plan identifying the restrictions placed on the open space.

While public access is a great amenity, if the open space remains in private hands, that option might not be feasible. It is certainly something the community can strive for, but the burden of caring for and insuring land that is open to the public is difficult for many landowners. The scenic views and environmental benefits provided by the open space are sufficient community amenities for a conservation subdivision.

If the open space adjoins a public park or if the town or village decides that public access is important, it might decide to acquire the land. Since this option requires both an initial investment as well as the funding of ongoing maintenance, the costs and benefits of the particular lands need to be carefully considered.

Another common approach is to have a homeowner's association own and maintain the open. In this case, access is usually restricted to association members. If the site plan notes the fact that the land is specifically designated as open space and notes the restrictions placed upon it, then the town or village could make sure it stays open.

Recommendation 1.5: Zoning and site plan review around designated conservation areas should reflect and protect the character of these areas.

Efforts to protect important natural habitats can be undermined if bordering lots are not designed properly. Edge effect is an ecological concept

where a habitat's character is diminished by its surrounding environment. This includes characteristics such as light, nutrients, noise, moisture, and stormwater runoff. This is especially important for certain sensitive habitats like ravines or forested wetlands. Traffic, bright parking lot lights, buildings, stormwater runoff can pollute nearby conservation areas, fragment the habitat and/or disturb natural processes.

This does not mean that these border lands must remain vacant. Instead, zoning should simply allow land uses that are good neighbors to targeted environmental areas. And site plan review should be heightened to ensure that development is shaped in such a way so as to minimize adverse impacts in these areas. For example, a large car sales lot and a sensitive natural habitat are not the best neighbors because of outdoor lighting, noise, and stormwater runoff. Perhaps most compatible are low-density residential or recreational activities. Conservation subdivision design is widely used to protect sensitive areas with open space being placed adjacent to conservation areas.

In addition to local controls, cooperation with other resource management agencies is important. Often times neighboring (or overlapping) jurisdictions plan in isolation from each other. As a result, state and local agencies fail to take full advantage of the natural resources of their neighbors. In the case of Catskill, which has several state land holdings, it is imperative that the Village and Town be an involved partner in the future planning of these lands, and at the same time, commit to protecting the immediate borders of these areas for the benefit of both the residents of Catskill and the greater region.

Recommendation 1.6: Develop basic site design guidelines that protect rural cultural character.

Catskill's rural character was identified in public meetings as an indispensable asset and there is broad support for protecting the rural landscape. In the community survey, residents identified the loss of open space as the second most important challenge facing the village and town. (Number one was maintaining quality schools.)

The hamlets, farms, waterways, and woodlands of Catskill fit together to form a coherent rural landscape. Yet piecemeal changes—a new hillside house here, a shuttered historic home there, trees cleared there, and bad signage over there—take their toll on the overall character.

The goal of protecting rural character is not to prevent change. Instead, it is to promote responsible development that maintains over time the distinctive characteristics of the land, while allowing individual owners to use their land.

All multi-home subdivisions should undergo a site design review by the planning board. Guidelines for this review should achieve the goals listed below. Individual homes need not appear before the planning board for approval, but they should meet new zoning rules that steer development in rural areas towards these goals:

Minimize impact on rural characteristics such as fields and forests

> Protect important viewsheds
> Protect the privacy of neighbors
> Conserve existing land forms and features and minimize grading / filling
> Preserve existing woodlands as buffers from public roads and neighbors
> Create buffers of native vegetation to protect views from public roads
> Preserve mature trees
> Minimize the impact of off-street parking, garages, carports
> Restrict building on steep slopes
> Avoid locating structures that create a silhouette against the sky when viewed from public ways.

Building in the wrong places can threaten public health and safety. The pictures above illustrate the impact of flooding in 2006 in Greene County. (Source: Greene County Soil and Water Conservation Service)

Recommendation 1.7: Encourage landowners to use the Agroforestry Resource Research Center when developing plans to harvest timber. Investigate the development of a timber-harvesting ordinance to promote sustainable forest management.

The impacts from poor forest harvesting practices are well documented: siltation of streams and ponds, slope instability, increased stormwater runoff, and the destruction of scenic vistas.

Education about forest management is one of the best tools to prevent improper timber-harvesting techniques. The Town should work with state and local forestry professionals to develop an effective outreach program that promotes the appreciation of timber harvesting as a significant renewable resource and positive economic contributor – while at the same time avoiding the massive negative impacts when it is done improperly.

The Agroforestry Resource Center in Acra, New York provides educational programs to landowners seeking to sustainably manage their forest lands. The center provides information on practices that will provide economic benefits to landowners and communities while preserving forested areas so they continue to provide ecological, economic and public health benefits to the surrounding areas. The center is supported by Cornell University in collaboration with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Greene County, New York State Forest Owners Association and other partners.

As another step, the Town should consider setting an acreage threshold over which a land owner must submit a cutting plan to the planning board for approval.

Recommendation 1.8: Develop environmental protection overlay districts for wetlands, floodplains, and steep slopes

There are some places that require very careful building – and other places where no building should occur at all. The floods in New York State in 2006 provided many examples of homes destroyed because they were erected in floodplains or on steep slopes. Nothing can prevent natural disasters. However, poor development practices can magnify the disasters. Building in the wrong places can cost the lives of residents and first-responders. They can cause everyone's taxes to increase for emergency services and post-disaster recovery. They cause insurance rates to go up.

Environmental protection overlay districts can help reduce those human and monetary costs. In addition, they can protect the valuable eco-services provided by many natural areas. The overlay districts become part of the town's or village's zoning code and can supplement the environmental regulations of the state and federal government.

A number of state and federal permits protect natural features like wetlands and flood plains, but these are reviewed and issued only after the project has been approved locally. In other words, state and federal regulations come into play only after the local government has exercised its authority to decide how land in its jurisdiction is used. This means that it is up the community to decide first what types of uses are appropriate, where they may occur, and how they may be done.

Wetlands and Stream Corridors.

The US Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) regulate many wetlands in New York State. NYSDEC regulates and limits development within a 100-foot buffer around wetlands larger than 12.4 acres. ACOE wetlands (also know as federal wetlands, meaning those wetlands that flow into navigable waters) have no minimum size requirements for regulatory review. However, ACOE wetlands require no buffers that trigger heightened regulatory review. This means that development under current rules could occur right up to wetlands smaller than 12.4 acres. Isolated wetlands, which do not flow into navigable waters and which are smaller than 12.4 acres, fall entirely outside of the jurisdiction of either the NYSDEC or the ACOE. These small but important wetlands could be filled in by builders without a permit under current rules.

Recognizing the potential for impacts to wetlands not under the jurisdiction of the NYSDEC, the town and the village should incorporate into their zoning regulations a standard that requires setbacks of 100 feet from all ACOE and NYSDEC protected wetlands. Isolated wetlands should be

protected with setbacks of at least 50 feet. Setbacks will apply primarily to permanent structures and mobile homes. The following site alterations and hazards should be considered for inclusion as well: tree clear cutting, site grading, filling, utility placement, storage of fuels or other toxic chemical agents, impervious surfaces, and other alterations or uses that may reasonably impair the function of wetlands. Selective tree cutting, landscape maintenance, repairs of existing structures, and agricultural activities should be exempt.

Floodplains. Ninety percent of all disaster declarations are for floods. The Town should coordinate with the New York State Bureau of Resource Management and Flood Management to ensure that flood zone designations are up-to-date. Many flood maps are decades old and were developed using data and methods that are inferior by contemporary standards. Today, solid climate data, reliable modeling methods, and computer analysis can more accurately characterize flood zones. Likewise, the Town and Village should take advantage of the extensive local knowledge base developed by the Greene County Soil and Water Conservation District.

Most people are familiar with the 100-year flood plain. In fact, experts have established floodplains for many , such as a 10-year, 25-year, 50-year and even 500-year floodplain. All floodplains are different and their size depends on a variety of factors. The width of a 100-year floodplain in any particular area depends on upstream runoff rates, soil types, historical climate data, and topography. Flood zones may actually widen over time due to increased runoff rates induced by upstream development.

The following flood zones should be adopted by the Town and Village of Catskill to officially characterize floodplains and determine development controls: 1) the floodway, 2) the 10-year floodplain, and c) the 100-year floodplain.

The floodway consists of the stream channel and certain adjacent lands necessary to accommodate a one-foot rise in water levels. The floodway is where the fastest water velocities occur and poses the greatest threat to life and property. Here, all development and land alteration activities should be prohibited. Typically, these areas currently have little to no development and such a policy does not represent a significant shift from existing development patterns.

The 10-year flood zone presents fewer risks associated with swift floodwaters, but the likelihood of flooding over the near term is very high. Agriculture, parks, and other low impact, low risk use activities may be permitted. Permanent structures, mobile homes, and high environmental threat activities (e.g. junkyards) should be prohibited.

The 100-year flood zone may permit the construction of permanent structures provided that the house is elevated by an established height and flood insured. Mobile homes and high-risk environmental threat activities (e.g. junkyards) should be prohibited. Schools, hospitals, elderly care facilities should be only permitted for areas outside a 100-year flood zone.

In addition, Catskill should adopt a local law that requires participation in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). When a community decides to participate in the NFIP, the program makes a Flood Insurance Risk Map that will help to determine flood insurance rates for buildings in the community.

Steep Slopes. Vegetated steep slopes provide two important benefits. One is aesthetic, since its elevation means that the slope will be visible at greater distances to more people. The other is safety since the removal of vegetation aggravates erosion rates, destabilizes slopes leading to landslides, and deposits sediments into streams and creeks downstream impairing natural habitats. In order to preserve these benefits, the Town and Village should require that building proposals provide assurances of maximum structural safety and slope stability, that development is in harmony with natural terrain, and that removed vegetation is replanted. The disturbance of ridge and tree lines, grading, septic fields, stormwater practices, and soil stabilization techniques should also considered.

Building on steep slopes can threaten public health and safety.

Recommendation 1.9: Require builders to protect most trees, especially large ones, on development sites

When builders prepare a site for one home or an entire subdivision, they often strip the land of trees and other vegetation. Such an approach to development destroys existing local character, risks environmental consequences and ensures that it will be years before a neighborhood has shade.

A better strategy allows builders to remove the trees only within the building envelope. The rule provides adequate room to get construction equipment in and work on the structure. In some cases, the builder might be encouraged to design houses around significant trees. Significant trees would be defined by tree radius at breast height.

A town and village policy to protect as many mature trees as possible will benefit both the homeowners and the community as mature landscapes are preserved. Neighborhoods with mature trees and natural vegetation have higher home resale values and lower utility bills than those neighborhoods without trees.

Recommendation 1.10: Require a Habitat Assessment Report as part of the site plan review process for subdivisions and other large developments.

In order to assist the site plan review process and protect Catskill's habitats, subdivision applicants should be required to provide information about the existing habitat on the site in the form of a Habitat Assessment Report. Such a report would provide valuable information about more and less sensitive areas and should be used to guide site design. Given its foundational role in the design process, the Habitat Assessment Report should be prepared before the site plan review process begins.

The Habitat Assessment Report will provide an overall ecological picture of the site, identify sensitive ecological areas, and analyze potential adverse impacts on the site to result from the project. The report should consider: water resources, vegetation types, soil types and quality, slope, aspect, and observed or likely animal species onsite. The report will also attempt to assess the extent, quality, connectivity, and susceptibility to disturbance of the habitats identified. A model set of guidelines was put together by the Town of Milan in "Habitat Assessment Guidelines." The Town of Milan Planning Board endorsed these guidelines in 2005 in order to facilitate the reasonable assessment of site plans.

Recommendation 1.11: Require a local stormwater discharge permit for construction activities disturbing over one acre of land

The ponds, streams and rivers within and bordering the Town and Village of Catskill are valuable natural assets. They provide aesthetic, recreational and economic value to Catskill residents and visitors. However, such value depends upon the continued ecological health of these waterways. As development of the rural areas continues, stormwater runoff will quickly threaten the ecological health of these waters. These impacts result from the creation of impervious surfaces and non-point source water pollutants. These pollutants include, among many others, sediment and silt from construction activities.

In order to reduce non-point source pollutants and to mitigate the impacts of impervious surfaces, the Town and Village of Catskill should require a stormwater discharge permit and Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP, pronounced 'swip') for all construction activities that disturb an acre or more of land. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation has prepared a model law that allows localities to review SWPPP for new developments and to issue of permits for approved SWPPPs. This model law spells out construction site inspection schedules, penalties to

be levied against contractors, and the standards by which such SWPPPs shall be measured.

The developer prepares a SWPPP that specifies which practices will be implemented to prevent stormwater runoff from the construction site. The SWPPP also identifies permanent stormwater practices that will be built to limit the rate of stormwater runoff to the site's pre-development rate.

Recommendation 1.12: The Town and Village should work with the state to investigate whether dams along the waterways could be repaired.

The Town of Catskill hosts dams that have become historical, cultural and recreational amenities in the community. These sit on the Catskill Creek just downstream from County Road 47/Cauterskill Road bridge and on Kaaterskill Creek just upstream from High Falls Road Extension bridge.

The Town and the State of New York should work together to investigate the status and condition of each dam. Concrete plans, with community input, should be developed for each structure based on community factors, such as their historical and recreational roles in Catskill, as well as the environment benefits of either removing or leaving the dams in place.

Recommendation 1.13: Work with property owners along important waterways to permit public access at priority locations.

With water playing such an important role in the community, many residents at the public meetings lamented the loss of access to many of Catskills ponds, rivers and streams. Such access is an important quality of life amenity – and in some places could be a vital economic asset.

Some possible points of access may lie along the banks of the Hudson on land owned by the cement companies. The town and village should approach the companies – along with any citizen groups they already work with – and determine what, if any, public uses might be compatible with their ongoing operations. Any public access should in no way interfere with the valuable economic activity happening at these sites. At the same time, the town might be able to offer incentives or assistance in opening up some river access points to the public.

Other parts around both the village and the town should also be investigated to find public access opportunities. The county's planned river access in the village between the Uncle Sam and Black (pedestrian) bridges is a priority. In addition, the town should conduct an inventory of potential

access points and talk with landowners to find ones willing to provide access in some form. One priority might be working with the landowner of the historic Palenville swinging bridge. Public access to this structure would be an important town amenity.

Access need not be the burden of a landowner. The community could purchase a public access easement or agree to provide insurance coverage. In some places, it might purchase land outright or accept a dedication.

Recommendation 1.14: If wind resources were found to be significant, the Catskill community would welcome wind turbines, particularly in industrial and agricultural land, so long as rigorous studies were undertaken to ensure that they would have a minimum impact of birds, bats, and other flying creatures.

The town and village should consider developing a wind power production plan, which, as a first step, would evaluate current wind energy resources. This preliminary analysis will reveal where in the community and to what extent, Catskill should expect to see interest from wind power developers.

Before any wind power production facilities are constructed, the town and village should require an extensive study of the proposed turbines impacts on flying creatures, particularly birds and bats. In addition, the town and village should require the wind power developer to take steps to minimize the visual impact of the structures including, but not limited to, those outlined by NYSERDA in their publication "Assessing and Mitigating Visual Impacts."

Recommendation 1.15: Require that the construction of telecommunications tower be done in an inconspicuous a manner as possible.

Wireless communications are becoming vital to economic and community development efforts and a mainstay in the lives of many residents. Wireless internet access, radio communications (especially for emergency services), cellular telephones, all require towers to work.

Across the country, conscientious owners of communications towers have found ways to hide them and blend them in with their environment. As new towers may be required in the village or town of Catskill, we should look at similar strategies here. Not all methods would be appropriate in any particular place, such as Catskill. However, with creativity, we can reap the benefits of telecommunications without marring the landscape that makes Catskill distinctive.

A Massachusetts church steeple hosts cell phone antennas. (Source: Dan Bricklin.com)

This water tower in Pendleton, New York is also used for telecommunications. (Source: Dan Bricklin.com)

This grain silo hosts communications equipment. (Source: www.utilitycamo.com)

This bell tower holds communications devices. (Source: The Green Head.com)

Goal: Enhancement of a vibrant, walkable and historic village core

A community's image is fundamentally linked to its success. Downtown Catskill is the most visible indicator of community pride and local economic and social health. This is the commercial and cultural center of the village and of the town. Despite the fact that the town and village are two separate municipalities, many residents at the public workshops emphasized their feeling that the village's historic downtown is also the core of the town.

A healthy, vibrant core is an important asset to both current residents and future investors. Businesses, especially stores, want to locate in a place full of people and activity. Shoppers and workers want to be somewhere they can get what they need. They prefer interesting and distinctive places.

Historic buildings give Catskill its distinctive look. This architecture is a physical expression of Catskill's history. Some communities or commercial developments try to build history or distinctiveness into their projects. One extreme example is the fact that the Disney Company has duplicated the look and feel of upstate New York's Saratoga Springs in one of its Florida resorts – and is the process of copying it again in California. The point is that Catskill already has what people and companies pay large sums of money to recreate.

By the same token, many communities and developers realize that people prefer places where they can walk. Cars are not going away. However, many communities now recognize that many people enjoy a downtown stroll and shopping. In these areas, window shopping becomes an important activity and activity from successful shopkeepers reinforces activity there.

In these areas, shoppers also spend more money. In 2005, an International Council of Shopping Centers survey found that customers spent an average of $57.50 an hour in enclosed shopping malls versus an average of $84.00 an hour in town center developments.[2]

In many ways Catskill has successfully preserved highly desirable aspects in its village core. The focus of the following recommendations is the enhancement of these characteristics.

How important are historic buildings and walkability to commercial success? So important that the Disney Company has recreated the historic and walkable nature of New York's Saratoga Springs in one of its Florida resorts. (Photo sources: disney.go.com and hostels.about.com)

[2] Ed McMahon, presentation to the New York Planning Federation, October 9, 2006.

Recommendation 2.1: Revise the village zoning code to encourage buildings that fit into Catskill's urban character and stress form over function.

Over the years, the zoning codes of many municipalities are amended and re-amended – and often become unwieldy to both developers and public officials as a result. In addition, many of the old regulations are not well crafted to fit a community's current vision for itself. This is typical in many upstate New York municipalities.

The Village of Catskill faces just such a situation. The zoning code is awkward and does not make it easy for developers or public officials to administer. At a minimum, the community should rewrite the code as a cohesive whole to make it easier to follow and administer as well as remove inconsistencies.

A growing trend in communities, especially those seeking to create or protect an urban vibrancy is to move to zoning rules that stress form over function. These kinds of regulations clearly lay out what a community wants to look like, but they contain broad terms to dictate what happens inside the building. So, for example, it might say that a building's facade needs (as recommended elsewhere) to come up to a build-to line, which enhances walkability and vibrancy. The rules might specify, in general, that the building contain retail, but not worry about whether it were a barber shop or a convenience store.

Well-crafted form based codes have the following advantages.

> Form based codes explain what a community wants rather than what it does not want and, therefore, achieve a more predictable physical result.

> These kinds of codes make it easier for developers of independent parcels to fit into the overall scheme and limit the need for large land assemblies to create an overall look.

> Form-based codes work well in established communities because they define and codify a neighborhoods existing look and stress the notion of compatibility with surrounding structures. At the same time, they help push areas where the community has been disappointed in the look of growth towards an appearance more in keeping with the community.

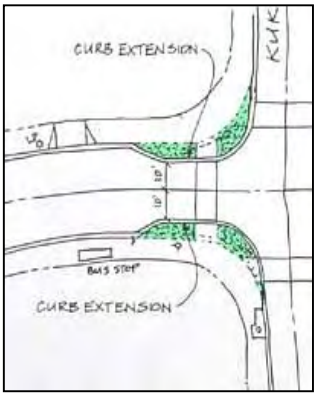
> Developers, citizens and non-professionals find form-based codes easier to use than conventional zoning because they tend to be more concise and organized for visual access and readability.

Recommendation 2.2: Create a streetscape infrastructure plan that enhances downtown vibrancy by promoting walkability.

The Village of Catskill's downtown is already a place where people can meet, enjoy a meal, and shop. Much has been done by the village to revitalize Main Street, but more needs to be done to continue to entice private investment.

Since walkability is a key ingredient to a vibrant and successful downtown, a streetscape infrastructure plan can help the village build on the improvement already made. Main Street, Catskill can benefit from many features, including, but not limited to the following:

- Pedestrian bump-outs at intersections, which shorten pedestrian crossing distances and calm traffic
- Crosswalks that are well-kept and located at all appropriate crossings
- Deciduous trees along streets buffer pedestrians from traffic, visually narrow the corridor, calm traffic, and shade sidewalks in the summer.
- Green spaces and landscaping near intersections and in pocket parks can visually soften the unwelcoming feel of concrete and asphalt
- Benches for pedestrian respite
- Spaces for public art



Bump-outs or bulb-outs are curb extensions that shorten the distance for pedestrians and tend to calm traffic.

Some infrastructure improvements, such as parks and plantings, require ongoing maintenance. The community should ensure that the resources for upkeep are in place. Not all maintenance need come from village workers, the community could explore volunteer groups, the chamber of commerce, other commercial groups or individual business sponsorships. Improvements like repaired sidewalks and street crossings, can be handled as routine street maintenance operations.

Catskill should prioritize which existing roads should be retrofitted with sidewalks. Priority areas include: routes to school, roads with heavy traffic, and roads near natural pedestrian destinations (e.g. shopping). The New York State Department of Health estimates that one-in-three children are obese or overweight. New federal guidelines urge children to exercise 60 minutes per day, yet fewer than one-in-four get even 20 minutes – and about another quarter report no significant physical activity per day.

In Catskill, encouraging more kids to walk to school has a fiscal benefit as well, since the school district must bus students who live in easy walking distance. This requirement costs a significant amount of money to

school district taxpayers. Sidewalks in appropriate places may help the school system reduce busing costs.

One source for information on encouraging children to walk to school is the National Safe Routes to School Program. The program promotes walking and biking to school through four programmatic approaches – the construction of new sidewalks is part of only one avenue. **The *Encouragement Approach*** uses events and contests to entice students to walk and bike. **The *Education Approach*** teaches students important safety skills. **The *Engineering Approach*** focuses on creating physical improvements around schools, reducing speeds and establishing safer crosswalks and pathways. **The *Enforcement Approach*** ensures drivers obey traffic laws.

Catskill's Main Street has undergone a lot of revitalization under Greene County's program. More can be done.

Recommendation 2.3: Create a Downtown Working Group to coordinate revitalization efforts.

There is a lot to boast about in downtown Catskill – storefronts are filling up, buildings are being rehabilitated, and the street life is becoming more vibrant. But more can be done.

There are many programs and funding sources that can support Main Street's revitalization. There are also many people with an interest in seeing downtown continue to grow and thrive.

The first step is to encourage the disparate local and county efforts to work together. This would be the job of the Downtown Working Group. The working group will evaluate the current district's assets and existing programs. It will start to build support within Catskill and network (perhaps through the National Trust's Main Street program) with other successful communities to learn from them. It will coordinate between other Catskill organizations on cultural and economic development issues. One possible outcome of this group is to create a strategic plan for downtown Catskill.

Some of the important sources that can be better utilized are already here. Greene County has a Main Street revitalization program that has funneled over $350,000 in improvement grants to downtowns across the county since 2003. It has played a role in restoring historic hotels, restaurants, firehouses and other Main Street buildings.

Another county effort, the Main Street Business Attraction Initiative, provides matching grant funds for activities that attract new businesses to Main Streets. The county's Interior Space Program offers 50 percent matching grants up to $25,000 to undertake the interior improvements needed to prepare space that will create new jobs. Finally, the Tourism Enhancement Program provides matching funds to help resort, lodging,

and/or tourism operations to create business plans and market their properties. These programs can be improved and expanded.

The Small Grants Program matches grants and architectural assistance for exterior improvements. The county legislature provides $150,000 per year for projects that will spur additional private investment. The village (and the town's hamlet cores) should actively encourage private building owners to take advantage of this assistance.

Elsewhere, one of the biggest sources of information is The National Trust for Historic Preservation. For downtown revitalization, they have developed the Main Street Approach – a community-driven, comprehensive way to revitalize older, traditional business areas. The underlying premise is to encourage economic development within the context of historic preservation in ways appropriate to today's marketplace. The Main Street Approach advocates the rebuilding of traditional commercial districts based on their assets, distinctive architecture, pedestrian-friendly environment, personal service, local ownership, and sense of community.

As described on their website (www.mainstreet.org) the Main Street approach revolves around four main principles.

Organization involves creating a team that drives the revitalization effort, raises the money, divides the workload and builds consensus and cooperation among stakeholders.

Promotion markets a business district's distinct character. The goal of this principle is to encourage shoppers and investors to live, work, shop, play and invest in Main Street.

Design means creating a safe, inviting atmosphere and a positive visual message about the vibrancy of the district. It involves developing operation and maintenance plans over the long term as well as encouraging appropriate public and private investment.

Economic restructuring builds upon, enhances and diversifies existing assets to meet current market needs.

Signs help shoppers find their way around downtown in Amherst, Massachusetts (top) and Saratoga Springs, New York.

Recommendation 2.4: Develop a commercial signage system to link the two main shopping areas and the village waterfront. Adopt the existing Catskill sign themes to reinforce local identity.

The first thing you see when you enter a mall is a sign mapping out the location of shops, food court and other important features. Many communities have adopted the same, simple philosophy – help people find their way.

Signs help newcomers, tourists and long-time residents find shops, local landmarks, unique neighborhoods, and attractions. The signs can

effectively enlarge a downtown because people will walk farther if easy-to-understand signs let them know that something worth the walk is just down the street or around a corner. They can also alert customers to shopping opportunities tucked away off of the main street. Well-designed signs also serve to further a community identity by using similar and recognizable colors, symbols and/or styles.

In the Village of Catskill, the signs should visually link the two main shopping areas (Main Street and Route 9W) as well as the waterfront area. Similarly styled, though not necessarily identical, signage could be used in hamlet and other commercial areas around the town.

Recommendation 2.5: Improve village and downtown gateways.

Image is fundamentally important to economic success, especially in a downtown. That makes the appearance of the downtown gateway – the first thing someone sees when entering the Village of Catskill or coming into downtown – vitally important.

There are several gateways into the Village of Catskill as indicated on the plan recommendations map. These areas could be enhanced to be more prominent and welcoming. A well-placed sign with landscaping indicating that one has arrived in Catskill might be a nice addition in these areas. Additional enhancements might include banners or flowers to improve the sense of arrival.

Gateways can also provide an opportunity to calm traffic. The landscaping, which marks an entry way, can be designed to transition the out of village traffic to calmer / slower in-town traffic.

Community gateways say "Welcome" and provide an opportunity to establish a positive first impression. The statue (right) at one entrance to downtown Catskill is a memorable icon for a gateway, and could serve as the basis for an overall theme.

Recommendation 2.6: Develop a sidewalk standards and maintenance program.

Walkable neighborhoods must have safe and clear places to walk. This means making sure that sidewalks are well designed and maintained. As appropriate, property owners and the village should clear them of snow, leaves and trip hazards.

The rules regarding snow removal should be reviewed to make sure they are fair and enforceable. The property owners also need to know the extent of their responsibility. As winter approaches, an annual public relations effort via mail and newspapers should be conducted to educate people about what they must do and the best ways to do it.

By the same token, the village must take care of the walkways that are its responsibility. It should set an example for the entire community using best maintenance practices and rapid response to sidewalk issues such as dangerous cracks and heaves as well as snow and leaf removal.

The village should investigate adopting a standard for the construction, access, and use of village rights of way. Walkability requires the consistent physical and regulatory rules for walkways and other avenues of public access. This is particularly important on Main Street.

Recommendation 2.7: Ensure the integrity and safety of the rail bridge over Catskill Creek in the Village; paint structure to improve appearance.

The Village should seek to partner with the CSX Corporation and appropriate state and federal agencies to examine and ensure the integrity and safety of the rail bridge over Catskill Creek in the Village. The structure is an important landmark for the Village. As such, the Village will also work in partnership with the CSX Corporation to improve the appearance of this landmark with a fresh painting.

Recommendation 2.8: Develop a repair and maintenance plan for the footbridge.

The footbridge is a valuable pedestrian link between the two banks of the Catskill Creek. It links the two shores and is used to carry several utility lines across the creek. It is also an eclectic example of adaptive reuse of older, historic infrastructure. The wood planking, installed fairly recently, is in good shape. However, the chain link fence has holes that allow people to easily climb under the bridge. In addition, the paint is peeling and appears rundown. The Village should ensure the structure is and appears safe.

The walking bridge is an eclectic and important pedestrian connection between the neighborhoods on either shore of Catskill Creek.

Recommendation 2.9: Find ways to open public access to the waterfront..

People gravitate to waterfronts. Downtowns that can play off of this natural affinity will nurture community pride and add one more reason for people to come downtown. In many communities, waterfronts become economic and cultural amenities and drive broader redevelopment efforts.

Attitudes about industrial waterfronts have shifted from blighted and unsafe to diamond-in-the-rough community assets. That is why former and fading industrial areas along waterways are now highly desired for residential and recreational development and public access in the case of any reuse or redevelopment.

The Village should pursue any opportunities to secure public access to the waterfront. Any proposed waterfront redevelopment should include the ability of the general public to make their way to and along the water's edge. Educational and interpretative signs about the waterfront's historic, industrial, and environmental significance should be woven into the design of any access points.

Goal: Strengthened system of pedestrian-friendly hamlet centers and commercial nodes that serve as community focal points

Many residents attending the public workshops expressed a desire to see an increased vibrancy in the hamlets. This sentiment was particularly strong in Palenville, which has historically had a small, distinctive commercial core. Residents talked about being able to safely walk to get a cup of coffee, a meal or basic groceries. The words "community" and "main street" were mentioned often.

At the same time, village and town residents alike appreciated Catskill's rural character. Strengthening hamlet centers and other cores by focusing development in them is a practical and important way to protect rural character and prevent sprawling suburban development patterns that has overwhelmed so many other communities in the Hudson Valley.

Recommendation 3.1: Focus commercial development and denser housing opportunities in the hamlets and designated commercial nodes

One of the best ways to protect rural character is to encourage more growth in existing hamlet centers and other commercial nodes. This makes the most efficient use of land and infrastructure and curbs sprawling development patterns. As growth comes to Catskill, focusing development in and around these core areas benefits all members of the community.

The Planning Recommendations Map (found in the next chapter) shows general areas where the community should focus commercial and residential development. These areas include traditional downtown cores, areas of high traffic, the Empire Zone and lands near existing infrastructure. As these areas fill out, boundaries can be expanded. This philosophy of focusing development makes for an efficient use of land.

The other benefit of increasing density in core areas is that it brings vibrancy. Commercial and higher density residential development means that people will be walking, shopping and spending money. These areas tend to be more interesting to potential retailers and more exciting places to live, especially for younger working families.

Recommendation 3.2: Enact clear, simple land use ordinances and guidelines, to encourage walkable, vibrant, and hamlet-scale (not highway-scale) commercial development in hamlet centers

From the perspective of quality developers, communities that set high development standards are communities worth investing in since such

standards protect property values and enhance the community overall. Communities across the country have learned that these developers will build what a community wants if those desires are clearly and completely described in the zoning rules. Communities that lower their standards have to live with what they ask for.

Some basic hamlet-scale design guidelines include:

- Parking behind or on the side of buildings
- All buildings orient front doors and display windows to the street
- A streetside build-to line (rather than a setback line) to bring buildings up to the street and make them accessible to pedestrians, especially window shoppers.
- Building exteriors should reflect the character of their surroundings, whether it's a hamlet, the Village, or the Town.
- Design details should be human-scale and consistent with the scale of surrounding buildings, such as roof lines and window spacing.

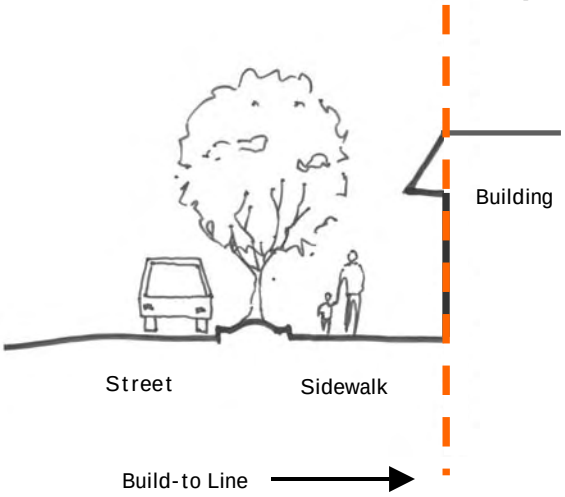
In a Massachusetts mill town, this Dunkin Donuts shop was designed to complement the old brick buildings undergoing renovation across the street.

The brick façade, colors, canopy, and landscaping of this Saratoga Springs gas station fit into the community's vibrant downtown. The color palette is in harmony with the brick architecture of downtown.

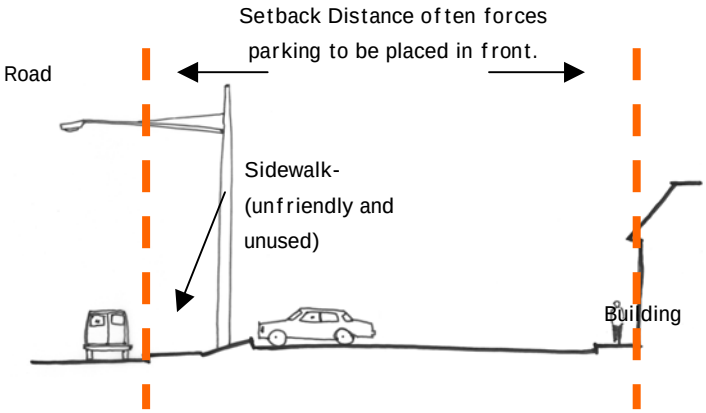
The sign and building design complement each other and strongly reflect the Adirondack nature of Lake Placid, New York.

Creating a build-to line achieves several objectives and yields a very different result than a setback line. It makes walking more interesting (and therefore a preferred alternative to the car) for pedestrians when they pass retail windows rather than parking lots. It also makes sidewalks more comfortable for lingering where a building facade forms one side of the pedestrian space. Retail space becomes more valuable as windows and signs become visible and shoppers can move easily from store to store. Shopkeepers and residents closer to the sidewalk have more "eyes" on the street protecting passersby and school children. In comparison, a setback requires a building be pushed back from the road by a minimum amount, usually promoting parking in front.

Build-to Line Example – Good pedestrian space



Setback Example – Poor pedestrian space



The Village's central commercial district has a similar rule in that there is no required front yard setback for buildings. This allows, but does not require, buildings line up along street fronts. A simple change to a built-to line would protect the integrity of downtown Catskill. Similarly, a build-to line in the hamlet centers will make their "main streets" more walkable – a key ingredient to the community's desire for vibrancy.

The town should also encourage mixed-use buildings in hamlet centers. Typically, commercial and retail activities are located on the ground floor, while and residential and office spaces are above. This diversity will increase the range of housing options, especially for Catskill's younger, working population. Zoning should reflect the community's desire to permit and encourage the building of quality housing that is affordable. Mixed use buildings in mixed use districts such as the village downtown or the hamlet centers also reduces the need for some people to drive for everything.

Just outside of the hamlet cores small-lot single-family and two-family residential housing should be allowed. (New developments should be connected to the hamlet core with sidewalks.) These will provide a transition to the rural areas of Town where larger lots are available.

Senior housing developments should be directed to areas in and around hamlets to take advantage of local conveniences. Walking is one of the most popular activities among empty-nesters and hamlet cores will provide a vibrant atmosphere for exercise. It will also put this age group, usually with more disposable income, in close proximity to hamlet shops and services.

Recommendation 3.3: Create streetscape infrastructure improvements plans for the hamlets that promote walkability.

As in any small community, the hamlets of Catskill provide opportunities to get people out of their cars. Hamlet cores provide an opportunity for people to walk, shop, work and recreate. This creates a sense of vibrancy, which will aid in their economic revitalization because people like to be in a place where things happen.

The easiest way to create a walkable hamlet is to make sure the core roads have sidewalks and crosswalks. Hamlet centers should have wide, well maintained sidewalks that provide connections between the mixed-use core of stores, restaurants, and nearby homes in the adjoining neighborhoods. When new development occurs, or when significant alterations to existing buildings and sites are proposed, the Town should require that pedestrian infrastructure improvements be made. As the Town, County or State makes road improvements, pedestrian amenities should be added to the hamlets.

Another important component in creating a pedestrian-friendly hamlet is to create an inviting streetscape. The streetscape includes the area from building front on one side of the street to the building front on the other. In addition to sidewalks, an inviting streetscape can include planting strips, street trees, curbs, pedestrian-scaled lighting, benches, bike racks and other pedestrian amenities. Simple traffic calming measures slows the speed of vehicles creating a safer pedestrian environment and exposing passing drivers to the shopping and eating opportunities in the hamlet.

Recommendation 3.4: Improve hamlet and commercial core gateways.

As described under the previous goal, gateways are an opportunity to say welcome and make a good impression. These points of entry become places of pride for local residents. They can also act as transitions from faster country roads to slower hamlet roads areas. And they signal to visitors that activity takes place here – slow down, look around.

Each hamlet and commercial core can use the gateway to establish a distinct identity. However, all gateways should also recognize that these hamlets are part of the greater Catskill community. Signage and landscape styles should have elements that unify the community by pulling from a unified palate of colors and materials.

Public places for events bring people together and create community in Saratoga Springs (top) and Catskill's Main Street (bottom).

Recommendation 3.5: Create public places where residents and visitors may interact and celebrate community

A street's physical appearance and layout sets an important stage for community building. Public places provide an accessible venue for community interaction. Sidewalks can host outside shopping or art displays. Side streets might be blocked off for block parties, farmers markets, flea markets, or festivals. Pocket parks or main street plazas might host music or theatrical performances. These kinds of events, offered around the year– especially in celebration of local history or cultural traditions – become a vibrant and on-going reminder of the distinctive character of the hamlets.

Recommendation 3.6: Establish a working group of citizens and public officials in hamlets to develop a revitalization plan for the hamlet's "Main Street."

Residents of Palenville spoke about their clear desire to revitalize their hamlet's main street. This potential exists in other hamlets, too. Building on other recommendations in this plan, the Town should form

hamlet working groups. Members of this working group should include local residents, town officials and, perhaps, county staff. The group's mission would include the following:

- Investigate strengths and opportunities in their hamlet.
- Create a hamlet plan for revitalization. This effort could result in a Hamlet Master Plan for each hamlet to be adopted by the town board as an amendment to this comprehensive plan.
- Devise ways to implement the plan including ordinance changes and infrastructure needs to put before the town board.
- Find funding to implement hamlet specific plan community-building and commercial redevelopment plans.

Goal: Preservation of farming and enrichment of the rural economy

Farming is an important part of Catskill's economy and contributes to Catskill's rural character. Farms and prime agricultural soils are a precious natural resource. Once they are paved over or built upon, they are lost for all practical purposes. Unfortunately, too many communities take their agricultural operations for granted and assume they will be around forever. In New York that is not always the case.

In the five years from 1997 until 2002, New York State lost about 1000 farms and about 120,000 acres of farmland. Greene County fared better during those same five years. The amount of farmland rose more than 9,000 acres (to 57,898) while the number of farms also jumped. In 2002, there were 98 more farms producing crops than in 1997. (The total number of farms in Greene County in 2002 was 342.)[3]

In Catskill, a wide variety of crop and livestock farmers ply their trade, including one operation that provides special pathogen free eggs for laboratory research. This healthy mix of agriculture makes it easier for Catskill to retain a working farm economy. Some of the reasons why this is an important sector of the Catskill economy are outlined below.

- Farms provide jobs and support the local economy
- Farms and forest land require fewer community services and thus help control property taxes
- Farms contribute to rural character of Catskill. Over 60 percent of respondents to the community survey ranked rural character as a top issue in the Town and the Village.
- Farms attract tourists to Catskill.
- Well-managed farms protect water quality and natural resources.

Any plan to promote agriculture in Catskill must recognize that farming is a complex economic activity dependent on markets, taxes, technology, climate, and land use. The feasibility of farming, like any business, depends on the cost of doing business and the price of goods it is able to provide. The cost of doing business includes taxes, supplies, upkeep, and labor. The price of goods depends on the market's willingness to pay. Niche products and a well marketed identity can improve Catskill's agriculture position in the market.

[3] All farm data from the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, Census of Agriculture.

The state's Agricultural District program, administered by Greene County, offers a variety of tax relief mechanisms and other protections for farming operations. The primary benefit relates to taxes. The Ag District program assesses farmland on its agricultural activity, which is less than when taxed at its development potential. Farms larger than ten acres and producing more than $10,000 annually in designated districts are eligible for the assessment. The program also limits nuisance lawsuits against certain farming activities, akin to a right-to-farm law. Another important component of the Ag District program is that comprehensive plans and local ordinances shall reasonably promote the goals of the Ag District program, excepting protections for public safety and health.

Recommendation 4.1: Enact "Right-To-Farm" laws at the town level.

Right-to-farm laws seek to maintain a favorable farming economy by limiting the farmer/non-farmer conflicts. Local laws can supplement the right-to-farm protections already provided through Greene County-designated agricultural districts. A local right-to-farm law documents the importance of farming to a town and puts non-farm residents on notice about the agricultural practices that will go on around them. The laws can also establish dispute resolution processes to mediate conflicts.

According to the American Farmland Trust, local right-to-farm laws in New York communities typically describe how important farming is to the community in terms of rural character and the local economy. The laws also establish a farmer's right to conduct agricultural practices if they are:

- reasonable and necessary to farm operations
- conducted in a manner that is not negligent or reckless
- conducted in conformity with generally accepted farming practices and with all local, state and federal regulations
- conducted in a manner that does not constitute a threat to public health or safety, and
- conducted in a manner that does not unreasonably obstruct roads or public waterways.

The laws also require real estate disclosure notices be attached to purchase and sale agreements and that the intent of the law (farm preservation) be taken into account by the town when reviewing development applications in farming areas.

Recommendation 4.2: Allow farm stands in rural areas zoned for residential or agricultural uses

Roadside farm stands allow local producers to sell their products directly to the public. The primary benefit to producers is the comparatively low cost of directly marketing agricultural products. Seasonal fruits, vegetables, dairy and other agricultural products are the featured products. Retailing specialty foods, drinks, other prepared foods, and souvenirs may augment the primary goods. Auxiliary uses may include u-pick operations, crop-mazes, and farm animal attractions. The character of the building, lighting, parking, and signage should be consistent with and evoke Catskill's rural character.

Recommendation 4.3: Create an agricultural zoning district in rural areas

Currently, most of the Town of Catskill is zoned Rural Residential, which allows, among other uses, single-family homes on 1.5-acre lots. Despite the name, the zoning will not protect rural character. Instead, the outcome will be sprawling development patterns of homes, roads and driveways. The goal of an agricultural zoning district is to support a farm-friendly business environment by stabilizing larger blocks of agricultural land, reducing the likelihood of conflicts between farmers and non-farmers; and preventing the conversion of farmland into lots too small to profitably farm.

An agricultural zone would emphasize the role of farms and farm-related businesses. While it might limit the number of homes that could be built on land, it would allow a greater range of structures to better accommodate farm operations. The agricultural zone might also set maximum average densities for rural land, rather than minimum lot sizes. This would set the maximum number of houses on a chunk of land, but allow the landowner to decide how to carve up the land into lots. Ideally the lots would be clustered together so that large tracts of land could be preserved for farming. One form of this clustering, the conservation subdivision design, is described in detail under the first goal.

Another technique in an agricultural zoning district might be changing the setbacks, required frontage and other dimensional requirements. The goal is to make the land the dominant feature in rural areas – not the structures. Care must be taken so that setback rules do not force buildings into the middle of productive fields.

Recommendation 4.4: Find ways to lower the property tax burden on farmers

The most critical asset in farming is the land. Its purchase, improvement (e.g. tilling or ditching) and maintenance represent an on-going and significant expense to agricultural operations. Property taxes are an additional burden and increasingly higher taxes in areas of growth pressure can force farmers to sell all or parts of their lands to make ends meet.

Communities that value farming can help reduce the tax burden on farmers by doing the following:

- Making sure farmers know about and understand New York's various tax relief programs.
- Providing appropriate agricultural assessments for farmland, structures and buildings. Catskill assessors can take training to establish appropriate assessments based on current farm uses rather than on market (non-farm development) value.
- Reduce tax assessments for farmers who give away or sell their development rights

Recommendation 4.5: Develop a local marketing brand for agriculture

The first step in marketing local agriculture starts with the development of a local marketing brand. A brand portrays one common image that is a friendly reminder linking consumers with values they can support in Catskill. As a concise message, a brand should achieve several tasks. The graphical message should be valid, credible, simple, and appealing. A successful brand should emphasize a story unique to Catskill such as local production, history, and community. The brand should reflect the sense of place and express special qualities that distinguish Catskill as a unique destination.

This is an easy way for Catskill growers to differentiate and add value to their products. A compelling brand combined with an effective marketing message achieves a number of objectives: educate the consumer about local food supplies, increase opportunities for direct marketing, heighten public awareness of Catskill, and promote agricultural diversification through improved demand. The key is developing awareness on the demand side of the market for local foods.

Tourism dependent business, restaurateurs, and other local businesses would mutually benefit by coordinating their independent initiatives in tourism, food retailing, and agriculture. As a logo on food products a brand offers consumers a choice between local products and those that are not. Restaurants have been known to use local branding icons to identify menu items with locally produced ingredients. Bed and breakfasts,

other inns, art festivals, and farmer's market vendors could all tout their support of Catskill by posting the brand. The brand itself may also play off Catskill's deep and rich links to the fine arts, such as the Hudson River School.

Recommendation 4.6: Investigate ways to improve local and regional 'buy local' efforts

Local support is crucial in farm economy protection efforts. By literally putting their money where their mouth is, Catskill residents can support the farming economy and open space that they have told us they value. In small ways, particularly for niche or organic products, having a local customer base can also cushion farmers against swings in the national and global commodities markets.

Communities can foster 'buy local' efforts with several easy steps. Among these is investigating how to improve the farmers' market. This may include bundling publicity of the farmers' market with other Village and Town events to promote foot traffic and vibrancy at the market. Can additional space be set-aside for new vendors? How can parking and access to the site be improved? Also, it would be helpful to review local ordinances to make sure they foster, rather than hinder, the market's ability to grow and flourish.

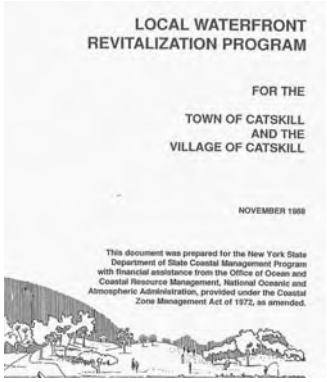
Communities may also promote direct linkages between local agriculture and institutional meal programs. For example, the school district could commit to purchase local fruits and vegetables in season. The district could also develop local agriculture and nutrition programs for incorporation into curricula. School gardens and hands on experiences such as field trips to farmers markets and working farms may become program elements that help students understand the origin of their foods. Farm-to-school programs may take time and persistence, but several districts have made this a priority, such as the Greeneville School District. Other public institutions like hospitals, nursing homes, and prisons can also commit to regular local purchases.

Goal: Residential, commercial and industrial growth that respect rural beauty, historic character and the natural environment of both the village and the town

The Catskill community can grow and still retain the characteristics that make it special. To do this requires that public officials and private property owners understand there are ways to grow, protect community character and realize the economic value in the land. The recommendations found throughout this plan, and especially in this chapter, have been shown in other communities to accomplish all of these goals.

Recommendation 5.1: Finish the LWRP process with New York State

Many upstate communities receive money for waterfront planning and capital improvement efforts from New York State's Department of State. The foundation of this funding is the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP). It is a process started by the Village and Town of Catskill about two decades ago. Much work has been done along the lines of the LWRP and it is cited in the zoning codes, for example, the Waterfront Overlay District. Planning and zoning boards continue to follow the recommendations and standards in the LWRP including the desire to increase waterfront access. However, according to Department of State staffers, it was never filed and reviewed with the state. Recent discussions with state officials indicate that this may hinder further funding from this already competitive pool of support.


LOCAL WATERFRONT
REVITALIZATION PROGRAM

FOR THE

TOWN OF CATSKILL
AND THE
VILLAGE OF CATSKILL

NOVEMBER 1988

This document was prepared for the New York State Department of State Coastal Management Program with financial assistance from the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, provided under the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended.

Although Catskill finished its LWRP in 1988, it never submitted it to New York State for approval – possibly hindering some state grants.

It is possible that the LWRP report may need to be updated before it is submitted to the state. Still, this action represents a simple, yet significant, investment by the Catskill community in its waterfront areas.

Recommendation 5.2: Institute parking lot standards for commercial developments that emphasize the shopper rather than the automobile

The objective is to refocus commercial activity as a relationship between people and stores rather than cars and stores. Too often communities prescribe a conventional approach to commercial parking, large lots situated between the road and the stores and that sit empty most of the time. However, the benefits of this approach are few and the drawbacks many.

First, there are financial costs to providing large parking lots. The lot's size and associated stormwater facilities require significant engineering, construction, and maintenance. Second, there is an opportunity cost. The land

reserved under cars could have gone to a more valuable use such as a building - increasing developer profits and local tax revenues.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, the pavement covering large parking lots prevents rainwater from naturally seeping into the ground where it is absorbed and filtered. The result of this increase in hard, impermeable surfaces is increased stormwater runoff, which can result in flooding. The oil and other pollutants washed off parking lots worsen water pollution.

Parking also indirectly affects the environment, primarily because parking influences how and where people choose to travel. In conventional low-density, single-use development, the required large surface parking lots create places that are not friendly to pedestrians or transit. These places also require more and longer trips between homes, workplaces, schools, shops, and parks. As a result, people make the rational choice to drive almost everywhere –and these areas register more vehicle miles of travel per capita.

Increases in travel raise emissions of pollutants, including carbon monoxide and the pollutants that contribute to dangerous ground-level ozone. Air pollution is associated with asthma and many other health problems, driving up health-care costs.

A better option is to compel developers to emphasize the pedestrian by discouraging large parking lots that remain empty most of the time. This can be achieved by shifting design strategies in the following ways.

Reduce minimum parking requirements. Establish a maximum number of allowable spaces. Require that 30 percent of spaces be reserved for compact cars. Too much of anything is usually a bad thing. That is particularly true of parking lots. It is extremely rare, if ever, that large parking lots fill up. The land underneath these empty parking lots could be put to better use for community's tax base, the developer's profit margin and/or the natural environment.

Too often, generic parking standards do not take into account local topographical, environmental or demographic conditions. There is no reason, for example, for a shopping center near a main street or a store with sidewalks connected to residential areas needs the same number of parking spaces as a suburban mall with no access but by car.

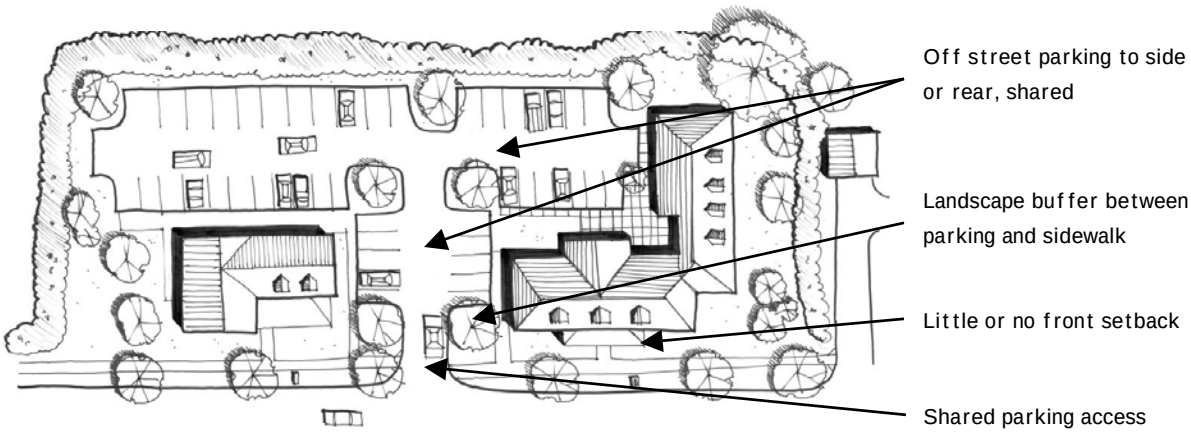
The Town of Catskill does not outline parking requirements in its zoning code. The Village of Catskill requires a minimum number of parking spaces based on use. Some of the requirements (such as the one space per 100 square feet of restaurant space) will force builders to create larger parking lots than are probably needed. This wastes time, money, reduces land values and puts the environment in danger.

The Catskill community should devise off-street parking requirements that fit the community. These requirements should both lower the minimum number of spaces required and cap the maximum.

Parking spaces typically range in size from 162 square feet (9 by 18) to 200 square feet (10 by 20). By contrast, compact car spaces are 8 by 17 feet or 136 square feet. Each space is 16 to 32 percent smaller than standard spaces. Working in conjunction with a cap on the number of spaces, requiring that 30 percent be reserved for compact cars can reduce the overall amount of asphalt.

Place parking behind buildings. Refocusing commercial activity as a relationship between people and stores rather than cars and stores is the main objective of this recommendation. Parking lots in front of commercial and multi-unit residential structures strip a community of the character found in its buildings – because you can't see them from the road. In addition, large asphalt areas make it uncomfortable for pedestrians to walk from shop to shop and destroy the distinctiveness of the shopping experience.

Shared parking and parking behind buildings



Require shared parking between uses and properties. Shared parking allows adjacent property owners to pool their efforts and reduce the overall number of spaces. The result is smaller parking lots and less pavement. Shared parking is not a new concept, having been used extensively in traditional commercial centers and downtown settings for decades. Today it is being used more and more in new developments to better manage road access, traffic congestion and accident rates. Within a single development, it is important that the community recognizes the value of shared spaces – and not requires a high minimum number for each use.

Between adjacent property owners, an effective way to achieve shared parking is through a contractual arrangement. As part of the site

review process, Catskill ensures that the first property owner to develop provides an easement that spells out the parking requirements when an adjacent property is developed. After redevelopment has reshaped many commercial areas, the town may want to consider creating parking districts where all users have access to all spaces and not just those on adjoining parcels. Shared parking also reduces the number of curb cuts, thereby reducing unsafe pedestrian/vehicle and vehicle/vehicle points of conflict. Shared parking could eventually be a developer's preferred option, as it would reduce the number of spaces required overall.

Recommendation 5.3: Conduct a downtown parking study for the village.

As downtowns revitalize their retail areas, the question of parking always becomes an issue. Often, this is a matter of making sure visitors know where parking is and properly managing the spaces. A parking study would help the community understand if there is a real or perceived issue. It would look at parking needs in the future as revitalization plans advance. The parking study will also investigate signage and opportunities for shared parking.

Recommendation 5.4: Revise and update sign ordinances as needed in the village and the town to protect the community's historic and rural characters.

A tidy community where visual clutter is limited and community appearance is protected promotes safety and enhances the overall business and tourist climate. The chaotic effect of signs competing for dominance can tarnish an image the community has worked hard to nurture. Well-implemented design guidelines create unique destinations, making it a preferred choice among shoppers, investors, and visitors. This is especially important when many of our retail and neighborhood destinations are virtually indistinguishable from so many others around the country.

Both the Town and Village of Catskill have sign laws in effect. The existing Village regulations require a comprehensive approach whereby proposed signs are reviewed for consistency with the character of the existing historic district. The Village should ensure that proposed signs conform with the code. The Town signage rules need to be reviewed and overhauled to permit signs that protect the scenic character of Catskill. As commercial areas grow, and particularly in hamlet cores, more specific rules need to be devised to protect community character.

A common method of helping developers and local officials make sure signs are appropriate is to create a "sign book" with examples of appropriate signage. This could be become part of the community's overall

design guidelines and help eliminate confusion, which slows projects and hinders revitalization efforts.

In the village, billboards are no longer permitted. The rules allow for a fair and orderly removal of billboards. The town should adopt similar rules and restrict billboards to prevent visual blight in the countryside. Billboards should also be prohibited in officially designated gateway areas. At the same

Many communities preserve character by controlling signs

time, the town needs to be conscious of allowing smaller, off-premise signs which are important to local businesses in our rural areas.

The Town and Village will also work with the state and county to consolidate the number of directional road signs in order to limit the visual clutter along roadways. Catskill recognizes the necessity of clear and appropriate signage for safety purposes and way-finding. By the same token, the proliferation of directional and informational road signs from multiple overlapping jurisdictions detract from the Catskill's rural and small-town character. A model for Catskill may be communities in New York and Vermont where signage is kept to a minimum. Furthermore, discussions between jurisdictions and agencies should be pursued on a case-by-case basis to identify practical ways to ensure safety and limit signage.

Recommendation 5.5: Work with junkyards to reduce their visual impact on the community

Both the Town and Village of Catskill regulate junkyard (wrecking yard or auto salvage yard) operations. Although these operations provide storage, repair, and recycling services, there are significant negative visual impacts. These may be worse when junkyards are located in areas of high

visual exposure, such as hillsides or community gateways. There are better places in Catskill than its gateways and hillsides for permitting uses that are visually detracting from the surrounding character.

The Town and Village of Catskill will promote a two-fold strategy to address the negative visual impacts from proposed and existing junkyards. The first approach is regulatory. Important community gateways and other high visual exposure areas should be mapped and accompanied by documentation of their community significance. Future uses inconsistent with the character of these areas will not be permitted. Areas suitable for new junkyards should also be defined. Catskill should promote the SEQRA environmental review process when the Town or Village is reviewing permits for new junkyards. SEQRA can be an effective method for determining what steps will be taken to mitigate negative visual impacts. Existing junkyard regulations will be reviewed to assess if setbacks and screening requirements (like evergreen trees and fencing) are sufficient or need strengthening. Penalties may need to be likewise toughened. Existing regulations will be enforced.

The second approach entails informal and formal negotiations with current junkyard owners. This approach is appropriate where there is a compelling community interest that cannot be achieved through regulations alone. Such discussions should be viewed as a constructive problem-solving exercise and confrontational posturing should be minimized. The goal is to achieve outcomes that are feasible and serve the interests of all involved.

Recommendation 5.6: Revise town highway standards to protect the rural character of the roads.

On the Planning Recommendations map, we have designated "rural roads." These are rural road corridors where the rural character is very desirable and careful attention should be given to appropriate development.

A way to accomplish this goal is to adopt a rural corridor overlay district along these roads. In addition to the underlying zoning restrictions, the district keeps trees, fences and fields close to the road. Narrow roads in these areas and in residential neighborhoods help to slow traffic and improve safety. The Cornell Local Roads Program provides standards, which may form the basis for updating Town road standards. These would apply to new roads created by developers and town roads undergoing significant work. In addition, the rules would provide important guidance and describe community desires when the state or county redo their roads. In addition to protecting rural character, these standards provide another important benefit. By reducing road size and limiting street lights, they make the construction and maintenance of roads less expensive.

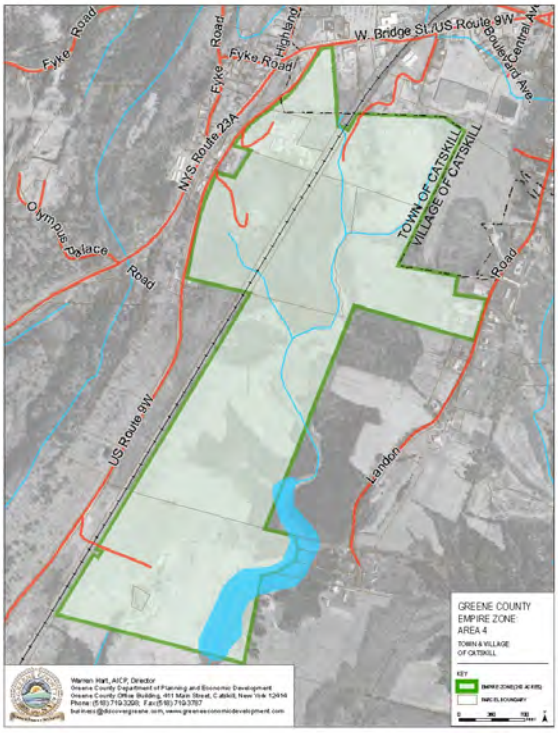
Sidewalks are not necessary on rural sections of the road (e.g. outside of a commercial node and where residential density is less than one unit per acre). However, where possible, appropriately designed shoulders should be maintained for walking and biking. The surface material should provide a stable, mud-free walking surface. Sidewalks should be considered where large residential developments are proposed.

Recommendation 5.7: Require that utilities be placed underground for new developments and in priority travel corridors.

Some features of new developments are so ubiquitous—like above ground utilities—that they often go unquestioned. However, it is such piecemeal changes that diminish the existing rural character of the landscape. As noted elsewhere, a major objective of this comprehensive plan is to encourage site plan designs, which are consistent with the existing rural character. When overhead utilities are placed underground they can significantly enhance the overall desirability of the site by reducing visual clutter. Likewise, roadway upgrades and repairs where utilities are placed underground can significantly improve the appearance of those corridors. Amend local site plan review procedures and standards so that telephone, electric and cable lines are built underground for all new commercial and industrial developments, as well as residential subdivisions. Also, the Town and Village of Catskill will identify priority road corridors of scenic significance, and work with local and state highway departments to have existing overhead utilities placed underground.

Goal: Greater range of job opportunities

Communities lacking employment options for residents struggle with overall success. The goal is to create a full range of opportunities for current and future residents. This means we must work to effectively position our regulations, policies and incentive programs to attract high quality business. It means we must also maintain a high quality of life and a quality education system for youth and continuing education, which is integral to attracting jobs and the families that will take those jobs.



In July 2006, the Greene County Legislature designated land along Route 9W just south of the Village as an Empire Zone. The site contains almost 190 acres of net developable land. Businesses that expand or relocate to an Empire Zone may be eligible for significant tax benefits including property tax credits and sales tax exemptions. Additional benefits include energy savings and wage tax credits for job creation.

Recommendation 6.1: Revise zoning and land use regulations and procedures to create an efficient development process that achieves the community's goals.

The first way to streamline development is the development of clear zoning and land use rules that reduce time, expenses, and hassles for both the developer and the community. The goal is to set high development standards but promote an efficient and predictable review process as a technique to entice new development without giving up public protections and benefits. We want to encourage good development that protects community character, the local environment and long-term economic growth.

One helpful exercise is to place local public officials in the role of developer and have them walk through a typical permitting process. The goal is to identify how bottlenecks get in the way of good projects and how poor projects can be improved.

Another way for the community to streamline the review process is to have the project applicant come in for a preliminary consultation. Here, planning and municipal staff may point out to applicants how the process works, to discuss the proposed project, and to understand how the project may or may not fit with Catskill's community goals. This should build a rapport for future work together and help the community achieve its long-term goals. The use of pictures, sketches, and guidelines should be encouraged to illustrate to land developers the sorts of projects that are suitable by community standards. A permitting calendar should provide a reliable timetable for the applicant and municipal officials to follow.

The Village already has a form that provides applicants with a clear list of requirements when putting together materials for the planning and zoning boards. The Town should provide similarly clear guides. Both municipalities should add to their checklists a list of the important items from the comprehensive plan and zoning to remind both the applicants and local officials about ways to keep the community moving towards its vision.

Recommendation 6.2: Designate certain industrial sites, especially within the new Empire Zone, as 'shovel-ready.'

The town and village should work with regional and state economic development organizations to provide "shovel-ready" sites for potential tenants. New York State certifies sites as shovel ready, which involves an upfront site investigation and pre-permitting to limit delays and remove obstacles for prospective projects. Developing land takes time, and time is money. A shovel-ready site that has already undergone wetlands and archeological investigation, engineering studies, and other pre-permitting activities is much easier for a community to market. More information can be found at www.shovelready.com.

Recommendation 6.3: Develop land use rules and economic development policies to focus industrial development in and around proposed Empire Zone. Make sure all land within the Empire Zone is zoned industrial.

Zoning and economic development policies should be revised to focus industrial development and support-services around the Empire Zone. This advances several other goals of the comprehensive plan. For example,

promoting additional investment in areas already or soon to be developed capitalizes on existing infrastructure and promotes efficient development. Likewise, this keeps the potential negative effects (traffic, noise, odors) to a limited area. It also lessens the risk that greenfield sites in other parts of the town will be developed for industrial usesand threaten Catskill's rural character. Most of the land contained within the new Empire zone is already zoned Industrial. Portions not designated industrial (some is currently residential) should be rezoned to industrial in order to encourage economic activity and streamline the development review process. Catskill should use its local land use authority to provide direction for future development. Single use industrial and commercial zones with strict height and density regulations can result in development that loses sight of the big picture.

Recommendation 6.4: Rebuild the railroad overpasses on Route 9W in Smith's Landing to allow commercial trucks to pass.

Route 9W should be a primary transit route for the businesses located in the Empire Zone. Unfortunately, the two CSX railroad overpasses south of the Village are too low to allow full-size tractor-trailers to pass. The existing underpasses are one lane wide and require traffic signals to share this road. It has been expressed that safety is an issue at these points. New York State, Greene County, local federal highway officials and the Town and Village of Catskill should work with the railroad company to enable efficient access.

Recommendation 6.5: Evaluate the extension of sewer lines to all industrial zones.

Focusing industrial development in and around the Empire Zone makes it clear that these areas should be connect to the existing sewer and water infrastructure. Industrial developments should not necessarily be dependent upon on-site septic systems or wells as this can have detrimental effects to the surrounding environment.

Recommendation 6.6: Increase broadband access in the community

Efforts to attract new business, especially spin-offs from the Capital Region's technology initiatives, require a wired community. In addition, entrepreneurs from places with strong information infrastructure, like New York City, may find Catskill a more desirable place to start a business if

high-speed internet access were widely available. Projects like these are anticipated in the economic development plan currently being developed in Greene County. In addition, there is a commitment to make the entire village core a wireless hotspot. This should be expanded throughout the entire village and major hamlets. In addition, wire-line or wireless broadband access should be expanded in the Town.

Recommendation 6.7: Set site plan review and architectural design standards for industrial areas.

Clear site design requirements and signage improvements make it easier for prospective industrial tenants to invest here. The community benefit, as in commercial areas, is to protect and enhance community character. In areas where industrial uses adjoin sensitive environmental or residential areas, buffers should be used to adequately shield these areas from the adverse effects of noise, light, dust, or odors. Public and private roads in industrial areas should be included to encourage alternative means of access to the site. The pedestrian and bike connections should extend to the denser areas of development, such as the village, to promote access there. This plan recognizes that the design of new buildings must accommodate the industrial and commercial functions of the building, however the outside character (landscaping, architectural design) should be consistent with the prevailing character of the Town and Village. Standards for land development and design should be strong, but they should also be clear and easy to achieve.

Recommendation 6.8: Institute a brownfields program to reclaim contaminated land or land perceived to be contaminated.

As communities come to terms with the high costs of sprawl and recognize the value of urban living, the demand for urban infill areas is growing, especially for new commercial and residential development. 'Brownfields' are where some communities are finding success with infill. In contrast to greenfields, brownfields are typically former industrial sites no longer in use. Typically the stigma of previous industrial uses and the perception of possible contamination (even when there is none) is a compelling market force to avoid brownfields for the clean-slate alternative of suburban greenfields. Brownfields may include sites such as old school, ports, warehouses, churches, and apartment buildings. Even vacant lots that are green with vegetation can be considered a brownfield. This is because pollution on the site may be very localized, underground, or non-existent. The problem with this sort of infill development is the reluctance of

This former textile mill in Maynard, Massachusetts has been converted to office space. The largely leased property is an important downtown anchor. (Photo: Saratoga Associates)

prospective tenants to begin a process of costly site investigations and liability associated with clean-up. Unless there is an overwhelming market demand for the site, most if not all prospective tenants will look elsewhere.

In order to overcome private-sector reluctance and possible clean-up costs associated with redevelopment, some communities find it advantageous to initiate brownfield programs. These are typically conducted in partnership with state and federal agencies. Incentives, such as streamlined permitting, tax abatements, and other financial incentives for clean-up (if necessary) can help drum-up interest in the site. Also, brownfield cleanups can be invaluable marketing through positive press coverage. Furthermore, many of these brownfields are in highly desirable urban locations near existing infrastructure. If done correctly, redevelopment can lead to neighborhood revitalization and business success. In many locations along the industrial corridors of the East Coast developers have recognized the value of these urban sites and found savvy ways to overcome false perceptions and liability issues.

New York State and the federal government offer funding for communities to investigate contamination and plan for the reinvestment in industrial areas. Catskill should secure funding to inventory and evaluate former industrial areas no longer in use. A brownfields program should be developed to track land and get it back into an economically productive use as soon as possible.

Goal: Efficient infrastructure and public services systems that support community goals

Growth leads to an increased demand of services and infrastructure. We must invest in the infrastructure and public services that will make Catskill a productive place to do business and a great place to live. This means managing growth within the limits of our infrastructure while protecting our natural resources. It also means making sure that the right infrastructure is in place to support the kind and shape of growth we want. We must prudently decide where schools, roads, water and sewer lines will be built or expanded and make the most efficient use of the tax dollars that go into building and supporting infrastructure.

Recommendation 7.1: Conduct a joint build-out analysis and cost of services study. Adopt it as an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan.

A buildout analysis and capital infrastructure study signifies a community's choice to invest in its future. This investment may be its most important one. These tools offer extremely effective means for localities to promote efficient growth. The Town and Village will benefit from the analyses and trends discovered in these tools. They assist localities in projecting demands for public services and forecasting expenses for their upkeep. Looking at the studies together reveals important answers to questions that are at the heart of effective land use management and local government.

> When will the capacity of Catskill's municipal services be reached?

> What costs will Catskill face when infrastructure capacity is reached?

> Will the community have the resources and the tax base necessary to fund improvements in public infrastructure and schools?

> Will the goals of the community be achieved through existing zoning rules?

> Will future development under existing rules promote or hinder the efficient use of public infrastructure?

> What aspects of land use rules can be tweaked to put Catskill on the right course?

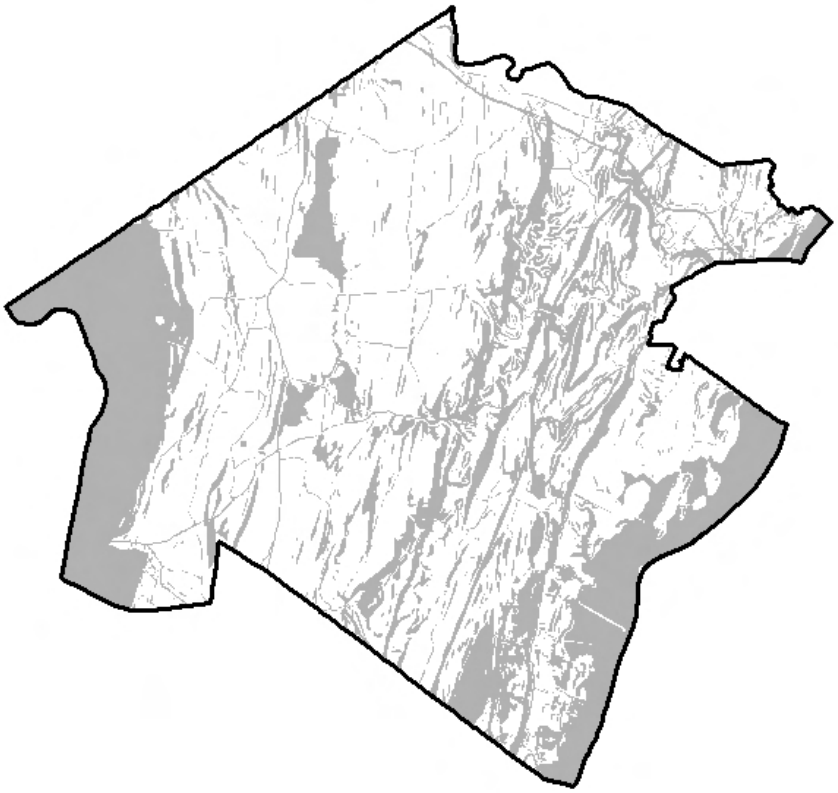
The studies are often conducted together. A buildout analysis is a test-run of existing land use rules. It offers a vision of what the community will look like if development were maximized under current rules. Scenarios

can be tested to see how particular changes in zoning rules (such as minimum lot size and multifamily housing) affect maximum development. These figures can then be used to calculate future demand on public infrastructure and the tax base.

On the other hand, a capital infrastructure study examines the condition of existing municipal services. It looks at school and fire fighting capacity, as well as water supply, roads, and sewage treatment. It determines their current capacity, and explores likely costs to be incurred by the Catskill community for repairs, upgrades, additions, or renovations.

The studies, once conducted, should be officially adopted by the Town and Village and appended to the comprehensive plan. These studies establish a quantitative foundation that enables a number of planning activities ranging from growth management to assessing reasonable impact fees from development. A build out analysis and capital infrastructure capacity study are beneficial public assets that identify to the locality and developers where and when available capacity exists.

There is good reason to do a complete buildout analysis. The map below shows developable (white) versus non-developable areas (gray). Non-developable areas are places where Catskill Park, surface water bodies, steep slopes, certain large wetlands, or quarries exist. For our calculations, we also took out lots below half an acre.



This very rough computation indicates the Town of Catskill has approximately 24,000 acres of developable land. From that total we cut out about 20 percent for roads and another five percent for parks. That gives us about 18,000 net developable acres. At the current zoning with its minimum lot size of 1.5 acres, about 12,000 homes could end up in the Town. Note that this includes existing homes.

The number 12,000 represents a rough upper physical limit under current rules. If Catskill grows to hold 12,000 residential units, can existing public infrastructure and schools adequately serve this? The answer is likely not in consideration of the high public expenses associated with sprawling development patterns enabled by current zoning rules. So, how should growth be managed and where should it go so that public resources are adequate to serve new growth? How shall zoning be updated to target growth to these areas and, in turn, protect the natural resources and rural character that make Catskill a great place to live?

Growth is inevitable, but there are tools and analyses that help communities effectively guide growth so that the qualities they love are not lost to outdated rules. A build-out analysis is one tool that takes into account actual growth pressures and paints a realistic picture by which to manage growth. If even a fraction of that number of homes were built under current rules, it would transform Catskill's rural character into a suburban setting typical of anywhere in the nation and result in higher taxes for residents and businesses.

Recommendation 7.2: Coordinate infrastructure maintenance and improvements with planned development

The fiscal impacts and quality of life impacts from rapid and poorly coordinated growth are legitimate and timely issues facing Catskill. The Town and Village of Catskill have a compelling public interest to encourage development standards that makes efficient use of municipal services and facilities. Rapid development, like that occurring in other Hudson Valley communities, can overburden local services, diminish the quality of services for all of Catskill's residents, and impair public safety. Existing infrastructure also represents a sizable long-term investment by local taxpayers who expect to see these investments protected and enhanced.

The Town and Village of Catskill will manage new development to maximize the efficient use of existing public facilities and infrastructure. Land development proposals will have to demonstrate that municipal services will adequately serve the project upon completion. For example, this may include showing that there is room to accommodate additional students in the school system or that traffic Level of Service ratings will not drop

below a defined level. This means that for large land development activities, the School Board, Town boards, and other agencies should be at the table. If a development proposal creates a demand that exceeds adequate service levels, the locality has several options. One approach is to phase development contingent on future improvements to public facilities. Another approach is to approve a scaled down version of the proposal where the anticipated impacts are manageable.

Goal: Effective code enforcement

Clear, strong, and evenly enforced rules benefit many sectors of the community. Catskill residents benefit because this pushes new development toward the realization of planned community goals. At the same time, developers save time and money if they know upfront what a community demands of them, rather than back and forth discussions with public officials over ambiguous and vague rules. Both the village and town must make code enforcement a priority as well. The rules are only as good as our efforts to enforce them. Enforcing existing property maintenance ordinances also maintains the quality of life in Catskill.

Recommendation 8.1: Require that development applications describe in detail how they advance the goals of the comprehensive plan.

The community has invested time and money developing its vision for the future through the comprehensive plan. Yet, it is not unusual for developers, local residents, and even public officials to not consult the plan before development or review of site plans. A reminder of the community's goals is sometimes needed.

This recommendation has two purposes. First, it makes sure that applicants review the comprehensive plan and apply it to their projects. Second, it reminds public officials (staff and planning board members), as well as Catskill residents, of their vision. As part of the permitting process, the applicant will be required to submit a short, but detailed description about the ways in which their project meets the vision and goals of the comprehensive plan. Given the importance of the comprehensive plan, the community should consider making this the first item for application to the planning or zoning boards.

Recommendation 8.2: Devise checklists, based on zoning code and the comprehensive plan, to guide staff and officials to help applicants foster community vision

In the land development process, many communities require a preliminary proposal that is the basis for the applicant and community to work together. After an initial review and discussion, the preliminary proposal is developed into a full application. A checklist of standards and guidelines can streamline this process and allow the reviewing board to quickly identify shortcomings of proposed land development projects before it advances too far in the review process. As a document for public use,

developers would have easy access to review and incorporate the criteria that the board will use. The scorecard/checklist could use the following categories to describe the project and its impacts:

> Located near infrastructure
> Promotes walkability
> Reflects appropriate design/history
> Attracts high-quality jobs
> Promotes a mix of uses
> Provides housing options
> Preserves open space
> Protects the environment
> Provides community amenities

Recommendation 8.3: Change rules to make enforcement easier and clearer

Too often our laws and regulations were written by people for whom clarity was not a priority. Furthermore, amendments over time results in wording that can be confusing and vague. Ambiguous language and regular turnover in municipal staff can lead to conflicting interpretations and the loss of good-will between the municipality and applicants.

Both the town and the village should review existing ordinances for clarity and assess which changes will enable the easier enforcement of rules. Clear, concise rules benefit everyone. The Town and Village of Catskill have numerous ordinances already on the books, that if enforced would promote the achievement of the goals identified in the comprehensive plan. A first step to easier enforcement is easier compliance.

The rules also require appropriate fines for enforcement. Many communities find that they have set fines for violations so low that developers just consider them a cost of doing business rather than a deterrent. Instead, fines should be substantial enough, and grow quickly enough over time, to dissuade violations and encourage quick compliance.

Recommendation 8.4: Ensure appropriate town and village staff resources to make sure code enforcement remains consistent and thorough.

Well-enforced rules even provide a level playing field all who invest in the community, from developers to life-long residents. It ensures consistent development and protects investments of existing property owners. However, enforcing rules requires the communities have sufficient, trained enforcement staff. The town and village should make sure there are ongoing

and sufficient resources for this purpose. The village and town should consider combining efforts so that one team of code enforcement officers covers both municipalities. Furthermore, the Village and Town Justices and attorneys should be partners in this effort and understanding the goals of the community. Fines should be reviewed on a regular basis and revised if necessary to deter violations. Inspection and application fees should cover the cost of administering these services.

In terms of other resources, it would be important to make sure that applicants – and not the town or village – cover the cost of the application. Fees for the applications should be updated to cover costs, especially when extra services, such as an outside expert, may be required.

Recommendation 8.5: Add pictures, graphs and other visual representations to zoning and subdivision code to aid developers with an understanding of the community's vision

A picture is worth a thousand words. In zoning codes they can be an efficient way to convey to developers and other applicants the community's guidelines and standards. These can depict features like setbacks or building sizes and details that are preferred in Catskill. By describing the different options, builders can create a wide variety of housing and building styles that comply with official code, sustain community character, and promote local vision. Such images, graphs, or figures work to supplement existing written rules. Explain to applicants that these images depict site design features and elements that the community expects of new development.

Recommendation 8.6: Make sure property maintenance ordinances are appropriate and make their enforcement a priority.

Enforcement of junk ordinances should be firm, consistent, and fairly applied. The prevalence of unkempt properties was identified during the community meetings as a top priority. Junk in yards, derelict buildings, and abandoned cars were visual blights routinely identified by public participants. At the public meetings some residents expressed concern that untidiness in a few locations was harming property values in the neighborhood. The community should review current ordinances to make sure they are written to accomplish the task and make their enforcement a priority. A neat and tidy appearance is in the interest of a community promoting itself as a tourist destination rich in natural, historic, and rural character.

Recommendation 8.7: Variances should be rare.

Zoning rules provide for the uniform application of adopted standards that will move the community toward its vision. However, zoning presumes that the land it regulates is uniform, as well. The reality is that no two pieces of land are exactly the same, and it can be a challenge to apply fixed standards. A zoning variance is a way to provide a measure of relief from one or more requirements in very limited circumstances on particular pieces of land.

Variances should be granted sparingly because they are permanent and run with the land, not limited to a particular landowner. Also, the zoning board needs to remember that variances set precedence. Under similar circumstances, the board must grant similar variances. The cumulative effect of this can quickly undermine the zoning ordinance and the community's vision as established in the Comprehensive Plan.

There are two types of variances – area variances and use variances. A use variances permits a use for the land that is otherwise not allowed by zoning. An area variance permits a use that is allowed, but that does not meet dimensional requirements such as setback, height or area.

To obtain a use variance, an applicant must demonstrate that the zoning causes an unnecessary hardship. Proving that hardship requires meeting all four conditions.

1. The owner cannot realize a reasonable return on the property as zoned. This lack of return must be substantial and must be proven with competent financial evidence. In the eyes of the courts, it does not matter if the desired use is more profitable than the allowed use. Landowners are only entitled to a reasonable return.

2. The hardship must be unique to the individual property and not a substantial portion of the zoning district. If the hardship applies to a whole neighborhood, then the Town Board shall change the zoning, not provide a variance.

3. Granting the variance cannot alter the essential character of the neighborhood.

4. The hardship cannot be self-created. For example, if a developer buys land zoned residential, but wants to build a commercial structure, he cannot argue that the zoning is creating a hardship for him.

Obtaining an area variance is easier than a use variance. In this case, a zoning board of appeals need only demonstrate that the members considered each of the following questions in terms of the health, safety and welfare of the neighborhood or community when making its rational decision.

1. Will the area variance produce an undesirable change in the neighborhoods character or be a detriment to nearby properties?
2. Can the benefit sought by the applicant be achieved by another method?
3. Is variance substantial?
4. Will the proposed variance have an adverse impact on the physical or environmental conditions of the surrounding neighborhood or district?
5. Is the hardship self-created? This question shall be considered during discussions, but it does not preclude granting the variance.

In the case of both variances, state law requires that the zoning board grant the minimum variance necessary and must at the same time preserve and protect the character of the neighborhood and the health, safety and welfare of the community. Variances may be granted with stipulations set by the Zoning Board of Appeals, such as requiring landscaping to mitigate the impact of the variance on the neighborhood. Indeed, protecting community character is one of the most important reasons for imposing conditions upon the granting of a variance. However, zoning boards may not impose conditions unrelated to the variance on a project.[4]

[4] This section was adapted from *Variances: Basic Tools and Techniques*, published online by the Pace Law School. www.law.pace.edu/landuse/varia.html

Goal: A town and village working together to efficiently raise the quality of life for all

Economic development, community character and environmental protection do not stop at municipal boundaries. We realize that partnerships across these lines are a practical way of saving money and securing the well being of our future. Working together, the two communities can better realize their goals.

Recommendation 9.1: Investigate opportunities to secure grant funding for town/village initiatives

By adopting a joint-comprehensive plan, the Village and Town of Catskill position themselves favorably for public and private funds. The goals outlined in this document demonstrate to prospective funders that individual projects in the community are conceived as part of a larger vision. In addition, donor organizations and agencies, especially at the state level, prioritize projects where inter-municipal cooperation and planning are project keystones.

Recommendation 9.2: Streamline appropriate functions between the town/village or the county

Many upstate New York communities save money and improve service through inter-municipal sharing and cooperation. In Catskill, this is already achieved with the consolidation of the Assessor's Office, thereby saving taxpayer money and providing streamlined services. Highway department equipment is another area that many public works departments typically team together. Developing a working relationship between the two municipalities will enable each to realize economies of scale and other efficiencies that will enable the cost effective provision of services. This may take place on any number of other issues like economic development, code enforcement, land-use policies, tourism development, and historic preservation. Recognize that such cooperative efforts are long-term relationships. Learn by starting small.

Recommendation 9.3: Hire a planner for the village and a planner for the town.

A full-time planner represents a significant investment for the future of Catskill communities. Primary responsibilities are to assist the town and

village in the review of project applications, to coordinate various planning related initiatives, and to provide technical expertise. The planner is the first point of contact for the applicant coming before the review boards. He or she helps make sure the applicant is ready for their hearings and can provide an informed assessment of project proposals. The planner may even work directly with applicants to find ways to improve projects. He or she also assists in guiding and organizing the implementation of the comprehensive plan. Grant writing, economic development and workforce housing are the kinds of local initiatives the planner may help manage.

The Town and Village should also consider teaming to develop a joint planning office. In addition to efficiencies of scale and money savings, this strategy allows the Town and Village to better coordinate growth.

Recommendation 9.4. Identify youth recreation needs, and improve parks and facilities for enjoyment by Catskill's youth

The Town and Village will work with the School District, the Catskill Community Center, and the Town and Village Recreation Commission to provide recreational opportunities for Catskill's youth. They need safe, supervised places for physical and social activity. In recent years the number of places in Catskill to hangout, be active, and stay out of trouble have diminished. In the Catskill Community Survey, 80 respondents (out of 116) indicated that they were not satisfied with the quality of recreational programs in Catskill. Parents speaking at public meetings for this comprehensive plan expressed dismay that soccer leagues, ice skating, water parks, and other structured youth activities were located so far from Catskill (even beyond Greene County) and required time-consuming drives. For some Catskill families managing multiple jobs, the lack of local opportunities means no opportunities at all since they cannot afford the time, money or means to enjoy recreation outside of the Town and Village. In order to strike a balance of indoor and outdoor recreation opportunities the community should consider the needs of age, affordability, and access. A key priority for Village and hamlet recreation opportunities is walkability to residential neighborhoods.

Recommendation 9.5. Improve parks and facilities in both the Town and Village to provide active and passive recreation for all of Catskill's residents

Catskill's woods, mountains, waters, and shores can sustain an amazing range of outdoor recreation for both residents and tourists. Public recreational resources are vital to the quality of life for Catskill residents and

help protect our environment. In the course of public meetings residents expressed support for the future sustainable development of these natural resources for public enjoyment. This includes opportunities for fishing, birding, hunting, hiking, cycling, horseback riding, camping, and other passive recreation activities. The Catskill Community Survey also reported a number of other activities and facilities that respondents would be interested in seeing. These include athletic fields, ice-skating, marinas, equipped playgrounds, picnic areas, swimming pools, tennis courts, and a skateboard park.

The Town and Village will work together to establish priority recreation improvements. Where recreation goals for the two communities overlap, the Town and Village will work together on issues of planning, funding, and maintenance in order to lower costs to each community. The Town and Village will also work with agencies and organizations in order to promote the public enjoyment of Catskill's natural assets and public recreation facilities. Organizations that work on open space, environmental stewardship, and greenway and trail development should be approached.

Recommendation 9.6: Develop and implement policies that promote local workforce housing

The presence of a local and skilled workforce is essential to any business's decision to invest itself in a community. However, this must mean that there are safe and affordable neighborhoods for the workforce to live in. Affordable workforce housing is a key concern that has risen with the region's desirability and accessibility. Between 2001 and 2006, median housing prices rose from $90,000 to $175,000. A family would have to earn $70,000 to afford this today, at a time when median income is $53,000 in Greene County.

Catskill's housing strategy must strive for a balanced mix of housing types suitable for all life-stages of Catskill's residents. While Catskill prepares for the upside of success, the downside often means higher rents and prices. Regional growth pressures and shifts in the housing market are making affordable workforce housing harder to secure for Catskill's residents. They include municipal employees, the manufacturing and office trades, hospital workers, retail personnel, and senior citizens.

A coordinated, multi-tiered approach must be developed involving the Town, Village, the private sector, and not-for-profit organizations. As of the adoption of this comprehensive plan, the Village is working with a developer to add workforce housing units to an existing housing project. Furthermore, the Town is raising funds for a workforce housing study which

will result in a plan. As Catskill formulates a housing strategy, the following considerations should be examined.

Balance is key

The Village and Town of Catskill can take a proactive role in facilitating the improvement and development of workforce housing. Because developers are risk adverse, their proposals tend to be safe from a financial perspective. In other words, they do what they are familiar with. This often means conventional 2,000-3,000 square foot homes in single-family areas. Homes such as these, while a viable option for higher income buyers, are out of reach for most of the workforce. Workforce housing can be a reality with appropriate municipal regulations, knowledgeable organizations, and local funding. Without these, the housing industry will build what is easy, not necessarily what Catskill needs. However, local rules and other incentive should not be so cumbersome that developers are scared from considering workforce units in appropriate areas. Balance is key.

Public/Private Partnerships. Community development corporations (referred to as "CDCs") are organizations established at the local level with paid and volunteer staff that develop and administer housing programs. As intermediaries and experts they facilitate workforce-housing programs by leveraging local, state, federal, and private funding. They also expedite the permitting process which otherwise adds dollars the provision of workforce-housing. They also coordinate and publicize housing options made possible by the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA), Community Development Block Grants, NYS Affordable Housing Corporation, and federal and state HOME funds.

Zoning. Make it easier for developers to build more small houses. These housing options can fill a number of housing market needs such as starter homes or downsizing from large homes with high upkeep costs. "Cottage Zoning" recommends that home sizes be between 600 and 1000 square feet. These homes are typically developed in clusters of four to twenty units and developed as a Planned Unit Development (PUD). Communities may also require a certain percentage of affordable units be set-aside in new developments. Typically, this is associated with an incentive for the developer such as a density bonus of a few additional market-rate units.

Code Enforcement. Enforce local and state codes to ensure that the existing rental housing remains in good condition. This can slow the deterioration of units falling into substandard conditions and off the market.

Rehabilitation. Rehabilitation costs less than new construction of affordable units and can stem the loss of workforce housing. Adopting the HUD's "Nationally Applicable Recommended Rehabilitation Provisions" can reduce rehabilitation costs even further. These provisions are modeled on

New Jersey's successful effort to update its building codes. Reducing the costs of code compliance makes renovation financially attractive and provides a reliable alternative source of workforce housing.

Recommendation 9.7: Improve quality of life for residents of Smith's Landing by reducing odors from solid waste railroad haulage.

The Town will work with NYSDOT, the Federal Railroad Administration, and CSX Corporation, the operator of the rail line adjacent to Smiths Landing, to reduce the almost daily effects of odors from solid and municipal waste railroad haulage. Solid waste haulage stops at mid-day for a few hours at a location immediately adjacent to Smith's Landing. During these stops odors from compacted and seeping waste frequent blow over the community. Although this is a nuisance year-round, the impact is worst during summer months. Residents of Smith's Landing expressed a number of possible solutions, including stopping the train along less populated segments.

Goal: Preservation of historic assets and cultural heritage

A communities' choice to preserve its historic buildings and neighborhoods affirms the communities' heritage and sets a direction for revitalization efforts. The Village of Catskill already has a robust historic preservation ordinance on the books and a sizeable historic district, the East Side Historic Neighborhood. This District is recorded on the National Register of Historic Places. There are 10 additional buildings and sites within Catskill that are designated on the National Register. Most communities are correct when they assume this designation provides stringent review procedures for projects within these structures. What most communities do not know is that these review procedures only kick-in when federal dollars are used to fund such projects. The recommendations under this Goal should be used to further the protection of these and other historic assets in the Town and Village.

Recommendation 10.1: Educate Village and Town residents on the value of the Historic Preservation

The Village should conduct public outreach activities that emphasize to residents and business owners in the East Side Historic District the value of preserving Catskill's historic character as well as steps residents can take to maintain and renovate their homes and business structures. Although the Village already has a strong historic preservation ordinance which applies to certain sections of the Village, many residents are unaware of what it requires and how it is of value to their community. For example, an official Village review of proposed building alterations and improvements within the Historic District helps to protect the Village's unique sense of place. Outreach should emphasize, too, the overall value of preservation in terms of local economic success and the improvement of property values.

Recommendation 10.2: Use "Neighborhood Design Standards" to protect certain priority neighborhoods in the Village and Town

"Neighborhood Design Standards" (sometimes called Conservation Districts) is a way for communities to ensure that the 'look and feel' of a neighborhood and its homes remains cohesive through project-by-project changes. This standard is subject to a less rigorous review than the official Historic District standards. It is also more appropriate for neighborhoods where building alterations over time have weakened the historic integrity of a neighborhood. Neighborhood Design Standards address a building's

character defining features, such as *generalized* architectural features, their relation on the house, and building mass. However, Neighborhood Design Standards *do not* prescribe exact dimensions, what materials to use (for example, cedar shingles over vinyl) or exterior colors.

These standards are developed on a neighborhood-by-neighborhood basis. For example, if a neighborhood in Catskill were generally defined by Four-Square, two story residences, rear (not front) garages, gabled roofs, and covered front door steps, then the standards would prescribe that new homes or alterations would have to include such features. Thus, a proposed new home for where one burned down could not have a level parapet roof or omit a covered front porch. Likewise, a mobile home or three story structure would not be permitted.

Recommendation 10.3: Locate, secure, and organize the Town and Village's inventory of historic places and other historic documents

Recently, local historians have spent time, effort, and some public funds to find and collect information about Catskill's history. This information can be a boon to future economic development since authentic places are attractive to many modern day entrepreneurs. These inventories should be finalized and enhanced, since Catskill is rich in history. There are several benefits. First, it provides a basis for determining which buildings truly *contribute* to the historic character of a community. This can prove economically valuable for tourism, as well as creating the 'local flavor' that attracts quality businesses and a skilled workforce. Second, it provides a way to identify sites that may be eligible for listing on the National Historic Register. Involvement in the State or National Register of Historic Places offers financial opportunities to both the municipality and the property owner. Finally, it gives developers a clear sense of community priorities. By designing new and rehabilitation projects with the community's historic assets in mind, they can maximize the value of their projects in a minimum amount of time.

Recommendation 10.4: Become a Certified Local Government, seek out federal support for preservation efforts, and become a destination for historically based tourism and business development.

The "Certified Local Government" program is a grant and technical assistance program for communities to promote and plan for historic preservation. "Certified Local Government" is a status conferred to local governments by the NYS Historic Preservation Office and in partnership

with the National Park Service. This is contingent upon local preservation laws and a qualified citizen body to administer the law, among other stipulations. Other Hudson Valley communities, such as Peekskill and Coxsackie have taken advantage of this program.

Certified communities become eligible for assistance and funds from the National Park Service through NYS Historic Preservation Offices. Typically, awards include grant money used as seed money to initiate studies and projects for historic buildings and neighborhoods. Grants are a 50/50 match of federal and local dollars and awards range from $1000 to over $25,000. Since the program's inception in 1985, approximately $40 million has been allocated to local governments. Over twelve hundred local governments have benefited and continue to participate in the preservation efforts.