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Project Objective

The Village of Highland Falls, located on the Hudson River in Orange County, is ready to be the regional center of preservation, tourism, transportation, and marketing. The Village is home to the United States Military Academy at West Point. The Village and West Point would like to further their long-standing relationship by linking the area’s three most prominent attractions: the historic Main Street, West Point Military Academy, and the waterfront, which can be accessed via Station Hill Road. The current layout of the Village of Highland Falls does not connect these three attractions, forcing visitors to treat these as three separate destinations. According to Orange County, West Point attracts 1.5 million visitors annually. Bringing West Point visitors to the historic Main Street and the waterfront is key to boosting local and regional tourism. Providing upgrades to the historic Main Street and the waterfront is expected to allow the Village to become an overnight destination for travelers rather than a one-day trip. A successful improvement strategy will seamlessly connect the historic Main Street, the waterfront, and West Point and allow visitors to see the Village of Highland Falls as one complete destination rather than three separate attractions.

Existing Site

Overview

The Village of Highland Falls has multiple features that were evaluated and given consideration as part of this project. The current traffic pattern of the Village of Highland Falls was analyzed, with a focus on the traffic flows between Main Street and the West Point Highway. Highland Falls has key features that will be used to create a more tangible bond between the Village’s historic Main Street, West Point, and natural resources. These key features include Veteran’s Park and Ladycliff Park, the medians between Main Street and West Point Highway, Station Hill Road, and the waterfront. An aerial of the existing Highland Falls layout has been included in the Appendix.

New York Route 218 (NY-218) approaches the Village of Highland Falls as Main Street. However, once NY-218 reaches Veteran’s Park, it splits into Main Street and West Point Highway. Main Street moves traffic slightly west, through the village center. West Point Highway shifts traffic slightly east and allows visitors to bypass the historic Main Street. Main Street and West Point Highway can be accessed from each other in six locations within the project study area. These six connecting locations are:

- Veteran’s Way
- Webb Lane
- Purple Heart Memorial Lane
- An unnamed connection that is aligned with the driveway to the US Military Academy Visitors Center and The West Point Museum
- A connection aligned with Station Hill Road
- A connection aligned with Homestead Avenue, approximately 270 ft south of Thayer Gate

Main Street and West Point Highway meet again at Thayer Gate, the entrance to West Point Military Academy. When leaving Thayer Gate, traffic is given the opportunity to leave via Main Street or West Point Highway. However, under the existing traffic pattern, traffic is directed
towards West Point Highway and away from the historic Main Street. NY-218 serves as the approach road to the Village of Highland Falls and will not be altered as part of this project.

Main Street

Main Street runs on the western side of Highland Falls and is currently 2 lanes, with one northbound (NB) lane and one southbound (SB) lane. The posted speed limit on Main Street is 30 mph. There are no designated shoulders on Main Street. There is parking on both sides of Main Street for the majority of the project area. There are no bicycle or shared use lanes on Main Street. There is a sidewalk on the western side of Main Street for the entire length of Main Street. There is a sidewalk on the eastern side of Main Street within the limits of the historic Main Street and along Ladycliff Park. The northbound lane of Main Street terminates 100 ft prior to Thayer Gate, as the southbound lane is one of two options given to traffic leaving West Point. Main Street provides visitors with access to the historic Main Street’s local restaurants, stores, and emergency services. Directing traffic through Main Street will help to boost the local economy, a primary objective of this project.

West Point Highway

West Point Highway runs on the eastern side of Highland Falls and is currently a 2-lane road with one northbound lane and one southbound lane. The posted speed limit on West Point Highway is 30 mph. There are no shoulders on West Point Highway within the Village of Highland Falls. There is sidewalk on the western side of West Point Highway from Veteran’s Way to Purple Heart Memorial Lane, and sidewalk on the eastern side of West Point Highway beginning at Purple Heart Memorial Lane and continuing beyond Thayer Gate. There are no parking, bike lanes, or shared use lanes on West Point Highway. West Point Highway allows visitors to access West Point Military Academy, the West Point Visitors Center, the West Point Museum, and Station Hill Road. Once traffic passes Homestead Avenue, it must continue to Thayer Gate. Occasionally, traffic passes Homestead Avenue and will execute a potentially dangerous turn-around prior to reaching Thayer Gate.

Village Features

The two parks between Main Street and West Point Highway, Veteran’s Park and Ladycliff Park, serve as the limits of the historic Main Street. Veteran’s Park sits within a triangle formed by Veteran’s Way, West Point Highway, and Main Street. The park is approximately 0.54 acres and is home to a gazebo, a September 11th memorial, and a World War memorial. Veteran’s Park is a respectful tribute to those who have served our country and the longstanding relationship between the Village of Highland Falls and the West Point Military Academy, making it a fitting entrance to the Village. Ladycliff Park is a 0.44-acre triangular shaped park formed by Main Street, Webb Lane, and Purple Heart Memorial Lane. The park is home to a gazebo and has been used to display sculptures and other works of art in the past.

A municipal parking lot (Municipal Lot A in this report) with pedestrian access to Main Street is located between Main Street and West Point Highway and can be accessed by vehicle from
Veteran’s Way. Adjacent to Municipal Lot A is Highland Brook. Highland Brook flows east under Main Street and parallel to Veteran’s Way before turning north alongside West Point Highway. Highland Brook then flows east under West Point Highway and into the Hudson River. There is additional green space and one municipal parking lot between the other four connections of Main Street and West Point Highway. The municipal parking lot (Municipal Lot B in this report) is located north of Ladycliff Park, between Purple Heart Memorial Lane and the unnamed connection in front of the US Military Academy Visitors Center and the West Point Museum. This parking lot has two charge stations for electric cars and is used for food trucks during warmer weather. The parking lot can be accessed from the south via Purple Heart Memorial Lane and can be accessed from the north via the unnamed connection. The design of Municipal Lot B suggests that it should be one way northbound. However, there are no signs or pavement symbols to direct traffic. The limited green space of the existing median is used for park benches, gardens, military statues and memorials, sculptures, and trees. The shared use of the median helps visitors and residents to enjoy the history of the ongoing relationship between the Village of Highland Falls and West Point Military Academy.

The existing crosswalks of Highland Falls were constructed prior to the implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Standards for Accessible Design. While there are crosswalks connecting many of the village amenities, there are no crosswalks connected to Veteran’s Park, only one crosswalk connected to Ladycliff Park, and only one crosswalk connected to Municipal Lot B. Most of the existing crosswalks have curb cuts and striping, but only one has detectable warning strips. All crosswalks spanning Main Street are equipped with “State Law: Yield to Pedestrians Within Crosswalk” traffic control devices. There are no traffic signals or pedestrian crossing signals within the Village of Highland Falls. When roadway work is being performed (with the exception of routine maintenance), updates to the adjacent sidewalks and pedestrian facilities are required in order to meet ADA Standards.
## Existing Roadway Data

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<tr>
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<th>Main Street</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td><strong>Speed Limit</strong></td>
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<td>30</td>
</tr>
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<td>4429 (2016)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1 NB, 1 SB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lane Width</strong></td>
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<td>12 ft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shoulder Width</strong></td>
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<td>2 ADA compliant crosswalks</td>
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<tr>
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<td>On-street parking, both sides of street</td>
<td>Partial sidewalk on eastern side, partial sidewalk on western side</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continuous sidewalk on western side, partial sidewalk on eastern side</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* As defined in the *Highway Capacity Manual, 6th edition*, Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) is the total volume of traffic passing a segment of a highway facility in both directions for 1 year divided by the total number of days in the year.

## Station Hill Road

Station Hill Road and the waterfront review area start at West Point Highway and extend east towards the Hudson River. Station Hill Road varies in width from 30 ft at the top to 18 ft at the bottom, with no centerline and no designated shoulders. No signage exists to indicate that the road leads to the waterfront, the historic railroad depot, and RV park. For the purpose of this report, Station Hill Road has been divided into two corridors, with the breakpoint occurring at the turn that divides the “Upper” corridor from the “Lower” corridor. The Upper corridor is approximately 0.2 miles long, reaching from West Point Highway to the Station Hill break point, and is aligned with northwest/southeast. The Upper corridor is shown with a blue line on Exhibit 2. On the southwest side of Upper corridor, there is approximately 60 ft of trees and a steep grade increase between Station Hill Road and the US Military Academy Visitors Center. The Lower corridor of Station Hill Road is approximately 0.2 miles long, beginning at the Station Hill break point and ending at the waterfront, and is aligned with north/south. The Lower Corridor is shown with a green line on Exhibit 2. On the east side of the Lower corridor, there is approximately 120 ft of trees and a RV Parking lot. There is a sharp turn where the Upper corridor and the Lower corridor of Station Road meet, forming a triangle between the Upper corridor and Lower corridor. The pavement of Station Hill Road is in poor condition, with deterioration covering 80% - 90% of the roadway in both corridors. Longitudinal cracking has become map cracking throughout the roadway. Station Hill Road has multiple repaired patches of pavement with older patches showing additional deterioration. Station Hill Road leads to the entrance of the RV park, with two “Private Property: No Trespassing” signs visible upon entering the RV parking lot.
The land between the Upper corridor and Lower corridor is approximately 1.5 acres. A small portion of this land is owned by McDonald’s and the remainder of the land is owned by the federal government. The terrain is heavily vegetated and rocky with an overall drop in elevation from 140 ft at the top of the Upper Corridor to 15 feet at the bottom of the Lower Corridor, though the grade change is inconsistent. The steepest slopes occur along what would be considered the “3rd leg” of the triangle and through the center of the triangular area, beginning at the connecting point of the Upper Corridor and the Lower Corridor. The 3rd leg is shown with a yellow line on Exhibit 2.

The 1.5 acres of land within the triangle is posted with “Restricted Area: No Admittance” along the lower corridor. The area is blocked off along the Upper corridor with green chain-link fence. The fence is damaged or has been knocked down in multiple areas. There is a man-made stone retention pond within the 1.5-acre plot. The original purpose of the retention pond and whether or not the retention pond is still used for its original purpose is unknown. The man-made retention pond has been located on Exhibit 2 using a red circle.
Waterfront

The waterfront property includes a private residence on the northern end of the waterfront, a small piece of property owned by the federal government that extends into the Hudson River, an RV park in the center of the waterfront property, and the Highland Falls Railroad Depot.

The waterfront property consists of a gravel parking lot used for RVs, CSX Corporation train tracks that run through the property, the Highland Falls Railroad Depot, a private gravel boat launch, and a private residence. The Highland Falls Railroad Depot no longer services the railroad and has been converted into multi-family housing. The CSX Corporation-owned railroad tracks run parallel to the Hudson River, offset approximately 35 ft from the water. The railroad tracks divide the property in two, with the Hudson River on the eastern side of the tracks and the remainder of the waterfront property on the western side. The portion of property east of the tracks and adjacent to the Hudson River is approximately 0.51 acres with 500 ft of waterfront. The waterfront consists of grass separated from the Hudson River by a barrier of rocks. The portion of property west of the tracks is approximately 0.73 acres and includes the RV lot and the repurposed train station. The 0.83 acres currently used for a private residence located at the north end of the of
the waterfront study area is divided by the train tracks into a 0.36-acre parcel on the eastern side adjacent to the Hudson River and a 0.47-acre parcel on the western side.

The waterfront property is examined in detail in the June 1, 2017 “Highland Falls waterfront Redevelopment Feasibility Study Final Report”. Acreage values for the waterfront study area are provided by this June 1, 2017 report.

Key Observations

- When approaching the Village of Highland Falls, there is a sign prior to Veteran’s Park that directs traffic towards West Point Highway and past the historic Main Street.
- There is bicycle traffic on West Point Highway and sidewalks of Main Street throughout the day.
- There is a “Think Local” sign encouraging visitors to support the local shops and restaurants on Main Street. This sign is located approximately 1000 ft from the Thayer Gate and has already missed visiting traffic. The “Think Local” sign is located behind a tree, making it difficult to locate and difficult to read.
- Traffic exiting Thayer Gate is given the option to leave via Main Street or West Point Highway. The existing traffic pattern directs traffic onto the West Point Highway when entering Highland Falls and directs traffic onto West Point Highway when exiting the Thayer Gate. The local shops on Main Street are passed over without many visitors knowing of their existence.
- Existing connections between Main Street and West Point Highway are substandard and lead to dangerous traffic maneuvers.
- Eastbound traffic from Mountain Avenue uses Veteran’s Way to access West Point Highway and avoid traveling down Main Street.
- The Village lacks sufficient opportunities for visitors and residents to connect with the waterfront.
- There is a gap between the historic Main Street and the assets of the United States Military Academy. This gap exists due to the limited green space north of Ladycliff Park. There are no attractions in this area, it is currently used for Municipal Lot B

Proposed Improvement Strategy

Main Street and West Point Highway

The primary concern to be addressed within the Village of Highland Falls is the existing traffic pattern. The existing traffic pattern allows traffic to route around the historic Main Street directly to West Point. The proposed traffic pattern prevents traffic from bypassing the historic Main Street by converting West Point Highway and Main Street into one-way roadways. West Point Highway is proposed to become dedicated to northbound travel and have two 11-foot lanes and one 7-foot bicycle lane. West Point Highway would serve as the entrance to the Village of Highland Falls, reaching from Veteran’s Park to Thayer Gate. Northbound angled on-street parking has been added to the western side of West Point Highway between Webb Lane and Homestead Avenue. Main Street would allow southbound travel and have one 11-foot lane and one 7-foot bicycle lane. Main Street would be used by traffic leaving Highland Falls, reaching from Thayer Gate to Veteran’s Park. On-street parking on the western side of Main Street would be retained as parallel
parking under the new traffic pattern. Parallel on-street parking on the eastern side of Main Street would be converted to southbound angled parking under the new traffic pattern and the existing northbound angled parking spots on the eastern side will become southbound angled parking spots, corresponding to Main Street’s proposed direction of travel. An aerial of Highland Falls with proposed improvements has been included in the Appendix.

The increase of on-street parking on Main Street and the addition of on-street parking to West Point Highway serves two purposes. The first is to allow visitors to access parking more easily and more frequently. Visitors will have the option to park in one location for the day or will be able to find new parking spots as they move from location to location throughout Highland Falls. Having easily accessible on-street parking will allow visitors of all levels of mobility to experience Highland Falls. The second is to help remedy the removal of the Municipal Lot B, which is being replaced with green space as an extension of Ladycliff Park.

The proposed traffic pattern has five two-way connections with corresponding left turn lanes between Main Street and West Point Highway. The proposed sixth connection is one-way and is located 50 ft south of Thayer Gate. This one-way connection is a final turnaround for traffic that has traveled too far north on West Point Highway and does not wish to pass Thayer Gate. Five of the existing six connections are preserved in their original locations and have improved roadway geometry under the proposed traffic conditions. The connection created by Purple Heart Memorial Lane will be removed to provide additional green space as an extension of Ladycliff Park.

**Village Features**

Highland Brook runs under Main Street, adjacent to the southern side of Municipal Lot A, and alongside West Point Highway. The current condition of Highland Brook causes it to be missed by many visitors. There is a sidewalk between Highland Brook and West Point Highway, but the sidewalk stops short of Veteran’s Way. Extending this existing sidewalk west along Veteran’s Way and north along Town Hall Row will complete a continuous loop of sidewalk back to Municipal Lot A. The sidewalk between Highland Brook and West Point Highway will have a strip of grass added to create a wider buffer zone. Highlighting this brook will allow residents and visitors to enjoy nature within the same block as the historic Main Street.

The median between Main Street and West Point Highway will receive increased green space to unite West Point and the historic Main Street. Ladycliff Park will see the largest increase in size by incorporating the land currently held by Municipal Lot B and Purple Heart Memorial Lane. With the addition of this land, Ladycliff Park will nearly triple in size, from 0.44 acres to 1.26 acres. Ladycliff Park will reach from the historic Main Street to the doorstep of the United State Military Academy Visitor Center and the West Point Museum. The next two sections of median will have a sidewalk, allowing pedestrians to travel from Veteran’s Park to the final intersection before Thayer Gate (the intersection of Main Street and Homestead Avenue) without having to cross Main Street or West Point Highway. The sidewalks in the median will also allow pedestrians to access the entrance to the waterfront at the intersection of West Point Highway and Station Hill Road. The most northern median is in front of Thayer Gate and will receive an increase in green space from 0.08 acres to 0.19 acres.
The crosswalks in the Village of Highland Falls will be improved to meet ADA Standards. The proposed crosswalks should include ADA-compliant curb ramps with detectable warning strips and ladder style in-street striping. Due to the proposed traffic pattern’s reliance on continuous, free flowing traffic, traffic signals and pedestrian crossing signals are not recommended. The use of signals at pedestrian crossings would impede traffic flow and have a negative impact on level of service. In lieu of signals, all crosswalks should be equipped with “State Law: Yield to Pedestrians Within Crosswalk” traffic control devices. Crosswalks are to be installed at the following locations:

- **Intersection of Main Street/Mountain Avenue/Veteran’s Way**
  - Across Mountain Avenue
  - Across Veteran’s Way
  - Across Main Street on northern side of intersection
- **Along Veteran’s Way**
  - Across driveway to Municipal Lot A
- **Along Main Street**
  - Across Schneider Avenue
  - Across Tobins Lane
  - Across Cozzens Avenue
  - Across Drew Avenue
  - Across Parry Avenue
  - Across Homestead Avenue
  - Across Webb Lane
- **Along West Point Highway**
  - Across Station Hill Road
  - Across Webb Lane
- **Accessing Ladycliff Park**
  - Across Main Street at southern end of park
  - Across Main Street at northern end of park
  - Across West Point Highway at southern end of park
  - Across West Point Highway at northern end of park
- **Accessing Median that spans from US Military Academy entrance to Station Hill Road**
  - Across Main Street at southern end of median
  - Across Main Street at northern end of median
  - Across West Point Highway at southern end of median
  - Across West Point Highway at northern end of median
- **Accessing Median that spans from Station Hill Road to Homestead Avenue**
  - Across Main Street at southern end of median
  - Across West Point Highway at southern end of median

As a safety measure to protect pedestrians against cars utilizing turn arounds, the medians will not be connected to each other via crosswalk.
Station Hill Road

Station Hill Road is key to the revitalization of the waterfront, as it is the link between the village center and the waterfront. Signage for the waterfront will be installed along West Point Highway, Main Street, and at the start of Station Hill Road to attract the attention of potential waterfront visitors. The natural landscape of the waterfront project area and the surrounding West Point attractions limit re-alignment possibilities for Station Hill Road. The current alignment of Station Hill Road is non-standard and requires advanced warning signs to make drivers aware of the sharp turn. The existing alignment uses natural slopes and will remain unchanged. However, the pavement of Station Hill Road should receive a full depth replacement. The 1.5 acres of land between the Upper Corridor of Station Hill Road and Lower Corridor holds potential as a wilderness exploration area. The McDonald’s located at the start of Station Hill Road is considered to be outside of the project review area and will not be included as part of this project. The McDonald’s parking lot is adjacent to the 1.5 acres of the project review area. The portion of the 1.5 acres just beyond the McDonald’s parking lot has a relatively gentle grade, with a rock outcrop to the north and a downward slope to the waterfront to the east. With the plan to use the slope down to the waterfront for trails and wilderness exploration, the upper portion will be used as a family picnic area and main entrance to the trails. The removal of the green chain-link fence along Station Hill Road will allow for more trail openings to be included. The slope down to the waterfront has similar geographical features to New York City’s Central Park. “The Ramble,” located in New York City’s Central Park, is moderately to heavily vegetated, has natural grade changes, and rock outcrops that are similar to the triangular area adjacent to Station Hill Road. The Ramble is a network of trails that uses the natural landscape as a guide for the trail alignments.

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<th>Proposed Roadway Data</th>
<th>Main Street</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Continuous sidewalk on both sides of street</td>
<td>Continuous sidewalk on both sides of street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7 ft wide bicycle lane, western side of street</td>
<td>7 ft wide bicycle lane, eastern side of street</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The 1.5-acre triangle formed by Station Hill Road can be used for the same purpose as The Ramble despite the much smaller scale. The natural landscape of the 1.5-acre triangle offers several opportunities for the construction of paths and provides a more scenic route down to the waterfront. The central existing features are the man-made retention pond near the center of the triangle and the rock outcrop along the northern side of the triangle. The included graphic provides a concept of what the wilderness exploration area may look like. An in-depth topographic survey and map are required to locate the natural slopes and features suitable for use as paths. The trails shown are concept only and should not be seen as final trail alignments.
At the top of the hill, approximately one-third of the way down the Upper corridor, will be the entrance to the trails and the picnic area. The picnic area will provide a safe, family-friendly connection to nature prior to taking a trip down to the waterfront. The construction of this trail network and picnic area will require the acquisition of the land between the Upper Corridor and Lower Corridor and will require negotiations with McDonald's to use a portion of their existing parking spaces for visitors.

**The Waterfront**

As noted in the “Highland Falls Waterfront Redevelopment Feasibility Study Final Report”, the waterfront property is currently privately held. As part of future development, the Village intends to purchase these parcels or work with a partner organization to convert them to public use. The
waterfront provides a great opportunity for those who would like to experience the Hudson River. The existing private boat launch has potential to provide future public access for boaters, fishermen, and kayakers. The strip of land between the railroad tracks and the Hudson River offers an uninhibited view across the Hudson River. Under the waterfront’s current private ownership, there is limited outdoor furniture that can be used to relax and enjoy the view. The addition of picnic tables, Adirondack chairs, and/or other outdoor furniture would increase the versatility and comfort of the waterfront area. A small jetty is the only remains of the former marina that was attached to the waterfront. The construction of a new marina would provide docking for multiple boats. However, it could impede the view of the Hudson River that the waterfront is currently afforded. Therefore, it is recommended that the new marina extend east from the jetty and south on the Hudson River. This marina design will leave an open view across the Hudson River, which may be paramount for visitors not interested in boating or being on the water. Ideally, the waterfront will be a location for social gatherings as well as individual leisure. The waterfront should not be restricted to or give attention to only one specific activity. The waterfront’s previous marina extended north and south in the Hudson River and mainly limited visitors to boating. Further study and discussion with stakeholders will be required prior to making a final decision for the waterfront.

**Highland Falls Railroad Depot**

On the opposite side of the train tracks from the Hudson River, the railroad depot is central to the waterfront review area and should serve the needs of the visitors in the area while providing a boost to the local economy. In the “Highland Falls Waterfront Redevelopment Feasibility Study: Final Report,” alternatives for the railroad depot include purchasing the Depot from its current owner and converting the existing multi-family housing into:

- a restaurant/eatery
- museum and visitor center
- outdoor/aquatic sport outfitting
- multiple store fronts.

The size of the railroad depot will allow it to successfully accommodate more than one alternative. Converting the depot into an eatery with local boutiques will give visitors reason to stay at the waterfront longer. In the warmer months, the covered loading platform of the former train station can be used for additional boutiques, for shaded seating, or for food stands, with the option of using part of the parking lot for food trucks. As a hub for food and shopping, the decommissioned train depot has potential to draw visitors independent of the waterfront. Given the Highland Falls Railroad Depot’s status on the National Register of the historic Places and the rich history of the relationship between the Village of Highland Falls and West Point, the railroad depot could serve an educational purpose in addition to a recreational purpose. Further study and discussion with stakeholders will be required prior to making a final decision for the Highland Falls Railroad Depot.
Appendix

Village of Highland Falls Existing Aerial

Village of Highland Falls Proposed Aerial