



NEW SCOTLAND HAMLET MASTER PLAN

JULY 2012

PREPARED BY



PREPARED FOR

Town of New Scotland, NY
and the
Capital District Transportation
Committee (CDTC)



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Disclaimer:

This report was funded in part through a grant from the Federal Highway Administration [and Federal Transit Administration], U.S. Department of Transportation. The views and opinions of the authors [or agency] expressed herein do not necessarily state or reflect those of the U. S. Department of Transportation. This report was prepared in cooperation with the Town of New Scotland, the Capital District Transportation Committee, the Capital District Regional Planning Commission, Albany County and the New York State Department of Transportation. The contents do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of these government agencies. The recommendations presented in this report are intended to support the Town of New Scotland’s efforts to establish a clear vision for the Hamlet of New Scotland, centered on the area around NY 85 and NY 85A, and create the New Scotland Hamlet Master Plan, the goal of which is to identify the desired future land use for the hamlet and its surroundings, and the tools that will help the town realize the vision. The recommendations are conceptual in nature and are presented to characterize the types of improvements that are desirable, and that may be implemented as part of future land use and transportation improvement projects. The recommendations do not commit the Town of New Scotland, CDTC, NYSDOT, or Albany County to funding any of the conceptual improvements. All transportation concepts will require further engineering evaluation and review.

Environmental Justice

Increased attention has been given to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) related to its ability to balance overall mobility benefits of transportation projects against protecting quality of life of low-income and minority residents of a community. President Clinton issued Executive Order 12898 to bring attention to environmental and human health impacts of low-income and minority communities - referred to as environmental justice - when federal funding is involved. The goal of environmental justice review is to ensure that any adverse human health or environmental effects of a government action, such as federally-supported roadway or transit project, does not disproportionately affect minority or low-income residents of a community or neighborhood. Environmental justice is a public policy objective that can help improve the quality of life for those whose interests have traditionally been overlooked.

The CDTC staff has completed a review of civil rights/environmental justice impacts of transportation actions proposed under this study. Based on a review of the latest socioeconomic data available, the CDTC staff has determined that there are a total of 0 TAZ’s in the New Scotland Hamlet Master Plan Study that are identified as Environmental Justice Target Population Areas. All of the transportation recommendations for the study would provide fair access and do not result in negative impacts to any minority or low-income residents. However, additional information gathered through the public review process could suggest a different outcome. In addition, examination of regional equity impacts would be necessary if any transportation action is considered for inclusion in CDTC’s Transportation Improvement Program.

Equitable access to, consideration within, and effects of the design and implementation of federally assisted projects is also a key aspect of environmental justice. However, design and construction is the responsibility of implementing agencies in the region. For projects identified in this study, implementing agencies would either be the New York State Department of Transportation, Capital District Transportation Authority, Albany County, or the Town of New Scotland.

EJ Target Population Areas are defined as any TAZ with low income, minority, or Hispanic populations equal to or greater than the regional average.

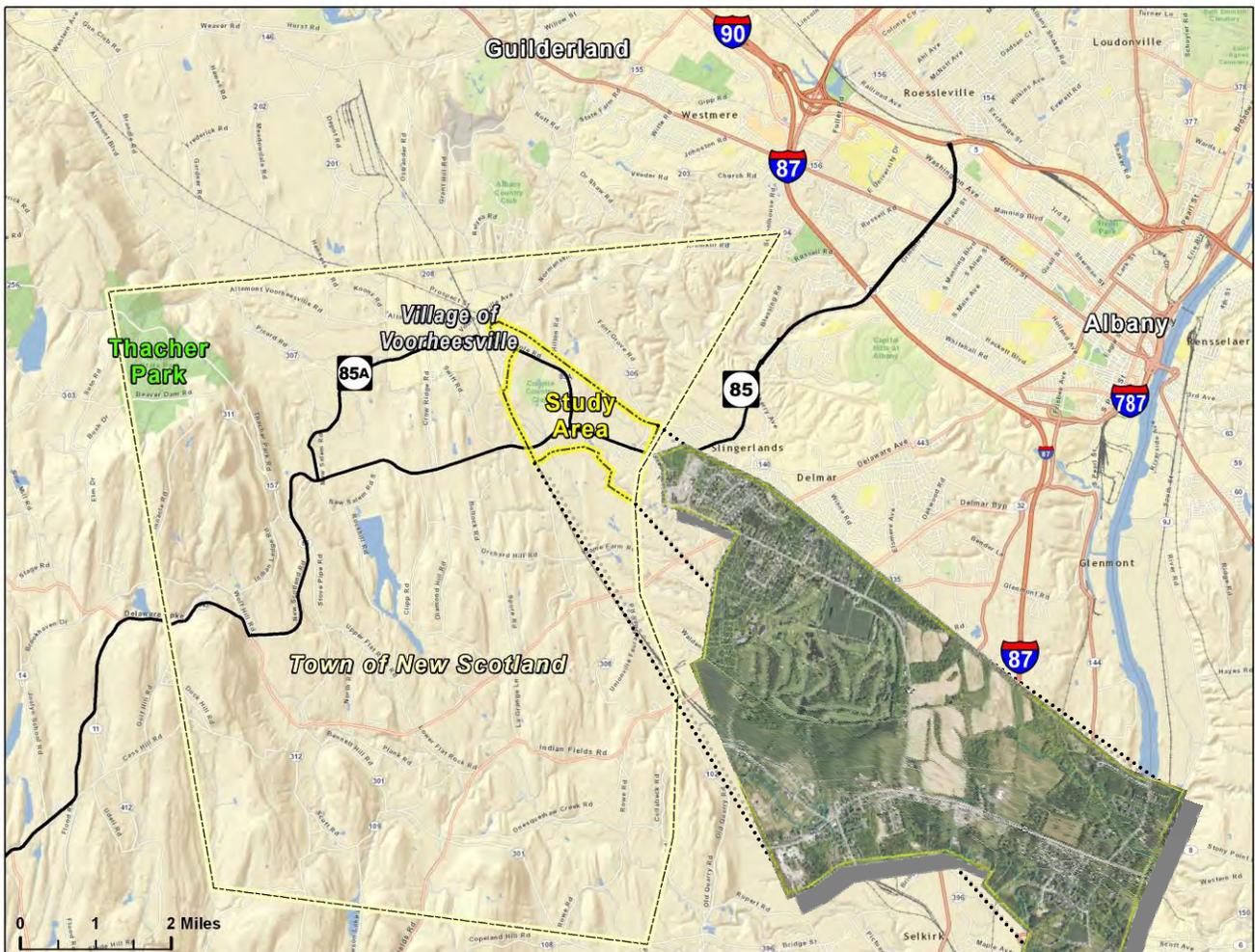
The regional averages are as follows:

Minority Population	11.2%
Hispanic Population	2.6%
Low Income Population	8.9%

I. INTRODUCTION

Purpose

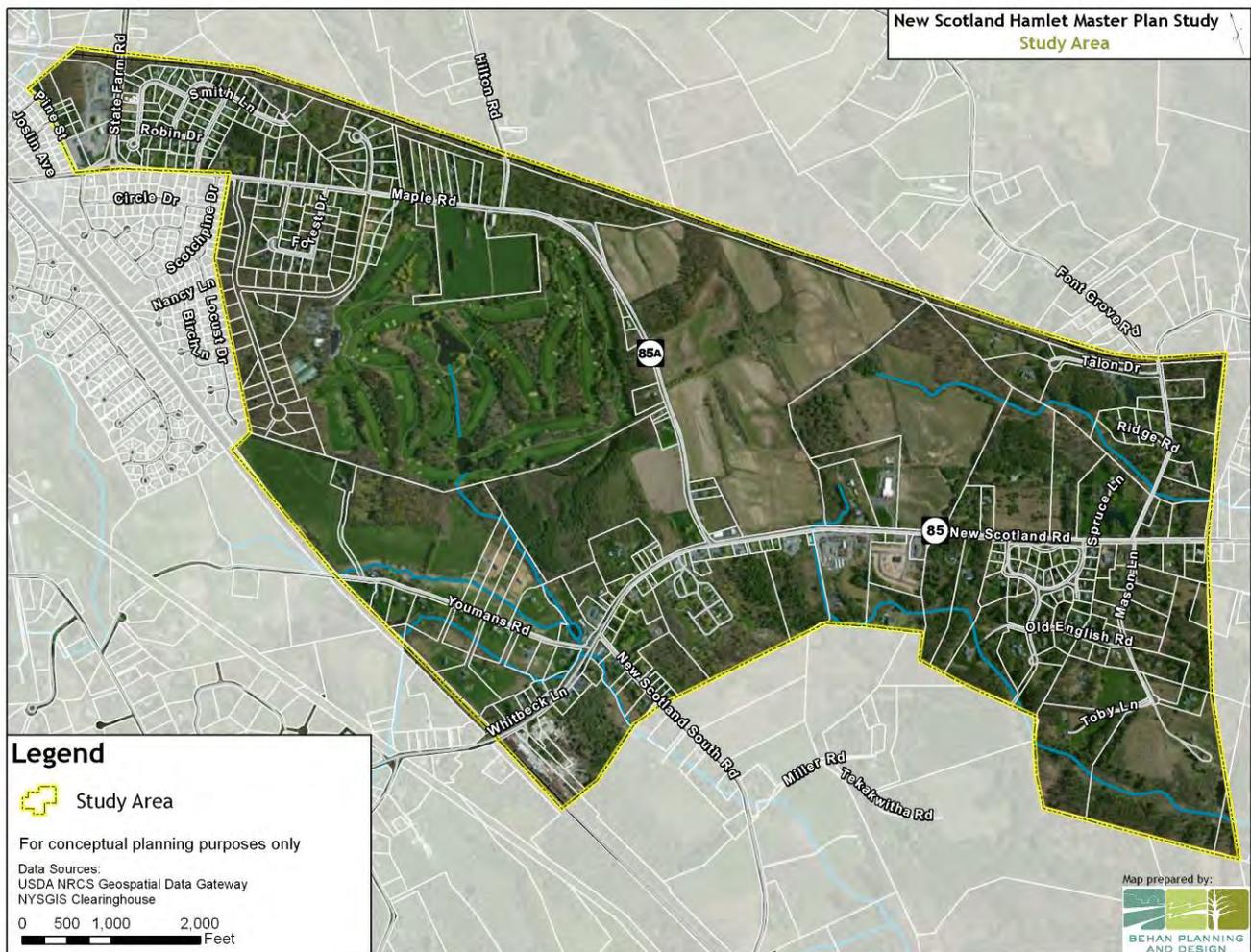
The Town of New Scotland is a predominantly rural residential community, located within a short commuting distance of the City of Albany and adjacent to the suburban towns of Guilderland and Bethlehem. Following several previous studies, the Town of New Scotland recognized the importance of establishing a clear vision for the Hamlet of New Scotland and partnered with the Capital District Transportation Committee (CDTC) to help create the New Scotland Hamlet Master Plan. The goal of the master plan is to identify desired future land uses, conceptual development patterns, and corresponding transportation enhancements for the hamlet and its surroundings, and to suggest tools that will help the town realize its vision. By taking a proactive approach to planning for the New Scotland hamlet, the town is positioning itself to encourage and accommodate future growth. Implementing the plan, through amendments to the Town’s zoning and other actions, will be a critical next step in this process.



The New Scotland Hamlet Study Area is in the northeastern quadrant of the town, and less than 10 miles from downtown Albany.

Study Area

The study area comprises the hamlet of New Scotland and the immediately surrounding area. Hamlets do not have specific geographic boundaries, however the hamlet is generally thought of as being centered on the intersection of NYS Routes 85 and 85A (New Scotland Road and Maple Road respectively). For the purposes of this project the study area boundaries are roughly the municipal boundary with the Town of Bethlehem to the east, the former rail line and future Helderberg-Hudson Rail Trail to the north, the Village of Voorheesville and the active rail line to the west, and the southern boundaries of the Commercial and Medium Density Residential (MDR) zoning districts to the south. The core of the study area is the town’s Commercial zoning district, with portions of the MDR and Residential Agricultural (RA) district included on the periphery.



Process

The creation of the New Scotland Hamlet Plan has been a collaborative effort between a Study Advisory Committee (SAC), the CDTC, and the town’s planning consultant, Behan Planning and Design. The SAC includes a cross section of area residents, mostly landowners within the study area, and local

agency representatives. The SAC met regularly throughout the planning process to help guide the recommendations of the hamlet plan.

A detailed inventory and analysis of existing conditions and previous studies provided a strong foundation for the hamlet plan. The inventory and analysis is summarized in the second section of this report with the full detailed report included as an appendix.

Public input is critical to a plan's success. Input received from a well attended public workshop in December 2011 provided the basis of many of the plan's recommendations. A second workshop was held in the spring of 2012 to gather additional feedback and refine the plan recommendations. Summaries of the public workshops are included in the third section of this report.



The study area along Route 85 has a significant amount of development, consisting of a mix of land uses, primarily commercial and residential. There is considerably less development along Route 85A, and the majority of the land area within the study area is undeveloped.

The center of the hamlet is generally considered to be the intersection of NYS Routes 85 and 85A (photo at right).

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II. EXISTING CONDITIONS

Overview

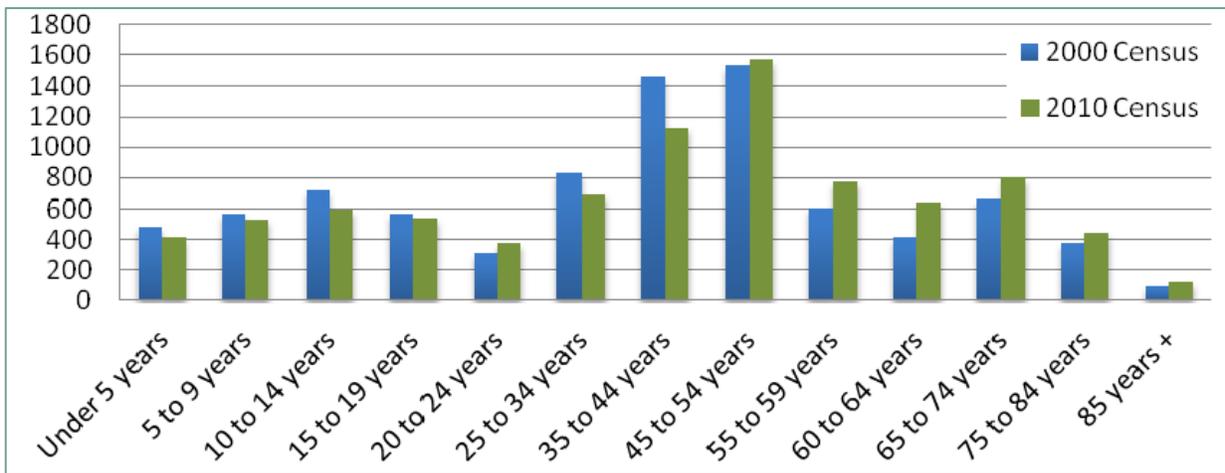
A comprehensive inventory of existing conditions for the New Scotland hamlet was completed at the beginning of this project, and an Existing Conditions report is included as Appendix A. The following are the key findings from that report.

The study area is made up of residential, commercial and professional uses. It is home to a number of locally-owned and operated businesses including Stonewell Plaza (a small strip center), Long Lumber, Our Family’s Harvest farm stand and nursery, Emma Cleary’s Café, Tastee-Treat ice cream, In-Town Self Storage, New Scotland Auto Center, Olsen’s Nursery / Ace Hardware and Falvo’s meat market. More recent commercial development includes a Stewart’s, a 10,000 square foot medical building, an expansion of Olsen’s nursery, redevelopment of Blackbird Prime Properties, and a business support center called Corner Gateway. There is also the vacant “Big Box” restaurant, and the Sabre offices located on Route 85. A senior housing project (Stone Creek Estates) is currently under construction within the Study Area. The secondary area of interest is the residential area to the north which provides linkages to the Village of Voorheesville and the Helderberg-Hudson Rail Trail.

Demographics

A review of demographic data provides a snapshot of the Town’s population right now and insight into trends that may affect future development. The primary sources of this information include the U.S. Census Bureau and the Capital District Regional Planning Commission. The key findings/highlights are:

- The population in the Town of New Scotland has increased less than 1% from 2000 to 2010 and is expected to continue growing relatively slowly compared to surrounding suburbs.
 - Population within the study area has decreased approximately 7% from 2000 to 2010.
- The senior population is steadily growing while the school-aged population is falling.
- The Town’s median household income is higher and its unemployment rate is lower than Albany County as a whole.



Population change, by age group, in the Town of New Scotland – the median age in town increased from 41.1 to 45.2.

Housing

Existing housing stock, household makeup and home values provide a snapshot of the Town's character and also provide insight into housing trends that may affect the Town and/or surrounding communities in the future. The primary source of information used to prepare this analysis is the U.S. Census Bureau, with additional data provided by Albany County Real Property and the Town of New Scotland. The key findings/highlights are:

- There are approximately 3,700 total housing units in the Town of New Scotland.
 - Within the study area there are approximately 280 residential units with an additional 90 approved units
- The median home value in the Town is \$224,400; Albany County has lower median values.
- Town-wide there is a 7% vacancy rate for residential buildings.
- The majority of the housing in the study area is single-family, detached homes built before 1980. There is also a mobile home park and a new housing development (Stone Creek Estates) south of NYS 85 which will include two family homes for seniors.

Mobility/Transportation

It is important to understand the current condition of the study area transportation system as it relates to the accommodation of all modes of travel: motor vehicle (including trucks, public transit and school buses), bicycle, pedestrian; and the relationship of this system to surrounding land use activities. Understanding the current capacities, limitations, and gaps of this system will help shape what is possible in the future and determine, at a conceptual level, improvements needed to support the future community based vision of what the hamlet study area can become.

The mobility/transportation section of the existing conditions report describes the current characteristics of the various roadways and other transportation system elements within the study area and includes information on traffic volumes; roadway characteristics; motor vehicle crashes; level of compatibility between major roadways, their access characteristics and surrounding land uses; and a description of system elements in terms of ability to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists comfortably and safely. The key findings/highlights are:

- The two main roadways serving the study area are owned and maintained by New York State. These urban minor arterials and urban collectors serve as both commuting routes for travelers within and outside the Town of New Scotland to jobs or activities elsewhere in the region, and as main roads and potentially as main streets within the New Scotland Hamlet area.



The main intersection, Routes 85 and 85A, located at the center of the hamlet. Views approaching from the east (left photo) and from the west (right photo).

- Roadways within the study area serve a mix of land uses, with commercial uses concentrated around the intersection of NYS 85/NYS 85A and primarily residential uses adjacent to both roadways moving away from this intersection and outside the study area.
- These roadways serve the current, relatively low intensity, surrounding land uses and through traffic well in terms of motor vehicle level of service and safety. The amount of motor vehicle travel has remained relatively constant over the past decade.
- Both NYS 85 and NYS 85A have surplus capacity under current traffic conditions; the current capacity or Level of Service (LOS) for the roadway sections and intersections along NYS 85 and NYS 85A within the study area are well within acceptable ranges for typical arterial roadways.
- Residential level of compatibility (LOC) ratings are poor where residential use/traffic conflict occurs along NYS 85 on the eastern edge of the study area and within Slingerlands, and along the short segment of NYS 85 between CR308 and NYS 85A. On NYS 85A, LOC ratings are also poor where residential dwellings are clustered near the intersection of NYS 155.
- Walking on the main routes within the study area using narrow shoulders alongside travel lanes where vehicles are moving at or over the speed limits of 45 and 40 mph most likely discourages pedestrian activity. However, land uses along the roadway in this area attract pedestrians.
- Bicycle level of service analysis and walkability surveys (lack of sidewalks and pedestrian signals at NYS 85/NYS 85A) give the area poor marks.



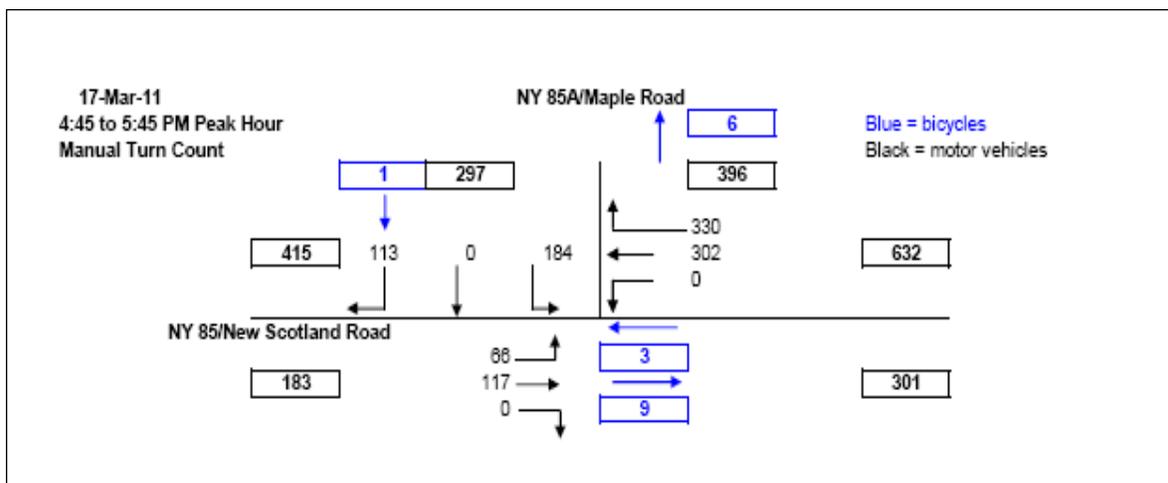
Shoulders throughout the study area are very narrow and limit the “walkability” and “bikeability” of the hamlet.

- Despite the low Bicycle Level of Service scores, roadways within the study area are known as popular recreational rider and cycling club routes.
- The ability to add roadway capacity and/or to provide future standard bicycle and pedestrian accommodations in some areas along main routes (NYS 85 and NYS 85A) is somewhat constrained due to limited right-of-way width, as well as the proximity of adjacent structures and the location of utilities.
- The Helderberg-Hudson Rail Trail presents a future opportunity for accommodating pedestrian and bicycle travel (both commuting and recreational) across a section of the study area.



The bus stop in the hamlet center consists of a sign post just off the edge of pavement – there are no pedestrian accommodations at the bus stop, nor are there crosswalks or sidewalks to provide a safer means of reaching the bus stop.

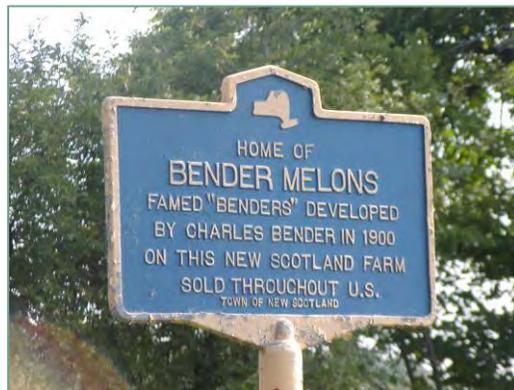
Transit service is seen as an asset to the study area providing an alternative to driving/enhanced mobility for those without access to a car. However due to the poor pedestrian and bicycling environment, limited frequency and timing of service as well as current lack of bus stop amenities, taking transit may not be an attractive option for some potential riders, with ridership decreases in recent years.



Various data have been collected for key intersections within the study area as summarized in Appendix A. In terms of intersection performance for the various modes, the NYS 85 (New Scotland Road)/NYS 85A (Maple Road) intersection currently functions well for motor vehicles, operating at a Level of Service (LOS) B during the PM peak hour. The junction of these two state routes is the only signalized intersection within the study area. CDTC staff conducted manual turn counts during the PM peak travel period as shown above. In addition to the motor vehicle traffic counted, there were 19 bicycles tallied during this one hour period. No pedestrians were observed.

Historic & Cultural Resources

The earliest known settlement in New Scotland was by Europeans in the early 17th century. By the 18th century, settlers from Holland, Scotland, England and elsewhere began to settle and start farmsteads and after the American Revolution the population began to grow significantly. Churches, which served as meeting halls and social centers, were erected in the hamlets throughout the area and by the early 19th century, schools were also being established in each of the hamlets. The hamlet of New Scotland was settled around 1765 by Scottish settlers, hence the name. Additional information is summarized in Appendix A, and the key findings/highlights are:



- The area now known as the Town of New Scotland was settled in the early 17th century but wouldn't be established until April 25, 1832.
- The Town's earliest economy was based on agriculture. New Scotland was the largest provider of hops to breweries in the City of Albany. The Town's most popular farm product was the "Bender Melon" produced on the Charles Bender Farm.
- The single greatest impact on the town was the establishment of the railroad, which increased markets for farmers and other merchants.

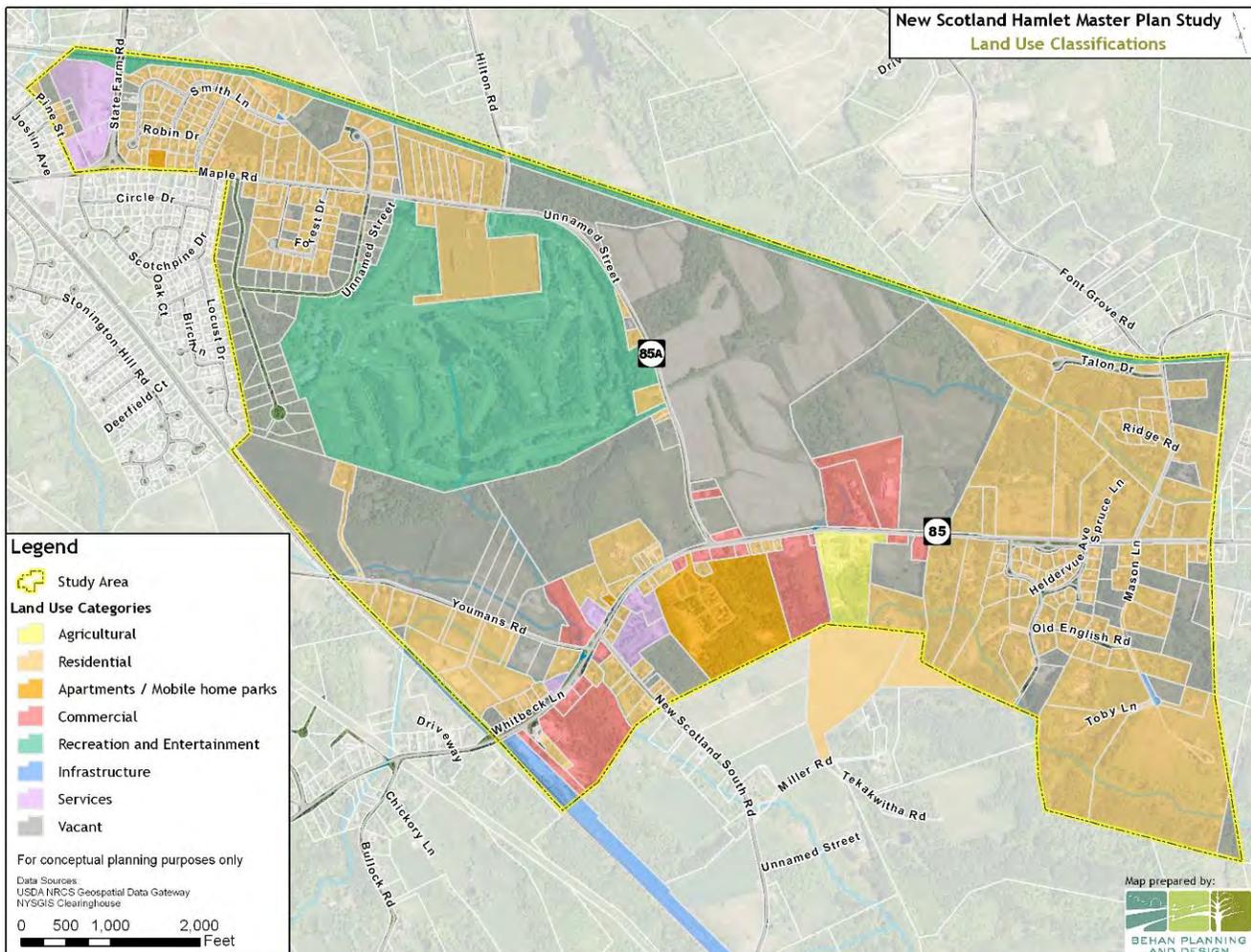


The current new Scotland Town Hall was formerly The New Scotland School, District No. 8. The school was built in 1866 and prior the site was occupied by a log school since 1804. In 1952 the building ceased to be a school and was then renovated in 1957 for use as the New Scotland Town Hall. Today, Town Hall is a focal point of the hamlet as well as the town. It is not only the home of the town's government activities but also serves as a community center and public meeting space. Source: New Scotland Historical Association

Land Use & Development

Understanding the characteristics and patterns of the land and how the land, not only within the Study Area but throughout the Town of New Scotland, is currently used is a key element to crafting a Hamlet Master Plan. Land is a finite resource; we cannot create more of it, so how we develop and/or convert land for different uses has a lasting, if not permanent impact. New Scotland, like surrounding suburban and rural towns, is faced with development pressures. Change is inevitable, but the pattern, rate, timing and location of that change can be managed, in part, by the community. The question is not whether New Scotland will grow, but how it will grow and look. The land use and development summary in Appendix A provides a description of the current zoning and land uses within the Study Area. The key findings/highlights are:

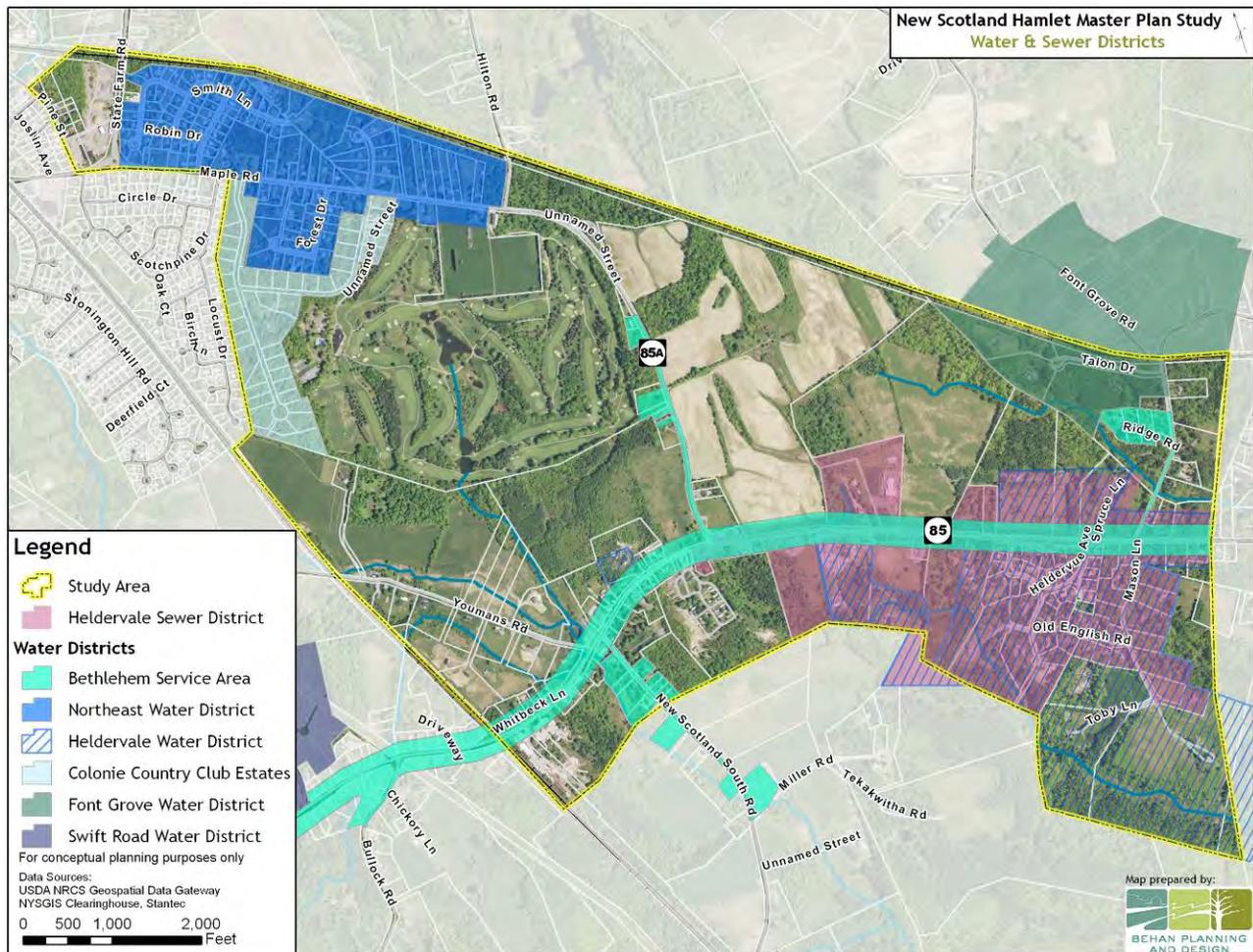
- The Study Area is predominantly zoned [COM] Commercial.
- The Study Area is largely a mix of vacant, residential and commercial land speckled with community service-type uses.
- Three (3) major residential subdivisions have been approved in the last few years within the Study Area.



Sewer & Water Infrastructure & Community Facilities

The issue of planning for the provision of water and sewer infrastructure to serve existing, proposed and potential development within the study area has been the subject of discussion as well as various efforts over the years. There are a variety of arrangements that currently exist to provide this infrastructure including facilities owned and operated by the Town of Bethlehem which provide supply or capacity either directly to study area land owners or to various water or sewer districts, some of which are then administered by the Town of New Scotland. Ongoing infrastructure issues relate to current and needed future capacities, demand, ownership, funding and scale. The Town of New Scotland currently has a Water Committee exploring these issues. The information in Appendix A was obtained through a variety of sources including the Kensington Woods DEIS, the Town’s Comprehensive Plan, with updated and more specific information being provided by the Town’s engineer. The key findings/highlights are:

- Sewer capacity is limited.
- According to the Town engineer, current information on the hydrogeology in the area indicates that there does not seem to be much potential for groundwater alone to supply larger scale development plans.



- There are physical, fiscal and administrative constraints to providing additional public water and sewer infrastructure in and adjacent to the study area under current arrangements.

Summary of Existing Reports / Studies

Several existing reports that are related to the New Scotland Hamlet were reviewed as part of this study. These reports included:

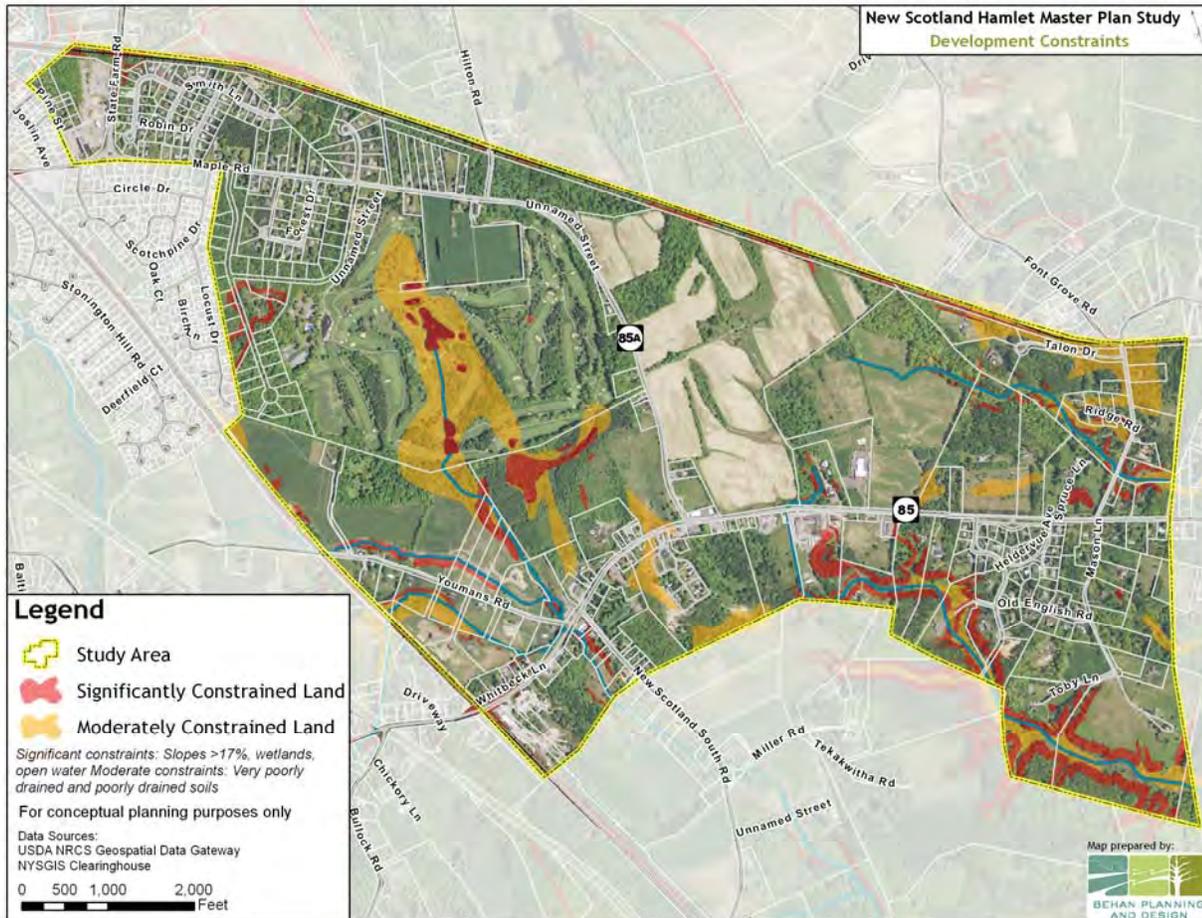
- Town of New Scotland Comprehensive Land Use Plan,
- Residents Planning Advisory Committee (RPAC) Route 85/85A Corridor Development - Recommendations to the Town Board,
- Traffic Impact Study - Kensington Woods, and
- Commercial Zone Advisory Committee (CZAC) - Report and Recommendation to the Town Board*

There were some overlapping themes in the various reports. In terms of land use, the reports indicate a desire to maintain the hamlet character and encourage mixed-use development. Commercial development, while desired, should fit in with the hamlet in terms of scale, and should serve the local population. It should not be “a regional draw”. The comprehensive plan highlights the New Scotland Hamlet as being the most appropriate for new residential development, however the RPAC report indicates residents (at that time) did not want condos/townhouses and/or rental units to be located in the hamlet. In terms of transportation it was noted that there are no pedestrian accommodations anywhere in the hamlet, and that conditions are less than desirable for pedestrians. Traffic volumes, while not ideal, are not viewed as problematic and there is no obvious need for intersection redesigns (though improvements regarding site lines and pedestrian accommodations could be made). A more detailed summary of the reports reviewed is included in the Existing Conditions Report in Appendix A.

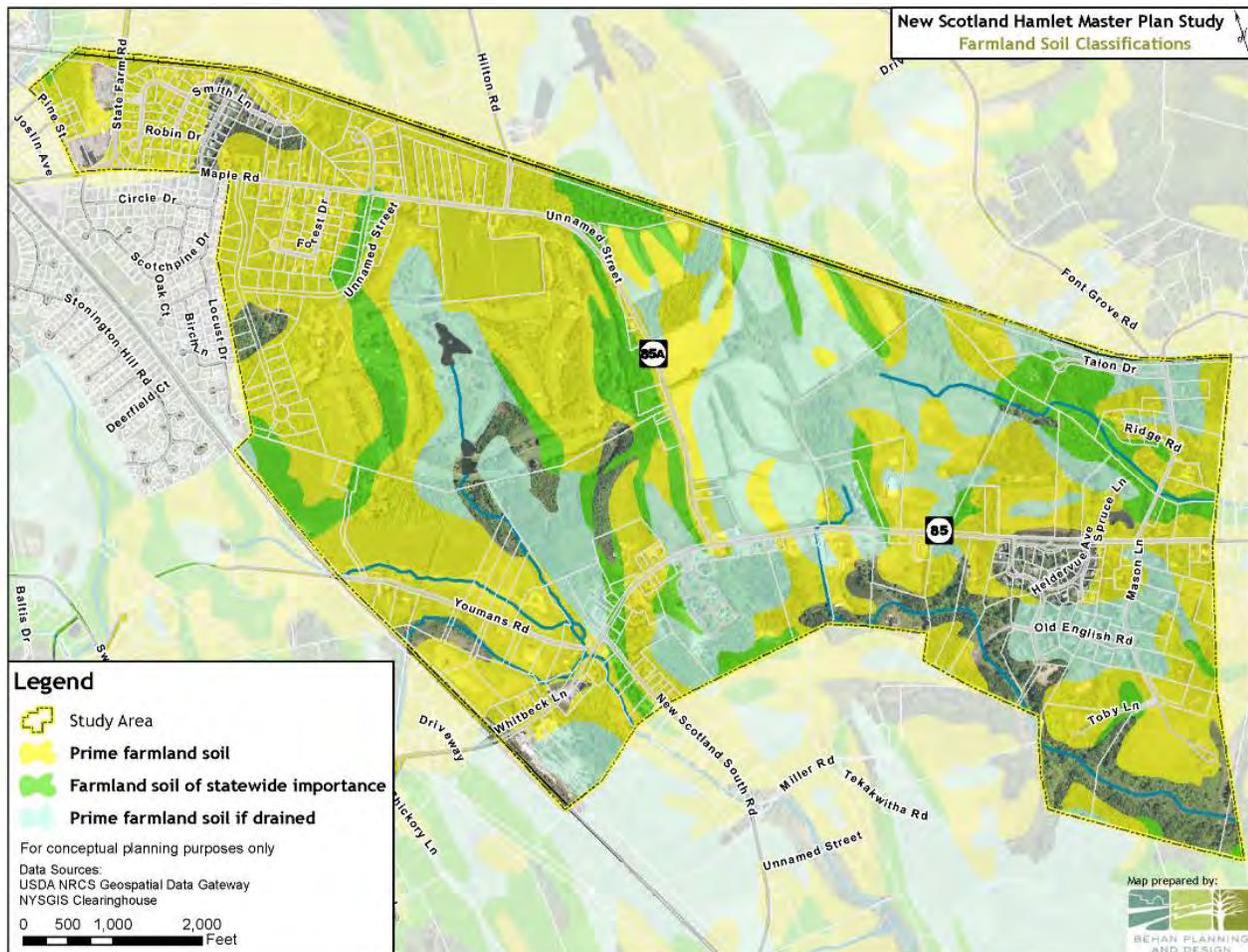
* Note: though there was an official version of this report, additional opinions were submitted to the Town Board by various members of this committee.

Other Highlights from the Existing Conditions Study

Natural Features: The Study Area straddles two watershed areas - the Vly Creek-Normanskill and the Vloman Kill. Sections of the Vloman Kill and Phillipin Kill waterways are found in the vicinity of Youmans Road and south of NYS 85. Along these streams steep slopes can be found. There are also some small wetland areas scattered throughout the study area, however none are large enough to be regulated by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC).



Recreational Features: There are currently no public parks or recreational facilities within the Study Area. However, just west of the Study Area is New Scotland Town Park which contains 2 ball fields, a tennis court, walking paths, and some additional facilities. South of the Study Area is the NYSDEC’s Five Rivers Environmental Educational Center; and just 5 miles to the east is Elm Avenue Park in the Town of Bethlehem. The Colonie Country Club, a private golf course, is located in the northwest section of the Study Area. The proposed Helderberg-Hudson Rail Trail, which will convert a 9-mile stretch of the old Delaware and Hudson Railroad between the Port of Albany and Voorheesville to a recreational trail, defines the northern limit of the Study Area. Once completed, this trail will be a tremendous recreational and transportation asset to the Town, enhancing quality of life and access for both residents and visitors. The trail may generate recreation-based businesses or may inspire the creation of additional public spaces and parks close by.



Agricultural Soils:

A large percentage of the study area includes soils designated by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) as Prime Farmland Soil or Farmland Soil of Statewide Importance. The USDA designations were confirmed by a representative of the Albany County Soil and Water Conservation District. In terms of the former Bender Farm, he indicated that the farm is still considered viable farmland. The land has most recently been in corn and is similar to productive farms in Albany County. Soils are generally wet, however with subsurface drainage they are productive soils as indicated on the map above. The soils are adequate to support crops and the productive potential is evident. Such agricultural products include, but are not limited to:

1. Field crops, including corn, wheat, rye, barley, hay, potatoes and dry beans.
2. Fruits, including apples, peaches, grapes, cherries and berries.
3. Vegetables, including tomatoes, snap beans, cabbage, carrots, beets and onions.
4. Horticultural crops, including nursery stock, ornamental shrubs, ornamental trees, flowers and sod.
5. Livestock and livestock products, including cattle, sheep, hogs, goats, horses, poultry, farmed deer, farmed buffalo, fur bearing animals, milk, eggs and furs.

6. Maple sap and maple syrup.
7. Christmas trees derived from a managed tree operation whether dug for transplanting or cut from the stump.
8. Woody biomass, which means short rotation woody crops raised for bio-energy and shall not include farm woodland.
9. Apiary products, including but not limited to honey, royal jelly, pollen, beeswax and propolis.
10. Compost products

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III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public input has been encouraged throughout the planning process. All of the SAC meetings were open to the public, and there were many comments received during these meetings. A project specific website was also created both as way to get information out to the public, but also a means for residents to comment on ideas and recommendations for the plan. Most importantly the public was encouraged to attend the two public workshops held during the planning process. The first workshop provided background information and some early ideas about the study area, but focused primarily on gathering ideas from the public through small workgroup sessions. These ideas helped shape the land use concepts presented in the next section. The second workshop provided an opportunity to review and respond to the proposed concepts and strategies for the study area, and led to refinement of the final hamlet plan. The following are summaries from the two public meetings.

Workshop #1 - December 1, 2011

Approximately 60 people attended the first public workshop on December 1, 2011 at the Voorheesville High School Commons. The meeting began with an overview of the study area and the existing conditions within the study area, a brief summary of previous studies completed for this area, and finally some “Food for Thought” for attendees to consider, such as what it means to be a hamlet, and what does “mixed-use” really mean.

Following the presentation the audience divided into eight facilitated discussion groups. The focus of the groups was to formulate a vision for the hamlet, both the immediate vicinity of the NYS Route 85/85A intersection, as well as the larger study area. Participants were asked what they would like to see improved in the area, what type of land uses and development patterns make sense for the study area, and what type of connections could be made both within, and to and from, the study area. A listing of the ideas from each group is included in Appendix B, with the big ideas discussed below.

Following the group discussions, each group was asked to report back to the whole audience the key ideas their group came up with. In no particular order, some of the key ideas were as follows:

- Pedestrian improvements for the hamlet - this includes creating trails and sidewalks, connections to the new rail trail, connections between the Village and the hamlet (particularly for ice cream) and creation of a bike lane on NYS Routes 85 and 85A.
- Maintain commercial focus - there is a desire to maintain commercial opportunities, but with a focus on smaller businesses mixed with residential uses. Businesses should serve the local population as well as possibly overnight visitors. Businesses that are education and/or technology focused were highlighted as larger operations that could fit in the study area. Also agricultural themed businesses were thought to be appropriate for the area, especially those that both made use of the land and sold directly to consumers within the hamlet. Examples included a brewery/distillery and cheese manufacturing.
- Focus on architecture and scale - there was a lot of concern about making sure new development “fits” in the hamlet. There is a desire to have design guidelines that specify

maximum building heights, appropriate setbacks, and architectural styles that complement or improve the existing hamlet.

- Desire to maintain agriculture and open space - while the emphasis on open space and agriculture varied between the groups, it was a common theme among all groups. Maintenance of rural character is important, including preservation of important views. Agricultural heritage is important to celebrate, suggesting a percentage of open land be preserved, and the creation of parks were all discussed.

Overall the groups seemed to be in favor of change within the study area, as long as the change is well planned and viewed as fitting in with the character of the New Scotland hamlet.

Workshop #2 - May 23, 2012

Approximately 35 people attended the second public workshop at the Voorheesville High School Commons. The meeting began with a presentation that provided some background information about the project and the study area; and that summarized the recommendations contained in the *Draft New Scotland Hamlet Master Plan* (May 2012). The Draft Plan was made available for public review a week prior to the public workshop at Town Hall and on the project website.

Following the presentation of the Draft Plan, those in attendance were asked to respond to two questions:

- What do you like about the ideas/concepts that were presented?
- What concerns or questions do you have about the ideas/concepts that were presented?

In general there were many positive comments about the ideas/concepts described in the plan and the presentation. Attendees liked the emphasis on mixed-use development balanced with open space conservation. They also agreed with the emphasis on creating a walkable/bikeable environment and organizing new development around an interconnected network of streets. The notion of new zoning with a focus on design guidelines and standards was well received.

Several concerns and questions were also raised and discussed. Some of these issues included lingering concerns about traffic related to potential new development, the market for various forms of housing and commercial development proposed in the plan, the challenge of implementation, the management/maintenance of conserved open space, and several others. Additional suggestions for connections between portions of the study area and other ideas were also offered. A more complete summary of the discussion can be found in the meeting notes in Appendix C.

IV. FUTURE LAND USE RECOMMENDATIONS

The hamlet of New Scotland contains one of only two commercial zoning districts in the town, and therefore proposed changes in this area must maintain commercial viability and landowner equity while allowing for a more dynamic and desired future land use pattern. Through discussions with the SAC, CDTC, and the community, a set of “character areas” has been identified for the study area. The character areas are described in the text and illustrated on the *Conceptual Land Use & Linkages Plan* that follow. The locations of the character areas and the connections shown on the *Conceptual Land Use & Linkages Plan* are highly generalized and tend to follow existing landscape features such as tree lines and streams. These lines are not fixed and they should not be interpreted as zoning district boundaries, though they could provide a starting point for the designation of future zoning districts. Similarly, the text below describes general considerations about the type and form of development that is desired for these various portions of the study area. Zoning recommendations for these areas are discussed further in Section V and Design Guidelines recommendations are discussed in Section VI of this document.

Existing Hamlet

The *Existing Hamlet* character area consists of the traditional hamlet homes and businesses which have been built over the years along the frontage of NYS Route 85, extending roughly from the railroad tracks to the professional building on Stone Creek Road. This linear corridor is illustrative of the historical growth patterns within the study area. It is primarily composed of smaller scale structures—with some exceptions—providing a mix of residential, commercial and institutional uses. While there



Section of NYS Route 85 within the Existing Hamlet area.

does remain additional growth potential, mostly from future subdivisions of the larger lots along the corridor, a large portion of the frontage has already been developed. For this reason, the majority of future change in the existing hamlet will likely come from conversions, renovations and expansions to properties which are expected to take place slowly over time. The conversion of a single-family home into a small professional office or retail store, and eventually expanded or replaced with a new commercial structure, is one example of the type of gradual change that can be expected here.

In order to properly plan for and adapt to this type of expected growth, it is recommended that efforts to manage change in the Existing Hamlet character area focus on maintaining its current residential scale and character. This can be achieved with zoning modifications and new design

guidelines which are targeted to this particular area. These are described in more detail in the Zoning Recommendations and Design Guidelines Recommendations sections. The goal of these changes should be to allow the hamlet to continue to develop with a moderate level of density as a visually attractive mixed-use hamlet corridor, taking specific precautions to avoid the loss of character to sprawl or strip development.

Hamlet Center

The *Hamlet Center* area, encompasses the immediate vicinity of the NYS Routes 85 and 85A intersection. This proposed center is intended to act as a more visible arrival point into the heart of town, with a denser and more formal arrangement of buildings similar to the atmosphere found in a traditional village development. As the focus of this center, a large town commons which would serve as a public gathering space and distinguishing feature of the town, could be developed. This park could be framed on two or more sides with clusters of buildings which would look out over the commons, creating a very attractive outdoor space with amenities such as benches, sidewalks, a bus stop, crosswalks and possibly a public monument.

The buildings found within the hamlet center should provide a mix of uses including shops, offices and residences. They should be 2-3 stories in height, clustered together and relatively close to the road. Parking lots should be secluded from view in the rear of the buildings, while on-street parking could be provided in front of the shops facing the commons. This setting would be the ideal location for a new Town Hall, Library, or other public building situated to overlook the commons.

Wide sidewalks around the hamlet center would create a very pedestrian-friendly environment, with potential for outdoor cafes/restaurants, encouraging people to walk around, mingle or shop. The pedestrian connections of this hamlet center would extend outward into the *Hamlet Expansion and Development Areas*, described below.



This sketch – prepared for another community – illustrates the type of character that a town commons lined with mixed use buildings could have in the Hamlet Center.

Hamlet Expansion

The *Hamlet Expansion* area is proposed as a natural extension, and eventual future growth area, of the *Hamlet Center* development. This area would be located to the northeast and northwest of the Hamlet Center and could extend into the larger lots found directly to the south on the other side of NYS Route 85. Development here would be organized around an interconnected network (or modified grid) of local streets, served by a handful of primary boulevards from NYS Routes 85 and 85A and from the *Hamlet Center*. This area could provide space for additional small-scale mixed-use development.

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Some higher density residential apartments or townhomes could also be incorporated here, branching off as needed and perhaps transitioning onto smaller local roads and service alleys with small-lot single family homes. For the purposes of walkability and scale, the extent of this hamlet expansion area should probably not exceed about $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile or so from the Hamlet Center. A conceptual development sketch for a portion of the Hamlet Center and Hamlet Expansion area is shown below.



*A conceptual layout for the northeast corner of the **Hamlet Center** and adjacent **Hamlet Expansion** area. In this concept commercial development is concentrated around the commons and along the major roads with moderate density residential development beyond. Park land and pedestrian accommodations are also considered and interwoven within the new development.*

Development Areas

Further out from the center, primarily to the northeast and northwest, there remains a lot of land suitable for development. Some of this area, discussed below, should be set aside as a farmland/open space conservation area as development occurs; however the remainder could still be utilized for a number of different purposes suitable to New Scotland. Such uses could include: clusters of small-lot single-family home neighborhoods mixed with townhomes and apartments geared toward smaller households and moderate income residents; a senior living community providing for a continuance of care; an educational facility; a mixed-office/light industrial campus, or combinations of these things.

In order to attract environmentally sensitive economic development that would strengthen the identity of New Scotland as a special place to live and work in the region, incentives could be created to encourage development that meets specific goals for cleanliness and environmental responsibility. For example, a college annex or learning center dedicated to researching environmentally-friendly sciences or technology and training the next generation of workers, or an office park/light industrial campus which develops sustainable-living and clean-energy products. A focus on this type of development could help to distinguish New Scotland as a unique and forward-thinking community, while providing jobs and economic investment.

As a particular sub-group to this development area, the inclusion of a Town Park is recommended, located directly off of the Helderberg-Hudson Rail Trail. This recreation area could double as a trail-head, providing parking for trail users and acting as a highly visible gateway to the larger recreational system proposed for the Study Area. All of the Development Areas should be connected to one another and to the businesses and services in the Existing Hamlet and Hamlet Center through a system of multi-use paths and sidewalks.

Agricultural / Conservation Area

A significant portion of land in the Study Area is recommended to be conserved for its continued use as farmland and open space. Some of this land contains wetlands, steep slopes, or other constraints that would limit its development potential; but most of it is classified as “prime farmland soil” or “farmland soil of statewide importance”, and continues to have value as productive farmland. Conservation of these areas would also preserve the natural views and rural character of the Maple Road (NYS Route 85A) corridor that local residents cherish. This would help to maintain an attractive countryside aesthetic and visual separation between the Hamlet of New Scotland and the Village of Voorheesville.



There is a strong desire from the public to maintain the rural character and views to the Helderbergs along NYS Route 85A.

Ideally, the conserved farmland would continue to be cultivated in the future, as rental farmland for a large farmer elsewhere in the county or as a smaller, niche farm operation. An organic farm, CSA, or other type of similar enterprise could perhaps benefit from the expanded population in the hamlet, potentially serving local restaurants or organic grocers within the town. It might also be possible to use some portion of this area as a community garden, with small plots available for people who live in the apartments, townhomes, and small lot single family neighborhoods of the hamlet.

It is understood that all of the lands indicated as Agricultural / Conservation Areas on the *Conceptual Land Use & Linkage Plan* map are privately owned. For the owners of this land - most of which has been zoned for commercial uses for many years - there is an expectation that their land will retain

some value beyond what it would garner as farmland in today's marketplace. To address this, the plan proposes to allow a wide range of uses and higher density development on portions of these parcels in exchange for the conservation of other portions of these parcels. By clustering the development in patterns as described above (Existing Hamlet, Hamlet Center, Hamlet Expansion, and Development Areas), significant areas of conservation land can be set aside as development occurs. Condensing the development into these clusters will also allow them to be more efficiently served by the infrastructure that will be necessary to make development here possible.

An alternative approach to using development to achieve the conservation of a portion of these lands would be to acquire the land, or conservation easements on the land, through donation, lease, or purchase. The Town could set aside funding for this purpose and/or supplement its own funding with state or federal grants. It should be noted, however, that state financial resources for farmland and open space conservation have been very limited over the last few years.

Rural Residential Area

The remainder of the lands to the west of Route 85A are recommended to be treated as a *Rural Residential* area. Although some of this area has been commercially zoned for decades, it has evolved as an area of large lot, single family homes and farmland. This existing residential character should be recognized in the Town's zoning. For the portions of this area that are not now residential, the Rural Residential designation should allow and encourage the existing recreational (Colonie Country Club) and agricultural uses to continue. However, if these uses are no longer viable in the future, low density residential development with conservation of open space resources (farmland, natural resource areas, and scenic views) should be permitted.

This area of town also has potential for providing a pair of key linkages in the western part of the Study Area. One linkage would be a connection from the end of Locust Drive in the Village of Voorheesville, through now vacant land that is proposed to be developed residentially, to Youmans Road, and down Youmans Road to New Scotland Road. This would serve to connect neighborhoods in Voorheesville to the hamlet. Ideally the connection between Locust Drive and Youmans Road would be a full street connection (designed specifically to discourage cut-through traffic); but at a minimum a bike/pedestrian connection linking these areas should be required if development occurs.

A second link would extend west on Youmans Road – under the railroad tracks at the old underpass – and eventually reach the New Scotland Town Park on Swift Road. Both of these routes would require cooperation with/from local landowners before they could be implemented.

Medium Density Residential (MDR) Area

This portion of the Study Area follows the existing Medium Density Residential (MDR) zoning district boundary. No changes to the zoning in this area have been recommended through this study. However, a sidewalk or trail along New Scotland Road, connecting this area to the Hamlet Center and to existing pathways in the Town of Bethlehem, would be appropriate. In addition, if new development takes place in this area, provisions for connections (full street or, at a minimum, bike/pedestrian connections) to adjoining lands that could be developed in the future should be required.

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V. ZONING RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to realize the vision established for each of the character areas described in the previous section, new zoning will be necessary for the study area. This section discusses recommended changes that should be considered when revising the town's code.

Most of the Study Area is currently zoned as Commercial (COM). A retail size cap law, limiting retail development in this area to structures no larger than 50,000 sf and grouped retail (plazas) to 100,000 sf was adopted by the New Scotland Town Board in June 6, 2012 (Local Law C of 2012).

The Commercial (COM) zoning designation should be replaced with one or more new zoning districts that prescribe the type of development suggested for each of the character areas in the last section. However, the character areas as drawn on the *Conceptual Land Use & Linkage Plan* are not intended to be translated directly into zoning districts. Instead there are several ways that the recommendations for these conceptual areas could be incorporated into zoning - through new zoning districts that mirror some of the individual character areas or groupings of related character areas; through the use of innovative zoning techniques such as an overlay zone or Planned Development District (PDD), and/or perhaps others. The selection of an appropriate approach should occur when the Town revises its zoning and related land use regulations as a follow-up to this plan, and should take into account the need to incorporate these changes into the Town's existing zoning law.

Within the new zoning district or districts, techniques such as incentive zoning and/or conservation subdivision design could be utilized to shape growth patterns into more focused, dense areas of mixed use development balanced with significant open space conservation. Incentive zoning allows a landowner or developer to work with a municipality to obtain incentives (additional density or other specified modifications to zoning standards) in exchange for providing desired community amenities (such as open space conservation or assistance in creating a park and trail system). Conservation subdivision design (a form of clustering) is density neutral; it does not change the number of homes that can be built on a site but it does change the form of development based on an analysis of the specific land to be developed. Identification of open space resources worthy of conservation at the earliest stage of design guides the design and approval process of these subdivisions. Like clustering, conservation subdivisions result in permanent open space conservation by allowing flexible lot sizes. In this way, important farmlands, natural resources, or rural vistas can be preserved even while development occurs.

Design Guidelines that describe the desired site and architectural characteristics for development in the study area should also be established and woven into the project approval process outlined in the zoning. The Planning Board could review and enforce the design guidelines as part of the special use permit and site plan review processes, or a separate board could be created for this review (now or in the future as appropriate). Design Guidelines are discussed further in the next section (Section VI. Design Guidelines Recommendations). Transportation recommendations, discussed in Section VII, should also be woven into the zoning and design guidelines as appropriate. Important ideas such as connectivity, access management, and infrastructure for walking (sidewalks), biking (bike racks), and public transportation (bus shelters) can be encouraged or required as part of the development approval process.

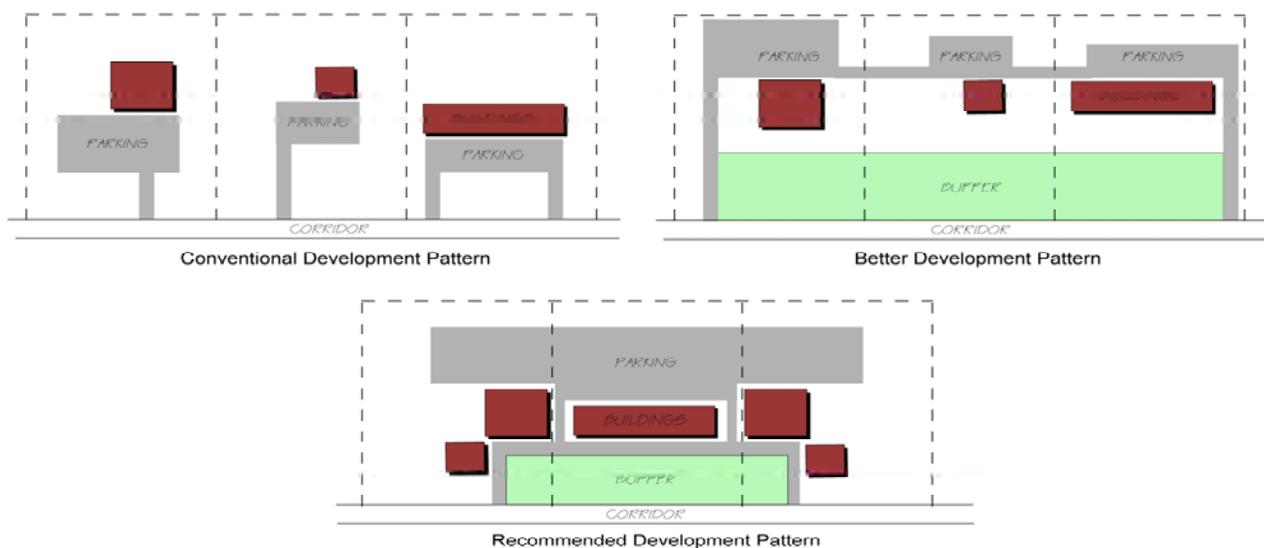
Some specific suggestions for the zoning, as applied to each of the character areas, are provided on the following pages. These suggestions are intended to further describe some of the key elements that should be included in the zoning for each of these areas.

Existing Hamlet

The area identified as the existing hamlet is recommended to be rezoned specifically to manage the gradual change of commercial conversions which this corridor is likely to experience. The combined use of revised zoning regulations and design guidelines should be tailored for this area to allow the corridor to continue to grow as an attractive mixed-use hamlet corridor while avoiding potential characteristics of strip development and conflicts with existing residences. Care should be taken to continue to allow residential structures and protect them from the potential adverse effects of adjacent commercial development as the area grows. To this end, the following zoning and design recommendations should be advanced:

Site Planning: Special attention should be paid to proper site planning early in the design review process, particularly for new development, to avoid strip development characteristics. It is recommended that new construction and additions/expansions of existing structures in this area attempt to mimic the existing front setbacks of the older structures along the corridor. Parking areas should be limited to the side or rear of structures where possible - while a few parking spaces in the front may be permissible for convenience, the goal should be to minimize the amount of parking lot readily visible from the road. The number of curb cuts should be kept to a minimum, with a limit of one per property and/or access management arrangements where two or more adjacent properties share a common driveway. Commercial site plan reviews should require the addition of sidewalks along the property frontage, separated from the road with a generous grass planting strip/landscaped area.

Raising the minimum amount of required greenspace in this district could be considered, however a majority of the current greenspace requirement is being met on existing parcels by leaving the back



Buildings, parking lot(s) and open space should relate to one another in such a way as to create the feeling of one unified development and minimize entry points from the road

half of the property undeveloped. As an alternative strategy, the amount of greenspace required in the front half of the lot—for example from the back of the building to the front lot line—could be measured as a separate standard. This would allow a higher amount of greenspace to be required in the front (where it is most visible and would make the greatest visual improvement), while allowing a reduced percentage for the overall total for site plan flexibility.

Building Heights: In order to maintain the character of the existing neighborhood, building heights in this area should remain limited to the current height of 35 feet to permit two-and-a-half story structures.

Allowed Uses: Within the Existing Hamlet character area, some of the allowed uses (found under the current COM district zoning) may be incompatible with the reality of this area and should, therefore, be considered for removal or clarification. Such uses include:

- ***Agricultural farm and nurseries (more than 5 acres).*** This use type should be re-defined to differentiate between a full-scale agricultural farming operation (such as dairy or corn production) and other less intensive agricultural uses which may be more appropriate for the hamlet. These less intensive uses may include nurseries, orchards, landscaping sales, community gardens, farm stand or a horse farm. This would allow such uses to be permitted in the hamlet, perhaps with size caps, while larger farming operations could be reserved for other parts of the Town.
- ***Restaurants and taverns.*** This use classification does not appear to differentiate between a standard table restaurant, and a drive-thru facility (such as a McDonalds). It is recommended that this use type be redefined to create this distinction so that restaurants and taverns can continue to be allowed while drive-thru restaurants could be excluded or required to meet specific regulations. If drive-thru establishments are permitted in the existing hamlet, the design guidelines should have specific requirements to ensure that they (as well as similar auto-related uses such as drive-thru retail, auto repair, car wash, etc.) are sensitive to the hamlet's character. Such design requirements could include limiting the location of drive-thru facilities to the side or preferably the rear of buildings out of view from public streets, landscaping to reduce the visibility of drive-thru facilities, provisions to minimize impacts on adjoining residences (if any), and consideration of internal vehicular circulation and pedestrian safety.
- ***Retail business.*** It is recommended that the retail business use be further re-defined to differentiate between small, medium and/or large retail establishments. The purpose of this is to allow for an increased standard of review for medium sized projects, while excluding large development projects which would likely be incompatible in the area of the existing hamlet.

In general, allowed uses in the Existing Hamlet should include a wide variety of commercial retail and services uses, professional offices, and single family and multi family residential. Accessory uses such as detached garages, carriage houses, granny flats, and similar uses that increase the variety of living and working opportunities without diminishing quality of life should also be permitted. The scale and architectural typology of new buildings and additions/expansions to existing buildings should be consistent with the older structures found in the existing hamlet.



The example on the left illustrates a design for a chain restaurant which would be more in character with the hamlet, as opposed to the example to the right, which utilizes the entire building as a corporate “sign”, with little attention to building character, design, or surrounding context.

Design Review: Several other elements of design should also be regulated (such as scale, massing, architectural character, signs and landscaping) through the use of design guidelines. Recommendations for these have been provided in the Design Guideline Recommendations section later in this document. It is recommended that the zoning be updated to authorize this type of review during the approval process.

Hamlet Center

The area characterized as Hamlet Center is recommended to be zoned specifically to encourage or require a denser and more formal arrangement of buildings similar to the atmosphere of a traditional mixed-use village. The combined use of revised zoning regulations and design guidelines should be tailored for this area to create a special sense of arrival into a walkable neighborhood. The hamlet center would have the highest standards of design for facades, parking and signs. To this end, the following zoning modifications are recommended:

Site Planning: Buildings should be required to be located close to the sidewalks to encourage a strong pedestrian environment, with all off-street parking located behind the buildings in shared and/or well screened lots. On-street parking would be provided along the secondary roads (not along NYS Route 85



An example mixed-use building that could potentially ‘fit’ in the Hamlet Center

or 85A) around the town commons area and on side streets. Wide sidewalks, street trees, benches, trash bins and similar pedestrian amenities, as well as bicycle parking should be required as part of site plan review.

Building Heights: Building heights in this area should be limited to a height of 3 stories to permit a vertical mix of uses between ground floor commercial/retail, with offices and or residential units above.

Allowed Uses: The allowed uses within the Hamlet Center should be include the following:

- Commercial retail space (without drive-thrus).
- Restaurants and taverns (without drive-thrus).
- Offices and professional services (banks, real estate, accountants, etc.)
- Municipal/civic buildings (town hall, library, courthouse or police station, etc.)
- Hotels or Inns (not motels).
- Personal services (hair care, beauty, massage, dry cleaning, etc.)
- Small, outpatient medical service clinic (doctor, dentist, etc.)
- Day care
- Multi-family dwellings (as part of a mixed-use buildings, not stand-alone)
- Churches
- Home occupations
- Temporary farm stand or outdoor market.

Parking Requirements: Due to the staggered parking demands between commercial and residential uses, a reduction in minimum required parking could be provided within this area to reduce the size of parking lots, thereby freeing up more buildable area for leasable space. The minimum parking requirements—particularly those for retail—should be reduced below the levels currently found in the zoning. Shared parking and similar arrangements should be strongly encouraged.

Particular attention should be paid to not permitting vehicle dependant uses which would undermine the aesthetic of the pedestrian village-style development, such as auto dealers, car washes, gas stations or motels.

Due to the fact that this central node of the town—particularly the creation of the town commons—would be highly dependent on creating the correct arrangement of buildings and design aesthetic, it is possible that it may be better suited toward a planned unit development approach. In this approach, the town would work in advance with developers to agree on the design for each of the different lots and buildings around the commons so that they work together to create a unified setting. To achieve this, the town should allow for, or encourage, Planned Unit Development (PUD) rezoning within the

Hamlet Center. The town has PUD language as part of the existing zoning code, however this section would likely need to be modified to be more specific about outcomes in order to achieve the goals set forth in this plan. Alternately, the town could advance the design concept of this central area further with the help of planning consultants to establish a pre-approved plan, and then seek a developer interested in building it.

Hamlet Expansion

The area identified as Hamlet Expansion, is recommended to be rezoned to accommodate additional growth outward from the Hamlet Center (within an easily walkable distance of ¼ mile or so), while providing somewhat more flexibility in building arrangement, uses and design compared to the more formal center.

Site Planning: Unlike the Hamlet Center, commercial/residential structures in the Hamlet Expansion area would be permitted larger (but still modest) setbacks and more flexible parking arrangements. Larger lawns with a high degree of landscaping, paths and sidewalks would be required.

Building Heights: Building heights in this area would be limited to 2-1/2 stories.

Allowed Uses: Permitted uses within the Hamlet Expansion area could be very similar to those in the Hamlet Center, with the following exceptions:

- Multi-family uses, such as apartment buildings, townhouses or condominiums, could also be permitted as stand-alone structures without a commercial component.
- Single-family homes could be permitted on small lots.
- Buffers (distance and landscaping) would be required between mixed-use commercial structures and residential-only areas.

In order to ensure that commercial uses in this district will not create an awkward relationship with any residential homes which may potentially be included as well, their relative placement and vehicle



Small-lot residential cottages with rear alley driveways and garages, similar to the type of neighborhood which could be developed in the Hamlet Expansion neighborhood.



Multi-family residential housing in Henrietta, NY is designed to be in keeping with agricultural community and rural setting.

circulation routes should be carefully arranged in a logical separation. One potential method of creating this separation between commercial/mixed-use properties and single family cottages is the creation of a small park or linear green which can act as a transition between the two. This type of formal greenspace can also double as a public outdoor activity area and/or a location for a multi-use path which runs through the development. The illustration on page 21 provides an example of this principle. Likewise, the entire layout could be designed as part of a PUD, as described above for the Hamlet Center.

Similar to the Hamlet Center recommendations, the parking requirements for this district should be reviewed to ensure that there is not an oversupply of parking.

Development Areas

The areas identified as Development Areas are recommended to be zoned to accommodate additional neighborhood-scaled residential growth, and/or to provide additional opportunities for well designed commercial, light industrial and institutional uses which would enhance the town as an attractive place to live and work. As such, the zoning for these areas is recommended to be adjusted as follows:

Site Planning: The Development Areas should have the greatest degree of flexibility for site planning, however they should be required to incorporate high quality landscape design and innovative stormwater management techniques. Ideally, each of these areas would be designed under a unified plan (such as a business park or campus) to ensure well-conceived use of the land and consistent quality.

Building Heights: Building heights in this area would be limited to 2 or 3 stories.

Allowed Uses: The permitted uses within the Development Areas should include a wide range of low-impact activities such as:

- Single-Family Residential. Creation of a small-lot single family home neighborhoods with lot sizes ranging from approximately 60 x 100 feet to 100 x 200 feet. Carriage houses and accessory apartments could provide additional living space for mixed income families.
- Senior Housing / Senior Living - could include a continuum of care to meet the changing needs of residents.
- Education/Research facilities - could include an educational or learning center primarily devoted to the study of environmental sciences, nature or sustainable living.



Specialized facilities, similar to Hudson Valley Community College TEC-SMART building pictured above, could bring clean energy research and education to New Scotland.

- Office / Light Industry - Offices and associated light industry could be targeted to specific industries such as environmentally-friendly and sustainable products, organic foods, clean energy technology or similar endeavors. Zoning should include restrictions on noise and limits for on-site retail sales of products, etc.
- Home occupations
- Support services - small retail or service uses to support facilities listed above could be incorporated into the development program within limits. However, these should not be sufficient in size or concentration to pull significant business away from establishments in the Hamlet Center, Hamlet Expansion Area, or the Existing Hamlet.



Small lot residential development or senior housing with a mixture of independent and assisted living options are some residential options that could be considered in the Development Areas.

Agricultural / Conservation Area

Recognizing the more intensive development that would occur as portions of these properties are developed, the areas that would be designated for Agricultural / Conservation would be limited to customary agricultural farming practices and land conservation. The purpose of this is to balance development with conservation and protect a portion of these fertile lands and maintain the existing rural character of the viewshed which defines this area of New Scotland. This may be a separate zoning district or, more likely, a condition of the *Development Areas* designation. For example there could be a 50-50 zoning designation that requires 50% of a parcel be kept in agriculture/conservation while the remaining 50% could be developed under the *Development Area* and/or *Hamlet Expansion* scenarios.

Allowed Uses:

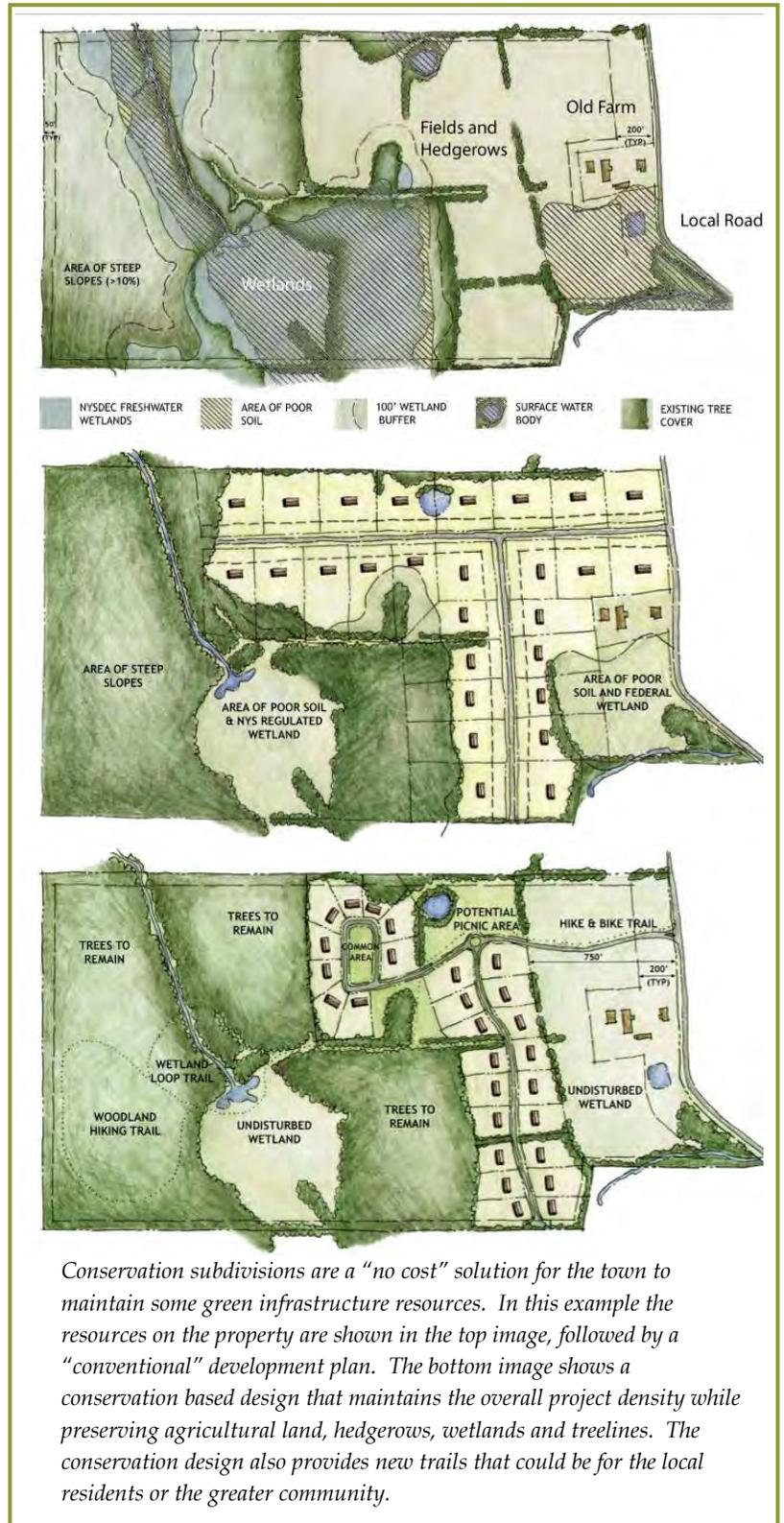
- Agricultural uses as defined by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets

- Public park, playground, recreation area or trail
- Conserved open space

Rural Residential Area

The character area defined as Rural Residential, which is currently zoned Commercial (COM) and Residential Agricultural (RA), should be rezoned to become a new rural residential zoning district. This district would permit single-family residential development at an overall density of approximately 1 acre per dwelling unit (in keeping with current nearby density levels) but would require that the development be designed as a conservation subdivision. This in effect would require that about one-half of the total land be preserved as open space, while permitting smaller lot sizes to accommodate the reduced area. The purpose of this zoning district would be to allow for continued residential growth while protecting much of the natural setting and landscape which helps to define the character of New Scotland. The zoning for this district could be framed as follows:

Site Planning: Applicants for new residential subdivisions within this district could be required to conduct a site analysis describing the unique characteristics of the property to be developed and, with the approval of the Planning Board, identify areas of the land which are most appropriate for development and those areas which would best be preserved as agricultural/conservation land. Once the agreed-upon development areas are determined, the applicant would submit a conventional subdivision layout using



all buildable lands to determine the maximum number of homes which would legally be able to be constructed on the property using the area and bulk regulations for the district. Once the maximum number of homes has been determined, the applicant would then submit a conservation layout using reduced lot sizes and leaving at least 50% of the overall property undisturbed.

In all cases, the conserved land should be restricted from further development through the use of a conservation easement. The conserved land can be owned / maintained by one landowner or several landowners as part of their parcels. In a larger project, it might be owned/maintained cooperatively via a homeowner's association. A land trust could also be involved or in some situations the Town might take ownership of all or some of the conserved land. There are many alternative scenarios that can work depending on the specific circumstances. The important thing is that the future of the open land set aside in these projects cannot be left to chance. Conservation easements are critical for securing the future of these lands. A management plan for the open land should also be prepared and made part of the easement. The zoning and subdivision regulations should spell out in detail what is required to ensure that these things are addressed properly.

In order for this district to be enabled, specific conservation subdivision language should be adopted into the zoning code, either for this district or for use in multiple districts in Towns, to replace the current §190-22 Cluster Development. This language should specifically outline the review and approval process, including goals, milestones and performance metrics of the design.

In addition to residential use, agricultural operations, recreational uses (such as the current country club) and low-impact rural business uses would be appropriate for this area.

VI. DESIGN GUIDELINES RECOMMENDATIONS

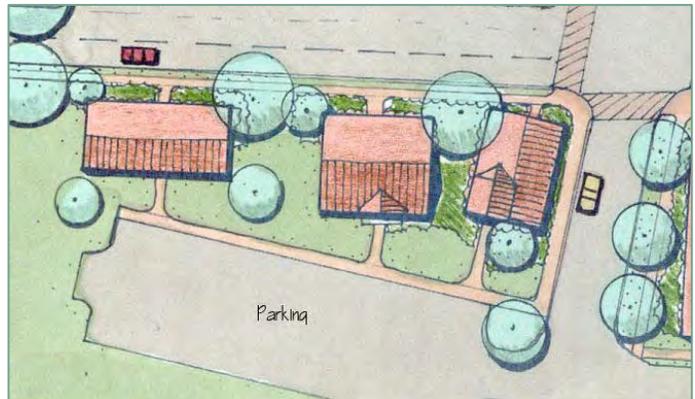
In order to protect the desired character of this important area of New Scotland, it is recommended that illustrated design guidelines accompany new zoning changes to help regulate the appearance of new buildings, additions/expansions of existing buildings, signs and landscaping. These guidelines could be enforced by the Planning Board and should apply, at a minimum, to any commercial property which requires a building permit or site plan review approval. Richly illustrated design guidelines add predictability to the development approval process by making it clear to developers, reviewers, and the public at large what is desired and expected in terms of the design of new development in the community.

A description of some of the design characteristics that should be encouraged for each of the character areas follows.

Existing Hamlet

Because of its nature as an older mixed-use corridor, the design guidelines for the existing hamlet area can be somewhat more relaxed than the design requirements for the other areas such as the Hamlet Center or Hamlet Expansion, and should therefore be separate from the requirements for these other areas.

Site Planning: The guidelines should enforce the goal of new construction and infill buildings being sympathetic to the front setbacks and alignment of any immediately adjacent structures on neighboring lots. Parking areas should be kept on the side or rear of the building and visually secondary to the architecture and landscaping, although having a few convenience spaces in front may be acceptable. Larger parking lots, if required, should be broken down into a series of smaller lots separated by significant landscaping. Automobile repair and sales establishments should keep vehicle storage in the rear of the lot and screened from view, although a small number of vehicles for sale may be displayed in front. Adjacent properties should connect or share their driveways and parking areas to limit curb cuts along the main corridor and provide more parking options where feasible. Pedestrian access to/from parking areas, adjacent buildings and sites, and to the



Development along the NYS Route 85 corridor should seek to locate and connect their parking lots in the rear for improved access management, and share common driveways to reduce the number of curb cuts.



Example of a large commercial building which has used different architectural treatments and massings along the front façade to highlight entry areas and reduce the perceived scale of the building.

local sidewalk network and nearby bus stops (if applicable) should be emphasized in the design. Building entrances should be easily accessible to pedestrians and oriented toward the street. Utilitarian functions such as outdoor storage, dumpsters, loading docks, vehicle service bays and similar areas should be kept in the rear of the building and screened from view. Driveways should only be as wide as necessary for one or two lanes of traffic as needed; any existing curb cuts which are significantly wider should be narrowed and reclaimed as attractive front yard landscaping.

Building Scale and Massing: New buildings and additions should be broken up into smaller massing segments to avoid the look of monolithic boxes. To achieve this, requirements could be applied which would limit the length of any continuous run of visible exterior wall to about 40 or 60 feet without a significant change in massing. Other methods may include: encourage the use of pitched roofs over the use of flat roofs; discourage the visibility of large areas of blank wall facing the road; prohibit the use of garage doors and loading docks on the front facade; front entry points into the building should be readily visible and highlighted with the use of different massing or separate roof element; and similar requirements.

Architectural Character: Although the architectural character of the NYS Route 85 corridor is varied and diverse - it is recommended that some basic architectural standards be maintained. The use of certain exterior materials could be encouraged, such as wood clapboard (instead of vinyl siding or concrete block) on the visible facades to improve the look and feel of buildings along the corridor. A list of encouraged and discouraged materials could be included in the guidelines for front and/or readily visible facade areas.



An example of new construction in a New England town that made use of architectural styles typical of the surrounding area.

Older and Historic Structures: Several of the older structures on the corridor have special and/or historic qualities which should be respected. In these cases, adaptive re-use of the older structures should be a high priority. Additions and new construction on these properties should appear secondary to the original structure, and be particularly sympathetic to their scale, character and use of materials. In these cases, the guidelines may have to identify the specific structures along the corridor which would receive this special treatment, or alternately the reviewing body could be given the authority to deem these properties special on a case-by-case basis.

Signs: The proper use of signage along the corridor will have a marked impact on the visual appeal of this area. Specific guidelines for signs here may want to permit the use of freestanding monument signs, provided they are kept relatively low to the ground and are limited to only a small amount of text such as the name of the business or plaza and a street number. The use of a freestanding sign which lists multiple business names on it or large amounts of information should be avoided. The use

of a freestanding sign could be limited only to cases where the commercial business is of a certain size or distance away from the road which would warrant the extra signage near the roadway. Otherwise, all remaining commercial signs could be limited to one per business, and surface mounted on the facade of the building. The size of all signs could be regulated to a moderate amount of area so that the text is readable from the road, while the sign board itself is not made unnecessarily large.

The lighting of signs could be strictly limited to small, shielded lamps which produce only the minimum amount of light needed to illuminate the sign surface, mounted to the exterior above or below the sign board. Internally illuminated cabinet 'box' signs, changeable message LED or changeable-copy trailer signs should not be permitted.

Landscaping: The front yard areas of all commercial properties should be sufficiently landscaped with well maintained lawn, shrubs, trees and other decorative plantings to create an attractive appearance from the roadway. Excess parking, driveway or other paved surfaces in the front yard area should be removed or relocated and reclaimed with landscaping wherever possible. The immediate perimeter around the front facade of the building should be framed with a planting area consisting of bushes, flowers and/or lawn—paved parking and asphalt areas which directly abut the building exterior should be prohibited. Any points of public entry along the front facade should be provided with a paved walkway which connects to the parking area and public sidewalk, if present. New commercial properties or existing properties seeking site plan approval for significant exterior alterations should be required to provide a sidewalk along the entire parcel frontage.



Buffer plantings are employed at this service station to shield the business from the adjacent roadway.

Hamlet Center

Because of its nature as a new commercial center within the town, the design guidelines for the Hamlet Center area should be somewhat stricter than the design requirements for the other areas, and should therefore be separate from the requirements for these other areas.

Building Scale and Massing. Buildings in this district should be limited in size and massing to smaller scale, individual forms which can be arranged to work together to create inviting outdoor public spaces. This can be achieved through the use of a small floor area ratio (F.A.R.) limit, or the use of building footprint size caps. Because large portions of this district could potentially be designed as part of a unified master plan, F.A.R. limits would not likely be effective and therefore the building

footprint caps might be preferred. Suggested limits would probably be in the range of between 4,000-10,000 square feet.

Due to the desired Hamlet Center aesthetic which is evocative of traditional mixed-use village development patterns, buildings here would ideally be 2 or 3 stories in height. Without the benefit of preparing a pre-approved development plan which dictates multiple stories for some of the structures here, it may be necessary to require 2 or 3 story building heights as part of the zoning or design guidelines in order to ensure that this will happen. Likewise, the use of pitched roof designs should be a requirement, and/or flat-roofed structures could be permitted provided they have a strong parapet.

Architectural Character. A list of encouraged and discouraged exterior materials should be provided for all structures which is slightly more demanding than the material standards for the Existing Hamlet, and should be applicable to all exterior facade and roof areas, not just those readily visible from the public way. Additional requirements for window types and sizes should also be included which encourage the use of more traditional window forms on the upper floors, such as double-hung styles, vertically proportioned and of limited size ranges. At the ground floor level in pedestrian areas, larger picture windows, inviting storefronts and recessed doorways should be required. Any blank areas of wall should be adequately minimized with decorative designs, trims, moldings or landscape treatments.

Signs: The design requirements for signs in this district could be similar as those for the Existing Hamlet, with signs being limited to one per business, and no internally-lit signs allowed. However, the Hamlet Center standards could be different in the following ways:

- No commercial freestanding monument signs should be permitted.
- Non-commercial freestanding monument signs which identify common public or civic institutions or areas may be permitted, such as a public park, Town Hall, police station or library.
- Small freestanding public directory signs which include a map of the local area and nearby businesses may be permitted in limited pedestrian areas for local wayfinding.
- The size of all signs should be kept to a minimum text and sign board size, with information limited to the name of the business and brief description of services. The size of the text and sign board size should ideally be smaller than what would be permitted in the Existing Hamlet.
- All signs should be constructed from carved and/or painted wood signboards, or extruded metal channel lettering which is surface mounted.
- All signs which are part of a given development should be part of a coordinated sign program which pre-determines a consistent look of shape, materials and background color for a clean and uniform appearance. Specific lettering or logo colors which may be a part of an established business logo should be allowed.

Landscaping: The landscaping requirements for this district could be similar to those listed for the Existing Hamlet, however could be further strengthened with minimum acceptable levels for tree plantings, shrubs and groundcover. All perimeter areas around a building abutting within five feet of a building facade should be provided with landscaped planting beds, lawn or sidewalk. Public alleyways or open courtyards created between neighboring buildings should be designed as attractive pedestrian plazas with flower beds, raised planters, decorative pavers, seating benches, bike racks and trash receptacles.

Design Guidelines in Remaining Districts

The design guidelines for the Hamlet Expansion district would likely be almost identical to those developed for the Hamlet Center district, with perhaps only minor differences, if any. Due to the fact that the Development Areas could evolve as either residential or commercial/industrial, it is not known what role design guidelines might have here. It would be possible however to reserve them for future use, and have them be developed—when needed—as part of the approvals for any development area proposal.

No design guidelines are expected to be needed for the Rural Residential Area, or the Agricultural / Conservation except as may be deemed necessary for any potential accessory barn structures.



Multi-story mixed use development within the Hamlet Expansion area could be carefully designed with natural materials such as wood and stone to be in keeping with the rural character of the area.



Example of attractive multifamily residential architecture in Colchester, VT.

Sustainable Building and Site Design

Sustainable building and site design techniques should be considered for all development activity in the New Scotland Hamlet Study Area. Green building techniques and green infrastructure should be strongly encouraged or required as appropriate. Elements such as solar panels, geothermal heating and cooling, green roofs, shade trees, porous paving, rain gardens, and similar features should be considered whenever projects are proposed and reviewed. Though these techniques are increasingly being utilized by the local development community on their own, the Town could encourage their use through the establishment of development incentives or by providing educational materials to builders/developers.



Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), Henrietta, NY – a bioswale filters stormwater from the road and parking lot.

In terms of green infrastructure, the Town of New Scotland is part of the Stormwater Coalition of Albany County; a partnership of ten (10) municipalities that are regulated by the NYS Pollution Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) permit program administered by the NYSDEC (as a consequence of the Federal Clean Water Act). As part of the Coalition's activities, a subcommittee is developing a model local law(s) or guidelines for green infrastructure practices and will provide training for local Planning, Zoning, and Legislative board members. This work is funded through a grant from the NYSDEC.

The purpose of this grant is to help incorporate the requirements in the NYS Stormwater Management Design Manual with local zoning, subdivision regulations and other related local code documents. The new green infrastructure practices that are being encouraged by the design manual are not always acceptable under local municipal code language. For example, allowing a narrower street width in a residential neighborhood in order to reduce impervious surface or allowing a cluster development in order to conserve open space on a parcel.

Green Infrastructure: Systems that mimic natural processes in order to infiltrate, evaporate, and/or reuse stormwater. Green infrastructure uses soils, topography, and vegetation in a way that minimizes the impacts of anthropogenic [human] disturbance and maintains the pre-development hydrology and water quality of urban environments.

- SUNY ESF: State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry

The Coalition expects to be finished with the grant work in 2013. The Town of New Scotland should consider how to incorporate this work into its land use regulations for the Study Area and, perhaps, the entire Town.

The New Scotland Town Board recently adopted Local Law D of 2012 that provides alternative specifications for “green road design.”



Green infrastructure in Niagara Falls, NY – an example of stormwater management that is environmentally friendly and aesthetically appealing in a densely developed setting.

In order for portions of the Study Area to develop as described in this plan (in particular the Hamlet Center), an integrated stormwater management program for this area may be warranted. Rather than dealing with stormwater on a site by site basis, a coordinated strategy for the Hamlet Center could result in better environmental and urban design outcomes.

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VII. Transportation Recommendations

As noted in the Mobility / Transportation section of the Existing Conditions report, there are no vehicular safety or capacity issues that require immediate attention in the Study Area. The two main roadways, New Scotland Road (NYS Route 85) and Maple Road (NYS Route 85A), both have surplus capacity. The intersection of these two state highways also performs well within acceptable ranges. Anticipated growth (approved projects and projects in the pipeline) in and around the Study Area will not significantly change this conclusion. However, the future land use vision as described in this plan will require a closer look from the standpoint of vehicular transportation. This will be described further below.

Though vehicular safety and capacity are not issues currently, there are existing quality of life concerns related to transportation in the study area that should be addressed. The Existing Conditions report notes that Residential Level of Compatibility (LOC) ratings are poor where residences are located close to roadways that are intended to serve through traffic. Small portions of the study area, in particular segments of NYS Route 85 near the eastern edge of the Study Area toward Slingerlands and in the heart of the hamlet (between NYS 85A and CR 308), are characterized by relatively poor ratings for residential compatibility; these poor ratings will be worsened as additional traffic volume is added to these roadways and other segments with previously good ratings will also degrade as traffic volumes increase. Owners of these homes are well aware of the impact of traffic - during the peak hours and when trucks pass their homes - on their quality of life. A broader concern for all residents and visitors to the hamlet is the lack of basic bicycle and pedestrian accommodations along the main roadways in the Study Area. Narrow shoulders and no sidewalks make riding a bicycle or walking along NYS Route 85 and NYS Route 85A unattractive and unpleasant. Despite the relatively close proximity of homes to businesses and institutions (church, Town Hall) in the hamlet, walking is not very common due to these conditions.

Transportation recommendations for the New Scotland Hamlet Study Area include the following:

Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements on Existing Highways

Addressing the lack of basic bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure in the heart of the hamlet is a primary concern. Limited right-of-way width, the proximity of adjacent structures to the roadway, and the location of utilities will constrain the options for future bicycle and pedestrian accommodations in the NYS Route 85 Corridor; however without additional study the extent of these constraints is unknown. In cooperation with the NYS Department of Transportation, the Town of New Scotland should take the lead in investigating the alternatives in more detail as a follow-up to this plan. The Town of Bethlehem, which desires to replace its old water transmission lines in this corridor, should also be asked to participate.

Ideally, the goal would be to have sidewalks on both sides of the street throughout the existing hamlet - along NYS Route 85 from approximately Whitbeck Lane to the new senior housing / office development at Stone Creek Court. The sidewalks could also extend south on CR 308 a short distance to pick-up a few houses, and north on NYS Route 85A a short distance to Falvo's Meat Market. Where possible, the sidewalks should be separated from the roadway by a planting strip. The desirability

and feasibility of other streetscape elements - formal curbs, streetlights, street trees and similar amenities - could also be determined as part of the further study of this corridor. A dedicated bicycle lane, or at least a wider well-maintained shoulder, for bicyclists would also be appropriate on NYS Route 85, NYS Route 85 A, and CR 308 in the study area. Physical constraints such as those identified above, as well as limited county or state funding and the need to accommodate new state stormwater regulations, must all be considered. However, consistent with recently approved NYS Complete Streets legislation and the regional transportation plan (CDTC's *New Visions Plan*), a balanced roadway environment should be pursued as possible and appropriate.

Based upon a detailed investigation of the constraints identified above, it may be necessary to modify the ideal. For example, if standard sidewalks are not possible in some portions of the NYS Route 85 corridor (such as the oldest section of the hamlet from CR308



An example of a paved pathway that can be used as an alternative to a formal sidewalk.



A "Sharrows" alerts motorists that the travel lane is to be shared with bicycles.

to the intersection with NYS Route 85A), an alternate route or a less formal paved pathway could be considered as possible alternatives in these areas. Paved pathways can meet the needs of most users (though they might not achieve full ADA compliance) and are arguably more appropriate from a design perspective than formal sidewalks and curbs in a historic hamlet setting.

Similarly, if a bike lane cannot be accommodated throughout the NYS Route 85 corridor, or along portions of the other highway segments identified above, a shared lane could be substituted for the bike lane in these locations. "Sharrows" stenciled on the pavement could be utilized (if the speed limit is reduced to 35 mph or less - see below for traffic calming recommendations) in these sections of shared roadway to alert motorists and bicyclists to the transition. Information about the proper function and use of sharrows is found in the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* (MUTCD) under Section 9C.07, Shared Lane Marking. NYSDOT would need to determine whether sharrows would be appropriate in these locations and, if so, would need to secure the physical and fiscal resources to install and maintain them.

Traffic Calming

The speed of traffic as it travels is an existing concern; and this will likely become a bigger issue in the future if, through this plan, the Town allows higher density development near the center of the hamlet and encourages more biking and walking. To address this concern, "traffic calming" techniques should be considered.

The primary objectives of traffic calming are: to reduce vehicle speed, to reduce traffic volumes, and to reduce pedestrian/vehicle conflicts. Depending on the situation, one, two, or all three of these objectives can be addressed by the inclusion in the roadway system of features that will alter driving habits to the benefit of non-motorized users of the system. Traffic calming techniques can be:

- passive, such as a speed trailer telling the driver how fast he is going;
- psychological, such as narrowing the roadway by the use of pavement markings; or
- physical, such as roadway closures or diverters to reduce volume, or roundabouts, speed bumps/tables, or curb extensions to reduce speed.

In the Hamlet of New Scotland, the primary concerns are reducing speed and reducing vehicular conflicts with pedestrians and bicyclists. The goal is to differentiate the role and function of this roadway - NYS Route 85 - for the approximately three-quarters of a mile that it traverses the heart of the hamlet. Outside of the hamlet it is, and should remain, a rural highway. However, within the heart of the hamlet, NYS Route 85 should function more like a “main street”. The same is true for NYS Route 85A as it approaches the hamlet center.

The posted speed limit (45 mph) may need to be reduced in the future as development of the hamlet progresses. To help motorists identify this transition from the rural highway to a slower speed main street, physical changes to the roadway should also be considered. For example, at the entranceways to the hamlet from the east and west on NYS Route 85, and from the north on NYS Route 85A, special design treatments could be installed. These “gateway treatments” could include raised, planted medians that would send a clear signal to motorists that they are entering the hamlet and that they must slow down. The raised medians could contain hardy, low maintenance grasses, ground cover or low plantings. If the town or a local group of volunteers would be willing to maintain them, more decorative plantings could be utilized as appropriate. In addition, the median could serve as the location for a “Welcome to New Scotland” sign.



Examples of “gateway treatments” that serve to signal an arrival to a destination and also provide a visual cue to reduce speed.

Access Management

According to the Federal Highway Administration, access management is “the proactive management of vehicular access points to land parcels adjacent to all manner of roadways. Good access management promotes safe and efficient use of the transportation network.” It preserves roadway capacity and reduces conflicts between vehicles and other users of the road (bicyclists and pedestrians).

Along the state highway corridors in the New Scotland study area there are two primary means by which the Town can help accomplish good access management. Where changes are proposed on already developed parcels in the existing hamlet (building additions and improvements, redevelopment, etc.), the Town can work with the business/property owners to make small access improvements. The use of landscaping to create defined driveways, the consolidation of curb cuts, cross-access agreements between adjoining parcels, and other similar techniques can make a big difference over time. In the new development areas identified in this plan, it is recommended that access be provided via new, local streets constructed off of the highways rather than through individual curb cuts to the maximum degree possible. The future roadway network, described in the next subsection, will make this possible.

Future Roadways

As part of the future land use vision described in this plan, much of the new development proposed for the study area will be directed inward onto the large parcels of land on the north side of NYS Route 85. While development along the roadway frontage on NYS Route 85, and to a lesser degree along NYS Route 85A, is planned, almost all of the new development will be accessed via a new network of interconnected local streets. These will intersect with the existing roadways at particular locations (new intersections), but the number of access points will be far fewer than what would occur if the frontage were developed in a conventional suburban commercial manner. The interconnected nature of the new internal street network will also distribute traffic more efficiently, reducing the potential impact of the new traffic generated by the development on the existing roads and on the intersection of NYS Routes 85 and 85A.

The new roadway network should make it possible for people to travel from NYS Route 85 to NYS Route 85A without passing through the intersection of these two roadways, however the network should not function as a bypass of this intersection. To accomplish this, the internal roads should be designed with T-intersections, traffic calming, and other elements that would tend to discourage pass through traffic.

The *Conceptual Land Use & Linkages Plan* illustrates a conceptual framework for a new system of local roads on these parcels. The lines shown are not intended to represent actual proposed alignments; instead, these lines indicate the types of major connections that should be provided between the different character areas shown. In addition to these larger connections, a more fine grained network or grid of inter-connected local streets would be developed as part of the development of these areas.

All of the new local streets that are constructed as part of the internal roadway network should also be designed as “complete streets”. That is, streets that are designed to meet the needs of all users, including “pedestrians, bicyclists, public transportation riders, motorists and citizens of all ages and abilities, including children, the elderly and the disabled” (from the recently adopted NYS Complete Streets legislation). As such, in the more densely developed portions of the Study Area (such as the Hamlet Center and the Hamlet Expansion areas) roadways should include elements such as curbs and sidewalks, bike lanes where necessary, and similar accommodations. In the other development areas, and along the roadways connecting the development areas to one another, other options such as pathways paralleling the road might be more appropriate.



Intersection Improvements

The intersection of NYS Route 85 and NYS Route 85A sits at the center of the hamlet of New Scotland. Under current conditions, this intersection performs acceptably in terms of vehicular safety and capacity. It does not, however, create a very welcoming feeling for bicyclists or pedestrians.

As development progresses in the hamlet area, and as more accommodations for bicyclists and pedestrians are considered, improvements to this intersection may be necessary. There are a range of conventional improvements that could be considered, including: fixing the skewed alignment of the intersection, formalizing thru traffic and turn lanes, adding highly visible crosswalks and pedestrian signals, etc. At some point, this intersection might warrant a more significant redesign such as the construction of a roundabout. While a single-lane roundabout (like the one in Voorheesville) or simple capacity improvements (such as the addition of a turn lane) might be appropriate, it



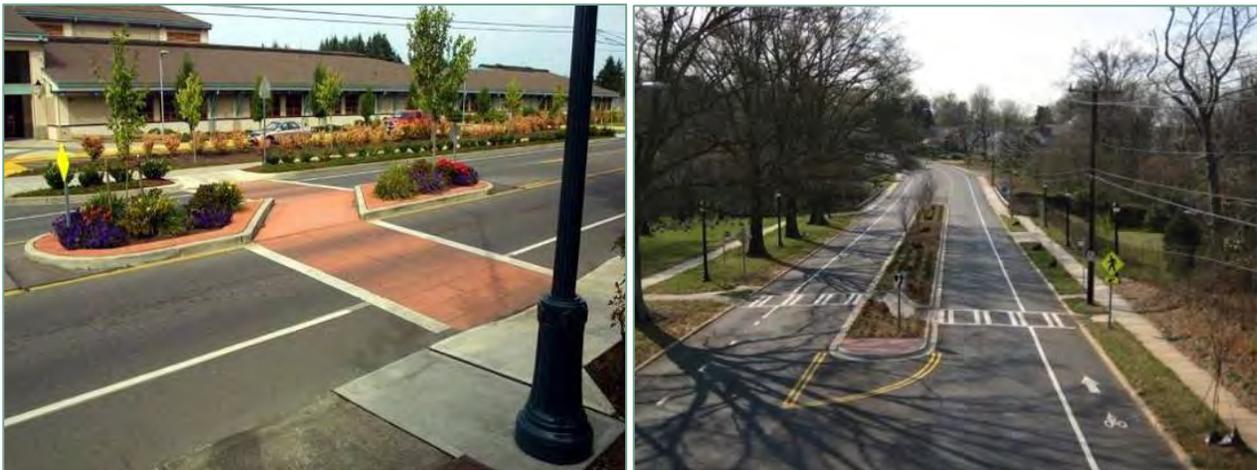
A single-lane roundabout, such as the one in Voorheesville, may eventually be appropriate at the NYS Routes 85/85A intersection.

should be noted that the community does not want to see major expansions or widenings of these roadways or this intersection.

The Town of New Scotland should carefully monitor this intersection as new development is proposed in and around the study area. A certain level of development could trigger the need for improvements and, to the degree possible, the cost of such improvements should be shared in an equitable manner between the public and private sectors. Furthermore, the Planning Board should be careful to consider the possibility of a future redesign of this intersection as it evaluates site plans for properties located adjacent to it.

With the development of the future roadway network described in the previous subsection, new intersections with NYS Routes 85 and 85A will be created. There will also be new intersections constructed on the development sites themselves. These intersections should be designed with all users in mind - vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists. Whether designed as a conventional intersection or a small roundabout, crosswalks and other appropriate infrastructure must be incorporated into each.

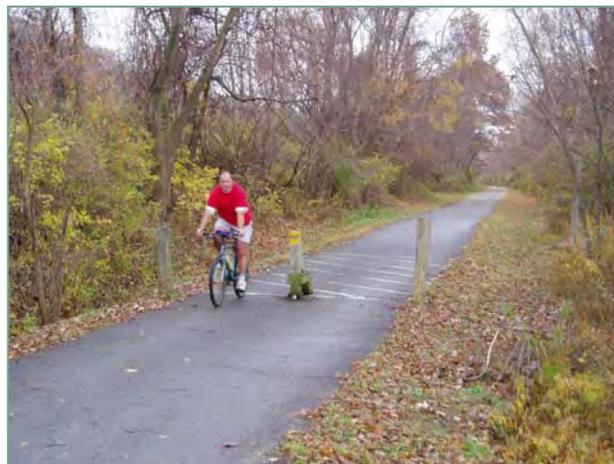
There might also be locations on NYS Routes 85 and 85A, or within the new interconnected roadway network, where mid-block pedestrian crossings would be beneficial. In such locations, it is recommended that crosswalks with a raised median be considered. The median reaffirms the need for motorists to slow down and provides a pedestrian refuge for people crossing the street. The path across the median could be designed with a slight jog that requires the pedestrian to look in the direction of oncoming traffic before crossing the second travel lane. This simple design feature adds an additional level of safety to the median's role as a pedestrian refuge. The appropriate use and design of mid-block crossings is described in NYSDOT's Highway Design Manual.



Examples of mid-block crossings which utilize a raised median to alert motorist to the presence of pedestrians.

Trail Connections

The proposed Helderberg-Hudson Rail Trail is viewed as a tremendous future asset for New Scotland. As already described, it is recommended that a Town Park be established adjacent to the trail to provide an amenity for users of the trail and residents of New Scotland. This would also serve as a trailhead for some users, and help establish connections from the trail to services (stores, restaurants) in the hamlet center. Steep slopes and wetlands along portions of the embankment in this area will need to be considered in the design of the park facility. A second small park and trailhead should be established along Maple Road near its intersection with Hilton Road.



A typical paved multi-use path.

Taking advantage of these connections to the future Rail Trail, this plan envisions a system of trails and pathways throughout the study area and connecting to nearby destinations in the Town and the Village of Voorheesville. The *Conceptual Land Use and Linkages Plan* illustrates this system of trails and pathways. Running alongside roadways such as NYS Route 85A (Maple Avenue) and Youmans Road, and through future development areas such as the Bender Mellon Farm, this network would create numerous walking / biking loops and serve as a unique and highly attractive recreational resource for residents and visitors to New Scotland. This type of amenity would also distinguish these development areas in the regional marketplace and perhaps improve their chances of success.

Aside from progressing work on the Helderberg-Hudson Rail Trail, another short-term trails-related initiative that the Town of New Scotland could pursue would be to secure public access to the small underpass that runs beneath the active rail line at the end of Youmans Road. With the recent closing of the former at-grade crossing, and the construction of a new road from the other side of the tracks to Swift Road, this old cattle pass could serve as a vital link for a trail connection from the study area to the Town Park off Swift Road. More information about the ownership status of this old underpass and negotiations with the railroad and adjoining landowners will probably be necessary, as well as determining the feasibility of excavation to provide enough clearance for bicyclists to safely pass through.



The "cattle pass" at the end of Youmans Road which could allow for a multi-use path to extend from the study area to the Town Park located approximately ½-mile to the west.

Public Transportation

As described in the Existing Conditions report, bus service through the Study Area is provided by the Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA). With the relatively large number of town residents who commute to Albany each day, it would seem possible that bus ridership will increase in the future as gas prices continue to rise. CDTA's current Albany County route restructuring initiative will have some bearing on the level of service provided and, therefore, the desirability of this option for commuters. But with the potential development envisioned for the New Scotland hamlet in this report, the Town should work with CDTA to pursue all opportunities to enhance the attractiveness of public transportation.

Currently, bus stops in the Study Area consist of small signs posted along the edge of the road. There are no amenities or even comfortable places to stand at these locations, and there is no pedestrian infrastructure in place to make walking to these locations feel safe or attractive. Whenever new development or redevelopment is proposed on sites adjacent to a bus stop in the Study Area, the developer should work with the town and CDTA during site plan review to ensure that transit stops and related infrastructure are upgraded as appropriate.

As part of the development review process for properties in the Hamlet Center area, the Town should ensure that provisions for well-designed bus shelters are included in the plans. To maintain route efficiency, buses cannot be expected to veer far from the main roads but perhaps they could utilize a location along the Town Commons envisioned as part of the Hamlet Center for a nice bus shelter. It might also be possible to use some of the parking behind the buildings in the Hamlet Center as designated park-and-ride locations. Bus riders would then pass the stores and restaurants in these buildings on their walk to and from the bus stop.

Transportation Conclusions

It should be noted that many of these transportation recommendations - from lowering the speed limit and utilizing traffic calming techniques to adding sidewalks or bike lanes - will need to be considered together as a package of improvements for the corridor. For example, NYSDOT is unlikely to reduce the speed limit for a section of the highway corridor unless this is part of a comprehensive strategy for the hamlet. Furthermore, any physical changes to the corridor would only be considered by NYSDOT as part of a reconstruction project, not within a routine paving project. Given the state's constrained fiscal situation and the large number of transportation projects that need to be addressed in the region, NYSDOT will probably not focus on this section of NYS Routes 85 and 85A for several years. Therefore, in order to advance the Town's goals for the corridor sooner, the Town will need to take a more direct role in the design and the financing of improvements. The next section of this document (Section VIII: Implementation) will suggest an approach for doing so.

It should also be clearly stated that it is not the intention of this plan to suggest development levels that would create conditions requiring the significant expansion (widening) of NYS Routes 85 and 85A or the intersection of these two highways. Residents of New Scotland have expressed a strong preference for maintaining the general characteristics of this transportation infrastructure - one travel lane in each direction, etc. As discussed at the start of this section, the existing roadway system has a

fair amount of surplus capacity. The form of development proposed in this plan and the recommendations in this transportation section are intended to minimize the potential negative impacts of future development in this area on the existing roadway system. The interconnected network of future streets, access management, support for public transportation, and the creation of an environment that really promotes walking and bicycling will reduce the growth of traffic pressure on existing roadways. Still, the Town and its partners at CDTC and NYSDOT should continue to monitor these conditions, especially since traffic issues here are impacted by activities elsewhere in the town and the region.

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VIII. Implementation

This New Scotland Hamlet Master Plan establishes for the first time a clear and compelling vision for the future of the New Scotland hamlet and its environs. The plan identifies the desired future land use pattern for the study area and suggests the tools (zoning, design guidelines, etc.) that will help the town realize the vision. It also provides a set of transportation recommendations that are coordinated with the land use vision.

The plan is an important first step for the Town of New Scotland. This area of the town has been the focus of a great deal of community discord in recent years. Though complete community consensus about the future of this area would be desirable, it is probably not a realistic goal. It is, however, hoped that the vision described in this study gives the town and the various stakeholders in this process a positive and mutually beneficial outcome to aim for. To the degree that there can be agreement about this, there is the potential for the town, landowners and business owners, residents, and the development community to work together toward achieving this vision. Time and resources can be put to productive use and everyone can benefit. The community can achieve a balance of conservation and development, preserve its unique character, create a new vibrancy and sense of place in the center of the hamlet, expand its selection of recreational amenities, and distinguish itself as a community of choice in the region. The Town can attract quality development that enhances its fiscal position. And landowners and business owners can have predictability in the development review process and a partner in the town to help address the big needs (transportation, infrastructure, etc.) that must be dealt with in order to bring high-quality development to this area.

The New Scotland Town Board should adopt or accept this plan as its policy guide for the New Scotland Hamlet study area. The Town Board is also ultimately responsible for implementing the plan. To assist the Town in organizing for this work, this section outlines some of the important actions that the Town should undertake to move these ideas forward. Recognizing that it is necessary to focus on a small number of tasks at one time, this section offers suggestions about priorities. It also provides information about how the work can be accomplished including appropriate partners and potential funding sources as appropriate.

Short-term (initiate immediately)

Revise the Town's zoning and related land use regulations -

This plan describes a land use vision and provides specific ideas about how the Town's zoning and related land use regulations could be revised to achieve that vision. Making these changes is a critical next step for the Town. These regulations guide private sector development, and they should be written to ensure that the type of development envisioned through the plan is in fact allowed and encouraged. The Town's current Commercial (COM) Zoning District covers most of the study area, and it is not suitable for directing the type of growth and change desired here. Replacing this zoning district with one or more new districts that incorporate tools and techniques specifically tailored to achieve the development patterns described in the plan is absolutely necessary.

The new regulations developed for this area should be clear and predictable so that the desired outcomes are understandable for those seeking to develop or make significant changes to their properties, for those tasked with reviewing and approving the proposed changes, and for the general public. Illustrated design guidelines and standards, such as those suggested within this plan, should be incorporated into the revised regulations (directly or by reference) to assist users in visualizing the desired site design and architectural characteristics.

A small technical committee should be tasked by the Town Board with guiding development of draft zoning amendments and associated documents building upon the recommendations in this plan. The Town Board, Planning Board, and perhaps the ZBA, should be represented on this technical committee. The Town Attorney, or a resident volunteer who specializes in land use law, could also be considered for a role on the committee. The Town's planning consultant charged with working with the committee could be asked to draft the zoning amendments and design guidelines with review by town legal counsel. The technical committee would serve in an advisory role. It would submit its draft amendments directly to the Town Board, and the Town Board would be responsible for coordinating review, conducting required public hearings and adopting the final version of the proposed changes.

Accomplishing this change is something the Town of New Scotland can initiate right away. Funded by the Town, this project could be completed within the next four to six months. If grant funding, through CDTC's Transportation Linkage Planning Program or from other sources, is utilized, it could take somewhat longer to initiate and complete the work. Given the long debate about this area of Town, it might be beneficial to move forward quickly if the Town's finances allow.

Continue dialogue with landowners in the Study Area -

Through the course of this study much has been learned about the aspirations of some of the primary landowners in the Study Area, and they too have learned more about the community's desires for this part of town. This dialogue should continue so that ideas can be shared and opportunities for cooperation identified. There is much to be done if the vision expressed through this plan is to be achieved, and both public and private investment of time and resources will be required.

Develop an educational program about the vision and recommendations for the New Scotland Hamlet -

The Town could spearhead an effort to provide additional information about the vision and recommendations contained in this plan for residents, business owners, and for the local development community. The purpose of this educational program would be to raise awareness about what the community desires for the New Scotland Hamlet and to send a message that the Town is open for business. The program could further explain some of the new land use tools and techniques that the Town intends to utilize to manage change in this area. Through presentations, brochures, or web based media, this effort would be designed to increase knowledge and smooth the transition to the new approach that the Town intends to utilize for this area.

Continue to work with Albany County and other partners to advance trail concepts -

The Helderberg-Hudson Rail Trail continues to be an eagerly anticipated project in New Scotland and surrounding communities. The Town of New Scotland should continue to work with Albany County to advance this important project. The Town could also consider whether there are any interim steps that it can advance on its own to make portions of the trail more accessible to the public in the near term. Sometimes getting people out there creates more momentum and advocacy for moving the larger effort forward. If appropriate, volunteers could serve an important role in making some of the initial improvements. The Friends of the Rail Trail, a committee of the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy, is currently working with the Town to open a section of the trail - from Voorheesville to Upper Font Grove Road - this summer*.

** Note: On June 22, 2012, Albany County, the Town of New Scotland, the Village of Voorheesville, and the Mohawk-Hudson Land Conservancy signed a four-way license agreement to maintain and operate a 2.6 mile section of the trail in the town and village. Formal opening will be later this summer after bridge safety issues are addressed, but the entire length of trail adjacent to the study area will be open for public use soon - volunteers and Town Highway crews began brush clearing and trail maintenance efforts on June 23, 2012.*

The other short-term action related to trails would be for the Town to work with the railroad and adjacent property owners to explore issues surrounding reuse of the old railroad underpass at the end of Youmans Road. This underpass would serve as a critical link for the future network of multi-use pathways envisioned in this plan.

To coordinate these initial activities and future efforts to develop the trail system envisioned in this plan, the Town of New Scotland could create an advisory pathways committee. Similar to efforts in Guilderland and in other communities in the region, such a committee could sustain the type of long-term initiative that is necessary to nurture the development of a trail network across such a large area.

Medium-term (initiate within the next two years)***Develop design concepts for the NYS Route 85 Corridor in the hamlet -***

The Town of New Scotland along with its partners at CDTC and at the NYSDOT should undertake a conceptual design study for the NYS Route 85 Corridor in the hamlet (from the Town line on the east to the active railroad tracks on the west). Small segments of NYS Route 85A and CR308, immediately north and south of NYS Route 85 respectively) should also be included in this study. The primary purposes of this conceptual design study would be to collect information about the right-of-way, utilities, and other features of the corridor and to develop preliminary designs for bicycle, pedestrian, and vehicular improvements consistent with the vision established in this plan. Additionally, desired streetscape elements (curbs, lighting, street trees, and other amenities) for various sections of this corridor could be identified and preliminary cost estimates provided. This conceptual design study would provide the Town and its partners with the information necessary to program funding for design development and construction in future years.

Create a Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) for the Study Area -

Under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQR), communities in New York can prepare a GEIS to evaluate the potential cumulative impacts of expected or planned development in an area. Since this Hamlet Master Plan has affirmed the community's intention to see well-planned development occur in the existing hamlet and on the large parcels of land surrounding the existing hamlet, the Town of New Scotland could take a pro-active role in ensuring that the transportation, infrastructure (water, sewer, stormwater, etc.), parkland and open space, and other needs associated with this development are satisfied in a timely and equitable manner. Under a GEIS, the Town of New Scotland could evaluate the potential adverse environmental impacts of alternative development scenarios that fit within the vision described in this plan and propose appropriate mitigation strategies for addressing such impacts. One potential outcome of this approach could be the establishment of a system of mitigation fees that ensure that future development pays its fair share of the cost of mitigating impacts. Absent legislative authorization for impact fees in New York State, the establishment of mitigation fees under SEQR is the primary mechanism by which a community in New York can require that infrastructure, roadway, or other public investments needed to meet the needs (address the impacts) of planned development in an area can be shared between the public and private sectors.

Several towns in the Capital Region have utilized this approach with much success over the last two decades. The use of a GEIS to address up-front the impacts (and costs) of development across a defined area is considered uniquely fair because it can ensure that such costs are not only divided equitably between the public and private sectors, but also between the various developers of land in the study area. Too often, the first one or two (or more) sponsors of development in an area pay relatively little to offset the impacts of their projects because a critical threshold, above which some improvement may be required, has not yet been reached. In such cases, it is the unlucky next developer in the door that gets saddled with the full cost of offsetting the impact if his/her development is the one that crosses the threshold. By analyzing and preparing for these impacts in advance, this type of situation can be avoided.

The cost of preparing a GEIS that addresses issues as described above can be significant. It is an upfront investment in the future that the Town Board could decide to make. It should, however, be noted that the cost of preparing the GEIS can be recouped by the Town over time if these costs are included as part of any mitigation fees established through the study.

Given the state's current fiscal situation, and the very large number of transportation and other infrastructure projects that are competing for funding throughout the region and the state, the establishment of a local source of funding for improvements via a GEIS could be the most likely way to advance the vision for this area within a reasonable period of time. As noted earlier in this report, the NYS Route 85 and NYS Route 85A corridors in New Scotland will not be a high priority for NYSDOT in the foreseeable future. However, if the Town takes a proactive role in terms of initiating this work and developing some of the funding to implement the necessary improvements, it might have more success bringing NYSDOT to the table.

Another potential benefit of this type of proactive, in-depth approach is that the GEIS could lead to the identification of locations within the study area that should be made “shovel-ready” for certain types of desired development. In particular, one or more of the Development Areas shown on the Conceptual Land Use & Linkages Plan could be made shovel ready. The term “shovel ready” has been around for many years and has been established as a formal designation by New York State. It has been defined as follows:

Having an economic development site certified as a "Shovel Ready Site" means that the local developer (or community) has worked proactively with the State to address all major permitting issues, prior to a business expressing interest in the location. This advance work creates a site where construction can begin rapidly, once a prospective business decides to develop a facility there. By reducing the time it takes a company to begin construction of a new facility, New York State and its local partners are able to provide valuable savings to the business and job opportunities for local residents.

Shovel Ready Certification is an ongoing component of the Build Now-NY program and is administered by Empire State Development (ESD). A site can, however, achieve Shovel Ready Certification without having received a Build Now-NY grant or loan to assist the developer in completing the advance work. Shovel Ready Certification is available to any site in New York State that is suitable for the type of development proposed, has proper zoning and infrastructure, has completed the appropriate surveys and studies, and has received the necessary permits and approvals.

Rather than continuing with the old “zone it, wait, and react” approach that has characterized the Town’s role in bringing development to its only commercial zone for many years, the actions described in this section would make the Town of New Scotland an active partner in promoting the appropriate development of this area. It would also ensure that the community does not leave to chance the preservation of its unique character and the provision of the necessary infrastructure and desired amenities to make the community a desirable place to live, work, and visit for years to come.

Work with the Capital Region Economic Development Council -

Under a new initiative of the Cuomo administration, New York State has established regional economic development councils to develop long-range strategies for economic growth in each region of the state. The Capital Region Economic Development Council created its Strategic Plan last year. The state also provided funding to implement the regional strategic plans last year, and will do so again this year. The Town of New Scotland should engage in this process to ensure that its vision for economic growth in the New Scotland Hamlet Study Area becomes part of the regional vision; and to try to secure funding for some of the transportation and infrastructure improvements that will be necessary to attract appropriate development to this part of New Scotland.

Consider creation of a local organization to promote development such as a Local Development Corporation -

The Town of New Scotland could establish a Local Development Corporation (LDC) or a similar entity to take the lead in actively promoting and pursuing economic development in the Study Area consistent with the vision established in this plan.

According to the NYS Office of the State Comptroller (*Municipal Use of Local Development Corporations and Other Private Entities: Background, Issues and Recommendations*, April 2011): “LDCs may be created pursuant to Not-For-Profit Corporation Law, Section 1411 for the following purposes:

- Relieving and reducing unemployment;
- Promoting and enhancing employment opportunities;
- Instructing or training individuals to improve or develop skills;
- Conducting scientific research to attract or retain industry; and
- Lessening the burdens of government and acting in the public interest.”

The same report notes that, “To achieve the purposes for which they are created, LDCs have the power to:

- Construct, acquire, rehabilitate, and improve industrial or manufacturing plants;
- Assist financially in such construction, acquisition, rehabilitation, and improvement;
- Maintain such plants for others;
- Acquire by purchase, lease, gift, bequest, devise or otherwise real or personal property or interests therein;
- Borrow money and issue bonds, notes, and other obligations therefor;
- Sell, lease, mortgage or otherwise dispose of any such plants or any of their real or personal property upon terms determined by the LDC;
- Carry out their corporate purposes; and
- Foster and encourage the location or expansion of industrial or manufacturing plants in the territory where the LDC's operations are principally conducted.”

In creating an LDC, the Town of New Scotland could provide very clear guidance about its mission that ties it directly to achieving the vision for the New Scotland Hamlet Study Area established through this plan and any subsequent studies conducted to advance this plan.