

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

VILLAGE OF CHESTER, NEW YORK



Prepared by the Village of Chester Comprehensive Plan Committee
with Planit Main Street, Inc.

Adopted by the Village of Chester Village Board – _____
FINAL DRAFT JANUARY 17, 2022



Preface

The Village of Chester Comprehensive Plan was prepared in accordance with NYS Village Law, §7-722. Under the law, the Village Board first had to determine how the plan would be prepared and who would conduct the review. The Village Board of Chester opted to create a committee composed of its members and citizens to work on the plan. All of the comprehensive plan committee meetings were open to the public. The Committee began the public participation process with a Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat (SWOT) Assessment for the Village of Chester, which was held on September 18, 2017. Following the SWOT Assessment, the responses were delineated, categories created and subcommittees formed; each headed by the appropriate committee person. The Committee’s work was aided by a planning consultant beginning on July 19, 2018.

In the Fall of 2019, the Committee partnered with the Orange County Citizen’s Foundation to conduct a Placemaking Tour of Chester, which was conducted on Saturday, October 5, 2019. Thereafter, the Committee completed its work on the draft Comprehensive Plan and scheduled its Public Hearing on the draft Comprehensive Plan. After revisions were made, the Committee recommended the initial plan to the Village Board for review and adoption. Subsequently, the Village Board referred the draft Comprehensive Plan to the Orange County Planning Department, addressed SEQRA and conducted its Public Hearing.

State Environmental Quality Review

The State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) identifies the adoption of a municipality's land use plan as an action that is presumed likely to have a significant impact on the environment. SEQRA allows the Village to prepare a Full Environmental Assessment Form (EAF) Part 1, 2 and 3 and then issue a Negative Declaration for a comprehensive plan if there are no potentially significant environmental impacts as a result of its adoption. Chester’s 2020 Comprehensive Plan is written in a manner to serve as the Full EAF Part 3 for the policies and recommendations contained herein. Throughout the Comprehensive Plan, a “Full EAF Part 3 Discussion” is provided, which assesses potential environmental impacts of proposed policies. Based upon this analysis, Chester has determined no potentially large environmental impacts will occur as a result of the adoption of the 2020 Comprehensive Plan.

Following compliance with SEQRA and the adoption of this Comprehensive Plan, the Village Board will immediately undertake to revise its zoning code, along with any other regulations it deems necessary to effectuate the plan.

Vision Statement

With this Comprehensive Plan, The Village of Chester establishes a vision, both short-term and long-range, for the future of our municipality, one that is rooted in the recognition and reinforcement of shared values and interests benefiting all residents. Primary among these values is the belief that the Village enjoys many distinctive features, both geographically and socially, that make this an outstanding place to live. These features must be nurtured and protected to ensure an ongoing quality of life consistent with smart growth, a safe and healthy environment, and a balanced socio-economic fabric. Among these features are:

- A valuable inventory of historic buildings that contribute to the character and overall identity of the Village
- An extraordinary and vibrant agricultural district that reflects both our history and our future
- A diverse population comprised of a varied cross-section of social, economic and ethnic backgrounds
- A robust commercial/economic platform that supports, in environmentally sound ways, both tourism and the needs of the local population
- A healthy network of municipal parks, offering a wide range of recreational activities
- A harmonious blend of housing options, with an emphasis on residential homes to encourage financial and emotional investment in the community.

In our Vision for the Village of Chester in the future, our agricultural farmland is protected and productive, the integrity of historic building stock is preserved, business districts revitalized, housing opportunities expanded, and overall quality of life enhanced. In the coming years, we seek to:

- Establish and revise, where necessary, the Village Code, including Zoning Code, to reinforce the Comprehensive Plan's goals
- Protect the integrity of the village, its black dirt farmland, public parks, and our natural resources by carefully managing changes in land use
- Preserve historic buildings, cultural and civic institutions, open space, and the integrity of our residential neighborhoods
- Enhance our business districts to create vibrant centers for civic engagement
- Promote a healthy lifestyle through the adoption of complete street policies
- Ensure a sustainable land use pattern that is more resilient to natural disasters
- Provide sustainable public infrastructure and services to meet growing community needs in a cost-effective manner
- Increase housing opportunities for all age groups and income levels
- Set quality design standards to ensure that new land uses enrich our community aesthetics and are in harmony with the existing fabric of the Village of Chester.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Village Board

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 Christopher Battiato, Deputy Mayor
 Alan Battiato, Trustee
 Elizabeth A. Reilly, Trustee
 Brian J. Boone, Trustee

 Rebecca Rivera, Village Clerk
 John Orr, Code Enforcement Officer
 Sandra VanRiper, Building, Planning and Zoning Board Secretary

Comprehensive Plan Committee

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 Christopher Battiato, Deputy Mayor [Transportation, Infrastructure]
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 Brian J. Boone, Trustee – [Economic Development]
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1.0 Introduction

1.1 General

The entire group of unincorporated villages – Chester, West Chester, East Chester, Chester at the Erie Depot, and Greycourt were formally incorporated as the Village of Chester on June 28, 1892. This was a result of seeking fire protection after the great fire of July 5, 1877, when much of the downtown section burned and all records of the town were lost. From the mid-eighteenth century, the Village has established its place as an important agricultural, business, cultural industrial, residential and transportation center in the Town of Chester and Orange County.

The Village has two distinct traditional business districts. “Downtown” is sited along Main Street in the vicinity of the 1915 Chester Erie Depot at the northern end of the Village. It grew upon arrival of the Erie Railroad in 1841 and is noted for its pedestrian-scale and three-story mixed-use buildings. “Uptown” is situated at the intersection of Academy Avenue and Main Street beginning during the colonial period at the intersection of major trails (e.g., Kings Highway, Waywayanda Path and Minisink Trail). Uptown is noted for its eclectic mix of one and two-story mixed-use primarily frame buildings and single-family homes. It is the oldest area of the Village and grew up around the 1765 Yelverton Inn. It was the center of Village activity until the arrival of the Erie Railroad in 1841. Residential growth occurred in batches, each with its own architectural style.

Chester remains an important employment center with its strip retail centers that developed during the mid-1960s along NYS Route 17M after NYS Route 17 (Quickway) opened in the mid-1950s. The Chester Industrial Park, situated southwest of NYS Route 17 (Future I-86), is also a major employment center. The Village remains an important agricultural center with nearly 20% of its land area comprising Black Dirt farmland. The Village has a *unique character* defined, in part, by its natural resources, built environment and local residents. With respect to natural resources, the low-lying Black Dirt farmland provides sweeping views to the forested hillsides of Goosepond Mountain, which lies to the southeast. Civic and institutional buildings like Village Hall, the 1915 Chester Erie Depot and its churches form the basis of Chester’s identity and character. Historic and architecturally significant homes also define Chester’s distinct character as does the Heritage Trail built on the Erie Rail line. Lastly, its residents - with their rich sense of history, diversity and strong sense of community - help to provide its *distinct sense of place*.

VISION STATEMENT

“WITH THIS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, THE VILLAGE OF CHESTER ESTABLISHES A VISION, BOTH SHORT-TERM AND LONG-RANGE, FOR THE FUTURE OF OUR MUNICIPALITY, ONE THAT IS ROOTED IN THE RECOGNITION AND REINFORCEMENT OF SHARED VALUES AND INTERESTS BENEFITING ALL RESIDENTS.”



This Comprehensive Plan is intended, in part, to preserve Chester’s unique sense of place, to stimulate new investment in the community and to make it more resilient to the effects of natural disasters and changing weather patterns in the future, in addition to providing a framework for how to respond to unforeseen challenges and events. In spite of these challenges, Chester’s residents have demonstrated their resiliency and ability to adapt to new circumstances. This Plan reflects those strong community values and the desire to protect them for future generations.

Chester’s *quality of life* reflects resident perceptions about cultural, economic, health, physical, social and environmental features of life. *Quality of life* is therefore a contextual concept, having no independent or absolute value, but is rather a statement about the relative well-being of a community. The general sentiment of its residents is the quality of life in Chester is very good. Primary among these values is the belief that the Village enjoys many distinctive features, both geographically and socially, that make Chester an outstanding place to live.

The planning vision for the Village of Chester is to encourage growth in a manner that reflects the best qualities of the Village’s built environment, while maintaining high-quality standards for new development within the community. This approach to managing future growth and development is necessary to protect the quality of life within the community. Planning is an opportunity to propose solutions to shortcomings and problems that are evident now and those that can be foreseen. This is especially true in the light of planned large-scale developments with regional impacts, such as Legoland, large scale residential developments and the redevelopment of Camp LaGuardia, which have the potential to dramatically change development/traffic patterns and social opportunities in and around Chester.

1.2 Purpose of the Plan

A comprehensive plan is not required under New York State Law. However, New York State law requires that zoning, if adopted, be in harmony with a "well considered plan." In accordance with NYS Village Law, §7-722(3)(a), comprehensive plans are intended to be general in nature and may include, but are not limited to, the designation of land-use; the consideration of goals, objectives and policies for agricultural, cultural, historic and natural resource protection; transportation systems; future housing needs, and present and future locations of community facilities; existing or proposed recreation facilities/parkland; future general location of commercial and industrial uses; strategies for all the above areas and improving the local economy.

Village of Chester, New York



Above (top to bottom): View of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church; view of Chester Union Free School District circa 1935 Art Deco School on Maple Avenue; and view of the Orange Heritage Rail Trail in the vicinity of Grey Court in the southeastern part of the Village. Chester’s unique identity is defined, in part, by its agricultural heritage, natural and scenic resources and built environment.

A comprehensive plan is a document prepared by a local government that looks at the interrelated functions of a community, establishes aspirations based on public and stakeholder input and establishes strategies to achieve those aspirations by coordinating the efforts of local government staff, departments and regulatory boards, and to a lesser extent, those efforts of higher layers of government such as the County, State and Federal governments. At its core, a comprehensive plan is a document that sets a destination for a community and maps a course to get there.

1.3. The Comprehensive Plan Process

The Village Board of Chester created a committee composed of members of the Village Board and citizens to work on the plan along with members of subcommittees and a planning consultant. All of the Comprehensive Plan committee meetings were open to the public. The Committee kicked-off the public participation process with a Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat (SWOT) Assessment for the Village of Chester, which was held on September 18, 2017. The results from the SWOT Assessment is provided in Table 1-1 below.

Table 1-1 Responses from Each Category of the SWOT Analysis			
Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Water System	Pedestrian Unfriendly	Traffic Realignment Main Street	Lack of Intra-City Transit
Historic Integrity of the Building Stock	Traffic	Business District Connection	Aquifer Protection
Rich Black Dirt Area	Zone Change Criteria is Weak	Diversity of Housing Options for all income levels	Water Supply Protection, Village wells in Town
Agricultural Land	Shortage of Commuter Parking	Resiliency and Sustainability	Development Pressure on Infrastructure
Balance and Diversity of Land Uses	High Density Housing Proposed	Zoning District Changes	Traffic and Safety on Local Roads
Diverse and Talented Population	Infrastructure, Flood Control	Control Over Growth Potential	Flooding Risks and Hazards
Convenient Public Transportation and Roads	Insufficient Parking in Uptown Area	Growth Management	Natural Gas Access
Orange Heritage Trail and Recreation	Connections	Public Outreach and Transparency	Unsustainable Overdevelopment
Active Community Groups	Recreation	Technology -Communication Between Residents and Village	Impacts of Freight and Shipping on Microclimates
Large Arts Community	Narrow Main Street	Architectural Review Board	(Air Quality around Industrial Park)
Proximity to NYC, Geographic Center of Orange County	Fragmented Business District	Early public input in development review process	Large-Scale Projects, Legoland, Camp LaGuardia, etc.

SWOT ANALYSIS

“THE COMMITTEE KICKED-OFF THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS WITH A STRENGTH, WEAKNESS, OPPORTUNITY AND THREAT (SWOT) ASSESSMENT FOR THE VILLAGE OF CHESTER, WHICH WAS HELD ON SEPTEMBER 18, 2017.”

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Important Prehistoric and Archeological Sites	Aesthetics	Public Art Installations	
Mix of Individual Business and Chain Stores	Housing Balance	Broaden Public Events (Fairs and Festivals)	
Beautification Efforts	“McDonaldization” of Route 17/17M	Large-Scale Projects, Legoland, Camp LaGuardia, etc.	
	Intrusive Road Signs, Billboards	Economic Development Coordination	
	No Noise Ordinance	Increased communication between the Town and Village	

Following the SWOT Assessment, Subcommittees were created. The Committee continued to meet monthly to work on the Comprehensive Plan. The Committee further encouraged public participation by providing a public comment period at each Committee meeting and by inviting the public through its website www.villageofchesterny.com/comprehensive-plan, which included an overview of the public participation process and calendar of meetings. At the July 2018 meeting, a public outreach group was formed, which conducted informal workshops monthly, followed by monthly formal meetings of the Comprehensive Plan Committee and the Consulting Planner.

The first phase of preparing the Comprehensive Plan included a relevant document review by the planning consultant, Committee and Village staff members. As draft Chapters were prepared by the consultant, they were reviewed and refined by the Committee, which led to the creation of the draft Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan Committee also considered these recommendations in creating the plan:

- Village Board priorities and policy direction as reflected in local laws
- Potential impacts to the Village of Chester resulting from Large-Scale Projects such as Legoland, and the redevelopment of Camp LaGuardia, etc.
- Recent severe storm events, which appear to be influenced by climate change
- Updates to demographic, housing and employment trend analysis
- Clarification of unclear objectives
- New federal and state requirements, laws or initiatives
- The need for better coordination of Plan policies and land-use laws to address conflicts

This Comprehensive Plan reflects a culmination of these efforts, along with public input at the Public Visioning Session. Chapter 2.0 provides a historic context concerning the development of the Village of Chester from pre-European settlement to today, along with an analysis of emerging trends that may affect growth in Chester tomorrow.

SWOT ANALYSIS

“RESIDENTS SELF-IDENTIFIED A NUMBER OF STRENGTHS THEY FELT THE VILLAGE OF CHESTER POSSESSES INCLUDING ITS ACTIVE COMMUNITY GROUPS, RICH BLACK DIRT AREA, INTEGRITY OF ITS HISTORIC BUILDINGS, MIX OF INDIVIDUAL BUSINESSES AND CHAIN STORES, PROXIMITY TO NEW YORK CITY, AND BEING SITUATED IN THE GEOGRAPHIC CENTER OF THE COUNTY.”

2.0 Portrait of Chester

The Portrait of Chester provides a brief summary of the history of the Village (Yesterday) in order to provide a context to the forces that have shaped Chester's growth (Today) and the demographic trends that are likely to shape the growth of Chester over the next decade (Tomorrow). This is followed by specific demographic trends summarized from U.S. Census Bureau data up to 2010. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the planning implications related to emerging trends in the Village and within the surrounding region.

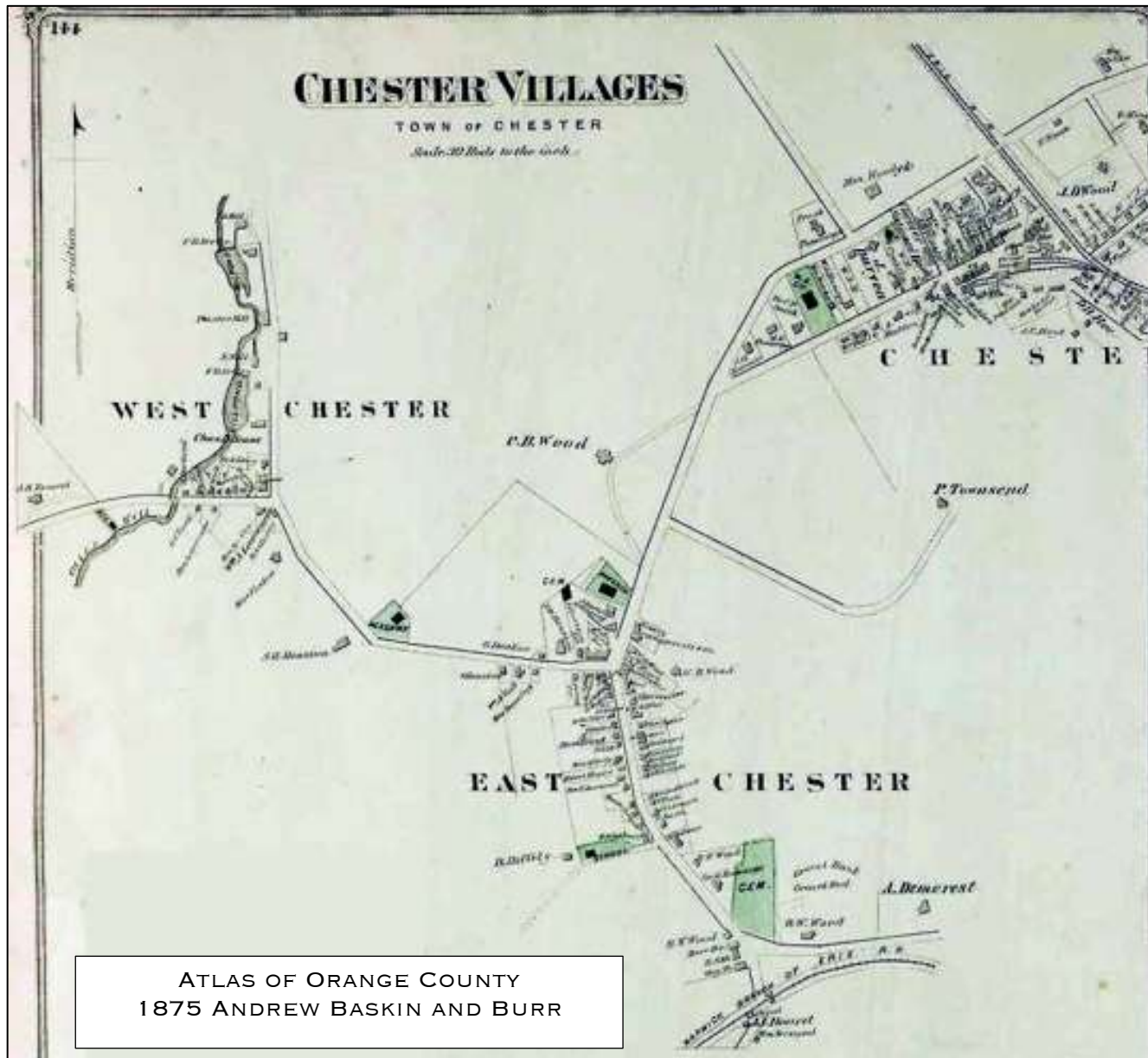
2.1 Yesterday – Chester's history

The Chester area has been occupied by a long series of cultures, beginning with the Paleo-Indian culture, who arrived shortly after the retreat of the Wisconsin glacier roughly 12,000 – 14,000 years ago, through to the Lenapehoking culture (Lenape), which came into this region about 700 years before European settlers. Europeans first settled the Chester area in the early eighteenth century. On May 19, 1755 John Yelverton bought 42 $\frac{3}{4}$ acres of land from James Ensign for a sum of 97 pounds and 4 shillings. This is part of the acreage on which the Village of Chester is located.¹

John Yelverton established the Yelverton Inn about 1765 at the intersection of major thoroughfares (Kings Highway, Wawayanda Path and Minisink Trail - near the current intersection of Academy Avenue and Main Street) during the colonial period. This Inn was not only the nucleus of growth for this settlement called Chester but also hosted significant events in the creation of these United States and the region. 1787: "The Trial of the (18th) Century² adjudicated the basis of central Orange County property rights.³ The Orange County Committee of Safety met in the Inn during the Revolution.⁴ George Washington, et al spent time here during the Revolution.⁵ Peter Townsend, proprietor of the Sterling Iron Works, built his residence,⁶ company store and marshalling yard across the street.⁷ As critical to the success of the American Revolution as the third and only successful Chain Across the Hudson that blocked British control of the river, was the first modern military procurement contract with specifications, enforceable quality controls, and penalties negotiated at this residence between Townsend and Secretary of War, Mr. Pickering, signed on February 2nd, 1778. In 1794, the first post office was established in Chester.⁸ It was located in the vicinity of the current post office.

EARLY SETTLEMENT PATTERNS

“EUROPEANS FIRST SETTLED THE CHESTER AREA IN THE EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY. ON MAY 19, 1755 JOHN YELVERTON BOUGHT 42 $\frac{3}{4}$ ACRES OF LAND FROM JAMES ENSIGN FOR A SUM OF 97 POUNDS AND 4 SHILLINGS. THIS IS PART OF THE ACREAGE ON WHICH THE VILLAGE OF CHESTER IS LOCATED.”



EARLY SETTLEMENT PATTERNS

MAPS SHOWING EARLY SETTLEMENT PATTERNS IN THE CHESTER AREA ALONG EARLY TURNPIKES AND THE KING'S HIGHWAY.



ABOVE: MAPS SHOWING EARLY SETTLEMENT PATTERNS IN THE CHESTER AREA ALONG EARLY TURNPIKES AND THE KING'S HIGHWAY.

Early settlement of the Chester area was advanced by the development of turnpikes such as Orange Turnpike (1800), Nyack-Goshen Road, New Windsor and Blooming Grove Turnpike (1801) and public roads such as King’s Highway (Trenton, N.J. to Newburgh), which greatly improved access to markets for area farmers. In 1806, the Orange Turnpike was extended south to the New Jersey line and north near the hamlet of Chester further improving access to the community.⁹

About a half mile northwest of Yelverton’s Inn the Otterkill provided waterpower for several mills, the first being Denton’s Mill, before 1785.¹⁰ The development in this area was known as “West Chester.” The most extensive enterprise was W.A. Lawrence's cheese/sugar and powder factory which operated from about 1876, into the 1920s.¹¹

The nucleus for East Chester was the colonial period Joseph Drake's old tavern, located about four tenths of a mile south east of the Yelverton Inn along the King’s Highway and the road to Monroe, also known as “Ramapo Pass Trail”. The Presbyterian congregation built their church here in 1797, on land that is now the Chester Community Cemetery.

During the early 1800s, Chester remained largely an agrarian farming community with the main dairy product being butter. This would change with the arrival of the Erie Railroad in 1841, which altered the nature of farming and commerce in the Town for years to come. In 1840, the Erie Railroad reached Greycourt, then known as Chesterville. It took until 1841 for the railroad to traverse west one mile to Chester, due to the difficulty in constructing a stable rail bed over the intervening muck lands.

The first shipment of milk by rail in 1842 was from Chester to Piermont, then twenty-one miles by boat to New York City. By 1843, Orange County milk was in high demand and the county’s liquid dairy industry was thriving. The focus of the Village gradually moved from “Uptown” to “Chester by the Depot” (Later known as ‘the lower village’ and currently ‘Downtown’) with the arrival of the Erie Railroad and the promotion by the first full time Station Agent on the Erie RR, Thaddeus Selleck. By 1849; the Newburgh Branch was completed from Greycourt, giving Orange County a direct rail link to the Hudson River. Upon seeing Chester’s improved access to distant markets, a group of prominent farmers and merchants in Warwick, N. Y. organized the Warwick Valley Railroad Company in 1859.

CHESTER

“IN 1840, THE ERIE RAILROAD REACHED GREYCOURT, THEN KNOWN AS CHESTERVILLE. IT TOOK UNTIL 1841 FOR THE RAILROAD TO TRAVERSE EAST ONE MILE TO CHESTER, DUE TO THE DIFFICULTY IN CONSTRUCTING A STABLE RAIL BED OVER THE INTERVENING MUCK LANDS. OVER TIME, THESE MUCK LANDS WERE DRAINED AND FARMERS USED THE BLACK DIRT FARMLAND.”

The line was built from Warwick, N. Y. to Greycourt, N. Y. where a connection could be made with the New York and Erie, as well as its Newburgh branch.” The Warwick Valley Railroad also established a station at East Chester. The railroads enabled local dairy farmers to ship milk directly to New York City and provided vital passenger rail service, which stimulated commerce and residential growth, until Conrail filed to abandon service along the “Erie Main Line” in 1983.

Over time, first by a wave of Irish, then Polish and Italian immigrants, these muck lands were drained and farmers used the Black Dirt farmland to produce a variety of crops, including beets, cabbage, carrots, celery, onions, parsnips and potatoes that were shipped to New York City daily. According to Louis W. White, former Town of Chester Historian: Mr. House raised the first onions and other area families then engaged in producing onions and other muckland crops. Being less perishable than most produce, Chester’s onions gained fame nourishing Union Troops during the Civil War.

Before the Town of Chester was officially created in 1845, the Village was in Sections of the Towns of Blooming Grove, Goshen, Monroe and Warwick. The Village of Chester is centrally located in Orange County, about four miles from the County Seat in the Village of Goshen.

On May 5, 1849, Hambletonian 10 - the founding sire of the Standardbred¹² horse breed - was foaled on the Jonas Seely Farm in Sugar Loaf, N.Y. Hambletonian raced once, at the Long Island Union Course, beating his rival in 2:48 plus. After that he was bred, and in his lifetime, he produced about 1,331 foals in his 24 seasons at stud. William Rysdyk stabled Hambletonian on his farm in the Village off High Street along the Chester-Washingtonville Road (Rt. 94). Hambletonian died on March 27, 1876, at the age of 27. His grave is marked by a red granite shaft and can be seen at a small plot on Hambletonian Avenue. A portion of his stable and Rysdyk’s home still stands in the village as does the home of his groom, Harmon Showers.

In 1861, William A. Lawrence, a dairyman in the Town of Chester, started in the cheese business and in the fall of 1872, began the manufacture of cream cheese squares. The first American cream cheese was a result of an attempt to create a richer batch of Neufchatel Cheese using cream as well as milk.

THE RISE OF BLACK DIRT FARMING

“OVER TIME, FIRST BY A WAVE OF IRISH, THEN POLISH AND ITALIAN IMMIGRANTS, THESE MUCK LANDS WERE DRAINED AND FARMERS USED THE BLACK DIRT FARMLAND TO PRODUCE A VARIETY OF CROPS, INCLUDING BEETS, CABBAGE, CARROTS, CELERY, ONIONS, PARSNIPS AND POTATOES THAT WERE SHIPPED TO NEW YORK CITY DAILY.”

W.A. Lawrence marketed cheeses under the Cow Brand Neufchatel Cream and Star Brand Cream Cheese brands. Charles Howell Green, located about two miles south of the Village of Chester on the Florida Road, also produced cheese under the World Brands plus other brands under contract. In 1880, Lawrence also wholesaled his cheese to D. Reynolds, a New York cheese distributor, who sold it as “Philadelphia Brand cream cheese.”

William A. Lawrence was also the first president of the Village and was instrumental in obtaining a water source for the Village and bringing in the Telford (paved) roads. The Village has a vibrant manufacturing history and several manufacturing concerns are still operating here in addition to numerous commercial and distribution enterprises.

The catalyst for the incorporation of the Village of Chester was the disastrous July 1877 fire that destroyed much of Downtown Chester.

“The creation of the Village was the mechanism used to provide fire protection through the formation of Walton Hose Company, and Chester’s gravity-fed water system with fire hydrants located throughout the built-up sections of the village.”¹³

The first residential neighborhoods formed during colonial times near Uptown along the major thoroughfares of the time in the vicinity of the Yelverton Inn and Peter Townsend’s homestead. The center of commerce shifted with the arrival of the Erie in 1840/1841. Greycourt and the Downtown developed rapidly thereafter followed by residential growth around Greycourt and Chester Stations in the mid-late 1800s.

When NYS Route 17 (The Quickway), opened in the mid-1950s, the business center again shifted. The Quickway dramatically improved vehicular access to the Village, helping to fuel significant commercial and residential growth. The move this time was to Route 17M where it remains today.

The Quickway Plaza shopping center was built in the early 1970s with an A&P supermarket as the anchor. When the A&P burned in March of 1976, it left the Village without a supermarket until Chester Mall, with its ShopRite, opened in March 1991.

THE RISE AND FALL OF CHEESE PRODUCTION IN CHESTER



ABOVE: The first American cream cheese was a result of an attempt to create a richer batch of Neufchatel Cheese using cream as well as milk. Over time, the dairy industry gradually declined and there are no dairy farms left in Chester.

Ease of access to the metropolitan region has made Chester an attractive bedroom community for residents. By the early 1980s, passenger rail service to The Chester Erie Depot ceased. It was spring, 1984, that the last passenger Metro North train passed through the Village of Chester along the Erie Railroad. The removal of the tracks was completed on November 28, 1984.

2.2 Today

The Village of Chester (Village) has a geographic area of 2.1 square miles with a population of 3,969 people, according to the 2010 Census. Between 2000 and 2010, the Village experienced a significant increase in its population, which was, in part, due to low real estate prices and the exodus from New York City following the 9/11 attack on the Twin Towers.

The Village experienced a population increase of 15.2% between 2000 and 2010. This was significantly higher than the growth rate of 9.2% in Orange County (County), and still a higher rate of growth than occurred in the surrounding Town/Villages of Blooming Grove, Goshen and Warwick. However, the rates of growth in the Town/Villages of Monroe and Town/Village of Woodbury exceeded 20% between 2000 and 2010. The most recent available Population Estimate is from the U.S. Bureau of the Census 2017 Annual Estimate of the Residential Population, which estimates the Village population at 4,129 persons.

The table on the next page shows how the Village of Chester, Town of Chester, surrounding municipalities and Orange County population has grown since 1960. From 1960 to 1980, the Village’s population growth was in line with the growth rate of Orange County. From 1980 to 1990, growth was a whopping 71.2% due largely to the Whispering Hills 690-unit condominium development. From 1990 to 2000, the Village’s growth rate was half the County rate. From 2000 to 2010, the Village’s growth of 15.2% was significantly higher than the County’s 9.2% growth rate.

Since the 1960s, there have been a series of annexations of Town of Chester lands into the Village of Chester, which have skewed the growth rate between these municipalities. In 2000, the average household size in the Village was 2.45 persons per household. This number only increased slightly to 2.52 persons per household in 2010. The Village’s large population increases in recent decades resulted, in large part, from residential housing development on lands that were annexed into the Village, rather than population growth from within the community.

DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS
BETWEEN THE LINES

“THE VILLAGE’S LARGE POPULATION INCREASES IN RECENT DECADES RESULTED, IN LARGE PART, FROM RESIDENTIAL HOUSING DEVELOPMENT ON LANDS THAT WERE ANNEXED INTO THE VILLAGE, RATHER THAN POPULATION GROWTH FROM WITHIN THE COMMUNITY.”

For this reason, Table 2-1 includes the population counts for the Town/Village combined and individually. When large tracts of land are annexed into the Village and then developed for residential housing, the resulting population increases can be substantial - straining community services. Developers will continue to seek annexation of their lands into the Village in order to gain access to municipal services (e.g. water and sewer), which, in turn, typically allow for greater development density.

**Table 2-1
Population Change 1960-2010**

	1960	1970	%Chg. '60-70	1980	%Chg. '70-80	1990	%Chg. '80-90	2000	%Chg. '90-00	2010	%Chg. '00-10	Persons Sq. Mi.
New York State	16,782,304	18,236,967	8.7	17,558,165	-3.7	17,990,778	2.5	18,976,457	5.5	19,378,102	2.1	402
Orange County	183,734	221,657	20.6	259,603	17.1	307,647	18.5	341,367	11.0	372,813	9.2	459
Town of Chester	2,002	3,140	56.8	4,940	57.3	5,868	18.7	8,695	48.2	*8,012	-7.8	320
Village of Chester	1,492	1,627	9.0	1,910	17.4	3,270	71.2	3,445	5.3	3,969	15.2	1,848
Chester (Town & Village)	3,494	4,767	36.4	6,850	43.7	9,138	33.4	12,140	32.8	11,981	-1.31	478
Blooming Grove (T & Vs)	3,777	8,813	133.3	12,339	40.0	16,673	35.1	17,351	3.9	18,028	3.9	519
Goshen (T&V)	6,835	8,393	22.8	10,463	24.6	11,500	1.0	12,913	12.3	13,687	6.0	314
Monroe (T & V)	5,965	9,190	54.1	14,948	62.7	23,035	54.1	31,407	36.3	39,912	27.1	190
Warwick (T&V)	12,551	16,956	35.1	20,976	24.2	27,193	29.6	30,764	13.1	32,065	4.2	316
Woodbury (T & V)	2,887	4,639	60.1	6,494	40.0	8,236	26.8	9,460	14.9	11,353	20.1	314

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census*Reflects closing of Camp LaGuardia and loss of 923 Group Quarters Population counted by U.S. Census in 2000.

ANNEXATION POLICY

“THIS PLAN SUPPORTS THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ANNEXATION POLICY TO PROTECT THE VILLAGE AND TO ASSIST VILLAGE POLICY MAKERS IN THEIR REVIEW OF ANNEXATION REQUESTS.”

The interests of the Village of Chester and the Town should be carefully considered before any request by developers to annex into the Village is considered. The first consideration should be whether there is existing capacity in municipal services to support the new growth. *Specifically, it is recommended that the new lands annexed into the Village come into the Village with the same or lower residential density than they had in the Town.*

Sustained population growth is expected to continue in Chester, and one of the primary goals of the Comprehensive Plan is to manage future development and population growth in a manner consistent with the Village’s character and vision.

2.3 Tomorrow

The Village of Chester in 2020 sits at a pivotal crossroads in its history.

In decades and centuries past, residential and commercial development projects were periodically offered and the Village, seeking growth, was amenable to these proposals. However, despite the presence of the Black Dirt region, the Village and surrounding areas are no longer the rural settings they once were. Today, Chester is increasingly an exurban and suburban municipality facing pressure and quality-of-life issues as open space is converted to high-density development.

In the coming years, steady population growth in the Village of Chester is expected to continue with projected large-scale regional development accelerating this rate of growth. The reason is two-fold:

- 1) Development with major regional impacts such as Legoland, the redevelopment of Camp LaGuardia, and the Greens of Chester will induce growth in the region, and
- 2) The proximity of the Village of Chester to these large-scale developments makes the Village increasingly attractive as a place for new employees to reside and for new businesses to locate.

Consequently, the Village has a greater interest and leverage in proactively managing the rate of development. The increase of proposed projects in anticipation of, and in the wake of, upcoming regional development dictates that the Village now has the opportunity to be more selective in what types of projects are approved.

It also needs to actively monitor and comment on development proposals in close proximity to the Village to ensure its interests are addressed as to potential impact on the Village of Chester.

Therefore, the Village intends to seize this rare and transformational opportunity to reassess its previous approach to development to incorporate a wider, coordinated plan for its future. The Village aims to ensure that future development, both residential and commercial, conforms to the overriding vision of the future, as represented by this Comprehensive Plan.

CHESTER TOMORROW

“THE VILLAGE OF CHESTER IN 2020 SITS AT A PIVOTAL CROSSROADS IN ITS HISTORY. IN DECADES AND CENTURIES PAST, RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS WERE PERIODICALLY OFFERED AND THE VILLAGE, SEEKING GROWTH, WAS AMENABLE TO THESE PROPOSALS. HOWEVER, DESPITE THE PRESENCE OF THE BLACK DIRT REGION, THE VILLAGE AND SURROUNDING AREAS ARE NO LONGER THE RURAL SETTINGS THEY ONCE WERE. TODAY, CHESTER IS INCREASINGLY AN EXURBAN AND SUBURBAN MUNICIPALITY FACING PRESSURE AND QUALITY-OF-LIFE ISSUES AS OPEN SPACE IS CONVERTED TO HIGH-DENSITY DEVELOPMENT.”

There are many emerging population trends that will continue to impact growth in the Village and County in the decades ahead. These include an aging population, increase in the number of single-person households, and changes in ethnic and racial compositions of the population. These trends are documented in the 2010 Census and are very likely to continue in the decades ahead. A timely review of the results of the 2020 Census is strongly recommended.

Below is an overview of demographic trends along with an analysis of the potential planning implications. The trends selected for analysis were those determined to most influence development and population growth in the years ahead.

2.4 Demographic Trends

The 2010 Census shows Chester’s population is aging. In 2010, nearly 14% of the population was over the age of 65 – up from 10.9% in 2000. In 2010, the Baby Boomers (1946-1964), accounted for another 23.9% of Chester’s population. Chester will see increases in people over the age of 65 in the next decade due to the aging Baby Boomers and increases in life expectancy.

Table 2-2 Chester and Orange County, New York Race and Hispanic Origin Year 2010						
	Village of Chester		Town of Chester*		Orange County	
	Population	%	Population	%	Population	%
Total	3,969	100.00	8,012	100.00	372,813	100.00
White	2,771	69.8	6,889	86.0	287,802	77.2
Black	469	11.8	442	5.5	37,946	10.1
Asian	247	6.2	245	3.1	8,895	2.4
American Indian	24	0.6	25	0.3	1,748	0.5
Native Hawaiian or PI	0	0.0	1	0.0	125	0.0
Some Other Race	301	7.6	220	3.7	24,615	6.6
<i>Two or more</i>	<i>156</i>	<i>3.9</i>	<i>191</i>	<i>2.4</i>	<i>11,682</i>	<i>3.1</i>
<i>Hispanic**</i>	<i>698</i>	<i>17.6</i>	<i>971</i>	<i>12.1</i>	<i>67,185</i>	<i>18.0</i>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau *Town Population excluding Village **Description of ethnicity not race. A person may consider themselves white/Hispanic, black/Hispanic, or other combination thereof. The percentages of all racial categories add up to 100%.

DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

“THE 2010 CENSUS SHOWS CHESTER’S POPULATION IS AGING.”

- ❖ In 2010, 14.1% of the population was over the age of 65.
- ❖ In 2010, the Baby Boom Generation (1946-1964) accounted for another 23.9% of Chester’s population.”
- ❖ In 2010, only 6.3% of the Village’s residents were under the age of 5.

While the Village of Chester has a relatively homogenous population, its racial and ethnic composition is changing, due to immigration and different birth rates among racial and ethnic groups. These trends parallel County, State and national trends. The 2010 U.S. Census shows that Chester’s residents were 69.8% white, 11.8% black, 6.2% Asian, 0.6% American Indian and 7.6% “some other race” and/or “two or more” races.

Chester is becoming more diverse with respect to race & Hispanic origin and growing diversity is a strength that enriches the fabric of the Village.

Table 2-3 Village of Chester Population by Age 2000 & 2010				
Age Cohort	2000		2010	
	Population	%	Population	%
Under 5	235	6.8%	251	6.3%
5 -19	638	18.5%	615	15.6%
20-24	188	5.5%	77	1.9%
25-34	625	18.1%	723	18.3%
35-44/35-49*	638	18.5%	784	19.8%
45-64/50-64*	744	21.6%	949	23.9%
65 & over	377	10.9%	562	14.1%
Total	3,445	100.00	3,961	100.0%
Median Age		35.5		38.8

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000 & 2010
*Age cohorts recorded varied between 2000 & 2010

The 2010 Census shows the level of educational attainment among the Village’s residents (see Table 2-4 on next page), which is in line with the County averages. The 2010 Census also shows the percentage of Village residents with a Bachelor’s degree or more is higher than that of the County – 30.3% for the Village versus 28.7% for the County. The number of Village residents with a graduate or professional degree more than doubled between 2000 and 2010 – from 7.7% to 15.2%, or a 139% increase.

2010 U.S. CENSUS

“THE NUMBER OF VILLAGE RESIDENTS WITH GRADUATE OR PROFESSIONAL DEGREE MORE THAN DOUBLED BETWEEN 2000 AND 2010 – FROM 7.7% TO 15.2%, OR A 139% INCREASE.”

**Table 2-4
Chester and Orange County, New York
Educational Attainment**

Educational Attainment	Orange County, New York Trends from 2000-2010				Village of Chester Trends from 2000-2010				% Change County	% Change Village
	2000		2010		2000		2010			
		%		%		%		%		
Total Persons 25 Years and over	212,816	100.0	233,830	100.0	2,504	100.0	3,018	100.0	9.9	20.52
Less Than 9th Grade	11,942	5.6	10,787	4.6	74	2.9	155	5.1	-9.7	109.00
9th-12th, no diploma	26,687	12.5	19,474	8.3	248	9.9	259	8.6	-27.0	0.2
High school graduate	66,119	31.1	69,192	29.6	808	32.3	716	23.7	4.6	-11.38
Some college, no degree	42,767	20.1	46,806	20.0	542	21.6	647	21.4	9.4	19.37
Associate’s degree	17,348	8.2	20,478	8.8	239	9.5	326	10.8	18.0	36.4
Bachelor’s degree	28,169	13.2	39,009	16.7	402	16.1	457	15.1	38.5	13.7
Graduate or professional	19,784	9.3	28,084	12.0	191	7.7	458	15.2	42.0	139.00
Percent high school graduate >		81.8		87.1		87.1		86.2		
Percent Bachelors Degree or >		22.5		28.7		23.7		30.3		

Source: U.S. Census Bureau STF3 Data Year 2000 and Table DP02 2010

2010 U.S. CENSUS

“THE 2010 CENSUS SHOWS A WIDENING GAP WITH RESPECT TO EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN THE VILLAGE. THE PERCENT OF RESIDENTS WITH LESS THAN 9TH GRADE INCREASED FROM 2.9% TO 5.1 %, WHILE THOSE WITH A GRADUATE OR PROFESSIONAL DEGREE INCREASED FROM 7.7% TO 15.2%.”

2.5 Planning Implications for Chester

The Village’s population is growing more diverse with respect to age, educational attainment, race and ethnicity with the greatest difference being those of Hispanic origin. Its population has grown steadily in recent decades and this growth is anticipated to continue. Large-scale developments nearby may accelerate this rate of growth. The Village’s growing senior population could result in additional needs for senior housing, resulting in the demand for the provision of additional community services to serve this population.

Greater numbers of retirees may also influence market demands for new housing styles, with universal design¹ that can better meet the needs of the Village’s aging population. There may also be a growing preference for smaller houses to reflect the decrease in average household size and a growing desire to produce more energy efficient housing units.

¹ Universal design in housing is intended to accommodate the needs of the broadest spectrum of users (e.g. children, elderly, people with disabilities and people of different height or weight).

The higher level of educational attainment of Chester’s residents is a competitive advantage the Village can utilize to attract business to the community, since a skilled labor force is often a prerequisite for site-selection companies hired to find development sites for business expansion.

The quality of life Chester offers its residents is also a strong recruitment tool. Increasingly, businesses are attracted to locations where they feel their employees want to live due to a variety of quality of life issues such as sense of security, quality of schools, access to recreation, and the quality of the natural and built environment.

2.6 Chester’s Vision and Goals

In our Vision for the Village of Chester in the future, our agricultural farmland is protected and productive, the integrity of historic building stock is preserved, business districts revitalized, housing opportunities expanded, and overall quality of life enhanced. In the coming years, we seek to:

- Establish and revise, where necessary, the Village Code, including Zoning Code, to reinforce the Comprehensive Plan's goals
- Protect the integrity of the village, its black dirt farmland, public parks, and our natural resources by carefully managing changes in land use
- Preserve historic buildings, cultural and civic institutions, open space, and the integrity of our residential neighborhoods
- Enhance our business districts to create vibrant centers for civic engagement
- Promote a healthy lifestyle through the adoption of complete street policies
- Ensure a sustainable land use pattern that is more resilient to natural disasters
- Provide sustainable public infrastructure and services to meet growing community needs in a cost-effective manner
- Increase housing opportunities for all age groups, income levels and stages of life
- Set quality design standards to ensure that new land uses enrich our community aesthetics and are in harmony with our vision for the Village of Chester.

VISION STATEMENT

“IN OUR VISION FOR THE VILLAGE OF CHESTER IN THE FUTURE, OUR AGRICULTURAL FARMLAND IS PROTECTED AND PRODUCTIVE, THE INTEGRITY OF HISTORIC BUILDING STOCK IS PRESERVED, BUSINESS DISTRICTS REVITALIZED, HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES EXPANDED, AND OVERALL QUALITY OF LIFE ENHANCED. IN THE COMING YEARS.”

2.7 Achieving Chester’s Vision

The Village of Chester faces a variety of challenges in achieving its vision for the future. These challenges include managing growth and redevelopment and protecting agricultural, historic and natural resources; providing employment and housing opportunities; providing necessary infrastructure and services to meet the needs of a growing population; and expanding cultural and recreational amenities throughout the Village.

Achieving each of these will require balancing, what in some instances will be competing interests.

Yet, Chester’s historic character, bucolic setting, and proximity to New York City make it an attractive location to live and conduct business. These appealing aspects of Chester can be strengthened by improving traffic flow, walkability, access to public transit and strengthening its mixed-use centers.

In the chapters that follow, detailed descriptions of the Village of Chester are presented including the environment, cultural, historic and recreational resources; Main Street revitalization, the transportation system; community facilities and services; jobs and housing; sustainability and resiliency and land-use policies.

The Comprehensive Plan includes goals for each of these aspects of Chester, including chapter-specific goals, objectives and policies that support the Village’s vision and values.

VISION STATEMENT

“CHESTER’S HISTORIC CHARACTER, BUCOLIC SETTING, AND PROXIMITY TO NEW YORK CITY MAKE IT AN ATTRACTIVE LOCATION TO LIVE AND CONDUCT BUSINESS. THESE APPEALING ASPECTS OF CHESTER CAN BE STRENGTHENED BY IMPROVING TRAFFIC FLOW, WALKABILITY, ACCESS TO PUBLIC TRANSIT AND STRENGTHENING ITS MIXED-USE CENTERS.”

3.0 Environment - Preserving Chester’s Natural Resources

GOAL

Protect the natural beauty, function and value of natural resources, which help to define the intrinsic character of the Village of Chester.

OVERVIEW

The beautiful natural environment within and surrounding the Village of Chester, including its open spaces, Black Dirt farmland, wooded hillsides and water resources, contribute to Chester’s character and quality of life. Village residents have access to these natural resources, and also nearby regional resources such as the Heritage Trail and Goosepond Mountain State Park

The Village of Chester is a participating member of the Hudson River Valley Greenway. The Hudson River Valley Greenway Act of 1991 (the “Greenway Act”) created a process for voluntary regional cooperation among 264 communities within 13 counties that border the Hudson River to facilitate the development of a regional strategy for preserving scenic, natural, historic, cultural, and recreational resources while encouraging compatible economic development and maintaining the tradition of home rule for land use decision-making.

The Hudson River Valley Greenway Grant Program provides matching grants to Greenway Communities and Compact Communities. Greenway Communities are eligible to receive up to \$10,000 to develop plans or projects consistent with the five Greenway criteria: natural and cultural resource protection, economic development, public access, regional planning, and heritage and environmental education.

This Plan encourages applying for available grants to implement the recommendations of this Comprehensive Plan.

This chapter highlights Chester’s natural resources, including land resources (open space, farmland and greenways), geologic features (wooded hillsides and backdrops) and water resources (wetlands, floodplains, aquifers, and streams).



Above (top to bottom): View overlooking Chester Community Park [jointly owned by the Village and Town] and the Chester Union Free School District ballfields; view of Black Dirt farmland looking north from Vadala Road toward Greycourt Avenue; and aerial view of Black Dirt farmland. Natural resources contribute to Chester’s character and quality of life.

3.1 Land Resources

Open Space

The Village of Chester has a land area of 2.19 square miles and a population density of 1,884 persons per square mile. Although its population density is quite high, the Village has retained its small-community charm, in part, due to the farmland and open spaces within the Village limits. Open space in the Village can be categorized in the following ways:

- 1) Privately owned Black Dirt farmland and Chester Agricultural Center, Inc. -owned Black Dirt farmland, which generally are not open to the public or that have limited public access.
- 2) Parkland owned by the Village/Town of Chester, including lands currently used for active recreational purposes by residents (e.g. Chester Community Park).
- 3) The Orange County “Heritage Trail” greenway, which is a 16.2-mile linear trail from Goshen to Harriman, New York. The Heritage Trail traverses the Village near Main Street.
- 4) Ballfields owned by the Chester Union Free School District and used by the School District.
- 5) Common recreational facilities associated with residential developments, which are typically reserved for use by the residents within the development.
- 6) Environmentally constrained lands such as wetlands and steep slopes, which have limited or restricted public access.
- 7) Reserved.

These open spaces also help to preserve and protect natural features such as aquifer recharge areas, steep slopes and wildlife habitats. The protection of these resources is necessary to maintain the overall quality of life in the Village. The following is a discussion concerning specific land resources in Chester.



Above: The Chester Erie Depot, circa 1915, which abuts the Heritage Trail and is situated on Winkler Place; view of Heritage Trail looking west toward railroad overpass with bicyclist utilizing the trail; and parents with baby strollers enjoying the trail. This Plan strongly supports enhancement and extension of the Heritage Trail.

Agriculture

Nearly 20 percent of the Village’s land area consists of Black Dirt farmland, which is highly productive and suitable for a wide variety of vegetable and field crops. Chester’s Black Dirt farms are a deeply rooted part of the community that contribute to the distinctive character of the Village. These farms add socio-economic value by providing locally grown produce, employment opportunities and by supporting local businesses on which they depend for supplies, machinery and equipment. Chester’s Black Dirt farms also provide valuable open space and scenic vistas.

One of the challenges associated with Black Dirt farmland is that it requires ongoing maintenance of drainage canals and pump stations, to keep these low-lying farmlands from being inundated. The 2004 Orange County Agricultural Development Strategy found “Black Dirt” (i.e., muck soils) could be improved through drainage to achieve better productivity. The County’s maintenance and repair of drainage canals and pump stations must continue to be done in a timely and responsive manner to protect Black Dirt farms from flooding.

The Chester Agricultural Center, Inc. is a 501 (C) 3 philanthropic organization. It owns a large tract of Black Dirt farmland in the Village, which it is transitioning to non-chemical organic production. This transition will open up opportunities to serve the growing demand for locally grown organic food. However, it also comes with challenges with respect to controlling weeds and pests.

Other challenges facing Black Dirt farming in the future include:

- training new farmers,
- providing affordable housing for farmers and farm workers, and
- distribution of produce to regional markets.

There are agencies, such as the Orange County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board and Cornell Cooperative Extension of Orange County, that are helping to provide some of these needs. However, the Village and its citizens also have a role to play in supporting agriculture.

AGRICULTURE

“CHESTER’S BLACK DIRT FARMS ARE A DEEPLY-ROOTED PART OF THE COMMUNITY THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTER OF THE VILLAGE.”

The Village Board can help to support agriculture by working with County Government to ensure the drainage canals and pump stations are maintained in a timely and responsive manner to protect Black Dirt from flooding. This Plan also recommends the Village and County work together to secure State funding to improve the existing drainage canals and pump stations so they are more resilient to future storm events.

The Village should work with local farmers to better understand the specific housing needs for the farming community. Local residents and businesses can continue to support agriculture through a farmer’s market, restaurants by serving locally grown food, and by residents actively participating in Community Supported Agricultural (CSA) programs.

By working collaboratively with local farmers, Cornell Cooperative Extension and Orange County, the Village can support existing farms and ensure that its Black Dirt farmland continues to be utilized to grow a variety of crops and contribute to the socio-economic vitality of the community.

Greenways

Greenways are linear open spaces that include recreational, cultural, and natural areas. The “Heritage Trail” is a 16.2-mile multi-use paved rail trail that is part of the County park system. The Heritage Trail runs from Goshen to Harriman and traverses the Village of Chester near the 1915 Chester Erie Depot and Downtown. The Depot was restored by the Chester Historical Society and serves as the Local History Museum. Downtown shops and restaurants are nearby.

The Heritage Trail is used for walking, biking, rollerblading, running and strolling. The paved trail is lined with trees and native plants as it passes through farmland, wood lots and residential developments. These natural areas along the trail provide valuable open space and wildlife habitat for a variety of flora and fauna. The Long Path, a long-distance regional hiking trail that runs with the Heritage Trail in the Village can also be easily accessed from the Village of Chester.

Greenways provide conservation benefits by providing natural buffer area to improve water, soil and air quality; serving as wildlife habitats and corridors, reducing the impacts of flooding and providing viewshed protection.



Above: The American House between Railroad Avenue and Winkler Place; view from Maple Avenue near Oak Street looking through yard and across the Black Dirt farmland toward Main Street; and view of house situate on ridge line above the Main Street (NYS Route 94).

The Heritage Trail provides all of these benefits, but also provides important recreational opportunities for local residents and visitors, which makes the Village more socially and economically vibrant. Overgrowth along the trail threatens to block wonderful vistas once kept open by the County. This Plan supports County measures to control the overgrowth.

The Orange County Long Range Transportation Plan includes plans for a rail trail beginning in the Village at Greycourt, which will branch off the Heritage Trail and follow the abandoned rail bed to Newburgh. This Plan encourages on-going coordination with Orange County Parks & Recreation Department to enhance the Heritage Trail by adding such extensions along with fitness stations or other amenities along the rail trail.

Better bicyclist and pedestrian connections to and from the rail-trail to the Village is also recommended to enhance the benefits of the Heritage Trail. The Planning Board should look for opportunities, in its review of development applications, to work with property owners to obtain conservation easements for trails within the Village.

3.2. Geologic Features

Topography

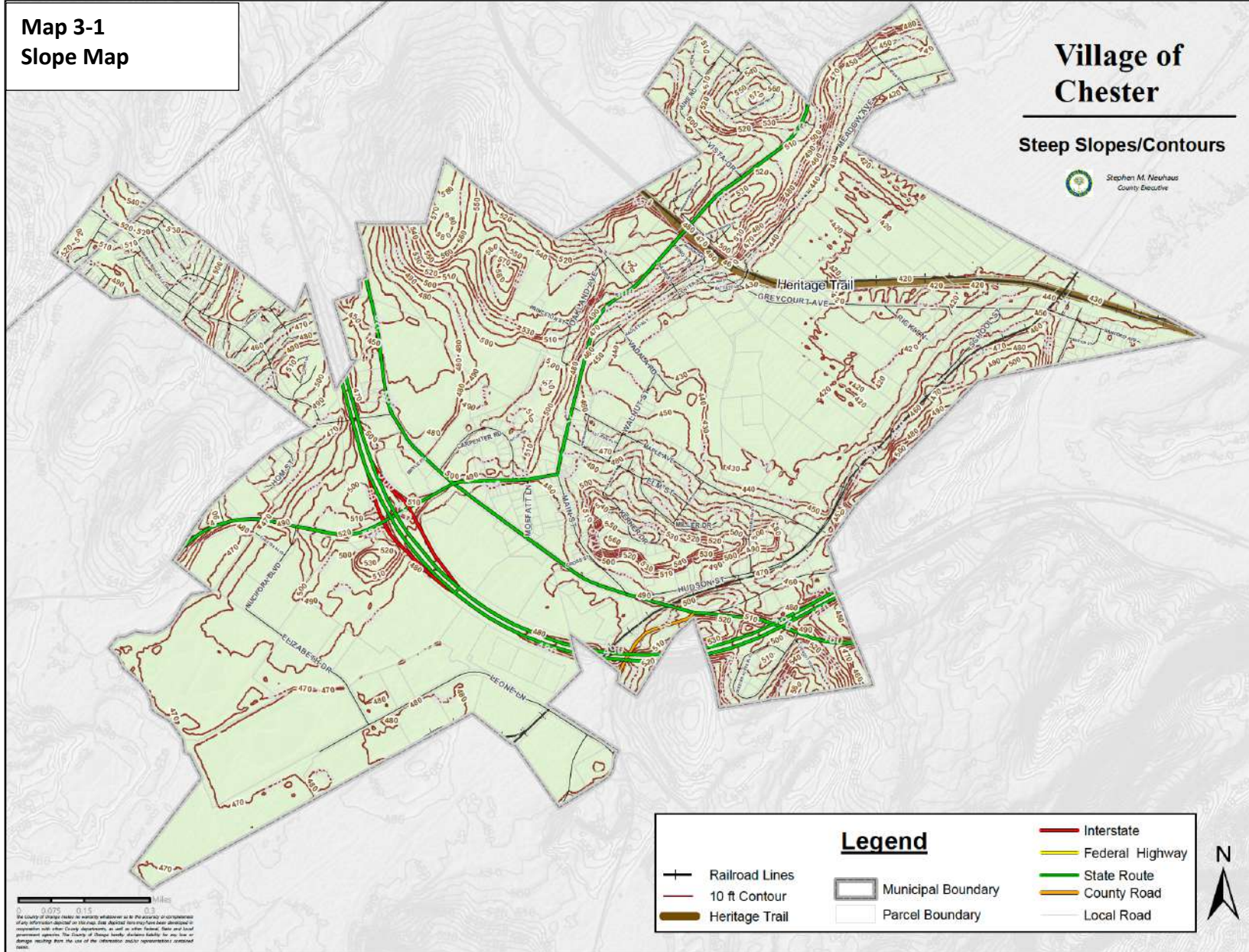
The older settled parts of the Village of Chester are relatively flat, with Black Dirt farms derived from digging canals to drain the muck soils within the natural floodplains. The steepest areas are in the vicinity of the Downtown business district and along the High Street portion of NYS Route 94, which is situated well above the natural floodplain.

Simply stated, slope is measured as rise over run. Slopes of 15% or greater are considered “*steep slopes*” and constitute a stretch of land 100 feet long that rises 15 feet in elevation. Areas with steep slopes are in the vicinity of Oak Street where single-family homes are situated on a relatively gentle rise above the Black Dirt farmland and on the as yet undeveloped BT Holdings property on Route 17M (Brookside Avenue).

Areas with steep slopes are depicted on the Slope map on the next page.

STEEP SLOPES

“SIMPLY STATED, SLOPE IS MEASURED AS RISE OVER RUN. SLOPES OF 15% OR GREATER ARE CONSIDERED “STEEP SLOPES” AND CONSTITUTE A STRETCH OF LAND 100 FEET LONG THAT RISES 15 FEET IN ELEVATION.”



In their wooded natural state, these steep slope areas form an attractive backdrop, or setting, which help to soften the man-made environment. Therefore, this Comprehensive Plan encourages the protection of hillsides and steeply sloped backdrops, and the adoption (or refinement) of measures to avoid the wholesale re-grading and disturbance of these areas for any land-use.

Development on steep slopes should be designed in a manner that limits site disturbance by designing building and parking areas in a manner that takes advantage of the site topography. Trees should be preserved along the edge of ridgelines to screen view of new development. *This Plan further supports the creation of Visual Assessment criteria to guide Planning Board review.*

3.3 Water Resources

Wetlands

Wetlands serve three primary functions: 1) to filter and clean water; 2) to provide wildlife habitat; and 3) to provide stormwater storage and retention. Wetlands are necessary to our ecosystems. Their development, outside of the occasional road or access driveway, must be limited and resisted. They also serve a vital function in retaining large amounts of runoff during the spring thaw or major storm events. In this respect, wetlands help to reduce peak flood flows and decrease flood damage. Wetlands also provide scenic viewsheds, which help to define Chester. *This Plan recommends the Planning Board continue to evaluate the need for wetland delineations at the earliest time possible during the review of an application and ensure required wetland buffers are protected.*

Floodplain

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has identified potential flood hazard areas in the Village of Chester, which are shown on FEMA maps. The Black Dirt farmland in the Village is situated almost entirely within a FEMA 100-year floodplain. Agricultural use is one of the best uses of this land since it does not obstruct water flow and is more tolerant of flooding. In their natural state, floodplains are an important natural resource and open space. This Plan recommends the Village consider establishing minimum buffers along streams to protect the floodplain.

FLOODPLAIN

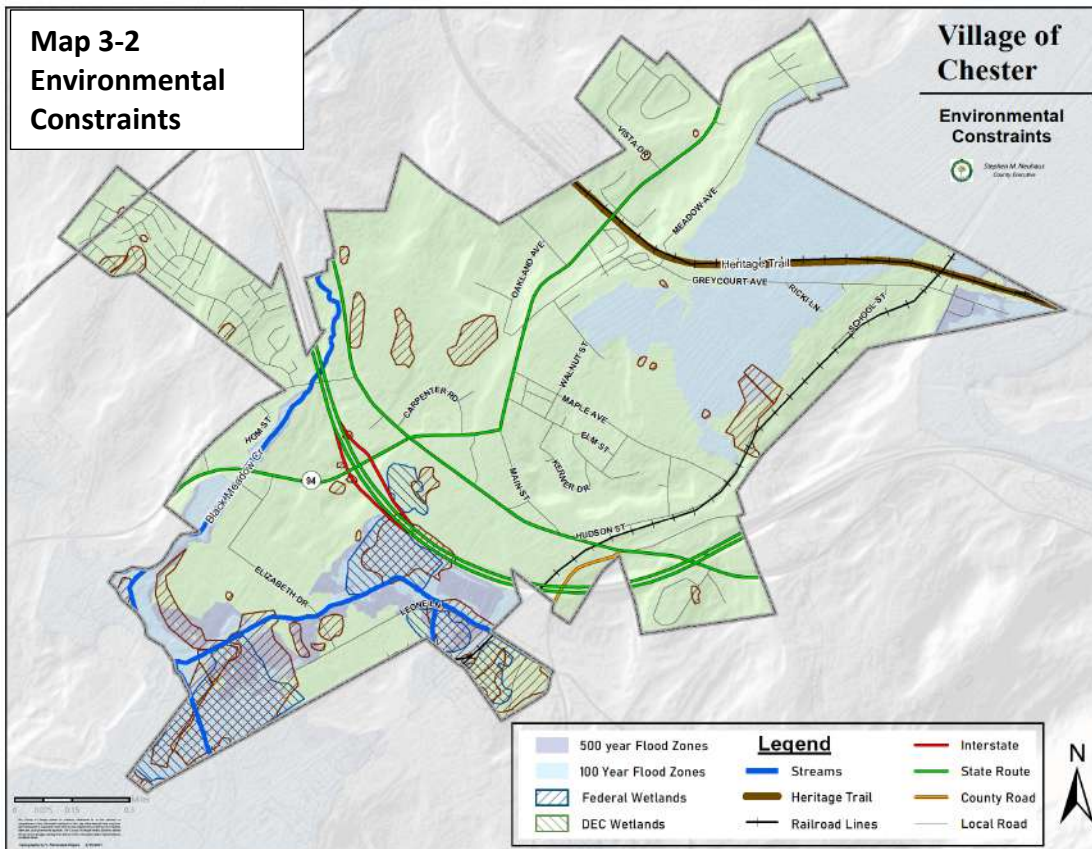
“THE BLACK DIRT FARMLAND IN THE VILLAGE IS SITUATED ALMOST ENTIRELY WITHIN A FEMA 100-YEAR FLOODPLAIN. AGRICULTURAL USE IS ONE OF THE BEST USES OF THIS LAND SINCE IT DOES NOT OBSTRUCT WATER FLOW AND IS MORE TOLERANT OF FLOODING.”

The southernmost portion of the Village, near its industrial park, is also situated within the 100-year and 500-year floodplain. FEMA defines the likelihood of flooding into two broad categories: 1) lands within the 100-year floodplain; and 2) lands within the 500-year floodplain. Lands within the 100-year floodplain have a 1% probability of a flood exceeding a certain depth in any given year.

The Planning Board must factor in the presence of floodplains when it reviews site plans and subdivision applications. The Planning Board must mandate mitigation measures for any development within floodplains or flood-prone areas and ensure that proposed buildings are in compliance with FEMA regulations. Placement of housing for Black Dirt farm workers would most likely fall within floodplains and would require careful oversight.

FLOODPLAIN

“PLACEMENT OF HOUSING FOR BLACK DIRT FARM WORKERS WOULD MOST LIKELY FALL WITHIN FLOODPLAINS AND WOULD REQUIRE CAREFUL OVERSIGHT.”

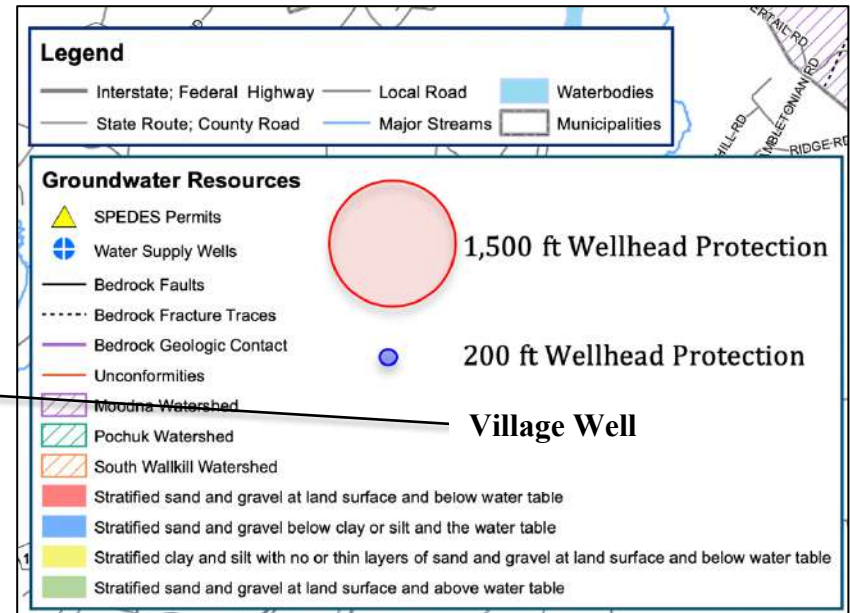
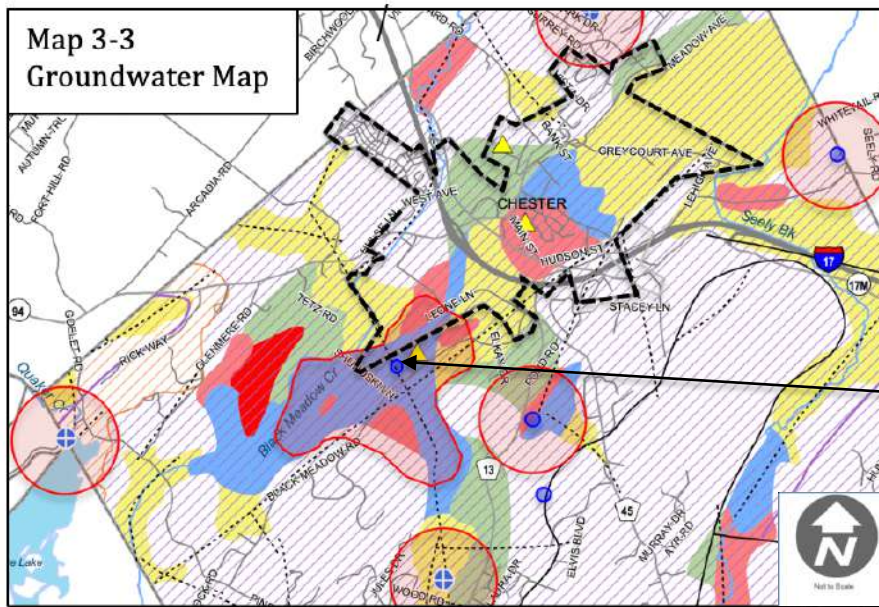


Watershed, Aquifer and Wellhead Protection

Walton Lake is the Village’s primary source of water. Watershed protection measures are needed, which will require cooperation with the Town of Monroe, where the lake is situated (see Water Supply Map on page 70). Wellhead areas for public water supplies are shown on the map below. Around each of these sites is a 1,500-foot radius protection boundary within which greater care should occur in the development of land. The Village wellhead protection area is larger and more amorphous based upon detailed groundwater study for that well. Watershed and wellhead protection legislation should be adopted to protect these irreplaceable water resources. This will require cooperation between the Village and the Towns of Chester and Monroe in which these resources are situated. The development of intermunicipal watershed and wellhead protection laws is supported by this Plan. Such laws could be enacted as a zoning overlay district that would define watershed and wellhead protection areas and establish restrictions applicable to certain potentially dangerous uses in these areas. *This Plan supports watershed and wellhead protection measures and the development of more detailed plans and studies to protect these vital resources.*

**WATERSHED, AQUIFER
AND WELLHEAD
PROTECTION**

“THIS PLAN SUPPORTS WATERSHED AND WELLHEAD PROTECTION MEASURES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF MORE DETAILED PLANS AND STUDIES TO PROTECT THESE VITAL RESOURCES.”



Stormwater Management

Chester’s stormwater management system includes its storm sewers and ditches that are designed to quickly channel runoff from roads and other impervious surfaces. These devices are important to control high flows that may be a threat to public safety. Unfortunately, there are adverse environmental impacts associated with traditional stormwater management.

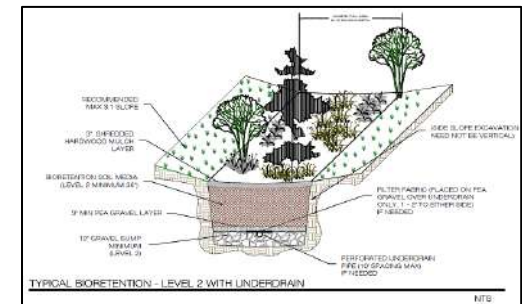
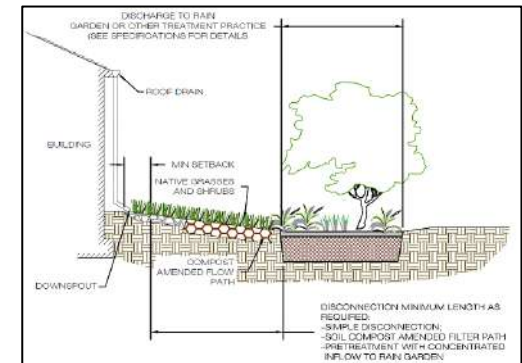
In New York State, any construction operation that will disturb or expose one or more acres of soil requires a State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) permit for stormwater management discharges from construction activity. Soil disturbance includes clearing vegetation, grubbing, filling, grading, excavation, demolition, and construction activity.

Detention and retention basins are used to ensure that post-development runoff rates from a site do not exceed pre-development rates. Detention basins are dry basins that fill with water during a storm event. They work by delaying the storm water so that it is released at a rate that mimics pre-development flow. Retention basins hold water in a pool and release water through an overflow spillway during storm events. These basins provide for the release of runoff at controlled rates to protect the quality of surface waters and to prevent flooding during storm events.

These basins are important stormwater treatment systems that allow particulates in stormwater to settle to the bottom, thereby, reducing pollution in runoff prior to discharge into receiving waters. A bioretention basin is one variation of these systems, with plantings intended to also absorb nutrients. Within off-street parking areas, catch basins are used to retain and filter contaminants before they leave the site. Infiltration trenches also treat runoff through a soil medium and pea-gravel-filter layer before it is discharged.

This Plan also encourages the use of low-impact design alternatives, such as curbless parking areas, open grass drainage swales, permeable pavement and dry wells to decrease potential stormwater runoff, flooding, surface water pollution and groundwater pollution related to future development. As the Planning Board reviews development applications, it must ensure that appropriate stormwater management measures are put in place. Such measures will help to protect water quality and mitigate potential damage during major storm events.

Village of Chester, New York



Above (top to bottom): Illustration showing residential rooftop bioretention system; view of bioretention system with plantings, which are intended to absorb nutrients from runoff; and a typical bioretention system. This Plan supports best management practices.

Source: Illustration from Virginia Department Conservation & Recreation.

3.4. Environment: Goals, Objectives and Policies

Land Resources: Open Space, Agriculture and Greenways

Open Space

- EN.1. Promote land-use policies and site plan reviews that encourage the protection and sustainable use of the Village’s natural and historic resources, including farmland, greenways, open space, ridgelines, wetlands, floodplains, native habitats of threatened/endangered species, and natural land contours.
- EN.2. During the development review process, ensure that natural resources, including native habitat of threatened or endangered species, are protected.
- EN.3. Protect and develop appropriate access to the community’s natural resources and public open spaces for the enjoyment and recreation of residents and visitors.
- EN.4. Work with Chester Union Free School District to ensure the ballfields are retained for the future.
- EN.5. Consider the creation of Ridge Protection Overlay Districts to establish clear guidelines for future development and protection of ridge lines. This includes creation of Visual Assessment criteria to guide decisions.

Agriculture

- EN.6. Encourage both private and public efforts to preserve and manage agricultural lands through purchase of development rights (PDR) and participation in the NYS Agricultural & Markets Districts.
- EN.7. Support local farmers efforts to ensure the County’s maintenance and repair of drainage canals and pump stations is done in a timely and responsive manner to protect the Black Dirt from flooding.
- EN.8. Encourage participation in the Hudson Valley Farm Link Network to match farmers who are selling their farms with people who are looking to purchase a farm.
- EN.9. Encourage shared, or “cooperative” infrastructure development (storage and processing facilities, locations for CSA drop-off and pickup, regional food hubs, etc.).

NATURAL RESOURCES

“PROMOTE LAND-USE DECISIONS THAT ENCOURAGE THE PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF THE VILLAGE’S NATURAL RESOURCES.”

EN.10. Increase community engagement and consumer demand for locally grown food.

- Work with regional economic-development entities and County and local governments to give local agriculture a higher priority and more visibility.
- Help connect institutional, restaurant and wholesale opportunities with agricultural producers.

EN.11. Review and revise regulations pertaining to farm operations to ensure these laws do not needlessly inhibit farming (e.g. farm stands, year-round farmers markets, greenhouses, value-added product operations, home-food production, U-picks, CSAs, and agritourism sites), if necessary.

EN.12. Continue support for agricultural programs provided by Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) and Orange County Soil and Water Conservation District.

EN.13. Encourage greater participation in the Chester Agricultural Center, Inc.'s "Community Garden" program to help the agricultural community and enhance the quality of life in Chester.

EN.14. Assess the needs for farmer and farm-worker housing to determine if revisions to land use laws are needed to increase opportunities for farming community housing.

Greenways

EN.15. Support efforts by Orange County Parks Department to make improvements to the Heritage Trail.

EN.16. Plan for enhanced bicycle and pedestrian connections from the Heritage Trail to the entire Village.

EN.17. Reserved.

Geologic Features: Topography

EN.18. Protect hillsides and steeply sloped backdrops and avoid the wholesale re-grading, clearcutting of trees and disturbance of these areas for any land-use.

EN.19. Development on steep slopes should be designed in a manner that limits site disturbance by designing building and parking areas in a manner that takes advantage of site topography.

EN.20. Trees should be preserved along the edge of ridgelines to screen views of new development and planting of new vegetation where sparse or none exists.



Above (top to bottom): Temporary pumping system for canal, which was utilized when pump stations were down (main pumps were down for two years between 2011 and 2013); view of outflow canal as it crosses under Lehigh & Hudson Rail Line and enters Camp LaGuardia; view of canal along Black Dirt field north of the Lehigh & Hudson Rail Line.

Water Resources: Wetlands, Floodplains, Watershed, Aquifers, Wellhead Protection and Stormwater Management

- EN.21. Implement SWPPP best management practices as required by NYSDEC.
- EN.22. Minimize impact of new development on the natural resources through best management practices (BMP), low-impact design standards and conservation subdivision techniques.
 - Require onsite stormwater management to reduce runoff and nonpoint source pollution.
 - Minimize the amount of tree loss and impervious cover for new projects, consistent with permitted land-use intensity.
 - Situate buildings to minimize driveway length and preserve trees.
 - Cluster development away from environmentally sensitive land (e.g., woodlands, wetlands & steep slopes).
 - Encourage the planting of new vegetation where none exists.
- EN.23. Ensure that all developments comply with NYSDEC and US Army Corp of Engineers (USACOE) wetland regulations.
- EN.24. Conserve the riparian zone along streams and tributaries.
- EN.25. Restrict development in riparian buffer zones and floodplains.
- EN.26. Cooperate with the Towns of Chester and Monroe to protect water resources through intermunicipal watershed and wellhead protection laws.
- EN.27. Consider enacting ridgeline protection overlay district to preserve scenic viewsheds, maintain stability of steep slopes and restrict clear cutting of trees on hilltops.

The information provided in this chapter is provided for general planning purposes and is not intended to be a substitute for detailed site-specific information. Proposed land-use applications will need to provide additional details as may be appropriate and necessary for a particular site.

Full EAF Part 3 Discussion: The goals, objectives and strategies pertaining to natural resource protection would help to ensure that potentially large impacts to the environment are avoided through the development review process. The preservation of natural resources would help to make the community more resilient while conserving vital habitat for all species.

NATURAL RESOURCES

“MINIMIZE IMPACT OF NEW DEVELOPMENT ON THE NATURAL RESOURCES THROUGH BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES (BMP), LOW-IMPACT DESIGN STANDARDS AND CONSERVATION SUBDIVISION TECHNIQUES.”

4.0 Cultural, Historic and Recreational Resources

Chester's sense of place is defined, in large part, by its cultural, historic and recreational resources. This Chapter provides a brief description of those resources with recommendations for enhancing and protecting these resources in the years to come.

4.1 Cultural Resources

Chester has a variety of cultural resources that help to enhance the quality of life for its residents. These include such institutions as the 1915 Erie Railroad Station Museum. The Chester Historical Society leases the station from Orange County which took possession in 1990 after the rail line was abandoned by Conrail. The society has restored the depot, and since opening in 1999 as Chester's Local History Museum, members produce an annual exhibit relevant to the history of the Town and Village.

The Erie Museum also serves as a repository archive and library of historical documents including letters, official deeds, artifacts, news articles and much more. This is a valuable resource, not only for the Village but also for individuals interested in researching genealogy, building history, zoning code changes, etc. Original pieces not on display are in the Village Historian's office at Village Hall.

Handicap accessible space is available to local groups. In addition to the member's annual exhibit, events held at the museum include: the Chester Historical Society's annual yard sale fundraiser, the community tree lighting and open house celebrating the holidays with the museum open for special exhibitions. With its location on the Heritage Trail, several charity walks/runs utilize the museum's hospitality yearly. The 1915 Erie Railroad Station Museum is open Saturdays, May through October, 9:00 am–1:00 pm. Tours for schools and local groups are offered by appointment.

Other significant cultural resources include the Uptown and Downtown commercial districts, the entire Black Dirt agricultural zone and affiliated Chester Agricultural Center, the 9/11 Memorial and Children's Memorial in Carpenter Field Park, the Heritage Trail, the Hambletonian Memorial on Hambletonian Avenue, and the recreational facilities in Carpenter Field Park.

Village of Chester, New York



Above (top to bottom): The 1915 Erie Railroad Station at 19 Winkler Place; historic marker for First Presbyterian Church; and the First Presbyterian Church, circa 1854 from Main Street (NYS Route 94). The current church building, listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1998, is the third in the history of the congregation, which dates back to 1798.

4.2 Historic Resources

During the public outreach phase of creating the Comprehensive Plan, it became clear that the overwhelming majority of residents and stakeholders saw Chester's historic resources as one of its greatest assets. From providing educational opportunities, to establishing neighborhood character, to drawing tourism, the Village's historic resources and their preservation drew the most consistent interest.

This Plan seeks to retain the rich history of the Village by encouraging the preservation and restoration of these resources by their property owners and through the creation of historic overlay districts.

There are currently two properties in the Village that are listed on the State and National Register of Historic Places, 1) The Yelverton Inn and Store, a group of four historical buildings at the corner of Main Street and Academy Avenue, includes the original 1765 Inn, its barn and shed and 1841 store, known historically as Durland’s, and 2) The First Presbyterian Church of Chester located on Main Street in the Uptown District.

In addition to the State and National Register listed properties, there are a treasure trove of other institutional, mixed use and residential properties in the Village that are eligible for listing (e.g., the 1915 Erie Depot Museum, former W. A. Lawrence residence at 99 Brookside Avenue, 15 High Street; former Presbyterian parsonage and stop on the underground railroad, Hambletonian monument (burial place of the great progenitor), St. Paul's Episcopal Church and Village Hall), and the 1935 Art Deco School on Maple Avenue owned by the Chester Union Free School District.

This Plan recommends the Village Board support efforts by property owners to list their properties on the State or National Register of Historic Places and to promote the preservation, appreciation and sustainable use of historical or heritage resources.

The Comprehensive Plan historic resources goals are listed on the following page.



Above (top to bottom): Commercial building at the corner of Main Street and Academy Avenue; The Yelverton Inn & Store complex near the corner of Main Street and Academy Avenue; and Saint Paul's Episcopal Church at corner of Main Street and Maple Avenue. St. Paul's Church is eligible for listing on the State and National Register of Historic Places.

The following goals are set forth in this Plan with respect to historic resources:

- Goal 1: Strive to identify, conserve and protect significant public and privately-owned historic structures, landmarks and buildings in recognition of their contribution to the Village’s identity.
- Goal 2: Promote the preservation, appreciation and sustainable use of historical resources.
- Goal 3: Work with property owners to maintain and restore historic properties within the Village.
- Goal 4: Work with building owners to find appropriate adaptive reuse of historic properties for new uses where the proposed use can be accommodated in a neighborhood without negatively impacting it.
- Goal 5: This Plan recommends the establishment of four (4) distinct State and National Register historic districts within the Village to 1) recognize the concentration of historically significant buildings, parcels, and uses, and 2) designate them for special conservation attention and initiatives. These districts should be 1) The Downtown Historic District, 2) the Uptown Historic District, 3) the West Chester Historic District, and 4) the Black Dirt Historic Agricultural District. These proposed Districts are displayed on Map 4-1.
- Goal 6: Pass a local Landmarks Preservation Law to protect important local historic resources.
- Goal 7: Establish an Architectural Review Board or an Historical Preservation Commission, separate from the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals, to oversee and recommend aesthetic considerations for projects under review to establish and enforce consistent guidelines of appearance.
- Goal 8: Emphasize the importance of an effective grant writer to pursue and secure outside funding to facilitate historical preservation initiatives.

Presently, Chester does not have land-use regulations that address exterior alterations to historic structures. Although many buildings are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, there is little in the way of standards to guide exterior alterations to historic residential or nonresidential properties.

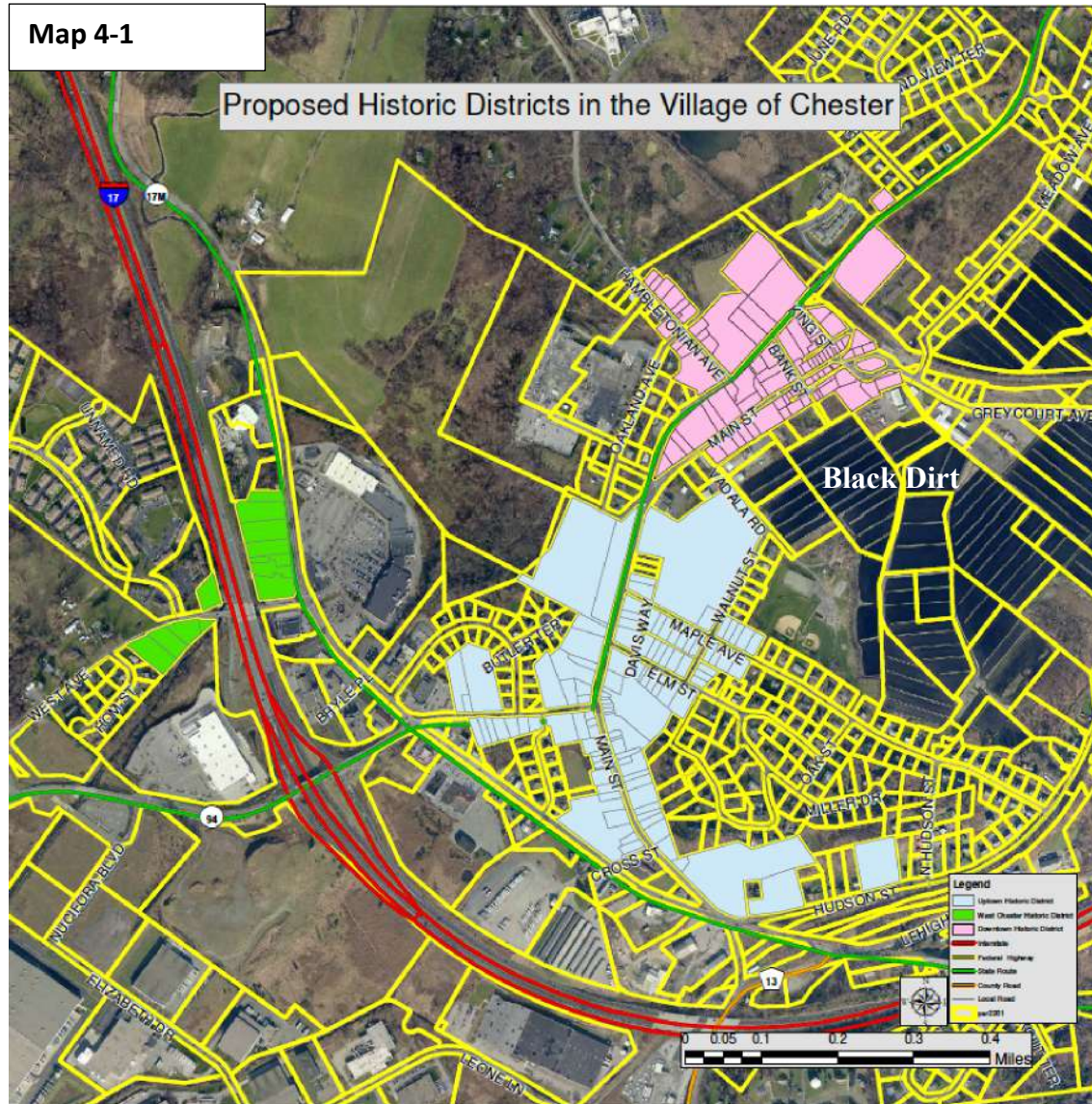
Over time, the renovation of some buildings has compromised the integrity of these historic buildings.

If Chester is to retain its individuality and sense of place in the future, it must protect the integrity of its historic properties.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

“THE BEST PRESERVATION TECHNIQUE IS TO MAINTAIN HISTORIC FEATURES FROM THE OUTSET SO THAT INTERVENTION IS NOT REQUIRED.”

Historic District Recommendations



Chester can preserve the integrity of its historic resources through:

- 1) Historic preservation guidelines,
- 2) A historic building renovation review process or historic district designation where a critical mass of buildings warrants such designation (e.g., Uptown/Downtown), and
- 3) Passage of a local Landmarks Preservation law.
- 4) More aggressive pursuit of grant funding to help finance preservation initiatives.

This Plan encourages all four initiatives. Failure to do so in a timely manner risks the irreparable loss of these unique resources. The Village Board should initially adopt a set of voluntary historic preservation guidelines to guide landowner decisions with respect to exterior alterations to their homes or businesses and to help them better understand historic-preservation techniques.

The Village Board should then seek funding for a historic resources inventory to provide the foundation for the creation of National Register-designated historic districts. From there, it should establish an Historic Preservation Commission or Architectural Review Board to review plans for exterior renovations of historic buildings.

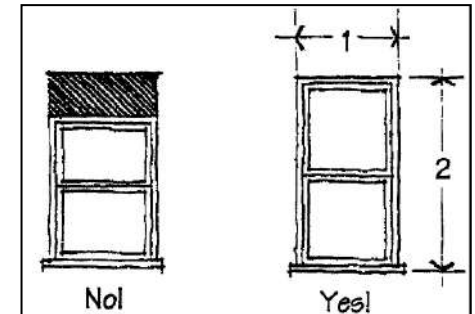
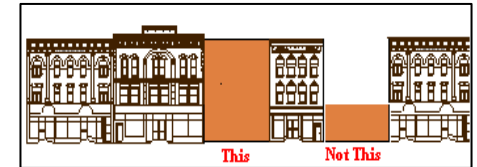
The following general historic preservation guidelines are offered to guide renovations of historic structures (adapted from National Register Guidelines):

Respect Original Architecture of the Building.

- Determine which elements are essential to its character and preserve these; and
- Avoid masking over original materials, and
- In cases where a historic building or parcel is being repurposed for contemporary usage (e.g., a new restaurant in an old/renovated structure), every effort should be made to acknowledge that history through naming, decor or on-site displays, to reinforce the perception of Chester as an historic village.

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

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



Maintain existing architectural elements of the historic building.

- The best preservation technique is to maintain historic features from the outset so that intervention is not required. Use treatments such as caulking, limited paint removal and reapplication of paint and rust removal;
- Repair only those architectural features that are deteriorated;
- Only replace those features that are beyond repair or missing; and
- Patch, piece-in, splice, consolidate or otherwise upgrade the existing material, using National Trust Preservation Standards.

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

- Do not block down the original window openings to accommodate a stock window that does not fit the building (see illustration on page 35);
- Where windows have previously been blocked down, restore original opening and allow replacement windows that will fit the original opening.
- Retain original window style when replacement is necessary.

Original building materials should be preserved and should not be covered with synthetic materials.

- Avoid removing siding that is in good condition or that can be repaired;
- If portions of the wood siding must be replaced, be sure to match style and lap dimensions of the original;
- New building permit applications to install vinyl or aluminum siding should be prohibited; and
- Deteriorated architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced, whenever possible.

The Village can strengthen its preservation goals by becoming a state-designated *Certified Local Government* (CLG). If the Village Board enacts appropriate preservation legislation and appoints a qualified preservation review commission, it would become eligible to become a CLG, pending a determination by the State Historic Preservation Office that it meets state and federal standards.



Above (top to bottom): Example of *Second Empire* architectural style building situated on Main Street in Uptown; *Victorian Style* home north of the Chester Presbyterian Church on Main Street; and the *Greek Revival* NY Onnuli Evangelical Church, between Main Street and NYS Route 94. The buildings above are eligible for listing on the State and National Register of Historic Places.

Approvals are forwarded to the National Park Service for certification. The CLG program supports and strengthens local preservation activities by encouraging communities to develop an action plan in order to achieve their preservation goals. In New York State, the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation administers the CLG program.

All certified CLGs are eligible to receive a variety of services from the SHPO, including:

- Grant money designated exclusively for CLG projects, which are awarded through the CLG program;
- Membership in a national CLG network;
- Technical preservation assistance and legal advice;
- Direct involvement in SHPO programs, such as identifying properties that may be eligible for listing in the State and National Registers of Historic Places;
- Training opportunities that will enable communities to protect their historic resources and integrate them into short- and long-term planning initiatives; and
- Ongoing support from the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation.

This Plan strongly recommends pursuit of Certified Local Government designation. Doing so will help protect sensitive and vulnerable historic resources for future generations.

Full EAF Part 3 Discussion: Creating interest in the “historical” aspect of the Village will increase tourism and make it a place of interest for those visiting New York State. The protection of these historic resources will help the Village of Chester to preserve its unique sense of place, which is defined, in part, by its historic buildings, Downtown and Uptown business districts and adjacent neighborhoods. Significant or large adverse environmental impacts are not anticipated as a result of these policies.

Full EAF Part 3 Discussion: The policies with respect to recreational resources will help to ensure the recreational needs of the community continue to be met as the community grows. Requiring payment-in-lieu of parkland fees will help to ensure parkland can be improved or expanded without unduly placing a burden on existing taxpayers. Significant or large adverse environmental impacts are not anticipated as a result of these policies.

**HISTORIC
PRESERVATION**

“THIS PLAN STRONGLY RECOMMENDS PURSUIT OF CERTIFIED LOCAL GOVERNMENT DESIGNATION. DOING SO WILL HELP PROTECT SENSITIVE AND VULNERABLE HISTORIC RESOURCES FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.”

4.3 Recreational Resources

The Village of Chester and Town of Chester jointly own and maintain the 16.4-acre Chester Community Park, which is accessed from Vadala Road. The park is centrally located and easily accessible to local residents.

The park contains two (2) baseball fields with a concession stand, two (2) full basketball courts, four (4) tennis courts, playground, two (2) batting cages, a picnic pavilion, a seasonal ice skating rink, a bocce court, two (2) civic memorials, and on-site parking for approximately 71 cars.

In addition to the public park, the adjacent Chester Union Free School District has three (3) baseball fields and a soccer field off of Vadala Road. The ballfields and soccer field will remain fully operational by the Chester Union Free School District (CUFSD). The recent extensive renovation of the baseball fields off Vadala Road brought them up to official Little League standards, making Chester eligible to host regional tournaments, a possible revenue source for the school district.

The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) establishes standards and development guidelines for community parks and recreational needs. These are based upon population size and are used to help communities plan for future parks and recreation needs.

Table 4-1 Recreational Demand - Village of Chester			
Facility Type	Standard per 1000 persons	Need	Provided
Neighborhood Park	1 acre	4 acres	16.4 acres
District Park With restrooms, playfields, tot lots and winter events.	2 acres	8 acres	16.4 acres Chester Community Park
Field Games @ CUFSD	3 acres	12 acres	16.4 acres + 10.8
Tennis Courts	½ court	2	4 courts
Basketball Courts	1 per 5000	1	2 courts
Baseball @CUFSD	1 per 5000	1	2 fields + 3 Fields
Soccer	1 per 10,000	½	1
Swimming pool	1 per 20,000	1	0
Trail	1 per region	1	Heritage Trail



Above (top to bottom): Aerial view from above Maple Avenue Park looking toward Main Street; *view from* Main Street; looking over Chester Union Free School District fields; and aerial view from Park looking southeast toward Maple Avenue. The Village provides recreational amenities for its residents, but a greater variety of activities may also be needed.

Based upon the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) standards, the Village of Chester meets most of the recommended standards for recreational facilities listed in Table 4-1, but additional recreational facilities are needed. For example, there may be demand for an additional soccer field and/or swimming pool, which might be accommodated at the existing park or situated nearby.

One of the most popular Recreational Resources in Orange County is the Heritage Trail, extending from near Middletown to Harriman and using a repurposed old train bed. In the Village of Chester, the trailhead is Downtown adjacent to the 1915 Erie Depot Museum. The Heritage Trail parking is courtesy of the Chester Historical Society on their lot that is leased from Orange County. This access point is at the midpoint of the full trail, making it even more popular. Additionally, walkers and bike riders often end their activities at nearby establishments (American House Ice Cream, Rushing Duck Brewery, a vegan restaurant, the Outdoor apparel store, Meadow Blues Coffee Shop, Clayton Delaney's and The Rustic Wheelhouse restaurants).

The confluence of these resources affords a great opportunity to create a recreational "hub" that could be promoted as a tourist destination. The area near the Heritage Trail is laid out in a loop road making it the perfect spot for concentrated events such as food truck festivals, village block parties, vintage car shows, seasonal festivals, and farm markets. All of these recreational activities should be explored through the creation of a local business association.

A new music pavilion/bandshell was recently constructed behind the storefronts along Downtown Main Street. This bandshell will host the popular weekly Summer Music Series, increasing pedestrian traffic. This, too, should be more heavily promoted beyond Chester.

However, the severe lack of parking in the Downtown area must be addressed to maximize the economic potential of this district.

The Chester Agricultural Center in the Downtown area has a Community Garden available to anyone interested in cultivating a plot in the Black Dirt area. This activity fosters a sense of community and environmental emphasis.

HERITAGE TRAIL

“ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR RECREATIONAL RESOURCES IN ORANGE COUNTY IS THE HERITAGE TRAIL, EXTENDING FROM GOSHEN TO HARRIMAN AND USING A REPURPOSED OLD TRAIN BED. THIS TRAIL CAN BE EASILY ACCESSED IN THE DOWNTOWN AREA AT THE ERIE TRAIN DEPOT.”

4.4 Cultural, Historic, and Recreational Resources: Goals, Objectives and Policies

The following goals, objectives and policies are set forth with respect to cultural resources:

Goal 1: Promote Uptown and Downtown Main Street as cultural centers in the community.

Establish a local Chamber of Commerce, Business Association, to encourage cooperation among store owners so as to stimulate economic growth in the business districts, promote their advantages and resources, and pursue grants to enhance the area.

- CR.1. Collaborate with local cultural institutions (such as the 1915 Erie Railroad Station Museum) to help them grow within the community and market their resources to the surrounding region.
- CR.2. Re-establish the *Village of Chester Farmers’ Market* in the Downtown business district.
- CR.3. Promote cultural events like the *Village of Chester Music Series*, Chester Kiwanis 5K Race, the Village-Wide Yard Sale Day, Bill Perry Blues Festival, and the Holiday Tree Lighting and Parade. Additionally, new seasonal events that have been successful in other towns should be explored, such as First Fridays, Food Truck Festivals, and holiday parades, and supported for long-term sustainability.
- CR.4. Support efforts to develop a cohesive cultural identify for the Village of Chester and to market its products and leisure experiences for residents and visitors. In particular, efforts by the Village of Chester Community Association (VOCCA) to beautify the village, promote civic pride and expand recreational and economic activities deserve support from the Village government.
- CR.5. Include cultural and historic resources in new Chester wayfinding systems.
- CR.6. Address the severe lack of parking in the Uptown and Downtown business districts. This is one of the main factors in the inability of these areas to grow and thrive.
- CR.7. Promote tourism by a variety of means that would serve as a directory of services, amenities and activities, along with a local map showing locations. This brochure could be paid for by local business ads in the brochure and could be distributed village- and town-wide. Increased tourist overflow from Legoland and other regional attractions can be enticed to make the Village of Chester part of their leisure plans. The goal is to establish a cohesive reputation of Chester as a place with a lot going on.

CULTURAL EVENTS

“PROMOTE CULTURAL EVENTS SUCH AS THE VILLAGE OF CHESTER MUSIC SERIES AND SUPPORT ITS LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY.”



Goal 2: Provide support for a rich variety of cultural opportunities and activities for all groups and individuals in the community.

- CR.8. Provide support for cultural activities by providing letters of support to business owners and not-for-profit cultural institutions seeking State funding for programing or capital improvements.
- CR.9. Support the Village of Chester Arts group to expand cultural opportunities in the Village.

The following goals, objectives and policies are set forth with respect to historic resources:

Goal 1: Strive to identify, conserve and protect significant public and privately-owned historic structures, landmarks, neighborhoods and buildings in recognition of their contribution to the Village’s identity.

- HR.1. Support nominations for individual listing of properties on the National Register of Historic Places.
- HR.2. Provide support letters to individuals or organizations that seek grant funding for historic preservation through the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation.
- HR.3. Seek grants to research, survey, document and rehabilitate historic resources in Chester.
- HR.4. Maintain accurate inventories of eligible historic properties in the Village, so that they can be considered in planning and development actions.
- HR.5. Consider creation of four (4) historic overlay districts to be consistent with the State and National Historic Registry Districts (See Map 4-1).
- HR.6. Actively seek preservation of historic resources through public-private partnerships, including seeking State Funding for rehabilitation. The State through the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation provides Rehabilitation tax credits for both homeownership and commercial properties that may be leveraged for any eligible rehabilitation project, but especially for adaptive reuse of currently obsolete and vacant commercial and industrial buildings.
- HR.7. Consider adopting design guidelines for each historic overlay district and foster stewardship of public squares, monuments and other public spaces. Such guidelines would be used by an Architectural or Historic Preservation Review Board.

HISTORIC
PRESERVATION

“STRIVE TO IDENTIFY, CONSERVE AND PROTECT SIGNIFICANT PUBLIC AND PRIVATELY-OWNED HISTORIC STRUCTURES, LANDMARKS, NEIGHBORHOODS AND BUILDINGS IN RECOGNITION OF THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE VILLAGE’S IDENTITY.”

Goal 2: Promote the preservation, appreciation and sustainable use of historical resources.

- HR.8. Consider developing a set of voluntary historic preservation guidelines for local residents. These guidelines can be adapted from those used by other municipalities who are successful in preserving their historical and architectural heritage: Warwick, Hudson, Rhinebeck, Cold Spring, etc.
- HR.9. Ensure Planning Board reviews development applications for land adjacent to historic resources to aid the Village’s heritage-resource protection efforts. Development proposals adjacent to or including historic sites should identify and mitigate adverse development impacts on those sites.
- HR.10. When historic resources can’t be saved, they should be documented compliant with the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), Historic American Engineering Record (HAER), Historic American Landscape Standard (HALS) or other appropriate nationally recognized standard.

Goal 3: Work with property owners to upgrade and renovate historic properties and outbuildings within the Village of Chester, including adaptive reuse options.

- HR.11. Consider creating special permit criteria in the zoning law to allow the conversion of carriage houses and other outbuildings to residential and nonresidential uses.
- HR.12. Consider the adoption of a preservation plan to further the Village’s goals for the preservation and conservation of historic resources.
- HR.13. Consider the adoption of a Landmark Law to preserve and protect important local historical resources.

Goal 4: Explore Certified Local Government Status.

- HR.14. Evaluate the potential benefits of Certified Local Government status and its potential application in the Village of Chester.
- HR.15. If sufficient benefit is determined to arise from CLG designation, pursue designation in cooperation with the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation.
- HR.16. Consider amending zoning law to allow adaptive reuse of historic structures subject to special permit approval. Create special permit criteria to allow the conversion of carriage houses and other outbuildings to uses consistent with the zoning regulations.
- HR.17. Compile list of historic, agricultural, recreational, scenic and watershed properties to forward to the Town of Chester for inclusion in the Community Preservation Plan (see sidebar).

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

“MAINTAIN ACCURATE INVENTORIES OF ELIGIBLE HISTORIC PROPERTIES IN THE VILLAGE, SO THAT THEY CAN BE CONSIDERED IN PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS AND BE USED AS A BASIS FOR HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGNATION.”

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION PLAN

The Town of Chester’s Community Preservation Plan (CPP) is intended to provide the foundation and framework for establishing a Town of Chester Community Development Fund, which will enable the Town to supplement Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) efforts and proactively protect valuable open space and farmland through the purchase of such lands.

The following goals, objectives and policies are set forth with respect to recreational resources:

Goal 1: Expand parkland and recreational opportunities for local residents.

- RR.1. Continue partnership with the Town of Chester to provide additional recreational amenities at the Chester Parks.
- RR.2. Explore opportunities for intergovernmental partnership with Chester Union Free School District to make recreational facilities more accessible to the general public.
- RR.3. Continue to support Orange County Parks & Recreation Departments efforts to enhance the Heritage Trail. Take advantage of Chester's location midway on the Heritage Trail to promote the downtown area as a destination/stopover for bikers. To accomplish this, additional parking is needed in the Downtown area which will ultimately benefit the neighborhood as a whole.
- RR.4. Ensure developers pay required payment-in-lieu-of-parkland fees to help pay for new recreation facilities needed to support population growth that occurs with new residential development. This fee schedule was enacted by resolution of the Village Board on May 13, 2013.

Goal 2: Enhance access to recreational facilities by local residents.

- RR.5. Consider creating an interconnected local system of trails and walkways to link Chester’s residents and businesses to its recreational resources. Ensure that recreational facilities and programs are easily accessible by Chester’s sidewalk system, bike lanes, trails and other pedestrian links.
- RR.6. Explore partnerships within Town of Chester, Orange County Parks & Recreation and Chester Union Free School District (CUFSD) to increase access to recreational facilities, for local residents. Work with CUFSD to identify adaptive reuse of the 1935 Art Deco Maple Avenue School.
- RR.7. Ensure that a well-balanced maintenance program is established and funded for all Village parks, recreational facilities, athletic fields, vehicles, and maintenance equipment, such as signage, lighting and bathrooms.
- RR.8. Collaborate with the Chester Agricultural Center to pursue the creation of a biking/walking loop that would be an offshoot of the Heritage Trail, and would circumnavigate the scenic Black Dirt farming area. This will simultaneously bring foot traffic to the downtown commercial district and raise awareness/education of the agricultural resources and history of the Village.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

“FURTHER EVALUATE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF CERTIFIED LOCAL GOVERNMENT STATUS AND ITS POTENTIAL APPLICATION IN THE VILLAGE OF CHESTER.”

5.0 Main Street Revitalization

The Village has two traditional “Main Street” business districts, in addition to the Route 17M corridor. The “Downtown” business district is situated along Main Street near the 1915 Chester Erie Station at the northern end of the Village. It is noted for its three-story mixed-use buildings, pedestrian scale streets and Village offices. “Uptown” is situated at the intersection of Main Street and Academy Avenue. Uptown is noted for its eclectic mix of one and two-story mixed-use buildings and is also the oldest section of the Village.

Today, there are a variety of businesses Downtown, including but not limited to three (3) restaurants, two (2) personal service establishments, a Yoga Studio, a barber shop, a market & deli; brewery with tasting room, coffee shop, and Village Hall, the Police Department and Justice Court. The Downtown business district has many beautiful and prominent mixed-use buildings that provide an excellent foundation for a vibrant mixed-use center. However, many storefronts are vacant and there is a general sense of disinvestment that detracts from its historic character.

Several of the buildings have no “curb appeal”; business names should be conducive to attracting customers and visitors. The wires on some of the buildings need to be consolidated or re-attached in a neater fashion. Unused wires should be removed. Until there are design standards established requiring proper maintenance of the buildings, the downtown area will not attract people who would casually walk down the street to view the other shops.

The Village’s Downtown business district has many of the attributes associated with a successful business community. These include a safe and walkable environment, attractive civic buildings, cultural anchor in the 1915 Erie Railroad Station Museum and a distinct sense of place as defined by the integrity of its historic architecture. These attributes provide a solid foundation on which to sustain a Downtown revitalization effort.

Uptown is the other traditional mixed-use business district, with a variety of business establishments including a barber shop, hair salon, realtor, professional office, insurance office, pizza restaurant, falafel restaurant, and consignment shop. Like the Downtown business district, Uptown has many vacant storefronts and a general sense of disinvestment.



Above (top to bottom): View of historic mixed-use buildings in Downtown Main Street; Village Hall, which is situated in the heart of Downtown on Main Street; and mixed-use building with several business establishments. The buildings above are eligible for listing on the State and National Register of Historic Places.

This Chapter provides a framework for how the public, private and not-for-profit sectors can work together to create an environment that attracts new investment to the Downtown business district and Uptown so that they remain vibrant business, civic and cultural centers of the community for years to come.

5.1 Civic and Cultural Anchors

Successful Main Street business districts are not only places where people shop, but they also are places where many civic and cultural activities occur and where the public can gather at community events. In the Village of Chester, Village Hall, the Police Department, and Justice Court are all located within the Downtown business district. So too is the 1915 Erie Railroad Station Museum. These civic and cultural anchors draw people to Downtown every day thereby supporting commercial activity and continued investment in the area.

This Plan strongly encourages the Village Board to keep its civic buildings Downtown and Uptown and supports private and not-for-profit sector efforts to establish and expand cultural and entertainment activities within these business districts.

5.2 Promotion

Successful Main Street revitalization programs require promotion. Promotion means selling the image and promise of Downtown and Uptown to all prospects. This involves marketing the unique characteristics of each business district to shoppers, investors, prospective businesses and visitors. It also involves the creation of a strategy to promote a positive image of the entire business district through advertising, special events and marketing events carried out by the business community along with the support of civic and cultural institutions.

The Chester Music Series is an important anchor that helps to draw visitors to Downtown; however, the visitors do not avail themselves of the other businesses when they attend the Music Series because the downtown area does not look appealing enough to take a stroll. Other than two restaurants (Rustic Wheelhouse & Clayton Delaney’s & the laundromat) which are close to the music venue and are open late, all of the other businesses are not.



Above (top to bottom): Mixed-use buildings that are the major focal point when entering Uptown from Academy Avenue onto Main Street; one-story infill building that houses a restaurant; and residence and mixed-use building in Uptown. Unlike the Downtown business district, there is more eclectic mix of buildings in Uptown, which make it less visually appealing. Parking is also very limited in this business district.

This section describes certain challenges facing each business district along with recommendations for creating an effective promotion strategy.

One of the challenges facing Chester in creating an effective promotional strategy is getting business owners to think of each business district as a whole rather than the sum of its parts. While the Village Board can play a supporting role promoting a positive image of Downtown and Uptown, it is the local business community that needs to take the leading role in promoting a positive image of their business districts. They can do this by sponsoring *special events*; conducting joint advertising campaigns to promote each business district and creating advertising campaigns to market the distinctive characteristics of each business district. Business owners must also work together to ensure the highest quality shopping experience for their customers.

For example, the business community should coordinate their *hours of operation* so that like businesses are open when customers are available to shop. Activity breeds activity and the *coordination of business hours* will benefit the entire business district. The business community should also work together to create *seasonal marketing campaigns* and other special events that are designed to draw customers to the business district.

Doing so will require the cooperation of the local business community but will strengthen each business district. Other measures that can be taken to promote Downtown and Uptown include the creation of special attractions within each business district that are designed to draw people. Activities might include the creation of a seasonal *arts & crafts marketplace* featuring the work of Hudson Valley artists and continue and expand *live music* events at local restaurants. Such activities can draw large numbers of people - providing them an opportunity to discover Chester.

It is also important that the business community reach out to prospective entrepreneurs to encourage them to open complementary businesses. *Business attraction efforts* are needed to fill vacant storefronts and are also needed to create an appealing mix of retail, restaurants, professional services and cultural attractions. The focus of business attraction efforts must be quality - quality design, quality of the goods & services, quality merchandise displays and appealing restaurant settings. A vibrant mix of restaurants, retail and services would give customers a reason to visit time and time again - thereby making Main Street a destination.



Above (top to bottom): *Case Study:* Butterfields Cafe on Division Street in Deposit, NY and view of front porch and outdoor seating for the café. The signs, large windows and nice presentation of the exterior and interior of this restaurant, coupled with its menu, make for an inviting culinary destination that has broad appeal.

Both the Uptown and Downtown areas are included in proposed Historic overlay districts, which will only enhance and preserve the historic character of these areas.

5.3 Organization

Successful Main Street revitalization efforts are built around a consensus of all the stakeholders who have a stake in the business district so they can work together toward the same goals. In the case of Chester, the stakeholders include the Village Board, Planning Board, local businesses, building owners, not-for-profit agencies and residents.

Business expansion and attraction efforts will likely require financial incentives to ensure a return-on-investment that dictates private sector investment. One tool that is available to assist in business recruitment or expansion is the New York Main Street (NYMS) Program. Each year, the Village must apply for between \$50,000 to \$500,000 through NYMS for local revitalization efforts.

NYMS funds can be made available to entrepreneurs in the form of small grants for façade renovations, interior building renovations and the creation of Main Street anchors. The Village Board must coordinate with the local business community with respect to identifying potential projects, but must take the leading role in pursuing the grant application for NYMS funds and administering the grant.

This type of organizational structure allows the Village to utilize its existing capacity to leverage these funds for Main Street revitalization, while enabling business owners to continue to focus on running their establishments. However, it would be the business community that would take the leading role promoting Main Street and hosting special events.

To formalize the structure of Main Street revitalization responsibilities and role, it is recommended that the Village Board establish a *Main Street Revitalization Committee* for a combined Downtown and Uptown Main Street to clearly identify the responsibilities of each stakeholder in the overall “Main Street” revitalization effort and to strengthen cooperation among various stakeholders over time. These Committees should consist of members from each identified stakeholder group and begin by meeting quarterly to initiate a coordinated Main Street revitalization program.



Above: Case Study: View of new infill building situated in the flood zone on Main Street in the hamlet of Livingston Manor in Sullivan County, NY. The revitalization effort in the hamlet began with leadership from the local business community along with strong support from the Town of Rockland and the Sullivan County Planning Department. The new sidewalks and streetlamps were funded through NYSDOT Multi-modal funds and Empire State Development Corporation funds. Business owners could secure matching grants of up to \$10,000 for façade renovations along with \$5,000 matching grants for interior renovations.

Finally, the Main Street Business District was placed within the Sullivan County Empire Zone enabling investors to obtain a 10-year Real Property Tax Credit. Collectively, these incentives – coupled with strong support from the business community and local government has helped to stimulate millions of dollars in new investment and expanded the tax base.

5.4 Design

Creating an attractive streetscape requires a careful focus on the design of building storefronts and the streetscape. Downtown and Uptown mixed-use buildings must be restored in a manner that respects their historic architecture and the pedestrian environment must provide a sense of cleanliness, comfort and security. This can be accomplished by having well-maintained sidewalks, street trees, streetlights and street furniture that provide comfort and security for the pedestrian.

Downtown and Uptown businesses owners must also create an inviting atmosphere. This can be accomplished through a variety of measures including attractive window displays, visually appealing facades, appropriate signage, pleasing displays of merchandise and good quality merchandise. It is also vitally important that new infill buildings are designed to complement the architecture of historic buildings that are located throughout each business district. A careful focus on design will make each more appealing thereby enhancing the social and economic vitality of the business districts. Design Guidelines should also be adopted for Downtown and Uptown.

5.4.1 Façade Renovations

Renovations to the historic buildings in the Downtown and Uptown business districts must respect the architecture of the buildings. To this end, renovations that remove historic elements of buildings must not be permitted. Also, façade renovations that mask the historic architecture of historic buildings should be prohibited. However, the removal of false facades should be encouraged.

5.4.2 Window Displays & Merchandising

The design of window and merchandise displays play an important role in defining the quality of the shopping experience. Window displays should be attractive to the eye and display something of interest that encourages the shopper to enter the store and shop. It is also important the windows remain free of visual clutter (such as temporary sales signs) since such signs block the view of the merchandise within the store. Temporary sales and banner signs also convey an image of cheapness – not quality. Any business can make their windows interesting.



Above (top to bottom): *Case Study: Country Emporium* in Walton, NY – an example of nice window display and transparent windows; *The Harrison Gallery* in Williamstown, MA where the display of sculptures and transparency of the storefront window create an inviting appearance; and *Rhinebeck Hardware Store* in Rhinebeck, NY with signage, awning and window and outdoor displays that invite customer interest.

As more and more store owners invest time creating inviting window displays the overall shopping experience in the business district will be enhanced.

As building facades are restored, building owners must retain the transparency of the storefront by maintaining the large display windows. Large display windows provide a great setting for window displays but also allow shoppers to see the merchandise from the street. When well designed, the store is inviting.

If the merchandise is well-displayed, it too becomes an aesthetically pleasing part of the storefront.

Attractive storefronts help merchants to attract customers into their stores. Collectively, they help to create vibrant business district. The Village should discourage business owners from making modifications to any of the storefronts within the business district that would reduce the transparency of the storefront as has happened with several storefront offices in Uptown.

5.4.3 Signs

The signs associated with Chester’s Uptown business district vary from very appealing to unappealing. Signs vary greatly with respect to placement, size, materials, quality and better design is needed. *Sign standards for Downtown and Uptown must be adopted, which regulate sign size, placement and set standards for sign materials and lighting.*

Wood or faux wood signs with down lit gooseneck lamps are recommended. Wall signs should be appropriately placed in the "lintel" (e.g. the sign panel between first and second floor). Pole signs and interior illuminated boxed lighting fixtures will be prohibited in the Downtown and Uptown business districts, as should LED “surrounds” on the display windows.

There is also a need to limit the placement of temporary window signs. Temporary window signs will be limited to a small number of seasonal events during the year for a short duration. Even then, the percentage of the storefront window on which these signs are placed will be limited to no greater than 25% of the total window area.

MAIN STREET
REVITALIZATION

“FORM A DOWNTOWN AND UPTOWN REVITALIZATION COMMITTEE TO CLEARLY IDENTIFY RESPONSIBILITIES OF EACH STAKEHOLDER IN THE MAIN STREET REVITALIZATION EFFORT AND TO STRENGTHEN COOPERATION AMONG VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS OVER TIME.”

5.4.4 Street Lighting/wiring

The existing utility poles, lights and wiring in Downtown and Uptown detract from the beauty of historic mixed-use buildings. This Plan recommends the Village Board, in cooperation with building owners and the utility companies, explore the feasibility of moving overhead utilities from their current location in front of buildings to the rear of the buildings in the proposed historic overlays. It is a goal of this Plan to replace the current utility poles, cobra lighting fixtures and wires with vintage style pedestrian-scale light poles along the sidewalks in Downtown and Uptown.

5.5 Main Street Revitalization: Goals, Objectives and Policies

Goal 1: Create a socially and economically vibrant mixed-use business districts.

Objectives and Policies: Main Street Revitalization

- DR.1. Keep civic and cultural anchors within the Downtown and Uptown business districts.
- DR.2. Encourage business owner participation by facilitating the creation of a local Chamber of Commerce to promote Downtown and Uptown as a whole rather than the sum of its parts. Identify complementary and needed businesses or services for Downtown and Uptown.
- DR.3. Emphasize quality - quality design, quality of goods & services, quality merchandise displays and appealing restaurant settings.
- DR.4. Consider the adoption of *Design Guidelines* to ensure renovations to historic buildings are done appropriately and infill development strengthens the fabric of Downtown and Uptown districts.
- DR.5. Identify complementary and needed businesses or services for Downtown and Uptown.
- DR.6. Review Zoning Law to ensure existing regulations do not hinder efforts to create new business establishments (e.g., off-street parking requirements, permitted density, etc.).
- DR.7. Build capacity for Main Street revitalization efforts by forming a *Downtown and Uptown Revitalization Committee* to clearly identify the responsibilities of each stakeholder in the “Main Street” revitalization effort and to strengthen cooperation among various stakeholders over time.
- DR.8. Apply through the NYS Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) to secure *New York Main Street* funds for business retention and expansion.






Above (top to bottom): *Placemaking Tour with the Comprehensive Plan Committee Members at new Pavilion behind Village Hall; corner of NYS Route 94 and Main Street; and view from Pavilion looking at the back of Downtown buildings.*

- DR.9. Encourage more housing opportunities above the first floor of existing mixed-use multi-story buildings.
- DR.10. Expand municipal parking areas in Downtown and Uptown business district.
- DR.11. The Village Board, in cooperation with building owners and the utility companies, should explore the feasibility of moving overhead utilities from their current location in front of buildings to the rear of the buildings in the proposed historic overlays.
- DR.12. Identify businesses needing renovation and proper maintenance such as peeling paint, loose bricks and mortar gaps, and require the businesses to correct such deficiencies and conform to the design standards established by the Village Board, including attractive window displays, visually appealing facades, and appropriate signage. Unusual building paint colors such as “shocking blue” will be prohibited. In order to give the business districts a better look for visitors and our residents, fines should be instituted if improvements are not accomplished within a specified time frame. The Village Board will present and pass a Local Law to codify and enforce these requirements. *Being in a qualifying census tract, help these owners with State and Federal tax credit programs.*
- DR.13. The Village Board will coordinate and plan outdoor events.
- DR.14. Leaning telephone poles will be replaced. “Zombie” and half poles will be removed. Unused utility wires will be removed, and the remaining wires will be consolidated in a neat fashion.
- DR.15. Parking areas should be expanded behind the downtown businesses including using the Larkin Pavilion area for parking when events are not scheduled there.
- DR.16. Signs will be consistent with the historical character of the Downtown, Uptown and should not be garish and unappealing. Wood and faux wood signs with down lit gooseneck lamps are recommended. Pole signs and LED signs should be prohibited.

Full EAF Part 3 Discussion: The policies proposed herein are intended to ensure that public investment in Downtown and Uptown is compatible with the historic character of these areas and promotes historic preservation to the greatest practical extent. No adverse impacts are anticipated as a result of these policies.

MAIN STREET
REVITALIZATION

“APPLY THROUGH THE
NYS CONSOLIDATED
FUNDING
APPLICATION (CFA)
PROCESS TO SECURE
NEW YORK MAIN
STREET FUNDING TO
ASSIST BUSINESS
RETENTION AND
EXPANSION EFFORTS.”

<p>Problem: Underutilized space.</p> <p>Recommendation: Develop an Overall Master Plan for the Village of Chester parcels situated behind the Main Street business district.</p>	<p>Problem: Cobra lights mounted on utility poles are not very attractive and lighting is not pedestrian friendly.</p> <p>Recommendation: Install street lights along Main Street.</p>			<p>Problem: Overhead utilities and utility connections on front of buildings is not visually appealing.</p> <p>Recommendation: Explore feasibility of moving poles behind buildings or burying electric lines.</p>	<p>Problem: Separate ownership of four (4) tax parcels stands in the way of creating a consolidated off-street parking area for the Main Street business district.</p> <p>Recommendation: Work with property owners to develop an off-street parking lot for the entire business district with room for 30 cars.</p>
					

6.0 Transportation

The Village’s transportation system provides the means that enable its residents, businesses and visitors to get around the community and to the surrounding region. It is an important goal of this Comprehensive Plan to provide an interconnected, multi-modal transportation system, which provides safe and efficient access to all properties and land uses.

A multi-modal transportation system accommodates a variety of travelers including motorists, bicyclists, pedestrians, truckers and rail. The Village is committed to ensuring its transportation system continues to serve vehicular travel but would like to enhance mobility options to its residents and businesses. Such options include improved pedestrian access along the Village’s sidewalk system through sidewalk enhancements, the creation of a trail system to better connect residents to its business districts, institutions, and recreational resources; the designation of bike lanes on streets through “Complete Streets” enhancements; and improved public transit.

The Village seeks to improve its transportation system by providing viable mobility options to its residents and businesses, so they are not solely dependent on automobiles for travel and transport. To do this, it will promote alternative modes of transportation, including biking, bus public transit, rail, and walking and work with its Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) – the Orange County Transportation Council (OCTC) - and New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) to expand “Park & Ride” opportunities to meet growing demand.

Over time, Chester envisions an enhanced multi-modal transportation model that encourages healthy, active living, promotes mobility options, increases pedestrian safety and access to community destinations, businesses, reduces environmental impact, reduces greenhouse gas emissions, and supports greater social interaction and community identity. This transportation model will provide safe and convenient travel along and across streets through a comprehensive, integrated transportation network for bicyclists, drivers, pedestrians, public transportation riders, and people of all ages and abilities, including children, youth, families, older adults, and individuals with disabilities.

COMPLETE STREETS

“NOW, IN COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY, A MOVEMENT IS GROWING TO “COMPLETE THE STREETS.” CITIES AND TOWNS ARE ASKING THEIR PLANNERS AND ENGINEERS TO BUILD ROAD NETWORKS THAT ARE SAFER, MORE LIVABLE, AND WELCOMING TO EVERYONE.... TO ENABLE SAFE ACCESS FOR ALL USERS, REGARDLESS OF AGE, ABILITY, OR MODE OF TRANSPORTATION. THIS MEANS THAT EVERY TRANSPORTATION PROJECT WILL MAKE THE STREET NETWORK BETTER AND SAFER FOR DRIVERS, TRANSIT USERS, PEDESTRIANS, AND BICYCLISTS – MAKING YOUR COMMUNITY A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE.”

- National Complete Streets Coalition

Key elements for achieving this vision will be: 1) improving the street system’s ability to move people and goods safely and efficiently, 2) revitalizing the historic grid network that exists in Chester by implementing Complete Streets solutions and policies, and 3) improving access to and promoting the use of public transport and rail (freight) to reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT).

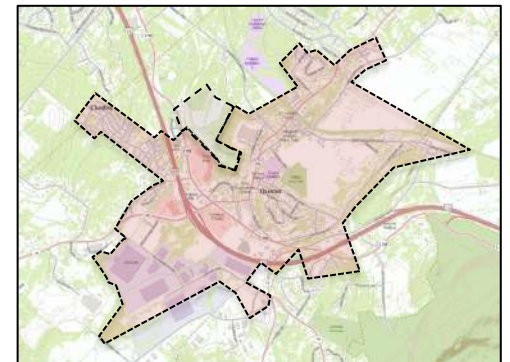
To achieve this vision and objectives, the Village will need to work closely with the Orange County Transportation Council (OCTC), New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT), and private railroads, since each of these entities in some way operate and maintain a portion of the Village’s transportation system.

6.1 Improving the Street System

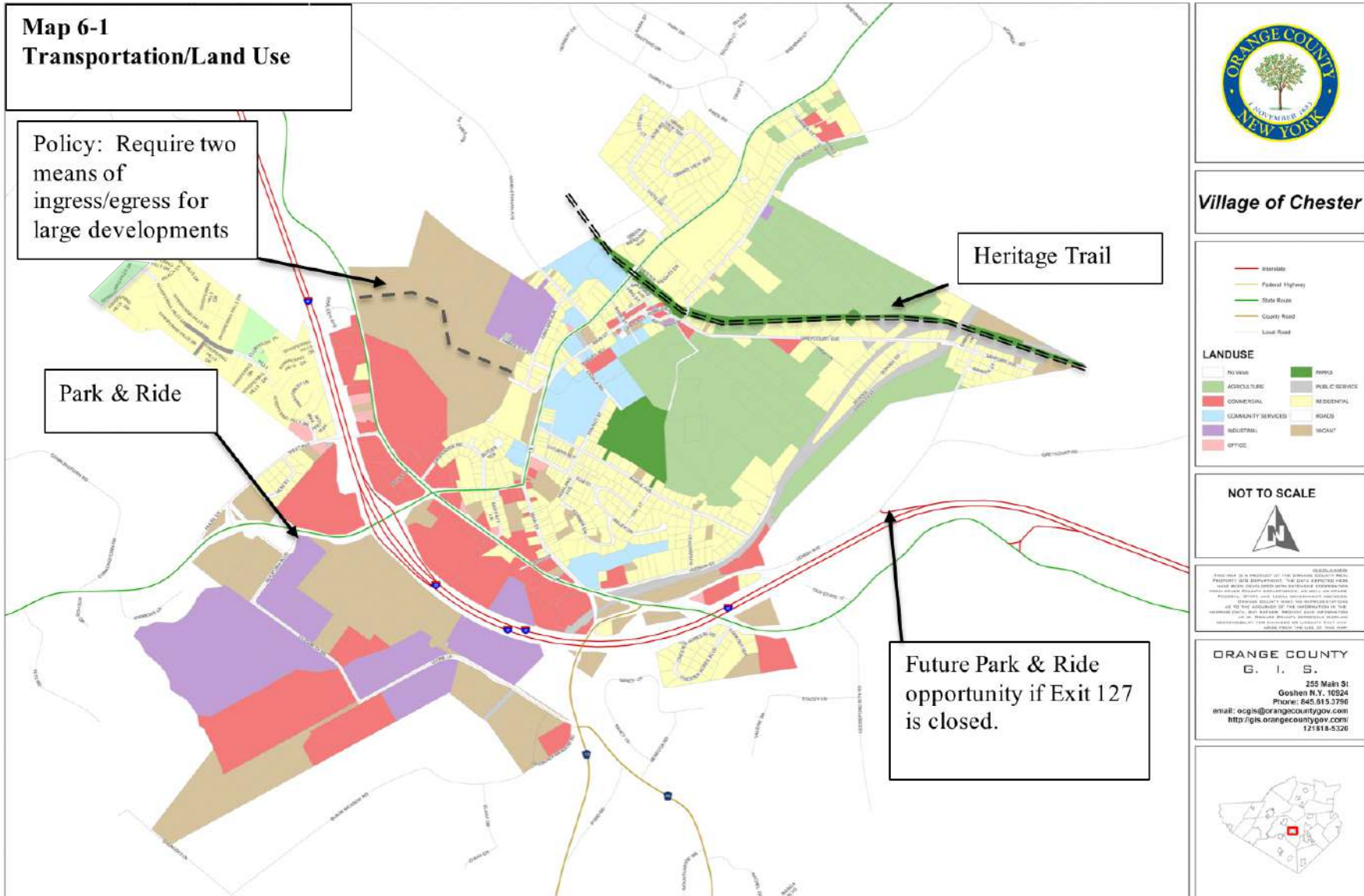
The core of the Village of Chester’s transportation system is its interstate and arterial highways and its *grid street plan* in which streets run at right angles to one another, forming a grid (Map 6-1). Two inherent characteristics of the grid plan, frequent intersections and the right angles of intersections, assist pedestrian and vehicular movement. The geometry helps with orientation and wayfinding and its frequent intersections give pedestrians and motorists many choices of potential routes in which to reach their desired destination. Such choices help to alleviate traffic congestion on a single street by giving motorists alternative routes to reach their destination.

The Village’s street system can be further defined by the functional classification. The Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) created a functional classification system for roadways as follows:

- *Local* - This type of road provides direct access to abutting properties and channels local traffic to collector roads (e.g. residential streets);
- *Minor Collector*: These roads provide connections between arterials and local roads at comparatively slower speeds and carry moderate volumes of traffic (e.g. Maple Avenue and Greycourt Avenue);
- *Major Collector*: Provide connections between arterials and local roads at relatively higher speeds (e.g., Main Street (between Uptown and Downtown), Lehigh Avenue, West Avenue);
- *Arterial*: The function of an arterial is to carry medium-to-heavy volumes of traffic at moderate to high speeds and provide access to major traffic generators (e.g., NYS Routes 17M & 94);
- *Interstate and Limited-Access Highways*: This type of highway moves large volumes of traffic at relatively high speeds to and from locations outside the region. Such highways have limited access via designated exits with no at-grade intersections (e.g., NYS Route 17).



Above (top to bottom): NYS Route 17M, which is an arterial highway; view of Park & Ride at the corner of NYS Route 94/Nucifora Blvd., and map showing street system in Chester. Improving the street system will require cooperation with Village, Town, County and State agencies.



The Village’s grid street plan is well-established so improving it involves identifying and then addressing deficiencies in the current infrastructure. This Plan recommends monitoring of traffic accident data with local and State law enforcement agencies to identify locations in the street and sidewalk system where roadway design may be contributing to traffic accidents. Once deficiencies are identified then improvements can be planned and funding secured to improve traffic safety.

Deficiencies in the present street system include the intersection of Brookside Avenue (NYS Route 17M) and Kings Highway (CR 13), where the roadway geometry results in difficult turning movements. This intersection is a major gateway to the Village of Chester and there is an urgent need to address its deficiencies in light of regional developments such as Legoland and the redevelopment of Camp LaGuardia, which will inevitably increase traffic congestion at this intersection. Failure to address the deficiencies at this intersection will have adverse transportation impacts that will affect the Village, Town and surrounding communities. For the above reasons, securing funding to address such street system deficiencies is a priority of this Comprehensive Plan and should be an action considered for immediate implementation.

To do so, the Village will need to work closely with its MPO, the Orange County Transportation Council (OCTC) to secure funding through the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) to prepare a plan for the improvement of this intersection and to get it on the NYSDOT’s Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) to fund planned improvements. In light of nearby developments with regional impacts (e.g., Legoland), this Plan recommends the Board of Trustees seek UPWP funding to conduct a Corridor Study of NYS Route 17M within the Village/Town of Chester. The study purpose would be to identify needed roadway geometry improvements and complete street enhancements to make the corridor visually appealing and pedestrian friendly.

Another concerning intersection is the Oakland Avenue/Main Street (Route 94)/High Street intersection. The roadway geometry for tractor trailers turning onto Oakland Avenue is too steep, and the sight distance for drivers turning onto High Street from Main Street is poor. The Walton Hose fire company is also located at this intersection. This is the type of intersection that would benefit from a roundabout, which would help to calm traffic and provide uninterrupted traffic flow to help alleviate congestion. Roadway geometry deficiencies must be addressed to accommodate increases in traffic that will inevitably be generated by the regional developments.



Above (top to bottom): View of the intersection of Main Street and Maple Avenue showing road and sidewalk system; intersection of Main Street and Elm Street; and view of Main Street and Academy Avenue intersection at gateway to Uptown. Cross Streets such as Walnut Street and Oak Street provide interior connections between Maple Avenue and Elm Street to form the grid.

There are also many locations in the village where sidewalks suddenly end, are missing or are just simply needed. This plan will analyze the connectivity and condition of the sidewalks in the village, identify locations and make recommendations as to what is needed. The Village Board will amend the Zoning Code to require developers to provide sidewalks and connections to the existing sidewalk system.

Looking ahead, it is recommended that the Village Board with its Streets Department continue to identify needed improvements in its street system so that as funding becomes available it is ready to apply for federal and State aid to address such deficiencies. This Plan supports the creation of a detailed inventory of the roadway system, which describes the general condition of road, culvert and sidewalk segments, and any drainage deficiencies that need to be addressed. From such an inventory, a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) would be developed along with a schedule for maintenance and replacement of key segments of the street system.

6.2 Complete Streets - Revitalizing the Grid System

Where the Village’s grid system is in good repair, it serves the multi-modal transportation needs of Chester. However, sidewalk improvements to make the community more accessible to persons with disabilities are needed as well as pedestrian and bicyclist systems.



Above: The ideal “Complete Street” with accommodations for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit and automobiles.

Courtesy AARP Bulletin.

Village of Chester, New York



Above (top to bottom): View of sidewalk and crosswalk system in Downtown, which would benefit from enhancements to make the business district more appealing and pedestrian friendly; view of NYS Route 17M corridor with strip commercial development and lack of street trees, which make it uninviting, and view NYS Route 17 M with nice display of antique vehicles associated with a local business establishment. Complete street concepts must be considered in a Corridor Study for NYS Route 17M.

It is an important goal of this Comprehensive Plan to implement *complete street* solutions and policies to revitalize the historic grid network that exists in Chester and to implement them into new streets and highways. In some instances, such solutions would involve repair or replacement of curbing, crosswalks and sidewalks. This is what is needed along Main Street [in Downtown and Uptown]. In other instances, new sidewalks, bike lanes or trails should be considered to better link residential areas to institutions, parks, Uptown, Downtown and the strip retail developments along NYS Route 17M [See illustration below of corridor “Complete Streets” improvements].

This Plan strongly supports streetscape enhancements in the heart of the Uptown and Downtown, which would include new sidewalks and handicap accessible curbing along with streetscape enhancements to make the business district more inviting to pedestrians and bicyclists. *Curbed bump outs* at key intersections would improve sight distance and pedestrian safety.

By bumping out the curb line at a crosswalk, the traffic gets slower, the pedestrians are more visible to oncoming traffic, and pedestrians are clearly directed to these crossing locations which helps channel them to safer crossing locations. The curbed bump outs would help to address the sight distance concerns at busy intersections. This Plan also recommends the introduction of more landscaping along Main Street in Uptown and Downtown to soften the appearance of these business districts. Complete Street enhancements are also needed along NYS Route 17M.



Above: NYSDOT Region 8 “Complete Street” Improvements on NYS Route 55 in LaGrangeville, NY, with accommodations for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit and automobiles.



Above (top to bottom): View of sidewalk and crosswalk system along NYS Route 55 in LaGrangeville, NY. The top photos showing a round-about, sidewalks, textured crosswalks, pedestrian-scale period lighting and pedestrian benches; middle photo shows tractor-trailer using mountable curb to make turn, and bottom photo showing monument sign for McDonald's. The Route 17 M Corridor in the Village of Chester would be well-suited for such improvements.

6.3 Improving Access to Public Transport and Rail

The Village seeks to improve access to public transportation along with business access to freight rail. These efforts would help to lower Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) and Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG), which are important goals of this Plan. Improved public transit is critical to creating a multi-modal transportation system that provides Chester’s residents access to safe, reliable, and affordable connections to employment, education, healthcare, and other essential services for all users including: the elderly and disabled, children, pedestrians, bicyclists, drivers, non-drivers and transit users.

The Village faces a challenge with the extreme shortage of commuter parking for daily bus riders traveling to and from employment in New York City. There is a 97-space Park and Ride lot in Chester at the corner of NYS Route 94 and Nucifora Boulevard. On a daily basis, this lot is filled to capacity with an estimated overflow of 70-100 cars per day parking in the Lowes Home Center parking lot across Route 94. Expanded parking capacity is a necessity that needs to be addressed. Park & Ride Lots enable drivers to ride-share or to use public transit by connecting to the Coach/USA Shortline bus system. The Park & Ride lot is already at capacity and cooperation among the Village/Town of Chester/Orange County/NYS DOT and Coach USA Shortline is needed to find ways to expand its capacity. If a Park & Ride were also developed along the Route 17 M corridor with pedestrian and bicycle connections, it would enable Village residents to walk or bike to public transit thereby creating a truly multi-modal transportation system.

Public transportation is needed to allow Chester’s senior residents to age in place rather than moving to other communities where more essential services are provided. Public transportation is also needed for the Village’s low-moderate income young adult population who need public transit for access to higher education, job training, and job opportunities that are only found in the surrounding region. The Village should look into getting a local bus/jitney service that would travel throughout the Village with stops at the Uptown, Downtown, and the Brookside Avenue districts.

To achieve this goal, the Village will need to work closely with the OCTC to explore opportunities to increase the frequency of bus service to the Village and add additional bus stops with shelters to make the bus service more appealing.

TRANSPORTATION

“THE VILLAGE SEEKS TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED OF THE COMMUNITY BY IMPROVING ACCESS TO PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ALONG WITH BUSINESS ACCESS TO FREIGHT RAIL.”

Mean Travel Time to Work

	<u>2010</u>	<u>2017</u>
OC	33.5	33.4
VC	40.3	31.1

OC- Orange County
VC – Village of Chester

Source: Census Commuting Characteristics Survey 5-year Estimates

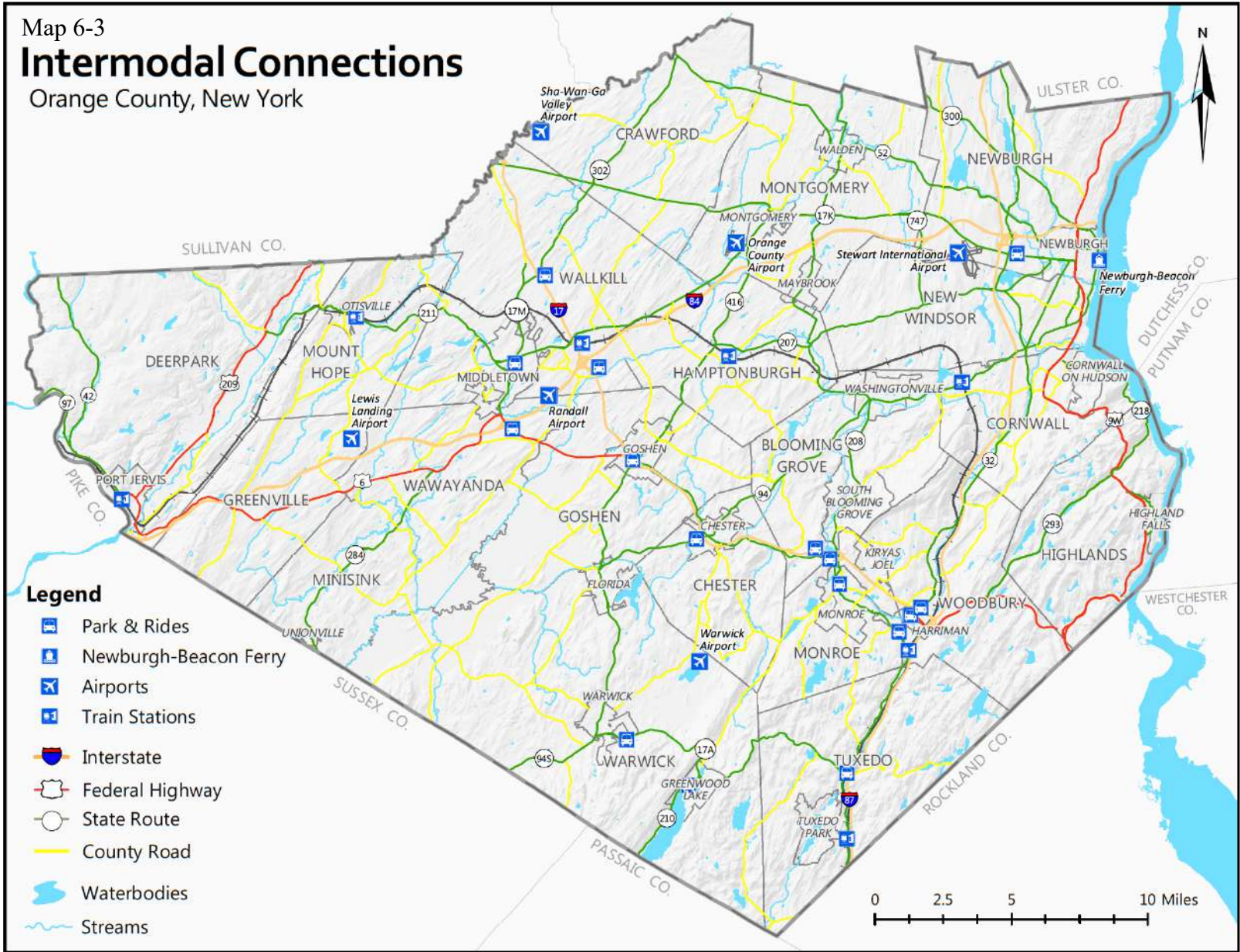
This Plan also recognizes the Middletown & New Jersey Railroad, LLC /New York Susquehanna & Western Railway Corp (MNJ/NYSW), which runs from Sparta Junction in New Jersey to the Port Jervis Line near Campbell Hall and traverses the Town of Chester and eastern portion of the Village, is an important part of its transportation infrastructure. The railway gives local vegetable farmers a competitive advantage and vital connection to transport their produce to market.

To help ensure the long-term viability of the MNJ/NYSW railroad, this Plan supports rail line connections to existing and new agricultural and manufacturing industries within the Village and Town of Chester. Increasing traffic volumes on the railway will help to ensure its long-term viability, while simultaneously helping to reduce VMT on local roadways. Short-term, bus-to-rail service from Chester to Metro North/New Jersey Transit train stations should be provided to enable residents to access passenger rail service to the Metropolitan NYC area. Long-term, passenger rail to the Village could be explored if potential ridership and congestion on local roadways warrant it.



FREIGHT RAIL

“TO HELP ENSURE THE LONG-TERM VIABILITY OF THE MIDDLETOWN & NEW JERSEY RAILROAD, LLC /NEW YORK SUSQUEHANNA & WESTERN RAILWAY CORP (MNJ/NYSW), THIS PLAN SUPPORTS RAIL LINE CONNECTIONS TO EXISTING AND NEW AGRICULTURAL AND MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES WITHIN THE VILLAGE OF CHESTER AND TOWN OF CHESTER.”



6.4 Transportation: Goals, Objectives and Policies

Goal: To provide an interconnected, multimodal transportation system that is safe and efficient, and serves and supports residential and nonresidential land-use in Chester.

Objectives and Policies

Traffic Circulation

- TC.1. Identify safety challenges for pedestrians, bicyclists, or other users through analysis of accident data, and walkability audits; and develop solutions to safety issues.
- TC.2. Prioritize modifications to safety challenges and identify funding streams and implementation strategies, including which features can be constructed as part of routine street projects.
- TC.3. Enhance Chester’s grid street network so that it better accommodates multiple modes of transportation, including bike, bus, pedestrian, truck and vehicular access.
- TC.4. Work closely with its MPO, the Orange County Transportation Council (OCTC), to secure funding through the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) to prepare a plan for “Complete Streets” improvements of the Route 17M corridor and to get it on the NYSDOT’s Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) to fund planned improvements including round-a-bouts.
- TC.5. Support efforts to develop a cohesive cultural identity for the Village of Chester and to market its products and leisure experiences for residents and visitors. Include cultural and historic resources in a new Chester wayfinding system (e.g., signs, mobile apps, website, walking/biking/auto tours, etc.).
- TC.6. Enhance the image of the Route 17 M commercial corridor. Plan the transformation of the B-2 Zoned Brookside Avenue (17M) into a pedestrian friendly walkable and attractive corridor.
- TC.7. Identify additional funding streams and implementation strategies to retrofit existing streets to include Complete Streets infrastructure. The Village could pursue funding through the NYSDOT Safe Routes to Schools and Transportation Alternatives Program to make complete street improvements.
- TC.8. Work with the Town, OCTC, and NYSDOT to prevent the closure of the exit and entrance ramps at Exits 127 and 128. The closure of these exits would be a disaster for Exit 126 because all traffic would be funneled to one exit, which is already congested especially during rush hour. Study the feasibility of new interchange at southeastern end of the Village.

TRANSPORTATION

“ADVANCE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN RESIDENCES, PARKS, INSTITUTIONS AND THE DOWNTOWN /UPTOWN MAIN STREET BUSINESS DISTRICTS.”

TC.9. Reserved.

TC.10. Work with the OCTC to secure funding through the UPWP to prepare a plan for the improvement of the intersections at Rte 17M/Kings Highway, Rte 17M/Rte 94 (Academy Avenue), Rte 94 (Main Street)/High Street and Oakland Avenue to get the projects on the NYSDOT’s Statewide STIP to fund the planned improvements. Pedestrian crossing improvements are desperately needed at these intersections. Roundabouts should be built at the following intersections: Brookside Ave & Academy Ave, Oakland Ave & Main St, and Brookside Ave & Lehigh Ave/Kings Highway.

TC.11. The traffic lanes at Brookside Ave & Academy Ave must be redesignated. At present, the left lane is for left turns, the middle lane is for traffic going straight, and the right lane is for right turns. The traffic backs up on the left turn lane because one lane is not enough to handle the traffic. The middle lane should be redesignated as both a left turn and a straight-ahead lane. Pedestrian crosswalks and signal improvements are also desperately needed in this location.

Bicycles and Pedestrian Safety

BP.1. Advance opportunities for bicycle and pedestrian connections between residences, parks, institutions and the Downtown/Uptown Main Street business districts.

BP.2. Require bike racks and amenities for commercial sites, schools, parks and public facilities.

BP.3. Through a *Capital Improvement Plan*, inventory the Village’s sidewalk system in terms of condition, need for repair, replacement or extension and pursue funding through OCTC, NYSDOT, NYSOCR (CDBG) and other agencies to make needed enhancements.

BP.4. Integrate complete streets infrastructure and design features into street design to create a safe and inviting environment for all users to walk, bicycle and use public transportation. Consider designing village environment around people, not cars.

BP.5. Capitalize on the Village's compact development and classic grid system by making enhancements to the street system to better encourage non-motorized transportation modes.

BP.6. Ensure that sidewalk improvements are fully accessible to people with disabilities.

Public Transportation

PT.1. Work with the Orange County Transportation Council and Coach/USA Shortline to provide more covered bus shelters and covered bike parking at transit stops in the Village of Chester.

TRANSPORTATION

“INTEGRATE COMPLETE STREETS INFRASTRUCTURE AND DESIGN FEATURES INTO STREET DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION WITHIN LARGE-SCALE DEVELOPMENTS TO CREATE SAFE AND INVITING ENVIRONMENTS FOR ALL USERS TO WALK, BICYCLE AND USE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION.”

- PT.2. Coordinate with the Town of Chester/Orange County/NYSDOT and Coach USA Shortline to find ways to expand the capacity of the Park & Ride lot at the corner of NYS Route 94 and Nucifora Boulevard, including a tiered parking structure. An alternative would be to coordinate with Orange County and Coach USA Shortline to build a parking lot at Camp LaGuardia which can provide much more parking and would keep traffic away from the already congested exit 126.
- PT.3. Coordinate with the OCTC and Coach USA Shortline to increase bus-to-rail service from the Village to Metro-North/New Jersey Transit passenger rail stations.
- PT.4. Work regionally and locally to develop satellite park-and-ride facilities near NYS Route 17 with bus service to New York City.
- PT.5. Integrate complete streets infrastructure and design features into street design and construction within large-scale developments to create safe and inviting environments for all users to walk, bicycle and use public transportation.
- PT.6. Consider the creation of a local bus/jitney service that would travel throughout the Village and would have frequent stops at the uptown, downtown, and Brookside Avenue districts. Residents could call the service and arrange for local transportation within the Village from their residences. This would be especially attractive for seniors and would help local businesses.

Rail Service

- RS.1. Consider the adoption of a Local Law to the rail car and tractor trailer parking within railroad rights-of-way to address potential nuisances.
- RS.2. Railroad rights-of-way should be preserved for current and future use.
- RS.3. Reserved.

**FULL EAF PART 3
DISCUSSION**

“THE COMPLETE STREETS AND OTHER TRANSPORTATION POLICIES ARE INTENDED TO RESULT IN SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS INCLUDING THE DECREASED USE OF PRIVATE AUTOMOBILES AND DECREASED TRAFFIC CONGESTION RESULTING IN IMPROVED AIR QUALITY, DECREASED FOSSIL FUEL CONSUMPTION AND DECREASED PRODUCTION OF GREENHOUSE GASES. POLICIES REGARDING EXPANDED PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AND FACILITIES DEVELOPMENT MAY RESULT IN FISCAL IMPACTS THAT MUST BE WEIGHED AGAINST BENEFITS TO PUBLIC SAFETY AND HEALTH AS WELL AS GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS.”

7.0 Community Facilities and Services

The Village of Chester provides the services and facilities of local government to the residents of the Village. It attempts to do so in a responsive, cost effective and efficient manner. The Village Board (Mayor and Trustees) along with the various departments: Village Administration (Mayor, Clerk, Treasurer), Building, Planning and Zoning, Water, Police and Justice Court are located in the Village Hall at 47 Main Street. The Street Department is located at 3 Vadala Lane.

7.1 Village Government

The Village Government provides a variety of services: day to day governance, administration, building regulations and development, establishing zoning regulations, village planning, code enforcement, providing water, providing for waste disposal, maintaining local roads, sidewalks and infrastructure, arranging elections, organizing police and fire protection, handling environmental issues as well as maintaining parks and playing fields.

Some services are shared with the Town of Chester and even Orange County. Chester Community Park, Chester Public Library, Chester Fire Department, the Chester Union Free School District and the Assessor’s office for example, with the assessor being an employee of Orange County.

7.2 Village Administrative Offices

The Village Board has identified the need to expand the municipal complex to meet community needs. Space in general, but public space in particular, at the current Village Hall is less than ideal. The building houses all Village departments except the Street Department and space is limited.

Public meetings are held on the second floor, access being via a steep stairway located in the police department lobby or by way of a small elevator located at the rear of the village offices. If the elevator is used, once on the second floor the clerk guides the resident through the police locker room, a series of ramps and finally a doorway with a step down into the meeting room



Above (top to bottom): Village Hall in Downtown Main Street, Chester District Firehouse on Main Street; and Lippincott Funeral Home on Main Street, which is proposed to be the new administrative office of Village government. The Village seeks to provide public facilities and services that are accessible and responsive to community needs in a cost-effective and efficient manner.

Access with a wheelchair, if possible, would be difficult. The restrooms on the second floor are not accessible for wheelchair dependent individuals.

The small conference room on the first floor will barely accommodate 8 people although the public is permitted to attend some meetings that take place there. Office of the Village Clerk is located on the first floor as well as shared office space for the Village Treasurer and the other office personnel.

The office of the Mayor, the Building Department and the Village Historian with the Chester Historical Society have offices on the second floor.

Plans call for the Police department and the Justice Court to remain at 47 Main Street and Village administrative offices to move to a recently purchased historic (1894) building at 92 Main Street next to the Presbyterian Church. The new offices and public spaces there would be ADA compliant.

Communicating with residents is a major function of government. Planning and Zoning Boards need to be able to project plans, letters, maps and other data so that everyone can see what is being presented /discussed. The Village Board should explore having its meetings recorded and shown on local cable network, available on Youtube or similar streaming services.

The Village emergency point person needs to be able to inform residents of emergency situations and providing emergency instructions and updates (such as in major storms and pandemics). This Comprehensive Plan recommends that this could be done via robocall and email systems.

The Village has a website which recently went through a redesign. More needs to be done with the website. The Village website should be visually engaging, responsive, kept up to the minute and it should be easy to use (intuitive). This plan recommends further enhancements to the website to make it more useful in the communication with its residents and others. It is also recommended that all public meetings of the Village Board and appointed boards should be recorded and posted on the Village website.

The plan also recommends that the Village engage a grant writer to pursue available funding for qualifying municipal and community projects.

VILLAGE
ADMINISTRATIVE
OFFICES

“THE VILLAGE BOARD HAS IDENTIFIED THE NEED TO EXPAND THE MUNICIPAL COMPLEX TO MEET COMMUNITY NEEDS. SPACE IN GENERAL, BUT PUBLIC SPACE IN PARTICULAR, AT THE CURRENT VILLAGE HALL IS LESS THAN IDEAL.”

7.3. Village Street Department

The Village of Chester Street Department is responsible for the maintenance and improvements of the Village street systems. Typical duties and functions of the department include paving, weekly street sweeping, snow and ice removal, curb and sidewalk replacement and repair, drainage projects, roadside mowing, mowing between the sidewalk and the curb, weekly grass and brush pick up, fall leaf vacuuming, and pick up of the municipal garbage bins on Main Street and in the Village offices. The Village code states the property-owner is responsible for snow removal and maintenance of sidewalks, however, the Village Street Department takes on much of this responsibility of sidewalk repair and replacement.

Excluding State and County roads, the Street Department maintains approximately 12 centerline miles of road. According to a 2009 Town/Village Cost of Services Study, “the most pressing concern on an annual basis is the maintenance and replacement of old deteriorated sidewalks.” This Comprehensive Plan recommends an inventory of the sidewalk system and development of long-term plan to provide for connecting sidewalks throughout the village as well for repair and replacement when needed of existing sidewalks. The plan also recommends requiring sidewalk inclusion, when appropriate, in site plans going forward. Funding through CFA grants and consideration of a *sidewalk special district* to fund needed improvements could be explored.

The Street Department has a fleet of road equipment necessary to perform road maintenance and repair. The central garage facilities include office space, a 3-bay maintenance shop with a lift and a pit, a large 4 bay garage for vehicles, a salt storage shed, 2 underground storage tanks, one 2,000-gallon tank for gasoline storage and one 500-gallon tank for diesel fuel. A building-needs assessment and cost evaluation is recommended should the needs of the Department change.

7.4 Police Department

The principle mission of the Village of Chester Police Department is to enforce all laws and ordinances in a fair and impartial manner through the prevention of crime, protection against criminal attack, loss or damage to property, and by preserving order in public places. The Chester police headquarters, located in Village Hall, serves as the operations center for the department.

STREET DEPARTMENT

“THIS PLAN RECOMMENDS AN INVENTORY OF THE SIDEWALK SYSTEM AND DEVELOPMENT OF LONG-TERM PLAN FOR SIDEWALK REPAIR AND REPLACEMENT.”

With the relocation of some Village Departments to the new location at 92 Main Street, the space at 47 Main Street will be reconfigured to allow front entrance to access the Police Department.

There is a direct relationship between increased population and the number, frequency and type of crimes committed and a need for additional emergency safety resources. As development is proposed, studies should be conducted to determine the impact of an increasing population on police services and whether more officers are needed to support the mission of the department.

7.5 Fire and Ambulance

Fire protection in the Village and Town of Chester is provided by the Chester Fire Department. Since the fire district boundaries do not coincide with municipal boundaries, Chester’s fire district (“District”) includes portions of land located outside of the Village. The District has three (3) fire companies.

The Walton Engine and Hose Company (Station No. 1) is located in the Village and serves the Village as well as northern portions of the Town of Chester. This firehouse also houses the Fire Department’s training facilities, meeting room and Chief Officer’s office.

Ambulance service is provided by Mobile Life Support Services, a private ambulance company.

The Village has a dedicated and well-trained group of volunteer providers, but as other communities in the region are finding, there are concerns with the adequacy of volunteer staff numbers during certain times of the week, especially during working hours on weekdays.

As the area grows, new residents are often commuters and therefore may not be available during the week. Time-pressed commuters may not feel able to devote the time to training and service or may be unaware of the vitally important role that volunteer service providers fulfill in a rural area such as Chester.

The Village and its residents should continue to support high-quality volunteer fire services that are adequately staffed with trained and properly equipped personnel. This Plan supports programs to attract and retain volunteer providers.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

“AS DEVELOPMENT IS PROPOSED, STUDIES SHOULD BE CONDUCTED TO DETERMINE THE IMPACT OF AN INCREASING POPULATION ON POLICE SERVICES AND WHETHER MORE OFFICERS ARE NEEDED TO SUPPORT THE MISSION OF THE DEPARTMENT.”

7.6 Water Service

The Village of Chester Water System was established in 1892. The source of this supply was a surface water supply known a Walton Lake, which is located in Monroe, NY. The Village continues to obtain parcels through tax foreclosure to protect the watershed, but additional measures are needed to protect this water source. The Village also has two wells situated in the Town.

Walton Lake has a DEC permitted withdrawal of 800,000 gallons per day. A second groundwater source was used in the early 1960s and was permitted for use by the Village of Chester in 1973. The overall permitted capacity is 1.1 million gallons per day.

According to its Annual Drinking Water Quality Report, in 2017, the Village produced 168,156,000 gallons of water for a daily average of 460,701 gallons of water per day. The distribution system consists of over 28 miles of water main ranging in sizes from 2" to 12 ". Understanding water use impacts and the availability of water for additional uses, or for climate resilience, is critical in planning. Further study is needed on water availability during drought periods in addition to development strategies that help protect and sustain water systems in an environmentally responsible and cost-effective manner for the long-term provision of such service.

Three (3) water storage tanks have a combined storage capacity of 2 million gallons. The 2017 Report showed 14.0% of this volume was unaccounted for, which is significantly higher than the 4.8% reported in 2004. There is a need for on-going monitoring and upgrades to the system to address leaks and use. All of the original 1892 cast iron distribution pipes were replaced with plastic pipes and the Village annually works on replacing the water mains that were installed in the 1960s. This Plan supports an on-going policy of systematically upgrading the system over time.

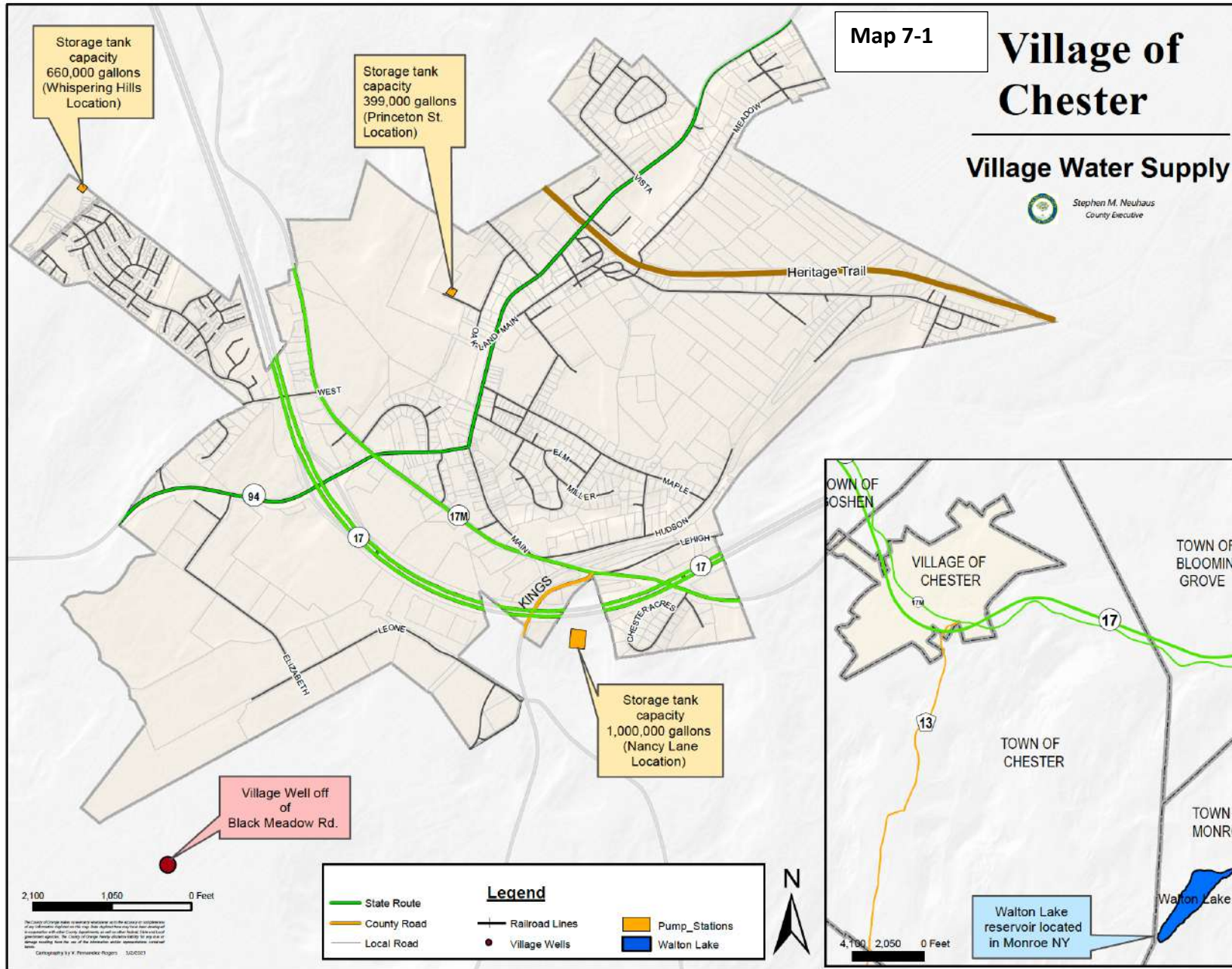
However, grant funding through the Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) should also be sought, when funding becomes available. Walton Lake watershed protection measures should include property acquisition and development of a “Watershed Protection Overlay District” with the Town of Monroe.

Full EAF Part 3 Discussion: The community facilities and services goals, objectives and strategies provided in this Chapter are intended to ensure that necessary public utilities and community services are provided in a cost-effective and efficient manner in order to protect the health, safety and welfare of the community.

WATER DEPARTMENT

“WALTON LAKE WATERSHED PROTECTION MEASURES SHOULD INCLUDE PROPERTY ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT OF A “WATERSHED PROTECTION OVERLAY DISTRICT” WITH THE TOWN OF MONROE.”

Note: The contract for doing the work of laying pipe for the Village water system was awarded on the 17th day of October 1892 to Francis M. Leonard of Norwalk, Connecticut; and exactly one year later was actually turned on in the pipes on the 17th day of October 1893 (Joseph Board notes of August 10, 1896).



7.7 Sewer Service

Sewer service is provided by The Moodna Basin Sewer Commission, which provides sewer service to the Village, as well as the Town of Chester and parts of the Town of Monroe. Moodna Basin wastewater flows into a county-operated treatment facility in Harriman, which discharges into the Ramapo River. The County will be expanding the Harriman plant to address capacity requirements and accommodate growth. This Plan supports continued efforts to upgrade these existing municipal sewer plants to meet the growth needs of the Village.

The policy of this 2020 Plan is to prohibit the construction of small individual wastewater treatment facilities in the Village. The Town’s previous experience with such facilities has not been good. Surrey Meadows and the King Tract once had their own treatment plants that developed problems, and many other communities in the region had similar experiences.

7.8 Schools

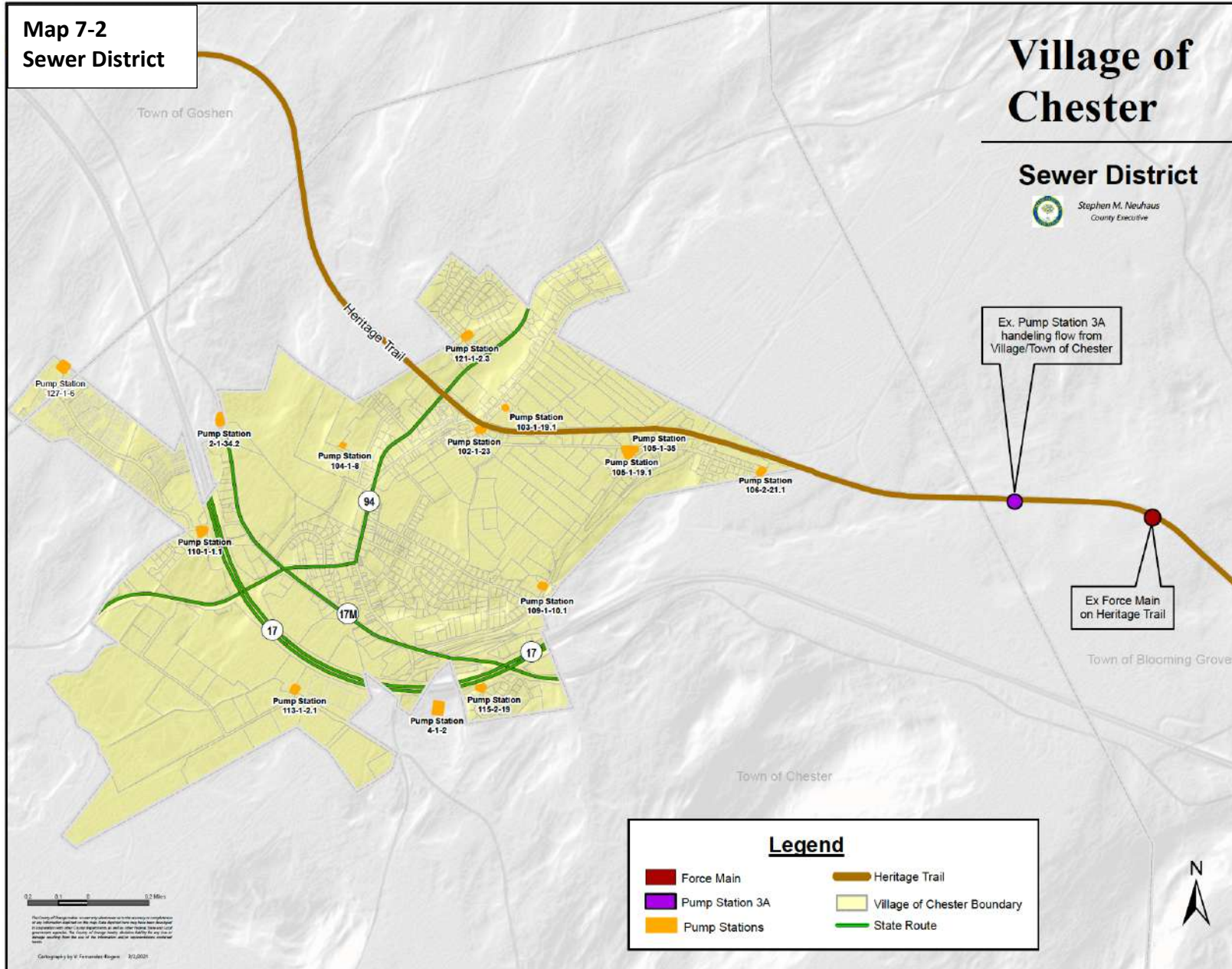
The Village of Chester lies entirely within the Chester Union Free District. The Chester Union Free School District enrolls 1,019 students with a student teacher ratio of 13:1. The schools in the district include the Chester Elementary School (K-5) and the Chester Academy (6-12). Both are physically located in the Town of Chester) The old high school, built in 1935 and now vacant, is in the Village on Maple Avenue.

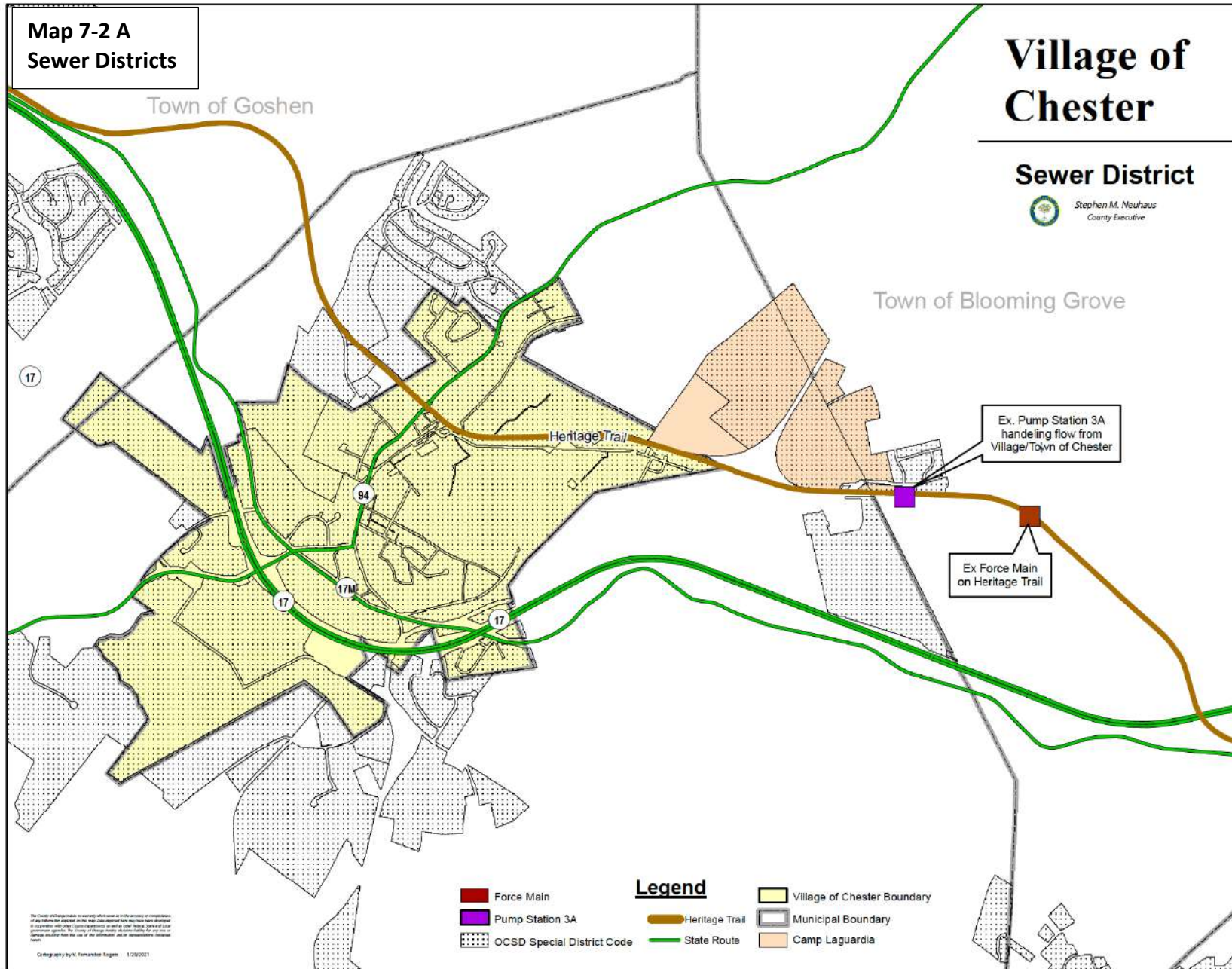
As residential developments are proposed in the Village of Chester or proposed to be annexed into the Village, it is important that the Planning Board utilizes the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) law to assess potential impacts on student enrollment within Chester Union Free School District. When impacts are anticipated, the developer should provide appropriate mitigation measures to help ensure the community can continue to offer the highest quality of public education available to its residents.

This Plan recommends the Village Board work with the school district to protect recreational amenities (such as the ballfields on Walnut Street/Vadala Road) for future school and public use. The Village should work with the Chester Union Free District to develop a “reuse plan” for the school building on Maple Avenue.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

“THE VILLAGE SHOULD WORK WITH THE CHESTER UNION FREE DISTRICT TO DEVELOP A “REUSE PLAN” FOR THE SCHOOL BUILDING ON MAPLE AVENUE.”

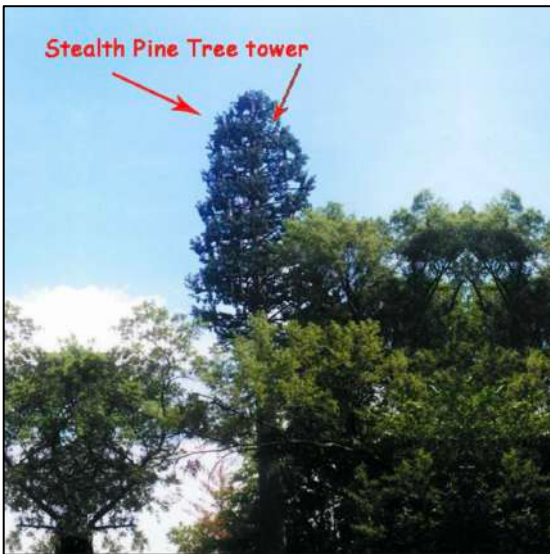




7.9 Broadband and Wireless Communications Network

A Village-wide state-of-the-art broadband and wireless communications network is an important goal of this Plan. The Village should insist its franchised broadband providers continue to upgrade its broadband network in the Village. Cellular service also needs to be expanded to address areas where there are gaps in coverage. Cell towers should first be considered on existing structures (e.g., silos, steeples or existing towers).

The placement of new wireless towers must be planned to mitigate potential visual impacts and must be designed to be inconspicuous in nature through tower placement or stealth design (see examples below). Increasing reliance on cell phones makes cell service an obligation for public safety in the Village.



Above (left to right): Stealth Pine Tree cell tower and stealth silo cell tower and utility shed.

Full EAF Part 3 Discussion: The Village of Chester must have access to state-of-the-art broadband and wireless communication networks so that it can remain a competitive place for business and to ensure emergency responders can effectively respond to natural disasters. Ensuring that cell towers are designed to complement community character will help to preserve the integrity of Chester’s historic districts. No large adverse impacts are anticipated.

BROADBAND AND
WIRELESS
COMMUNICATIONS
NETWORK

“A VILLAGE-WIDE STATE-OF-THE-ART BROADBAND AND WIRELESS COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK IS AN IMPORTANT GOAL OF THIS PLAN.”

7.10 Community Facilities and Services: Goals, Objective and Policies

Goal: Maintain, fully utilize and enhance existing Village facilities according to their level of service and in a manner consistent with the community’s high level of expectation and the needs for services.

Objectives and Policies: Community Facilities

- CF.1. Public facilities should serve as examples of the desired development quality in the Village. Proposed land acquisitions for public facilities must be evaluated to ensure they fulfill the Village’s immediate and future needs, including opportunities for expansion. Preference should be given to new facilities capable of consolidating multiple Village departments, agencies and offices. Concentrate community facilities, such as schools and community centers, in close walking distance of residential areas. The public facility should be compatible in design with its surrounding neighborhood.
- CF.2. When impacts on schools are anticipated, developers must provide appropriate mitigation measures to help ensure the community can continue to offer the highest quality of public education available.
- CF.3. Cooperate with Chester Union Free District to protect recreational amenities (such as the ballfields on Walnut Street/Vadala Road) for future school and public use and work with them to develop a “reuse plan” for the school building on Maple Avenue. In this way school facilities will be in harmony with the Village’s vision of future land-use.
- CF.4. Work with the Town of Monroe to create a Walton Lake watershed protection overlay district.
- CF.5. Budget for continued annual replacement of water line segments to protect water supply system and pursue funding through the Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) process for upgrades.
- CF.6. Create a capital improvement plan (CIP) for capital facilities with an asset management plan that identifies funding sources. A CIP would assess the useful life of capital facilities, maintenance needs and replacement schedules.
- CF.7. The Village recognizes that private development, especially large projects, have an impact on and create future liabilities for community facilities and services, such as infrastructure, sewer, police, etc. Those impacts and future liabilities must be addressed and, if possible, mitigated during the planning process.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES
AND SERVICES

“MAINTAIN AND FULLY
UTILIZE EXISTING
VILLAGE FACILITIES
ACCORDING TO THEIR
LEVEL OF SERVICE AND
IN A MANNER
CONSISTENT WITH THE
COMMUNITY’S HIGH
LEVEL OF EXPECTATION
AND THE NEEDS FOR
SERVICES.”

Public Safety

- PS.1. Create an environment that encourages respect, mutual responsibility, community outreach and cooperation between public officials and citizens through citizen education programs, safety education programs, mediation, conflict-resolution services and other outreach opportunities.
- PS.2. Provide citizens with the highest quality public safety services and facilities by maintaining high levels of training opportunities for police, fire, and rescue personnel. Establish public safety levels of service and consider these levels when evaluating the impact of future land-uses on Village services.
- PS.3. Upgrade cellular service to ensure cell users can access emergency responders through the 911 system in the event of an emergency.
- PS.4. Establish an emergency automatic call system (reverse 911 robocall). Residents would receive emergency information, instructions and updates from the Village’s emergency point person.

Telecommunications and Wireless Facilities

- TC.1. Strive for the highest level of broadband network available throughout the Village to give Chester a competitive advantage in its business retention and recruitment efforts.
- TC.2. Pursue public and private partnerships to complete projects linking major facilities (e.g. Village government, cultural institutions, business and industrial parks) with fiber optic networks.
- TC.3. Seek State and federal grants in cooperation with service providers to provide broadband and wireless communication service to underserved areas of the Village.
- TC.4. Require co-location on wireless communication antennas on existing towers.
- TC.5. Wireless communication towers should first be considered on existing structures (e.g. water tanks, silos, steeples) or existing towers.
- TC.6. New wireless communication towers must be designed to be inconspicuous in nature through tower placement or stealth design (e.g. silo or stealth tree).

COMMUNITY FACILITIES
AND SERVICES

“STRIVE FOR THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF BROADBAND NETWORK AVAILABLE THROUGHOUT THE VILLAGE IN ORDER TO GIVE CHESTER A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN ITS BUSINESS RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT EFFORTS.”

8.0 Jobs and Housing

For Chester to prosper, future development within the community has to involve new investments in its:

- agricultural sector,
- commercial gateways,
- business and light industry park,
- Downtown and Uptown business districts,
- along with the adaptive reuse of underutilized sites with access to water, sewer and transportation infrastructure.

Successful economic development must also include diversified housing opportunities for employees at various economic levels.

This Plan supports an environment that protects Black Dirt farmland and diversification of agriculture along with growth in businesses and industries, which all create local employment opportunities.

In order for the Village to remain competitive in the global economy, it needs state-of-the-art broadband and telecommunications infrastructure. Providing it is an important goal of this Plan.

This chapter begins with a discussion of trends in Chester’s economy as well as opportunities and concludes with a discussion of housing resources and needs within the Village.

8.1 Trends in Employment Status and Industries

In 2017, nearly 60% of Chester’s civilian labor force of 3,225 people was employed in three industries:

- educational and health services (28.2%),
- retail trade (19.9%),
- and arts, entertainment & recreation (10.8%).



Above (top to bottom): LP Transportation, Inc., which is a trucking company situated between Brookside Avenue and Main Street that has been in business for over 100 years, Black Dirt farmland as seen from Vadala Road looking toward Downtown; and The Castle Fun Center located on Brookside Avenue in the west end of the Village.

In 2010, only 44.2% of the civilian labor force was employed in the top three industries. Since 2010, the arts, entertainments & recreation industry joined Chester’s top three industries, which is likely related to employment growth at The Castle Fun Center.

Between 2010 and 2017, the fastest growing industries were:

- arts,
- entertainment and recreation;
- communications and information;
- transportation, warehousing & utilities;
- other services; and
- retail trade.

Declining industries during this time included:

- agriculture, forestry and mining;
- wholesale trade;
- finance, insurance and real estate;
- manufacturing;
- construction; and
- public administration reflecting the diminishing role of these industries as major employers (see Table 8-1).

Growth in educational & health services and retail trade industries were modest, but their share increased as other industries lost employment. Chester’s talented and well-educated workforce with educational attainment above the Orange County average makes it an attractive community for growing businesses (see Chapter 2, page 14, Table 2-4).

Furthermore, Chester has excellent transportation access (e.g., U.S. Route 6, NYS Routes 17 (Interstate 86), 17M, 94 and the MNJ [NYSW] rail line, which gives it a competitive advantage in attracting industries that need access to regional markets.

JOBS AND HOUSING

“CHESTER HAS EXCELLENT TRANSPORTATION ACCESS (E.G., NYS ROUTES 17, 17M, 94 AND THE MNJ [NYSW] RAIL LINE, WHICH GIVES IT A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN ATTRACTING INDUSTRIES THAT NEED ACCESS TO REGIONAL MARKETS.”

Table 8-1 Trends in Employment Status and Industries 2010-2017										
Employment Characteristics (Age 16 and over)	Orange County, New York Trends from 2010-2017				Village of Chester Trends from 2010-2017				Percent Change	Percent Change
	2010	%	2017	%	2010	%	2017	%	COUNTY	VILLAGE
Total										
Persons 16 Years and Over	279,978	100.0%	292,199	100.0%	3,225	100.0%	3,464	100.0%	4.4%	7.4%
In Labor Force	189,079	67.5%	189,468	64.8%	2,216	68.7%	2,195	63.4%	0.2%	-0.9%
Civilian Labor Force	181,849	65.0%	185,146	63.5%	2,203	68.3%	2,195	63.4%	1.8%	-0.4%
<i>Employed</i>	170,431	60.9%	174,770	59.8%	2,075	64.3%	2,066	59.6%		
<i>Not Employed</i>	11,418	4.1%	10,376	3.6%	128	4.0%	129	3.7%		
Armed Forces	7,230	2.6%	4,322	1.5%	13	0.4%	0	0.0%		
Not In Labor Force	90,899	32.5%	102,731	35.2%	1,009	31.3%	1,269	36.6%		
Industry										
Educational & Health Services	45,493	26.7%	45,304	25.9%	540	19.3%	582	28.2%	-0.4%	7.8%
Retail Trade	21,743	12.8%	24,231	13.9%	369	15.1%	412	19.9%	11.4%	11.7%
Professional services	14,619	8.6%	15,553	8.9%	143	9.8%	143	6.9%	6.4%	0.0%
Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	10,638	6.2%	9,757	5.6%	194	6.8%	109	5.3%	-8.3%	-43.8%
Public administration	12,297	7.2%	12,207	7.0%	198	8.1%	144	7.0%	-0.7%	-27.3%
Manufacturing	13,489	7.9%	12,592	7.2%	143	9.0%	84	4.1%	-6.6%	-41.3%
Transportation, warehousing & utilities	9,531	5.6%	10,984	6.3%	89	5.6%	129	6.2%	15.2%	44.9%
Construction	12,231	7.2%	10,860	6.2%	77	5.2%	56	2.7%	-11.2%	-27.3%
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	11,618	6.8%	14,210	8.1%	63	3.9%	223	10.8%	22.3%	254.0%
Wholesale Trade	6,284	3.7%	5,741	3.3%	120	6.8%	28	1.4%	-8.6%	-76.7%
Communications and Information	4,307	2.5%	4,215	2.4%	14	5.1%	45	2.2%	-2.1%	221.4%
Other Services (except public admin).	6,320	3.7%	7,769	4.4%	91	4.5%	111	5.4%	22.9%	22.0%
Agriculture, forestry and mining	1,861	1.1%	1,347	0.8%	34	1.6%	0	0.0%	-27.6%	-100.0%

Source: 2010 U.S. Census Bureau DP-3 Table and 2010-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates DP-3 Table.

In recent years, Chester has successfully attracted major employers to its industrial park, which have provided employment opportunities for local residents, even as there were declines in other industries. However, this Plan recommends a strategy that strives to maintain a diverse economic base so that the local economy is more resilient to declines in one industry or another.

8.2 Economic Development Goals

The Village has many assets to build upon as it pursues its future economic development goals. Among these are its strong local government; Black Dirt farmland; historic mixed-use Downtown and Uptown business districts, commercial centers along NYS Route 17 M and NYS Route 94, and its industrial park. Furthermore, there are remaining “shovel-ready” sites within its industrial park, which is likely to attract new businesses to the community.

Chester strives to create a diverse economy that provides needed services and good paying job opportunities; improves the appearance and quality of the built environment; strengthens the local tax base; and enhances the quality of life for its residents. To accomplish this goal, there are a variety of economic development policies that can be pursued by the Village Board and its partners (i.e., County and State agencies and the local farming and business community). Specific policies by industry are provided below.

Agriculture

Chester’s Black Dirt comprises roughly 20% of the Village’s land area making the need for agricultural economic development pronounced. The Chester Agricultural Center, Inc. owns much of this Black Dirt farmland with plans to promote organic farming and help new farmers to get established. The Village can assist in this effort by helping to ensure the County maintains and repairs the drainage canals and pump stations that make the Black Dirt farmland viable. Vegetable farming by its very nature is labor intensive and relies on farm workers to be viable. This Plan recognizes there is a need for both affordable farmer and farm-worker housing. Please refer to Chapter 3.0-Environment for specific goals, objectives and policies in support of agricultural economic development.



Above (top to bottom): Chester’s industrial park along Nucifora Boulevard and Elizabeth Drive; area used for self-storage and truck terminal with redevelopment potential and Chester’s Black Dirt farms in the Village.

Main Street Revitalization

The Village has two traditional “Main Street” business districts. The “Downtown” business district situated along Main Street near the 1915 Chester Erie Station at the northern end of the Village. It is noted for its three-story mixed-use buildings, pedestrian scale streets and Village offices. “Uptown” is situated at the intersection of Main Street and Academy Avenue. Uptown is noted for its eclectic mix of one and two-story mixed-use buildings and is also the oldest section of the Village.

The Downtown business district has many beautiful and prominent mixed-use buildings that provide an excellent foundation for a vibrant mixed-use center. However, many storefronts are vacant and there is a general sense of disinvestment that detracts from the historic character of Downtown. Like the Downtown business district, Uptown has many vacant storefronts and a general sense of disinvestment.

A successful “Main Street Revitalization” effort will require a sustained commitment among local government, business owners and building owners to “organize” the revitalization effort. Organization establishes consensus and cooperation by building partnerships among the various groups that have a stake in the commercial district.

By getting everyone working toward the same goal, the revitalization effort can provide effective, ongoing management and advocacy for these missed-use business districts. Once the organization is in place, it must “promote” the Downtown and Uptown business districts to create a positive image of these business centers to instill community pride and make these centers more attractive to consumers and potential investors in the business districts. Promotion would include such things as special events and marketing campaigns to attract new customers and visitors to Downtown and Uptown.

In order to compete with regional retailers, Chester must retain the distinct historic charm of its Downtown and Uptown. It can do so by placing each within an historic district and adopting design guidelines to ensure the original architecture of its mixed-use buildings are preserved to retain the integrity of its traditional business districts.



Above (top to bottom): The Rustic Wheelhouse restaurant on Main Street in the heart of Downtown; Allan's Falafel restaurant on Main Street in Uptown; and view of mixed-use buildings on north side of Main Street in Downtown business district. Residences above-the-store are common in Downtown and supported by this Plan.

The focus on “*design*” also includes the streetscape, which should provide a safe, walkable and comfortable environment for shoppers, workers and visitors (e.g., ADA compliant sidewalks, pedestrian lighting, benches and trees).

Efforts to strengthen the “economic vitality” of Downtown and Uptown are also needed.

This involves efforts to retain existing business establishments, while attracting new businesses that the market can support to create a balanced and inviting commercial mix in these business districts. Converting unused commercial space on the ground floor into an economically productive business will help to strengthen the business district and make it more economically viable.

A local “Chamber of Commerce” or “Main Street Revitalization” organization should also be established to help business owners improve their merchandising skills to make individual stores, and in turn, the entire business district more inviting to shoppers, workers and visitors. Coordinating business hours is also important to give consumers an expectation of when shops will be open for business within these business districts.

Chester’s historic Downtown and Uptown have the potential to become vibrant mixed-use centers by providing shoppers and visitors with a unique and exciting shopping experience where consumers can interact with small business owners and each other.

The creation of an organization to undertake Downtown and Uptown revitalization efforts should be underway as soon as possible so that Chester is ready to attract some of the visitors from Legoland to the Village as they seek nearby attractions during their vacation. Such an organization could also help the Village Board to pursue a New York Main Street grant to assist business and building owners in investing into their businesses to make them more inviting and vibrant.

Industrial and Industrial Park Development

The Village of Chester zoning map designates a large area south of NYS Route 17 and along Nucifora Boulevard, Elizabeth Drive and Leone Lane as M-1, Light Manufacturing – Research.

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Above (top to bottom): Images of attractive mixed-use business districts with appealing window displays and merchandising displays that invite shoppers into the stores and make the business district more inviting.

The zoning map also designates a M-2, Manufacturing District on the north side of NYS Route 17 and the west of Oakland Avenue in the vicinity of Princeton Street. This Plan supports the existing zoning designation of these areas as M-1 and M-2. However, this Plan also recognizes that there is redevelopment potential of the lands between NYS Route 17 and Route 17M, that are currently used for storage, trucking terminals and storage yards that could also be suited for a mix of commercial businesses such as office, retail, hotels and restaurants (see aerial of area below). A more detailed analysis of this area for inclusion within the B-2 General Business District with concurrent adoption of “design guidelines” is a policy recommendation of this Plan.



Above (top to bottom): Brakewell Steel Company sculpture/building; Iron Mountain within the Village’s industrial park; and Steris Corp., which is also situated within the Village of Chester industrial park on Elizabeth Drive. This Plan supports the creation of a diverse economic base, including light industry.

Chester’s industrial park has excellent transportation access from NYS Route 17 (Future I-86) for light industry and warehouse distribution facilities. Its light industrial park also has access to central water and broadband, which are prerequisites for many industries. The light industrial park is “shovel ready,” meaning the infrastructure is in place to accommodate new buildings.

This Plan strongly supports efforts to attract new businesses to shovel-ready sites within the light industrial park in order to broaden the Village’s tax base while expanding employment opportunities for its residents. The Village Board must continue to work with NYSDOT to ensure it’s culverts along NYS Route 17 are properly maintained to prevent flooding of the industrial park and lower lying lands between NYS Route 17 and NYS Route 17M.

Service and Retail Industries

The Village’s zoning map designates areas along Route 17M as B-2-General Business along with a small area along the Hudson Street Extension. The B-2 General Business Zoning District allows for assembly halls, automotive sales, banks, garages and filling stations, hotels and motels, offices, personal-service establishments, restaurants, shopping centers, taverns and theaters, subject to site plan review by the Planning Board. Uses allowed by Special Permit include, autobody and refinishing shops, recreational facilities, trucking terminals and repair and servicing facilities.

The B-2 General Business District provides for the largest variety of permitted non-residential uses within any zoning district within the Village. This Plan supports continued development of commercial, office and mixed-use development within the B-2 General Business Districts.

However, this Plan also supports the adoption of design guidelines for this commercial corridor. The design guidelines would provide guidance for creating a more aesthetically pleasing, walkable and functional commercial corridor over time.

It is recommended that such guidelines include both standards (requirements) and guidelines (suggestions), to guide the Planning Board’s review of new commercial development.



Above (top to bottom): The Tractor Supply Co. in the Chester Mall Shopping Center, Brookside Avenue (Route 17M); Outdoors, which is an outdoor sport shop situated at 6 Howland Street in Downtown; and Orange Bank & Trust Company on NYS Route 17M opposite the entrance to the Chester Mall.

Other Industries

One of the fastest emerging industries in the Village is the arts, entertainment and recreation industry, which grew by 254% between 2010 and 2017. Chester's natural setting, as well as its established events, Black Dirt farms and access to the Heritage Trail, make it an attractive destination for tourists and a desirable location to draw new residents.

The Village also has the opportunity to become a base camp for outdoor enthusiasts who want to take advantage of the Heritage Trail and nearby regional parks and trails such as Goosepond Mountain State Park, the Highlands Trail, Appalachian Trail. This Plan supports continued growth in this industry.

Telecommunications

The Village Board should continue to advocate to ensure its telecommunications infrastructure, including broadband and cellular is continually upgraded by service providers to meet the rapidly changing needs of the business and residential community.

Chester Union Free School District Campus

The Chester Union Free School District (CUFSD) owns a school campus on Maple Avenue and the 1935 Art Deco School on Maple Avenue is presently vacant. The district does not presently have a use for the building. The building, constructed in the 1930s, needs major repairs, which are estimated to cost up to \$4 million dollars. The options for the use of the school and campus are as follows:

- 1) Spend \$4 million to upgrade the building with the hope of finding a tenant to lease it to;
- 2) Lease the building as is to a tenant;
- 3) Lock the doors and mothball the building until such time enrollment justifies its reuse; or
- 4) Sell the building.

School district voters recently turned down a proposal by the CUFSD to demolish the building. This Plan strongly recommends that the Village work with the School District to find an appropriate adaptive reuse of the school building.

Village of Chester, New York



Above (top to bottom): The Chester Union Free School District Art Deco Building; aerial view of school building and campus; and aerial view showing relationship of school campus to Chester Community Park. This property is an important education, employment, and recreation center and its future use should provide like benefits.

The ballfields are heavily utilized by the School District, which does not have room on its other campuses for ballfields. The ballfields on Maple Avenue were recently upgraded and the District needs additional ballfields and recreational amenities for its existing schools in Chester.

It is an important goal of this Plan to retain the ballfields for recreational use for the schools and for public use when not needed for school activities. Should the school district’s plans change, this Plan also supports the adaptive reuse of the School District’s Art-Deco Building for continuing education, economic development or senior housing opportunities.

The school campus is situated within the Village’s RS-Residential Single-Family Zoning District. The Village should consider an Overlay Zone for the Maple Avenue school campus to better guide the reuse of this very important property to something that is consistent with this Plan. The campus is currently included in the proposed “Uptown” Historic Overlay District. This Plan supports the adaptive reuse of the school’s Art-Deco building for civic or cultural uses such as the reuse as a public library should the Chester Public Library return to the Village.

8.3 Housing

Today, the Village contains a diverse but unbalanced range of housing types. To effectively review the current Chester housing situation, it is necessary to evaluate two components: the physical structure of the housing, and the ownership arrangement of the housing.

HOUSING (Physical structures): Residential building structures in Chester can be divided into two broad categories: detached single family houses on a single lot, and multi-unit dwellings where two or more families live in adjoining units that share one or two common walls. The term “multi-unit dwellings” includes apartments and townhouses. Examples of typical single-family houses can be found in the Cherry Heights neighborhood and the areas surrounding the Black Dirt farms along Meadow Avenue and Greycourt Avenue. Examples of multi-unit dwellings can be found in Whispering Hills, Meadow Hill Apartments, Academy Avenue Apartments, Green Meadows Apartments, and 2 Vadala Rd. Included in the multi-unit category are dwellings in mixed residential/commercial areas, such as the apartments above the storefronts on Main Street in the Downtown and Uptown areas.

HOUSING

“THIS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN STRONGLY RECOMMENDS THE ADOPTION OF POLICIES AND EVALUATION OF PROPOSED BUILDING PROJECTS WITH THE INTENTION OF REBALANCING THE SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSING TO MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING RATIO TO A MORE EVEN MIX.”

The United States Census’ American Community Survey for 2017 shows the Village’s housing stock consists of approximately 30% single-family houses (SFH) and 67% multi-unit dwellings (MUD). According to benchmarks produced by the Orange County Department of Planning, the ideal ratio of housing in a community such as Chester is 70% single-family houses and 30% multi-unit dwellings. The Village’s ratio is exactly opposite of what is recommended. The Village reached this situation via the approval, over several decades, of a disproportionate number of high-density condominium and rental townhouses and apartment complexes, and comparatively few single-family housing developments.

This critical imbalance creates problems that permeate the community with high-density housing putting strains on the water and sewer infrastructure, roads, law enforcement, fire departments, and traffic. The Comprehensive Plan therefore strongly advocates policies designed to promote a better balance between single-family and multi-unit dwellings. With much of the Village land already built out, this reversal will be a challenge to achieve but can be aided by, for example, zoning changes to certain districts to encourage developers to build more single-family homes.

At the same time, as part of the effort to revitalize Downtown, incentives could be designed to encourage the development of more apartments above the Main Street storefronts, rather than on outlying tracts. If there are going to be new multi-unit dwellings built, they should be steered toward the business districts to make them more mixed-use oriented.

HOUSING (Ownership arrangement): With respect to homeownership, owner-occupied housing is 65.6% of the housing stock with renter-occupied housing comprising the remaining 34.4%. However, due to the housing style imbalance mentioned in the preceding section, a large portion of the owner-occupied housing is held under a condominium arrangement. This has a direct effect on the Village, as condominium units are currently tax assessed at only 60% of what a single-family house is assessed, despite having an equivalent impact on village infrastructure.

The Village is therefore receiving less tax revenue on a per capita basis from condominium housing, creating municipal financial strains.

FARM HOUSING

“THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN THEREFORE STRONGLY ADVOCATES POLICIES DESIGNED TO PROMOTE A BETTER BALANCE BETWEEN SINGLE-FAMILY AND MULTI-UNIT DWELLINGS.”

Recent societal statistics seem to indicate that post-Baby Boom generations prefer and are opting to live in MUDs rather than houses, to avoid costly and time-intensive property upkeep. At the same time, the 2019-2020 coronavirus pandemic has forced many younger people to reassess multi-family living arrangements, prompting, as of this writing, a sales boom in single-family houses, which provides safer social distancing and more work-from-home opportunities. In short, the demands of the housing market are in flux as of 2020 but the current imbalanced ratio of MUDs to single-family homes remains and urgently needs to be addressed by the Village. While the Village cannot dictate whether a development is fee simple versus condominium, it can encourage developers to pursue fee simple ownership through its zoning laws.

The Village’s zoning map devotes the largest developable land area to residential development in the RS-Residential-Single Family Zoning District, which has a minimum lot area requirement of 12,500 square feet approximating 3.48 dwelling units to the acre. The development of fee-simple single-family homes should be encouraged in the RS District and lands annexed into the Village. Senior Citizen Housing (SCH) is a special permitted use in the RS, RMH, RM B-1 and B-2 Districts.

This Plan also encourages development of MUDs for senior or age-oriented housing in affordable and accessible owner/rental units in close proximity to shopping and transportation services that are integrated as a small component of market-rate housing developments throughout the Village. This Plan supports a mandatory set-aside for large-scale residential developments of 25 or more units, where 10% of the units are reserved for accessible, senior or affordable workforce housing.

In 2017, the U.S. Census showed the Median Household Income (MHI) for the Village was \$68,500. While there is housing to serve the Village’s low-moderate income residents and higher income residents, there is a gap in affordable workforce housing (i.e., those earning 100-120% of the MHI in the Village. In other words, those households earning between \$68,500 and \$82,200.

A detailed description of the program is provided on the next page.

SENIOR HOUSING

“THIS PLAN ENCOURAGES DEVELOPMENT OF MUDS FOR SENIOR OR AGE-ORIENTED HOUSING IN AFFORDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE OWNER/RENTAL UNITS IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO SHOPPING AND TRANSPORTATION SERVICES.”

This law, at local option, authorizes a declining 12-year partial exemption from real property taxation and special ad valorem levies for non-residential property converted to a mix of residential and commercial uses. The property must be located in a city, town, or a village. The creation of dwelling units above the first floor of Downtown buildings would be eligible. This program could also apply to a warehouse or agricultural building that might be converted to farmer live-work space.

According to the requirements of Section 485-a, an eligible conversion must have a cost in excess of \$10,000 or a higher amount stated in the local law adopted by the Village. The exemption applies only to construction commenced subsequent to the date on which the local law adopted by the Village takes effect.

The exemption does not apply to improvements for dwelling units in a hotel and also does not apply to ordinary maintenance and repairs. However, the exemption would apply to the conversion of vacant second and third story space in Downtown, that are converted to dwelling units or warehouse space to mixed residential/commercial space. The exemption is calculated as a percentage of the "exemption base," which is the increase in assessed value attributable to the conversion. The exemption is calculated using the following method:

<u>Year of Exemption</u>	<u>Percentage of Exemption</u>
1 through 8	100% of Exemption Base
9	80% of Exemption Base
10	60% of Exemption Base
11	40% of Exemption Base
12	20% of Exemption Base

This Plan supports the adoption of a Local Law to opt into the 485-a Real Property Tax Law Exemption for the purposes stated above.

Full EAF Part 3 Discussion: The strategies provided below are not likely to result in significant or large adverse environmental impacts. Promotion is intended to attract tourism to the area, or to capture tourism that is already headed to the local region. This could increase vehicular traffic and increase the daytime population, but much of the traffic is already headed through or by the Village.

REAL PROPERTY TAX
LAW SECTION 485-A

“THIS LAW, AT LOCAL OPTION, AUTHORIZES A DECLINING 12-YEAR PARTIAL EXEMPTION FROM REAL PROPERTY TAXATION AND SPECIAL AD VALOREM LEVIES FOR NON-RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY CONVERTED TO A MIX OF RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL USES.”

8.4 Jobs and Housing: Goals, Objectives and Policies

Economic Development

ED.1. Promote economic development that builds upon the strengths of the Village and region.

- Promote arts, entertainment and recreational businesses, based upon the agricultural, cultural, historical, and recreational attractions of the Village and surrounding area.
- Work cooperatively with business organizations to promote the Village of Chester through a Chester Chamber of Commerce.
- Encourage light industrial uses within the Village’s existing industrial and light-industry park.
- Encourage the Chester Agricultural Center, Inc. to partner with the Orange County Land Trust, Scenic Hudson and Equity Trust, to attract new farmers to Chester’s Black Dirt by bringing the price of land to within reach of new farmers by only leaving farming rights to the land and purchasing development rights.

ED.2. Downtown and Uptown Revitalization.

- Work with building and business owners in Downtown and Uptown to sustain a “Main Street Revitalization” effort consisting of a not-for-profit organization to spearhead the effort, promotion of the Downtown and Uptown Business Districts, development of “design guidelines” to ensure building renovations respect the original architecture of buildings, and economic restructuring to enhance the economic vitality of these traditional mixed-use business districts.
- Designate Downtown and Uptown as historic districts.
- Work with utilities to reduce presence of overhead utilities on Main Street in Downtown and Uptown and to replace cobra lights with more pedestrian friendly vintage style street lighting.
- Incorporate Complete Streets enhancements along Main Street in Downtown and Uptown, along with ADA compliant sidewalk improvements.
- Work with Downtown and Uptown businesses to secure New York Main Street funds for building renovations, apartments-above-the store, and streetscape enhancements.
- Continue to work with local businesses to sponsor special events and re-establish a farmer’s market.
- Complete plans for a performing arts stage and new parking area behind Village Hall.

ED.3. Promote a diversified economic base that takes advantage of emerging opportunities.

- Cooperate with County, regional and State efforts, as well as those of local business organizations within the Village, to promote economic development consistent with the vision of this Comprehensive Plan.
- Support economic growth that creates jobs that match the occupational needs of the Village’s residents.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

“WORK WITH BUILDING AND BUSINESS OWNERS IN DOWNTOWN AND UPTOWN TO SUSTAIN A “MAIN STREET REVITALIZATION” EFFORT.”

- Coordinate with telecommunications providers to ensure planning for broadband and cellular service is consistent with the Village’s goals, objectives and policies of this Comprehensive Plan.

ED.4. Promote shovel-ready industrial and office parks to create employment opportunities.

- Cooperate with landowners to promote Chester’s shovel ready sites.
- Evaluate existing zoning regulations in areas with redevelopment potential, like the M-2 Manufacturing Zoning District between NYS Route 17 and NYS Route 17M to see if changes to zoning designation may be warranted to further the economic development goals of the Village.
- Facilitate adaptive reuse of the Chester Union Free School District buildings on Maple Avenue for economic development, senior housing opportunities and/or civic or cultural uses.

ED.5. Facilitate well-designed development within the Village’s business zoning districts.

- Develop design guidelines for new commercial development within the B-1 and B-2 zoning districts.

ED.6. Implement design standards, complete street and traffic calming measures along Route 17M.

Housing Opportunities

HD.1. Encourage provision of handicap-accessible dwelling units for people with physical disabilities.

HD.2. Reserved

HD.3. Reserved.

HD.4. Reserved

HD.5. Reserved.

9.0 Sustainability and Resiliency

This Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan is intended to guide land use decisions and provide the basis for local laws and public policies addressing sustainability and resiliency issues. This Chapter is related to and should be read in conjunction with the Land Use, Natural Resources, Jobs and Housing and the Transportation Chapters of the Comprehensive Plan.

9.1 Sustainability

While sustainability is a broadly supported principle, there is no common definition for it. However, in 1987 the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland Commission), formed a definition for sustainable development, which has been widely accepted: *“Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”* This Plan uses that definition as the framework for Chester’s sustainable land use goals, objectives and policies.

For this Plan, sustainable land use patterns are very generally defined as: 1) focusing development toward lands served by public sewer and water infrastructure and by alternative forms of transportation (i.e. walking, biking and public transportation); and 2) focusing preservation efforts toward environmentally sensitive and active agricultural lands. Most of the Village is developed and much of the balance is difficult to develop because it is environmentally sensitive (e.g., steep slopes or flood prone areas). However, scattered infill opportunities are located throughout the Village. While infill development is in some respects inherently sustainable (since it does not rely upon new streets or infrastructure) this Plan calls for infill development to be compatible with the historic development in the Village’s neighborhoods, Downtown, and Uptown.

This Plan calls for infill development that creates an aesthetically pleasing and functional NYS Route 17M corridor. To do so, building orientation must respect surrounding buildings and streets and create a cohesive and attractive visual identity. Buildings should be detailed with long-lasting materials, which can be appreciated when viewed from the street, surrounding properties or within multi-building developments. Landscaping should be utilized to soften the appearance of commercial uses from street and sidewalks should be continuous and free of barriers.

SUSTAINABILITY

“DEVELOPMENT THAT MEETS THE NEEDS OF THE PRESENT WITHOUT COMPROMISING THE ABILITY OF FUTURE GENERATIONS TO MEET THEIR OWN NEEDS.”

The fundamental purpose of this Plan is to ensure that planning and development is done in a manner that allows for future generations to enjoy the same or more opportunities in terms of employment and housing options, access to open space and natural resources, vibrant community life and environmental health. Several sustainability principles were referred to in developing this Chapter. These principles are generally consistent with those of the sustainability principles of the American Planning Association framework for sustainability. The four sustainability principles of this Plan follow below along with a fifth agricultural sustainability principle.

Five sustainability principals:

1. We want to sustain Chester as a good place to live, and as a community that offers economic, housing and other opportunities to its inhabitants.
2. We want to sustain the values of our community — things like volunteerism, a sense of community and small-town charm.
3. We want to reduce Chester’s dependence on fossil fuels and non-renewable sources of energy.
4. We want to sustain the biodiversity of the natural environment, both for the contribution that it makes to the quality of human life and for its own inherent value as well as for its economic value in terms of supporting the eco-tourism.
5. We want to ensure that Black Dirt farming remains a part of the fabric of Chester for the contribution that it makes to our local food production, economic base, open space and our way of life. Filling on top of Black Dirt Farmland for non-agricultural land uses should be expressly prohibited in the Village of Chester.

These five (5) principles provide the framework for Chester’s sustainability goals, objectives and policies that are provided below.

SUSTAINABILITY

“THE FUNDAMENTAL PURPOSE OF THIS PLAN IS TO ENSURE THAT PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT IS DONE IN A MANNER THAT ALLOWS FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS TO ENJOY THE SAME OR MORE OPPORTUNITIES IN TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT AND HOUSING OPTIONS, ACCESS TO OPEN SPACE AND NATURAL RESOURCES, VIBRANT COMMUNITY LIFE AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH.”

9.2 Resiliency

“A Resilient City is one that has developed capacities to help absorb future shocks and stresses to its social, economic, and technical systems and infrastructures so as to still be able to maintain essentially the same functions, structures, systems, and identity” (ResilientCity.org).

Chester’s desire to improve its resiliency during natural disasters was one of the catalysts for creating the community’s first Comprehensive Plan. Flooding has plagued Chester’s Industrial Park for years, due to poor maintenance of drainage channels. This Plan includes several *resiliency goals, objectives and policies* intended to help Chester absorb the shock of future natural disasters.

9.3 Sustainable Land Use Patterns

Policies promoting compact development in appropriate areas – those served by existing infrastructure – which are coupled with policies promoting preservation of active Black Dirt agriculture and environmentally sensitive lands will allow for continued growth and enhancement in the Village without jeopardizing its environmental resources.

There are limited *infill* non-residential and mixed-use redevelopment opportunities in Downtown consisting of vacant lots with access to water, sewer and roads. However, the development potential of some of these properties is compromised since these sites are situated on steep slopes. Still development on these sites is needed to fill in the gaps within the Downtown and to maintain cohesiveness of the business district. It is an important policy of this Plan to encourage infill development on vacant lots within the Downtown Business District.

In Section 8.3 Housing of this Plan, the NYS Real Property Tax Law Section 485-a was discussed as a means to encourage farmer, farmworker and affordable workforce housing as part of a mixed-use residential/commercial development. There are several existing buildings within the Downtown (see images to the right) that are used but appear to be underutilized. These buildings may provide an opportunity for mixed-use residential commercial development that would help to strengthen the economic and social vitality of Downtown.



Above (top to bottom): Buildings in Downtown Chester that may have potential for adaptive reuse for mixed-use residential/commercial development or the creation of a Maker Space. The adaptive reuse of existing buildings is strongly encouraged to promote a sustainable land use pattern in the Village of Chester.

These buildings might also lend themselves to the creation of a Maker Space. A maker space is a collaborative workspace inside a shared facility for making, learning, exploring and sharing that uses high tech to no tech tools. These spaces could be open to students, entrepreneurs and have a variety of maker equipment including 3D printers, laser cutters, shared conference space and other common facilities.

Makerspaces are being used to foster entrepreneurship and are being utilized as incubators and accelerators for business startups in other parts of the country.

The adaptive reuse of existing structures for a maker space would help to retain existing structures, have little impact on the land, and stimulate new investment in an area already served by public infrastructure. The proximity of these buildings to the Black Dirt and Heritage Trail would further strengthen a sustainable land use pattern in the Village of Chester.

9.4 Sustainable Transportation System

This section is meant to complement and be used in conjunction with Chapter 6.0 Transportation of this Comprehensive Plan. This section focuses on interconnectivity and the principle of complete streets as an important tool that Chester can employ to reduce vehicle miles traveled.

Street connectivity is defined as a system of streets with multiple routes and connections serving the same origins and destinations. The Village’s grid street pattern is the perfect example of the principle of connectivity.

This type of street system has many advantages such as decreasing vehicle miles traveled, decreased traffic congestion (by providing alternate routes of travel), enhanced emergency services response times (multiple routes to emergency calls) and more efficient provision of utilities. The most important thing Chester can do to reduce the energy demand and *vehicle miles travelled* is to encourage, where appropriate, compact development which is served by alternative forms of transportation and in proximity to goods and services.

RESILIENCY

“A RESILIENT CITY IS ONE THAT HAS DEVELOPED CAPACITIES TO HELP ABSORB FUTURE SHOCKS AND STRESSES TO ITS SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND TECHNICAL SYSTEMS AND INFRASTRUCTURES SO AS TO STILL BE ABLE TO MAINTAIN ESSENTIALLY THE SAME FUNCTIONS, STRUCTURES, SYSTEMS, AND IDENTITY.”

(RESILIENTCITY.ORG).

Chester can reduce its environmental footprint by implementing smart growth principles and therefore providing residents an opportunity to drive less since destinations are closer and walking and biking options are available.

In addition to these environmental benefits from moderate density compact development, there are also health, economic and social advantages. Walkable neighborhoods, particularly those which are in or proximate to a mixed-use area which offers destinations, can lead to improved public health through increased exercise rates as people walk (or bike) for enjoyment, employment and/or shopping.

Additionally, neighborhoods with compact development patterns typically have a stronger sense of community since they typically have a human scale, which includes homes which are close to the street and, many times, porches – both of which further facilitate neighborly interaction.

The Village of Chester has many of these characteristics already, which can be strengthened through the implementation of goals, objectives and policies that have the effect of sustaining Chester’s existing land use development pattern, while encouraging new infill development that both respects the unique character of the Village and is more sustainable to natural disasters.

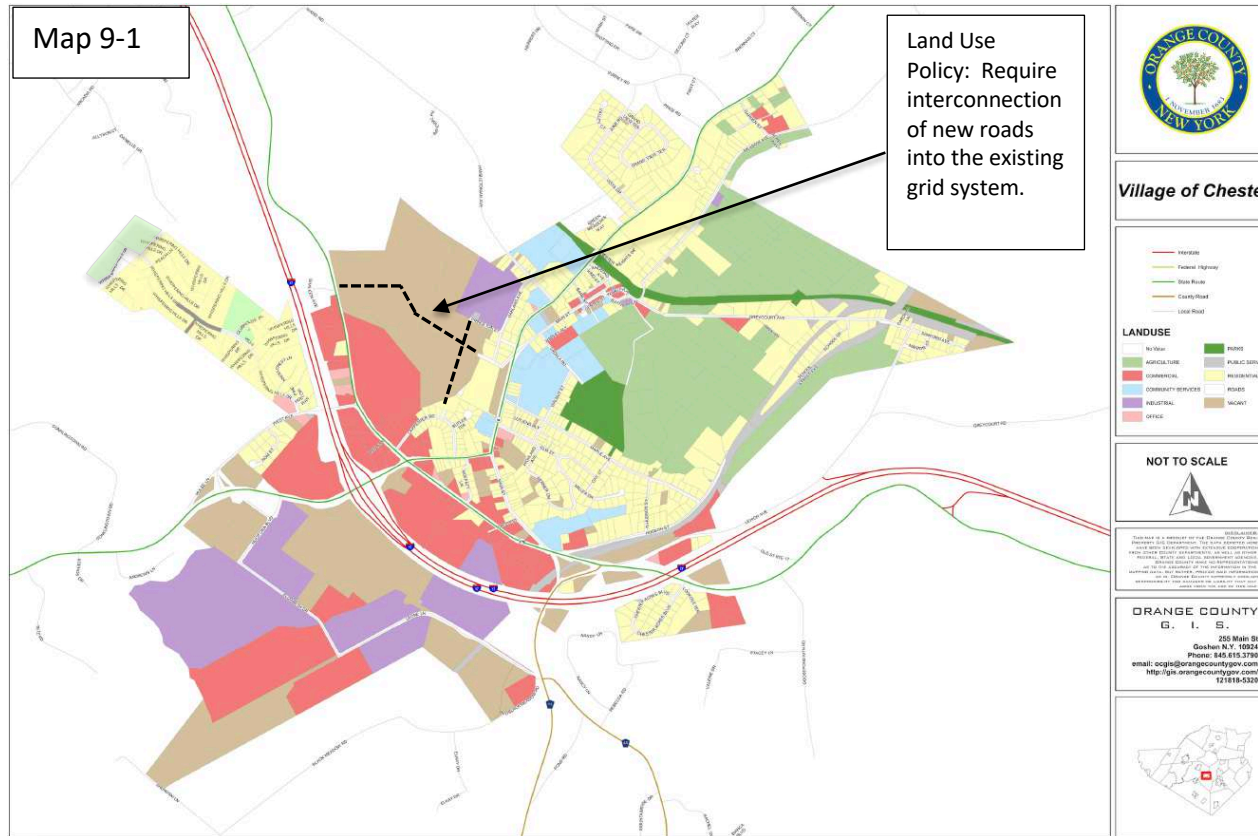
The advantages of the grid street pattern are further enhanced when coupled with complete streets. Complete Streets offer all users, including motorists, pedestrians (children, seniors and those with physical disabilities), bicyclists and transit riders the ability to safely use the street and sidewalk system and cross the street.

Complete Streets offer advantages including a reduction in vehicle miles traveled since such streets promote walking, biking and public transportation and less reliance on personal automobiles. Complete Streets also improves public health by encouraging biking and walking and improves safety by establishing dedicated areas for pedestrians, bicyclists and automobiles, which in turn, reduce vehicular conflicts with other users of the road.

This Plan supports continued use and expansion of the grid street pattern within the Village along with the application of complete street principles during the rehabilitation of streets.

GRID STREET PATTERN

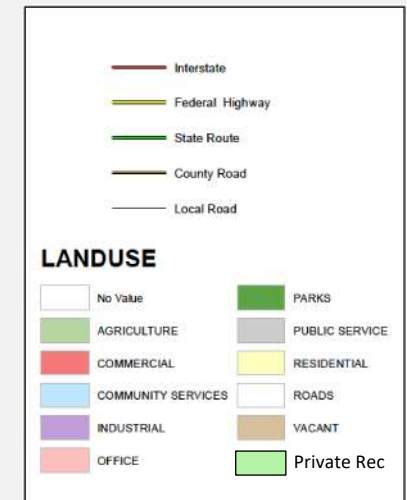
“THIS PLAN SUPPORTS CONTINUED USE AND EXPANSION OF THE GRID STREET PATTERN WITHIN THE VILLAGE ALONG WITH THE APPLICATION OF COMPLETE STREET PRINCIPLES DURING THE REHABILITATION OF STREETS.”



GREEN BUILDINGS

“THIS PLAN SUPPORTS THE VOLUNTARY UTILIZATION OF GREEN BUILDING TECHNIQUES, WHICH CAN SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE THE IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT ON THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.”

Legend



9.5 Energy Conservation and Renewable Energy Production

This Plan encourages measures to reduce energy consumption for buildings and facilities, while encouraging the installation of renewable energy facilities. The Village should undertake periodic energy audits of its buildings and facilities to assess what measures may be taken to increase energy efficiency.

Such measures will lead to energy conservation along with reduced energy costs for the community in the future.

In addition to Village buildings and facilities, streetlight upgrades (e.g. LED (Light Emitting Diode) streetlights, traffic lights and exterior safety lighting) should be considered along with the introduction of high efficiency pumps for water and wastewater supply, storage and distribution. This Plan further encourages local businesses and homeowners to undertake energy audits of their buildings and facilities and to take advantage of a variety of NYSERDA programs to assist in retrofits that enhance energy efficiency and conservation.

This Comprehensive Plan also supports the development of small-scale solar energy for homeowners and local businesses. **However, the development of large-scale solar farms on Black Dirt should be prohibited in the Village of Chester, since it would destroy these irreplaceable and highly productive agricultural soils and important way of life.**

To protect the historic character of the Village, the placement of residential solar arrays needs to be carefully considered so that they do not adversely affect historic properties. Roof-mounted solar arrays on the large warehouses within the Village of Chester’s industrial parks should be encouraged to create renewable energy without affecting prime soils and natural resources.

9.6 Green Building Design

This Plan supports the voluntary utilization of green building techniques, which can significantly reduce the impact of development on the natural environment. The United States Green Building Council cites that in the United States, buildings account for the following:

- 72% of electricity consumption,
- 39% of energy use,
- 38% of all carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions,
- 40% of raw materials use,
- 30% of waste output, and
- 14% of potable water consumption.

Based upon these facts, measures that focus on energy conservation in buildings and energy efficient homes can have a dramatic impact in lowering a community’s carbon footprint.

LAND USE

“CONCENTRATE COMMUNITY FACILITIES, SUCH AS SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY CENTERS, IN CLOSE WALKING DISTANCE OF RESIDENTIAL AREAS.”

The Village should lead by example and consider including *green building design* techniques in its own buildings as upgrades or new building become necessary. This Plan also supports efforts by homeowners, local businesses and not-for-profit entities to enhance energy conservation in their homes and buildings.

The following green building techniques are encouraged for the renovation of existing buildings and the construction of new buildings: install energy efficient lighting, choose eco-friendly paints, use low-VOC construction products, choose hard, low formaldehyde floors, use reclaimed and renewable materials, install water-saving fixtures, choose high-efficiency water heater, select energy-efficient equipment, minimize site disturbance, install or upgrade insulation, provide controls and zoning for HVAC, use ceiling fans for natural ventilation, solar cells and thin-film homogeneously integrated with traditional roofing materials such as metal, slate, fiber-cement and asphalt roofing, and provide rainwater collection systems.

The following section outlines specific goals, objectives and policies for enhancing sustainability and resiliency throughout the Village of Chester.

Full EAF Part 3 Discussion: The strategies provided below are not likely to result in significant or large adverse environmental impacts. Policies related to sustainability will lead to better or more cost-effective use of the Village’s infrastructure and result in new infill development that strengthens the fabric of the community and enhances to appearance and function of its commercial corridor. Policies related to resiliency will ensure that renovations of existing buildings and new construction is more resilient to natural disasters. Policies related to energy conservation and renewable energy production will lead to fewer environmental impacts related to energy consumption over time. No significant or large adverse environmental impacts are anticipated as a result of these policies.

LAND USE

“ENCOURAGE INFILL DEVELOPMENT WITH ACCESS TO EXISTING WATER, SEWER AND TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE.”

9.7 Sustainability & Resiliency Goals, Objective and Policies

The following goals, objectives and policies are set forth with respect to sustainability and resiliency.

Goal 1: Promote compact development in areas served by existing infrastructure.

Objectives and Policies: Land Use

- LU.1. Encourage infill development with access to existing water, sewer and transportation infrastructure.
- LU.2. Encourage mixed use infill development compatible with the architecture of the historic area and/or revitalization in the Uptown and Downtown Business Districts.
- LU.3. Reserved.
- LU.4. Concentrate community facilities, such as community centers, in close walking distance of residential areas.
- LU.5. Locate parks and recreational amenities within walking distance of residential neighborhoods.
- LU.6. Reduce vehicle miles traveled by employees and visitors by allowing for a wider range of complementary uses within the Downtown Business District.
- LU.7. Reduce vehicle miles traveled by promoting local food production/farmer’s market in the Village.
- LU.8. Prohibit large-scale solar energy facilities on the Black Dirt.

Objectives and Policies: Transportation

- TP.1. Ensure that new streets are interconnected with the existing grid street system.

LAND USE

“ENCOURAGE MIXED USE INFILL DEVELOPMENT AND/OR REVITALIZATION IN THE DOWNTOWN BUSINESS DISTRICT CONSISTENT WITH THE EXISTING HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD.”

- TP.2. Consider making complete street improvements as streets are rehabilitated to address the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, drivers and those that use public transit (i.e., bus transportation).
- TP.3. Improve existing sidewalk system as funds become available to improve walkability and ensure Americans with Disability Act compliance and add new sidewalks to connect with existing throughout the Village.
- TP.4. Retrofit existing streets to provide bike lanes where there is sufficient right-of-way width to accommodate a bike lane.
- TP.5. Enhance bicycle and pedestrian access to recreational opportunities and the Downtown and Uptown through the development of multi-use paths.
- TP.6. Explore opportunities with NYSDOT and Orange County Transportation Council to enhance public transportation to and from the Village of Chester and regional employment centers.

Goal 2: Conserve energy and promote production of renewable energy locally.

Objectives and Policies: Energy Conservation and Renewable Energy Production

- EC.1. New buildings should be situated to conserve energy through site design that takes advantage of passive solar opportunities.
- EC.2. Upgrades and renovation of municipal facilities and infrastructure should incorporate energy conservation measures.
- EC.3. Over time, work with Orange & Rockland and NYSERDA to replace all streetlights, traffic lights and exterior safety lighting with LED (Light Emitting Diode) lighting.
- EC.4. Encourage installation roof-mounted solar array facilities on existing warehouse distribution buildings within the Village’s industrial park.
- EC.5. The Village should consider incorporating new renewable energy production, such as solar power, into existing and future facilities.
- EC.6. Encourage homeowners and local businesses to install renewable energy systems, such as roof-mounted photovoltaic panels.

TRANSPORTATION

“ENHANCE BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN ACCESS TO RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND THE DOWNTOWN AND UPTOWN THROUGH THE DEVELOPMENT OF MULTI-USE PATHS.”

- EC.7. Consider revising land use laws to guide and encourage new development of solar/photovoltaic power and other forms of renewable energy systems.
- EC.8. Ensure all new development plans include sidewalks.

Objectives and Policies: Green Building Design

- GB.1. Encourage use of green building design in new and rehabilitated buildings.

Goal 3: Make the Village of Chester more resilient to natural disasters.

Objectives and Policies: Resiliency

- RE.1. Reserved.
- RE.2. When financially feasible to do so, relocate community facilities that are prone to flooding to higher elevations within the Village.
- RE.3. Reserved.
- RE.4. Consider working with NYSDOT to ensure that their culverts in the vicinity of NYS Route 17 are properly maintained to prevent flooding with the Village’s industrial parks and those low-lying lands between NYS Route 17 and NYS Route 17M.
- RE.5. Reserved.
- RE.6. Reserved.

RESILIENCY

“WORK WITH NYSDOT TO ENSURE THAT THEIR CULVERTS IN THE VICINITY OF NYS ROUTE 17 ARE PROPERLY MAINTAINED TO PREVENT FLOODING WITH THE VILLAGE’S INDUSTRIAL PARKS AND THOSE LOW-LYING LANDS BETWEEN NYS ROUTE 17 AND NYS ROUTE 17M.”

10.0 Land Use Policies

10.1 Land Use

Land use refers to how we use land. It is an important goal of this Comprehensive Plan to guide growth in a responsible manner that results in quality development and redevelopment consistent with the character of the Village of Chester. The Village’s existing land use, by tax parcel, is graphically illustrated on *Map 10-1 Land Use* on page 103. The Land Use Map divides land use into broad categories including agriculture, commercial, community services, industrial, office, parks, public service, residential or vacant land. Having a clear picture of the Village’s existing land-use patterns is critical when planning for its future development.

The Village's land area is primarily occupied by residential single-family homes on small lots, with the second most prominent use of land being agriculture. Collectively, these two land uses comprise roughly half of the Village's total land area. The vast majority of the land area devoted to these two land uses are situated north of NYS Route 17, aka the Quickway (see Land Use Map on page 103). Multi-family residential development is primarily situated in the Whispering Hills development, located west of NYS Route 17 and northwest of West Avenue.

While residential family homes represent the largest use of land, it is important to note that the current ratio of single-family homes (SFH) to multi-unit dwellings (MUD) is 30% SFH to 70% MUD. According to numerous municipal planning sources, including the Orange County Department of Planning, the ideal ratio for effective use of infrastructure and services is exactly the opposite, that is, 70% SFH, 30% MUD.

The Village finds itself in this predicament via the approval, over several decades, of a disproportionate number of high-density condo-style and rental townhouses, and comparatively few single-family housing developments. The ripple effect of this imbalance is a substantial population that pays taxes at a lower assessment rate. Consequently, this Comprehensive Plan strongly recommends the adoption of policies and evaluation of proposed building projects with the intention of rebalancing the SFH/MUD ratio to the recommended ideal.

LAND USE
HOW WE USE THE LAND

“IT IS AN IMPORTANT GOAL OF THIS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TO GUIDE GROWTH IN A RESPONSIBLE MANNER THAT RESULTS IN QUALITY DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT CONSISTENT WITH THE UNIQUE CHARACTER OF THE VILLAGE OF CHESTER.”

The *commercial* development is situated primarily along NYS Route 17M, NYS Route 94 (Main Street) while mixed use commercial and residential uses are located on Main Street in Uptown and Downtown. A wide variety of commercial land uses are established along the NYS Route 17M Corridor including a shopping center with a supermarket, movie theater, restaurants and Tractor Supply Company store. *Community Services* include cemeteries, churches, firehouse, and Village Hall. *Industrial land uses* are primarily situated in the Chester Industrial Park, south of NYS Route 17. Other industrial uses are located off of NYS Route 17M and Princeton Street. *Mixed-use* buildings - with dwellings above the first floor - are situated in Uptown and Downtown.

The Land Use Map shows a very high percentage of Chester’s land area is already developed, however, there are still some large tracts of land that are vacant. The Village’s land use pattern is well-defined and this Plan supports infill development and new growth that complements the early settlement of the community in terms of land use and density. This Plan also strongly supports the preservation of the Village’s Black Dirt farmland for agricultural use. This Plan does not support high density housing that is in sharp contrast to the Village’s established development pattern. The Village should use its Home Rule authority to implement land use regulations that encourage development consistent with the recommendations of this Comprehensive Plan.

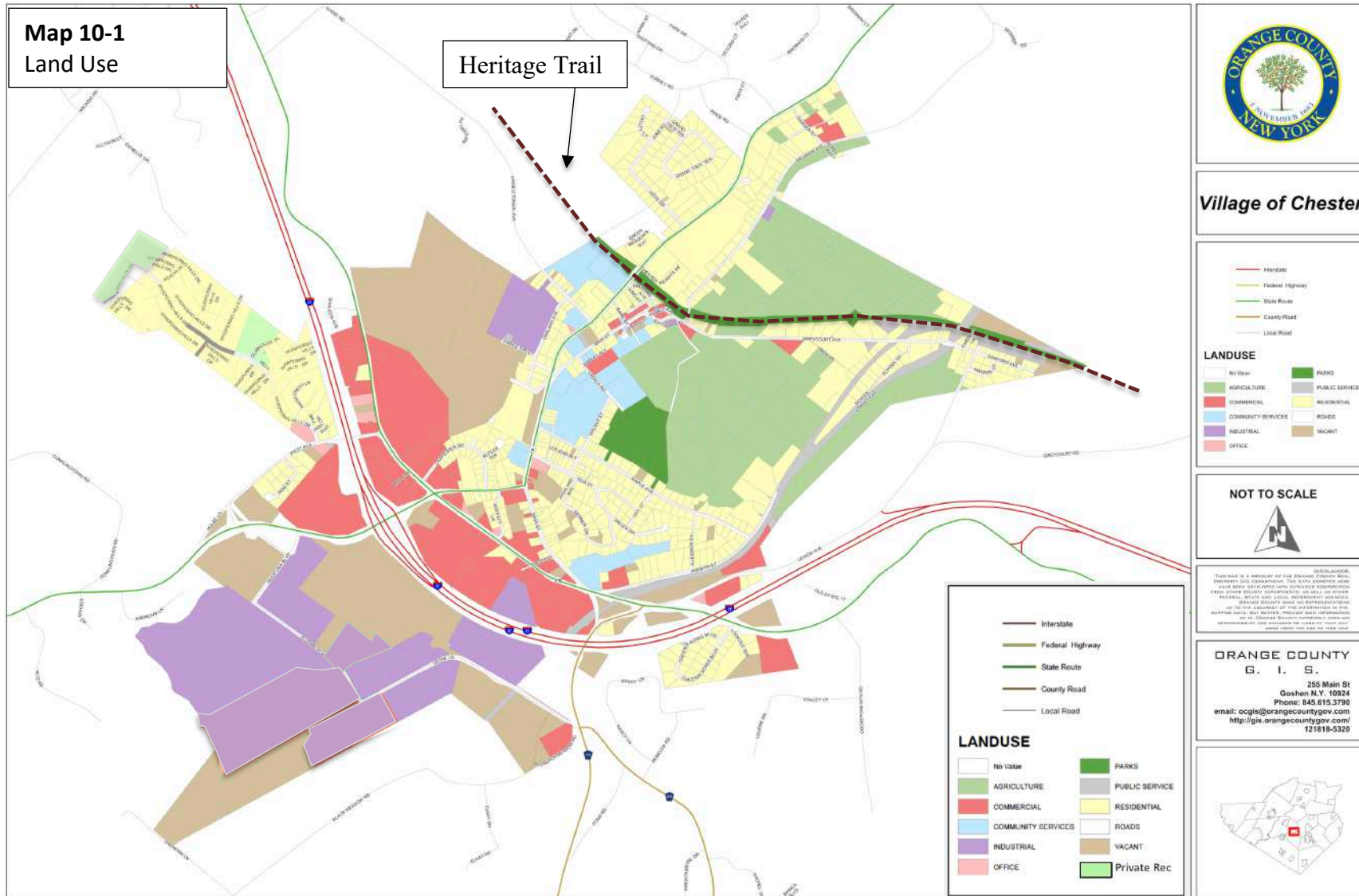
The Village contains 2 sizable parcels along Main/ High Street (Rt 94); 8.9-acre former Brook Farm (SBL 2-1-32, 108-1-2.1, 108-1-2.2) and the approximately 1+ acre (SBL 104-5-9, 104-5-10), which in the future may become available for development/redevelopment. This plan recommends these RS zoned parcels, if developed, be developed with design guidelines and be compatible with existing historic structures in the Main Street/High Street proposed Uptown and Downtown historic district overlays such as the homes at 15, 19 and 22 High Street.

Ensuring future development consistent with the historic viewshed of uptown Main Street and High Street would strengthen the Village’s historic character. A goal of this plan is to protect the scale, density and character of Chester’s stable and well-maintained neighborhoods.

The development of large-scale solar farms on Black Dirt should be prohibited, since it would destroy these irreplaceable and highly productive agricultural soils and important way of life.

LAND USE
HOW WE USE THE LAND

“THE COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT IS SITUATED PRIMARILY ALONG NYS ROUTE 17M, NYS ROUTE 94 (MAIN STREET) WHILE MIXED USE COMMERCIAL AND RESIDENTIAL USES ARE LOCATED ON MAIN STREET IN UPTOWN AND DOWNTOWN.”



10.2 Zoning

Chapter 98-Zoning of the Village Code divides Chester into eight (8) distinct zoning districts as shown on the Map 10-2 - Zoning. Additionally, there are two Zoning Overlays. Zoning districts define where certain land uses are permitted and regulate the intensity of land development through bulk regulations that control permitted density, building height and separation between uses. The Zoning Law is the most important land use tool to managing growth and redevelopment.

There are four (4) residential zoning districts in the Village of Chester as follows: 1) the RA-Residential & Agricultural zoning district that encompasses Black Dirt farmland and adjacent residential areas; 2) the RS-Residential Single-Family zoning district that covers areas with single-family homes surrounding the Black Dirt farmland, Uptown and Downtown; 3) the RMH-Residential Mobile Homes zoning district, which is situated in the vicinity of Greycourt Avenue, School Street and Sanford Avenue; and 4) the RM-Residential Multiple Dwelling zoning district, which encompass Whispering Hills and several smaller multi-family developments in the Village.

There are four (4) nonresidential zoning districts in Chester as follows: 1) The B-1 Neighborhood Business District, which encompasses Uptown and Downtown; 2) the B-2 General Business district that primarily encompasses the NYS Route 17 M Corridor, 3) the M-1 Light Manufacturing-Research zoning district, which encompasses the industrial park, and 4) the M-2 Manufacturing zoning district, which is situated along NYS Route 17M and Princeton St. The Village also has two (2) Overlay Zones, the HIO-Highway Interchange Overlay and the RS-Technology Overlay District.

The following is a general description of the Village’s existing Zoning Districts. Those uses shown in ~~strikethrough~~ are recommended to be deleted and those underlined to be added:

RA-Residential & Agricultural: The RA Zoning District requires a minimum lot size of 80,000 square feet (sf). The district regulations call for minimum lot width of 200 feet for single-family homes and 50-feet for house trailers and mobile homes. Most of the lands within this district are presently used for farming and the balance consists of single-family and mobile homes. This zoning district allows commercial agricultural operations as principal permitted uses. Special Permitted Uses subject to Site Plan approval by the Planning Board include: single-family dwellings, house trailers or mobile homes; public utility structures; dormitory accommodations for farm workers; and barns and storage buildings. Customary accessory uses are also allowed.

ZONING
HOW WE REGULATE LAND USE

“CHAPTER 98-ZONING OF THE VILLAGE CODE DIVIDES CHESTER INTO EIGHT (8) DISTINCT ZONING DISTRICTS AS SHOWN ON THE MAP 10-2 - ZONING. THESE ZONING DISTRICTS DEFINE WHERE CERTAIN LAND USES ARE PERMITTED AND REGULATE THE INTENSITY OF LAND DEVELOPMENT THROUGH BULK REGULATIONS THAT CONTROL PERMITTED DENSITY, BUILDING HEIGHT AND SEPARATION BETWEEN USES.”

Map 10-2

The Village of Chester

Orange County, New York

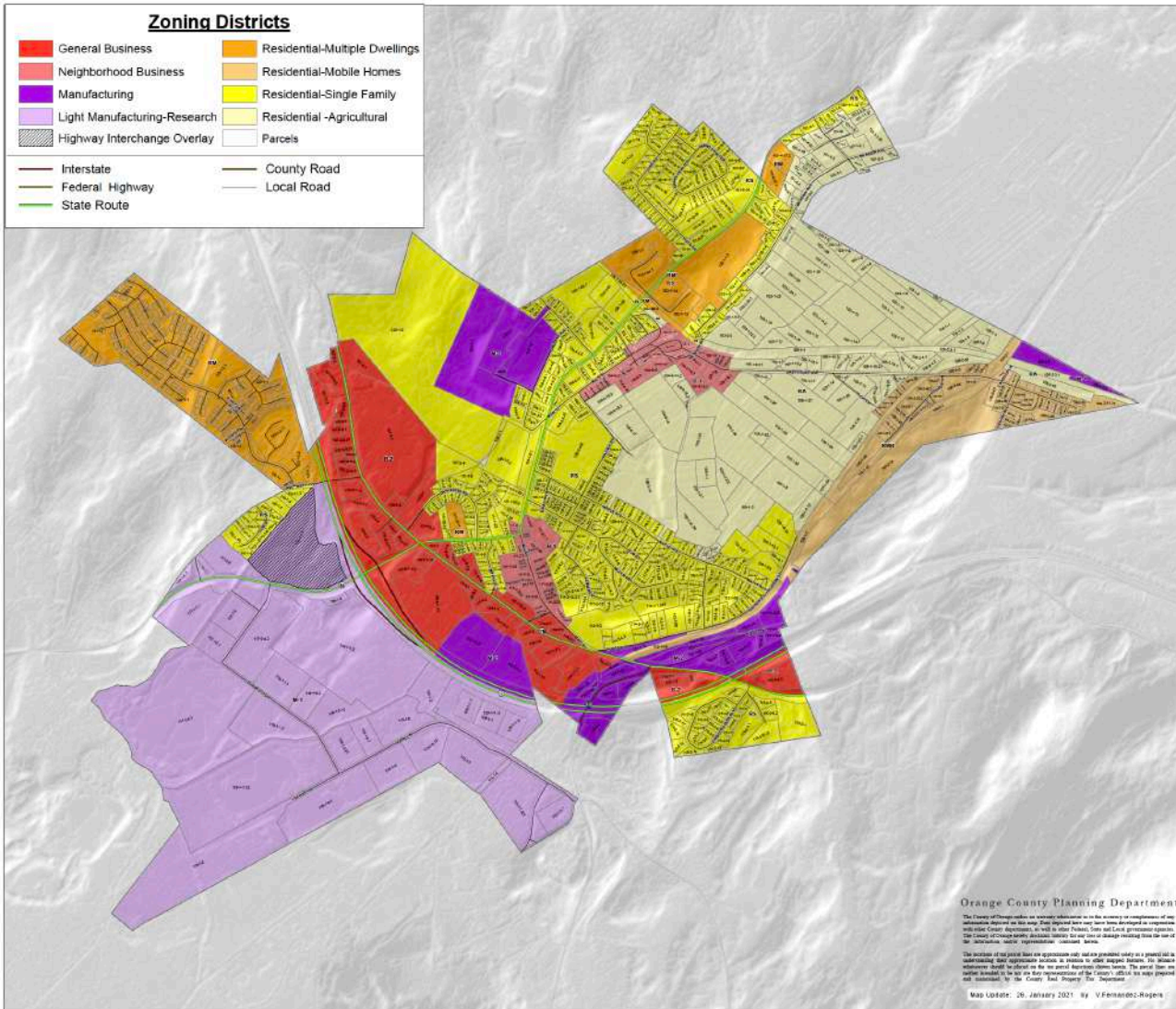
ZONING DISTRICTS



Steven M. Nouhas
County Executive

*****DRAFT**

**** Please Note: This map and the contents therein are currently under the process of verification by the Village of Chester. The Planning Department does not guarantee the accuracy of the zoning information depicted here.



ZONING HOW WE REGULATE LAND USE

“VILLAGE OF CHESTER ZONING DISTRICTS 2021”

RS – Single-Family Residential: The RS - Single-Family Residential District has a minimum lot size of 12,500 square feet. The minimum lot width in this district is 100 feet and the maximum permitted lot coverage is 30%. The principal permitted uses include: single-family dwellings and prefabricated and modular dwellings not to exceed one (1) dwelling unit per lot. Special Permitted Uses subject to Site Plan approval by the Planning Board include: firehouses; municipal office buildings; public utility buildings; boarding and rooming houses with accommodations for five (5) or fewer guests; public libraries and museums; clubhouses and rooms for fraternal, religious, social organizations not operated for profit; studios for art, music and dance; professional office limited to residential conversion of 1-2 family dwellings on Route 94 from the intersection of Elm Street and Main Street through Academy Avenue; mobile homes; ~~public and parochial schools; hospitals;~~ churches or other places of worship including parish houses and Sunday school buildings; and Senior Citizen Housing. Bed & breakfast establishments and Short-term rentals should be considered as added Special Permit Uses. Customary accessory uses are also allowed.

RMH – Residential Mobile Homes: The RMH-Residential Mobile Homes zoning district has a minimum lot size of 12,500 square feet (sf) per dwelling unit for RS permitted uses and minimum lot area of 5,000 sf for single-wide mobile homes and 8,000 sf for double-wide mobile homes within or outside a mobile home park. The minimum lot width in this district is 100 feet for RS permitted uses and 50 feet for mobile homes. The principal permitted uses include single-family dwellings and prefabricated and modular dwellings, mobile homes, and mobile home parks. Special Permitted Uses subject to Site Plan approval by the Planning Board include: firehouses; municipal office buildings; public utility buildings; boarding and rooming houses with accommodations for five (5) or fewer guests; public libraries and museums; clubhouses and rooms for fraternal, religious, social organizations not operated for profit; studios for art, music and dance; and churches or other places of worship including parish houses and Sunday school buildings. Customary accessory uses are also allowed.

RM – Residential Multiple Dwellings: The RM-Residential Multiple Dwellings zoning district has a minimum lot size of 80,000 square feet (sf) with a maximum permitted density of eight (8) dwelling units per acre for 1 or 2 bedroom units; 6-units per acre for 3 or more bedrooms with a bedroom defined as including a den or other bonus room that is not a kitchen. The minimum lot width in this district is 150 feet and the maximum building height is 35 feet ~~or 3 stories~~. The maximum permitted lot coverage is 20%.

Village of Chester, New York

UPTOWN AND DOWNTOWN
BUSINESS DISTRICTS

“FIRST WE SHAPE OUR
BUILDINGS; AND
AFTERWARDS OUR
BUILDINGS SHAPE US.”

Winston Churchill

Note: Stated while addressing the nation regarding the re-building of the 'Houses of Commons' after its destruction during the Second World War.

Principal permitted uses include: RS permitted uses or a two-family dwelling, not to exceed one (1) dwelling structure per lot. Special Permitted Uses subject to Site Plan approval by the Planning Board include: firehouses; municipal office buildings; public utility buildings; boarding and rooming houses with accommodations for five (5) or fewer guests; public libraries and museums; clubhouses and rooms for fraternal, religious, social organizations not operated for profit; studios for art, music and dance; and churches or other places of worship including parish houses and Sunday school buildings; and multiple-dwellings, apartments and townhouses provided the entire lot occupied by such structure is maintained in single or group ownership. Single-ownership shall be construed to include cooperatives, condominiums and home associations. Townhouses shall be at least 20 feet wide and may be situated on individual lots at least 2,000 square feet in area. Customary accessory uses are also allowed.

B-1 Neighborhood Business District: The B-1-Neighborhood Business District does not provide a minimum lot area or lot width requirement. This zoning district encompasses Uptown and Downtown. The minimum front yard is 5 feet, side yard 10 feet and rear yard 40 feet. The maximum permitted height is 35 feet ~~or 3 stories~~. Principal permitted uses include: wholesale and retail establishments, provided all wares are stored within buildings; banks and similar institutions; personal service shops and offices; restaurants and luncheonettes; taverns; hotels where food and lodging are furnished either to residents or transients and the usual appurtenant uses incidental to the operation of a hotel; assembly halls; bowling alleys; billiard and pool parlors; bus and railroad passenger stations; and ~~telegraph and express offices~~.

Special Permitted Uses subject to Site Plan approval by the Planning Board include (RM special permitted uses): (i.e., firehouses; municipal office buildings; public utility buildings; boarding and rooming houses with accommodations for five (5) or fewer guests; public libraries and museums; clubhouses and rooms for fraternal, religious, social organizations not operated for profit; studios for art, music and dance; and churches or other places of worship including parish houses and Sunday school buildings); plus multiple-dwellings, apartments and townhouses provided the entire lot occupied by such structure is maintained in single or group ownership. Customary accessory uses are also allowed including apartments above retail and services establishments, limited to one-bedroom and efficiency dwelling units only.

ZONING TEXT AND MAP AMENDMENTS

“THIS PLAN RECOMMENDS THE ZONING LAW BE REVISED TO ESTABLISH THE MAXIMUM PERMITTED HEIGHT BASED OPEN FEET, NOT THE NUMBER OF STORIES OF A STRUCTURE.”

Recommended Height Definition:

“The vertical distance measured from the average elevation of the finished grade at the front of the building to the highest point of the roof for flat and mansard roofs and to the mean height between eave and ridge for other types of roofs.”

B-2 General Business District: The B-2-General Business District has a minimum lot area requirement of 15,000 square feet (sf) and minimum lot width of 100 feet, but for recreational facilities, which require a minimum lot area of 2-acres and lot width of 200 feet. The minimum front yard is 50 feet, but that may be reduced to 30 feet if there is no parking in the front yard, side yard 15 feet and rear yard 20 feet. The maximum permitted height is 35 feet. Principal permitted uses include all business uses allowed in the B-1 Neighborhood Business District (i.e., wholesale and retail establishments, provided all wares are stored within buildings; banks and similar institutions; personal service shops and offices; restaurants and luncheonettes; taverns; hotels where food and lodging are furnished either to residents or transients and the usual appurtenant uses incidental to the operation of a hotel; assembly halls; bowling alleys; billiard and pool parlors; bus and railroad passenger stations; telegraph and express offices); plus the following: theaters (except drive-ins); hotels and motels; automotive sales agencies for new motor vehicles; garages and filling stations; and shopping centers. Special Permitted Uses subject to Site Plan approval by the Planning Board include: auto body and refinishing shops; recreational facilities; trucking terminals and repair and servicing facilities, and Senior Citizen Housing. Customary accessory uses are also allowed.

The NYS Route 17M corridor lies, in part, within the B-2 Zoning District. This corridor consists of an eclectic mixed of commercial and light industrial uses. This Plan recommends the adoption of *design guidelines* for this corridor so that new infill development results in an aesthetically pleasing, walkable and functional mixed-use corridor.

M-1 Light Manufacturing Research District: The M-1 Light Manufacturing Research District has a minimum lot area requirement of 3-acres and minimum lot width of 200 feet. The minimum front yard is 60 feet, side yard 50 feet and rear yard 50 feet. The maximum permitted height is 40 feet ~~or 2 stories~~. Principal permitted uses include: wholesale storage and warehouse facilities; manufacturing, processing, producing and fabricating operations, which do not emit any noises, fumes, odors or vibrations; research laboratories; and business and industrial office facilities. Special Permitted Uses subject to Site Plan approval by the Planning Board include: outdoor storage of building supplies and building materials, when screened; and adult entertainment uses. Customary accessory uses are also allowed.

ZONING TEXT AND MAP AMENDMENTS

“THIS PLAN RECOMMENDS THE ADOPTION OF DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR THE NYS ROUTE 17M CORRIDOR SO THAT NEW INFILL DEVELOPMENT RESULTS IN AN AESTHETICALLY PLEASING, WALKABLE AND FUNCTIONAL MIXED-USE CORRIDOR.”

M-2 Manufacturing District: The M-2 Manufacturing District has a minimum lot area requirement of 1-acre and minimum lot width of 150 feet. The minimum front yard is 50 feet, side yard 30 feet and rear yard 30 feet. The maximum permitted height is 40 feet ~~or 2-stories~~. Principal permitted uses include: wholesale storage and warehouse facilities; ~~gasoline and fuel storage tanks located entirely underground~~; lumber, wood, feed and similar storage yards (excluding salvage or junk yards); manufacturing, processing, producing and fabricating operations, which do not emit any noises, fumes, odors or vibrations; research laboratories; and trucking terminals and repair and servicing facilities. Special Permitted Uses subject to Site Plan approval by the Planning Board include: outdoor storage of building supplies and building materials, when screened; ~~and adult entertainment uses~~. Customary accessory uses are also allowed.

HIO – Highway Interchange Overlay District: The HIO District applies the underlying zoning district bulk requirements. Principal permitted uses include: wholesale and retail establishments; banks and similar institutions; personal service shops and offices; restaurants and luncheonettes; theaters (except drive-ins); hotels and motels; and shopping centers.

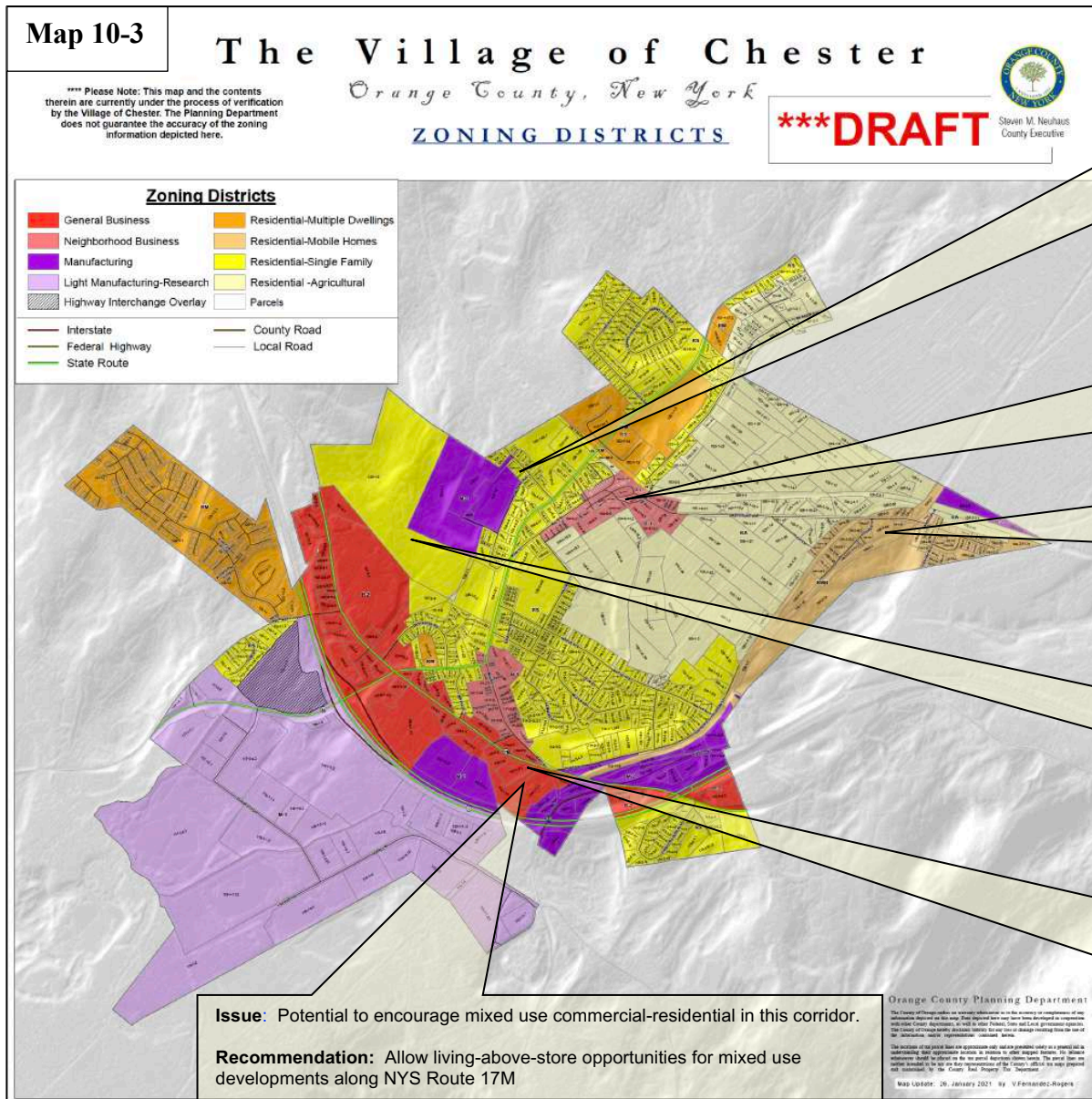
RS-Technology Overlay District (Residential Single-family Zoning District with Internet Incubator Technology and Research Park Overlay). This overlay district encompasses 60-acres as well as parcels SBLs 108-1-1 and 107-3-4 (approximately 4 additional acres), which is property of BT Holdings, LLC that was annexed into the Village. The overlay district allows for use as-of-right for no greater than 120 residential single-family detached dwelling units, or by Special Permit by the Village Board commercial uses including a variety of technology, office, medical office, medical research, business incubators and educational, scientific and research activities.

Summary of Zoning District Recommendations: A review of the residential zoning districts reveals the districts are well tailored to the residential neighborhoods in terms of bulk regulations, permitted height and allowable land uses. Future changes to the Zoning Code must reinforce the Comprehensive Plan’s goals and the character and integrity of existing neighborhoods.

Zoning Map Amendments: This Comprehensive Plan recommends several Zoning Map Amendments as depicted on Map 10-3 on the next page. The map amendments are intended to further the objectives of the Comprehensive Plan including adopting Design Guidelines.

ZONING TEXT AND MAP AMENDMENTS

“THIS COMP PLAN RECOMMENDS SEVERAL ZONING MAP AMENDMENTS AS DEPICTED ON MAP 10-3 ON THE NEXT PAGE. THE PROPOSED MAP AMENDMENTS ARE INTENDED TO FURTHER THE OBJECTIVES OF THIS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN.”



Issue: This is site of Nexans Energy USA, a manufacturer of wire and cable that has made product at this location for 66 years. Tractor-trailer access to the facility is cumbersome due to roadway geometry at NYS Route 94 and Oakland Avenue.

Recommendation: Meetings with OCTC, NYSDOT, Village Officials and officers of Nexans to improve roadway geometry at NYS Route 94/Oakland Avenue and Main St. RS/Technology Overlay District to be considered and connectivity to new development.

Issue: There is a need for renovation of existing buildings and new infill buildings in Uptown and Downtown. However, renovations and new buildings must respect existing historic buildings to maintain integrity of the historic districts.

Recommendation: Adopt Design Guidelines and create Architectural Review Board or give Planning Board such powers.

Issue: This area is zoned RMH-Residential Mobile Home. The undeveloped area consists of upland fields with steeper slopes that do not have access to central water or sewer.

Recommendation: This area may lend itself to farm-worker housing. More analysis to determine whether to rezone to RS District.

Issue: Proposed BT Holdings development with up to 120 single-family residential home or development in accordance with the RS-Technology Overlay District.

Recommendation: Require at least 2 means of ingress and egress for all properties of more than 50-acres to mitigate traffic impacts and ensure emergency access.

Issue: There is presently an eclectic mix of commercial and light industrial uses in this portion of the NYS Route 17M corridor. With the advance of Legoland, the OCTC and NYSDOT have added funding to the UPWP to undertake a NYS Route 17M Corridor Study.

Recommendation: This Plan recommends that consideration should be given to rezoning the M-2 Zoning District along NYS Route 17M to B-2, coupled with, the adoption of Design Guidelines for the corridor.

10.3 Site Plan Review and Design Guidelines

Chapter 98 Zoning, Article IV, Article VI, §98-27 through §98-30.2 of the Village Zoning Law grants the Planning Board with the authority to review and approve site plans. Site plan review is a powerful planning tool, which the Planning Board can use to shape the character of new development. Through site plan review the Planning Board can control the placement of buildings, and other elements of the site plan including landscaping, signs, lighting, and off-street loading and parking. The Village’s Site Plan Regulations are simple in that they lay out the applicability; procedures and requirements for site plan review along with some basic objectives to help guide the Planning Board’s decisions.

Chester’s commercial corridors (i.e., NYS Route 17M and NYS Route 94) and its Uptown and Downtown business districts represent a major economic investment. They also provide an opportunity for the introduction of new buildings or the rehabilitation of existing structures on developed sites. The shape of new development will shape the future character of the Village.

Design Guidelines are needed to ensure that new development is functional and aesthetically pleasing in the commercial corridors and enhances the Uptown and Downtown business districts. Design Guidelines should include both standards (requirements) and guidelines (suggestions). Standards would typically use the word “shall” or a clear directive (“are not permitted” or “are required”). Guidelines typically use the word “should” or “consider.” New projects would be required to comply with standards and be strongly encouraged to comply with guidelines. The Design Guidelines would apply to actions requiring Site Plan Review pursuant to Chapter 98 of the Zoning Law in the following zoning districts: B-1, B-2 and M-2. Design Guidelines are intended to:

1. Stimulate improvements to existing structures and encourage new development in these commercial areas.
2. Improve the appearance of these business districts to sustain interest in and the viability of these areas as hubs of retail, office and other commercial activity.
3. Provide a consistent methodology for review of proposed projects.
4. Inspire creativity and quality in the design of all structures and in site development.
5. Foster an exchange of ideas among developers, Village officials and residents in an effort to improve the quality of design in all projects both public and private.

ZONING TEXT AND MAP AMENDMENTS

“DESIGN GUIDELINES IN CONJUNCTION WITH A HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION OR ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD IS RECOMMENDED FOR ALL PROPOSED HISTORIC DISTRICTS AND FOR THE B-1 ZONE SINCE IT CONTAINS THE MOST HISTORIC AREAS OF THE VILLAGE.”

Design guidelines in conjunction with a Historic Preservation Commission or Architectural Review Board is recommended for historic districts.

“Mixed use neighborhoods, such as downtown “are easily differentiated from single-use neighborhoods because they are generally active for more hours of the day and, for that reason, maintain a dynamic feeling for a large portion of the day. Because of this dynamism, they are more than just commercial/retail uses proximate to housing because a housing subdivision may also be proximate to a shopping plaza.

In a mixed-use neighborhood, housing and commercial/retail are more seamlessly integrated and economic forces usually determine which businesses will survive. It’s not uncommon to find restaurants, cafes, dry cleaners, supermarkets, hardware stores, etc. – businesses that serve the local population and support the daily needs of residents. These neighborhoods offer an important lifestyle option for people who don’t have a need to live in the suburbs or in places that are dedicated to residential uses only.” (From “Mixed-Use Neighborhoods: What Are They, and What Are the Benefits?” by Owiso Makuku, February 10, 2018).

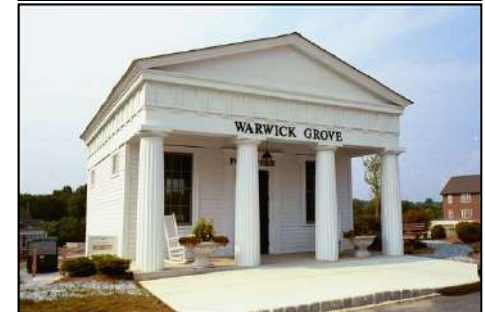
The Architectural Review Board is also needed to reshape future development along the NYS Route 17M Corridor. This Plan encourages redevelopment along the corridor that results in a more aesthetically pleasing, walkable, vibrant and cohesive mixed-use development pattern.

10.4 Form-Based Code

A form-based code is a land development regulation that fosters predictable built results and a high-quality public realm by using physical form (rather than separation of uses) as the organizing principle for the code. Form-based codes address the relationship between building facades and the public realm, the form and mass of buildings in relation to one another, and the scale and types of streets and blocks.

The regulations and standards in form-based codes are presented in both words and clearly drawn diagrams and other visuals. They are keyed to a regulating plan that designates appropriate form and scale (and therefore, character) of development, rather than only distinctions in land-use.

Village of Chester, New York



Above (top to bottom): Celebration, Florida a Neo-Traditional community circa 1992; Warwick Grove – Warwick, NY showing new single-family residential homes circa 2006; and Warwick Grove Community Post Office circa 2006. This Plan supports Form-Based Coding to encourage Neo-Traditional concepts within the Village and particularly within its Uptown and Downtown. The examples cited above are simply provided to illustrate the concept.

The heart of the historic Village is Uptown and Downtown where residents can live above stores and where a variety of retail, cultural, or professional services and institutional uses are available to serve the community’s needs. There are vacant lots within Uptown and Downtown and the form of new infill development could have a profound effect on their character.

While the Village has a Zoning Code and Design Guidelines are recommended to regulate land uses in Uptown and Downtown, consideration should also be given to creating an Uptown and Downtown form-based code that articulates a vision for the form of new infill buildings on vacant lots. Another area where Form-Based development might be considered is the small neighborhood of surviving historic properties along Rt 17M from West Ave to the Nail Salon, 103 Brookside Avenue (SBL 102-2-7).

A form-based code would provide greater predictability in the form of new infill buildings in order to ensure they better define Chester’s sense of place and complement its historic character.

This Plan recommends the Village Board explore the use of a form-based code to guide new development within Uptown and Downtown. If a formed-based code was developed for Downtown and Uptown, it would be developed in conformance with the zoning regulations and design guidelines". If there is a conflict, the applicant could appeal to the ZBA.

The use of form-based code is also recommended for the proposed West Chester historic district, so that new development is in keeping with the scale and architecture of the historic properties in this area of the Village of Chester.

10.5 Alternative Energy

Alternative renewable energy resources, such as wind and solar, should be encouraged within the Village of Chester to reduce dependence on foreign energy supplies and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Village Board should review its zoning laws to allow alternative energy facilities and establish land use laws to regulate the placement of such facilities to ensure they are visually acceptable and don’t adversely affect adjoining property owners.

ALTERNATE ENERGY

“ALTERNATIVE RENEWABLE ENERGY RESOURCES, SUCH AS WIND AND SOLAR, SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED WITHIN THE VILLAGE OF CHESTER TO REDUCE DEPENDENCE ON FOREIGN ENERGY SUPPLIES AND TO REDUCE GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS.”

10.6 Land-Use Goals, Objectives and Policies

- LU.1. Clearly communicate the Village’s future land-use goals, law standards and requirements to the development community and the public.
 - Create a developer’s guide to site plan, special permit and subdivision review.
 - Provide a copy of this Plan to the members of the Planning Board, members of the Village Board and members of the Zoning Board of Appeals.
 - Provide up to date Village code together with updated zoning map online and place 2020 Comprehensive Plan on the Village Web site.

- LU.2. Review the Village General Code and Zoning Law as necessary to support land-use regulations reinforce and implement the objectives of the Comprehensive Plan.
 - Adopt amendments to the zoning law as identified in this Plan based upon Village Board priorities.
 - Determine specific zoning law and subdivision regulation amendments, which are necessary to:
 - Encourage reinvestment and growth in Uptown and Downtown.
 - Protect natural resources to improve resiliency from extreme weather events.
 - Support farmer, farmworker and senior affordable housing opportunities.
 - Stimulate economic development.

- LU.3. Consider the compatibility of development with surrounding uses.
 - Utilize strategies such as landscaping, tree preservation and other buffering techniques.
 - When necessary, require modification of site development plans to minimize impacts.
 - Encourage developers to work with surrounding property owners to resolve community concerns prior to formalizing their development plans.

- LU.4. Encourage mixed-use infill development within the Uptown and Downtown business districts as compatible with the scale and historic character of these districts.
 - Encourage Neo-Traditional design principles to strengthen the character of Uptown and Downtown.
 - Develop and implement a comprehensive long-term parking strategy for Uptown and Downtown.
 - Amend B-1 Zoning to allow artist lofts, living-above-the-store dwellings and maker spaces.
 - Secure funding to advance streetscape improvements throughout Uptown and Downtown.
 - Explore the use of a form-based code to guide new infill development within Uptown and Downtown.

- LU.5. Encourage more construction of U.S. Green Building Council’s LEED certified buildings.

- LU.6. Utilize land use tools to enhance the natural environment and preserve prime farmland and open space.

LAND USE GOALS

“CLEARLY COMMUNICATE THE VILLAGE’S FUTURE LAND-USE GOALS, LAW STANDARDS AND REQUIREMENTS TO THE DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY AND THE PUBLIC.”

LU.7. Reserved.

LU.8. Through the land-use and decision-making process and cooperation with the Towns of Chester and Monroe, protect the integrity and quality of the Village’s water resources.

LU.9. Require the preservation of vegetation along the perimeter of sites and landscaping during land development to buffer neighboring properties. Prohibit the clearcutting of large parcels of land.

LU.10. Reserved.

LU.11. Reserved.

LU.12. Dumpsters shall be enclosed. Dumpster enclosures shall be placed on a concrete slab and enclosed on three sides with durable materials and have a color scheme, which is comparable to the principal building. Dumpster enclosure gates shall be made of durable opaque material, which utilizes commercial hinges, poles and hasps. Dumpster enclosures shall be screened from adjoining properties and public streets and situated in designated service areas in the side or rear yard. Landscaping around the base of the dumpster enclosure shall also be required. Placement of dumpsters should avoid the need to back into pedestrian rights-of-way.

LU.13. Consider creation of Ridge Protection Overlay Zoning Districts to establish clear guidelines for future development and protection of ridge lines along with Visual Assessment criteria to guide decisions.

LU.14. Consider adoption of an Annexation Policy for the Village of Chester. *Specifically, it is recommended that the new lands annexed into the Village come into the Village with the same or lower density than they had in the Town. A draft annexation policy is provided in Appendix B of this Plan.*

LU.15. Monument signs should be encouraged along Brookside Avenue and existing poles signs should be replaced with monument signs when projects are subject to Site Plan review.

Full EAF Part 3 Discussion: The policies proposed herein are intended to manage growth and redevelopment within the Village in a manner that strengthens community character and resiliency; protects natural, cultural and historic resources and provides housing opportunities for all. No large adverse environmental impacts are anticipated as a result of the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan. The adoption of the Comprehensive Plan will result in additional measures to protect the environment in the Village of Chester.

PAYMENT IN-LIEU OF PARKLAND FEES

“AS THE NUMBER OF VILLAGE RESIDENTS INCREASES, SO TOO DOES THE NEED AND DEMAND FOR RECREATIONAL AMENITIES. ENSURING THE COLLECTION OF ITS PAYMENT-IN-LIEU-OF-PARKLAND FEE WILL ENABLE THE VILLAGE TO IMPROVE EXISTING PARKS OR ADD PARKLAND TO MEET THE GROWING NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY, WITHOUT PLACING AN UNDUE BURDEN ON EXISTING TAXPAYERS.”

- LU.16. Consider developing a form-based code that articulates a vision for the form of new infill buildings on vacant lots in the proposed Uptown, Downtown and the West Chester historic districts.
- LU.17. Require an As-Built Survey for all development requiring site plan approval prior to Issuing a Certificate of Occupancy.
- LU.18. Reserved.
- LU.19. Consider adopting a Local Law to regulate short-term rentals in a manner that allows such uses while protecting neighbors from potential nuisances resulting from such rentals.
- LU.20. Consider rezoning the M-2 Zoning District along NYS Route 17M to Zone B-2, coupled with the adoption of Design Guidelines for the corridor to curtail incongruous development, in both use and appearance.
- LU.21. Consider adopting new policies and zoning regulations, and evaluate proposed building projects with the goal of rebalancing the SFH/MUD ratio to the recommended ideal.
- LU.22. Reevaluate the zoning of the 33.4-acre Nexans Energy USA property should the current business change.
- LU.23. Reserved.
- LU.24. Reserved.