

Town of Niskayuna

Comprehensive Plan - 2003: Overview

Introduction

Local government officials are continually confronted with questions of physical development. The Town Board, Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals, as well as professional staff of the Town, are expected to make consistent decisions regarding growth. A Comprehensive Plan provides the contextual and technical foundation to guide the outcome of both the incremental and intentional effects of land use development that confront the Town's decision-makers.

The Comprehensive Plan is a well researched document that establishes major policies concerning desirable future physical development, Accordingly, Plan - 2003 is intended to serve as a long range guide for the Town's land use decisions, community growth patterns, and development policies over the next ten years. The plan's structure of goals, objectives, and implementation tasks as well as the research contained in the issues papers is intended to provide the user with logical information to make coherent decisions.

Plan-2003 is the fifth in a series of Comprehensive Plans developed under the direction of the Town Board of the Town of Niskayuna (See Table 1). Significant portions of previous plans have been implemented through adoption and revisions to the Town's zoning ordinance, official map, and subdivision regulations. The recommendations of Plan-2003 can be effected by similar actions taken by the Niskayuna Town Board.

Table 1

Comprehensive Planning History Town of Niskayuna 1929 to Present

1929 – First zoning ordinance adopted. Limited to sections of the Town subject to development pressures. Remained in effect, with revisions, for over thirty years.

1960 – Preparation of first comprehensive plan. Town assisted by the firm of Sargent, Webster, Crenshaw, and Folley. Lead to the adoption of a new zoning ordinance (1964) and subdivision regulations (1963). The plan was quickly rendered obsolete by development pressures of the late 1960s.

1971 – Preparation of a second comprehensive plan. Town assisted by the NYS Office of Planning Coordination. Resulted in “Revised Comprehensive Land Use and Development Plan – 1971”. Lead to the adoption of a third zoning ordinance (1972) and new subdivision regulations (1973) and official map (1972).

1983 – Preparation of the third comprehensive plan. Town assisted by Schenectady County Planning Department and Michael D. Haydock, planning consultant. Resulted in “Plan-83 Comprehensive Land Use Plan”. Responded to changing trends and demographics in the community resulting in amendments to the zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations.

1993 – Preparation of the fourth comprehensive plan. Town assisted by Schenectady County Planning Department and the Capital District Regional Planning Commission in cooperation with Town Planner Diane F. Sturman. Resulted in Plan-93 Comprehensive Development Plan.”

2003 – Preparation of the fifth comprehensive plan. The Town Board appointed the Comprehensive Plan Committee, which updated the plan with the assistance of _____.

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Background

The Town of Niskayuna is a suburban community of 20,295 inhabitants located in the easterly portion of Schenectady County. The Town is largely developed, and is characterized by a well-established pattern of residential development with 86 percent

of its tax parcels, or 46 percent of the land area, devoted to residential use. Population projections to the year 2013 indicate that Town growth over the next ten years will be modest, peaking at 21,033.

Housing stock is of high quality and reasonably varied. In 2000, the median value of a single family home was \$141,000. Apartments accounted for approximately 1,415 units out of 7,787 total dwelling units. Population grew at a steady rate over the past decade. If there is an area of concern, it is the balance between residential and nonresidential growth that continues to be a Town issue.

Plan-2003 tends to focus on those issues that can enhance the quality of life for Town residents and their business neighbors rather than major changes to land use policies.

Natural Resources

The landscape of Niskayuna includes developed areas of structures and manicured yards, forests, some brushlands, pockets of wetlands including portions of five state-designated wetlands, and federally-identified floodplains along the Mohawk River. From the north, the town rises from the Mohawk River Valley and is characterized by slopes in excess of fifteen percent along this northern perimeter. Bedrock consists of the Schenectady Formation of shales and sandstones in the western two-thirds of the Town while the eastern third consists of shales known as the Snake Hill formation. Resting on the bedrock is a layer of glacial till topped by a soil layer varying in depth from inches to several feet. Soils within the Town are largely of the Burdett Scriba Ilion Association, that is, upland soils that are poorly drained and subject to seasonal high water table and only slowly permeable. In general, soils are characterized by high water tables or are poorly drained although there are some small well-drained areas dispersed throughout the central and southern part of town. There are several major drainage channels in the Town with the most significant being the Lisha Kill and its tributaries. As the slope of the Town is generally towards the Mohawk River, most streams flow in a general west to east direction terminating either in the Mohawk or in the Lisha Kill. An aquifer located south of Lock Seven is the water source for the Town wells and is estimated to have the capacity to support additional pumping without risk of water mining. There are no known endangered animal species within the Town and the vegetation not associated with development is mostly farm wood lots, open fields and areas of second growth trees and scrub.

Human Resources

The Town is connected to the Capital District region by three major state arterials: Balltown Road (Rte. 146), Troy Road (Rte. 7), and State Street (Rte. 5). County roads, such as Van Antwerp, Aqueduct, and Consaul Roads, provide additional connections between the Town and its neighbors. With the exception of the improvements to Troy Road and State Street, these former "farm-to-market" roads do not always support the level of traffic they are expected to sustain. Local streets serve residential development, with connections between subdivisions strongly supported by the Planning Board. Public transportation is limited to State Street, Union Street, and a circular route that includes Nott Street and a small portion of Balltown Road. 2

The vast majority of the Town is zoned and developed for residential use. There is a substantial area of industrial property that is currently occupied by General Electric Global Research Center and Knolls Atomic Power Laboratory. Commercial sites are

limited to the Balltown Road-Nott Street area, the State Street-Balltown Road area, and the westerly portion of Union Street. There is only one building, the Niskayuna Reformed Church on Troy Road, on the State and National Register of Historic Places. The NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation has indicated to the Town that certain sites in the town have potential archeological significance, but these are identified by Parks on an as-needed basis. Private preserves, most of the floodplain, and the lands adjacent to the Lisha Kill are zoned Land Conservation. There are no agricultural districts located in the town and critical environmental areas are limited to State and Federal wetlands.

As a developed community, Niskayuna enjoys a full range of public facilities and services. Over ninety-five percent of existing homes are sewerred and public water is provided virtually townwide. An established system of parks, school playgrounds, preserves, and open space exceeding 1,000 acres is complemented by an active recreation program. In addition to the public recreation program, the Town is served by such private facilities as the Jewish Community Center, the Schenectady Curling Club, and the Mohawk Golf Club. Towns people are protected by a 43-member police department and three fire protection districts. Overall, the predicted growth in the Town is not expected to exceed the capacity of available municipal services.

Formulation of the Comprehensive Plan

The Town of Niskayuna's Town Board undertook the lead role in the development of Plan-2003. Technical assistance in the planning process was provided by the Comprehensive Plan Committee, Planning Board, Department heads and their staff as well as Advisory Boards to the town. Regular presentations and discussions involving the Planning Board and the Town Board in a public forum were held at every stage of the process. A public hearing provided the residents of the Town as well as other interested parties an opportunity to hear about the plan and to express their views on the future of the Town.

Organization of the Plan

Plan-2003 is organized into Issues Papers (part 1) and the Plan (part 2). The issues papers reflect the research done on each issue, and the Plan articulates goals, objectives and implementation tasks that address the issues. In addition, the Appendix contains information regarding the socioeconomic characteristics of the Town.

Issues Papers

Issue areas that are important to the Town were identified. Major policy statements and recommendations from Plan-93 were studied and their effectiveness evaluated. This examination of each issue area helped to establish the underpinnings of the prescriptive actions outlined in Plan-2003. The issue areas are as follows:

Transportation -- Vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle circulation systems clearly impact upon development patterns and quality of life in the Town. Issues of sidewalk policy, street classification and non-vehicular access to destination points are assessed. The future of the public transportation system may become an issue.

Cultural and Recreational Facilities -- The availability and proximity of recreational resources are studied. Under-utilized recreational opportunities are identified.

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Public Facilities -- Administrative and service systems are evaluated in terms of planning for future needs.

Economic Development – The balance between residential and business development is examined and specific opportunities for economic development and tax base growth are explored.

Land Use – This paper integrates the issues investigated in the other papers and evaluates potential changes to the land use regulations of the Town.

The Plan

The issues papers, together with the information gathered through the socioeconomic analysis, establish the framework for the formulation of goals, objectives and implementation tasks found in the Plan. Goals are broad policy statements for future Town development. Objectives are more narrow, designed to address specific issues. Implementation tasks are just that -- specific actions intended to realize goals and objectives. This approach to plan development results in a comprehensive strategy for addressing the issues since the implementation tasks are derived from the objectives which are in turn derived from the goals.

Development Plan Map

The Development Plan Map illustrates the general land use, circulation, and development patterns recommended for the Town as articulated in the implementation tasks. The map is used to guide decisions on rezoning that are made by the Town Board. The map is also used when a zoning ordinance revision is undertaken.

Plan Implementation

Plan-2003 is a compilation of recommendations and suggestions offered by the Comprehensive Plan Committee and the Planning Board to guide future public and private development decisions in the Town. It should be reviewed by the Town Board periodically to ensure that its goals, objectives and implementation tasks are relevant to the changing conditions within the Town. The Town Board should review Plan-2003 within the next five years and undertake its complete update within ten years.

Plan-2003 will be implemented only to the extent that legislative action is taken by the Niskayuna Town Board to make its recommendations a part of local law. Development control mechanisms available to the Town Board to effect Plan-2003 include:

1. the zoning ordinance – to regulate the nature, density, and location of development;
2. subdivision regulation – to oversee the conversion of raw land into building sites adequately served by streets and services;
3. site plan review standards – to ensure compatible non-residential parcel development that meets zoning standards and the recommendations of the comprehensive plan;
4. State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) review – to ensure that a suitable balance of social, economic, and environmental factors are incorporated into the planning process.
5. official map – to fix the location of existing and proposed streets, parks, and drainageways; 4
6. capital improvements program – to schedule anticipated public improvements in an efficient and equitable manner.

Recommendations as to how the Town can utilize and adjust these legislative tools to implement Plan-2003 are detailed in the Plan's Implementation Tasks.

Acknowledgements

Plan-2003 was prepared for the Niskayuna Town Board by the Comprehensive Plan Committee with contributions by the Planning Board and Zoning Commission and the Conservation Advisory Council. The Town Board formally adopted Plan-2003 on _____ by Resolution _____.

Niskayuna Town Board Planning Board

Luke J. Smith, Town Supervisor William Hendricks, III, Chairman
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Carl Friedman T. Darton Strayer - Conservation Advisory Council
Jerry Griggs¹ James Borrowman - Economic Development Committee
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Eric Dickson, Town Attorney
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ISSUE AREA: TRANSPORTATION

51 Mr. Borrowman worked with the Comp Plan Committee for one year before moving out of the area.

Introduction

A community's circulation system can hardly be overemphasized. The road system should be designed to permit the safe, efficient, and orderly movement of traffic to meet the needs of the present and future population served. However, in no instance should transportation planning be concerned with transportation services alone. The transportation network is a key factor in the safety, social workings, and visual impact of a community. As traffic and speeds increase, the road becomes a barrier, safety becomes a problem, and the sense of neighborhood is lost. Therefore, it is important that the community plan a transportation system that is not only efficient, but promotes safety and flexibility, respects natural and residential features and topography, presents an attractive streetscape, and is designed based on function.

Every transportation decision has implications for land use, a relationship that is reciprocal: land use patterns affect travel decisions and travel decisions affect land use patterns. Improved coordination of transportation and land use decisions would result in

improved transportation investment decisions, preservation of rights-of-way for future expansion, a proactive arterial management design program, and coordinated planning for transit, pedestrian, and bikeway systems. The Town continues to work with NYS Dept. of Transportation and Schenectady County Engineering to improve transportation conditions throughout the Town.

1. ISSUE: STREET CIRCULATION SYSTEM DESIGN

Niskayuna, by maintaining a street classification system and an "Official Map", currently has a good understanding of its present and future transportation needs. However, the existing street classification system should be updated to reflect the current function and/or to reinforce the existing functional role of selected streets.

Also, additions and deletions should be made to the Official Map that anticipate the circulation, safety, and environmental needs of the community.

The Town has maintained a long-standing policy of advocating connecting streets on the Official Map. Connecting streets have the ability of reducing daily trips on a single feeder road that typically services a development. New proposals to consider include an extension to Anthony Street to connect with Aqueduct Road; and an extension of Banker Avenue to Aqueduct Road. The town should encourage service providers to work with the property owners to bury utility lines whenever possible.

In 1993 the Town embarked on a major initiative to study the Balltown Road corridor and contracted with the Capital District Transportation Committee (CDTC) to prepare the Balltown Road Corridor Study. Though the study focused on possible improvements to Balltown Road and adjacent roadways, the study area included the entire Town and parts of adjacent communities. The corridor improvement plan concentrated on Balltown Road, upper River Road, Van Antwerp Road, Aqueduct Road and those local streets with the potential for significant impact due to traffic diversions or future land development.

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A part of the analysis included:

- (1) Demographic and land use information;
- (2) Traffic and traffic control information;
- (3) Vehicular trip generation estimates; and
- (4) Issue of available funding.

The improvements completed since the last Comprehensive Plan street network scenario were the extension of Nott Street East to its intersection with Van Antwerp Road and the reconstruction and partial realignment Aqueduct Road. Additional roadway capacity improvements outside the study area were also incorporated into the traffic model to determine what local effects will accrue due to these "external" projects.

Based on the study findings, CDTC staff evaluated a number of alternative capital projects, their potential impacts on local traffic congestion, and feasibility to proceed based on the preliminary study. The report stated that the pervasiveness of traffic congestion limits the ability of any single improvement or localized set of improvements to significantly improve traffic system performance. Most proposed capital improvement actions would affect relatively small portions of total trips. However, when combined with other capacity action strategies such as arterial management techniques (access controls, turn restrictions) and local demand management (trip reduction ordinances, requirements of transit access where feasible) there are selected capital projects that could prove beneficial.

A traffic simulation model was used to determine the effects of alternative improvement strategies on hourly traffic volumes and levels of service on Balltown Road. One of the more interesting findings is the relationship between improvements to Balltown Road, including Rexford Bridge, and additional capacity actions along the Route 50/Freeman's Bridge Road corridor. An evaluation of existing trip patterns indicated that improvements to Rexford Bridge/Balltown Road alone would not substantively improve traffic conditions and levels of service during the peak hours without improvements to Route 50 in Glenville. The reason for this finding is that once any improvements are made to Balltown Road, it would become the route of choice for many of those who currently use the Route 50 corridor.

2. ISSUE: PEDESTRIAN MOVEMENT

The requirement for the installation of sidewalks in suburban residential communities is an issue that has generated an ongoing debate. Many feel that in low density areas sidewalks detract from the semi-rural atmosphere, add unnecessarily to the cost of housing, and are not a safety issue because of low pedestrian volumes. Others feel that regardless of density, an available sidewalk is an important safety precaution sidewalks have the potential for reducing automobile use. Also, sidewalks are often used by children as play areas, which advocates claim is one of the most important and sometimes overlooked functions of the sidewalk.

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In May of 2002 the Town enacted Local Law # 3 the Sidewalk Installation, Maintenance and Repair Law that promotes the maintenance of safe and adequate sidewalks for pedestrian use by regulating the manner of construction, reconstruction, repair and maintenance of sidewalks in the Town right-of-way. The Town's subdivision regulations reference sidewalks in relation to the State enabling legislation which permits planning boards to require sidewalks in conformance with local standards. Recently, the Planning Board has required developers to install new sidewalks in areas where they can connect to existing sidewalks.

While none of the existing land use regulations in Niskayuna require the installation of sidewalks, many subdivision ordinances throughout the country do. A 1986 study indicates that, nationally, approximately 75 % of the subdivision ordinances require sidewalks on both sides of all streets. More recent ordinances, however, tend to require sidewalks only on one side of local streets and none at all on short cul-de-sacs serving fewer than ten homes. Newer ordinances still require sidewalks on both sides of arterial and collector streets within the subdivision. The study further indicates that sidewalks are usually not required in large lot subdivisions, the most common breakpoint being one-half to one acre except near schools and other pedestrian serving uses.

The Institute of Traffic Engineers' Transportation and Traffic Engineering Handbook provides the following recommendation: "At a minimum, sidewalks should be provided along streets used for pedestrian access to schools, parks, shopping areas, and transit stops." The National Safety Council adopted a policy statement in 1989, which emphasizes the safety aspects of sidewalks and recommends that government jurisdictions adopt sidewalk regulations. The National Association of Home Builders recommends that sidewalks be required within one quarter mile of major pedestrian generators.

A recommended approach developed by the Rutgers University Center for Urban Policy Research is based on performance standards with the need for sidewalks determined on a case by case basis depending on street classification, development intensity, pedestrian traffic, the proximity of schools and shopping, school bus stops and relation to population areas. As densities increase, more pedestrian movement is to be expected. Similarly, as traffic volume and speeds increase, there is more need for a separate pedestrian way. Additional factors such as the existing sidewalk system and probable future development should also be considered.

Placement of sidewalks can be part of the public street right-of-way or part of a front yard easement. The sidewalk easements are granted in perpetuity for public access and must meet all the design requirements as if they were built in the public right-of-way. The advantage of sidewalk easements, from the developers perspective, is that it allows the developer to increase the effective development density since these easements count toward minimum lot sizes. The effect is that the public right-of-way is smaller and the net developable area larger than if the lots were plotted conventionally with the sidewalk in the street right-of-way.

In cluster subdivisions, the traditional placement of sidewalks in the street right-of-way has been replaced by a flexible pedestrian circulation system connecting individual dwelling units with other units, off-street parking, the open space system, and recreational facilities. There are numerous advantages to this layout:

- (1) It conforms better to topographical features;
- (2) Due to separation from traffic, it is safer and more pleasant;
- (3) Pedestrian access from origin to destination may be more direct;
- (4) There is less site disturbance and impervious cover; and
- (5) Costs are reduced.

Additional sidewalks along subdivision streets, however, may also be necessary in cluster developments for access to schools, bus stops, shopping, or other facilities.

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Transportation Goals, Objectives and Implementation Tasks

GOAL - To develop a balanced circulation system that promotes different forms of mobility in a manner that complements the Town's existing and future land uses.

Objective #1 - The Town should support the development of an interconnected pedestrian/bikeway system.

Implementation Tasks:

1. Use the Town's Geographic Information System (GIS) to identify and map pedestrian traffic generators, existing sidewalks, bikeways, and pedestrian paths.
2. Develop a pedestrian access and bikeway plan in conjunction with the greenway plan and incorporate these recommended improvements on the Official Map.
3. Develop a bikeway plan to address the transportation needs of local commuters and include these recommended improvements on the Official Map.
4. Require the installation of bikeways and sidewalks as identified on the Official Map.
5. Continue to execute existing Town policy on bike path requirements.

Objective #2 - The Town, in consultation with State and local agencies, should develop an arterial management strategy to be applied to all its arterials and address such issues as

capacity improvements, land use, service roads, traffic demand management, transportation system management, and public safety.

Implementation Tasks:

1. Support improvements to the Rexford Bridge and Balltown Road from River Road to Glenridge Road and improvements to Glenridge Road and Route 50.
2. Update the Balltown Road corridor study findings.
3. Require that aesthetic and pedestrian/bicycle friendly considerations be part of any road widening improvements.
4. Continue to participate in the transportation planning and engineering process to minimize the negative impacts of re-alignments on surrounding land uses.
5. Require that residential and nonresidential development proposals along arterials be designed to minimize curb cuts accessing the roadway.
6. Promote the establishment of effective demand management strategies such as carpooling, staggered work hours, telecommuting, and bus transit support as a means to reduce highway capacity demand.
7. Participate with CDTA to identify mechanisms to support bus transit operations to serve the Town.
8. The Town should work with service providers and property owners to bury utility lines whenever possible.
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Objective #3 - The Town should continue to update and revise its transportation planning tools to reflect both present and future conditions.

Implementation Tasks:

1. Delete from the Official Map proposed roadways located within State regulated wetlands except for roads that are needed to access individual tax parcels.
2. Investigate the legal implications of removing proposed roadways located within State-regulated wetlands that would otherwise provide direct access to undeveloped parcels as listed on the tax rolls.
3. Add the following roadways to the Official Map that anticipate the circulation needs of future developing portions of the Town: the extension of Anthony Street to Aqueduct Road to align with the Aqueduct Road - Balltown Road connector, and the extension of Banker Avenue to the Aqueduct Road - Balltown Road connector.
4. Regularly update the street classification system for the Town's roadways.

Objective #4 - The Town should continue to make physical improvements to the existing circulation system to meet future needs and fulfill functional requirements.

Implementation Tasks:

1. Investigate the feasibility of upgrading Pearse Road as a north-south minor arterial corridor route between Route 7 and Consaul Road.
2. Complete the extension of Windsor Drive to River Road
3. Work to eliminate sharp curves on Consaul Road, and Van Antwerp Road to address safety concerns while minimizing negative impact to surrounding land uses.
4. Design street layouts in new subdivisions to preclude cul-de-sacs.
5. Continue Town action to provide interconnections between isolated subdivisions in those cases where such connections cannot be achieved through the subdivision process.
6. Investigate traffic calming measures to help with traffic flow problems throughout the Town.

7. Undertake a townwide traffic study to look at long term traffic flow problems throughout the Town. The Town Board should appoint a committee to identify problem areas and suggest potential solutions.
8. Pursue funding based on the outcome of the Traffic Committee's report.

ISSUE AREA: CULTURAL & RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

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Introduction

Residents of the Town have access to both active and passive recreational opportunities offered by a combination of public parks, private and commercial recreation facilities, and privately owned conservation tracts. A summary of public and private facilities available to Niskayuna residents is provided in Table 1. Public parks and private open spaces are also shown on the Development Map. While these public and private resources form the core of a substantial parks and recreational system in the Town, there are emerging opportunities to be considered which could enhance the diversity of recreational and cultural experiences enjoyed by its residents.

TOWN OF NISKAYUNA Public Parks, Open Space and Private Recreation 2003

Town Wide Parks and Facilities

Table 2

NAME	ACRES	COMMENTS
River Road Park	28.50	Located on River Road, developed by the Town with matching funds from an EQBA grant. Active recreation site.
Blatnick Park	15.22	Located on River Road just east of KAPL which includes the skate board park; active recreation site.
Avon Crest Park	11.70	Located off Westmoreland Dr. in the heart of Avon Crest subdivision; active recreation site.
Mohawk-Hudson Bikeway	70.80	A continuous 9-mile stretch of intercounty bike-hike trail located along the Mohawk River. Includes ancillary park and recreation area at Lock 7.
Railroad Station Park	3.0	Adjacent to Mohawk-Hudson Bikeway off Rosendale Road; cartop boat launch area.

Aqueduct Park	33.06	Located within the Old Erie Barge Canal right-of-way west of Balltown Road; includes the Aqueduct Rowing Club facility and complemented by the much smaller Kiwanis Park just east of the Rexford Bridge.
Town of Niskayuna Recreation Center	55.25	Located on Aqueduct Road. The center also houses the Town pool.
Soccer Fields	23.25	Located off Balltown Road just north of Craig Elementary School.
Becker Street Play Lot	0.33	Located at the intersection of Central Avenue and Becker Street.
Niskayuna Driving Range	12.0	Located on River Road just east of Blatnick Park.
Niskayuna Skate Board Park	0.42	Located on River Road just east of Blatnick Park and behind the Town's Transfer Station.
Memorial Park	0.11	Located at the intersection of Balltown Road and Van Antwerp Road.
Total Town Parks	253.71	

Neighborhood Parks and Subdivision Open Space

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Table 3

NAME	ACRES	COMMENTS
Dean Street Park	8.40	Restricted to Park District members; active recreation site.
Baker Woods	2.74	Restricted to Park District members of Baker Avenue/Lexington Parkway area.
Rosendale Estates	12.20	Passive green space along ravine in Rosendale Estates.
Orchard Park	3.59	Neighborhood park off Morrow Avenue
Brendan Estates/Avon Crest West	3.36	Neighborhood park on Brendan Lane
Catherines Woods	8.73	Neighborhood park adjacent to undeveloped portion of Niskayuna landfill.

Antonia Park (Windsor Estates)	7.05	Neighborhood park stretching from Van Antwerp Road to St. Ann Drive.
Kimberly Court	8.00	Neighborhood park along Lisha Kill at the Town's south border.
Floral Acres	4.09	Neighborhood park adjacent to Kimberly Court, has access to the Lishakill.
Applewood Estates	3.97	Parkland adjacent to the Lishakill.
Oakmont	7.99	Most of the acreage is in a conservation easement because of wetlands.
Hummingbird Manor	4.08	The parkland is adjacent to the Hudson Mohawk Bird Club.
River Hills	2.06	Located on River Road.
Orchard Park – open space	8.10	Open space associated with average density development.
Avon Crest North – open space	13.19	Open space associated with average density development and adjacent to the Nature Conservancy lands.
River Hills – open space	8.95	Open space associated with average density development.
Hummingbird Manor – open space	15.87	Open space associated with average density development.
Floral Acres – open space	3.78	Open space associated with average density development.
Wetlands Nature Walk	----	Located behind the Town Library on Nott Street East. The walkway takes you out into the wetlands from the library.
Total Neighborhood Parks & Open Space	127.41	

Private Preserves (currently permits public access)

Table 4

NAME	ACRES	COMMENTS
Reist Preserve	108	Owned by Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club, located between St. David's Lane and Consaul Road.

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Access to this preserve is located in the Hummingbird Manor subdivision, Morgan Avenue and Brendan Lane.
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Lishakill Preserve	108	Owned by the Nature Conservancy; runs from Troy Road north to Rosendale Road. Access is located at the end of Agostino Avenue, Avon Crest North and Rosendale Road at the Grange Hall.
Schenectady Museum Preserve	94	Located between River Road and the Mohawk River. Access is located on Whitmyer Drive, River Road and the Hudson-Mohawk Bike Trail.
Total Private Preserves	310	

Private Recreation (with greater than one acres of land)

Table 5

NAME	ACRES	COMMENTS
Mohawk Golf Club	200	Private golf and tennis facility at Union Street and Balltown Road.
Jewish Community Center	26	Multipurpose center including outdoor pool and day camp for members. Located north of River Road on Balltown Road.
Schenectady Curling Club	1.8	Private club for area curlers; located on Balltown Road.
Total Private Recreation	228	

Summary Table of all Lands

Table 6

NAME	ACRES
Town of Niskayuna Public Parks	253.71
Town of Niskayuna Neighborhood Parks and Subdivision Open Space	127.41
Private Preserves	310.0
Private Recreation	228.0
Niskayuna Central Schools Property (with playground and recreational facilities)	156.1
Total Acreage	1,075.22

1. ISSUE: USE OF SCHOOL LANDS FOR PARKS AND RECREATIONAL PURPOSES.

The Niskayuna School District within the Town consists of four elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school. Total acreage of these facilities is 156 acres, and it is estimated that 110 acres of these are available for recreational use (see Table 2). To the extent that the fields and playgrounds are not required for

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school use, they are available to the Town's recreational programs. Construction on the pool at the High School has been completed and it is now open for use by the residents of the Town.

Unused school properties currently do not exist within the Town of Niskayuna thus precluding the conversion of such areas into either taxable properties or park and recreation facilities. Nevertheless, given the fluid nature of annual school enrollment figures and the evolving levels of use of existing public facilities, cooperation between the Town and the School District may provide the Town's residents with increased access to both passive and active recreational facilities. Underused and/or seasonal school recreation facilities may be incorporated into the Town's overall system of parks and open space areas thereby enhancing access to a variety of passive and active recreation sites.

Table 7

***Niskayuna Central Schools Property
with playground and recreational facilities**

1. Craig Elementary School 15.0 acres
2. Niskayuna High School 49.6 acres
3. Rosendale Elementary School 24.7 acres
4. Iroquios Middle School 25.3 acres
5. Van Antwerp Middle School 8.7 acres
6. Hillside Elementary School 8.9 acres
7. Birchwood Elementary School 23.9 acres

Total acres 156.1

*Property within the town.

2. ISSUE: IMPROVED ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC PLACES, PARKS AND RECREATION SITES FOR VEHICULAR AND PEDESTRIAN BICYCLE TRAFFIC.

The Town Planning Board has approved construction standards for multi-purpose walkways along "major" streets. Multi-purpose walkways have been completed for the Mohawk Trails, Hummingbird Manor and Windsor Estates Sections 1 & 2 subdivisions. A multi-purpose walkway is planned for Windsor Estates Section 3.

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Since the opening of Town Hall in 1994 and the addition of the Town Center District, the Balltown Road/Nott Street area has become an active pedestrian and bicycle traffic generator. The Town continues to look at providing safe and easy access to the Town Center from all areas of Town, specifically the areas from the south and west where Troy Road, State Street and Balltown Road present particular obstacles.

Townwide bike lane plans should be developed along appropriate street classifications to further integrate and enhance access to existing and future public park and open space areas. These bikeway plans should be included on the Town's "official map" to provide planning insight for incorporation of future public park and open space developments.

Enhanced bicycle and pedestrian linkages should be created to better incorporate the Town's existing natural areas including the H.G. Reist Wildlife Sanctuary, the O.D. Heck Nature Park, the Lisha Kill Natural Area, the Mohawk River Trail and the Schenectady Museum Nature Preserve. The development of new open/park space should be planned with the goal of providing improved access to, and the general enhancement of, these existing natural areas.

3. ISSUE: NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

Recreational facilities, such as Little League ballparks, have been concentrated at the Blatnick Park complex as recommended in Plan-83. Access, however, remains a problem for pedestrians and bicycles that must traverse major transportation arteries such as Route 7.

Given this situation, investigation may be warranted into the development of smaller "neighborhood" parks to serve the population within the substantial area located south of Route 7 and also adjacent to State Street. Research should be conducted into existing level of facilities, current ownership of public parkland and allowance of public access to these areas to then be compared with the service needs of that geographic population. These individual "neighborhood" parks should then be linked by bike paths thereby providing easy access to a variety of sites and facilities.

Investigation may be warranted into the availability of under-used private recreational facilities that may then be integrated into the Town's public recreation network. Similar to the cooperative relationship between the Town and the School District, available or under-used recreational facilities located upon private land holdings might be made accessible for general public use. These additional recreation sites would enhance the Town's overall park network and could potentially benefit those areas where current facilities are inadequate or future park development is unlikely.

A potential recreational area exists in the southwest corner of town as illustrated on the Town's official map. It is located in an area of "paper streets" lying within a N.Y.S. Regulated Wetland. Given its regulated status, paper streets in the wetlands should be removed and the area either rezoned for Land Conservation or otherwise protected via an overlay district or special permit process.

Since this same wetland extends into the Town of Colonie and the City of Schenectady, a unique opportunity is presented for the creation of an "intermunicipal recreation area" offering passive recreational activities such as bird watching, flora appreciation and an interpretive walking trail. In addition to providing the southern portion of town with a passive recreation area, this site would also complement the additional private natural areas found within the Town.

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4. ISSUE: PRESERVATION OF ADDITIONAL OPEN SPACE AREAS THROUGH THE ACQUISITION OF LAND BY PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS, "SET-ASIDES", OR BY DIRECT TOWN ACTION.

While no private organizations (e.g. Nature Conservancy, Inc.) have acquired new tracts of land for conservation since Plan-83, direct Town action has encouraged parkland formation through the accumulation of "set-aside" areas via the subdivision process. The Town currently requests a ten (10) percent land set-aside for new subdivision developments. However, in lieu of land, the Town may accept a monetary per lot payment to be used for park and open space purposes.

The cumulative benefit of these individual land acquisitions may be greatly enhanced if aggregated to form larger tracts of unbroken open space. Rather than existing as isolated areas of green, these larger, aggregated tracts of preserved land would contribute to the Town's overall system of natural / open space areas. The encouragement of "cluster developments" would also allow for the creation of future subdivisions while preserving larger parcels of unbroken land that could then be incorporated via pedestrian and bicycle linkages into the Town's larger open space and recreation system.

The approximately 95 acres of nature preserve belonging to the Schenectady Museum represents a valuable environmental resource that merits special protection. Particular attention should be paid to this parcel in the future so that it is not diminished by development pressures or acute fiscal distress.

The Town might wish to establish a specific "park, open space and recreation plan" that examines existing open space/park land while envisioning future development and resident needs. This plan would then serve as a valuable planning tool in the integration of existing park land and aid in the development of future open space areas acquired through either direct land set-asides or land purchases.

5. ISSUE: DEVELOPMENT OF WATER-RELATED COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES IN THE RIVER FRONT AREA WEST OF THE REXFORD BRIDGE AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE MOHAWK RIVER TRAIL.

The Mohawk River serves as the eastern and northern boundary between the Town of Niskayuna and adjacent communities. During the early part of the century, the Mohawk River was a critical link of the Statewide Barge Canal System. With the demise of the Canal as a primary method for the movement of goods, the River has been largely ignored as more than just a body of water used as a transportation mode for leisure craft. In recent years, however, New York State has recognized the Canal System's potential to enhance tourism and economic development in the State. As a result of this renewed interest, the State has adopted legislation mandating that the Thruway Authority be responsible for the operation of the State Canal System and provide financial assistance to key transportation related economic development projects along the Canal. The legislation also requires the preparation of a Statewide Barge Canal System Plan to be prepared in two phases. Phase I was completed in 1993, and is a comprehensive inventory of land uses and ownership along the Canal System. Phase II involves analyses and recommendations for development of "State-scale" facilities this phase was completed in the fall of 1994.

The legislation also recommends that county or region-wide plans be prepared to complement and supplement the Statewide Planning effort. In Schenectady County, the Planning Department, in conjunction with a variety of interest groups, has expressed interest in the preparation of a countywide Barge Canal Plan. In response to this interest, the Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDRPC) submitted a proposal to the N.Y.S. Department of Development to prepare a region wide plan. Among the Plan's goals are to identify natural and

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historic sites and areas of local and regional significance not included in the State Canal Recreation Plan, and to formulate a priority list of "less than State-scale" development proposals for further site-specific feasibility and design studies.

In the year 2000, the Town began working with Schenectady County and other waterfront municipalities on a “Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan”. A copy of the draft document is available for review in the Town’s Planning office. If enacted this plan would establish a vision for the waterways by clearly articulating specific policies. It would be the job of the Planning Board under site plan review for any development along Niskayuna’s waterway to make sure that developments comply with the policies described in the Plan. Under the auspices of the New York State Thruway Authority, areas abutting the Erie and Barge Canals may be eligible to receive funding for projects relating to, in particular, transportation/circulation, water-related commercial activities and cultural/recreational activities intended to enhance this canal-zone area. Given the Town's river front resources and this opportunity for funding, the Town should give priority to developing an overall implementation plan for the improvement of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike/Hike Trail and the creation of an integrated system of passive recreational facilities along the river front. In addition to general improvements to the trail, this plan could include the following:

- Identify gaps in the existing bike trail and acquire/develop public land to resolve this. Expand the bike trail to link the soccer fields, the Town’s recreation Center, and River Road Park.
- Further, incorporate Mohawk Hudson Bike/Hike Trail into the Town's recreational system by creating additional pedestrian/bicycle access points and developing linkages to the Town Center and school facilities.
- Further develop Vischer Ferry Lock # 7 into a passive cultural/recreational facility. With improved vehicular and pedestrian/bicycle access, this site could become a natural attraction site with a picnic area, a fishing area, an informational area illustrating the Canal's history and importance to this area and an interpretive walking trail detailing the site's flora and fauna. This site could be then be linked to the Schenectady Museum Nature area with additional linkages to the remainder of the Town's recreational areas.
- Encourage the incorporation of Niskayuna’s Mohawk Hudson Bike/Hike Trail park areas into the larger, regional recreation network. Invite commercial and recreational canal users from points beyond the Town's borders to actively partake of Niskayuna's river front recreation facilities by developing appropriate sites for temporary boat docking with related - rest room and refreshment services. Trail- access points from dock areas would allow for greater pedestrian/bicycle participation in the river front recreational activities.

While no N.Y.S. regulated wetlands exist in the river front section east of the Rexford Bridge, this area does contain wetland zones. Given the environmental sensitivity of this land and the high cost of service provision to this location, this area should be protected via an overlay district or special permit process and incorporated into the more comprehensive recreation network that includes the Mohawk Hudson Bike/Hike Trail.

6. ISSUE: LAND ACQUISITIONS TO MEET SPECIFIC NEEDS

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Additional recreational space should be sought to adequately serve the needs of the Town's population residing near State Street in the Southwest portion of the Town. Becker Street Park, a 0.33 acre open lot, currently

serves as the recreation space for this area. However, given the number of younger families taking advantage of the more moderate housing prices in this portion of town,

this park may not sufficiently satisfy the active and passive recreational needs of the increasing number of children. If additional land proves to be unavailable, improved bicycle and pedestrian access should be developed to existing parks and open spaces. The Town should actively pursue acquiring the wetland area in the Southwest portion of Town from Schenectady County for passive recreational uses.

RECREATIONAL AND CULTURAL FACILITIES

GOAL - To continue enhancing the Town's broad-based recreation and conservation network by maximizing emerging opportunities that enable Town residents to enjoy a diversity of recreational and cultural experiences.

Objective #1 - The Town should target appropriate land acquisitions and improvements to meet identified recreation program needs.

Implementation Tasks:

1. Continue to pursue the use of public and private facilities that may be integrated into the Town's public recreation network.
2. Identify suitable sites for Town recreation activities in the event that these sites become available.
3. Continue to require either parkland set-asides or fees in lieu of parkland, as appropriate, to meet the Town's increasing recreation program needs.
4. Actively pursue acquiring property in Southwest Niskayuna from the County for passive recreational uses.
5. The Town should evaluate a suitable location to construct a dog park.

Objective #2 - The Town should focus on development of recreational opportunities in under-served areas.

Implementation Tasks:

1. Investigate the development of neighborhood parks to serve the population within the substantial area located south of Route 7.
2. Seek additional recreational space to adequately serve the needs of the Town's population residing near State Street in the southwest portion of the Town.

Objective #3 - The Town should establish a greenway system that permits the connection of parks and open space, allows pedestrian and bicycle access and conserves remaining natural habitats within the Town.

Implementation Tasks:

1. Develop a Town-wide bikeway plan to further integrate and enhance access to existing and future public park and open space areas.
2. Include the bikeway plan on the Town's Official Map to provide planning insight for future public park and open space developments.

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3. Create enhanced bicycle and pedestrian linkages to incorporate the Town's existing parks and natural areas into the greenway system through such mechanisms as use of existing public rights of way, easements and land purchase.

Objective #4 - The Town should update its park, open space and recreation plans to document existing open space and parkland resources while envisioning future developments and resident needs.

Implementation Tasks:

1. Utilize the Geographic Information System (GIS) to identify and map existing and future cultural and recreation facilities within the Town.

2. Establish an updated Park, Open Space, and Recreation Plan that examines existing open space and parkland while envisioning future development and resident needs.
3. Encourage increased participation by school district officials and other public and private community landowners in the preparation of this revised Park, Open Space and Recreation Plan.
4. Continue to aggregate individual subdivision land set-asides wherever possible to form larger tracts of uninterrupted open space.
5. Continue to encourage average density and cluster developments as a method to preserve larger parcels of contiguous land that might then be incorporated into the Town's larger open space and recreation system via pedestrian and bicycle linkages.
6. Investigate with adjacent municipalities the development of an intermunicipal passive recreation area in the wetland zone in the southwest portion of Town.
7. Evaluate the feasibility of using the landfill site for future park and open space purposes.
8. Evaluate the feasibility of rezoning all designated nature preserves and New York State designated wetland areas to the Land Conservation zoning classification to limit future development activities in these areas.

Objective #5 - The Town should take a leadership role to enhance public enjoyment and use of the Mohawk River/Barge Canal and adjoining Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail.

Implementation Tasks:

1. Further, incorporate the Mohawk Hudson Bike/Hike Trail into the Town's recreational system by creating additional pedestrian/bicycle access points and developing linkages to the Town Recreation Center on Aqueduct Road and school facilities. Consider extending the bike path from Blatnick Park to River Road Park.
 2. The Town should implement the "Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan" to help encourage the development, preservation and recreational opportunities for the riverfront in Niskayuna.
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3. Further develop Vischer Ferry Lock #7 into a cultural/recreational facility including such elements as:
 - A State constructed informational area illustrating the Canal's history and importance to this area .
 - An interpretive walking trail detailing the site's flora and fauna.
 - Improved linkages to the Schenectady Museum Nature area with additional linkages to the remainder of the Town's recreational areas.
 - Improved vehicular and pedestrian/bicycle access.
 4. Continue improvements to Aqueduct Park and the Railroad Station Park to increase recreational opportunities along the Mohawk River Barge Canal.

ISSUE AREA: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

Economic development affects the Town of Niskayuna in multiple ways. It provides underlying strength to the community's tax base. It injects vibrancy into the Town, conveying to residents and visitors a plurality of experience and opportunities. Both commercial and industrial establishments furnish employment for many residents. Yet, professional, commercial and industrial activities must harmonize within the community to avoid potentially deleterious influences. The Town provides its residents with a full-

time 43-member Police Department, one paid fire district and two volunteer fire districts. The Town provides water to all of its residents and 95% of the Town is serviced by sanitary sewer and a transfer station. The Town also has available to its residents emergency 911, a County Library branch, a well-maintained road system, and a wide range of recreational programs.

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The momentum of many of the economic forces that have shaped the Town in the past continue in 2003. Nevertheless, new issues emerge as dynamics are altered in the community. Accordingly, the Economic Development issues paper also evaluates more recent initiatives that may influence economic development. These include the evolution of the Town Center, the development of the Northwest corner of Town and a Comprehensive Economic Development Plan prepared for Schenectady County that assesses specific industry sectors possessing opportunities for growth. Building permit data are tabulated to compare the rate of industrial and commercial growth in the Town with residential growth. Future economic development in Niskayuna is clearly a function of available and useable sites; and therefore, the following issues are reviewed in the context of presently limited land resources.

1. ISSUE: TRENDS IN OFFICE DEVELOPMENT IN RESIDENTIAL AREAS.

A proposal by the Town Board to change zoning along Balltown Road, North of River Road to R-P:Residential Professional has been accomplished, and the specific land use issues raised are discussed in the Land Use issues paper. Professional offices have been eliminated from the R-2: Medium Density Residential Zoning District.

In terms of the proposals effect upon tax base and economic development several impacts are evident. The impact upon properties converted from residential to commercial use, tend to increase in market value. The impact upon surrounding properties left unconverted is less certain. Hence, careful evaluation of future economic development should consider not only the impact on the affected properties, but also the broader impact on the surrounding community.

Office development should not occur at the expense of the town's residential base. Any illegal encroachments of nonresidential uses into residential areas can be prevented as the Town of Niskayuna continues to pursue a program of strict zoning and code enforcement.

2. ISSUE: PRESENT ZONING CLASSIFICATION I-R RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT AS A LIMIT TO ECONOMIC GROWTH

In the previous decade, no new research and development facilities have located within the Town of Niskayuna. In 2001 Schenectady International expanded to locate its corporate headquarters in Niskayuna, Environment One received approval to construct a 40,000 square foot addition to the existing facility and in 2002 G.E. Global Research (formerly G.E. R & D) received approval for a multi-million dollar upgrade.

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Local public policy can, and does, influence other private sector decisions to locate and/or expand businesses. In 1989, Laventhol & Horwath prepared a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategic Plan for Schenectady County. Under the terms of the engagement, Laventhol & Horwath conducted a target industry analysis to identify the major business sectors with a strong likelihood of investing in the County. Among the target industries identified are scientific and engineering instruments, information processing and communications equipment, and health care services. Coincidentally,

medical related services have exhibited significant growth within the town. A node of comprehensive care physicians offices and diagnostic complexes has emerged in the vicinity of Balltown Road and River Road. Additionally, Bellevue Maternity Hospital has

undergone considerable expansion in recent years and as of January 2002 has changed from profit to not-for-profit.

The Town may wish to investigate broader economic development opportunities and not limit itself to the niche opportunity of research and development facilities. The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategic Plan for Schenectady County provides a basis to begin an investigation of other such opportunities.

Increasing the amount of land zoned for Research and Development, if it should be done at all, should be done in the context of the realistic economic feasibility of encouraging additional Research and Development activity. The Town of Niskayuna is looking at rezoning a portion of the northwest corner of Town to a O-T: Office/Technology zone, which would allow for light industrial uses and office use.

3. ISSUE: INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE TOWN.

There are several substantial parcels available for economic development located in the area north of Hillside and Providence Avenue and west of Balltown Road. The Hillside Commerce Park complex is located in this area and consists of 154 acres. Although a few buildings occupy the site, it remains underutilized and is generally developable. This particular site was identified in the Laventhol and Horwath (1989) plan as a site that should be actively developed. Environment One is located in the area to the west of Balltown Road. Much of the remaining acreage in this area could undergo development. In addition, the Town owns a 50-acre site on Aqueduct Road that now houses the Recreation Center, and a portion of this has the potential for development. This area is included in the Metroplex zone,²and the Town is actively considering an Office Technology zone in this area.

Because of the economic development potential of this site, the Town should consider a more active role in facilitating its development. The Town and the Metroplex Authority may play a critical role in terms of infrastructure development and regulatory approval prior to the evaluation of specific development proposals. For instance, thought has been given to building a road through the area, connecting Balltown Road to Aqueduct Road, greatly improving access to these underdeveloped parcels. Certainly, the Town could work to coordinate the plans of the principal landholders in the area. The principal concern is the balance between existing residential and future economic development.

4. ISSUE: COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY IN THE MOHAWK COMMONS-STATE STREET AREA.

No vacant land is available to support additional commercial activities in this area. While there are still obtrusive visual elements in this area that affect commercial activity recent developments have brought economic renewal and improvements to the visual character of the street (i.e. new curbs and sidewalks by the State, new construction at Mohawk Commons, including curbing and landscaping, new gas station at Balltown Road and State Street, new façade at BMW Motorworks, etc.). The future focus in this area should be upon strengthening the existing commercial base, and improving its visual character, and the Town should define ways to do so. In 2000, the Town enacted design standards

for the C-S: Shopping Center Zoning District, and these standards were successfully used in the redevelopment of Mohawk Commons (formerly Mohawk Mall).

As New York State continues efforts to deinstitutionalize its developmentally disabled population, the future disposition of the O. D. Heck complex may become an issue. The Town should continue to monitor the State's plans for this facility, and work in conjunction with the State to promote its adaptive re-use. ²² Metroplex has shown interest in this area for development. There are two properties in this area located in the Empire Zone.

5. ISSUE: COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY IN THE TOWN CENTER AREA.

The focus of much commercial business serving Town residents is found in the Nott Street/Balltown Road locale where a small shopping district has developed. The establishment of a Town Center District has amplified this trend. With the Post Office, Town Hall, County Library Branch, and St. James Square commercial development it provides the "anchors" drawing people to the Nott Street/Balltown Road District where they can shop and find auxiliary services.

Although the Nott Street/Balltown Road area could eventually assume primacy as the Town's commercial district, its present stage of development enables the Town to ensure that aesthetically sensible development occurs. Development in the Nott Street/ Balltown Road area should be distinguished from existing commercial districts in that it should be a node versus strip development, pedestrian friendly, and oriented to serve Town residents.

Existing trends in commercial activity, combined with future plans for public buildings, provide Niskayuna with an opportunity to develop a commercial area nearer to the center of Town. The Town Center has brought an identity and focal point to the community, mitigating the amorphous influences that characterize many suburban communities. The other two existing commercial districts in the Town lack the ability to create a focal point for the Town since neither is centrally located. Upper Union Street is closely affiliated with the City of Schenectady and the State Street-Balltown Road area serves an itinerant market travelling Route 5.

6. ISSUE: COMMERCIAL RECREATIONAL FACILITIES IN THE RIVER FRONT AREA UPSTREAM OF THE REXFORD BRIDGE.

The Town of Niskayuna is participating in the development of the "Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan" and any commercial development along the Mohawk River should be compatible with this Plan's objectives.

Commercial recreational water-related activities in the Town would be limited to the region west of the Rexford Bridge since the areas east of it are either characterized by steep slopes and/or owned by New York State.

7. ISSUE: TAX BASE.

The Town of Niskayuna has adopted the "homestead" provision with regard to its property valuation and assessment practices. Under this state statute, the amount of property tax derived from residential versus non-residential sources is established at a 60%:40% base proportion (base year - 1989). Regardless of relative growth rates, the proportion of tax revenue collected from nonresidential properties will remain the same. The Town's tax base grows at a rate of 1.5% - 2.0% per year (net of appreciation value). However, an analysis of building permit data from 1994 to 2001 indicates that tax base value gain is concentrated in residential (see Figure 1) growth. The long-term practical implications of this phenomenon are of more concern than the short-term. In the short-

term, non-residential properties will continue to provide 40 % of tax base revenue. Long-term non-residential property tax revenue stability is less certain because businesses must be taxed at a higher rate to maintain the same base proportion.

Although non-residential investment provides important tax base growth, it does not carry the attendant liabilities of residential growth, such as increased school district enrollment.

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS & IMPLEMENTATION TASKS

GOAL - To employ viable Town initiatives that foster economic development in appropriate locations.

Objective #1 - The Town should examine the structure and standards of its zoning ordinance to determine changes required to foster the economic development of land zoned for commercial or industrial use.

Implementation Tasks:

1. Evaluate how allowable uses in the I-G: General Industrial zone might be revised to include office development.
2. Enact appropriate performance standards in the industrial zone that promote development compatible with the residential character of the community.
3. Evaluate commercial zoning standards to more directly address present trends in commercial development by considering such features as parking standards, commercial PUDs, and commercial overlay districts.
4. Investigate the value of additional standards for the C-N zoning district.
5. Discourage residential rezoning of industrial or potential O-T zoning areas.

Objective #2 – The Town should complete the process of examining the economic development opportunities in the northwest portion of Niskayuna. The required zoning amendments to establish an Office Technology (OT) zone should be implemented.

Implementation Tasks:

1. Explicitly define the uses allowed in the OT zone. Uses should be environmentally conservative and minimize impacts to the residential character of the Town.
2. “Heavy Manufacturing” should not be an allowed use in the OT zone.
3. The current definition of “Light Manufacturing” in the zoning ordinance needs to be redefined to be more explicit. Light Manufacturing should be an allowed use in the OT zone.
4. The boundaries of the OT zone in the northwest portion of Town need to be defined. The following criteria should be evaluated and considered to determine the boundaries:
 - a) the impact on existing uses in the adjacent areas such as the Jewish Community Center, the Craig School and the Town soccer fields
 - b) minimize all possible impacts on residents within the zone including negative effects on property values
 - c) the existing boundaries of funding agencies (Metroplex, Empire Zone) that would help foster the growth of business in the OT zone
 - d) the use of the terrain and vegetation, existing, altered and new to buffer the current residential population
 - e) the impact of the potential increase in traffic in re-zoning to OT versus maintaining the current zoning
 - f) consideration of the overall impact on the available housing stock within the Town

g) any zone changes should consider the area as a whole more specifically any zone change should examine the impact on Balltown Road, Hillside Avenue, and Aqueduct Road. Care should be taken to insure that any proposed change does not result in piecemeal development in this area. See figure 2

Objective #3 - The Town should advance the concept of a Town Center, thereby creating a focal point of shopping, civic and cultural activities.

Implementation Tasks:

1. In 1995 the Town Center Overlay District was formulated to ensure coherent development of a Town Center District and implemented through the amendment of the comprehensive plan and through appropriate changes to the zoning ordinance, zoning map, and official map. The Town should ensure further development in this area that is consistent with the Town Center Overlay District.
2. Define the public facility elements to be included in the Town Center.

Objective #4 - The Town should take an active role in facilitating the development and redevelopment of selective properties that are underutilized relative to their economic potential.

Implementation Tasks:

1. Target growth-industry sectors, such as scientific and engineering instruments, information processing and communications equipment and health care services, for location and growth within industrial and commercial zones.
2. Coordinate the plans of large landholders in northwest Niskayuna for coherent development of nonresidential lands.
3. Investigate the feasibility of public/private cooperation on infrastructure installation to foster economic development.

ISSUE AREA: PUBLIC FACILITIES

Introduction

In the broadest sense, public facilities include Town operated administrative and service facilities, public schools and their related facilities, fire stations, lands and institutions owned and operated by non-local units of government, and public recreational facilities. This issues paper is limited to a discussion of selected Town facilities and services and how best to plan for their future. A summary of the full range of public facilities within or serving the Town is provided in Table 8.

1. ISSUE: WATER SUPPLY AND DISTRIBUTION

The Town of Niskayuna obtains its water supply from the Schenectady Aquifer through a number of well fields located within the Town and the City of Schenectady. Niskayuna's well field and filtration plant along the

Mohawk River at its eastern border currently provides approximately 45 % of the Town's average daily water demand of 3.2 million gallon per day (MGD). The remaining 55 % is obtained from the City of Schenectady through the Joint Water Project.

Based on population projections and water demand figures by the Capital District Regional Planning Commission and Malcolm Pirnie, the average daily demand will be 3.25 MGD in 2010 and increase to 3.36 MGD by 2030. The Town's projected maximum day demand (greatest sum of daily water production, plus the amount of water withdrawn

from storage that occurs during any one day in a given year) is projected to increase to 4.15 MGD in 2010. The capacity of the Town's water filtration plant is approximately 3.65 MGD. Additional well development in the Niskayuna well field could reduce, if not eliminate, Town dependency on the Schenectady City water system.

The Town owns and maintains two pump stations and three storage facilities within its service area, exclusive of the treatment facilities. The Bevis Hill reservoir is located in the Town but only provides storage for the City of Schenectady. The Town consolidated into one water district in September of 1983, but the system is divided into three pressure zones - low, medium, and high. The 1991 Malcolm Pirnie Water Distribution System Analysis found that the firm capacity of the pumping stations in the medium and high pressure zones of the system is adequate to meet the current and future maximum daily demands of the zones. The two, one million-gallon storage tanks in the medium pressure zone are adequate for present and projected storage requirements. The high-pressure zone is serviced by a 400,000 gallon elevated tank located next to the Bevis Hill reservoir. While it meets current storage demands, the Malcolm Pirnie study suggests the need for a larger tank to meet future demands. In addition, the report suggested the addition of 750 MGD pump for the high pressure zone to achieve optimum fire flows of 1500 gpm in that zone.

Field tests performed by Malcolm Pirnie indicated possible internal deterioration of pipes in Balltown Road and some six inch water mains in the south and west portions of the Town. The consultant suggested that the Balltown Road transmission main from the Schenectady Reservoir to Holiday drive be cleaned and lined. In 1994, a portion of this main from VanAntwerp Road to Union Street was replaced.

The Town has extended municipal water (a 3,300ft. main) along Aqueduct Road to serve 22 homes and provide water for potential development near the waterfront. This water extension along Aqueduct Road (from the intersection of Balltown Road and Aqueduct Road westward) provides water to homes that in the past have experienced well water supply and quality problems. Additional extensions along Aqueduct Road are unlikely because of the natural constraints of rock outcroppings and steep slopes as well as the undeveloped nature of the northern section. However, this situation could change if a developer provides water extensions for a large project in this area.

2. ISSUE: UTILITY INSTALLATION IN FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Current Town policy stipulates that developers are required to install utilities in their developments and dedicate them to the Town. This policy is typical of most towns in the Capital District and should be continued.

3. ISSUE: SEWER INSTALLATION IN DEVELOPED NEIGHBORHOODS

It is estimated that more than 95 percent of the Town's population is serviced by the Consolidated Sewer District No. 6, Schenectady Consolidated Sewer No. 1, and the Town of Colonie. An estimated six hundred and forty housing units are unsewered at present within the Town.

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Several homes that are unsewered are located near the Mohawk River along the northeastern borders of the Town. Because of the relatively sparse population, surface bedrock formations and topography in the northeastern section of the Town, the cost of constructing a collection system, force mains, pump stations and trunk line has been prohibitive; however, if necessary piping can be installed along Balltown Road as part of

the Rte. 146 reconstruction, it may become financially feasible to extend sewers to this area. Its eventual construction is highly improbable, unless a large development scenario is planned that could justify the public investment.

Currently, the western end of Albany Street is served by the Consolidated Sewer District No. 1, which is part of the City of Schenectady system. This area also lacks the necessary large population needed to distribute the cost of providing gravity sewers, a force main and pumping station. Due to a large N. Y. S. freshwater wetland which occupies the central portion of this area, development within this section is highly unlikely. If sewers were extended to this area a wetland disturbance permit from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and an easement from the landowner would be needed. Application was made in April 2002 for a Small Cities Grant to partially fund a sewer extension in this area, but was denied. The Town will continue to look for outside funding sources in order to offset the high cost of this project.

4. ISSUE: CAPACITY LIMITS ON EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE

Consolidated Sewer District No. 1 is treated at the City of Schenectady Waste Treatment Plant and services the area west of Balltown Road.

Consolidated Sewer District No. 6 serves most of the remainder of the Town east of Balltown Road. There are two main trunk sewers (north and south) receiving waste water from collection sewers in District No. 6 that flow into the Town's waste water treatment plant located on Whitmyer Drive. The plant was built in 1965-66 and discharges treated wastewater into the Mohawk River. This secondary treatment plant has a designed average daily capacity of 3.0 MGD and a peak capacity of 4.5 MGD. In 1990, the average daily flow was 2.27mgd. Fourteen wastewater pumping stations are located within the District. Three stations were installed in the 1960's, three in the 1970's, two in the 1980's and six in the 1990's. The stations are well maintained; however, the control systems need to be updated. At present, all stations have flow capacities greater than existing peak flows; however, inflow and infiltration of stormwater and groundwater into the collection system is pressing some of the stations to their limit. Future development scenarios on undeveloped lands could exceed capacities at some of the stations. The Buckingham Drive pumping station is one of the oldest and frequently requires replacement parts to adequately continue serving the area. When this station deteriorates to a point where replacement is warranted, it should be located south of its present location to better serve the developable lands along the Town's southern boundary. The Becker Street pumping station is near a large tract of undeveloped land. If these lands are developed in the future, the pumping station could be overloaded.

In 2002, the Town began a comprehensive inflow & infiltration (I & I) study of its collection system. The first objective is to locate and quantify I & I points or sources. The second objective is to identify needed repairs and associated costs. The third objective is to evaluate and rank the repairs and capital improvements to maximize our return on investment. The final step is to budget for and implement the repairs and improvements. Upgrades will be needed on both the sanitary and storm sewer systems to reduce the I & I problem described above.

TABLE 8 PUBLIC FACILITIES SERVING THE TOWN OF NISKAYUNA

1. Town offices and Police Department, located on Nott Street East.
2. Recycling and Transfer Station located on River Road This site also houses the Water and Sewer Department offices and garage.
3. Wastewater Treatment Plant at the end of Whitmyer Drive.
4. Public wells (location not published for security reasons).
5. Highway Department offices and garage on WTRY Road.
6. Two one-million gallon water standpipes and a 400,000 gallon water tower adjacent to the Bevis Reservoir on Balltown Road.
7. Water and sewer pump stations located throughout the Town.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

1. Eight separate parcels owned by the Niskayuna Central School District are located within the Town boundaries and comprise over 160 acres. Facilities include the Niskayuna High School; Van Antwerp Middle School; Iroquois Middle School; Birchwood, Craig, Hillside, and Rosendale Elementary Schools; and the school district garage. Glenclyff Elementary School is located in the Town of Glenville.
2. Children in the southern part of the Town attend the South Colonie Schools, none of which are located within the Town's boundaries.

FIRE DISTRICTS

1. Fire District One, maintaining its main station on Balltown Road with a satellite station on River Road.
2. Fire District Two, maintaining its station on Troy Road.
3. Stanford Heights Fire District, serving southern Niskayuna with its stations located outside the Town boundaries.

OTHER NON-TOWN FACILITIES

1. Sgt. Horace D. Brandt Army -Reserve Center on Hillside Avenue.
2. Oswald D. Heck Developmental Center, operated (its use and operation has changed) by the NYS Department of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities on Balltown Road.
3. City of Schenectady Bevis Hill Reservoir on Balltown Road.
4. Town of Colonie pumping station on Rosendale Road.

5. ISSUE: INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

The Town should continue to cooperate and work in conjunction with other governmental agencies (e.g. Schools Districts and Fire Districts) to provide the best possible services and facilities for the community.

At the regional level, the Town should continue to cooperate and work with federal, state, and, county agencies, as well as other municipalities to improve relations, resources, and financial conditions that affect Town residents.

If school district facilities become vacant in the future, any reuse of those facilities should be consistent with town policy.

6. ISSUE: CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMMING

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A Capital Improvement Program is an important tool a community may use to plan for the replacement or expansion of essential equipment, and/or services. With limited tax income available each year to fund the improvements, careful planning is needed to set priorities in funding. An internal steering committee and

review process should be employed to identify and schedule needed infrastructure improvements using a six year program period.

A Capital Improvement Program would identify each improvement or project to be constructed, purchased, or replaced and estimate costs and the proposed means of financing during the six year program period.

Each year in the program would have its own capital improvement budget, which may become a part of the legally adopted annual Town operating budget. However., the longer term program need not have legal significance and does not commit a governing body to a specific expenditure in a particular year.

PUBLIC FACILITIES GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION TASKS

GOAL - To assess the community's future public infrastructure needs and to meet those needs through coordinated planning and efficient implementation.

Objective #1 - The Town should implement a capital improvements planning process.

Implementation Tasks:

Implementation Tasks:

1. Establish a Capital Improvements Program planning committee to include representatives from the Town governing body, department heads and other interested parties.

2. Complete the "consolidation process" which is the legal foundation for Capital Improvement Planning and Budgeting.

3. Establish a multi-year Capital Improvements Program that inventories existing facilities, identifies capital improvements, financing methods, and expected timing of improvements.

Objective #2 - Based upon specific known system limitations, the Town should remain cognizant of the incremental impacts of future growth as allowed by zoning and devise an appropriate and fair means of distributing the burden of accommodating those impacts.

Implementation Tasks:

1. Continue to require developers to install utilities in new subdivisions and dedicate them to the Town.

2. Define existing infrastructure capacity limitations through the Capital Improvements Program and determine expansion needs to accommodate future development.

3. Explore reasonable mitigating measures that may include impact fees to expand existing public infrastructure that is determined to be of insufficient capacity to accommodate future development.

4. Maintain lower density development patterns where public utilities cannot be provided due to financial burden or natural constraints.

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Objective #3 - In those cases determined to be in the public interest, the Town should consider alternatives as provided in Town Law, to the traditional benefits assessment model of financing sewer improvements in already built areas.

Implementation Task:

1. Investigate the feasibility of using Article 12C of Town Law to finance sewer extensions within already built areas through the townwide ad valorem property tax, where appropriate. Look to outside sources of funding.

Objective #4 - The Town should determine the appropriate long-range mix of City versus Town water supply based on the production capacity of the Town aquifer and the service delivery costs from each source.

Implementation Tasks:

1. Continue the dialogue with Schenectady City officials to ascertain establishment of a long-term water agreement.
2. Evaluate alternatives through the Capital Improvements Program process that balances the cost of expanding well development versus City water rates.

ISSUE AREA: LAND USE

Introduction

The Town of Niskayuna is a suburban community. An urbanized area is found along the Town's border with the City of Schenectady, while expanses of rural character are located within its central and eastern sections.

Due to the fact that Niskayuna is essentially a developed Town, challenges encountered when shaping future land use policies will deal mainly with the manner in which remaining vacant areas are developed. Development pressures are managed along the Town's three principal corridors, and future transportation networks accommodating pedestrians, bicycles, and motor vehicles are integrated within present and developing neighborhoods.

General Land Use Patterns and Distribution of Land Use Activities

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The number of parcels and the amount of land in acres within the Town devoted to various land uses was examined using the Town's 2001 tax assessment roll data. The acreage statistics generated through this analysis are approximations due to the fact that acreage data was not universally available for all tax parcels within the Town.

The majority of Niskayuna's development is contained in single family residential subdivisions. According to 2001 Town tax assessment roll data, approximately 84 % of tax parcels within Niskayuna are devoted to single family residential uses; these parcels absorbed approximately 39 % of the Town's land area. Two family residential uses comprised less than 1 % of all tax parcels on less than 1 % of the Town's acreage. Ten percent of the tax parcels within the Town are "vacant", consuming 20 % of the Town's total land area. Vacant parcels are interspersed throughout the Town; however, one notable area of concentration is found in the vicinity of State Street, within a New York State designated wetland. Similar to this area, other sections of Town containing significant numbers of vacant parcels may also lack infrastructure. Coupled with natural constraints, such as poor soils or steep slopes, the ability to develop these lands has been limited in the past.

According to 2000 U.S. Census data and the 2001 Town tax assessment rolls, there were 1,096 apartment units, that is, units within structures containing 3 or more units, within the Town.

General commercial uses are located on 1 % of total parcels using 3 % of the Town's total acreage. In contrast, approximately 0.1 % of all parcels within the Town are used for industrial activities but these uses consume approximately 12 % of the acreage contained within the Town. Other land use activities found within Niskayuna include community and public services (2 % of all parcels, 9 % of total land area), recreation and

entertainment (less than 0.1 % of all parcels, 3 % of acreage), parks and forested lands (less than 0.35 % of all parcels and 6 % of land area). See Table 9.

Land Use Distribution – Total Parcels

Table 9

LAND USE	NUMBER OF PARCELS	PERCENT OF TOTAL PARCELS	ACRES	PERCENT ACREAGE
Total Parcels	8,246	100%	5,488.3	100%
1-Family Residential	7,041	85.39	1,331.6	24.2
2-3 Family Residential	70	0.85	26.7	0.48
Other Residential	23	0.28	73.9	1.3
Apartments	20	0.25	96.1	1.7
Vacant	792	9.60	1,105.5	20.1
Commercial	120	1.46	481.6	8.7
Recreational	24	0.29	432.0	7.8
Community	45	0.55	302.3	5.5

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Services				
Public Services	20	0.24	199.1	3.6
Industrial	3	0.04	722.6	13.1
Parks/Forest	34	0.41	691.1	12.5
Agricultural	2	0.02	25.4	0.46

1. ISSUE: APPROPRIATE LAND USES AND DENSITIES IN NEIGHBORHOODS FACING COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT PRESSURES AND PERSISTENT TRAFFIC GROWTH.

In past years the Town of Niskayuna has attempted to accommodate additional commercial development in appropriate areas along major roadways, and to fashion development regulations that work to enhance these corridors as primary entryways to the Town. Limited commercial development in the form of professional offices had been permitted along major arterials in the R-2 Medium Density Residential zoning district subject to various access, lot size and signage restrictions through use of the special permit process. During the 1980's and 1990's the Town received a significant number of area variance applications to allow professional offices along Balltown Road, and to a lesser extent along Troy Road and Union Street in the R-2 zone. These area variance applications have sought an easing of the requirement for an additional access to a minor arterial; in some cases area variances were requested for relief from the one (1) acre minimum lot size requirement as well. In June of 2000 the Town Board by Resolution 200-131 removed the professional office medical and nonmedical use from the R-2: Medium Density Zoning District. In May of 2001 the Town Board rezoned certain areas

of the R-2: Medium Density zoning district to R-P: Residential Professional where they felt professional office use was appropriate.

TROY ROAD

Background. The entire length of Troy Road (NYS Route 7) within the Town has been reconstructed by the New York State Department of Transportation. The project involved adding a middle turning lane, repaving, stormwater drainage improvements and sidewalk reconstruction. As a result, past capacity constraints are alleviated as levels of service along this roadway improve. Whereas traffic congestion and accident rates have been reduced due to these improvements, traffic volumes are expected to increase consistent with the rate of future traffic growth projected for the region.

Existing Zoning. The majority of lands located within this corridor are zoned R-1 Low Density Residential. The two parcels adjacent to the Town of Colonie on either side of Troy Road are zoned C-N Neighborhood Commercial. The remainder of the corridor is zoned R-2 Medium Density Residential from Mohawk Road east to R-P: Residential Professional zone located on the south side of Troy Road and the C-N district mentioned above to the north.

Existing Land Uses. According to 2001 tax assessment data, land use activity along this corridor is mainly single family residential. Within the C-N Neighborhood Commercial zone abutting the Town of Colonie are a gas station and professional office. In the R-2 zoning district, single family residential uses are found on the majority of parcels (approximately 56 out of 76) with average lot sizes of less than 3/4 acres. Two-family residential uses are located on 5 lots, the average size of which is one acre. Other residential uses are found on two large lots of 10 and 2.25 acres, respectively. 6 lots within this zone are classified as vacant, with lot sizes ranging from 0.07 acres to 1.8 acres. Non-residential uses located in the R-2 zone include:

- 1 fire station

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- 1 church
- 1 cemetery
- 3 greenhouse/nursery
- 1 animal hospital
- 2 professional offices
- 1 care home

Very few properties appear to require rehabilitation and those that do are somewhat interspersed throughout a limited area from the Town boundary on the south to WTRY Road on the north.

In addition, there were very few commercial intrusions into the R-2 zone; land uses on the majority of properties are consistent with the surrounding neighborhood. Finally, several properties possess significant redevelopment potential for residential use.

Summary. The Town is not faced with conflicting factors impacting future land use and development along this corridor. Consistent with past trends, market forces continue to indicate that this area is favorable to residential growth:

- The majority of parcels along this corridor are devoted to older residential uses on adequately sized lots.
- Lands located behind this corridor, on either side, have been developed for single family residential use.

- A significant number of more recent single-family residential subdivisions have been developed in this corridor area.

Although the amount and intensity of commercial uses along this corridor within the Town itself are not extensive at present, the following factors may result in rising traffic growth through this corridor:

- Continued commercial and residential development in the Town of Colonie, evidenced by the large Latham Farms retail complex and proposed expansion of Latham Circle Mall.

- According to the Capital District Transportation Committee, traffic volumes are expected to increase 39% along this corridor from 2000-2010, compared with the 27% projected region-wide growth. The fact that this roadway serves not only as a major arterial within the Town, but as a regional arterial as well should be recognized.

Recommendations: The primary issue is how the Town grapples with these seemingly contrasting occurrences. As it did with the previous R-P: Residential/Professional rezoning near its eastern border with the Town of Colonie, the Town can attempt to designate any sections along this corridor where commercial development could be accommodated without resulting in strip development. However, an examination of tax parcels indicates few, if any, remaining areas that would easily lend themselves to this approach.

In the absence of an approach which would allow restriction of commercial activities to appropriate activity nodes along this corridor, it appears that the best strategy is to retain the current zoning as is. This could achieve two objectives, preserving both the existing neighborhood character and affordable housing.

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The Town should then determine steps it can take to assist those properties, which could benefit from rehabilitation assistance since these are primarily the same properties where traffic impacts are greatest due to building locations. Furthermore, the Town should identify other actions it can take to enhance the positive aspects and locational attributes of this neighborhood. The Town has already relaxed some of the home occupation restrictions by allowing two non-resident employees instead of one in homes on a major arterial, and

other relaxations could be considered. Fence height restrictions could also be decreased for the front yard to afford greater privacy. The Town does not have any rehab assistance for homeowners, but helping residents in certain areas of Town with painting and other enhancements should be looked into, there maybe some grant opportunities available from the State. The issue with fencing and relaxing the ordinance for residents along Troy Road has been raised. The Zoning Board of Appeals has looked unfavorably on height variances for fences in the Troy Road or other areas of the Town.

BALLTOWN ROAD

Background. Similar to Troy Road, Balltown Road is a major arterial within the Town, which has been experiencing significant traffic growth. Like Troy Road, portions of this roadway contain primarily residential neighborhoods.

Existing Zoning and Land Uses. The majority of lands located within this corridor are zoned R-1 Low Density Residential and R-2 Medium Density Residential. This corridor can be described as containing seven different neighborhoods or subareas. Moving north

along Balltown Road from its intersection with State Street to its terminus at the Mohawk River, the following subarea descriptions have been assigned and are illustrated in Figure 2.

Subarea B1: Zoning in this subarea, which is bounded on the south by State Street and O.D. Heck to the north, includes a Shopping Center Commercial district containing the Mohawk Commons and the Raymour & Flanigan Plaza.

Subarea B2: Abutting the Shopping Center Commercial District in Subarea 1 to the south and extending to Niskayuna Square to the north of Consaul Road, this subarea is comprised of C-N: Neighborhood Commercial, R-1: Low Density and R-2: Medium-Density Residential zoning. The O.D. Heck Developmental Center is located to the south of Consaul Road and Stewart's Convenience store to the north. No single-family residences are found within this subarea. The City of Schenectady has single family homes located in this area and in Subarea 1.

Subarea B3: This subarea extends from subarea 2 to Union Street and contains a R-1 Low-Density Residential district, with a small section of R-2 zoning on the western side of Balltown Road between the Crosstown and Union Street. Single family development is located primarily on the side streets in this subarea; however, approximately 29 single-family homes have frontage on Balltown Road. Other land uses include four vacant parcels, two commercial properties, and two church parcels.

Subarea B4: Moving north from Union Street to Van Antwerp Road, this subarea contains R-2 zoning on the west side of Balltown Road and R-1 zoning on the east. A total of 36 properties have frontage on Balltown Road in this subarea. The majority of parcels are used for single family residences (29 out of 36). Other uses include the Curling Club, a firehouse and lands devoted to public purposes.

Subarea B5: This subarea is bounded by Van Antwerp Road on the south and Crescent Road on the north; its center encompasses the intersection of Balltown Road and Nott Street. Zoning currently consists of C-N: Neighborhood Commercial and R-2: Medium Residential. Land use activities include single family dwellings, townhouses and apartments, two daycare centers, a television station, an office building, two gas stations, two banks, a small strip of commercial stores, and a shopping center containing a food store, restaurants, retail stores and professional offices (St. James Square) at the intersection of Nott Street and Balltown Road. In 1994

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the Town moved its offices from Balltown Road to its location on Nott Street East (Niskayuna Circle). At the same time the Town amended its zoning ordinance to add the Town Center Overlay District and created the "Town Center".

Subarea B6: An R-1 Low-Density Residential district is found on the eastern side of Balltown Road in this subarea, which runs from Crescent Road on the south, north to River Road and Providence Avenue. The western section is zoned R-2 Medium-Density Residential with one parcel located on the corner of Balltown Road and Providence Avenue zoned R-P: Residential Professional. Single family residential uses predominate in this subarea; the Niskayuna High School, a professional office and a church are also found here.

Subarea B7: North of Providence Avenue, it is the I-R Research & Development Industrial zoning which comprises the majority of this subarea; the General Electric Training Center, Environment One Corporation and Schenectady International, Inc. are

found here in this subarea. An R-2 district is located between River Road and the I-R district to the north. Several religious properties, professional offices, a veterinary clinic, a school and single family residential uses are also found in this subarea. In 2001 the Town rezoned the area on the south side of Balltown Road and River Road from R-2: Medium Density Residential to R-P: Residential/Professional. In the late nineties the Town saw the expansion of Schenectady International and Environmental One Corporation, and the development of soccer fields from land donated by the General Electric just north of Craig School on Balltown Road.

Current Studies. The R-2 zoning district along Balltown Road was included in the Town's professional office study discussed previously. As mentioned above, area variances have been requested to allow professional offices in the R-2 zone along this major arterial, indicating that the market considers this corridor to be conducive to commercial development. Most of these variance requests were related to properties located near the Balltown and River Road intersection. In 2000 the Town Board removed the professional office medical and nonmedical use from the R-2 zoning district and rezoned certain areas to R-P: Residential Professional.

Along Balltown Road, it is estimated that a total of six offices could potentially be developed in the R-P zoning district on parcels of one acre or larger, if religious organization and school properties are excluded. Furthermore, preliminary analysis projects that Balltown Road would be the most impacted by traffic of the three corridor study areas based on its current two-lane capacity.

The Town has used a new zoning district, R-P: Residential/Professional zone along the northern section of Balltown Road. This district is devised to function as a "transition zone" between discrete commercial or industrial areas and residential neighborhoods. Within the R-P district, professional and general offices are allowed by special use permit on lots of one acre or larger. Only one access is needed unless a second access is required by the Planning Board for buildings totaling more than 20,000 square feet. Under R-P zoning, subdivision of existing large parcels along Balltown Road could create commercially developable rear lots. R-P zoning would promote professional office development on service roads through such subdivisions, thereby reducing the need for direct access to major arterials. A decrease in the number of access drives would help the arterial function as designed as a regional traffic carrier.

Subarea Recommendations:

Subarea B1: Current zoning districts and associated standards should be retained. In 2000 the Town adopted Design Standards for the C-S zoning district. Standards established in the Rte. 5 Corridor Study should be employed to enhance the character and business viability of State Street. 35

Subarea B2: O.D. Heck is still operating under NYS and it has expanded its uses on the property (one of the new uses is a YMCA). The vacant parcel to the north and east of Stewarts has been developed with the construction of Niskauna Square, Oakmont Subdivision and Hummingbird Manor. One change that was overlooked by the Town at the time of rezoning part of this vacant parcel to the north as C-N: neighborhood Commercial was the Stewart's parcel. The Stewart's parce remains R-1 and it should be rezoned to C-N.

Subareas B3, B4 and B6: Based on results of the Town's study, review of existing land uses along this major arterial, and public comments, it appears the preferred strategy is to retain the current residential zoning.

Subarea B5: The proposed Town Center complex is located in this subarea. The Town has adopted the Town Center Overlay District (TCOD) which includes design standards for any type of construction or renovation for any building located in the TCOD. The Town is in the process of amending the Zoning Ordinance to allow “neighborhood mixed use buildings” in the C-N: Neighborhood Commercial Zoning District. This amendment would allow residential and commercial uses in the same building.

Subarea B7: The Town has rezoned the R-2: Medium Density Residential zone on the eastside between River Road and the industrial zone to the north to R-P: Residential Professional. The feasibility of requiring service roads and other measures to reduce curb cuts and traffic safety conflicts should be fully explored. New York State has plans to expand Balltown Road and make improvements to Glenridge Road and Rte. 50 in the future with the Rexford Bridge being the first phase of the project. Once these improvements take place this subarea will be better equipped to handle the current and increasing traffic demands and allow for development of the northwest corner.

With respect to the I-R Research & Development Industrial zone west of Balltown Road, the Town should consider altering the scope of allowable uses in this district to permit office activities, while limiting industrial development to "light" uses only. A less complex alternative would involve rezoning this area to I-G: General Industrial as discussed in the Economic Development Issues paper, while expanding permitted uses to include offices. The Town should also examine the performance standards section of its zoning ordinance and formulate needed changes to ensure their effectiveness as part of the overall development review process. This is especially important when evaluating light industrial projects. The Town is currently exploring the possible rezoning of a portion of the northwest corridor as a Office/Technology zone which would allow for light industrial and professional office use.

NORTHWEST NISKAYUNA

Background. In the area of economic development Plan 93 called on the Town to ... “employ viable Town initiatives that foster economic development in appropriate locations.” This goal is carried forward in Plan 2003. One of the objectives in meeting this goal is that the Town ... “examine the structure and standards of its zoning ordinance to determine changes required to foster the economic development of land zoned for commercial or industrial use”.

In November of 1998 the Town began the process of considering adoption of zoning amendments to establish an OT Office Technology zone in the Northwest corner of Niskayuna. The Town commissioned preparation of a Generic Environmental Impact Statement to assess the potentially significant environmental impacts of building a new road through Northwest Niskayuna and putting in place zoning that would encourage office and technology development.

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The study area is made up by approximately 460 acres of land whose general boundaries are Balltown Road on the east, Hillside Avenue on the south, and Aqueduct Road on the north and west. See attached map.

Existing Zoning. The existing zoning in the proposed Office Technology area is made up of I-G: General Industrial (56%, 255 acres), I-R: Research and Industrial (16%, 73 acres), Planned Unit Development (i.e. housing; 14% of the area or 64 acres), R-2: Medium Density Residential (10%, 48 acres), and R-P: Residential Professional (4%, 20 acres). In the existing I-G: General Industrial zone the principal permitted uses include light manufacturing, wholesale distribution centers and storage facilities, mail order sales offices and distribution centers, research and experimental testing laboratories. Special permitted uses include heavy manufacturing, automotive storage, construction facilities and telecommunications facilities. In the existing I-R: Research and Industrial Development zone the principal uses are research, development, and experimental and testing laboratories. Special permitted uses include light manufacturing and telecommunications facilities.

The Planned Unit Development (PUD) is a type of housing development alternative that incorporates maximum choice in housing environment and type, more usable open space, and preservation of natural topography. Permitted uses are housing and uses that primarily serve residents of the PUD. Permitted uses in R-2: Medium Density Residential are single family dwellings. Special permitted uses include places of worship, religious education facilities, hospitals, mobile home parks, care homes nursing homes, and others. Principal uses in the R-P: Residential and Professional zone include single family dwellings. Special permitted uses include medical offices and office buildings for general business (but not retail business).

Existing Land Uses.

Uses	Acres
Hillside Commerce Park (located on Hillside Avenue) in the I-G Zone	154.0
U.S. Army Reserve Center (located on Hillside Avenue)	12.2
Environmental One (located on Balltown Road) in the I-R Zone	34.0
Jackson Demolition (located on Aqueduct Road) in the I-G Zone	16.0
Town of Niskayuna Recreation Complex (located on Aqueduct Road) in the R-2 Zone	55.2
Existing Residential homes	15.0
Undeveloped land	173.6

Recommendation. The noxious impacts often associated with heavy manufacturing which are incompatible with the essentially residential character of the Town. The Town could elect to leave the existing zoning in place in the study area, and remove the heavy manufacturing use from the I-G: General Industrial zone. Another alternative would be to rezone a portion of Northwest Niskayuna (460 +/- acres) to O-T: Office Technology zoning district which calls for the removal of the heavy manufacturing use. For more information on Northwest Niskayuna please refer to the Goals and Implementation Tasks in the Economic Development section of Plan 2003.

CONSAUL ROAD

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Background. Consaul Road is considered a minor arterial within the Town of Niskayuna that has experienced significant traffic growth over the past ten years. Like Troy and Balltown Roads, major portions of this roadway contain residential neighborhoods, but

over the past ten years, the Town has seen the addition of a shopping center, townhouses and a senior housing project.

Existing Zoning and Land Uses. The majority of lands located within this corridor are zoned R-1: Low Density Residential and R-2: Medium Density Residential, with a small section zoned C-N: Neighborhood Commercial. Moving west to east from its intersection with Balltown Road to its terminus at the Albany County line, the following land uses can be found:

- Convenience store
- Shopping center
- O.D. Heck (NYS facility for the disabled)
- Access road to Raymour & Flanigan and Mohawk Commons
- Townhouses
- Farm/Country Gardens
- Landscaping/Nursery/Gift Shop
- Single family homes
- Senior housing

Recommendation.

The Town should take steps to rezone the parcel of land at the corner of Balltown Road and Consaul Road (Stewarts) from R-1: Low Density Residential to C-N: Neighborhood Commercial. The zoning for this parcel would then conform to the C-N: Neighborhood Commercial zoning of the Niskayuna Square land that surrounds it.

The Town should encourage the County to put Consaul Road back in the budget for the straightening of the dangerous curves that now exist. The straightening of the curves would reduce the number of accidents that occur on the road (in the year 2002 there were a total of 41 accidents).

Another problem that the Town will have to grapple with is Oswald D.Heck Developmental Center. If New York State should decide to sell it, the Town should try to encourage possible buyers to keep its residential character. In keeping with the mostly residential nature of Consaul Road, there is one 36-acre parcel that has the potential for development. This 36 arce parcel is currently zoned R-1: Low Density Residential. The Town should encourage residential development through use of average density.

Over the past ten years with the development of Niskayuna Square, Glen Eddy and most recently Mohawk Commons pedestrian traffic has increased along Consaul Road. The Town should work with the County to construct a sidewalk, bikepath or multi-purpose walkway on the north side of Consaul Road from St. David's Lane to the sidewalk at Hummingbird Manor.

UPPER UNION STREET

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Background. Like Troy and Balltown Roads, Union Street contains neighborhoods in transition. As with the other two corridors, Union Street functions as one of the Town's major arterials. However, as compared to the concentrations of traffic experienced in the peak hour along the other two corridors, Union Street appears to carry city-type traffic comprised of many trip ends or destinations within its commercial area. Land uses along a substantial length of Union Street within the Town are predominantly residential in nature. Alterra Wynwood is a facility for senior citizens that was constructed in the past

ten years. Additionally, the County has made traffic flow improvements to Union Street by bringing it down to one lane and putting in a turning lane.

Existing Zoning and Land Uses. For ease of analysis, Union Street has been divided into two subareas, which are illustrated in Figure 3.

Subarea 1: This subarea extends from the City of Schenectady line to just west of Cornelius Street. It contains three zoning districts, C-N: Neighborhood Commercial, R-2 Medium Density Residential, and R-P: Residential Professional. The C-N district is adjacent to the City's Upper Union Street commercial area, ending at Troy Place on the north side of Union Street and at the Teachers Federal Credit Union to the south. The distribution and layout of land use activities within the C-N district exhibit an older, urban development pattern. This pattern is common to historic travel routes such as Union Street and reflects the fact that this area was developed as an extension of the adjoining City commercial area. The R-2 district of this subarea is somewhat varied and includes a church, synagogue, home occupation use, and the American Legion. The R-P district is on the north side of Union Street from Troy Place east to St. Helen's Church. The uses included in this area are an office building, dentist and single-family homes. In 2000 the Town hired Synthesis Architects to look at possible streetscape improvements to the Union Street area.

Subarea 2: This subarea extends from the vicinity of Cornelius Street to Rosendale Road and is zoned R-1 Low-Density Residential, and R-2 Medium Density Residential. Land uses are limited to single family residences, a church, a private golf club, and a vacant parcel.

Subarea Recommendations:

Subarea 1: The Town has examined this section of Union Street and rezoned a section on the north side of Union Street between Troy Place and St. Helen's School to R-P: Residential Professional. The Town concluded that the remainder of the corridor should keep its present zoning. The Town is amending its Zoning Ordinance to allow "neighborhood mixed use buildings" in the C-N: Neighborhood Commercial Zoning District. This would allow residential and commercial uses in the same building. The Town should work with the neighborhood and institute some of the changes recommended by Synthesis Architects.

Subarea 2: Because of the strong residential character of this area, it seems reasonable to retain the current zoning as is.

2. ISSUE: HOUSING DIVERSITY

The majority of Niskayuna's development is single family residences. According to the 2002 Town assessment roll data, 6,910 tax parcels out of 8,211 total are devoted to single family dwellings while 68 parcels contained two-family dwellings, and 19 apartment complexes (i.e. units within structures containing 3 or more units).

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Compared to other towns in the County, Niskayuna possesses a significant number of apartments, although other suburban towns within the region contain higher percentages of apartments when compared to Niskayuna.

With respect to duplexes or two-family homes, the Town possesses far fewer units than other Towns within the County or Region. Niskayuna is, and will remain, a community characterized by traditional single family residences. There is room to consider housing

alternatives, which meet a variety of social and environmental objectives. The opportunities for these housing alternatives are discussed in the following order: two-family housing, accessory home care units, and average density development.

Two-Family Housing

Two-family homes provide:

- opportunities for affordable home-ownership
- a diversity of housing types; and
- accessory home care functions (i.e. family members living in close proximity to one another, while retaining a measure of independence).

Two-families in Older Neighborhoods. According to the 2002 assessment roll data, existing two-family, structures are concentrated in the following areas (see Figure 4):

- Old Niskayuna along Van Antwerp Road, Palmer Avenue and Regent Street
- Southwest of State Street, and
- Troy Road, primarily within the R2 district

The majority of areas containing two-family homes are zoned R-2 Medium Density Residential and are nonconforming because the lots existed before 1971.

In the Van Antwerp Road/Palmer Avenue/Regent Street area, 37 lots contain two-family homes. The majority of residential parcels are comparatively small averaging 10,000 square feet per lot. Consequently, on-street parking is used by a significant number of residents along these roadways. An estimated eleven vacant parcels are found here with an average size of 2,600 square feet.

In the area southwest of State Street, the neighborhood does not have access to public sewer service. There are approximately eleven lots containing duplexes in this area, with an average parcel size of 0.40 acres or 17,424 square feet. There are approximately 161 single family residential lots found in this area, the average size of which is 13,000 square feet. Approximately 77 vacant parcels are found in this area outside the NYS wetland area; these lots have an average size of 10,000 square feet, and the majority of the lots would be able to accommodate additional parking.

Along Troy Road, there are ten two-family homes and approximately forty single family homes in the R-2 zone. On two-family lots and smaller single family parcels there is often front yard parking due to existing house and driveway locations. Both single family lots and parcels containing two-families are somewhat larger than those in Old Niskayuna and the State Street area. Average lots sizes are 0.72 acres (31,363 square feet) and 1.52 acres for single family and two-family lots, respectively. There are approximately six vacant parcels, with an average lot size of 0.69 acres or 30,000 square feet. The eastern most portion of this area does not have public sewer service. For the most part, soils do not present limitations to installation of on-site septic systems.

Recommendations:

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Van Antwerp Road/Palmer Avenue/Regent Street - Adding additional two-family units would result in an increase in population density and an aggravation of existing parking problems along these neighborhood roads which currently carry significant traffic volumes. Therefore, it would not be practical to permit new two-family homes in this area.

Southwest of State Street - Because of poor soils, the absence of sanitary sewer and NYS DEC Wetlands the Town feels that this area should remain an area of single family homes. If sewers are installed the Town should consider development in this area.

Troy Road - The Town has determined that the Troy Road area should remain as single family residential.

Accessory Home Care Units

Accessory home care units, which have been used in several states in various forms, allow elderly or disabled family members to live in close proximity to other care-giving members of their family while maintaining the privacy of each. While communities search for ways to accommodate needs of their elderly and disabled populations and their families, a main objective of accessory home care unit provisions is to ensure that the character and integrity of existing single family neighborhoods is maintained.

In 1993, the Town Board adopted the “Accessory Home-care Units in Single-family dwellings”. This allows a resident to build a temporary unit onto their existing single-family home for the care of the elderly and/or disabled individuals.

Accordingly, accessory home care units are allowed within existing single family dwellings or additions thereto; they must be temporary and never used for rental purposes. Consequently applicants must demonstrate the need for the unit by an elderly or disabled family member, and must also prepare a plan for reconversion to single family status once the second unit is no longer needed.

Recommendation. The Town should continue to allow Accessory Home Care Unit within the town with stringent and fair enforcement.

Average Density Development

The Town currently facilitates development of different housing types via the Average Density Development section of its zoning ordinance. Average Density Development is allowed within the R-R Rural Residential and R-1 Low Density Residential zoning districts on sites containing a minimum of ten (10) acres. In recent years, several townhouse developments, as well as detached dwelling cluster subdivisions, have been built within the Town under this provision. More diversified and affordable units are being developed under these provisions.

Recommendation. The Town should encourage the use of the Average Density Development option, and continue to encourage its use where there is a void in housing diversity types. Furthermore, the Town should consider allowing this option within the L-C: Land Conservation zoning district. By allowing average density development in the L-C :Land Conservation zoning district the Town would preserve more open space, parkland and trees. Where public sewer service is not available, larger lots will be needed to accommodate septic systems, the Town encourages the installation of public sewer systems. Clustering should be encouraged to ensure creation and preservation of continuous, uninterrupted green space and to protect environmentally sensitive areas. (See Cultural and Recreational Facilities Issues Paper). 41

3. ISSUE: MIDDLE STREET REZONING

The Middle Street neighborhood is located in the Town's northeastern tip along the Mohawk River.

This area currently retains R-R: Rural Residential zoning, in which the required minimum lot size is 80,000 square feet, approximately 1.84 acres. In 1990, the Town

Planning Board recommended that this area be rezoned to R-1: Low Density Residential, with the adjacent 100 year floodplain area to be designated L-C: Land Conservation. The Town Board did not enact those recommendations. The Town should look at this area again and change the zoning inconjunction with the area being sewerred.

The majority of land uses in this area are single family residential (51 out of 76 parcels). Lot sizes range from approximately 1.3 acres to 0.07 acres or 3,050 square feet.

Obviously, none of these lots meet the current minimum lot size requirement; consequently these lots are considered non-conforming. Notably, the 2001 - tax roll also indicates that 22 vacant parcels exist here; these parcels range in area from 18.9 to 0.1 acres. Other land uses include two parcels used for a social organization, a highway garage, and a park.

According to the 2001 assessment roll data, three vacant parcels front on a paper street called River Street; other paper streets remain officially mapped in this area. All of the public streets in this neighborhood were built prior to adoption of Town road standards and became public Town roads through use.

Public water service is available in this area, but there are no public sewers. On-site household systems typically consist of a septic tank and some type of absorption mechanism (i.e. raised bed, tile field, mound, seepage pit, etc.). Consequently, sanitary wastes are currently processed via on-site waste disposal systems. The ability of such systems to successfully process waste over an extended period is a direct function of on-site soil characteristics.

According to the Schenectady County Soils Survey, the entire Middle Street neighborhood contains soils that are rated as "severe" for septic systems because of a shallow depth to bedrock. Therefore, to meet requirements of the state sanitary code, Article 75-A, "fill" systems will most likely be needed. Such systems require a large area where non-native fill soils are deposited, in which absorption trenches are then installed. Such systems are typically installed on lots of at least one acre.

Recommendations: Zoning - Since it will be costly and an engineering challenge to extend public sewer service to the Middle Street area (See Public Facilities Issues Paper), a new zoning district should be created for this area in which one acre minimum lot sizes are required. The 100-year floodplain area should be rezoned L-C: Land Conservation, as previously recommended by the Planning Board. When sewers become available the Town should consider average density development for the remaining vacant parcels.

Official Map - The three tax parcels that appear to front on the paper street named "River Street" should be examined. The Town should check all other paper streets for fronting parcels as well. If remaining vacant parcels will not be landlocked, all paper streets in the floodplain area should be removed from the official map.

4. ISSUE: VACANT AREAS WITHIN ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREAS.

Floodplains and Wetlands 42

Of particular concern in land use policy are environmentally sensitive areas in which development is constrained by the natural conditions of the land. Two such areas within the Town are the floodplain region along the Mohawk River and the State-designated wetlands scattered along the river and throughout the southern part of the Town. Building in the floodplains is regulated under the Town's Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance

while construction in the State-wetlands is regulated under Article 24 of the State Environmental Conservation Law, commonly known as the Freshwater Wetlands Act. Much of the land in these areas of the Town is already zoned Land Conservation, but there are some areas, notably in the southern part of Town, where zoning suggests a density inappropriate to the carrying capacity of these lands (See Figure 5).

Recommendations: The Town should reduce the potential for development in these environmentally sensitive areas by rezoning selected floodplain and state wetlands areas of the Town to Land Conservation where this is not already the case.

Southwest Wetland Area

As discussed in the Cultural and Recreational Facilities Issues Paper, there is a NYS designated wetland in the southwestern section of Niskayuna, south of State Street. This wetland area contains several paper streets that are also drawn on the Town's official map.

Zoning in this area is R-2: Medium Density Residential, and the majority of land uses are single family residential. As stated in the discussion on two-family housing, the average size of single family lots in this area is approximately 13,000 square feet. As indicated in the Public Facilities Issues Paper, this area is not currently served by public sewers; however public water is available. Soils found within the wetland obviously are not suited to on-site systems due to prolonged wetness. Sites outside the wetland boundary should be evaluated on a lot-by-lot basis.

According to 2001 tax assessment data, within the wetland itself and along abutting paper streets, numerous vacant parcels exist. Of 165 parcels located in this general area, 102 are owned by Schenectady County. These parcels consume 22 acres and have an average lot size of 0.22 acres or 9,580 square feet. The remaining 63 lots are owned privately; of these, a total of 23 are held in joint ownership by seven different property owners (See Figure 6).

Recommendations. The Town should examine all privately owned tax parcels via tax parcel maps and aerial photographs of the area. Where privately owned parcels will not become landlocked, the Town should remove paper streets from the Official Map.

The Town should encourage public sewer systems and continue its efforts in seeking funding for sewers in this area.

As stated in the Cultural and Recreational Facilities Issues Paper, the Town should explore the prospect of working with the County to utilize this area for passive recreational purposes and/or a nature preserve. The possibility of the transfer of the County owned parcels to the Town for such a preserve/passive recreational area should be investigated.

5. ISSUE: FUTURE DEVELOPMENT ALONG PEARSE AND LISHAKILL ROADS

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As larger tracts of vacant developable land become scarce, development pressure may increase on the deep or "spaghetti" lots found fronting on several Town collector roads. Since many lots located along these roads possess somewhat limited lot widths, the feasibility of developing such lots for traditional subdivisions, without parcel consolidation, may be difficult. Because the majority of such lots are found on Pearse and Lisha Kill Roads, the balance of this discussion will focus on these two roads (See Figure 7).

Background. Pearse Road and Lisha Kill Road provide through north-south routes connecting Troy Road (Route 7) to Consaul Road in the Town of Colonie. Lands along these roads in this south central portion of the Town are zoned R-1: Low Density Residential. The minimum required lot size within this zone is 18,000 square feet or approximately 0.41 acres. The minimum required lot width and depth are 100 feet and 125 feet, respectively. According to 2001 Town tax assessment data, there are 142 parcels possessing frontage on these roads. Of these, 122 lots are devoted to single family use. Other land uses include 17 vacant lots, two agricultural parcels, and one apartment. Lots range in size from 0.14 acres to 30 acres. The average size of a single family residential lot located along either one of these roadways is 1.5 acres. Of the 142 parcels with frontage on Pearse or Lishakill Roads, 123 have lot sizes of 18,000 square feet or larger.

18,000 Square Foot Minimum Lot Size: Of the 123 lots containing 18,000 square feet or more, 60 could be further subdivided. An analysis of build-out potential based on net developable acreage, in which individual lot configurations were not considered, indicates that approximately 425 additional 18,000 square foot single family lots could be developed if no parcel consolidation occurred.

Public sewers are available along portions of Pearse Road and Lisha Kill Road. New development could provide extensions of these services. A New York State designated wetland runs along the southern half of the Lisha Kill to its border with the Town of Colonie (see Figure 10). According to the Schenectady County Soil Survey, a few pockets of land within this area exhibit temporary or seasonal wetness, and may therefore meet the criteria for federally designated wetlands. Due to the fact that public sewer service could be extended to serve new subdivisions in this area, these soil characteristics should not significantly limit development, but may result in somewhat lower densities because of the need to avoid "wet" areas.

Development Options. "Spaghetti lots" were created as pieces of land were broken off from larger parent parcels, most often previously devoted to farm use. A review of tax parcel map composites of Pearse and Lisha Kill Roads shows approximately 20 lots that currently possess adequate lot width to be subdivided into one additional lot each, assuming the locations of existing structures are favorable to such subdivision.

The Town's Planning Board has encouraged planning for local connecting streets within this area to provide interior access to deep lots proposed for subdivision. Interior subdivision streets tied into the surrounding road network, and designed to function as local streets, could provide needed access without the proliferation of dead end streets or long driveways, both of which can create problems for emergency vehicle access. Presently, three options exist for additional interior access in this area:

Lishakill Road

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Plan-93 recommended that the Town plan for a road that would provide additional access to parcels along the eastern side of Lisha Kill Road, permitting subdivision of the rear portions of larger lots found here. While this proposed road would in fact make a physical connection between Troy and Lisha Kill Roads, its function is

intended to be that of a local street. By proper design, a road or a series of roads would provide interior subdivision access, while its use as a route for through traffic would be discouraged. This road has not been placed on the official map.

Recommendation. Plan-2003 policies related to future development of this area should fully consider whether the Town desires to preserve the rural character of lands fronting along this roadway, or to plan for the more suburban development suggested by the current zoning.

Pearse Road

Establishment of an interior subdivision road is possible off Trottingham Road using a strip of land previously reserved as a "proposed street". This strip was designated for such use during the subdivision process that created residential lots along Trottingham Road.

Recommendation. Plan-2003 policies related to future development of this area should fully consider whether the Town desires to preserve the rural character of lands fronting along this roadway, or to plan for the more suburban development suggested by the current zoning.

For more suburban development in keeping with current zoning, additional roads will be necessary for good circulation. It is recommended that the Town encourage the development of internal access roads rather than long cul-de-sacs.

The Planning Board should continue to encourage creation of a connecting road between Route 7 and Lisha Kill Road. However, any such road should be designed to function as a local street, serving interior subdivision access needs. Interior access along Pearse Road is not as critical as that for Lisha Kill Road, due to the fact that the rear portions of deep lots on Pearse Road do not appear to be developable as separate lots.

The Town should determine which direction it wishes to encourage. If rural development is preferred, the Town should consider rezoning this area for minimum lot sizes of 1 acre.

6. ISSUE: DEVELOPMENT IN THE TOWN CENTER AREA

The Town has had a longstanding commitment to the Balltown Road/Nott Street area in terms of development of the road network and the establishment of a Town Center. In 1992, its goals were realized in part by the construction of Nott Street East. This section of the arterial provides a connection between Balltown Road to the west and Van Antwerp Road to the northeast. The remaining portion of this road will extend from Van Antwerp Road to River Road. The traffic circulation at the High School has been improved by the construction of a service road to Nott Street East in 1996.

The Town Center concept has been implemented with the construction of St. James Square, the Town Hall and the County Library and the renovation of existing buildings in accordance with the Town Center Overlay District standards. At this juncture, the Town is presented with the opportunity to insure efficient and beneficial integration of existing land uses with new public buildings, park land, and bike and pedestrian facilities. There is also the potential to establish controls to assure that new private development will also "fit", creating a true Town Center or "downtown" area within Niskayuna. The focus on appropriate land uses and development controls had made this area the Town Center.

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Issues related to this area's future economic development, pedestrian/bike access, and overall future land use are also discussed in the Economic Development and Cultural and Recreational Facilities Issues Papers. Prior discussions in this paper focused on

appropriate densities and future land uses along Balltown Road in this vicinity. The purpose of this section is to pull together and crystallize those ideas presented elsewhere. The "Town Center" area is considered that section of Niskayuna as shown on Figure 8 and roughly described as a triangle. The three apexes of this triangle are bounded by the Town Center public facilities on the east, the Town's old administrative complex to the south, and the commercial district northwest of the intersection of Balltown Road and Nott Street.

Land use activities currently found or under development in this area include:

- * St. James Square (a mixed use retail/office complex), the Co-op grocery store, the Co-op parking lot, two gasoline service stations, several restaurants, two banks, several professional office buildings, and several small retail and service stores
- * Van Antwerp Village apartments
- * R-1 and R-3 residentially zoned properties, which border on Nott Street East
- * A 24 unit condominium project on Nott Street East
- * Two Daycare Centers
- * Post Office
- * Town Hall and Park
- * Niskayuna Branch Library
- * a scattering of residences along Balltown Road and Van Antwerp Road
- * a few vacant parcels

The majority of this area is zoned C-N:Neighborhood Commercial. However, three residential districts are also found here. These include a section zoned R-1 located south of Nott Street East, abutting the County Library site to the east and an R-3 district to the west; an R-2 zone situated north of Van Antwerp Road, between Balltown Road to the west and Van Antwerp Village to the east; and an R-3 district, containing the Van Antwerp Village apartments.

Significant land uses adjacent to this study area include the Niskayuna High School to the north, the townhouses of Mohawk Trails to the east and established residential neighborhoods to the west and south.

Overall Development Issues

As discussed previously, issues related to the remaining development of this area include appropriate land uses, access to major and minor arterials, interior circulation for motor vehicles, bikes and pedestrians, landscaping, parking, architectural compatibility with new public facilities, and impacts to adjacent residential neighborhoods. The Town is working with the County to help alleviate traffic safety conflicts in the Co-op area.

Zoning

The majority of this town center area is zoned C-N: Neighborhood Commercial.

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Subarea 1. R-2 zoning should be retained in this area.

Subarea 2. R-1 zoning south of Nott Street East, abutting the County Library site to the east, and R-3 district to the west and the remaining lands are zoned C-N.

Recommendations.

Overall Area Development - A node-oriented development approach for this area has been adopted by Town since Plan-93. This area reflects a "neighborhood" commercial

atmosphere, containing small retail, service, and specialty shops, primarily serving Town residents.

The Town should continue to encourage this type of development to enhance the planned park and public facilities area within the Town Center complex, and to enable safe pedestrian and bicycle access. This plan should address the future development or redevelopment as follows:

- pedestrian and bicycle access
- parking - including consideration of public parking
- bus access
- overall, measures to ensure preservation and enhancement of public buildings and parkland through site design standards (building placement, landscaping, etc.) and architectural standards
- the Town should continue to study the possibility of a “Community Center” in the center of Town
- Finally, the plan should consider alternate parking arrangements for those businesses for which onsite parking is not possible.
- Construct the proposed Greens Farm Road from Nott Street East to Van Antwerp Road.

LAND USE GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION TASKS

GOAL - To sustain and enhance the Town’s residential character while providing for complementary nonresidential uses in appropriate locations.

Objective #1 - The Town should use available zoning tools to provide the flexibility necessary to permit efficient planning for orderly development. However, the Town should avoid spot zoning.

Implementation Tasks:

1. Continue to use R-P: Residential Professional zoning to establish areas appropriate for office development.
2. Amend the R-P zoning district uses to include care homes as a special permitted use.
3. Review the list of uses permitted in each zoning district for currency and suitability with respect to the residential character of the Town, and revise the zoning ordinance to add and delete uses as appropriate.

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4. Establish a committee to review and recommend changes to the Zoning Ordinance.

Objective #2 - The Town should take actions to sustain the essentially residential character of the Troy Road corridor.

Implementation Tasks:

1. Retain the current residential zoning with the following modifications:
 - a. Facilitate the delivery of rehabilitation assistance to those properties that could benefit from such action.
 - b. Work with New York State to promote pedestrian safety along Troy Road.
 - c. Work with New York State to beautify Troy Road, specifically the crosstown area.
 - d. Investigate changes in zoning standards and other actions that would allow owners of property along this corridor to buffer their properties adequately.

Objective #3 - The Town should recognize the diversity of neighborhoods in the Balltown Road corridor and implement strategies to enhance existing character and expand opportunities, as appropriate.

Implementation Tasks:

Subarea 1

1. Retain current zoning districts and design standards.

Subarea 2

1. Reshape land use policy/zoning standards in the O.D. Heck area to allow for appropriate and beneficial adaptive reuse of the O.D. Heck property.
2. Rezone the Stewarts property at the corner of Balltown and Consaul Roads from R-1 to C-N to be consistent with its adjacent commercial property known as Niskayuna Square.

Subareas 3, 4 and 6

1. Retain current zoning.
2. Explore ways to implement pedestrian access on Balltown Road between Union Street and Van Antwerp Road.

Subarea 5

1. Retain current zoning.

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2. Incorporate a multi-purpose walkway into the plan for proposed “Greens Farm Road” between Nott Street East and Van Antwerp Road.
3. Amend the C-N zoning district to allow mixed use (commercial/residential)
4. Explore opportunities to alleviate parking problems in the Nott Street area west of Balltown Road.

Subarea 7

1. Rezone the area currently zoned I-R: Research and Development on the west side of Balltown Road to I-G General Industrial.
2. Delete the heavy industrial use from the I-G: General Industrial zone.
3. Re-evaluate the Office Technology Zone boundaries to consider residential development prior to the rezoning of the area.
4. Complete the review of the GEIS and make a recommendation on the Tech Park zoning.
5. Recommend and implement design standards for the Tech Park zoning district.
6. Consider office development and other viable economic uses compatible with each other and with the residential character of the Town for the I-G/Tech Park zone.
7. Examine the performance standards section of the zoning ordinance and implement needed changes to insure their effectiveness as part of the overall development review process.
8. Continue to work with New York State to alleviate the traffic problem on Balltown Road.
9. Work with New York State to construct a pedestrian access between Craig School, the Niskayuna soccer fields and the Jewish Community Center.

Objective #4 – The Town should implement strategies in the Consaul Road neighborhood from St. David’s Lane to Balltown Road to introduce appropriate pedestrian access.

Implementation Tasks:

1. The Town should pursue the rezoning of the Stewarts property at the corner of Balltown and Consaul Roads from R-1 to C-N to be consistent with its adjacent commercial property know as Niskayuna Square.
2. The Town should encourage the County to fix the dangerous curves on Consaul Road 49
3. The Town should work with the County to construct a sidewalk, bikepath or multi-purpose walkway on the north side of Consaul Road to meet the existing sidewalk at Hummingbird Manor.
4. The Town should be an active participant with New York State for the redevelopment of O.D. Heck.

Objective #5 - The Town should implement strategies in the Union Street neighborhood, west of St. Helen’s Church and Beth Israel Synagogue, to introduce appropriate commercial uses.

Implementation Tasks:

Subarea 1

1. Work with the residents and businesses in the C-N and R-P zones on Union Street to incorporate some of the design elements from the Upper Union Street study prepared by Synthesis Architects.
2. Establish site design-oriented controls for the C-N and R-P zones to address: signage, parking, landscaping/streetscape, traffic (vehicle, pedestrian accommodation, etc.), and density.

Subarea 2

1. Retain current R-1: Low Density Residential and R-2: Medium Density zoning.
2. Evaluate opportunities to improve the triangle at Union St. and Troy Rd. with low maintenance growth.

Objective #6 - The Town should institute zoning regulations to encourage duplex development in appropriate neighborhoods.

Implementation Tasks:

1. Define duplex housing in the zoning ordinance and evaluate which areas of the Town might support it.
2. Van Antwerp Road, west of Balltown Road/Palmer Avenue/Regent Street. Retain current zoning since neither land nor parking is available to permit additional duplexes in this area.
3. Distinguish between duplexes and multi-family dwellings in the R-3 zoning district and reduce the minimum lot size requirement for duplexes within this district. Recognizing that such structures require additional parking and greenspace to accommodate occupants, consider duplex development on minimum lot sizes of 18,000 square feet.

Objective #7 - The Town should expand opportunities for housing arrangements to meet the increasing needs of the elderly and disabled.

Implementation Task:

1. Continue to evaluate alternative housing opportunities for the elderly and the disabled that include a range of supportive services.

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Objective #8 - The Town should continue to encourage development patterns that promote housing diversity and conserve natural resources.

Implementation Tasks:

1. Encourage the use of the Average Density Development option and continue to encourage its use to maintain a diversity of housing types.
2. Continue to secure subdivision parkland that would augment connecting parklands.
3. Allow Average Density Development within the L-C Land Conservation zoning district to conserve land and reduce infrastructure.

Objective #9 - The Town should implement zoning changes that establish development densities consistent with the capacities and limitations of the land and infrastructure.

Implementation Tasks:

1. Rezone 100-year flood plain areas to L-C Land Conservation.
2. Reduce the minimum required lot size in the Middle Street neighborhood from 80,000 square feet to 40,000 square feet to maintain adequate space for on-site sewage disposal while providing for lot sizes that are more consistent with those already developed in the area.
3. Rezone the Middle Street area to RR-40 and the remaining RR zones to RR-80.
4. Consider lower density zoning in those areas of the Town where public utilities cannot be provided due to financial burden or natural constraints.

Objective #10 - The Town should clearly identify the preferred development pattern for narrow and deep undeveloped parcels and implement planning strategies to effect this choice.

Implementation Tasks:

1. Determine whether to preserve the rural character of lands fronting along Pearse Road and Lisha Kill Road, or to plan for the more suburban development suggested by the current zoning.
2. Evaluate the creation of connecting roads between Route 7 and Lisha Kill Road that are designed to function as local streets, serving interior subdivision access needs.
3. Consider extending the proposed stub street off Trottingham Drive through to Pearse Road.