

**Plan – 2013**  
**Comprehensive Development Plan**  
**For the**  
**Town of Niskayuna, New York**



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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

ADD	Average Daily Demands
ARB	Architectural Review Board
BID	Business Improvement District
CDTA	Capital District Transportation Authority
CDTC	Capital District Transportation Committee
CDRPC	Capital District Regional Planning Commission
CIP	Capital Improvements Plant
DEC	Department of Environmental Conservation
Dept.	Department
e.g.	as an example
GIS	Geographic Information System
GE	General Electric
I/I	Inflow & Infiltration
JCC	Jewish Community Center
KAPL	Knolls Atomic Power Laboratory
LIP	Landowner Incentive Program
MGD	Millions Gallon per Day
MHBHT	Mohawk Hudson Bike-Hike Trail
MS4s	Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems
NCSD	Niskayuna Central School District
NYS	New York State
NYSDEC	New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
OPWDD	Office of Persons with Developmental Disabilities
psi	Pounds per Square Inch
PUD	Planned Unit Development
Rt.	Route
SEQR	State Environmental Quality Review
TCOD	Town Center Overlay District
TDR	Transfer Development Rights
TSR	Troy Schenectady Road
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
WTP	Water Treatment Plant
WWTP	Waste Water Treatment Plant
ZBA	Zoning Board of Appeals

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# Plan 2013 Overview

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## INTRODUCTION

This Comprehensive Plan provides a roadmap that sets out broad goals and objectives for the immediate and future preservation of valued community characteristics, while allowing for the enhancement of smart and sustainable growth. This is accomplished by maintaining an appropriate balance between residential and commercial needs. The intent of the Comprehensive Plan is that it will serve as a long range guide for the Town's development and preservation policies that affect land use decisions and community growth patterns over the next ten years. As the Town Board, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, and professional staff of the Town are confronted with questions of land development, this Plan provides the contextual and technical foundation to guide the outcome of both the incremental and intentional effects of their decisions. Finally, the Comprehensive Plan represents a snapshot of the Town at a particular time and should not be viewed as a static, but rather as a dynamic, policy instrument to be modified as needed to reflect changing conditions.

Niskayuna and the greater Capital District have undergone considerable changes over the past 10 to 20 years and early in the planning process the Committee felt it was important to purposely depart from Plan 2003, rather than update it: essentially starting, at least initially, with a fresh sheet of paper. Although the current Plan represents a departure from Plan 2003, it maintains an appropriate level of continuity with earlier comprehensive plans (see Table 1), relying on historic town wide land use and development patterns as its foundation. In addition, recognizing that Niskayuna is a diverse community, committee members examined the Town with both a local neighborhood and a townwide view when identifying community strengths and needs. Throughout the planning process, the committee worked to insure that goals, objectives, recommendations, and implementation tasks, made herein, reflect Niskayuna's diverse attributes.

The Town of Niskayuna is a suburban community located in the easterly portion of Schenectady County adjacent to the City of Schenectady. There are several reasons why the 21,781 residents chose to make Niskayuna their home. One reason often stated is the reputation of the Niskayuna School District. The 2010 census shows that about 34% percent of the households in Niskayuna have children under 18, while 66% do not. This statistic suggests there are other, equally important factors that make Niskayuna an attractive place to live. This supposition is supported by a recent survey conducted by the Comprehensive Plan Committee, which revealed several Town characteristics or 'livability factors' that convince people to pay a premium to live in the Town (Niskayuna has among the highest property values in the Capital District). Some of the livability factors cited in the survey include the Town's: parks, open spaces and natural areas, walking and bike paths, traditional tree lined neighborhoods, historic areas, and easily accessible and diverse shopping areas. In particular, residents cited Niskayuna's 'Main Street' retail areas located on upper Union Street and in the Town Center Overlay District (Nott Street and Balltown Road). Residents also appreciate the level of services and the variety of recreation options offered by the Town. Finally, Town residents benefit from the regional road network which allows them to

conveniently take advantage of cultural, recreational and employment opportunities throughout the Capital District.

The Comprehensive Plan strives to preserve and build-on these 'livability factors' that give Niskayuna its identity. Preservation of community character not only has wide support from residents, its preservation makes economic sense, as 'quality of life' is one of the things that most employers are looking for when relocating a business operation. The Plan also recognizes that as Niskayuna reaches full build-out, development pressures on the remaining undeveloped land parcels will likely intensify and it is likely that the Town's previous growth patterns will change. With this view in mind, the Plan attempts to position Niskayuna to take advantage of future opportunities as they arise by encouraging beneficial growth patterns that strengthen the Town's character and build its economic base. More specifically, the Comprehensive Plan sets out to:

- Encourage housing development of various types, sizes, and costs to meet the needs of people at various stages of the life cycle, income, age levels, and household compositions. New development should not compromise the integrity of the surrounding neighborhoods. Moreover, to insure that the viability of Niskayuna's traditional neighborhoods is maintained, encourage exterior maintenance, renovations, and/or additions, to existing housing stock that are congruent with and appropriately scaled to fit the existing house style and age. Such actions should harmonize with the surrounding streetscape and maintain the neighborhood's cohesive character.
- Ensure an adequate open space and recreation system composed of publicly accessible active and passive opportunities is established, and that it accommodates the future needs of Niskayuna residents. Enable Niskayuna to build on its existing system by positioning the Town to take advantage of open space opportunities as they arise; thereby, enabling the Town to realize the long term goals and objectives of an open space and recreation plan. Ensure that Niskayuna's open space recreation plan recognizes the important role open space plays in the character of individual neighborhoods and the Town identity.
- Ensure that Niskayuna's current transportation system which includes streets, roads, sidewalks, and multiuse path facilities is safe and provides convenient circulation around the Town. Future additions and improvements to the transportation system should provide a balance of connectivity options that reflect the increasing importance of pedestrian and bike transportation modes. In addition, future transportation system improvements should minimize impacts to existing neighborhoods.
- Preserve and maintain the valuable historic, cultural, architectural, and archaeological heritage of Niskayuna for the benefit of present and future residents.

- Strengthen Niskayuna's waterfront connection with the Mohawk River by developing strategies and policies that build on and complement Niskayuna's historic relationship with the barge canal, provide appropriate recreation, residential, and business opportunities.
- Maintain and strengthen Niskayuna's existing diverse commercial and retail economic area's such that they complement one another and maintain Niskayuna's fiscal base. Preserve and strengthen the 'Main Street' character of the Upper Union and Town Center Overlay Districts by encouraging attractive, compact, pedestrian friendly, retail areas that are convenient for Town residents. Promote economic opportunities for residents by recognizing that technology is changing the nature of home based businesses. Protect residential neighborhoods from commercial, industrial, and office encroachment.
- Encourage the Town to promote Climate Smart development strategies.

To accomplish these goals the Comprehensive Plan is divided into 7 sections, these include:

- Neighborhood Narratives
- Transportation
- Recreational Facilities and Open Space Preservation
- Public Facilities
- Economic Development
- Land Use
- Historical and Cultural Preservation

These sections 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 refined, 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.

Table 1: Comprehensive Planning History Town of Niskayuna 1929 to Present

**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.

2013 – Formulation of the sixth comprehensive plan. The Town Board appointed the Comprehensive Plan Committee, which was formulated by Resolution 2011-76. The Town was assisted by professional planners, MJ Engineering of Clifton Park, NY.

## **Formulation of the Comprehensive Plan**

The Town of Niskayuna's Town Board undertook the lead role in the development of Plan-2013. 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. Public hearings provided the residents of the Town as well as other interested parties opportunities to hear about the Plan and to express their views on the future of the Town.

## **Organization of the Plan**

Plan-2013 is organized into an Introduction, Neighborhood Narratives, and Issue Papers that are divided into two parts. The Issue Papers reflect the research done on each issue, and then describe 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-2003 were studied and their effectiveness evaluated. This examination of each issue area helped to establish the underpinnings of the prescriptive actions outlined in Plan-2013. The issue areas are as follows:

Neighborhood Narratives – Summaries of 20 different areas within the Town based on development patterns, natural boundaries and physical features.

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.

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

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.

Historical and Cultural Preservation – Identification of historic sites and properties that contribute to the Town’s cultural heritage. Consideration of methods for protecting and preserving these places for the long term.

## **The Plan**

The Issue 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 narrower, 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-2013 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-2013 within the next five years and undertake its complete update within ten years.

Plan-2013 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 affect Plan-2013 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 meet zoning standards and the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan;
4. State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) – 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, sidewalks, multiuse paths, and drainageways;
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-2013 are detailed in the Plan's Implementation Tasks.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Plan 2013 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.

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# Plan 2013

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# ISSUE AREA: NEIGHBORHOODS NARRATIVES

## INTRODUCTION

During the initial planning of the 2013 Comprehensive Plan the committee members discussed the many diverse areas that create the Town's unique character. Natural features, housing stock and commercial development varies throughout the 15 square miles. Based on these development patterns it became apparent that although there are Town wide issues, some topics affect each area differently. The analysis by the committee was based on geographic features, physical manmade landscape, roads and residential development patterns that resulted in establishing 20 distinctive neighborhoods. This new approach lent itself to a creating a priority level for each major topic within the Comprehensive Plan, with intent to list concerns and specific recommendations for the development of the Town for the next 10 years and beyond. Collectively, the committee felt that this approach identified key issues within the plan's main topics and will help the Town's trustees bring more of the recommendations to fruition.

The boundaries laid out for each neighborhood are shown on the accompanying map. Each neighborhood was assigned a number that becomes the index reference throughout the Comprehensive Plan. Based on the overlay, names were developed for each area. Many have historical significance related to the people and their efforts to develop Niskayuna. More detail is found in the general description portion at the beginning of each neighborhood's section in the Comprehensive Plan.

### 1: Balltown-Aqueduct

This neighborhood, sometimes referred to as the northwest corner of Niskayuna, is bounded by the northwestern portion of Balltown Road (previously called the road to Ball's Town, now Ballston), the Mohawk River/Aqueduct Road/Van Vranken Avenue, part of northwestern Hillside Avenue, and the top part of Providence Avenue. Much of the land along Balltown Road was once the Griesemer family farm, part of which remained a working farm until most of the remaining land was sold in the 1960's to the Schenectady Jewish Community Center for its new home across from Craig Elementary School. The area also includes part of the Erie Canal Aqueduct, a boathouse, the Niskayuna Community Center, part of the Niskayuna Hike and Bike Path, and direct access to the Mohawk River. While there has been some commercial development on Balltown Road (e.g., Environment One) and Aqueduct Roads, most of the development on these streets consists of detached, single family homes. There are also two new residential developments off Balltown Road. Hillside Avenue has a mix of single family

homes, condominiums, large apartment complexes, an Army Reserve Center, and Hillside Commerce Park. There is a residential area consisting of several small streets off Hillside Ave that also includes the secondary access to the Niskayuna Community Center. Providence Avenue includes a nursing home, but otherwise is detached, single family homes. The availability of various recreational venues encourages additional residential development, but much of the undeveloped land is problematic due to the topography and the presence of high voltage lines.

## 2: Mohawk Trails

This neighborhood, defined as Mohawk Trails, is in the center of Niskayuna and includes the town hall, library, high school as well as two grocery stores and smaller businesses. The homes are mostly single family houses, with the exception of Carrie Court Drive which has multi-unit development, built as separate suburban neighborhood in the 1980's. As such, many of the streets are not connected and end in cul-de-sacs. Most of the homes are large, contemporary style homes intermingled with colonial revival inspired elements. It is bordered by Balltown Road on the west, River Road on the north, Van Antwerp Road and Nott Street Extension on the south. The topography is defined by many rolling hills intersected by small streams running through it. A section of the town bike path is within its boundaries.

## 3: Edison Woods

Edison Woods is a newer and growing neighborhood within Niskayuna just east of the Town Center that consists of larger upscale single family homes, including many of the largest homes within the Town. It is bordered on the west by Van Antwerp Road, on the south by Windsor Drive, and on the north and east by River Road, where it is close to GE Global Research and Knolls Atomic Power Laboratory. Access to the neighborhood is also provided through Alva Road and Port Huron Drive along Van Antwerp Road. The neighborhood continues to grow with the development of houses along Windsor Drive. Although the majority of this neighborhood is defined by newer development its name pays respect to Thomas Edison who historically helped Schenectady gain global recognition with his role as one of America's foremost inventors.

## 4: Rosendale Estates

Rosendale Estates is one of the largest neighborhoods within Niskayuna. This neighborhood runs north of Rosendale Road, east of Van Antwerp Road, south of Windsor Drive, and west of River Road. Rosendale Estates was initially approved for the development by the Town of Niskayuna in the late 1940s and initially developed in the 1950s as noted local engineer Clark Godfrey subdivided the land around his family's farmhouse on Rosendale Road, which would be developed by real estate developer Benjamin Preisman. The topography of the area is defined by gently sloping grades.

The neighborhood grew in several stages over six decades and includes a mix of mid-sized to larger single family homes. Some of the major north-south access roads serving the neighborhood include Rosehill Boulevard, Godfrey Lane, and Ruffner Road which are linked through a series of connector roads.

#### 5: Country Club

Country Club derives its name from the Mohawk Golf Club golf course founded in 1889. This area is bounded by the golf club to the west and north, while the southern boundary is Union Street. The neighborhood's eastern boundary is Rosendale and Ruffner Roads. It is a unique collection of single family homes developed between the 1920's to 1940's with a mix of larger homes along Union Street and Rosendale Road. As with many older Niskayuna neighborhoods there are numerous mature trees. Moreover this is one of the few neighborhoods that have street lights. The Mohawk Golf Club surrounds this neighborhood and gives it a sense of open space. The neighborhood is accessible to the Upper Union Street commercial district. Other notable cultural amenities include the 10 acre Dominican retreat and conference center.

#### 6: Monica Heights

The neighborhood defined as Monica Heights is bordered by Nott Street Extension on the north and Balltown Road on the west. It includes a portion of Van Antwerp Road and a community just to the east of Van Antwerp. The neighborhood includes single family homes, town homes, an apartment complex and businesses. There is a small pocket park and a small bit of land with a stream running through. The access to the Town's water towers is located here.

#### 7: Mohawk River Neighborhood

The Mohawk River defines the northern edge of this neighborhood. It is bounded to the east by Rosendale Road to Old River and Vly Roads to the most western border at Knolls Atomic Power Lab. (KAPL). The primary roads are River Road and Rosendale Road ending at the eastern border where the Niskayuna/Colonie Town line at the Mohawk Bike Path and the Rosendale / Old River Road., Vly Road intersection.

This section may very well be one of the Town's most diverse parcels with the eastern border dating back to the late 1600's and listed as part of the Clute patent (deed). Historically, Johannes Clute (DOD 1725) settled in Canastigione (the original name for Niskayuna) in 1684. The land was willed to Johannes upon the death of his uncle, Capt. Jan Clute. The first Clute House was built in the original Hamlet of Niskayuna in 1684. The dwelling was most likely of log construction, and stood until the 1930's. John Clute's patent included over 2800 acres to the north and south of the Mohawk River. In the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, the old road followed the south shore of the Mohawk

River to Canastigione (Niskayuna) from Schenectady on its way east toward Albany. In 1690, local residents knew this road as “the river road”. The Clute patent included the area of what is today known as Niskayuna.

The most western section including neighborhoods designed in the midst of the Town’s largest, most exclusive developments: Catherine Woods and Baldwin Farms, along with one of the most expansive areas devoted to parks and recreation. A large section of the bike trail runs through this section.

#### 8: IR-R&D Neighborhood

This neighborhood consists of a stretch of River Road that runs from the Balltown Road to Knolls Atomic Power Laboratory (KAPL) which is a government facility that is operated by Bechtel Marine Propulsion Corporation. The Mohawk River creates the eastern boundary. There is one residential street consisting of newer homes that is located across from KAPL. This neighborhood is mostly commercial - home to General Electric's Research and Development Center, Environment One, and Schenectady International - with a few single family homes dispersed throughout the south side of River Road.

#### 9: Middle Street

The Middle Street neighborhood is located on the northern edge of Niskayuna. It is bordered by the Mohawk River on the north and Balltown Road on the west. It is comprised of single family homes built in the 1940's, and newer and larger homes situated along a cliff overlooking the Mohawk River along with parcels on newer growth forested land. Its semi-remote location generates a more rural feel compared to other neighborhoods within the Town.

#### 10: Avon Crest

Avon Crest is a suburban neighborhood developed during and after the 1950's and is closely situated to shopping and schools. The neighborhood is well established with mature trees and other vegetation. The street layout of gentle curves provides for interesting walking and biking within the neighborhood. The many connections to the surrounding major roads minimize internal car traffic, and the irregular street layout provides traffic calming. Avon Crest Park is located in the neighborhood. Amenities include a playground, tennis courts, small covered pavilion with bathrooms, a basketball court, a softball field, and large open area.



### 11: Hexam Gardens

The Hexam Gardens area is composed of three smaller pockets of development. It is bounded by Union Street (Rt. 7) to the north, by Balltown Road on the west, Bellevue Hospital on the east and Consaul Road on the south. Development of this area initially occurred along the farm-to-market roads: St. David's Lane, Consaul Road, Balltown Road, while development along Union Street began as a streetcar suburb of Schenectady City. Subsequent development has occurred for more than a 100 years. This area contains a wide range of housing stock - including several Paul Schaefer houses - , and most streets contain mature trees. Areas of note include the H.G. Reist Bird Sanctuary, Bellevue Hospital, Paul Schaefer's house and library, and the former George Westinghouse Jones, a Shingle style house listed on the New York State National Register of Historic Places.

### 12: Schaefer

The Schaefer neighborhood is centrally located within the Town straddling Route 7 encompassed by Rosendale Road on the north, Algonquin Road to the east, Avon Crest and Saint David's Lane to the south and west. This quiet area has a mix of various traditional housing styles with generous lot sizes and hosts several Paul Schaefer homes designed and built in the craftsman style. Adjacent to Saint David's Lane is the H. G. Reist Bird Sanctuary. Along Route 7 are Bellevue Women's Care Center hospital and a small pocket of commercial businesses.

### 13: Pearse Road

Pearse Road is an old county road with pockets of residential development. It is bounded by the Avon Crest neighborhood on the west, and the Red Oak neighborhood to the east. The east neighborhood has an older section in the north with mature trees and vegetation, and more recent development in the south. The side street layout is traffic calming and conducive to walking and biking within the neighborhood.

### 14: Avon Crest North

The Avon Crest North Neighborhood is located in the southeastern portion of the Town, bordered generally by Rosendale Road to the north, Troy Schenectady Road (Route 7) to the south, the Lisha Kill Natural Area to the west and the Town of Colonie line to the east. There are almost exclusively one-family homes, with styles varying from older ranch/split level houses to newer/larger Colonials to new construction. A small pocket of townhomes are also present. This neighborhood is home to the Niskayuna Reformed Church designed by renowned architect Philip Hooker, which was organized in 1750 and moved to its present location on Route 7 in 1852. The Niskayuna Reformed Church is one of three sites listed on the New York State National Register of Historic Places. Avon Crest North also is home to the Niskayuna Fire Co. District No. 2 Firehouse, Clare

Bridge Senior Living Facility, WTRY Radio Towers, and the Town of Niskayuna Highway Department facility.

#### 15: Red Oak

The Red Oak Neighborhood is located south of Route 7 and to the east of Pearse Road. This is one of the smallest neighborhoods within the Town. This neighborhood is tucked away and protected from Niskayuna's main thoroughfares. With access from Pearse Road at Whitney Drive and/or Maple Lane there are less than ten roads all of which are connected. All are single family residences of recent development. There are no sidewalks; however, pedestrians are quite safe to walk along the sparsely traveled roads. There is a small park at the south end and access to the Lisha Kill waterway.

#### 16: Fieldstone

This area includes several older developments, such as Fairfax and North Alandale Avenues, running in from the commercial development on State Street and Central Avenue. The area bordering on Consaul Road was largely rural until the recent development of Fieldstone Estates consisting of mixed single family houses and townhomes. This area includes Fieldstone Park with 1.3 miles of natural walking trails and pedestrian boardwalks at wetland crossings.

#### 17: Stanford Heights

Stanford Heights is named after Charles Stanford a regional figure in business and politics in the mid-19th century, who resided in this area. Bounded on one side by the City of Schenectady and by the Town of Colonie on another, this area is well known for its commercial areas: Mohawk Commons, Mansion Square, and other commercial establishments on State Street. It also has a well-established residential neighborhood centered on the Niskayuna portion of Albany Street and the residential Central/Taurus/Jewett Road area. This area includes the O.D. Heck Center, the Stanford and Becker Street Parks, and shares a wetland with both adjacent municipalities.

#### 18: Birchwood

The neighborhood defined as Birchwood is located at the most eastern end of town. The boundaries are defined as the Town of Colonie to the east and south, Birchwood Road to the west and Route 7 to the north. This neighborhood is comprised mainly of single family homes that are approximately 50 years old to new construction. Most of this neighborhood consists of smaller developments with not much connection in between each grouping. A few of the streets are used as connectors from Niskayuna to Colonie. Birchwood Elementary school is located in this neighborhood and commercial activity is located on Route 7.

### 19: The Grange

The Grange neighborhood, named after the Grange Hall that sits within its boundaries, is centrally located in the Town, bordered generally by River Road to the north, Troy Schenectady Road (Route 7) to the south, the Lisha Kill Natural Area to the east, and the Rosendale Estates to the west. The Grange Hall is located on Rosendale Road and was the original Rosendale School from approximately 1812 to the early 1900's. The Town acquired the Grange building in 1988, and it still sits today at the entrance to the Lisha Kill nature area. The Grange Hall building is one of only three sites in the Town listed on the New York State National Register of Historic Places. Development is sparse with some small recent developments and has a rural feel as it is set apart from the major arterials in Town.

### 20: Old Niskayuna

The neighborhood defined as Old Niskayuna is located on the western edge of the Town. The boundaries are defined by the City of Schenectady along the west, Providence Ave along the north, Balltown Road on the east and Troy-Schenectady Road on the south. This was one of the first areas of the Town to be settled, initially as a rural collection of farms based on its proximity to Schenectady. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Schenectady was growing and suburban development was becoming a recognized urban planning pattern. Rural landscape gave way to suburban development. Many of the streets are defined by larger homes on the corners with more modest sized homes in between and mature trees lining the roads. There are a variation of styles such as Colonial, Bungalow, Greek Revival, Cape Cod, and Tudor. This diverse collection attributes to the character many associate with this part of town. Most of the development is single family homes, a few 2 family homes, small pockets of commercial enterprises, schools, parks, and municipal services

### **FACT**

- The Town's name derived from the Connestigione Native Americans meaning "extensive corn flats".

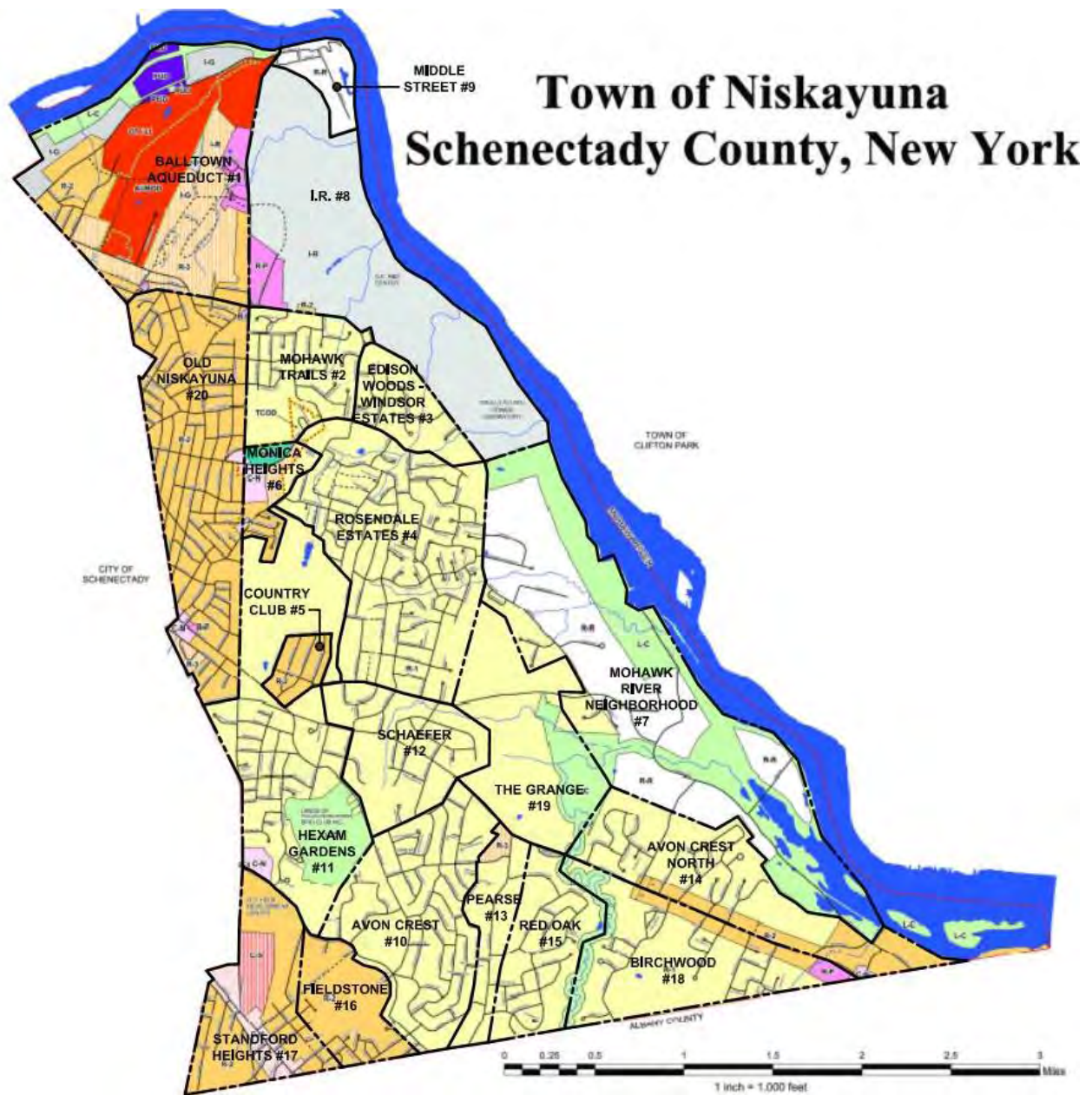


Figure 1 – Neighborhood Map

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# Transportation

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# ISSUE AREA: TRANSPORTATION

## INTRODUCTION

A community's transportation system should be thought of as the town's circulatory system which includes: roads, sidewalks, multi-use paths, as well as, public transportation. Each of these transportation components are integral and contribute to its overall efficiency and quality. A major component, the road system should be designed to permit 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 road and pedestrian network is a key factor in the safety, social workings, and visual impact of a community. As road traffic and speeds increase, the road becomes a barrier, safety becomes a problem, and the sense of neighborhood is lost. Providing strategically placed pedestrian opportunities promotes neighborhood interconnectivity; and provides access to schools, businesses and recreation areas. Therefore, it is important that Niskayuna's plan reflect a transportation system that is not only efficient, but promotes safety and flexibility. It should also respect natural topography, residential features, and present an attractive streetscape that 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. Coordination of transportation and land use decisions results 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 Department of Transportation and Schenectady County Engineering to improve transportation conditions throughout the Town.

For this version of the Plan 2013, the neighborhoods were analyzed to determine issues that affected the entire Town and problems that related to specific neighborhoods.

## 1. ISSUE: STREET CIRCULATION SYSTEM DESIGN

### TOWNWIDE

Niskayuna maintains a street classification system and an "Official Map", which provide 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 anticipates 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. For aesthetics purposes, the Town

should encourage service providers to determine the feasibility and advisability of burying utility lines and proceed accordingly.

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.

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.

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.

The Balltown Road corridor continues to be an area of concern that affects the entire Town because it is the primary north south arterial. This is ranked as the highest priority for this section and encompasses the most complex set of problems. Traffic congestion is found on nearly every major intersection from State Street to the bridge at the river throughout the day with amplified times during the morning and afternoon commutes. Limited improvements have been made over the past 10 years with the

exception of the intersection at Troy Schenectady Road (Route 7) and Union Street. Continual bottlenecking of vehicles frustrates residents and commuters and could have adverse impact on potential future development. Although this committee is tasked with providing specific recommendations for improvements, the collective position is that too many issues need to be resolved by a myriad of agencies well versed in working with traffic design. Substantial upgrades to address the issues will take a major commitment from the Town and surrounding municipalities to develop a comprehensive approach. The first step is to perform a thorough analysis of the corridor which should engage the State Department of Transportation, Town Highway Department, local businesses located in close proximity and any other pertinent entity. Based on that study the Town should consider what the best long term solution is for the Balltown Road corridor and implement a course of action.

Although there needs to be a comprehensive plan for Balltown Road there are immediate items that can be implemented on a smaller scale that will improve the current situation. They are as follows:

#### Intersection of Balltown Road & Nott Street:

- Issue: Heading eastbound on Nott Street there is not a designated left turn lane to head north onto Balltown Road. Traffic is forced into the right lane and shift back into the left lane to cross the intersection.
- Potential Solution: Restripe the intersection and provide new signage to designate a left hand turn only lane. Reprogram the traffic lights similar to the other 3 directions.

#### Balltown Road – East Side of Balltown Road from Union Street to Nott Street

- Issue: The Country Club neighborhood and others east of it have bike and pedestrian access along Troy Schenectady Road and Union Street. Linking these areas north of Union by these means is difficult because of the volume of traffic. A multiuse path on the east side of Balltown Road would provide a safe means of access to connect these neighborhoods to the Town Center. Coordination will be required with the Mohawk Golf Club, Town and private residents to reconfigure the streetscape and develop easements on the corresponding properties. The opportunity to add street lights and landscaping would enhance the corridor and improve the current unmaintained overgrowth on the fenced area of the golf course.
- Potential Solution: Provide a multiuse path on the east side of Balltown between Union Street and Nott Street.

#### Balltown Road – North of Providence Ave

Although the NYS Department of Transportation has long considered improvements and even drawn plans to improve Balltown Road, such as adding a center turning lane on the northern portion between River Road and the Rexford Bridge and a sidewalk to service Craig School, the Jewish Community Center and the Niskayuna Soccer Fields,



funding has not been forthcoming. These suggested changes are improvements worth pursuing.

## FACT

- 9.86 miles of new roads have been added since 2003.

## NEIGHBORHOODS

On a localized scale the following chart (See Table 2 – Traffic Volume Chart) and Traffic Volume Map documents issues that specifically pertain to each neighborhood along with recommendations for improvements that could be implemented.

Table 2 - Traffic Volume Chart

Location		Issue	Priority	Recommendation
A	Baltown Road from Providence Ave to the Bridge.	Traffic congestion in the north & south direction during peak commuting hours. Surges caused by GE and KAPL	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Third lane (turning lane) will increase traffic flow, but not necessarily capacity.</li> <li>• Support New York State's plan to install a new bridge with pedestrian access.</li> </ul>
B	Intersection of Hillside Ave & Providence Ave.	Traffic congestion at intersection. Currently lacks a traffic light.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completed 2013.</li> </ul>
C	Intersection of Balltown Road & Aqueduct Road	<p>Traffic congestion on Aqueduct Road from Balltown Road &amp; the bridge.</p> <p>Problem during peak commuting and regattas.</p>	High	Linked to A
D	Intersection of Balltown Road & Van Antwerp Road	Traffic congestion at intersection.	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No or poorly designed left turn on to Van Antwerp Road from Balltown Road traveling south.</li> <li>• Turning lane would be nice, but no room.</li> <li>• Relocate the pedestrian crossing off island.</li> </ul>
E	Nott Street west of Balltown Road	Poor traffic flow from parking near business district.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide left hand turn east on Nott Street north to Balltown Road.</li> <li>• Allow right hand turn on red north on Balltown Road to Nott Street East.</li> <li>• Improve parking lot arrangement</li> </ul>

				onto Nott St. for all businesses.
F	Rankin Road west of Balltown Road	Congestion beginning & end school day and after school activities. Problem occurs when cars make left hand turn onto Balltown and cars stack up on Rankin Road.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Left hand turn signal for traffic leaving school grounds.</li> </ul>
G	Intersection of River Road & Rosendale Road	Traffic congestion at intersection during peak hours. Problem occurs as cars turning left on to Rosendale Road merging with cars on Rosendale Road.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Install a roundabout.</li> <li>• Install a right hand lane on River Road heading west.</li> </ul>
H	Intersection of Rosendale Road & Lock Seven access road	Hair pin turn.	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better signage.</li> <li>• Ease radius of turn – road reconfiguration.</li> <li>• Easing turn may increase road speed.</li> </ul>
I	Intersection of Rosendale Road & Vly Road	Hair pin turn.	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No recommendation.</li> </ul>
J	Consaul Road near Country Gardens development	Traffic congestion along Consaul Road. Curve is bad and will get worse with ongoing and planned development.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce curvature</li> <li>• Work with County to add multiuse access.</li> <li>• Reducing curvature may increase road speed.</li> </ul>
K	Balltown Road between Troy-Schenectady Road & Consaul Road	Traffic congestion along corridor at peak times. Congestion is increasing at other times as well with commercial development.	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Install turning lane.</li> <li>• Sequence lights in area.</li> <li>• Problem is extending along Balltown Road to RT. 7</li> <li>• Increase right hand lane on Balltown Road for right turn on to RT. 7 eastbound.</li> </ul>
L	Mohawk Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Steep Grade</li> <li>• Poor visibility onto Rosendale Road.</li> </ul>	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No recommendations.</li> </ul>
M	State Street near Mohawk Commons	Long delays for side streets entering onto State Street.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No recommendations.</li> <li>• Problem connected with K.</li> </ul>

N	Intersection of Birchwood Lane & Troy-Schenectady Road	Right hand turn from Birchwood Lane onto RT. 7, cars double in single lane.	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stripe road to show single lanes.</li> </ul>
O	Rosendale Road near schools	Traffic in and out of both schools causes backups during beginning and end of school day.	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suggest to school district to form traffic loop linking the two schools - this would result in one entrance and exit.</li> </ul>
P	Balltown Road at Medical Arts Building	Difficult to merge onto Balltown Road. Soccer traffic turning left on to Zenner Road can cause problems for cars traveling west on River Road.	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reconfigure discharge driveways onto Balltown Road to angle with traffic.</li> <li>• Add turning lanes.</li> <li>• Enforce no left turns as approved by the Planning Board at the Zenner Building.</li> </ul>
Q	RT. 7, Union Street and Crosstown.	Traffic congestion during peak hours.	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RT 7 generally works well except at this location traffic backs-up.</li> <li>• Improve traffic light timing - coordinate all three lights.</li> </ul>
R	Union Street and Balltown Road.	Traffic backs up on Union Street and Balltown Road during peak hours and noon.	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connected to problem areas Q and K</li> <li>• Widen Balltown Road north of the intersection to increase the length of left hand turn lane east onto Union Street.</li> </ul>

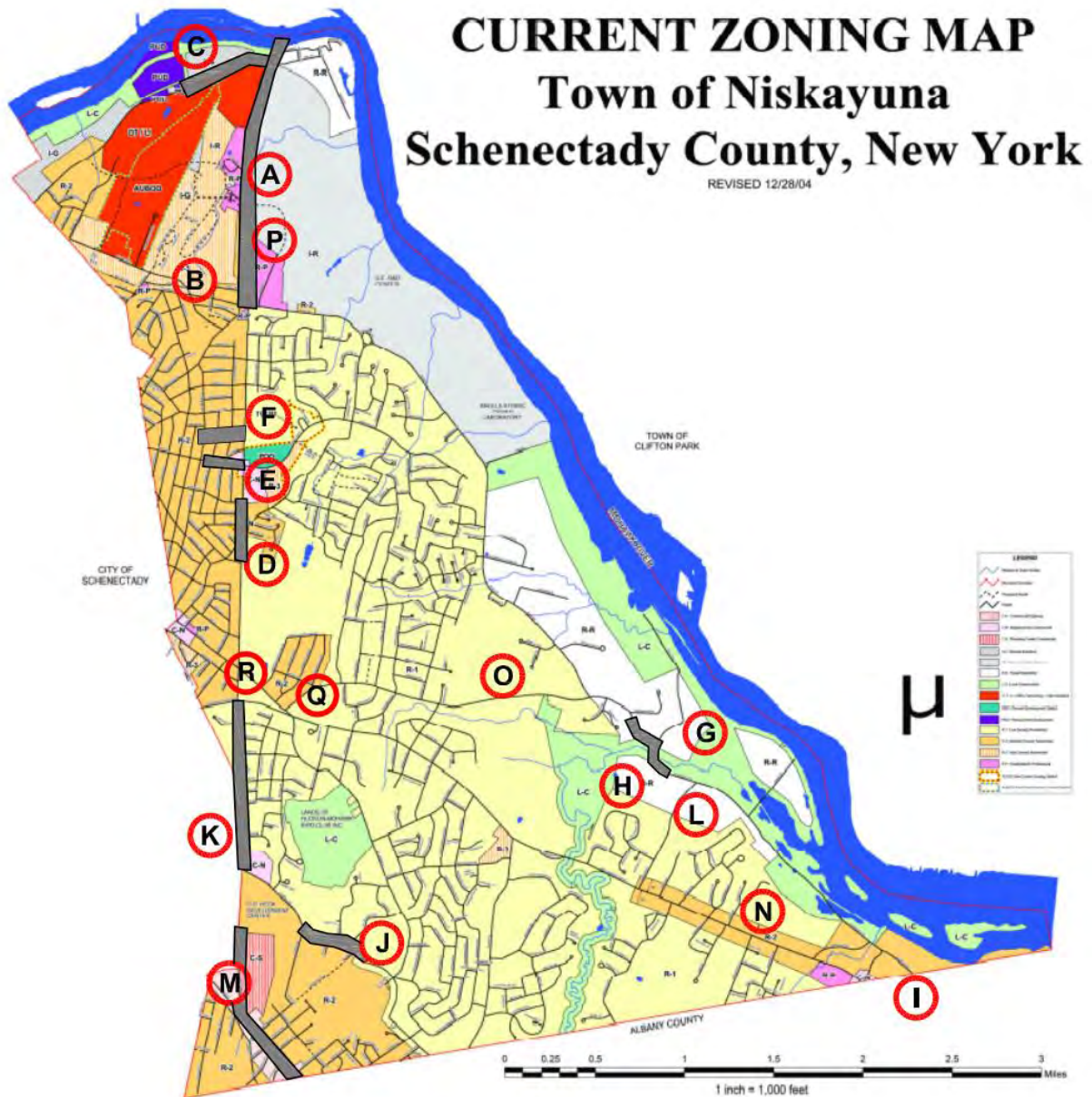


Figure 2 - Traffic Volume Map

## **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 since 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. As an extension to sidewalks, multiuse paths have been a favorable template for current development as they serve more functions than just pedestrian access.

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 – Section 189-17B and Zoning Ordinance Section 220-44A(3) Site Plan Review 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.

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.

#### **FACT**

- 2.18 miles of sidewalks have been added since 2003



Rosendale Road and sidewalk heading west.

### **3. ISSUE: PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

The Town's favorable location between Albany & Schenectady places it in close proximity to major transportation hubs such as the Albany International Airport and Amtrak stations in both cities.

The Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA) also provides several bus routes that service the area. Recently a rapid transit bus system "Bus Plus" has been implemented between the downtowns of Albany and Schenectady with a stop in Niskayuna on State Street. This progressive system has covered waiting areas,

widened bus pull offs and timers to coordinate traffic lights that decrease the commuting time for riders. Bus Plus has exhibited good use based on its daily rider numbers; however, local bus routes throughout the rest of the Town have been reduced in the past ten years owing to low rider use.

Currently, buses do not serve the upper Balltown Road businesses north of Nott Street. This is a concern that people that work at these companies must rely on vehicles and cannot use an alternate type of transportation. Commuting by bicycle is possible but is done with caution based on the heavy traffic volume. Walking is not possible as no provisions are made for safe access along Balltown Road.

#### **FACT**

- 8.8 miles of improvements to the bike path have been implemented since 2003.

### **Transportation Goals, Objectives and Implementation Tasks**

**GOALS** - Address areas in the Town that have continual issues with traffic volume or safety concerns and 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 – Pedestrian & Bikeway Safety:** 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 and work in conjunction to implement improvements on the Official Map as follows:
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 as recommended by the Safe Routes Committee.

**Objective #2 – Arterial Management:** 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. Perform a thorough study on the traffic issues pertaining to Balltown Road and develop a comprehensive approach to implementing improvements. This study shall include the review of the current work on Glenridge Road and new train bridge construction.
3. Require that aesthetic, sidewalks and pedestrian/bicycle friendly considerations are 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. Work with local businesses and agencies to promote the establishment of effective demand management strategies such as carpooling, staggered work hours, telecommuting, and bus transit support as a means of reducing 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 feasible and appropriate.
9. Design street layouts in new subdivisions that preclude cul-de-sacs.
10. Continue Town action to provide interconnections between isolated subdivisions.
11. Investigate traffic calming measures to help with traffic flow problems throughout the Town.
12. Undertake a town wide traffic study to look at long term traffic flow problems throughout the Town. The Town Board should refer to the committee's recommendations chart to identify problem areas and suggest potential solutions.
13. Pursue funding based on the outcome of the traffic reports.

**Objective #3 – Transportation Planning:** 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 or where there is a major benefit to the Town.
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 – Neighborhood Improvements:** The Town should continue review and consider making physical improvements to the existing circulation system to meet future needs and fulfill functional requirements in the following neighborhoods.

### **Implementation Tasks:**

1. Refer to the Traffic Issues Chart for specific improvements to arterial management.
2. #1 Aqueduct Balltown – Connection link from Balltown Road to Aqueduct Road on north end of Town.
3. #3 Edison Woods - Complete the extension of Windsor Drive to River Road with a multiuse path and connect to the bike path.
4. #6 Monica Heights - Work to eliminate sharp curves on Van Antwerp Road to address safety concerns while minimizing negative impact to surrounding land uses.
5. #10 Avon Crest - Work to eliminate sharp curves on Consaul Road to address safety concerns while minimizing negative impact to surrounding land uses.
6. #12 Schaefer - Provide a sidewalk along Mohegan Road to connect between Route 7 & Rosendale Road.
7. #13 Pearse - Investigate the feasibility of upgrading Pearse Road as a north-south minor arterial corridor route between Route 7 and Consaul Road.
8. #20 Old Niskayuna – Provide sidewalks along Dean Street from the Schenectady city line to Nott Street, Regent Street from Schenectady city line to Nott Street, Palmer Avenue from Grand Boulevard to Story Avenue, Grand Boulevard from Van

Antwerp Road to Schenectady city line. Further consideration should be given to providing sidewalks throughout the entire neighborhood near Van Antwerp Middle School and Hillside Elementary School. These schools located within a traditional neighborhood development can potentially alleviate the escalating school district bus costs by promoting walking and eliminating bus routes in these areas.

**Objective #4 – Improved School Access:** The Town should work in conjunction with the Niskayuna Central School District to improve pedestrian access to schools.

#### **Implementation Tasks:**

1. Continue work to provide pedestrian access from Hempstead Road to Rosedale and Iroquois Schools via River Road Park.
2. Work with the county to continue sidewalk installation on Rosendale Road to Rosendale and Iroquois Schools with surrounding neighborhoods.
3. Work with Birchwood School to provide pedestrian access between school and Lori Drive.
4. Look for opportunities to extend Bentley Road with pedestrian access to Rosendale School.



#3 Edison Woods – Bikepath at Windsor Drive



#10 Avon Crest – Sharp Curve on Consaul Road

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# Recreational Facilities and Open Space Preservation

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# ISSUE AREA: RECREATIONAL FACILITIES AND OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION

## INTRODUCTION

The importance of recreation facilities, and open space on the 'livability' of a community cannot be understated. In fact, such 'livability' factors were identified in a town wide survey conducted by the Comprehensive Plan Committee as one reason why residents choose to live in Niskayuna. The Open Space Institute (See Reference 1) identifies 'livability' as a real and important asset of the Capital District. In a recent assessment of the Capital District, they identify 'livability' as "what sets us apart, [specifically]...our communities are close to our workplaces, but equally close to the outdoors. In addition, there are "pockets of parks and wild places, and historic places (See Reference 2)." Other studies also identify 'livability' or community character as an important tangible quality, which municipalities should strive to protect.

Niskayuna Town residents 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 3. These public and private resources form the core of a substantial parks and recreational system in the Town.

Historically as the Town was being developed, previous administrations knew the importance of providing parks and open spaces to compliment the growing neighborhoods. Consequently, the Town parks and open space system has evolved with Niskayuna's growth. It was always the intent to create a diverse set of open spaces that include playgrounds, open fields, trails, multiuse paths, and wooded areas while preserving natural features. Included in these goals was to provide Town residents with public access to green space that is connected by a multitude of means.

While many of these goals have been met, additional actions are necessary to insure that recreation, open space needs are identified, and appropriate actions are implemented to meet future Town needs. Open space is a nonrenewable resource, and as Niskayuna approaches full build out and development pressures intensify the Town's remaining, important and unprotected open space may disappear without upfront planning. The Town needs to build on the legacy left by past Town leaders and position itself to take advantage of emerging opportunities which could enhance the diversity of recreational experiences enjoyed by its residents.

Several Plan 2003 recommendations have been implemented. These parkland acquisitions and Plan accomplishments are summarized below:

- New York State purchased the Schenectady Museum Nature Preserve property now known as Mohawk River State Park.

- Schenectady County deeded to Niskayuna 24 acres of protected parkland, which is adjacent to the Woodlawn Preserve.
- The Town acquired Fieldstone Park which contains walking trails in the Fieldstone Estates neighborhood. This parkland was obtained via the Town's parkland setaside requirement.
- The Safe Routes Committee is now required to review all major subdivisions.
- The Town established an official map showing existing bike routes within the Town. An interactive map is available to the public on the web.
- Several multiuse path routes have been identified for possible installation as opportunities arise.
- Continual maintenance and improvements by the Town of the MHBHT and other multiuse paths.
- A public right-of-way has been provided through the Flower Hill development, thereby providing future access to MHBHT.
- New York State replacement of the Niska Isle Bridge accommodated the connection of the MHBHT.

Below, various elements of the Niskayuna's current open space and recreation areas are discussed. At the end of this chapter Plan objectives and individual action items are recommended.

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

The Niskayuna Central 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 3). For the most part when the fields and playgrounds are not required for school use, they are available to the Town's recreational programs. More recently, open space at the high school previously available for residential use was converted to playing fields limited to school team use.

During the summer months, the Town uses several of the elementary school facilities to provide day camps for Town youths. In addition, the high school pool built in 2003 is available for Town resident use at various times throughout the week. The pool is also utilized year round by a USA Swim Club, which provides a competitive swim program for area youths.

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 Niskayuna Central School District may provide the Town's residents with increased access to both passive and active recreational facilities. To the extent possible, underused and/or seasonal school recreation facilities should continue to 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. However, because public use of school facilities are at will by the Niskayuna Central School District, the Town should recognize that such arrangements can be temporary. For this reason such lands should not be included in park and open space tallies used for planning purposes.

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

The Mohawk Hudson Bike-Hike Trail (MHBHT) is a major East-West multiuse path located along the Mohawk River. It is important as it links several Town recreation and open space areas including the Lyon's Park, Lock 7, Mohawk River, and Blatnick Park with the soccer fields. A 2007 study of trail use conducted by the Capital District Transportation Committee (CDTC) estimated that there were approximately 241,000 uses that year. Moreover, it was found that the Niskayuna Train Station has the highest usage, followed by the Corning Preserve located in the city of Albany. These numbers suggest that the Niskayuna section of the MHBHT is both a Town and regional recreational asset. As such, unique funding opportunities should be explored to enhance Town recreation in this area.



Signage on the MHBHT



Aqueduct Park – Greenspace Access

In recent years, the Town, in conjunction with the Safe Routes Committee, has erected signage along bike routes leading to the MHBHT. When possible, Niskayuna has worked with developers to improve Town access to this trail. For example, during the planning stages of Flower Hill Estates, the Town was able to secure access down to Rosendale Road. Although a small walk on Rosendale Road is necessary, there is nearby access to the MHBHT via a path adjacent to the Niska Isle Bridge. The right-of-way between Flower Hill and Rosendale Road should be improved to facilitate this access. Because this connection will provide access to MHBHT for a majority of Avon Crest North residents, the Town should look for improvements along Rosendale Road in this area to improve pedestrian safety.

Previously, the Town Planning Board approved construction standards for multi-purpose walkways along "major" streets. To date multi-purpose walkways have been completed for the Mohawk Trails, Windsor Estates Sections 1 & 2 subdivisions, and Fieldstone Estates. As discussed below, extending the Windsor Drive multi-purpose path to River Road should be a Town priority, as it would significantly improve Town connectivity to MHBHT and Blatnick Park.

Once viewed as primarily for recreation use, multiuse paths are now recognized as important non-motorized vehicular links connecting residents with work, school, and shopping. Since the opening of the current Town Hall in 1994 and the addition of the Town Center Overlay District, the Balltown Road/Nott Street area has become an active pedestrian and bicycle traffic generator. The Town needs to look for opportunities to provide safe and easy access to the Town Center from all areas of Town, specifically the areas from the south and west where Troy-Schenectady Road, State Street, and Balltown Road present particular obstacles. Recently New York State made improvements to the Route 7 crosswalk near St. David's Lane as part of a larger highway improvement project. This improvement has helped increase accessibility across Route 7 on the western end of the Town; however, additional crosswalks are needed.

Town wide bike lane plans should be developed along appropriate street corridors to further integrate and enhance access to existing and future public parks, open space, and commercial areas. Identifying such bikeway plans on the Town's "Official Map" will provide planning insight for their incorporation in new infrastructure development and existing infrastructure upgrades. For example, bike access along Route 7 is limited and current use utilizes the existing sidewalks. The Town should seek opportunities as they become available, via private or state improvements, to convert the existing sidewalks to multiuse paths. A second candidate for pedestrian/bike access improvement is Balltown Road. In conjunction with the Safe Routes Committee the Town should continue to identify and implement the recommendations for other major routes throughout the Town shown on the Safe Routes Map.

In addition, 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 MHBHT, and the Mohawk River State Park. The development of new open/park space should be planned with the goal of providing contiguous access to existing multiuse paths and neighborhoods.





Lisha Kill Park Entrance



Lisha Kill

Over the years some public right-of-ways to neighborhood parkland and open space has been obscured. To ensure maximum access to these lands, Niskayuna, where appropriate, should identify these lands and place signage denoting their location.



Lions Park – Train Station



Aqueduct Park – Park Space

### 3. ISSUE: NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

Recreational facilities, such as Little League ballparks, have been concentrated at the Blatnick Park complex as recommended in Plan 1983. Pedestrian and bike connectivity between these facilities and the majority of the Town remains problematic. There may be an opportunity to connect Old Niskayuna to these facilities by extending the Windsor Drive multiuse path to River Road. This multiuse path extension was originally part of the planned Windsor Drive extension; however, the presence of wetlands has made further land development in this area non economical and the road extension is unlikely to be built. Give the importance of this neighborhood link, the Town should work with the current landowner to identify possible extensions for this multiuse path.

Access also remains a problem for pedestrians and bicyclists that must traverse major transportation arteries such as State Street and Troy Schenectady Road. To improve



pedestrian oriented recreation opportunities, Plan 2003 called for the establishment of parkland within the substantial area located south of Troy Schenectady Road and adjacent to State Street. Since 2003 the Town has acquired two separate land parcels in the southwest corner to establish Stanford Estates and Fieldstone Estates passive parks. To date Stanford Park, which is adjacent to the larger Woodland Park, remains largely undeveloped and inaccessible. Even with the addition of these parks, the parkland objective outlined in Plan 2003 remains unmet, as there is still need for active recreation opportunities in this area of Town.

Given this situation, investigation may be warranted into the development of smaller active "neighborhood" parks to serve the population within this geographic area. For example, Plan 2003 recommended further development of active parkland 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 recreational needs of the increasing number of children

The establishment of neighborhood parks throughout the Town should be part of a future open space and recreation study. With respect to these parks; research should be conducted into existing level of facilities, current ownership of public parkland, and allowance of public access to these areas to be compared with the service needs of the local area.

This investigation should consider the availability of under-used private recreational facilities that may be integrated into the Town's public recreation network. Similar to the cooperative relationship between the Town and the Niskayuna Central 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.

Several of the existing neighborhood parks receive frequent use while a few are apparently underutilized. Improving pedestrian access within neighborhoods, enhancing the landscaping or updating amenities may increase resident usage. Encouraging participation by residents to establish park committees will alleviate the Town's personnel from having to provide routine maintenance and general work that can be conducted by locals with their own resources. This has several benefits. It allows residents to take ownership of their neighborhood parks, increases usage, and maximizes the Town's labor forces to work on improvements that are not routine maintenance. A current model is the Dean Street Park.



Dean Street Park



Monica Heights Park

In 2009, Schenectady County deeded 24 acres of parkland to Niskayuna adjacent to the 170 acre Woodlawn Pine Barrens-Wetlands Complex; a mix of woodland and wetland areas. The Niskayuna parcel located within a N.Y.S. regulated wetland was rezoned to Land Conservation and the "paper streets" lying within it were removed by the Town board. This land transfer was considered an important step in linking the Woodlawn Preserve and the Albany Pine Bush Preserve. It provides a potential passive inter-municipal recreation opportunity, as the wetland extends into both the City of Schenectady and the town of Colonie. Currently there is limited access to this property and Niskayuna should consider the installation of a small parking lot and entrance kiosk at the end of Stanford Ave. In addition, connecting trails from this location to the existing trail system in the Woodlawn Preserve should be a priority.



Antonia Park



Avon Crest Park

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

Preservation of open space generally has wide support from residents, and its preservation makes economic sense. Communities that preserve their character and natural areas typically outperform economically those communities that do not. Loss of

key open spaces or community character can have negative impacts on surrounding property values and the ability of a town to attract businesses. The preservation of existing open space and parkland should also be viewed not only as desirable but as an economic asset contributing to the Town's overall fiscal health.

Given its importance the Town should establish a comprehensive "park, open space and recreation plan" that examines existing open space/park land while envisioning future development and resident needs (prior to the establishment of the State Environmental Quality Review Act in 1975, Niskayuna's Conservation Committee periodically issued parkland assessments and environment reports). 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.

There are several specific issues such a plan should address:

- There are approximately 487 acres of publicly owned parks and open space within the Town, another 443 acres are designated as private preserves and recreation areas. These are an important resource and there is no guarantee that the private areas will remain in their current use.
- Previously, much of the protected open space and parkland has resulted via private donations, private organization land acquisition (e.g. Nature Conservancy, Inc.), or the formation of "set-aside" areas via the subdivision process. Since Plan 1993 there have been no private land donations or privately funded land acquisition, and as the Town reaches full build out, it is unlikely that the Town will continue to obtain parkland or open space via land subdivisions. Given this situation the Town needs to survey remaining undeveloped land, determine its value as open space, and develop a long term plan for its future protection and/or acquisition. The majority of the land acquisitions have been from private donations.
- 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 park system should be examined on both a Town wide and neighborhood need basis. The Town should recognize that parkland and open space is not uniformly distributed throughout the Town and that population density and neighborhood characteristics may dictate local parkland development.

- Realizing that the Town is approaching full build out, the Town should identify remaining undeveloped land parcels and evaluate their value as parkland or open space. Parcels identified as having high value as parkland or open space should be identified and ranked.
- When considering the value of undeveloped parcels, the Town should consider the benefits of the open space as well as the economic, traffic, and public utility implications if the land was developed to its fullest extent.
- Town resources are generally stretched between many competing needs; hence any park or open space plan needs to identify funding and zoning strategies to achieve the open space plan goals.

The Comprehensive Planning Committee has identified several undeveloped land parcels which the Committee feels due to their size and/or their location, have high open space or recreation value and may warrant future protection. These parcels include but not limited to: the lands of the Mohawk Country Club, the Dominican Retreat House, the Hamlin property, the Bard property, and the Burger property. This list is not meant to be inclusive and it is expected that other parcels would be identified in a comprehensive study.

## **5. ISSUE: COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF WATER-RELATED ACTIVITIES**

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 that it shall 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 that was completed in the mid 1990's.

The legislation also recommends that county or region wide plans be prepared to complement and supplement Statewide Planning efforts. 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 Economic Development to prepare a region wide plan. Among the Plan's goals are to identify natural and 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.

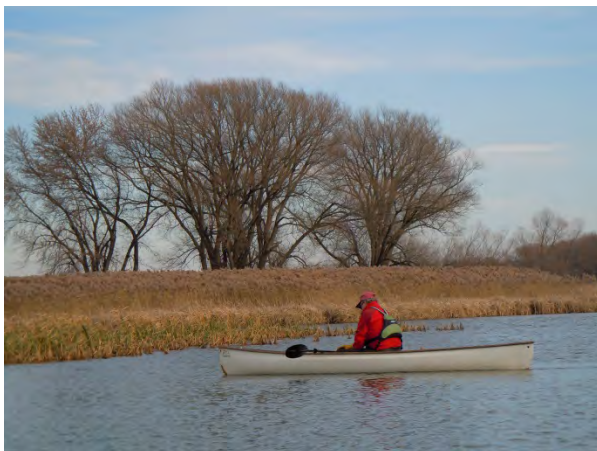


In 2009 Niskayuna along with the other waterfront municipalities in Schenectady County developed and issued a Mohawk River Waterfront Revitalization Plan. In this study a comprehensive inventory/analysis was conducted for the waterfront revitalization area. Based on the river area inventory, this study identified key issues, opportunities, and proposed development projects for each municipality within the study area.

Although not identified by the DEC as a Significant Habitat; the study identified the Lock 7, Lisha Kill, The Mohawk River State Park and Mohawk River Wetlands as locally important fish and wildlife habitats, which should be protected. In addition, several sites of historic significance were identified, including: the Erie Canal Aqueduct abutments, the former Schenectady-Troy Railroad (now the part of the Hudson Mohawk Hike and Bike Trail), Niskayuna Hamlet (settled between 1678-1750) and the VanVranken Settlement developed in the early 1700's. These properties provide opportunities to promote historic tourism.

The former Town landfill provides important recreational opportunities and affords scenic views of the river which should be protected. Existing launches within the Town are actively used by residents of Niskayuna and surrounding communities; however, they are in need of rehabilitation. This rehabilitation is important as placement of additional boat launches to supplement existing ones in the Town is limited. Finally, this report identified lands west of Balltown Road along Aqueduct Road as suitable areas for recreation and economic development.

In all, the Mohawk River Waterfront Revitalization Plan is a coherent planning document which promotes an inter-municipality vision with specific actions for Schenectady County's Mohawk River waterway. As such, this plan should be used as framework for future recreation development, open space preservation, and economic development for the study's focus area. The Planning Board under site plan review for any development along Niskayuna's waterway should make sure that developments comply with the policies described in the Plan.



Canoeer on the Mohawk River



Boaters Using the Launch Access

Under the auspices of the New York State Canal Corporation, 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 riverfront resources and this opportunity for funding, the Town should give priority to developing an overall implementation plan for the improvement of the MHBHT 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 continuity gaps that would connect park recreational lands to the existing MHBHT and acquire/develop public land to resolve this. The Town is looking to expand the bike trail to link the soccer fields, the Town's Recreation Center, and River Road Park.
- Further, incorporate MHBHT into the Town's recreational system by creating additional pedestrian/bicycle access points and develop a link 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 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 linked to the Mohawk River State Park area with additional linkages to the remainder of the Town's recreational areas.
- Encourage the incorporation of Niskayuna's MHBHT 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.
- Work with adjacent communities and New York State to identify opportunities to connect the hike/bike trail across the Mohawk River.
- Identify uses for the former Niskayuna Train Station that support the trail uses.
- Install kiosks along the bike trail to identify natural and historic features along the trail.

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 MHBHT.



Lock 7 – Open Parkland



Lock 7 – Recreation Area

## 7. ISSUE: TOWN RECREATION CENTER

The Town Recreation Center is located in the northwest end of Town along the south side of Aqueduct Road. Purchased in the late 1990's this has served as the main municipal recreation center open to residents. It is home to the Senior Center, the Town pool, playground equipment, and a large covered pavilion equipped with bathroom facilities available for use by Town residents. In addition, the site includes various sports fields including a football field used by the Niskayuna Pop Warner football league and green spaces. The site also contains a substantial open space area which is wooded. The property rises steeply from Aqueduct Road to a plateau where the majority of the center's infrastructure is located and it affords some of the best views of the Mohawk River. The undeveloped section of the park is located primarily in the steeper sections of the property.

The concentration of several recreation facilities within the Recreation Center provides unique opportunities for future recreation programs. The proximity of the pool, playing fields, pavilion, recreation center, and a large wooded portion provides a unique mix of recreation, sports, nature and intergenerational program opportunities for the Town. The Town should study how the current center's use could be expanded. Possible opportunities could include sports and nature camps for the Town's youth.

Moreover, recent residential development in the Town's northwest corner and potential mixed development on the Mohawk River along Aqueduct Road suggest that the park will become more important as these areas develop. Hence, the Town should look for opportunities to further expand the park's footprint. For example, the Town should augment the park by working with Schenectady County to acquire the undeveloped county land located to the east.

Given this potential, the site has a few drawbacks:

- The Town pool's infrastructure, which is utilized by residents for recreational swimming, swim lessons and the Town swim team, is aged and outdated.

- Access to the recreation center is either from Aqueduct Road or Banker Avenue via Hillside Avenue. Consequently this site is isolated from most of the Town. Currently there are no safe access points for pedestrians or bikes.
- The park is not centrally located within the Town.

As part of the future comprehensive open space and recreation plan discussed in Section 4 the Town should consider actions to reduce or minimize the above site drawbacks. A detailed study of the community's needs should be considered in a potential redesign of a pool complex. As part of any future pool discussion its location within the Town should be examined.

Regardless of future pool plans, the Town should look to improve the access to the site by:

- Extending the current multiuse path along Hillside Avenue to Banker Avenue.
- Work with land developers to provide access from the south. This will provide park access to residential development in the area bordered by Balltown Road and Hillside Ave.
- Work with existing land owners to connect the Recreation Center with MHBHT using the former railroad right of way.
- Encourage future developments along the river to provide connections to the recreation center.



Town Recreation Senior Center



Town Pool and Playground

## **8. ISSUE: OPTIONS FOR ACHIEVING PARKS & RECREATION GOALS THROUGH THE USE OF EXTERNAL FUNDING SOURCES AND CONSERVATION TOOLS**

In the past, the Town 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. In addition, the Town has effectively utilized cluster development to create



new and expand existing open space. As the Town reaches full build out, opportunities to use these land acquisition and recreation funding tools will likely diminish.

Fortunately there are several other options available to Niskayuna for achieving open space and recreational goals. These options include:

- To identify and secure additional new funding sources for the Town's current parkland fund and set-aside a portion of these funds for long term land acquisition.
- To utilize conservation easements and/or the transfer of development rights (TDR) to insure preservation of open space.
- To utilize land use regulations to achieve parkland/open space goals in new developments and to maintain current open space/recreation uses by reducing land development pressures of specific parcels.

Achieving full benefit from the above options requires a proactive implementation strategy and the Town should consider their use as part of a long range future recreation and open space plan.

**Funding Options:** Identifying a dedicated funding source for open space and parkland development is important to enable the Town to take advantage of opportunities as they become available. In the past, the Town has successfully pursued county and state grants to fund specific park improvements. For example, installation of a comfort station at Lions Park was state funded. These sources of funding are important; however, they have limited availability and tend to target specific projects. Therefore the Town should not rely on grant funding alone to meet long term objectives, but identify and consider implementing other funding sources.

As the financial aspects of the Town evolve, there are numerous options for funding the development and enhancement of parks and open space. As mentioned above the Town has utilized a parkland fee to develop parks and recreational facilities within the boundaries of the development or place them in a maintenance fund for existing recreational facilities. This should be broadened to also incorporate purchases or land acquisitions. Other funding options include:

- Use of a Local Bond Act: Bond acts are a common source of implementation to generate funding for project specific initiatives. Typically, this revenue stream is short term and is the responsibility of current residents. It can become controversial and may have negative connotations although it may yield long term benefits.
- Real Estate Transfer Fee: This option implements a tax on the acquisition or purchase of both residential and commercially developed property. Other municipalities have found this to be a successful avenue to generate revenue because it does not directly tax existing residents and provides a proactive funding stream. Since it requires low administrative oversight and properties are continually being transferred this option is particularly appealing. This type of funding would place the financing responsibility on the owners of any new transactions. Revenue

from this option would be placed into a fund used specifically for parks and recreation. This approach has been successfully used in New York State by a number of communities. Evaluation by the Town should be done if this program is considered.

- New York State and Federal Funding Options: There are several New York State and Federal Funding Options that warrant investigation. Some NYS programs include: the Environmental Protection Fund, the Clean Water State Revolving Fund, and the Habitat/Access Stamp Funding. Federal programs include: the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the Pittman-Robertson Programs.
- Landowner Incentive Program: The Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) is a partnership between the New York Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and private landowners to protect the habitat of at-risk species on private lands. It is a voluntary program funded by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). This program provides incentives to landowners to keep their property undeveloped open space.

**Conservation Easements and Transfer of Development Rights:** To date Niskayuna has not actively perused these options for land conservation. In both of these approaches the land owner receives economic benefits for development rights which are removed for the owner's land parcel. As a result future development of the parcel is restricted. How this is accomplished and who pays the owners for these rights depends on whether a conservation easement or a transfer of development rights is used.

Conservation Easement: A conservation easement is a voluntary agreement made between a property owner and a third party, in this case the Town, to sell partial or whole development rights of a land parcel.

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR): The use of TDR techniques allows a municipality to achieve land conservation goals without relying on Town funds. TDR programs allow landowners located in specified "Sending" overlay zones to separate development rights from their properties and transfer them to landowners located in specified "Receiving" overlay zones. Communities employing this program are able to preserve open space without causing hardship on landowners or restricting a town development potential or its future tax base growth.

**Land Use Regulations:** Currently Niskayuna uses its Land Conservation zoning designation to maintain open space primarily for areas of the Mohawk Rivers' flood plain and some private reserve parkland, such as the H.G. Reist Preserve. As mentioned in the Land Use chapter, Niskayuna's zoning code has not been updated since 1972. Since that time, several additional zoning tools have been made available to communities. Niskayuna should survey other communities to determine best practices for land conservation through the use of land regulation. For example, the Town of Mamaroneck has successfully established recreation districts to maintain and protect commercial recreation uses, in particular golf courses.

Table 3 – Public Parks, Open Space and Private Recreation Facilities Chart

<b>Public Parks, Open Space and Public Park District Recreation Facilities</b>			
<b>NAME</b>	<b>PUBLIC / PRIVATE</b>	<b>ACRES</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
River Road Park	Public	28.50	Located on River Road, developed by the Town with matching funds from an EQBA grant. Active recreation site.
Blatnick Park	Public	18.94	Located on River Road just east of KAPL which includes the skate board park; active recreation site.
Avon Crest Park	Public	11.70	Located off Westmoreland Dr. in the heart of Avon Crest subdivision; active recreation site.
Mohawk-Hudson Bikeway	Public	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	Public	3.00	Adjacent to Mohawk-Hudson Bikeway off Rosendale Road; car top boat launch area.
Aqueduct Park	Public	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	Public	35.25	Located on Aqueduct Road. The center also houses the Town pool
Soccer Fields	Public	23.25	Located off Balltown Road just north of Craig Elementary School.
Becker Street Play Lot	Public	0.33	Located at the intersection of Central Avenue and Becker Street.
Niskayuna Driving Range	Public	12.00	Located on River Road just east of Blatnick Park
Memorial Park	Public	0.11	Located at the intersection of Balltown Road and Van Antwerp Road.
Fieldstone Park	Public	72.00	Walking trails located in Fieldstone Estates neighborhood.
Dean St. Park	Public Park District	9.20	Private park for residents in the Dean Street area. 350+/- members. Amenities include open fields, water, playground, ballpark, & tennis courts.
Baker Woods	Public Park District	2.70	Woodland and open space on Baker Avenue.
Boulevard Medians	Public	NA	Grass strips & tree plantings along Grand Boulevard, Lexington Parkway & Dorwaldt Parkway.
Monica Heights Park	Public	0.60	Open space & trees classified as wetlands along John Paul Court.

Rosendale Estates – Parkland Areas	Public	5.70	Stream & open space spanning through Rosendale Estates.
Antonia Park (Windsor Estates)	Public	7.05	Neighborhood park stretching from Van Antwerp Road to St. Ann Drive
Kimberly Court	Public	8.00	Neighborhood park along Lisha Kill at the Town's south border
Floral Acres	Public	4.00	Neighborhood park adjacent to Kimberly Court, has access to the Lishakill
Applewood Estates	Public	3.97	Parkland adjacent to the Lishakill
Oakmont	Public	7.99	Most of the acreage is in a conservation easement because of wetlands.
Hummingbird Manor	Public	4.08	The parkland is adjacent to the Hudson Mohawk Bird Club.
River Hills	Public	2.60	Located on River Road.
Orchard Park – open space	Public	8.10	Open space associated with average density development
Avon Crest North – open space	Public	13.19	Open space associated with average density development and adjacent to the Nature Conservancy lands.
River Hills – open space	Public	6.80	Open space associated with average density development
River Hills Parkland	Public	20.00	Open space associated with average density development
Hummingbird Manor – open space	Public	15.87	Open space associated with average density development (adjacent to Reist Preserve)
Floral Acres – open space	Public	3.78	Open space associated with average density development
Wetlands Nature Walk	Public	4.13	Located behind the Town Library on Nott Street East. The walkway takes you out into the wetlands from the library
Catherine Woods	Public	3.41	Located at the end of the cul-de-sac.
Stanford Park	Public	36.63	Forest land located at the end of Stanford Ave. adjacent to the Woodlawn Preserve This parkland as well as the the 135 ac woodland preserve is part of the Albany Pine Bush
Former Niskayuna Landfill	Public	110.00	Open space.
Mohawk River State Park	Public	107.00	Formally the Schenectady Museum Preserve purchased by New York State in 2006.
<b>Total</b>		<b>693.74</b>	

<b>Privately Held Recreation Areas</b>			
<b>NAME</b>	<b>PUBLIC / PRIVATE</b>	<b>ACRES</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
Mohawk Golf Club	Private	190.00	Private golf and tennis facility at Union Street and Balltown Road.
Jewish Community Center	Private	26.00	Multipurpose center including outdoor pool and day camp for members. Located north of River Road on Balltown Road
Schenectady Curling Club	Private	1.80	Private club for area curlers; located on Balltown Road.
H.G. Reist Preserve	Private	108.00	Owned by Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club, located between St. David's Lane and Consaul Road.
Lishakill Preserve	Public	108.00	Owned by the Nature Conservancy; The land contains an old growth forest.
Conservation Easement adjacent to H.G. Reist Preserve	Private	NA	Easement between H.G. Reist sanctuary and private property.
<b>Total</b>		<b>433.80</b>	

<b>Niskayuna Central Schools &amp; Private Schools</b>			
<b>NAME</b>	<b>PUBLIC</b>	<b>ACRES</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
Craig Elementary School	Public	15.00	
Niskayuna High School	Public	49.60	Playing fields are not public.
Rosendale Elementary School	Public	24.70	
Iroquois Middle School	Public	25.30	
Van Antwerp Middle School	Public	8.70	
Hillside Elementary School	Public	8.90	
Birchwood Elementary School	Public	23.90	
<b>Total</b>		<b>156.10</b>	

<b>Summary of all Lands</b>		
<b>NAME</b>	<b>ACRES</b>	<b>% of town total (9024ac)</b>
Town of Niskayuna Neighborhood Parks and Subdivision Open Space	693.74	7.6%
Private Recreation	433.80	4.9%
Niskayuna Central Schools & Private Schools Property	156.10	1.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,283.64</b>	

## TOWNWIDE

### **RECREATIONAL FACILITIES AND OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION Goals, Objectives and Implementation Tasks**

**GOALS** - Continue enhancing the Town's broad-based recreation and open space network that enables current Town residents to enjoy a diversity of recreational opportunities. Build on this network to ensure that future recreation and open space Town needs will be met.

**Objective #1** - The Town should develop a comprehensive park, open space, and recreation plan that can be used as a planning tool for future integration of parkland, and acquisition of future open space.

#### Implementation Task:

1. Complete the comprehensive inventory of existing parkland, open space, and recreation infrastructure.
2. Utilize the Geographic Information System (GIS) to identify and map existing and future recreation facilities within the Town.
3. Based on Niskayuna's projected development, identify future open space and parkland needs.
4. Survey remaining undeveloped land parcels, determine their value as open space and include in this survey the community costs of full parcel build out. Develop a prioritized open space list of significant and high value undeveloped parcels.
5. Establish an action plan which includes upgrades to the existing infrastructure and a strategy for future parkland/open space acquisition and/or protection.
6. Identify appropriate Town use policies and employ appropriate funding strategies to ensure that Niskayuna's park, open space and recreation plan is realized.
7. Encourage increased participation by school district officials and other public and private community landowners in the preparation of the Park, Open Space and Recreation Plan.

**Objective #2** - The Town should target appropriate land acquisitions and improvements to meet identified recreation program and open space 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. Implement new fund raising mechanisms that dedicate revenue towards purchasing and developing parks and recreational facilities.
5. Examine the potential use of Conservation Easements and Transfer of Development Rights to preserve open space.
6. Work with Schenectady County to acquire suitable undeveloped county land adjacent to or within the Town.

**Objective #3** - The Town should focus on development of recreational opportunities in under-served areas.

**Implementation Tasks:**

1. Investigate the development and improvements to existing 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 #4** - 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. Continue to develop the Town-wide MHBHT with the Safe Routes Committee to further integrate and enhance access to existing and future public park and open space areas.
2. Include the MHBHT plan on the Town's Official Map to provide planning insight for future public park and open space developments.
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.
4. Develop a comprehensive signage system to employ throughout the Town that demarcates access points to the bike path. Provide signs with "key plan" maps showing sections of the path within certain areas.
5. Establish a multiuse path access along Troy Schenectady Road and Balltown Road.

6. Coordinate efforts with the State to develop more pedestrian friendly system of crosswalks across Troy Schenectady Road on the eastern end of the Town.
7. Advocate for a dedicated multiuse lane on the Rexford Bridge with the State's proposal to upgrade the bridge.
8. 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.
9. Develop a connecting extension of the Windsor portion of the bike path through private property to the MHBHT.

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

**Implementation Tasks:**

1. Further incorporate the MHBHT 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. Establish a small parking area in the Middle Street neighborhood to provide access to the MHBHT.
3. The Town should implement the "Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan" to help encourage the development, preservation and recreational opportunities for the riverfront in Niskayuna.
4. Further develop Vischer Ferry Lock 7 into a recreational facility including such elements as:
  - A State constructed informational display illustrating the Canal's history and importance to this area.
  - An interpretive walking trail detailing the site's flora and fauna and local history.
  - Improved linkages to the Mohawk River State Park with additional linkages to the remainder of the Town's recreational areas.
  - Improved vehicular and pedestrian/bicycle access.
  - Improve the current area of the boat launch to accommodate more boats.
5. Continue improvements to Aqueduct Park and the Railroad Station Park to increase recreational opportunities along the Mohawk River Barge Canal.



**Objective #6** – Evaluate the future use of the Town Recreation Center.

**Implementation Tasks:**

1. In the context of a comprehensive park, open space, and preservation plan, Niskayuna should focus on developing a future vision for the recreation center concept. Given the current sites strengths and weaknesses, this process should investigate whether the current site is suitable for this use or if other potential sites better situated in the center of Town. This study should investigate potential infrastructure improvements to update aged facilities and weigh the cost of renovation existing facilities and amenities at the Town recreation center verses building a new facility.
2. The Town should improve access to the Recreation Center by extending the current multiuse path along Hillside Avenue, work with land developers to provide access from the south. Work with existing land owners to connect the Recreation Center with MHBHT using the former railroad right of way.
3. The Town should work with Schenectady County to acquire the undeveloped county land located to the east.

**Objective #7** – Improve access to existing Open Space and Recreation Areas.

**Implementation Tasks:**

1. The Town should consider building a small parking lot to improve town wide access to Stanford Park.
2. The Town should install signage on public right-of-ways indicating access to parkland and open space.
3. The Town should expand the existing web page on parks to include private public accessible open space and Town passive parks.
4. Work with NYS to and the property owners to provide safe access between Craig School, the soccer fields and the JCC.

## **NEIGHBORHOODS**

**Objective #1** – Establish neighborhood based volunteer groups to help develop and maintain existing and proposed parks to enhance their appearance and increase usage.

1. Improve or provide signage for each park or green space.
2. Team with Town departments to work with residents to develop a maintenance plan that efficiently utilizes the Town's resources and alleviates some of the labor related

activities that can be absorbed by residents. Although a park restricted to residents of the park district and their guests, the Dean Street Park serves as a good template for a neighborhood that has a functioning membership board that meets and oversees the development and maintenance of their park.

**Objective #2** – Create new parks and green space in neighborhoods.

1. Provide enhanced landscaping on the islands on Route 7 at Crosstown Connection. Solicit a local company or organization to donate money and/or services to maintain the green space and provide a sign recognizing the provider.
2. Neighborhood #5 Country Club – The Mohawk Golf Course is the largest privately owned parcel in this neighborhood. If the land ever became available for sale the Town should give serious consideration of purchasing it to use for recreation purposes.
3. Neighborhood #17 Stanford Heights - Actively pursue acquiring property in Southwest Niskayuna from the County for active recreational uses.
4. Neighborhood #20 Old Niskayuna – Develop the medians on Grand Boulevard, Lexington Parkway & Dorwaldt Boulevard with landscaping and walking paths. Neighborhoods could adopt each section of green space, landscape and maintain it throughout the year.



Dorwaldt Boulevard Median



Grand Boulevard Median

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# Public Facilities & Utilities

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# **ISSUE AREA: PUBLIC FACILITIES AND UTILITIES**

## **INTRODUCTION**

In the broadest sense, public facilities include Town-operated administrative and service facilities, public schools and their related facilities, fire stations, as well as lands and institutions owned and operated by other units of government.

Public utility systems addressed in this section include water, sanitary sewer, and storm-water. These systems have assets and provide services that influence land use and development decisions. The location, capacity and condition of the assets as well as the systems' management and budgeting policies ultimately affect the growth potential and fiscal health of the community. Likewise, the condition of a utility system is dependent on the fiscal health of the community that supports it. Which comes first is the chicken or egg debate. This section describes how, where, and why the utility systems have evolved as they have and identifies factors that drive the location, capacity and condition of the system assets.

## **INVENTORY OF PUBLIC FACILITIES**

### **Town Administrative and Service Facilities**

1. Town Hall (with numerous Town Departments) and Police Department - One Niskayuna Circle.
2. Recycling and Transfer Station – 2555 River Road.
3. Former Town Landfill, 2555 River Road
4. Highway Department Offices and Garage - WTRY Road.
5. Community Center - Aqueduct Road.

### **Public Schools**

There are two school districts within the Town; Niskayuna Central School District and South Colonie Central Schools. Only the Niskayuna Central School District has facilities within the Town. The facilities are located on eight separate parcels encompassing over 160 total acres. The district's facilities include:

1. Niskayuna High School - Balltown Road
2. Van Antwerp Middle School - Story Avenue
3. Iroquois Middle School - Rosendale Road
4. Birchwood Elementary School - Birchwood Lane
5. Craig Elementary School - Balltown Road
6. Hillside Elementary School - Cornelius Avenue
7. Rosendale Elementary School - Rosendale Road
8. School district garage - off Hillside Avenue

Glenclyff Elementary School is also part of the Niskayuna Central School District, however, it is located within the Alplaus section of the adjoining Town of Glenville.

## **Fire Districts**

Fire protection for the Town is provided via three fire protection districts; District One, District Two, and Stanford Heights Fire District. Each fire protection district is governed by its own Board of Fire Commissioners. Budgeting for the districts is completed independent of the Town and annual established fees are applied to those within the district through a separate tax levy.

### Fire District One

Fire District One is comprised of both professional and volunteer firefighters and paramedics. District One maintains two facilities. The Main Station located at 1079 Balltown Road is staffed 24 hours, 7 days a week. The sub-station located on River Road, east of the intersection of Balltown Road and River Road, is staffed Monday through Friday 8:00am to 4:30pm. The professional staff resides at the Balltown Road Main Station and the volunteer staff resides at the River Road Sub-station

### Fire District Two

Fire District Two's firefighting manpower is all volunteer. District Two does not provide medical transport services. These services are normally provided by Mohawk Ambulance Service with occasional support from Fire District One and the Town of Colonie Emergency Medical Services.

### Stanford Height Fire District

Stanford Heights Fire District provides fire protection to portions of the Towns of Niskayuna and Colonie. It is served by an all-volunteer staff. The Stanford Heights station primarily serves the southern sections of the Town located just over the municipal boundary with the Town of Colonie along Central Avenue.

### Ambulance Service

Ambulance service is provided by the proprietary Mohawk Ambulance Service.

Other public facilities that operate within the Town include:

1. Sgt. Horace D. Bradt Army Reserve Center - Hillside Avenue.
2. Oswald D. Heck Developmental Center, operated by the NYS Office of Persons with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) – Balltown Road.
3. Niskayuna Public Library - Nott Street East

## INVENTORY OF PUBLIC UTILITIES

### Niskayuna Operated Public Utilities

1. Water and Sewer Maintenance Facilities, 2555 River Road & WTRY Rd.
2. Water Treatment Plant, Lock 7 Road
3. Joint Water Pump Station, 1323 Balltown Road (at intersection of Van Antwerp Road)
4. Water District #3 Pump House (High Pressure Zone), Balltown Road near Story Avenue.
5. Water Storage Tank Site, located off Jaffrey Street
6. Wastewater Treatment Plant, Whitmyer Drive
7. 17 Wastewater Pump Stations (located throughout the Town)

### Other Public Utilities

1. City of Schenectady Bevis Hill Reservoir, located along Balltown Road opposite Story Ave.
2. Town of Colonie Raw Water Pumping Station, located on Rosendale Road (approx. 1000 feet northwest of the Niskayuna Rd intersection)

### Water System

#### Service Area

The existing water system services approximately 95% of the Town's residences. In 2011, public water was delivered to 21,543 people served through 7,820 service connections via infrastructure owned primarily by the Town.

In 1983, the Town consolidated various water districts into a single district, Consolidated Water District No. 1 (CWD#1) that encompasses most of the Town. In 1986, CWD#1 and the City of Schenectady agreed to construct a "Joint Pump Station" (JPS) and make some modifications to the distribution systems enabling CWD#1 to expand its service area to include a portion of the City, located immediately west of Sheridan and Providence Avenues, and provide that area with higher water pressures than the City's system could provide. (The project also provided some benefits to the Town's distribution system.)

#### Supply

The sources of supply for Niskayuna's water are two aquifers. The Schenectady Aquifer (aka "The Great Flats Aquifer") is located along the Mohawk River in Rotterdam and a smaller "Niskayuna Aquifer" is located along the Mohawk River in Niskayuna. The City of Schenectady owns and operates a water treatment plant (WTP) and pumps water from the Schenectady Aquifer while the Town of Niskayuna owns and operates a WTP and pumps water from the Niskayuna Aquifer. In 2011, the Town's WTP supplied

approximately 57% of the Town's water demands. The remaining 43% was supplied by / purchased from the City of Schenectady.

The Town's average day demand (ADD) is measured by millions of gallons per day (MGD). Since this amount occasionally exceeds the current permitted pumping capacity of 3.65 MGD, the Town has maintained a long term contract with the City of Schenectady that guarantees the Town will purchase at least 1.5 MGD = 548 million gallons per year of water from the City.

The amount of water a well-field may supply is dependent on a permit; the amount of water it can supply is dependent on the quality of the aquifer, the number of wells and their condition, as well as the size and condition of equipment needed to extract the water. Wells must be reconditioned every few years to maintain their pumping capacity. Once the raw water is pumped out of the ground, there also must be adequate facilities to treat, convey, and store the water. These are all constraints that affect the supply of water. Without a complete balanced package of equipment, there may be limitations which ultimately impact service and develop-ability of land.

### Treatment

Treatment at the Town's WTP consists of gas chlorination for disinfection and oxidization of iron and manganese, pressure sand filtration for iron and manganese removal, low level fluoridation for dental health benefits, and poly-orthophosphate for corrosion control. The Town's WTP is permitted to withdraw a maximum of 3.65 million gallons per day (MGD) of potable water production. The City of Schenectady's treatment process is nearly identical to the Town's except there is no pressure sand filtration due to minimal presence of iron and manganese in the raw water.

The Town's WTP was constructed in the mid 1960's. Various components have been upgraded over the years. One original component that is due for examination and likely needs reconditioning is the pressure sand filtration system.

### Transmission and Distribution (T&D)

The Town's water system has over 120 miles of water main, generally ranging in size (diameter) from 24-inch to 6-inch. 50 years ago and earlier, 6-inch pipe was commonly used in water distribution systems; most of the pipe installed in Old Niskayuna was 6-inch. Standards then changed increasing the minimum pipe size to 8-inch for most distribution systems. Now 6-inch pipe is typically used to supply a single fire hydrant off an 8-inch main. Larger pipe sizes are used to create the transmission system which conveys higher volumes of water out to the smaller diameter distribution pipe network. Undersized pipe can restrict system capacity, in particular, fire flows. If there is inadequate flow and pressure, it will limit the development of an area. Such was the case recently in the vicinity of Hillside Commerce Park. Much of the old piping was 6-inch and the system could barely support fire flows for one hydrant. In 2013, 16-inch main was installed along Hillside Avenue north of Providence Ave. Ultimately, this

larger main should be extended back to the GE Research Circle and connect to other transmission size piping.

The age of the T&D infrastructure ranges from new to 100 years old. The useful life or life expectancy for water main in Niskayuna is between 50 and 100 years. Age is one of several factors that affect useful life; other factors will be addressed below. The oldest pipe in Niskayuna is generally located in Old Niskayuna along Grand Boulevard and the oldest neighborhoods abutting the City. The newest pipe is obviously located in the newest subdivisions such as Fieldstone and Orchard Creek. There are some exceptions where original pipe has been replaced since 2007. Such areas include: the southeastern end of Rosendale Road, Old River Road, Niskayuna Road, the first block of Lisha Kill Road, Whitney Drive, a portion of Harris Drive, a portion of Trottingham and, most recently, a portion of Hillside Avenue.

Water pressure is another factor that influences the performance and useful life of water T&D systems. Water pressures around 50 or 60 psi are desirable; pressures in excess of 80 psi are too high for most purposes and tend to stress the water mains. The older, western end of Niskayuna generally has water pressures in the desirable 50 to 60 psi range; however, the areas of Town located closer to the Lisha Kill such as Avon Crest and areas closer to River Road, such as the newer portions of Rosendale Estates have water pressures between 75 and 100 psi. Some areas have pressures exceeding 100 psi. This situation is currently under evaluation to determine how and where to modify or better control the pressure zones to reduce system stresses.

Niskayuna's water system is currently divided into three different pressure zones (low, medium, and high). These separate zones regulate, to some degree, water pressures throughout the Town. Unfortunately, from a water pressure management standpoint, the elevations in different parts of Town vary by as much as 320-feet. This large fluctuation in elevation imposes a significant constraint on the water system design. A single pressure zone could never service such a range in elevation; the water pressures at the highest elevations would be too low and the water pressures at the lowest elevations would be far too high. [The lowest elevations in Town (elevation 190 = 190 feet above sea level) are located along the Mohawk River downstream of Lock 7; the highest ground elevation in Town (elevation 510) is located at the top of Bevis Hill (located along Balltown Road at Story Avenue). Also, the Lisha Kill (stream) is low elevation and it bisects the Town, separating high points at the southeast end of Town (such as Birchwood School) from the west-central part of Town (e.g. Bevis Hill), where the water storage tanks are located.] Various tanks that store water at different elevations establish 3 different hydraulic grade lines or 3 different pressure zones. The highest tank, which is about 185 feet tall, stores water at elevation 650 +/- and maintains water pressure for the highest elevation parts of Town (the "high zone") including Hexam Gardens, the Country Club neighborhood and the highest portions of Rosendale Estates. The lowest tank, the City's Bevis Hill Reservoir, stores water at elevation 500 +/- and maintains pressure for the neighborhoods bordering State Street as well as the northwest corner of Town along Aqueduct Road to the Town Recreation Center plus streets including Ravine, Banker, Englewood, Grandview and Napa Court.



The tanks in the medium zone store water at elevation 550 +/- and maintain water pressure for the remainder of Town and a small portion of the City. In order to better manage water pressures across the Town, a fourth pressure may need to be established with associated tankage and/or pumping systems to service the area of Town located east of the Lisha Kill.

The Town's policy has been and continues to be that developers install required water system improvements in their developments and then convey them to the Town. As development has progressed easterly through the Town, distribution piping has been installed, now forming a vast distribution system, with 120 miles of water main that reaches a large majority of the Town's residents.

The Town owns and maintains two dedicated water pump stations in addition to the high-lift pumps at its WTP that transmit water to and throughout the medium and high pressure zones. The 1991 Malcolm Pirnie Water Distribution System Analysis found that the firm capacity of the pumping stations in both pressure zones was adequate to meet the current and future maximum daily demands of the zones. However, it was recommended that a 750 GPM pump be installed for the high pressure zone to increase fire flows to 1500 GPM. A 2013 study by CT Male also recommended various capital projects to strengthen the T&D system.

### Storage

The Town has three water storage tanks within its' service area, exclusive of the treatment facilities. Two of these tanks each have a capacity of 1 MG and service the medium pressure zone. They are adequate to meet current and future storage requirements. The high-pressure zone is serviced by a 0.4-MG elevated tank. This tank meets current storage requirements of the zone; however, the 1991 Malcolm Pirnie Water Distribution System Analysis suggested additional storage to meet future demands. In an effort to reduce demand for additional storage volume in the high pressure zone, the Mohawk Golf Club's irrigation system connection was switched from the high zone to the medium zone in 2013.

## **Sanitary Sewer**

### Service Area

Existing sanitary sewers service more than 95% of the Town's population. Service is provided primarily by two sewer districts: Sewer District No. 1 and Consolidated Sewer District No. 6. Sewer District No. 1 generally covers the areas of the Town west of Balltown Road and Sewer District No. 6 covers most of the areas east of Balltown Road. Sanitary wastewater from all of Sewer District No. 6 and a small portion of Sewer District No. 1 is conveyed to the Town's Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP). Wastewater from the remaining areas of Sewer District No. 1 is conveyed to the City of Schenectady's WWTP. Some areas along the southern edge of Town have sanitary sewers that connect to the Town of Colonie's sanitary sewer system.

The areas of the Town that do not have public sewers are limited to the Middle Street and Mohawk River neighborhoods located along the northern and eastern edges of Town near the Mohawk River, as well as portions of the Albany Street area in the southern part of the Town. In total, approximately 640 housing units do not have public sewers.

### Conveyance

Within the Town limits, sanitary wastewater is conveyed through one of two different wastewater collection systems, owned, operated and maintained by Sewer District 1 or Consolidated Sewer District 6, to one of three different end points. The three end points or destinations are: (1) the Niskayuna WWTP on Whitmyer Drive, (2) the City of Schenectady's collection system or (3) the Town of Colonie's collection system. Most wastewater from District 6 and a small portion of District 1 flows to the Town's WWTP. Wastewater from the remaining portions of District 1 flows to the City of Schenectady's WWTP. Wastewater collected along southern edge of the Town is conveyed through Sewer District 6 pipe to the Town of Colonie's collection system.

Districts 1 and 6 collection systems consist of gravity pipes, manholes, and pump stations. Sewer District No. 6 and its infrastructure cover the majority of the Town while the oldest sewer lines are generally found in Sewer District 1. SD#1 is Old Niskayuna which is bound by Balltown Road to the east, Union Street to the south and Providence Avenue to the north as well as sections along Central Avenue in the southern portion of the Town. As with the extension of public water, sewer followed and was installed as development progressed easterly through the Town.

Fifteen wastewater pumping stations are located in Sewer District 6 and one in Sewer District 1. Three stations were installed in the 1960's, three in the 1970's, two in the 1980's, six in the 1990's, one in the 2000's and one in the 2010's. The stations are well maintained and the control systems are currently being updated. At present, all stations have flow capacities greater than existing peak flows; however, inflow and infiltration (I/I) into the collection system is stressing some of the stations and the collection system.

### Treatment

Most of the wastewater from Sewer District No. 6 collection system is conveyed to the Town's WWTP located on Whitmyer Drive. The WWTP was built in 1965-66 and discharges treated effluent to the Mohawk River. The WWTP has undergone various upgrades since it was originally constructed including:

- 1970's: addition of secondary treatment facilities
- 1980's: increasing treatment capacity to 3.0 MGD (average day), dissolved air flotation capacity was expanded and the primary digester was upgraded to a high rate digester to meet design loading.

- 1990: Improvements to the anaerobic process by adding mechanical screens and a sludge dewatering filter press.
- 2000's

The WWTP currently operates as an activated sludge unit process. The design capacity of the WWTP is 3.0 MGD (30 day average) and 4.5 MGD (max day) with effluent limits of 35 mg/l for biochemical oxygen demand BOD5 and 35 mg/l for suspended solids.

The WWTP both historically and under current operations experiences difficulty treating the volume of raw sewage during severe wet weather events due to Inflow/Infiltration (I/I) storm and ground water. During severe wet weather, the WWTP has exceeded permit limits such as not meeting effluent concentration limits, excess flow, inability of achieving 85% removals during I/I (due to dilute influent) and high effluent loading.

In 2003, the Town entered into a NYSDEC Order on Consent (Order) to reduce I/I. As a result, the Town formulated a plan to reduce I/I over a period of years. In 2010, the NYSDEC initiated another Order in settlement of reported violations of the 2003 Order.

In 2011, the Town conducted investigations and submitted additional reports to DEC outlining further action to tighten up the collection system and proposed upgrades to the WWTP.

The WWTP analysis concluded that the unit processes could adequately treat dry weather flows through 2020 but upgrades would be needed to accommodate the wet weather flows.

Two options were proposed to solve the wet weather flow problems:

- Upgrade and expand the WWTP to increase its treatment capacity to handle any expected flows.
- Provide a sizable overflow retention basin (at a cost of approx. \$3M).

The 2011 Order set a deadline of January 2016 for the Town to remove I/I from its collection system and complete improvements at the WWTP. It also established a moratorium on new connections to the sewer system until the I/I problems have been resolved. Projects already in the pipeline were exempt from the moratorium, but new proposed development will be stalled until the problems have been fixed.

## **Storm Water Management Systems**

“Storm water management (SWM) systems” is the common description or terminology used today in place of “drainage systems”. Drainage systems were typically considered the pipes, ditches and streams that conveyed water from point A to point B. Storm water management addresses not only the drainage component but also water quality, quantity, and rate of discharge. SWM is a more comprehensive approach to drainage.

The Town's storm water management (SWM) systems consist of: (1) catch basins that collect surface runoff, (typically within the Town's roadways), (2) drainage pipe and swales that convey the runoff, and (3) storm water management basins that store, treat and release runoff to receiving areas so as not to cause flooding further downstream. Older sections of the Town tend to have less SWM infrastructure and are more prone to flooding. Newer subdivisions tend to have more SWM infrastructure and generally experience less flooding. Since the mid 1990's, new storm water design standards and management strategies have, in effect, raised the performance bar.

SWM systems cost money to maintain. For many years, the only source of funding to maintain the SWM systems was the Town property tax. A portion of the town-wide tax revenue was allocated to the highway department for all drainage system maintenance. In the 1990's, the Town started requiring individual "special drainage districts" in all new subdivisions to cover the cost of system operation and maintenance within each particular subdivision. Special Districts charge variable fees or tax rates for specific services within each district and the fees or rates vary from district to district depending on what needs to be done. In addition to these special district charges, the costs to maintain the older drainage systems outside the aforementioned subdivisions are still paid for by everyone (through the town-wide general tax).

As various levels of government began to recognize that there were mounting problems with SWM systems, new standards and procedures were instituted or adopted. The Town of Niskayuna amended one of its earlier drainage standards so that new drainage systems had to be designed to convey a 25-year storm instead of a 10-year storm. In addition, the Town required new developments to examine downstream infrastructure and mitigate against pre-existing conditions that could cause flooding.

At the federal and state level, significant changes occurred since 2003 with the adoption of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Final Rule for Phase II of the Clean Water Act. The primary objective of the Phase II regulations was to control the last unregulated source of non-point source water pollution within the U.S. through implementation of a comprehensive program that would target surface runoff and water resources.

The Phase II Final Rule established criteria defining Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4s). Niskayuna met the criteria and was designated an MS4. As such, Niskayuna was required to initiate a fully integrated and permanent non-point source pollution prevention and mitigation program to protect both surface and groundwater resources within its regulatory boundaries. Under this program, the MS4 serves as the base management unit to communicate the regulatory requirements to the public. It must also incorporate "best management practices" (BMP's) into its operations

## **Issues and Opportunities**

### **Town Administrative and Service Facilities**

- Many of the Town's facilities are greater than 50 years old, with the exception of the Town Hall, which was constructed in the early 1990s. Many of the facilities are not optimal to meet the growing needs of each department. Much like the Town's utilities, understanding the limitations under current operations as well as those in the future is critical information to have for long term budgeting.

### **Public Schools**

- Not applicable.

### **Fire Districts**

- Not applicable.

### **Other Public Facilities**

- In 2013, the State announced the closing of the four remaining developmental centers operated by the OPWDD which included O.D. Heck by 2015. The location of the O.D. Heck facility, adjacent to Mohawk Commons and at the corner of Consaul Road and Balltown Road, has a substantial opportunity for redevelopment. Currently, the land is owned by the State which does not have to conform to the Town's zoning ordinance. The property is zoned R-2: Medium Density residential and would allow for single family homes only.

### **Water**

- Water main breaks cost a lot to repair. They often create secondary problems such as property damage, discolored water, and sometimes no water pressure for several hours. Some of the causes for water breaks have been addressed earlier. One way or another, measures need to be taken to reduce the frequency of water main breaks.
- The Town's distribution system is segregated by pressure zones such that end users are provided with water within an acceptable delivery pressure. However, there remain areas within the Town that still have high pressure, most notably in the eastern portions of the Town. The creation of a fourth pressure zone could reduce system pressures in the area and reduce the number of breaks.
- A large percentage of the Town's water is provided by the City of Schenectady. The two municipalities have agreements in place where the City furnishes water to the Town at a set cost, however, unknown or uncontrollable circumstances could lead to potentially substantial increases in user rates to Town users.

- The last comprehensive study of the Town's water system was done in 1991. In 2013, a limited scope study was conducted to examine the feasibility of purchasing all water from the City of Schenectady. The earlier study identified various improvements across the system including additional storage within certain pressure zones to decrease high delivery pressures as well as upgrades to increase fire flow within certain pressure zones. With over 20 years passing since the last comprehensive study of the Town distribution system and substantial growth occurring over this time, there may be a need to update the study to have a clear understanding of current and future system limitations.

## **Sanitary Sewer**

- Due to the relatively sparse population, surface bedrock formations and topography in the Middle Street & Mohawk River neighborhoods, 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 in the near term, unless a large development scenario is planned that could justify the public investment.
- Rain dependent inflow, primarily from stormwater runoff entering through cross connections to the public sewers and infiltration of groundwater entering through aging infrastructure has been and continues to be an issue within the Town sanitary sewer system. The Town has been tracking areas where it is most prevalent and has completed various capital projects to address I/I. However, there is still a critical need to further reduce I/I as a result of the NYSDEC Order and associated moratorium on new connections. The Town may need to consider a program that progressively targets cross connections primarily in the form of sump pumps or roof drainage from individual parcels as these two sources are significant contributors.
- The 2010 NYSDEC Order not only requires the Town to reduce I/I in the District No. 6 collection system, but also requires upgrades to the WWTP. The cost of these improvements will likely exceed \$10 million dollars. Absent financial assistance in the form of low interest loans or grants, these costs will be bonded and will likely precipitate an increase in user fees.
- The Town's numerous sanitary pump stations are reported to be at or beyond their design capacities. While the Town continues with replacement of aging components, the combination of unmitigated I/I and future development and redevelopment scenarios will continue to push some of the pump stations further beyond their capacities. As with the WWTP, substantial upgrades to the pump stations, if not a result of new development, may be significant and are largely unbudgeted.

## **Stormwater and Drainage**

- With the need to address I/I within the sewer system, which includes re-routing cross connections from sump pumps and roof runoff, it will be important to provide another acceptable means to collect and convey these discharges with the most logical being the Town's drainage system. Areas of the Town where these cross connections exist also coincide with the areas with the least drainage systems available. Further, these areas are also located where drainage districts do not exist. To upgrade existing drainage systems or installing new drainage systems will come at a significant cost.
- The framework by which stormwater management is regulated is expected to become more rigorous. The Town needs to regularly review its own codes and laws to ensure they are representative of the most current requirements and best management practices.

### **Goals, Objectives and Implementation Tasks**

**GOALS** - Continue to provide and/or support adequate community facilities and services - including fire protection, police protection, emergency services, education facilities, healthcare services, libraries, services for youths through seniors, and social services - that are responsive to the community's expected level of service and safety and that continue to enhance the quality of life.

**Objective #1:** Determine a preferred level of service for existing and future community facilities and services.

**Objective #2:** Formalize a dialogue and process with service providers to ensure preferred levels of service.

**Objective #3:** Support, encourage, and provide incentives to continue and enhance volunteer services.

**Objective #4:** Work with fire and emergency services to meet the needs of the current and future Town population.

**Objective #5:** Continue to provide adequate social, youth, adult, and senior services.

**Objective #6:** Create a process by which the Town and the schools share information and coordinate planning efforts.

**Objective #7:** Work with the school districts to support continuing educational opportunities for all Town residents.

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

**Objective #1:** Fully understand the operational state(s) of critical infrastructure to meet current and future demands of the Town and develop a capital improvement plan.

**Implementation Tasks:**

1. Establish a Utility Master Planning and Capital Improvements committee to include representatives from the Town governing body, department heads, and other interested parties.
2. Complete utility master plans that inventory utility assets and evaluate their functional state under both current and future needs. The master plan should also examine the viability to extend utilities in areas that are currently not served, yet residents need or want the service.
3. Establish a multi-year Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) (5 to 10 year planning period) that ranks the critical nature of improvements defined, establishes capital costs for the improvements, and then determines when they should occur.
4. The CIP should consider the Town's fiscal resources, including bonding capacity on an annual basis, ability to refinance existing debt as well as shared financial contribution from developers, when and where legally appropriate.
5. The CIP should investigate possible green initiatives, green education, and other actions that could reduce the capital costs of improvements.

**Objective #2:** Evaluate various means to finance infrastructure improvements to minimize impacts on the Town's population.

**Implementation Tasks:**

1. Explore legal mechanisms to finance capacity improvements that are cumulative in nature due to on-going development.
2. Investigate the feasibility of using Article 12-C of NYS Town Law to finance sewer improvements within already built areas through the town-wide ad valorem property tax, where appropriate.
3. Be aware of infrastructure issues and evaluate them against eligibility requirements of various grants and/or low interest loans that become available from State and Federal Agencies. Proactively apply for these funding opportunities.



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# Economic Development

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# 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 27-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. The Town also has available to its residents emergency 911, a County Library branch, a recycling/waste transfer station, a well-maintained road system and a wide range of recreational programs.

The momentums of many of the economic forces that have shaped the Town in the past continue in 2013. 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 & RETAIL DEVELOPMENT IN RESIDENTIAL AREAS.**

A proposal adopted by the Town Board on June 3, 1997 by Resolution No. 97-135 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.

In terms of the proposal's effect upon tax base and economic development, some impacts are as follows: Properties converted from residential to commercial use tend to increase in market value; however, the impact on surrounding residential properties can be negative when not thoughtfully integrated. Commercial development in residential areas may destabilize neighborhoods by changing their character and making the homes less desirable, thereby lowering their value. The increased valuation is reflected in the community's tax rolls. Allowance for additional professional offices reflects the ongoing structural transformation in business and the workplace.

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.

In the Town zoning ordinance, Article VI, Supplementary Regulations Relative to Specific Uses – Section 220-29 entitled home occupation uses allows residents to have small scale businesses operated on the premises but not encourage transformation from a residence into a commercial property. Opportunities for home businesses should be encouraged as long as they preserve the residential appearance and character of the neighborhood. Significant transformation of the exterior should be discouraged.

Small scale local retail businesses located within established residential neighborhoods is a template that has a growing potential within the Town. Appropriate retail stores can benefit the surrounding neighborhoods as long as they are cohesively intergrated into the fabric. Local retail provides walkable options and promotes sustainable development. A model that promotes holding the street scape, encourages mixed use and is architecturally distinctive from suburban home styles should be further defined by the Town.

## **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 The SI Group, formally known as 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 expansion.

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 Women's Center has undergone considerable modernization in recent years and as of January 2002 has changed from profit to not-for-profit. More recently, the Berger Commission resulted in it joining Ellis Medicine and undergoing substantial upgrades.

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.

### **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. This area is included in the Metroplex Service District.

Since Plan 2003 the goals of the tech park have not been met, given the changing economic condition and the recent rezoning of tech park land to residential. The Town should reevaluate the tech park zoning district while including all stakeholders in this process such as Metroplex and property owners to improve the connectivity between Balltown Road to Aqueduct Road. The principal concern is the balance between existing residential and future economic development.

### **4. ISSUE: COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY IN THE TOWN**

Several areas of established commercial activity have seen positive growth over the past ten years while new locations have emerged increasing the retail and business activity in the Town. There is a comfortable amount of potential commercial development within existing sites that would not require more undeveloped areas in the Town to be designated for that use. The following is a listing of commercial areas including existing and potential locations:

#### **MOHAWK COMMONS**

Over the past decade the Mohawk Commons commercial area has seen significant growth and development. As the main retail anchor between State Street and Balltown Road the area is dominated by large scale stores and cluster development. This area attracts customers from the surrounding communities and is a large source of the Town's tax revenue. Supplementing Mohawk Commons is Raymour and Flanigan Plaza to the north connected by an access road to the main businesses. Its proximity to

the State Street Corridor and newly developed Mansion Square have solidified the south end of Town as the most densely developed commercial and retail area.

## **MANSION SQUARE**

One of the Town's newest commercial developments between State Street and the west side of Balltown Road is Mansion Square. Located on the site of the historic Stanford Mansion it features the adaptive reuse of the 1815 brick mansion as a bank, a collection of newly constructed one story commercial buildings, and a large retail anchor business. Across Balltown Road is Mohawk Commons which balances the retail zone on both sides. Tree lined sidewalks link each of the buildings and extend the network of pedestrian access from Schenectady. The CDTA bus station will be relocated to this plaza from further east on State Street.

## **NISKAYUNA SQUARE**

Located at the corners of Balltown Road and Consaul Road, this commercial strip is anchored by a large grocery store and supplemented with stand alone banks, a gas station and other retail venues within the strip mall. The plaza is in close proximity to Mohawk Commons but is not directly connected via pedestrian means. 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 if it is deactivated, work in conjunction with the State to promote its adaptive reuse.

## **UPPER UNION STREET**

At the convergence of Troy Schenectady Road and Union Street, up to the city line of Schenectady along Union Street, is "Upper Union Street". This section of commercial and retail space offers a large variety of businesses and anchors the east end of Schenectady's portion of the street. The section within the Town's borders is a mix of residential, converted single family homes and retail business buildings. All are stand alone structures with parking either directly off the street or placed between the buildings. Upper Union Street within the Schenectady city limits has its own business improvement district and has recently undergone a streetscape and sidewalk enhancement as part of Schenectady County's Metroplex program.

In 2003 the Town hired Synthesis LLP of Schenectady, NY to perform an analysis and study potential upgrades to the corridor. A report was prepared that interviewed residents and business owners to identify concerns and priority issues impacting the area. Because of the existing low density of development, any large scale endeavor would require the obtainment of several properties to construct anything sizable under a template of multi-story with a focus on mixed use. This was considered a very low possibility; however, recommendations of the type of styles, building types and setbacks

from the street were outlined in the report. An item that received favorable consideration was improvements to the sidewalks, terraces, and streetscape. Refer to the drawing by Synthesis LLP dated February 5, 2003 showing proposed enhancements to the roadway and pedestrian access.

## **STATE STREET CORRIDOR**

Approximately 0.69 miles of New York State's Route 5, State Street, is a major arterial connecting the City of Schenectady with the Town of Colonie. This lineal urban strip is loaded on both sides with several types of businesses from large scale plots to small single unit buildings. It is lined with residential neighborhoods that back up to both sides. Although the Town's section is short in regards to the overall length, which extends between the cities of Albany & Schenectady, it follows a recognized post World War II development pattern and is a vital component that connects the Town with the other major municipalities in the Capital District.

Development of this area is a concern as other sections of State Street outside the Town's limits have undergone substantial large scale development. The Town should continually seek out sound development opportunities that will enhance the corridor but not significantly transform the current character. The Town should consider the incremental effect of development to ensure that suitable improvements occur such as pedestrian friendly scaled buildings. State Street is accessible by several modes of transportation and makes this area unique because it is not solely dependent on the automobile. Development and maintenance of the sidewalks, curb cuts, and roadways by the State have made the corridor attractive and allowed the street to maintain its low density development that doesn't overwhelm and consume the adjacent residential neighborhoods.

## **TOWN CENTER**

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 Shop Rite Plaza 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 centralized 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 existing commercial districts in the Town lack the ability to create a focal point for the Town since none are centrally located. Upper Union Street is closely affiliated with the City of Schenectady and the State Street-Balltown Road area serves a commuter market travelling Route 5.

The current zoning regulations should be reviewed to confirm that there aren't any imposing regulations that are outdated and could deter potential development that would be beneficial to improving the Town Center. In 1995 the Town Center Overlay District was formulated to ensure coherent development of a Town Center District, implemented through the amendment of the comprehensive plan and through appropriate changes to the zoning ordinance, zoning map, and official map. Reintroduction of formulating this committee should be considered to develop a master plan for future development that follows the proposed attributes listed above.

### **HILLSIDE COMMERCE PARK & THE HILLSIDE AVENUE AREA**

On the north end of Town, in the Aqueduct-Balltown neighborhood, there is a small pocket of industrial development off Hillside Avenue. This section of Town has seen the construction of multi-unit residential units and single family homes. Although the Town Center is within close proximity this area could benefit from a small pocket of retail development to serve the community on the north end. Supplemented by a growing residential population, consideration of more retail in this area should be given if the residents indicate that they would support commercial activity. Recognizing that community input to such development is essential.

### **5. 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.

Lock 7 on the Mohawk River is a unique waterfront feature that is rich in history and has been an attractive recreational area for residents and visitors. There is much potential for enhancing this section of the river. Several commissions and studies have been performed since 2003 but a specific plan of action has not been created that defines what the vision of the riverfront should be. In July of 2010, Congressman Tonko started the Mighty Waters Initiative in which the Town has been an active participant. The mission of the Mighty Waters Initiative is to help create a climate of investment, recovery and public awareness for the waterways and communities of the upper Hudson and Mohawk Rivers, Erie Canal, and related waterways by mobilizing federal

resources that encourage policy reform, economic development, public access and enjoyment and effective environmental cultural resource management.

## **6. 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 the last decade indicates that tax base value gain is concentrated in residential 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. Reliance on a tax base that is heavily weighted on residential does not foster financial balance, and may create a fiscal environment that leads to a need for unsustainable Town and School tax increases every year, as reflected in singular pattern development. Promotion of diversified construction in the appropriate locations throughout the Town will ensure long term revenue sources in the event that one type falls out of favor.

The long term maintenance costs should be considered as part of any large scale development and its impact on the Town's resources.

## **7. RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT**

As the Town begins to reach full build out, consideration needs to be given if significant re-development to established residential areas could occur. Residential areas throughout the Town are one of it's greatest assests and should be protected from inappropriate and poor design that does not contribute to the overall intent of the neighborhood. A growing concern is that there currently is nothing prohibiting the purchase of adjacent residential lots, demolishing the homes, and building on a combined-single lot. Although this redevelopment pattern has not become a frequent pattern here, other communities that have experienced a significant rise in property values have been experiencing this trend. Building that is out of scale with the surrounding properties is not a beneficial contributing factor and can adversely affect property values.



Residential developments within the last decade have offered a limited range of architectural styles and home sizes. Lack of diverse building stock attracts a limited buyer range that may or may not be able to afford purchasing. If a certain singular type is the only offering, and the properties do not sell, the vacant homes become a detriment to the neighborhood. A mix of housing stock with a range in styles and sizes appeals to a broader range of purchasers and has proven to promote better continual ownership. Uniformity should be discouraged.

A recent development trend affecting established residential neighborhoods is extensive renovations and additions that do not maintain the original character and spirit of the architectural language. Homes that are out of scale, lack thoughtful design and use incompatible materials adversely affect the surrounding community. Creation of an Architectural Review Board, as a subcommittee of the Planning Board, would establish a set of non-binding design guidelines that would advocate for appropriate development that compliments the language of the neighborhoods. This board would work in the field with the home owners or builders to ensure that the exterior appearance of the new construction is sympathetic and built to the standards of the existing structure.

## **8. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

At the forefront of the last decade, an emphasis on sustainable design practices has become very important. It promotes using regional materials and minimizes the amount of energy to operate a building. Recent improvements on the municipal level include the installation of solar panels at Town Hall. As energy costs become a primary contributing factor in development and facility maintenance, selection of the best materials within budgetary limits attribute to less monetary costs over the lifetime of the buildings. Both commercial and residential development has benefited from adopting these policies and the Town should encourage developers to implement sustainable design principles whenever possible.

In regards to landscape, the use of indigenous species should always be encouraged. Typically these plant types are adapted to our climate, prosper well within our range of temperatures, and compliment the surrounding green spaces that have not undergone development. Use of species that are not native should be discouraged.

An emerging mode of transportation that has experienced a recent rebirth is the use of electric vehicles. This once fairly common vehicle type has seen an emerging market with the growing participation in sustainable transportation. Infrastructure such as charging stations and dedicated low emissions vehicle parking spaces have begun to be installed in the retail and commercial districts throughout the Town. As ownership of this vehicle type becomes more common, more areas will cater to these modes of transportation.

Alternative energies such as solar, wind, and water should be encouraged by the Town with guidelines for installations and impact on the neighborhood character. As the technology improves more options will become available making these systems more

economical for business and home owners. Consideration on retrofitting retail and existing neighborhoods should be outlined within the Town's policy so to avoid disputes on what the visual impact may be to adjacent properties.

## **TOWNWIDE 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 while maintain the Town's residential character. A comprehensive review of the current zoning regulations should be performed by a professional agency with experience in writing zoning ordinances.

### **Implementation Tasks:**

1. Determine the viability of a Tech Park Zone for industrial development in Northwest Niskayuna.
2. Decide if an industrial zone is compatible in a residential community.
3. Enact appropriate performance standards in the industrial zone that promote development compatible with the residential character of the community.
4. The Town should look at the I-G zoning at Aqueduct Road to the river to determine if it is the best economic development of the area.
5. Evaluate commercial zoning standards to more directly address present trends in commercial development by considering such features as parking standards, commercial Planned Unit Developments (PUDs), and commercial overlay districts.
6. Investigate the value of additional standards for the C-N zoning district.
7. The Town should review the permitted uses to diversify development in the C-N: Neighborhood Commercial zoning district.
8. Consider rezoning as mixed use for the O.D. Heck property as previously discussed in other Issue Papers.
9. Review the current wind turbine ordinance to be updated with new technology.

**Objective #2** - The Town should continue to advance the concept of a Town Center, thereby creating a focal point of shopping, civic and cultural activities.

### **Implementation Tasks:**

1. Reestablish a Town Center Overlay District Committee to ensure coherent development of a Town Center District and implement appropriate development through the amendment of the Comprehensive Plan and through appropriate changes to the zoning ordinance and zoning map.
2. Define the Public Facility elements to be included in the Town Center.
3. Future building development should maintain continuous setbacks from the street that establish and promote pedestrian activity.

**Objective #3** - 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 technology, 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.

**Objective #4** – The Town should consider the following improvements to the commercial areas.

### **Implementation Tasks:**

1. Mohawk Commons:
  - a. Work with the State to provide better pedestrian connectivity with sidewalks that connect the surrounding neighborhoods with a sidewalk along the east side of Balltown Road.
  - b. Work with the owners to make the grounds more pedestrian friendly and install more sidewalks to connect the retail buildings within the property.
  - c. Construct a staircase or ramp that connects Raymour & Flanigan Plaza to the north end of Mohawk Commons.
2. Mansion Square:
  - a. Encourage development that follows the intended vision for the commercial area.

3. Niskayuna Square:

- a. Provide better pedestrian connectivity with a multiuse path that connects the plaza along Consaul Road to the entrance of Glen Eddy. Coordinate efforts with the County.
- b. Work with the State to provide better pedestrian connectivity with sidewalks along the east side of Balltown Road.
- c. Improve visibility from Balltown Road.

4. Upper Union Street:

- a. Allow mixed use for single family homes to be converted to office or retail within the C-N zone.
- b. New building development should maintain a continuous setback from the street.
- c. Combine parking between properties to minimize the amount of space and curb cuts feeding off of the street.
- d. Consider streetscape improvements to the terraces, sidewalks, curbs and adding street lights. *See Synthesis LLP February, 2003 report for representative design features.*
- e. Enhance landscaping and enforce penalties for properties that are delinquent in maintaining their green areas within public view. Always consider the use of indigenous plants.
- f. Work with the Town to research a location for a common parking area.
- g. Bury utilities when the opportunities are provided based on appropriateness.
- h. Annually maintain the crosswalk at Union Street and Balltown Road. Coordinate efforts with the State and the County.
- i. Survey business owners to establish a BID.

5. State Street Corridor:

- a. Promote greenscape and planters along the terrace and front sides of the properties.
- b. Revise the parameters for landscaping to encourage attractive plantings along the pedestrian zone but that do not visually obstruct the facades of the buildings. Always consider the use of indigenous plants.
- c. Combine parking between properties to minimize the amount of space and curb cuts feeding off of the street when feasible. Parking should be designed so that it has minimal impact to the residential neighborhoods.
- d. Bury utilities when the opportunities are provided based on appropriateness.
- e. Amend current zoning ordinance on signage for C-H: Commercial Highway and update as required. Include performance standards.
- f. Require that all buildings display their number in a place easily identifiable from the street.
- g. Amend current zoning ordinance that defines the maximum size of commercial development when large lots become available. Insert

language that allows for a full review of the proposed use so as not to deter unique opportunities.

6. Town Center:

- a. (See Objective #2)

7. Hillside Commerce Park:

- a. Promote greenscape and planters along the terrace and front sides of the properties.

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# Land Use

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# 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 pockets of rural character are located within its central and northern 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 and existing developed lands are redeveloped. 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. A continual theme that has been advocated in other areas of the Plan is to maintain a balance of commercial and residential development. Treatment of how to use the remaining available land and reuse of existing properties is discussed further in this section. Amenities such as the Town's favorable geographic location between the cities of Albany & Schenectady, relationship to the Mohawk River, varying terrain and proximity to the recent high-tech based business development in the region should be considered for any future development.

Much of the focus in this issue section is on developed land parcels and many recommendations made herein advocate for the enhancement or redevelopment of current commercial and retail sites, while insuring the appropriate stewardship of existing undeveloped and agriculture land and preserving Niskayuna's residential character.

Guiding principles include pedestrian friendly development, encouragement of appropriately scaled streetscape, sustainable development, etc.

As the Town continues to grow, existing large land parcels may be identified for development resulting in drastic shifts from their current use. Such development shifts require careful and deliberate consideration to determine redevelopment impacts on the surrounding area, infrastructure, and existing land use patterns. In these situations, acting proactively by considering possible development sceneries and their potential impacts will allow the Town to preserve its favorable character by directing it than rather having its future develop by outside forces. In some cases, the Town may want to employ land use tools or protective measures to reduce or mitigate negative impacts and achieve desirable future development.

Protective measures can be utilized by the Town if it felt it was in the best interest for the future. Such measures may require a change in zoning or modifying its current designation. Specific cases are as follows:

## TOWNWIDE GENERAL LAND USE PATTERNS & DISTRIBUTION OF LAND USE ACTIVITIES

The number of parcels and the amount of land in acres within the Town devoted to various land uses were examined using the Town's 2013 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 2013 Town tax assessment roll data, approximately 85% of tax parcels within Niskayuna are devoted to single family residential uses; these parcels absorbed approximately 40% of the Town's land area. Two family residential uses comprise less than 1% of all tax parcels on less than 1% of the Town's acreage. Ten percent of the tax parcels are "vacant", representing 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 the ability to install public infrastructure creating hardship for development. Coupled with natural constraints, such as poor soils or steep slopes, the ability to develop these lands has been limited in the past.

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 4.

Table 4 – Land Use Distribution Chart

Land Use Distribution – Total Parcels		
Table 4		
LAND USE	NUMBER OF PARCELS	PERCENT
1-Family Residential	7,343	85.17%
2-3 Family Residential	67	0.77%
Other Residential	38	0.44%
Apartments	19	0.22%
Vacant	557	6.45%
Commercial	86	1.00%
Other	517	5.95%
Total Parcels	8,627	100%

\* For a more extensive listing see the full version in the Town Assessor's Office.



## **CURRENT ZONING REGULATIONS**

The last comprehensive overhaul of the Town's zoning regulations occurred in the 1960's. The current set of regulations with the numerous updates and amendments is cumbersome and many of the ordinances and/or policies are outdated or not applicable. This has resulted in numerous requests for variances. During the development of Plan 2013, the committee felt that it was an appropriate time to have the current set of zoning regulations updated. Niskayuna's zoning regulations are perhaps the most important tool at the Town's disposal to insure smart growth, maintain a desirable community character, and sustain a strong local economy. Given its importance, the Town needs an updated Comprehensive Zoning Code for the following reasons that reflect the Town's current concerns. This would provide a useful resource for several reasons:

- The current code fails to address in a comprehensive fashion current development trends and business climate.
- The Town has substantially changed since 1972 as it evolved from an agricultural to a suburban community. As full build out is achieved, Town concerns and pressures are now different and current zoning regulations should reflect these changes.
- A comprehensive overhaul would enable the Town to incorporate modern land use techniques and tools into its zoning code.
- Create a more user friendly and accessible version that can be accessed by a multitude of entities that may be considering development in the Town.

### **1. ISSUE: APPROPRIATE LAND USES AND DENSITIES TOWNWIDE FACING COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT PRESSURES AND PERSISTENT TRAFFIC GROWTH.**

In past years the Town of Niskayuna has attempted to fashion development regulations that work to enhance these corridors as primary entryways to the Town.

## **TROY ROAD**

### Background

The entire length of Troy Schenectady Road (NYS Route 7 - Troy Schenectady Road) 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 the 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). Two-family residential uses are located on 5 lots. 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
- 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 the Troy Schenectady Road area.

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 Town should take steps to insure that trend extends into the future. 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 were 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 should maintain its existing zoning along Route 7. Since an examination of the tax parcels indicates few, if any, remaining areas that would easily lend themselves to commercial development.

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.

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. For example, the town should work to make the area more pedestrian friendly. 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 may be some grant opportunities available from the State.

## **BALLTOWN ROAD**

### Background

Similar to Troy Schenectady Road, Balltown Road is a major arterial within the Town, and has been experiencing significant traffic growth. Like Troy Schenectady 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 3.

**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; Mansion Square is adjacent to Balltown Road.

**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 an 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, one church parcel and a convent.

**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. A golf club abuts Balltown Road.

**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 known as Shop Rite Square at the intersection of Nott Street and Balltown Road.

**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 River Road, 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 Jewish Community Center, a veterinary clinic, a school and single family residential uses are also found in this subarea. In 2001 the Town rezoned the area of Balltown Road and River Road from R-2: Medium Density Residential to R-P: Residential/Professional. In the late nineteen nineties the Town saw the expansion of Schenectady International.

The R-2 zoning district along Balltown Road was included in the Town's professional office study. 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, there is the potential for additional development in the R-P zoning district on parcels of one acre or larger. Without additional traffic improvements, preliminary analysis projects that Balltown Road could be the most impacted by traffic of the three corridor study areas based on its current two-lane capacity.

The Town has used, 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 a regional traffic carrier.

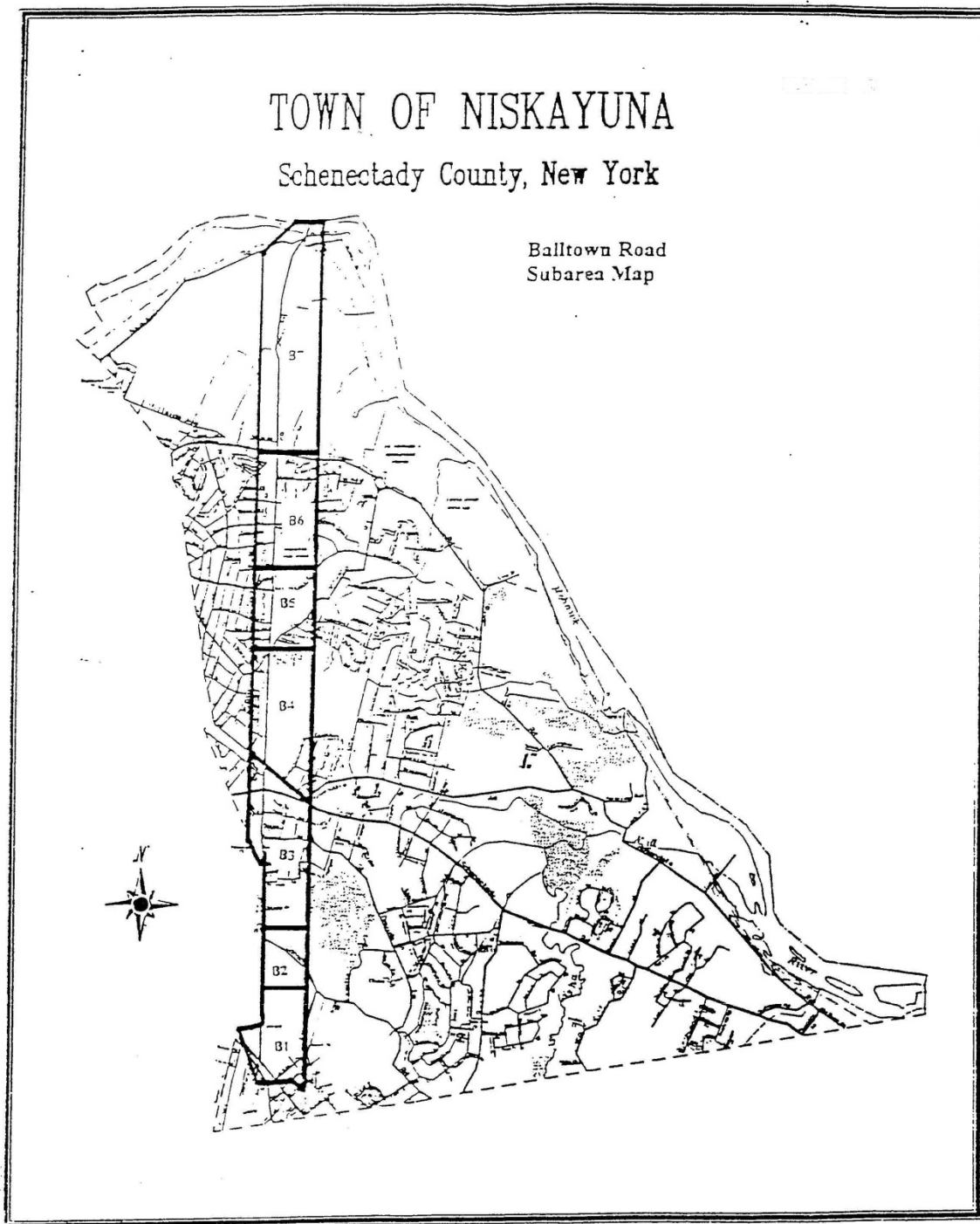


Figure 3 – Balltown Road Corridor Subarea Map

## **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.

**Subarea B2:** As mentioned previously in this paper, this State owned facility is slated to close in the near future. The Town may consider pursuing grants that would fund a study on possible adaptive uses and budgetary implications for modifying the complex. This large parcel has several large buildings, parking and green space that may be suitable for multipurpose use. Any reuse should provide pedestrian access to the surrounding properties, be mindful of the traffic congestion and impact on the residential areas. Development should incorporate mixed use practices.

**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 Town Center 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 should continue to uphold the existing zoning standards in place that encourage pedestrian friendly development.

**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 should continue its plans to improve the Rexford Bridge and the Balltown Road corridor. The Town should continue its coordination efforts with the State to carry out these projects.

With respect to the I-R Research & Development Industrial zone, the Town should consider altering the scope of allowable uses in this district to permit office activities. Since the OTLI district has been designated, the characteristics of the area has been changing, Since this has not seen a lot of interest in the last decade the Town should reevaluate if this use has any appropriateness.

## **CONSAUL ROAD**

**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-Schenectady Road and Balltown Road, major portions of this roadway contain residential neighborhoods. More recently the Town has seen the addition of 57 new single family homes & 45 townhomes and a condominium development. Traffic pressures will continue to increase into the future.

**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
- Access road to Raymour & Flanigan and Mohawk Commons
- Townhouses
- Condominiums
- Landscaping
- Single family homes
- Senior housing

### **Recommendations**

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 or any other improvements to the road would reduce the number of accidents that occur. Non motorized access should also be considered with the improvements.

In keeping with the mostly residential nature of Consaul Road, there is one 36-acre parcel that has the potential for development. This 36 acre parcel is currently zoned R-1: Low Density Residential. The Town should encourage residential development through use of average density. Full development of this property could create significant traffic congestion along Consaul Road. The Town might want to consider conservation options to limit development. It is bounded by the HG Reist Parcel that would limit the expansion of development. As discussed in subsection B2, any changes in the use of the O.D. Heck center will affect the traffic and character of the area. Full build out of this property could have a significant impact on the issues described above.

With the development of Niskayuna Square, Glen Eddy and Mohawk Commons, pedestrian traffic has increased along Consaul Road. Given the development in the area the need for non motorized access should be given high priority. 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.

### **UPPER UNION STREET**

**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. 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 4.

**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. Kateri-Tekakwitha Church and School. 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. The recommendations in the report were never executed.

**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, and a private golf club.

Town of Niskayuna  
Schenectady County, New York

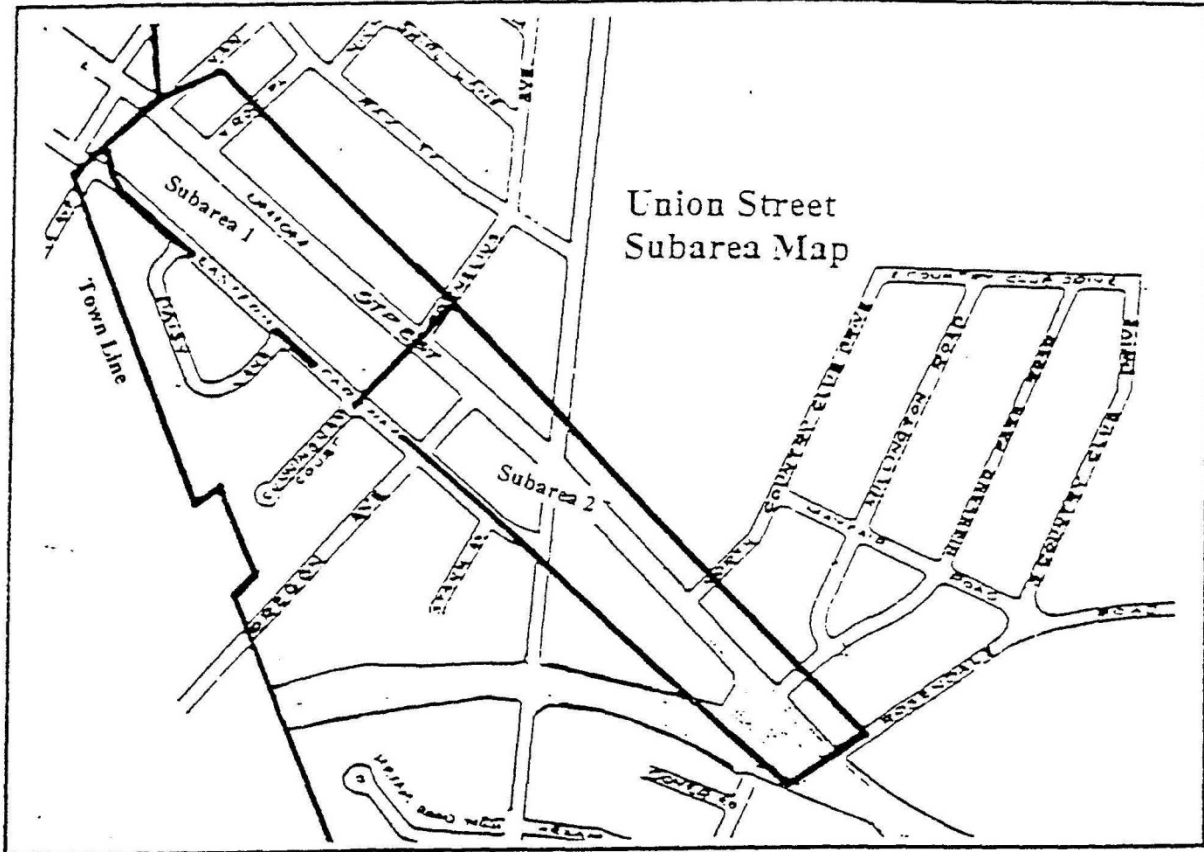


Figure 4 – Union Street Corridor Subarea Map

**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. Kateri Tekakwitha Church & School to R-P: Residential Professional. The Town concluded that the remainder of the corridor should keep its present zoning. 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: DEVELOPMENT OF EXISTING LARGE PARCELS**

Realizing that the Town is approaching full build out, the Town should identify remaining undeveloped land parcels and evaluate their value as parkland or open space. Parcels identified as having high value as parkland or open space should be identified and ranked. When considering the value of undeveloped parcels, the Town should consider the benefits of the open space as well as the economic, traffic, and public utility implications if the land was developed to its fullest extent.

### OD Heck Complex

This State owned facility is slated to close in the near future. The Town may consider pursuing grants that would have an agency perform a study on possible adaptive uses and budgetary implications for modifying the complex. This large parcel has several large buildings, parking and green space that may be suitable for multipurpose use. Its proximity to the largest collection of commercial businesses and major arterials on the southern end of the Town are benefits; however, the size of the parcel would require either a sizable entity or group of investors to develop the property. The Town has undergone large scale development projects but a phased approach could be implemented if it was deemed more suitable.

### Mohawk Golf Club

The Mohawk Golf Club is comprised of a 27 hole golf course, recreational facilities such as tennis courts and a swimming pool, a large club house with dining facilities and other buildings that support the complex. This private club is open to the public for certain functions. Its centralized location, established amenities and geographic features makes it an attractive parcel. Currently it is zoned R-1 which allows residential development. Under the Town's current regulations a large number of homes could be constructed if the club ever ceased to operate under its current configuration. Given that this parcel attributes to open space, if the club ever became available the Town may consider operating it as a municipal golf course or relocating recreational facilities to the location.

## **3. ISSUE: HOUSING DIVERSITY**

The majority of Niskayuna's development is single family residences. Single family homes include condominiums & townhomes. Below is a summary of the types of housing based on the 2013 Town's assessment data:

- Two family homes (2 units only) = 65 homes for a total of 130 units
- Three family homes (3 units only) = 3 homes for a total of 9 units
- 20 apartment complexes (4 units or more) = 1167 units

Niskayuna possesses a significant number of apartments. 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. See Figure 5 for the 2013's "Property Classification Summary".

NYS - Real Property System  
County of Schenectady  
Town of Niskayuna  
SWIS Code - 422400

Property Classification Summary - 2013 -

					----- Taxable Values -----	
R S	Prop Type	Description	No. of Parcels	Land Value Total Value	County Tax Town Tax	School Tax Village Tax
1	210	1 Family Res	7,343	335,693,920 2,005,260,846	1,930,594,860 1,933,394,696	1,982,700,441 0
1	210 - C	Condo	159	2,780,000 36,243,500	27,823,850 34,489,352	35,575,400 0
1	215	1 Fam Res w/Apt	4	266,550 1,835,000	1,835,000 1,835,000	1,835,000 0
1	220	2 Family Res	61	2,383,600 12,251,000	11,552,775 11,552,775	11,852,125 0
1	230	3 Family Res	2	84,400 488,000	488,000 488,000	488,000 0
1	240	Rural res	19	2,557,300 9,887,000	9,705,100 9,688,707	9,781,900 0
1	260	Seasonal res	2	38,100 110,000	110,000 110,000	110,000 0
1	270	Mfg housing	2	64,000 173,000	173,000 173,000	173,000 0
1	280	Res Multiple	15	788,110 4,619,000	4,583,000 4,583,000	4,619,000 0
1	311	Res vac land	525	10,636,500 10,636,500	10,636,500 10,636,500	10,636,500 0
1	312	Vac w/imprv	29	549,200 745,714	744,435 744,435	745,714 0
1	322	Rural vac>10	10	1,381,100 1,381,100	1,375,100 1,375,100	1,375,100 0
1	330	Vacant comm	15	334,600 334,600	334,600 334,600	334,600 0
1	331	Com vac w/imp	2	610,100 626,100	626,100 626,100	626,100 0
1	340	Vacant indus	5	2,428,100 2,428,100	2,428,100 2,428,100	2,428,100 0
1	411	Apartment	19	4,947,500 48,836,000	48,836,000 48,836,000	48,836,000 0

Figure 5 - Property Classification Summary Chart

## **Affordable Housing**

The generally accepted definition of affordability is for a household to pay no more than 30 percent of its annual income on housing. Families who pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing are considered cost burdened and may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation and medical costs.

In recent years, the great majority of new home construction has been for upscale homes that do not meet the definition of affordable for many residents and those who may want to become Niskayuna homeowners. More affordable housing exists mainly in Old Niskayuna. There are tools that municipalities may use to encourage the development of new affordable housing. These tools include requiring a percentage of a new development to be affordable, allowing a portion of a new development to be clustered for the addition of affordable homes, and offering incentives to developers or individual home purchasers for the development of individual affordable homes. Additionally, as noted elsewhere in this Plan, steps can be taken to preserve the affordability of existing homes.

## **Sustainable Development**

With any new development, the Town should encourage the developer to employ as many sustainable building techniques and good land management practices as feasible. The use of quality materials along with advanced building techniques create better buildings that use less energy to operate and have longer life spans meaning that building sites will not undergo continual re-development. Since Niskayuna is a participating partner in the Climate Smart Community program, it parallels the goals and objectives set forth to reduce energy consumption. National and State wide programs such as US Green Building Council (USGBC), Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) and Energy Star provide information to owners and developers on sustainable building techniques and option for tax incentives.

## **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 2012 assessment roll data, existing two-family, structures are concentrated in the following areas (See Figure 5):

- Old Niskayuna along Van Antwerp Road, Palmer Avenue and Regent Street
- Southwest of State Street, and

- Troy Road, primarily within the R-2 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. There are still a few remaining vacant parcels 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 location outside the NYS wetland area; these lots have an average size of 10,000 square feet.

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. On the most eastern end of Troy Road, Vly Pointe has 64 condominium units which are currently connected to the Town of Colonie's sewer system.

### **Recommendations:**

**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 of more affordable single family homes in this area.

**Troy Road** - The Town has determined that the Troy Road area should remain 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 Unit 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 Units 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 units are being developed under these provisions. An example of this is Fieldstone Estates and Hummingbird Manor which allowed for a diversity of housing and preservation of open space.

**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. By allowing average density development 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 Recreational Facilities and Open Space Issues Paper).

## **Assisted Living Complexes**

In select locations within the Town, there are assisted living complexes such as, The Eddy and B'Nai B'Rith that offer housing for the elderly. Although the past ten years has not seen a significant demand for assisted living complexes, future development of land parcels should be located near amenities and utilize the area to offer a variety of services and outdoor spaces that residents can use.

## **4. ISSUE: TRANSFER DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS**

The concept of Transfer Development Rights (TDR) is one that has been adopted by communities that are faced with limited available land for development. The premise is that the owner of a lot can transfer their development rights to another location thereby preserving the condition of that primary property and allowing the latter property a greater range of use options with the parcel. An example would be if an active farm wanted to sell their development rights to another parcel across Town that wished to have a higher density development than currently permitted by zoning.

## **5. ISSUE: PARKING – CURRENT POLICY MODIFICATIONS**

Throughout the Town there are clusters of commercial businesses where parking is the primary mode of access. Since there is a wide range of services offered throughout the Town, the current parking regulations almost always require a review by the Planning Board. Making the parameters less stringent and allowing the Planning Board to have more flexibility while reviewing individual submissions will result in better development patterns throughout the Town.

### Recommendations

When possible, encourage adjacent business owners to develop shared parking lots with reduced number of entrance points.

Allow business owners to submit justification with specific criteria that demonstrates projected patronage patterns to reduce the number of parking spaces required under the current policy.

## **6. ISSUE: EXISTING FARMLAND AND ENCROACHMENT FROM DEVELOPMENT**

Although Niskayuna is predominantly a suburban community several large parcels operate as working farms. Typically, the surrounding lands adjacent to the farmsteads have undergone residential development. Most of these developments are established and the lot sizes generally large, however, there are mechanisms within the current Town's policies that do not inhibit redevelopment based on the current zoning. Some private parcels may have enough land to subdivide or if multiple parcels are bought by a single entity redevelopment types with higher density rates may be allowed. The Town



should consider better protection of these lots if the Town is faced with situations such as these.

## **7. 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 should enact those recommendations.

The majority of land uses in this area are single family residential. 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 tax roll also indicates that 22 vacant parcels exist here; these parcels range in area from 18.9 to 0.1 acres.

According to the 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. The Town should continue to look at options to sewer this section.

**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. As opportunities arise, the Town should work with property owners to remove the paper streets from the record and develop the paved roads.

## **8. ISSUE: VACANT AREAS WITHIN ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREAS.**

### **Floodplains and Wetlands**

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 L-C: Land Conservation.

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

### **Southwest Wetland Area**

As discussed in the Recreational Facilities and Open Space 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 septic systems due to prolonged wetness. Sites outside the wetland boundary should be evaluated on a lot-by-lot basis.

**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.

## **9. ISSUE: FUTURE DEVELOPMENT ALONG PEARSE AND LISHAKILL ROADS**

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 6).

# RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT FRONTING ON PEARSE OR LISHAKILL ROADS

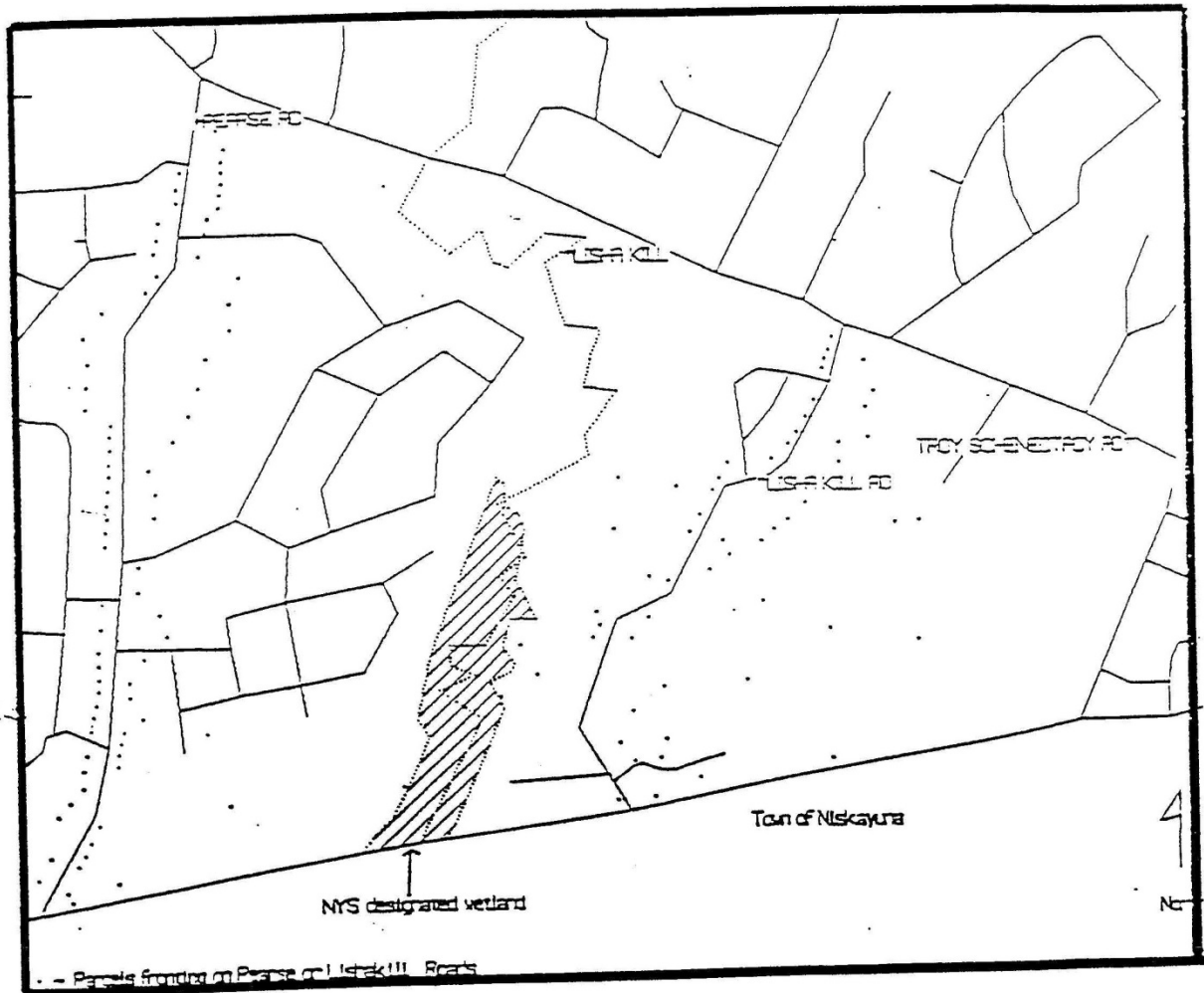


Figure 6 – Pearse & Lisha Kill Roads Map

**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 recent 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.

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 6). 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 development potential, assuming no further action, would be 40 lots.

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.

### **Lishakill and Pearse Roads**

Plan-1993 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-2013 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.

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.

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.

## **10. 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 Town Center concept has been implemented with the construction and renovations of buildings in the Shop Rite Plaza, Nott Street group of buildings, stand alone structures such as the Town Hall, Post Office and the County Library. At this juncture, the Town is presented with the opportunity to insure efficient and beneficial integration of existing land uses with new public and privately owned 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 made this area the Town Center.

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 Recreational Facilities and Open Space 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 7 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:

- Shop Rite Square (a mixed use retail/office complex), the Niskayuna 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 pharmacy on the juncture of Van Antwerp Road and Balltown 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.

# Current Zoning Designations for the Town Center Area

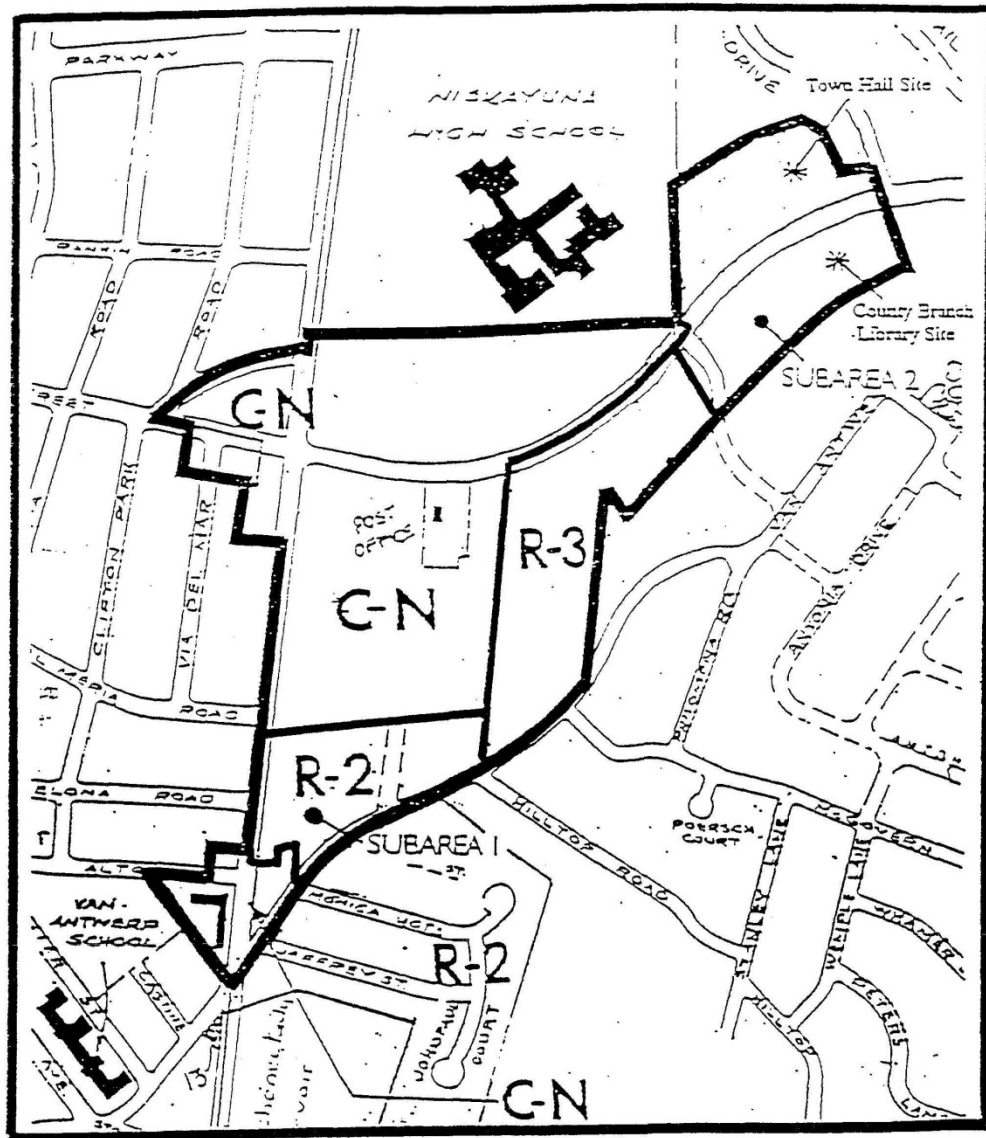


Figure 7 – Town Center Zoning Map



## **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. The Town should encourage the use of appropriate size of common parking lots and discourage drive-throughs as they are not compatible to the Town Center district concept.

## **Climate Smart Community**

In 2011 Niskayuna joined the Climate Smart Communities program which is sponsored by the DEC. This State-Local partnership promotes sustainable development practices that lower greenhouse emissions that benefit the residents of their community. Currently 118 communities within the state participate in the program. Niskayuna's pledge commits future planning to adopt policies to combat climate change.

## **Zoning**

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

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

**Subarea 2.** The R-1 piece is located west of the County Library site, south of a vacant commercially zoned parcel, and east of a vacant R-3 parcel.

## **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:

- Improve service road locations and connections with proper linkage to arterial and collector system roads with appropriate zoning and land uses to be permitted within this area
- Pedestrian and bicycle access

- Parking - including consideration of public parking with consolidated lots shared between businesses. The plan should consider alternate parking arrangements for those businesses for which onsite parking is not possible
- 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 as discussed in the Economic Development Issue Paper.
- The Town should continue to study the possibility of a “Community Center” in the center of Town
- Encourage development that maintains the streetscape.

### **Land Use Goals and Implementation Tasks**

**GOAL** - To sustain and enhance the Town’s residential character, as discussed throughout this Plan, 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 consistent with applicable laws, rules and regulations, and principles of good planning consistent with the visions expressed in Plan 2013.

#### **Implementation Tasks:**

1. 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.

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

#### **Implementation Tasks:**

1. Retain the current residential zoning with the following modifications:
  - a. The Town should explore 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-Schenectady Road. Work towards the goals of including a multiuse path the entire length and adding pedestrian crossing where applicable.
- c. Work with New York State to beautify Troy-Schenectady Road.

**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. See also Objective 8 – Item 5.

#### **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.
- 2. Incorporate a multi-purpose walkway into the plan for proposed “Greens Farm Road” between Nott Street East and Van Antwerp Road.
- 3. Explore opportunities to alleviate parking problems in the Nott Street area west of Balltown Road.

#### **Subarea 7**

- 1. Reevaluate the Office Technology Zone boundaries. 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.

2. Consider viable economic uses compatible with each other and the adjacent neighborhoods with the residential character of the Town for the OT-Light Industrial district.
3. Continue to work with New York State to alleviate the traffic congestion on Balltown Road and the Rexford Bridge.
4. Encourage better pedestrian improvements in the area with any future projects to meet the Complete Streets program.
5. 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 encourage the County to fix the dangerous curves on Consaul Road
2. The Town should work with the County to construct a multi-use path on the north side of Consaul Road to meet the existing sidewalk at Hummingbird Manor.
3. 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. Kateri Tekakwitha 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. Work with New York State to evaluate opportunities to improve the triangle at Union St. and Troy-Schenectady Road with low maintenance growth.

**Objective #6** - 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.

**Objective #7** - 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. The Town should perform an overall study of the Open Space Townwide.

**Objective #8** - 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. Consider lower density zoning in those areas of the Town where public utilities cannot be provided due to financial burden or natural constraints.
4. Encourage average density development to facilitate upgrading public utilities and preserving open space in the Middle Street neighborhood.
5. Consider placing a moratorium for the redevelopment of the O.D. Heck property until it is rezoned to emphasize mixed use development patterns that focus on the

following elements: walkable streetscape, centralized open space, interconnected street system, and required mix of residential and commercial uses.

6. Review the I-G zone along the Mohawk River to meet the development projections consistent with the Mohawk River Waterfront Revitalization Plan.
7. The Town should look at land use tools that protect the residential aesthetics between the National Grid lines and Aqueduct Road along Balltown Road.

**Objective #9** - The Town should clearly identify the preferred development pattern for narrow and deep undeveloped parcels and implement planning strategies to affect 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 Troy Schenectady Road 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.
4. Discourage the development of keyhole lots (long and narrow) that inhibit connectivity for emergency services and to other roads within the neighborhood.

**Objective #10** - The Town should encourage the development of affordable housing.

**Implementation Tasks:**

1. Protect the existing affordable home stock by blocking the combination of lots to build oversize, non-affordable housing in existing more affordable neighborhoods.
2. The Town should consider the tools available to encourage the development of affordable homes and enact those that will work and fit the Town.
3. Continue the implementation of the Climate Smart Communities adopted by the Town.

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# Historical and Cultural Preservation

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# ISSUE AREA: HISTORICAL & CULTURAL PRESERVATION

## INTRODUCTION

Niskayuna has a rich and storied past that has been documented in numerous books and research papers over the past century. From its earliest inhabitants to its current suburban profile much of its rich history still survives. The Town is unique in that the earliest development began as a fur trading post along the banks of the Mohawk River between the Dutch and Mohawk Indians, formed into a rural community during the 1700 to 1800's, established a position along the Erie Canal in the 1830's, underwent residential development at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, introduced research and development industries in the past mid-century and finally created the balance of residential, retail and industrial present today. Generally, development has always been carefully planned by giving consideration to creating a balance that harmonizes with the natural surroundings. The past few decades have seen a significant period of construction on many fronts which, at times, has caused much public debate over what value should be placed on historic sites and properties. Outside of the SEQR process, currently, the Town lacks any formal mechanism that defines or identifies what is or should be considered historical. Historical preservation is a local Town responsibility and every effort should be made to actively protect historic sites and properties.

Beginning in the 1970's, historic preservation became a recognized movement as residents understood the values of retaining buildings and sites that contributed to the establishment of their communities. Throughout the past three centuries, buildings and sites were constructed and some still exist today within the Town. Because the Town is reaching near-full build out it will be faced with decisions on what to do as properties are considered for redevelopment. The purpose of this issue paper is to identify buildings and sites that have contributed to the Town's history, continually add cultural value, and should be protected from inappropriate development.

### Cultural Events

Almost every community across the country hosts events that reflect something significant about their area: Niskayuna is no different. Whether based on historical, recreational, agricultural or cultural, these events attract residents and visitors to the area to engage in unique experiences throughout the year. Exposure to the multitude of qualities that the Town has to offer is a great economic boost but to many residents it also serves as a great sense of civic pride. Within one's own community, residents need not look far for the many opportunities to experience the cultural attributes of the Town. Although events are not tactile items that can be preserved, like a building or



parkland, they contribute to the cultural development of the Town and warrant recognition as such. The following lists events that merit cultural designation in Town:

### *Niska-Day*

Held on the Saturday prior to Memorial Day, Niska-Day is the annual townwide celebration of the Town itself. Regional organizations contribute to the parade that runs from Upper Union Street to Nott Street. An all-day fair is held at one of the school's grounds with numerous vendors providing a multitude of services and entertainment. The evening is concluded with a fireworks display. Civic displays are present. This event is to promote civic pride and has become a priority event for many residents. 2013 celebrated the 32<sup>nd</sup> year of the event.

Throughout the year, many other events take place that have become annual traditions for the associations and businesses that host them. Below is a list of some that warrant acknowledgement because of their continual contributions to the community. They are as follows but not limited to:

- *Cherry Blossom Festival* - Held at the Temple Gates of Heaven along with a 5K run.
- *Carrot Festival* – Held at the Agudat Achim Synagogue.
- *Town Hall & the Green* – Various Events that include: Summer Concert Series, Movie Nights, Easter Egg Hunt & Parade, Halloween Parade, and Art Exhibits.
- *Niskayuna Schools* – Various visual and performing art events, community art exhibits.
- *Town Library* – Continual lectures, visual and literary based events.
- *April 1<sup>st</sup> annual bike ride event*
- *Hudson-Mohawk Marathon*
- *Canal Events*

### Redevelopment Concerns

As the Town approaches near-full build out and development pressures increase, Niskayuna will be faced with situations where developers and residents may select areas for redevelopment. As the Capital District undergoes continual expansion with new enterprises locating here, land values may become increasingly more valuable where the land that the existing building sits on is more valuable than the structure. Established neighborhoods can become attractive based on their proximity to the business, natural resources, and amenities. This development should be carefully managed with the appropriate mechanisms that promote community growth and protect cultural assessments. This has often not been the case in the counties outside of major

metropolitan areas. The results of redevelopment are not always beneficial when the size and scale dwarfs the established template. This can affect both residential and commercial areas.

### *Residential*

Many residents select their homes based on the location, character, and cost. Niskayuna offers a wide range of homes in varying price points and property sizes. Once a neighborhood is established, property maintenance and landscaping standards begin to develop that maintain a level of continuity. Although there are individual exceptions throughout the Town, there currently are not large pockets of blight or high vacancy. Since the Town is very fortunate not to be subjected to this problem, it makes it attractive to potential residents and maintains property values.

As residents enjoy living in a particular neighborhood, some decide to invest for the long term. Sound investment should always be encouraged as long as it contributes positively to the surrounding area but in certain locations lot sizes restrict proposed programs. When redevelopment or additions are added to existing homes they need to be done with consideration to the larger community so that they contribute to the overall whole while addressing the concerns of the owner. Shortsightedness in alterations that lack cohesive thought are all too often designed from the inside-out lacking any relationship to the street. Results sometimes are out of scale additions, conflicting architectural language between styles, and poor construction techniques that lead to long term maintenance issues. Even though there is a mechanism to allow special use permits and variances, there isn't a regulatory entity that considers design intent. The importance of good design cannot be stressed enough to maintain continuity of architectural styles, community attractiveness, and maintain overall property values.

### Architectural Review Board

Establishing an Architectural Review Board (ARB) would serve as a resource for the Town to aid owners and developers for the sole purpose to encourage and promote quality and sustainable design as related to residential design. As discussed previously, the intent is to engage them early in the design process to maintain levels of continuity in architectural styles and contribute to the surrounding neighborhood. The ARB would be an extension of the Planning Board and would report findings and recommendations directly to them. It would be comprised of a panel of appointed volunteers and community residents that have backgrounds in architecture, engineering, design, or related professions. The ARB members will be the liaison between the owners/developers and the Planning Board. Major projects can be

referred to the ARB from the building department via the permitting process, the ZBA and The Planning Board.

Formulation of a resolution by the Town defining the responsibilities and commitments would need to be developed to add this board to the current government structure. Their scope would include but not be limited to:

- Creation of design standards for new residential development that encourages a range of architectural styles and sizes of homes by neighborhood.
- Creation of design standards for existing neighborhoods that address appropriate architectural language for additions and alterations and promote continuity in design.
- Review proposed designs by developers and home owners to refine schemes to relate to the immediate and surrounding architectural styles.
- Review site plans for relationship to surrounding properties and offer comments on impact to the neighborhood.
- Provide insight on construction techniques that promotes sustainability.
- Coordinate selections of appropriate materials based on construction of the structure.

### Historical Sites and Properties

Historic structures play a significant role in community character and economic health by providing a connection with the community's past. Moreover, once lost, these structures cannot be duplicated or otherwise replaced. The primary responsibility of protection of such structures falls on the Town. However, the Town does not have any landmark or preservation regulations protecting such structures.

The following is a collection of existing buildings and sites that, in their own way, have played a particular role or significantly contributed to the Town's history.

#### *Residential*

- Paul Schafer's Home – Union College
- Schafer Homes
- George Westington House
- W. Garner Bee House
- Schopenmeir House
- Former Shaker Site on River Road near Lock 7

#### *Religious Institutions:*

- Niskayuna Reformed Church

- Dominican Retreat Center & Windmill
- Jewish Community Center

*Commercial & Industrial:*

- WRGB Building
- Train Station
- Lock 7
- Aqueduct Foundations
- Bellevue Hospital

*Agricultural:*

- The Grange Hall

## **Historical Sites and Properties Goals, Objectives and Implementation Tasks**

### **GOALS**

1. Establish an Architectural Review Board (ARB).
2. Maintain thoughtful and quality design standards for residential buildings that promote long term sustainability and promote architectural features and characteristics.
3. Encourage future developers to work with the ARB to develop quality designs.
4. Establish a historical plaques program.
5. Update the historical archives with Schenectady County's historical society.

**Objective #1 – Creation of an Architectural Review Board:** The Town should consider creation of an Architectural Review Board.

### **Implementation Tasks**

1. Develop a resolution to adopt the ARB as a recognized board within the Town's government structure.
2. Define the scope of the ARB.
3. Solicit members of the community that could serve as volunteers on the ARB.
4. Determine term durations for ARB members.

**Objective #2 – Historical Plaques Program.** Develop a signage program to identify historical sites and properties.

### **Implementation Tasks**

1. Establish a localized marker program for plaques that home owners may purchase that promote architectural significance, age and importance of the property to the community.

### **Objective #3 – Develop a centralized catalog system to document historical site and properties.**

#### **Implementation Tasks**

1. Update the historical property survey from the 1980's for the Town from the Schenectady Historical Society archives. Solicit volunteers from the community to perform this task.

### **Objective #4 – Develop statutes which afford protections to historic and culturally important buildings and structures.**

#### **Implementation Tasks**

1. Incorporate a review process prior to demolition of these structures to prohibit arbitrary demolition of sites.



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# Appendix

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## LIST OF TABLES & FIGURES

Table 1 - Comprehensive Planning History Town of Niskayuna 1929 to Present

Table 2 - Traffic Volume Chart

Table 3 - Public Parks, Open Space and Private Recreation Facilities Chart

Table 4 - Land Use Distribution Chart

Figure 1 – Neighborhood Map

Figure 2 – Traffic Volume Map

Figure 3 – Balltown Road Corridor Subarea Map

Figure 4 – Union Street Corridor Subarea Map

Figure 5 – Property Class Summary Chart

Figure 6 – Pearse & Lisha Kill Roads Map

Figure 7 – Town Center Zoning Map

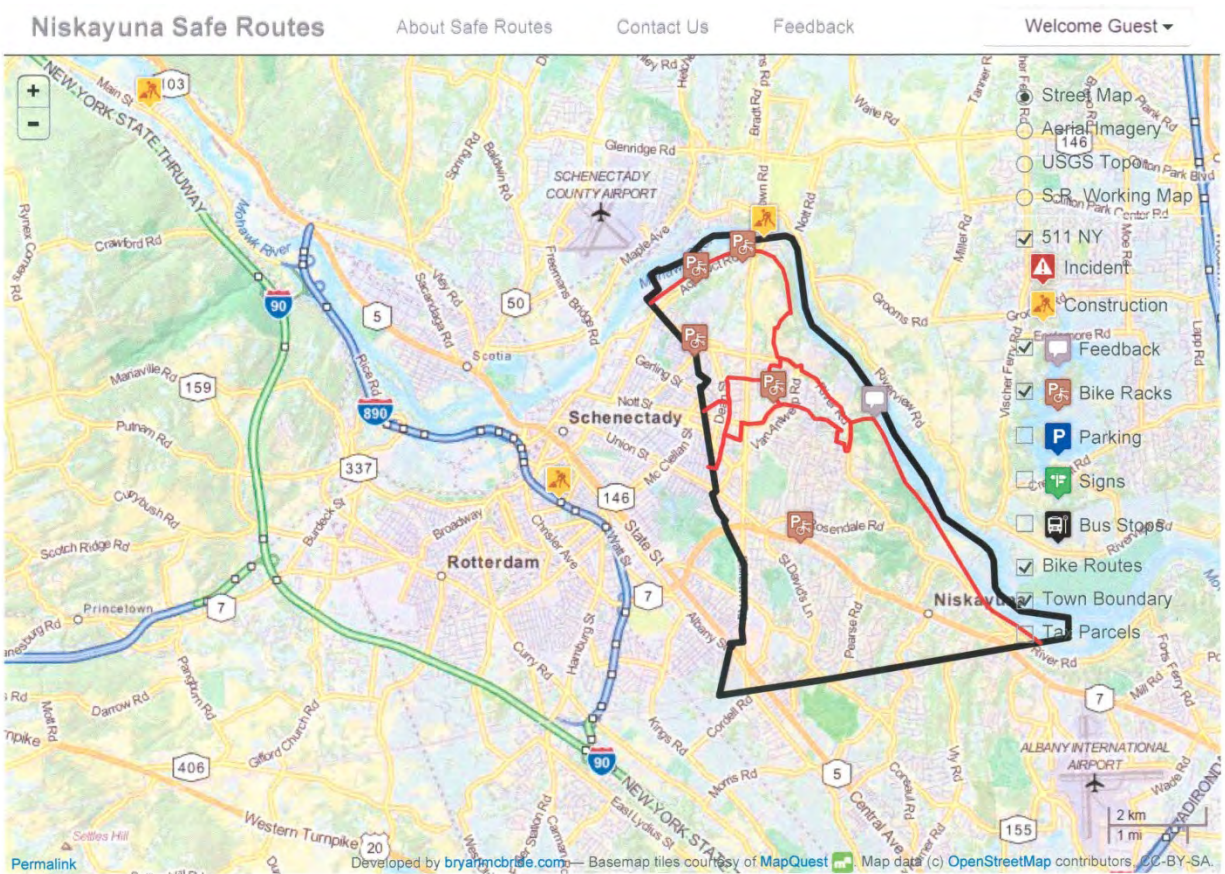
## REFERENCES

### Reference 1

Open Space Institute, established in 1964, achieves its goals through land acquisition, conservation easements, regional loan programs, creative partnerships, fiscal sponsorship, and analytical research. It seeks to do this by making land acquisition, establishing conservation easements and by making loans to, and creative partnerships with, other organizations. It is active across the country, including the states of New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine and New Jersey.

### Reference 2

Sampson, D.S and Daniels, K., *Open Space for Tomorrow: A Capital District Sprawl and Open Space Action Strategy*, Open Space Institute, 307 Hamilton St. Albany, NY, 2005.



Safe Routes Map

**END OF DOCUMENT**