



# VILLAGE OF HIGHLAND FALLS LOCAL WATERFRONT REVITALIZATION STRATEGY

JUNE 2020 FINAL



**Village of Highland Falls**  
Orange County, New York



**Department  
of State**



## Highland Falls Local Waterfront Revitalization Strategy

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NYSDOS Contract #: C1001153

Village of Highland Falls, Orange County, New York

June 2020 Final

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**Village of Highland Falls**  
Orange County, New York



*This document was prepared with funding provided by the New York State Department of State under Title 11 of the Environmental Protection Fund."*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Village of Highland Falls was awarded a grant through the NYS Department of State to prepare a Local Waterfront Revitalization Strategy (LWRS). A LWRS is a planning document prepared by the local community that addresses issues that affect the most critical issues facing a significant portion of the waterfront and the surrounding environment. The LWRS builds off the planning foundation provided from the Highland Falls Comprehensive Plan and the numerous other planning initiatives completed in recent years, including several reports from Cadet Studies from the U.S Military Academy at West Point.

Since the entire Village is within the Hudson River Coastal Zone Boundary the Revitalization Area Boundary includes the whole village. The Revitalization Area covers approximately 717 acres and includes 1,276 parcels. County Route 218 is the central roadway and connects to U.S. Route 9W at the southern and northern ends of the municipal boundary.

The LWRS has a strong focus on economic development. The report outlines available resources, explores opportunities for improved quality of life for residents, identifies projects and initiatives that have the capacity to foster tourism, and capitalizes on assets that will create new and expand existing businesses.

Through public meetings and other feedback, the planning process reflected community consensus and provides clear direction for the future of the lands in the Waterfront Revitalization Area. The meetings established a close partnership among local government, community-based organizations, and the State, providing an enduring source of technical assistance to implement the LWRS. This partnership helped develop a unified vision for the Village which will greatly increase the Village's chances to obtain public and private grant funding for the implementation of the recommendations in the LWRS.

The Village is in the middle of a true renaissance. A strong, enduring commitment to inclusive community planning has led to the development of a multitude of local projects and initiatives that have stemmed directly from residents and stakeholders that participated in the public outreach program for this project and the DRI application initiative. The vision includes building on the numerous initiatives that are underway or completed in the last 5 years. The Table below presents a summary of recommended private and public sector projects to move forward in the coming years. Each of the projects is detailed in the Project Profiles presented in Section 10: Revitalization Projects and Implementation Strategy. Each Project Profile provides a description, land use and ownership, strengths and challenges, local and regional impacts, potential funding sources, and next steps for moving forward.

This approach and resulting projects and initiatives are supported by its strongest partner, West Point. The vision is to revitalize a downtown environment that marries 217 years of West Point history with an authentic Hudson River village environment. The Village wants to build on this unique relationship that stems from the synergy created from the approximately 2,500 on-base jobs that employ civilians from the Highland Falls area, and the 2 million annual West Point visitors. This connection has the power to generate a significant impact by bringing residents and visitors into downtown to work, recreate and relax.

To realize this vision Highland Falls is creating a dynamic downtown environment to become a “must-go” destination building upon a strong and sustainable foundation driven by the following elements:

- Historic gateway to U.S. Military Academy at West Point;
- Location on and relationship to the Hudson River;
- Proximity to Hudson Highlands, Fort Montgomery State Historic Site, Bear Mountain State Park;





- Completion of projects that have been strategically selected and are ready for development;
- The strong visitor base of West Point and the surrounding attractions; and
- The availability of a deep and diverse community of people, resources, and facilities ready to support and participate in the revitalization efforts.

The Village is seeking a welcoming, pedestrian-strong streetscape with stores and shops that evoke the character and heritage of the community's rich history and provide goods and services that residents and visitors alike desire. Interpretive signs and wayfinding draw visitors on a walking tour from the West Point Museum, down Main Street through the business district to Memorial Park. Another part of the vision seeks to build on the expanding regional recreational tourism base that includes a new trail system in the Hudson Highlands West and the Empire State Trail up the Hudson River shoreline. These experiences are to be shared by visitors from across the state, the nation and even the world through a multi-format branding and marketing program that proudly exhibits the Highland Falls community as an authentic extension of the West Point community.

In summary, the Village wants to create a Waterfront Revitalization Strategy that:

- Transforms the face and function of Main Street into a lively and memorable experience for residents and visitors, and a catalyst for growth for businesses;
- Provides more exposure and public access to the Hudson River waterfront especially the former Highland Falls Marina site;
- Revitalizes public parks and creates spaces that function efficiently and are responsive to the changing needs of residents;
- Improves and expands connections between West Point and downtown Highland Falls;
- Capitalizes on the visitor base by establishing a downtown hotel and recruiting retail stores; and
- Develops a marketing plan that defines the strategies and messaging to be used to promote downtown Highland Falls, including websites, social media, maps, and events.

Over the past few years, the Village has invested approximately \$4.5 million toward community infrastructure, parks, public spaces, and Main Street improvements. In 2017, the Village was awarded a DOS grant to develop this Local Waterfront Revitalization Strategy focusing on the redevelopment of the historic former train depot and only public access to the Hudson River waterfront in the Village. The Village recently applied for the Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) program as well. Even though the application has not yet been successful, the process of public outreach has resulted in creating a new synergy between the Village's many partners, especially West Point. The ongoing improvements and planning initiatives have greatly improved communications among partners and have resulted in a unified vision. This has led to community enthusiasm and momentum for moving forward with tangible actions that will work together towards positive change.

The LWRS is a critical part of a more detailed planning process that moved the community beyond the "wouldn't it be nice" phase. The community outlined 17 projects that they believe to be not only feasible but achievable over the next 5-10 years. These projects work as a cohesive set of actions designed to create a vibrant and sustainable economic development model for the downtown and waterfront.





## Summary of Recommended Projects

#	Title	Type	Priority	Potential Funding Opportunities
1	Highlands Station and Marina Redevelopment	Redevelopment	High	DOS LWRP; HRVG; ESD; DEC Environmental Restoration; DEC Local Stewardship Planning; OPRHP Parks; EFC GIGP; OPRHP Historic Preservation; NYSCA Preserve NY
2	Roe Park Forest Trails and Interpretive Area	Recreation	High	DOS LWRP; HRVG; OPRHP Recreational Trails
3	Main Street and West Point Highway Redesign	Transportation	High	DOS LWRP; HRVG; ESD; OCTC TIP; DOT TEP; CDBG; HCR NY Main Street; OEA JLUS
4	Highland Falls-Industrial Development Agency Business Incubator	Economic Development	High	DOS LWRP; ESD; HCR NY Main Street
5	Village Zoning Code Update	Planning	High	DOS LWRP; HRVG; OPRHP CLG
6	Highland Falls Economic Development, Tourism and Marketing Strategy	Planning	High	DOS LWRP; ESD; NYSCA Architecture + Design; HRVNHA Heritage Development; OEA JLUS
7	Highland Brook Environmental Assessment and Trail Feasibility Study	Recreation	Medium	DOS LWRP; HRVG; OPRHP Recreational Trails; DEC Environmental Restoration; DEC Local Stewardship Planning; OPRHP Parks; EFC GIGP; DEC Tributary Restoration and Resiliency; EFC Clean Water Fund; DEC WQIP
8	Townwide Trails Master Plan	Planning	Medium	DOS LWRP; HRVG; OPRHP Recreational Trails
9	Village Signage Plan	Planning	Medium	DOS LWRP; HRVG; ESD; NYSCA Architecture + Design; HCR NY Main Street
10	Gateway Improvements Plan	Planning	Medium	DOS LWRP; HRVG; ESD; NYSCA Architecture + Design; HCR NY Main Street
11	Ladycliff Park Improvements	Recreation	Medium	DOS LWRP; HRVG; ESD; DEC Local Stewardship Planning; EFC GIGP; OPRHP Parks; NYSCA Architecture + Design
12	Municipal Center	Redevelopment	Medium	DOS LWRP; ESD; OPRHP Certified Local Government; HCR NY Main Street; CDBG; NYSCA Architecture + Design
13	Main Street Architectural Design Guidelines and Façade Improvement Program	Planning	Low	DOS LWRP; HRVG; ESD; NYSCA Architecture + Design; HCR NY Main Street; NYSCA Preserve NY
14	Memorial Park Improvements	Recreation	Low	DOS LWRP; HRVG; ESD; DEC Local Stewardship Planning; EFC GIGP; OPRHP Parks; NYSCA Architecture + Design
15	Village Welcoming Center and Museum	Economic Development	Low	DOS LWRP; ESD; HCR NY Main Street; NYSCA Architecture + Design
16	Downtown Parking Garage	Transportation	Low	DOS LWRP; ESD; DOT TEP; OCTC TIP; EFC GIGP
17	Downtown Lighting Redesign	Infrastructure	Low	DOS LWRP; ESD; HCR NY Main Street; HUD Community Challenge; DOT TEP; CDBG; OCTC TIP; NYSEDA Clean Energy Communities



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## A. LOCAL WATERFRONT REVITALIZATION STRATEGY OVERVIEW

### Introduction

The Village of Highland Falls was awarded a grant through the NYS Department of State to prepare a Local Waterfront Revitalization Strategy (LWRS). A LWRS is a planning document prepared by the local community that addresses issues that affect the most critical issues facing a significant portion of the waterfront and the surrounding environment. The LWRS builds off the planning foundation provided from the Highland Falls Comprehensive Plan and the numerous other planning initiatives completed in recent years, including several reports from Cadet Studies from the U.S Military Academy at West Point.

The LWRS has a strong focus on economic development. The report outlines available resources, explores opportunities for improved quality of life for residents, identifies projects and initiatives that have the capacity to foster tourism, and capitalizes on assets that will create new and expand existing businesses.

Through public meetings and other feedback, the planning process reflected community consensus and provides clear direction for the future of the lands in the Waterfront Revitalization Area. The meetings established a close partnership among local government, community-based organizations, and the State, providing an enduring source of technical assistance to implement the LWRS. This partnership helped develop a unified vision for the Village which will greatly increase the Village's chances to obtain public and private grant funding for the implementation of the recommendations in the LWRS.

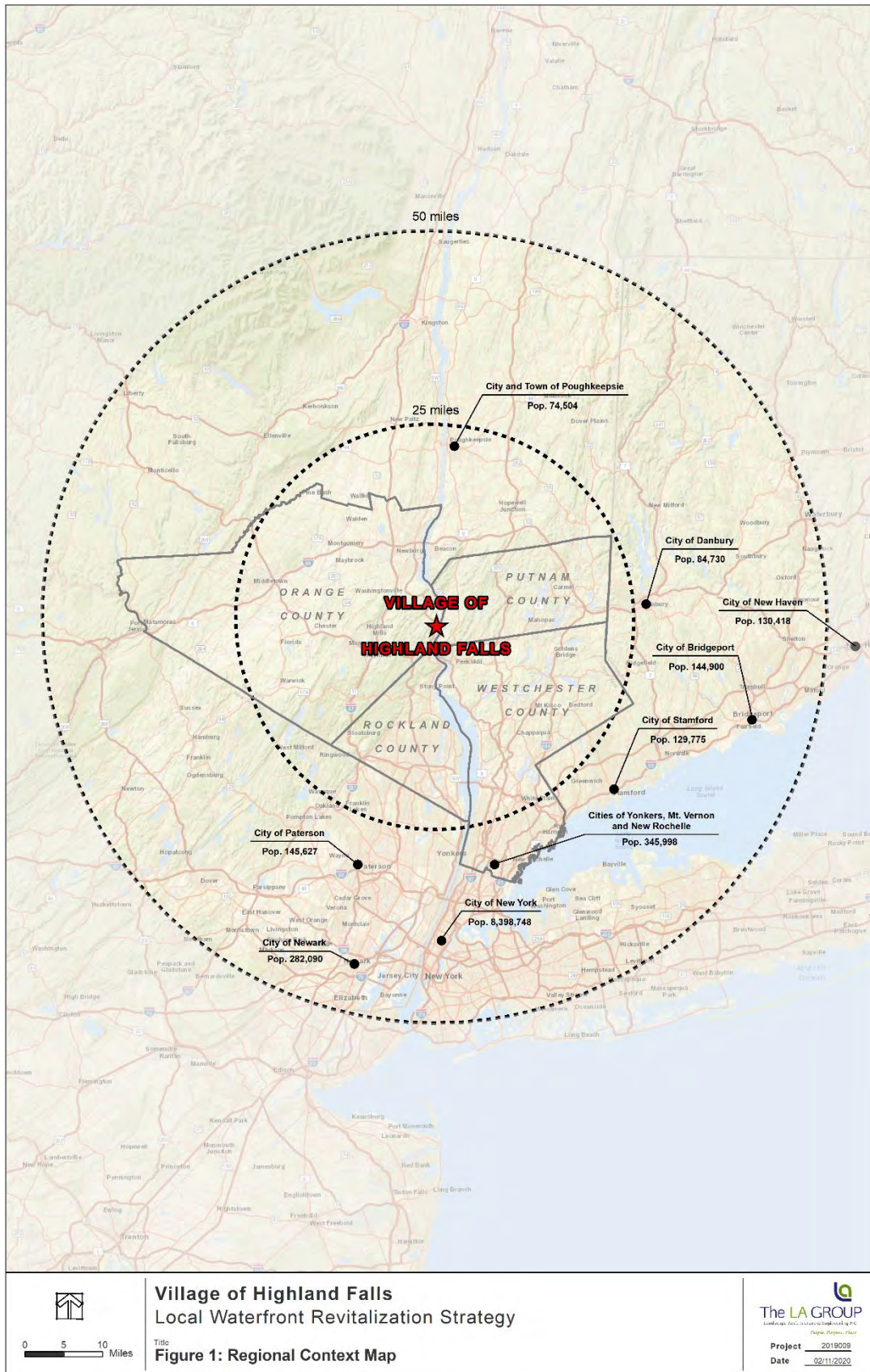
Since the entire Village is within the Hudson River Coastal Zone Boundary the Revitalization Area Boundary includes the whole village. Figure 1 illustrates the location of Highland Falls in relation to the Hudson River Valley and greater region.

The LWRS is a precursor to completing a full LWRP (Local Waterfront Revitalization Program) which includes adaptation of the State's 44 Coastal Policies and has the capacity to give the Village more control over waterfront lands and waters.



**Original Highland Falls Marina**





## **Vision for Revitalization**

Highland Falls is in the middle of a true renaissance. A strong, enduring commitment to inclusive community planning has led to the development of a multitude of local projects and initiatives that have stemmed directly from residents and stakeholders that participated in the public outreach program for this project and the DRI application initiative. The vision includes building on the numerous initiatives that are underway or completed in the last 5 years. See Appendix A for a comprehensive list of private and public sector projects.

This approach and resulting projects and initiatives are supported by its strongest partner, West Point. The vision is to revitalize a downtown environment that marries 217 years of West Point history with an authentic Hudson River village environment. The Village wants to build on this unique relationship that stems from the synergy created from the 2,500 on-base jobs that employ civilians from the Highland Falls area, and the 2 million annual West Point visitors. This connection has the power to generate a significant impact by bringing residents and visitors into downtown to work, recreate and relax.

To realize this vision Highland Falls is creating a dynamic downtown environment to become a “must-go” destination building upon a strong and sustainable foundation driven by the following elements:

- Historic gateway to U.S. Military Academy at West Point;
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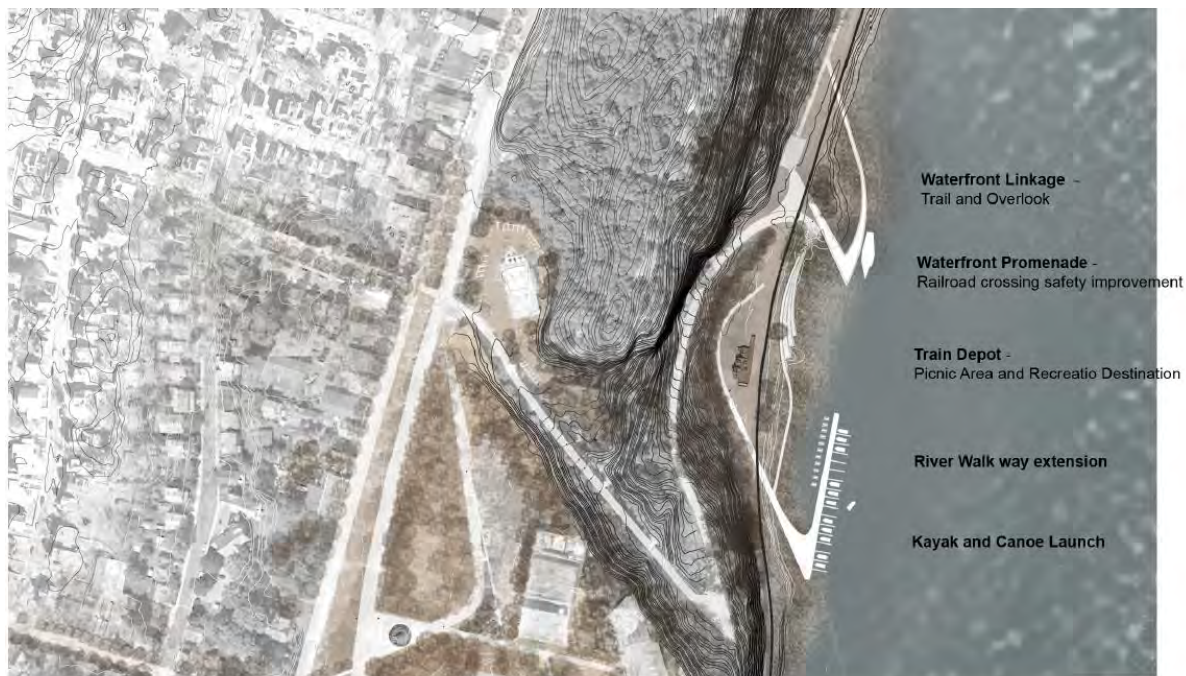
The Village is seeking a welcoming, pedestrian-strong streetscape with stores and shops that evoke the character and heritage of the community’s rich history and provide goods and services that residents and visitors alike desire. Interpretive signs and wayfinding draw visitors on a walking tour from the West Point Museum, down Main Street through the business district to Memorial Park. Another part of the vision seeks to build on the expanding regional recreational tourism base that includes a new trail system in the Hudson Highlands West and the Empire State Trail up the Hudson River shoreline. These experiences are to be shared by visitors from across the state, the nation and even the world through a multi-format branding and marketing program that proudly exhibits the Highland Falls community as an authentic extension of the West Point community.

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## Inspirational Waterfront Concepts



### **Waterfront Revitalization Area Boundary**

The Waterfront Revitalization Area (Revitalization Area) is the designated geographic area within the Village of Highland Falls where public benefit improvements will be concentrated around a unified vision set by the community. The Revitalization Area may be comprehensive to address all issues that affect the entire waterfront, or it may be focused to address the most critical issues facing a significant portion of the waterfront.

The NYS Department of State (DOS) requires the following to be considered when determining the Revitalization Area boundary:

- Must be within the Coastal Zone Boundary established by the NYS Department of State (DOS); and
- Received public consensus through a Community Outreach Plan approved by the Waterfront Advisory Committee and DOS.

Based on these factors, the entire Village was selected as the Revitalization Area for Highland Falls. The Village is bound by U.S. Route 9W to the west, the Hudson River to the east, the U.S. Academy at West Point to the north, and the hamlet of Fort Montgomery in the Town of Highlands to the south. U.S. Route 9W is the western boundary of the Coastal Zone Boundary, which includes the whole Village of Highland Falls to be included in the Waterfront Revitalization Area. See Local Waterfront Area Boundary Map.

The Revitalization Area covers approximately 717 acres and includes 1,276 parcels. County Route 218 is the central roadway and connects to U.S. Route 9W at the southern and northern ends of the municipal boundary. The Village downtown is centered around Main Street, which extends from County Route 218 by Memorial Park in the heart of the Village. The Village waterfront connects to the Village downtown by Station Hill Road. This roadway provides the only public access to the Hudson River at the site of the historic railroad depot, a nationally registered historic place.<sup>1</sup>



**Aerial view of West Point and Highland Falls.**

<sup>1</sup> Information on all nationally registered historic places can be found on the National Park Service website at <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/database-research.htm>.









## **Planning Foundation**

A medley of local and regional planning efforts has been conducted on the topics of waterfront and community revitalization. These plans were prepared by a variety of professionals and community stakeholders from diverse backgrounds offering unique perspectives on the problems and solutions for the Village. In addition, each planning process incorporated input from the public to assess the existing conditions, needs and opportunities of the community. By reviewing the findings and recommendations of each plan, a preliminary list of needs, opportunities and revitalization projects were identified. This review process was followed by an inventory and analysis to compare the existing conditions to previous conditions to establish consistency and determine outstanding community needs. The following were determined to be the most valuable to the development of a waterfront and community revitalization strategy for the village. A full summary of the plans and relevant recommendations are included in Appendix B.

The Town of Highlands: From Bear Mountain to West Point (1999) – The Town of Highlands and the Village of Highland Falls participated in the Countryside Exchange, an international planning program through the Glynwood Center for Regional Food and Farming headquartered in the Village of Cold Spring just across the Hudson River.

Village of Highland Falls Comprehensive Plan (June 2009) – The Comprehensive Plan details the framework for the future of land use and zoning in the Village. The Village is preparing to update the Comprehensive Plan within the next few years. The analyses and recommendations presented in the Waterfront Revitalization Strategy will be incorporated into the update.

West Point and the Town of Highlands Relationship (May 2013) – A 2013 study of the relationship between the Town of Highlands and the U.S. Academy at West Point led by Academy cadets.

Waterfront Development Project of Highland Falls – West Point Cadet Study (May 2017) – A 2017 study led by West Point cadets to develop scenarios for the redevelopment of the historic train station property on the Hudson River waterfront in the Village of Highland Falls.

Highlands: University of Pennsylvania, School of Design, Department of Landscape Architecture Green Stimuli Studio (2017) – Students from a graduate landscape architecture studio course at the University of Pennsylvania developed master plans for public recreation areas and design concepts that improve local connections to the region’s various water resources through scenic lookouts, trails, boardwalks, green spaces, and launch sites for canoes, kayaks and small boats.

Highland Falls Waterfront Redevelopment Feasibility Study (June 2017) – A study prepared by The LA Group, P.C. to determine redevelopment opportunities for the site of the historic train station and only public access point to the Hudson River.

The Village of Highland Falls and West Point: Finding a Balance (2018) – An examination of the reasons why the Village of Highland Falls has experienced stagnant growth despite a large visitor base to West Point and a significant supply of highly educated and industrious labor from West Point cadets, staff and their family members who live at or visit the Academy.



## **Public Outreach**

Public participation in the planning process took place on three levels: waterfront advisory meetings, one-on-one stakeholder interviews, and public workshops. The Village of Highland Falls, in consultation with the NYS Department of State (DOS), appointed a Waterfront Advisory Committee to oversee the planning process. The Waterfront Advisory Committee consists of a diverse group of community members to ensure that the recommendations of the committee are accurate and comprehensive.

The project consultant, in consultation with the Waterfront Advisory Committee, the Village of Highland Falls, and the NYS Department of State (DOS), held interviews with four key stakeholders. These stakeholders were selected based on recommendations from the Waterfront Advisory Committee and the Village Mayor.

A series of three community workshops were held to solicit public input on the community vision and recommended projects. Notification to the public of meetings was accomplished using a combination of email blasts, the Village website, the local newspaper, the local television station, and posted fliers at the Village Hall. Community Workshops were held:

### *Workshop #1: Community Vision – September 19, 2019*

The first community visioning workshop presented an inventory and analysis of existing conditions and identified preliminary issues and opportunities. Participants were encouraged to identify and discuss important community issues and opportunities.

### *Workshop #2: Exploring Alternatives – January 9, 2020*

A series of posters were utilized to communicate the findings of the inventory and analysis and move the participants through inspirational images.

### *Workshop #3: Village Board Meeting– June 1, 2020*

A presentation of the findings of the Draft LWRS to the Village Board and public through a Power Point presentation. The draft was posted on the Village website and comments on the draft were accepted for 2 additional weeks.



**Public Meeting #2 at Highland Falls Senior Center**



## B. COMMUNITY PROFILE

### **Brief History of the Community**

Highland Falls is a small village inside a big geographical area. The village of less than 1.5 square miles and under 4,000 people is at the crossroads of the four counties directly north of New York City – Orange, Rockland, Putnam, and Westchester – with an estimated total population of about 1.8 million. One-in-twelve U.S. residents live within a few hours' drive of the village, including the nearly 20 million people that live in the New York-Newark-Jersey City metropolitan area which is the largest in the country<sup>2</sup>. The immediate region on the western shores of the Hudson River is over 12,500 people living in the Village of Highland Falls, at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, and in the hamlet of Fort Montgomery.

Highland Falls acts as the year-round downtown for the Town of Highlands. The village has unique attributes and opportunities. It is characterized by a variety of uses within a quaint, compact and walkable setting of two- and three-story buildings around the historic Main Street with views of the Hudson River. Main Street is the central business district, the node for civic activity and community life, and the gateway to West Point. Main Street buildings house the commercial activities that provide goods and services to residents and offer dining and shopping experiences for visitors. The historic center has a healthy mixture of private businesses and community services in charming buildings that create a true village experience.

People have long been attracted to Highland Falls for its proximity to several natural, historic and cultural assets. Places such as the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, Bear Mountain State Park, and the greater Hudson Highlands are the essential components of a robust and growing tourism market generating an estimated \$3.6 billion in revenue for the six counties of the Hudson Valley (reference). The military academy is the third largest tourist attraction in the state outside New York City. Nearly 3 million people visit West Point and Highland Falls each year, including over 500,000 foreign tourists. The Highlands through New York and New Jersey alone have more visitors than Yellowstone, Yosemite and the Grand Canyon. The Hudson Highlands West region includes six state parks, the world famous Storm King Art Center, private conservation lands, and three regional trails that extend a total of 550 miles. According to the State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP), the 17-mile region draws an estimated 14.5 million visitors annually.

One of the trails that draws people to the region is the Appalachian Trail. More than 3 million people visit the trail and over 3,000 attempt the complete hike from Georgia to Maine each year. Bear Mountain State Park, just 3 miles south of Highland Falls, is one of the major focal points for the trail. Bear Mountain is the most frequented state park in the region, with nearly 2.2 million visitors in 2018 alone. Visitation to Bear Mountain State Park has more than doubled over the last decade. The number of visitors is only expected to increase as state plans for improvements to existing facilities and the addition of new recreational trail routes are completed.

The Local Waterfront Revitalization Strategy is an opportunity for the people of Highland Falls to review the current state of their village and determine the issues to address and the opportunities to capitalize on. Through this planning effort, Village residents and officials developed a revitalization strategy that continues to improve the public realm to make the village a more attractive and special place to live or visit for the growing regional population.

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<sup>2</sup> 2018 U.S. Census Bureau Population Estimates.





## Demographic Trends

The Village of Highland Falls is an incorporated village within the Town of Highlands in Orange County, one of the fastest-growing counties in New York. The village population peaked at over 4,600 residents in 1970, before declining for the next three decades. This trend reversed itself beginning in 2000, and the village population has grown steadily since then. According to ESRI, a leading national provider of market data, Highland Falls has a 2019 population estimated at 3,969, an increase of 1.5 percent since 2010.

Like Highland Falls, the Town of Highlands also reached its highest population in 1970 with approximately 14,700 residents. The Town's population in 2019 was estimated at 12,612, an increase of just 1 percent since 2010. In addition to the Village of Highland Falls, the U.S. Military Academy at West Point occupies a large part of the Town, accounting for approximately 6,800 residents. The hamlet of Fort Montgomery to the south accounts for only an estimated 1,500 residents in the Town.

Table 1 Population Trends					
	2000	2010	2019 (est.)	% Change, 2000-2010	% Change, 2010-2019 (est.)
<b>Village of Highland Falls</b>	3,685	3,900	3,969	5.8%	1.5%
<b>Town of Highlands</b>	12,487	12,492	12,612	0.0%	1.0%
<b>Orange County</b>	341,367	372,813	395,994	9.2%	6.2%
<b>New York State</b>	18,976,457	19,378,102	20,030,453	2.1%	3.4%

Source: U.S. Census and ESRI (2019 estimates).

Based on Census Bureau data from the last two decades, the regional population is projected to keep growing. Orange, Rockland and Westchester Counties have been the fastest growing counties in the Hudson Valley<sup>3</sup> region since 2000 and are expected to increase by over 90,000 people by 2040<sup>4</sup>. Based on the estimated growth of the New York-Newark-Jersey City metropolitan area since 2012, the area is expected to grow by over 400,000 people by 2040<sup>5</sup>. As for the immediate region, if the current growth rates continue, the total population of Highland Falls and Fort Montgomery will increase by nearly 2,500 people while West Point has announced their intention to increase the student body by over 1,000 in the next few years. This is a significant market from which to draw people to the village.

Currently the Village of Highland Falls houses an estimated 1,665 households, a 1.1 percent increase since the 2010 Census. The average household size in the Village is 2.38 persons, smaller than the averages reported for the Town of Highlands (2.71) and Orange County (2.89).

Table 2 Median Age			
	2010	2019 (est.)	% Change, 2010-2019 (est.)
<b>Village of Highland Falls</b>	40.2	41.7	3.7%
<b>Town of Highlands</b>	23.6	24.1	2.1%
<b>Orange County</b>	36.5	37.3	2.2%
<b>New York State</b>	37.9	39.2	3.4%

Source: U.S. Census and ESRI (2019 estimates).

<sup>3</sup> The Hudson Valley includes the counties of Columbia, Dutchess, Greene, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan, Ulster, and Westchester.

<sup>4</sup> Based on 2017 projections by the Cornell University Program on Applied Demographics.

<sup>5</sup> Projected from U.S. Census Bureau Estimates of Resident Population Change and Rankings from 2012 to 2018.

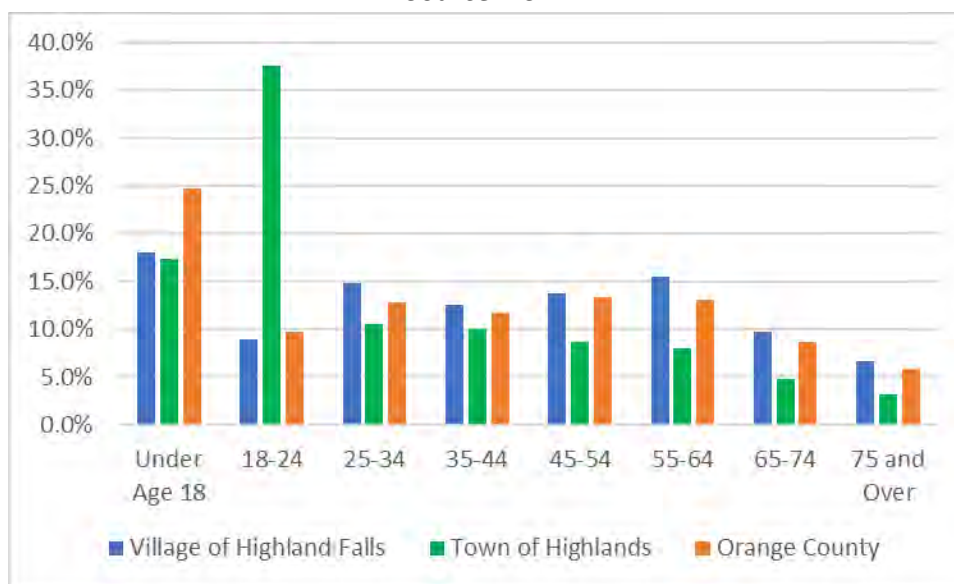


The median age in Highland Falls increased between 2010 and 2019 by 3.7 percent from 40.2 to 41.7 years. The latter considerably exceeds the Town of Highlands median age of 24.1 years, which is likely influenced by the cadet population at West Point.

As illustrated in Chart 1 below, the Village of Highland Falls has a lower share of residents under age 18 (18 percent) relative to the Town of Highlands (17.3 percent) and Orange County (24.7 percent). It also has a relatively small share of residents ages 18 to 24 (8.9 percent). In contrast, Highland Falls has higher shares of older residents, especially those in the 45-54, 55-64, 65-74, and 75 and over age cohorts.

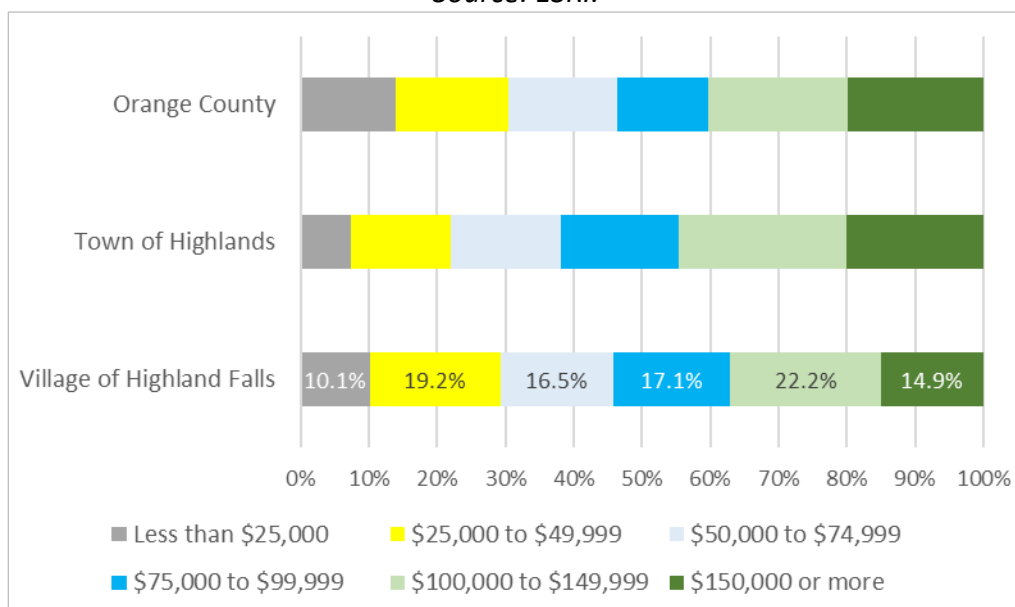
**Chart 1: Distribution of Population by Age Group, 2019 Estimates**

*Source: ESRI.*



**Chart 2: Distribution of Households by Income, 2019 Estimates**

*Source: ESRI.*



The 2019 median household income in Highland Falls is estimated at \$79,660, only slightly below the median for Orange County of \$80,431 but well below the town wide median of \$90,384. The distribution of households by income is illustrated in Chart 2. Highland Falls has a larger share of households at the lower end of the economic spectrum than the Town of Highlands, but about the same as the county-wide proportion. At the same time, more than 37 percent of households residing in Highland Falls earn at least \$100,000 per year.

Educational attainment levels in Highland Falls are high relative to both the county and the statewide estimates (see Table 3). Nearly 42 percent of village residents, versus 30.6 percent of county residents, have a bachelor's degree or higher. In the Town of Highlands, 26.7 percent of residents aged 25 and older have a graduate or professional degree.

<b>Table 3: Educational Attainment, Individuals Aged 25 and Older, 2019 Estimates</b>						
	<b>Less Than High School</b>	<b>High School Diploma or GED</b>	<b>Some College, No Degree</b>	<b>Associate Degree</b>	<b>Bachelor's Degree</b>	<b>Graduate or Prof'l Degree</b>
<b>Village of Highland Falls</b>	4.6%	22.5%	18.0%	13.1%	22.6%	19.2%
<b>Town of Highlands</b>	4.4%	18.6%	16.6%	11.4%	22.3%	26.7%
<b>Orange County</b>	9.8%	29.6%	19.6%	10.4%	17.6%	13.0%
<b>New York State</b>	13.2%	26.2%	15.2%	8.9%	20.4%	16.1%

Source: ESRI.

Recent estimates from the American Community Survey (ACS) suggest that most homeowners have lived in the village for a decade or more (see Table 4). Only 46 households, or 5.3 percent of all owner-occupied households, moved into their homes between 2015 and 2017, while 57 (6.6 percent) moved in between 2010 and 2014. In contrast, 313 (36.2 percent of owner-occupied households) moved into their residences prior to 1990. This is a higher percentage than in the town (30.0 percent) or county (25.7 percent).

<b>Table 4: Tenure by Year Householder Moved into Unit</b>			
	<b>Village of Highland Falls</b>	<b>Town of Highlands</b>	<b>Orange County</b>
<b>Owner-Occupied:</b>			
Moved in 2015 or later	5.3%	5.0%	3.5%
Moved in 2010 to 2014	6.6%	7.7%	14.4%
Moved in 2000 to 2009	34.6%	34.2%	36.6%
Moved in 1990 to 1999	17.2%	23.1%	19.9%
Moved in 1980 to 1989	16.2%	11.6%	12.5%
Moved in 1979 or earlier	20.0%	18.4%	13.2%
<b>Renter-Occupied:</b>			
Moved in 2015 or later	21.7%	21.1%	15.4%
Moved in 2010 to 2014	47.9%	59.2%	49.7%
Moved in 2000 to 2009	17.6%	13.0%	24.7%
Moved in 1990 to 1999	9.1%	4.8%	6.5%
Moved in 1980 to 1989	2.5%	1.2%	1.8%
Moved in 1979 or earlier	1.3%	0.6%	1.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2013-17 Five-Year Estimates.





Residential mobility has been higher among renter households since 2010. Nearly 70 percent of renter households in Highland Falls moved in between 2010 and 2017, resulting in an annual rental housing turnover rate of 9.9 percent. The rental housing turnover rate in the Town of Highlands was 11.5 percent.



**Typical residential streets in Highland Falls**



## **Overview of Market Conditions**

### *Commercial Real Estate Transactions*

Table 5 below lists commercial properties along Main Street that changed ownership from 2015 through October 2019. Sale prices ranged from \$145,000 to \$700,000. There was an uptick in commercial real estate sales in 2018. Among the properties sold was the former Pentagon Federal Credit Union (or “PenFed”) building at 481 Main Street, which has been vacant since the credit union relocated to West Point. The structure is expected to be demolished and replaced by a new boutique hotel. The former Nicole’s Restaurant and Catering at 11 Main Street is also slated for demolition.

<b>Table 5: Commercial Property Sales on Main Street, Village of Highland Falls</b>			
<b>Address</b>	<b>Property Type</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Sale Price</b>
315 Main Street	DT Row Building (Detached)	10/2019	\$345,000
467 Main Street	DT Row Building (Detached)	9/2019	\$490,000
481 Main Street	Standard Bank (vacant)	7/2018	\$700,000
270 Main Street	DT Row Building (Detached)	7/2018	\$575,000
260 Main Street	DT Row Building (Detached)	3/2018	\$200,000
447 Main Street	Large Retail Food Store	2/2018	\$300,000
11 Main Street	Restaurant (vacant)	1/2018	\$700,000
427 Main Street	DT Row Building (Detached)	11/2017	\$440,000
145 Main Street	DT Row Building (Detached)	6/2016	\$350,000
264 Main Street	DT Row Building (Detached)	12/2015	\$145,000
287 Main Street	DT Row Building (Attached)	12/2015	\$367,800

*Source: NYS Office of Real Property Services. Standard (arm’s length) sales only.*

### *Main Street Businesses*

Although commercial uses are also located along Routes 218 and 9W, most businesses in Highland Falls are concentrated on Main Street (See Table 6). A downtown business survey conducted by Pattern for Progress in January 2018 identified 75 storefronts in Highland Falls, 13 of which were vacant. Of the occupied storefronts: 35 percent were filled with restaurants and bars; 24 percent with service establishments such as banks, dry cleaners, and law offices; 18 percent with health and beauty businesses, including hair and nail salons, barbershops, and medical offices; and 14 percent were occupied by retail stores. The organization concluded that the business mix was not conducive to drawing customers from surrounding areas or attracting visitors. Nearly half of the retail options in Highland Falls were food-related, primarily catering to residents. There was also a limited variety of dining options.<sup>6</sup>

To update this information, an inventory of businesses located in buildings along Main Street was conducted in Fall 2019. Each business was categorized by industry sector based on the North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS). Table 6 shows the results of the survey.

<sup>6</sup> Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress, *The Village of Highland Falls and West Point: Finding a Balance*, pp. 14-15.





Table 6: Main Street Businesses, Fall 2019		
Type of Business	Number	Percent
Accommodation and Food Services	23	35.4%
Retail Trade	14	21.5%
Personal and Repair Services	11	16.7%
Finance and Insurance	8	12.1%
Professional and Technical Services	3	4.5%
Health Care and Social Assistance	2	3.0%
All Other Industries	5	7.6%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Echoing the findings of the Pattern for Progress survey, the inventory indicated a high proportion of service establishments that are of limited value in attracting visitors and a relative lack of specialty retail stores. In addition, of the 21 restaurants along Main Street, 6 are pizzerias or specialize in Italian food. None of the restaurants can be characterized as fine dining. Although a handful of restaurants have been in business for years and have high ratings on websites like TripAdvisor and Yelp, some are not open for dinner or have limited seating. For more variety, people must travel north to the Town of Cornwall or take advantage of the dining options available at West Point.



**Businesses on Main Street**

### *Tourism Attractions*

In addition to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, there are multiple historic, cultural, and recreational attractions in the vicinity of Highland Falls. Table 7 provides a list of the fourteen major attractions in and around Highland Falls.

<b>Table 7: Attractions In and Around Highland Falls</b>	
Bear Mountain State Park	5,200-acre state park that offers biking, hiking, boating, picnicking, swimming, cross-country skiing, and other recreational activities; scenic road to the summit
Black Rock Forest (Cornwall/Highlands)	3,870-acre forest and biological field station open to the public for hiking and mountain biking
Boscobel House and Gardens (Philipstown)	Historic house museum
Constitution Island (Philipstown)	Only part of the U.S. Military Academy on the east side of the Hudson; open for visiting on certain days in the summer
Constitution Marsh Audubon Center and Sanctuary (Philipstown)	Tidal marsh providing vital natural habitat for birds and other wildlife; nature education programs, hiking trail, birdwatching
Fort Montgomery State Historic Site (Highlands)	Historic landmark and site of Revolutionary War battle; trails, interpretive signage, visitor center
Garrison Art Center (Philipstown)	Community art center offering classes and galleries
Hudson Highlands Nature Museum (Cornwall)	Nature center with quality education programs on the unique ecology of the Hudson Highlands for children and adults
Hudson Highlands State Park (Philipstown)	Non-contiguous state park on the east side of the Hudson River; offers fishing, boating, hiking, and birding
Storm King Arts Center (Cornwall)	500-acre outdoor museum connecting art and nature; attracts 200,000 visitors per year
U.S. Military Academy - West Point (Highlands)	3 <sup>rd</sup> largest tourist attraction in the state outside of NYC
West Point Foundry Preserve (Cold Spring)	90-acre preserve with trails passing remnants of historic foundries used during the Civil War; hiking, picnicking, wildlife watching
West Point Golf Course (Highlands)	Public golf course; pro shop and snack bar; new clubhouse opening spring 2021
West Point Museum (Highland Falls)	Military Academy museum with galleries showcasing the history of the U.S. Army

Visitors to Highland Falls find it challenging to access information on many of these attractions. A visitor guide to the Town of Highlands produced by the Highland Falls Chamber of Commerce was at one time distributed around the community, but its vintage is unknown since there is no date on the brochure. A link to the visitor guide is provided on the Town's homepage, but there is no reference to it on the Village of Highland Falls website. The Chamber of Commerce website has some general information, but it has not been updated recently (the last blog post was in 2015) and a link to an events calendar no longer exists. These issues are further complicated by the spotty Internet and cell service within the Village. Visitors expecting to use a smartphone to search for a restaurant or place to stay may be disappointed. This is a significant drawback to the Village as a destination.



As shown in Table 8, nearby state parks and historic sites have experienced dramatic growth in visitation over the last ten years. There is an opportunity for communities like Highland Falls to capture a share of this market.

<b>Table 8: Attendance at State Parks and Historic Sites</b>				
	<b>2008</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>Net Change, 2008-18</b>	
			<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Storm King State Park (Orange/Rockland)	2,343	14,505	+12,162	519.1%
Bear Mountain State Park (Orange/Rockland)	1,003,031	2,127,572	+1,124,541	112.1%
Fort Montgomery State Historic Site (Orange)	14,946	31,615	+16,669	111.5%

*Source: NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation.*

Within a 5-mile radius of downtown Highland Falls, there are currently 10 lodging establishments with a total of 505 rooms (see Table 9). They range from small B&Bs, inns, and independent motels to midscale limited-service and upscale accommodations. The IHG Army Hotel and the historic Thayer Hotel are both located on the West Point campus. The Holiday Inn Express is the only property in the area associated with a national chain.

Although the “mom-and-pop motels” vary in quality, the West Point Motel on Main Street has an average rating of 4.0 (very good) based on more than 160 reviews on the travel website TripAdvisor. The Bear Mountain Bridge Motel, which has been operating for 50 years, is also highly rated. Fair Bridge Inn & Suites, located at the southern end of Main Street in Highland Falls, is a former Econo Lodge and has an average rating of 2.5. The U.S. Academy Motel is not listed on TripAdvisor, nor does it have a website.

<b>Table 9: Accommodations Within a 5-Mile Radius of Highland Falls</b>			
<b>Property</b>	<b># of Rooms</b>	<b># of Reviews on TripAdvisor*</b>	<b>Average Rating on TripAdvisor*</b>
West Point Motel	51	164	4.0 (very good)
Fair Bridge Inn & Suites	54	167	2.5 (average)
U.S. Academy Motel	15	not listed	-
Overlook on Hudson B&B	5	84	5.0 (excellent)
Hudson River Crest B&B	7	62	5.0 (excellent)
Holiday Inn Express and Suites West Point-Fort Montgomery	120	186	4.0 (very good)
Thayer Hotel	151	1,213	4.0 (very good)
Bear Mountain Bridge Motel	5	21	4.0 (very good)
IHG Army Hotels Five Star Inn on West Point	34	29	3.5 (very good)
Bear Mountain Inn, Overlook Lodge & Stone Cottages	63	263 (inn) 215 (lodge)	3.5 (very good) 3.5 (very good)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>505</b>		

\* As of 11/18/2019

One of the most attractive and popular accommodations in the region is the Bear Mountain Inn. Located at Bear Mountain State Park, the Bear Mountain Inn is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It offers three different types of accommodations: 15 deluxe rooms and suites at the inn, 24 guestrooms at the scenic Overlook Lodge, and 4 rustic mountain cabins, each containing 6 individual rooms.





## **Building a Future Condition: Inspirational Case Studies**

The LWRS would not be complete without looking at some examples of how other Hudson River communities have maximized their waterfront and taken advantage of regional marketing initiatives for economic development. Other case studies focus on communities that have a similar connection to military facilities. A third focus is on a town wide trail system that not only has a positive impact on the quality of life of residents but increases the number of visitors into local businesses.

### ***Case Study: Hudson Waterfront Redevelopment***

The City of Hudson in Columbia County exemplifies how the Village of Highland Falls can successfully implement a planning project for the redevelopment of an underutilized waterfront area. The project also provides some valuable lessons in political collaboration for the Village of Highland Falls since it required coordination between a municipal government, a nonprofit organization, New York State, and CSX Railroad.

The waterfront redevelopment project began nearly two decades ago in 2002 with the adoption of the City Comprehensive Plan. The Plan provided recommendations for the waterfront, including zoning changes, physical improvements, and an application for funding to complete the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP). The final LWRP report would be important for establishing an official vision for the waterfront and requiring all development to be consistent with the goals and policies set forth in the LWRP.

In 2006, the City of Hudson decided to create the Hudson Development Corporation (HDC) to help guide the waterfront revitalization process for the City. This organization would open the City to additional funding opportunities and allow local leaders and ordinary citizens to take ownership of the revitalization process. That same year, the City was able to receive funding from the Department of State (DOS) to complete a Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP).

The LWRP report formally identified the vacant buildings, vacant development sites highly underutilized properties that should be the target of the waterfront revitalization efforts. The report included recommendations for zoning changes and amendments, projects and end uses at the waterfront that focused on either mixed-use, commercial or public space development. Some of the recommended projects for the Hudson waterfront were similar to the redevelopment plan for the Highland Falls waterfront, including both a private and public marina, a ferry/cruise service, a kayak/canoe launch, expansion of public park and open space, rehabilitation or redevelopment of underutilized, vacant and historic buildings, pedestrian and bicycle access improvements, beautification projects, and transportation and infrastructure improvements.

With the adoption of the final LWRP report in November 2011, the City was able to proceed to the implementation phase. While much of the land was owned by private and public entities who were willing to assist with the report's implementation, CSX Railroad remained a major hurdle for the City and the HDC. CSX did not own much developable land, but the railroad company owned and managed the railroad that divided the waterfront area. Any plans for new connections between the opposite sides of the tracks would require approval from CSX Railroad. For this reason, the HDC focused its attention on more feasible projects.

Eventually, action by New York State reduced potential conflicts with CSX Railroad significantly. In December 2012, Governor Cuomo announces that the Hudson Rail Line would be managed by Amtrak



instead of CSX Railroad. Governor Cuomo also announced \$2.45 million in safety improvements at 13 at-grade rail crossings. Columbia County, where Hudson is located, was included. This was an important step as it reduced a major hurdle for the redevelopment of the waterfront.

While New York State was working with CSX Railroad, the HDC continued pushing forward with the redevelopment efforts. With the LWRP completed, the organization was able to apply and receive implementation funding from the DOS through the LWRP program. The HDC used the funds to hire a consultant firm to prepare Concept Development Plan to reuse the historic Dunn Warehouse on the Hudson waterfront. The Dunn Warehouse was one of the key vacant and underutilized buildings identified in the LWRP. The report was accepted at the end of 2015 and by the end of the next year, the City was awarded \$500,000 through the State's Restore NY program to stabilize and plan for the further development of the Dunn Warehouse.

The same year, the HDC began reaching out to CSX Railroad to negotiate for a deal for the KAZ warehouse site, a key underutilized property owned by CSX Railroad and identified in the LWRP. After nearly two years of failed attempts to connect CSX's Real Estate Office, the Mayor, and the Executive Director for the HDC developed a regional political coalition to incentivize CSX to work with the HDC. The coalition consisted of several community leaders, including the Mayor, the Executive Director, a development consultant, the President of the County Chamber of Commerce, State Assemblywoman Didi Barret, and Senator Chuck Schumer. The political coalition was able to keep CSX interested in a partnership with the HDC.

The final and most important piece in the redevelopment process to date came in 2017 when the City of Highland Falls was selected as a winner of the State's \$10 million Downtown Revitalization Initiative program. The City's application focused on the BRIDGE (Build, Renew, Invent, Develop, Grow, Empower) District, a roughly 133-acre area along the waterfront. Several of the projects recommended in the 2011 LWRP, such as the Dunn Warehouse rehabilitation, were included on the list of DRI projects to be assisted through the State grant program. Having thought through these projects during previous planning studies, they City was well prepared to provide a list of project goals, jobs created, and cost estimates. City officials were also able to demonstrate a commitment of funds from the City and other public and private investors.

With the DRI award from New York State, the HDC was able to receive a \$200,000 loan from the County Economic Development Corporation and incentivize CSX Railroad to renegotiate for the KAZ warehouse site. Eventually in November 2019, the HDC closed on a deal to purchase the property for \$175,000.

Although the City of Hudson's waterfront redevelopment project well exceeds the Village of Highland Falls in scale and scope, there are several important lessons that Hudson Falls can apply to their redevelopment efforts. These include:

- Complete a comprehensive and thorough planning process for each phase of the waterfront redevelopment. Begin with an area-wide master plan that identifies the projects and implementation strategy and develop project specific plans that can be implemented in phases. There is no substitute for good planning.
- Planning is a method for opening ideas to new funding opportunities. A project that has been identified in several layers of plans is more likely to receive the funding assistance it needs.
- Develop or identify a community and/or development organization to lead the waterfront redevelopment process. This organization will be able to access funding opportunities that cannot



be sought by the Village, ensure the redevelopment is community led and driven, and focus on a single project that may require planning well beyond the terms of a municipal government.

- Build a local and regional coalition of support. Political support will be necessary to leverage negotiations and increase the likelihood of receiving funding assistance when needed.

### ***Case Study: Milton Train Station***

The 2017 Highland Falls Waterfront Feasibility presented the Milton Train Station project as a case study for the reuse of the historic train station in Highland Falls. The Milton Train Station redevelopment is an ongoing project by the Milton Train Station Foundation to reuse the old station house as a community center for the Town of Marlborough.

There are several valuable best practices to apply to the redevelopment of the train station in Highland Falls. The best practices listed in the report are as follows:

- Identify priority projects to complete in sequential order. Develop a construction timeline.
- Have open programming for the public. Be flexible to allow for the public to provide suggestions on programming and use the space in a manner that best meets their needs.
- Change happens slowly. The project has been underway for over a decade.
- Seek a partnership with CSX Transportation Company to alleviate initial regulatory burdens.
- Form a nonprofit group to lead the redevelopment efforts and manage the station after the project is completed. In Marlborough, the Milton Train Station Foundation was also able to gather donations from the community to help with the renovations. Each donor is listed on commemorative plaques inside the station.
- Have a long-term vision for the space. The Milton Train Station Foundation plans on developing a park around the Milton station. This step is currently in the design phase and awaiting regulatory approvals.

### ***Case Study: Strategic Planning and Capacity Building***

The U.S. Naval Academy and Airforce Academy have worked to build stronger ties between their academies and the municipalities in which they are located. These collaborative efforts have been consistent and deliberate to ensure compatible growth and development and improve the rate of response when faced with the unexpected.

In the City of Annapolis, a common threat brought the City and the Naval Academy together. Following several major flooding events from 2003 to 2018, which impacted academy facilities, infrastructure and the historic City Dock neighborhood, the Naval Academy completed site analyses and developed a flooding protection plan. The result was the construction of a large new seawall and joint pump facilities, both of which will protect the academy's harbor and the City Dock neighborhood.

In the City of Colorado Springs, the Department of Defense (DOD), through the Airforce Academy, has purposefully targeted investments toward creating a hub for military, scientific and technological research and development with spinoff industries. The DOD continues to work with the City to invest money in plans, studies and analyses to assess their investments and plan for the future. The Academy produces an annual Economic Impact Analysis. The report is no longer required by DOD but is done to direct Academy investments toward improving the local community and its relationship with the Academy. The Academy will even provide direct legislative and funding support for local transportation and infrastructure improvements identified through the analysis. The Academy also participates in a unified lobbying and promotional organization with the City and its business leaders. The purpose of the organization is to





promote the Academy and its relationship with the community, and to attract new residents, investors and businesses to the hub. Marketing campaigns promote new facilities, planned development and available commercial spaces.

Based on these case studies, it is recommended that the Village of Highland Falls and U.S. Military Academy at West Point consider the following best practices:

- Identify a single common issue and focus on its solution. This effort can be the launching point for greater collaboration.
- Complete a Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) to develop a strategy for the growth and development of industries that are compatible with the operations of the Military Academy and its research institutions. The results of this study will guarantee that DOD and municipal investments are directed toward a common goal.
- Work with a Military Academy research institution to produce Economic Impact Analyses every year or three years that summarizes the role of the Military Academy, audits investments and informs future expenditures.
- Establish an organization for the marketing and promotion of Highland Falls and the Military Academy. The organization should include representatives from the Military Academy, the Village and Town governments, the business community, and economic development entities such as the Orange County Industrial Development Agency (IDA), the Regional Economic Development Council (REDC), Orange County Tourism, and the Highlands Chamber of Commerce.

#### ***Case Study: Historic Hudson River Towns (HHRT)***

Historic Hudson River Towns, Inc. is a joint 501(c)3 not-for-profit formed in 2008 from a 1994 inter-municipal agreement (IMA) between municipal executives along the east side of the Hudson River in Westchester County. The purpose of the organization is to use economic development and tourism initiatives to stimulate local economies and save historic Main Streets. The key focus areas are downtown revitalization, waterfront renewal and tourism development.

As riverfront communities, each member municipality understands that their economic health and the quality of life of their residents is dependent on the Hudson River. All of the municipalities who participate in the HHRT initiative recognize the importance of protecting the Hudson River ecosystem and environmentally sensitive areas while providing recreational public access, allowing for smart growth development, preserving historic and cultural assets, and maintaining the scenic value of the Hudson Valley for tourism promotion. Some of the projects that have been undertaken to accomplish this vision include:

- Participates in the Hudson River Estuary Restoration Initiative and the State's Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Estuary Advisory Board.
- Provides additional staff and expertise for members interested in the development and promotion of new tourism resources.
- Regional tourism promotional campaigns.
- "Flower Villages" campaign to beautify downtowns.
- Sea level rise and shoreline stabilization studies.
- Participant in the "Green Circle" subcommittee of the Mid-Hudson Region Economic Development Council (REDC) focused on industries and enterprises that are meaningfully tied to the land and natural infrastructure such as agriculture, waterfront development, tourism, and arts and culture.



- Maintains a website with information on members, events and activities, lodging and dining, land and water recreation, and historic sites. The website also includes links to other tourism websites that cover the region.

The organization is now open to all riverfront communities, having expanded to include the towns of Nyack and Haverstraw in Rockland County and Beacon in Dutchess County. With the organization now open to the City of Beacon, the Village of Highland Falls should consider submitting a request for membership. If membership is not feasible, the Village should consider working with neighboring municipalities on both sides of the river to develop an organization that follows the best practices of HHRT.

***Case Study: Fishkill Creek Greenway & Heritage Trail***

The Fishkill Creek Greenway & Heritage Trail (FCGHT) is a partially completed 4.3-mile trail connecting the Beacon Metro-North train station to the town of Fishkill through the city of Beacon along the entire length of the Fishkill Creek. The trail project was born out of Beacon Deserves Better, a grassroots citizen group that opposed a transit-oriented development proposal in the early 2000s near the train station. After receiving a grant from the Hudson River Valley Greenway program, the City of Beacon developed a Master Plan, with a select Committee and professional consultant team, which identified the most feasible route, elements and funding sources for the trail. The Master Plan envisioned that the trail would provide direct, uninterrupted creek access to residents with several opportunities for active and passive uses. With the trail passing through several distinct neighborhoods, it would also provide an opportunity for interpretive spaces that connect users to the City's history.

Since the Master Plan was completed in 2013, the greenway has become part of the city's long-term planning. In 2014, the City Council amended the zoning code to require developments along the creek to allow greenway access. As a result, some development projects along the creek are required to demonstrate trail accessibility before City inspectors can issue a certificate of occupancy.

The City has provided matching funds for grant awards to construct the trail in phases. Currently, the trail is mostly hard packed gravel and stone dust. The most recently completed sections opened in December 2018. These segments continue the trail on a paved surface along Churchill Street and Creek Drive and mark about the halfway point. Once complete, the trail will be linked to the network of hiking and walking trails in and around the City of Beacon through a physical connection and marketing efforts.

If the Village of Highland Falls is interested in transforming Highland Creek into a public trail and interpretive area, the Village should consider the following best practices from the FCGHT project:

- Build a coalition of public support early and maintain this coalition throughout the life of the project.
- Begin with a master plan for the entire trail corridor to determine its feasibility.
- Make the trail project part of the Comprehensive Plan.
- Codify rules about development along the creek and trail to maximize its benefit and guarantee its protection long-term.
- Develop the trail in phases as funding becomes available. Seek funding assistance for each phase of the project.
- Include the trail in marketing and promotional efforts.



## C. INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS SUMMARY

### Overview

The goal of the strategy is to outline projects that will improve publicly owned or accessible lands as a catalyst for the revitalization of Highland Falls. It was determined that focusing the strategy on the Village's greatest assets would increase the probability of its implementation and the significance of its impact long-term. A total of 27 resources were identified for the Local Waterfront Revitalization Strategy. A summary of these resources is found in this section. A full description and analysis can be found in Appendix D. See the Resource Inventory Map for locations of all resources.

Each resource is classified under one of the following categories:

- Community Resources – Places that are integral to life in the community due to their use, location, ownership, or some combination of each.
- Historic Resources – Sites of local and national historical significance, and the local services that manage and celebrate these resources.
- Tourism Resources – Attractions that draw visitors to Highland Falls, and the businesses and services that support the local tourism economy.
- Natural Resources – Natural features and places that define the local geography and offer opportunities for educational and recreational activities.
- Parks and Recreational Resources – Public parks and trails that offer space for people to interact, contemplate and recreate.
- Waterfront Resources – Properties with a connection to a waterfront either through existing public access, the potential for public access, or unique views of the Hudson River and valley.

### Community Resources

Highland Falls is a desirable place because it is listed among the safest and most livable villages in New York.<sup>7</sup> The Village of Highland Falls can have a major positive impact on the life of its residents and the experience of its visitors by providing quality community resources. This includes everything from the reliability of municipal services to the appearance of the Village and its properties. The focus of this analysis is on the publicly accessible areas of the built environment that can be improved.

### Highlights

*Former Elementary School* – Built in 1970, the former elementary school for the Highland Falls-Fort Montgomery Central School District has sat vacant since 2012. The Village has expressed their preference to reuse the building but are open alternatives. The Central School District has discussed plans for the County Industrial Development Agency (IDA) to open a business incubator, for the Town Recreation Department to help relocate a local non-profit that provides youth services, or for a non-profit assisting veterans with housing and other basic needs to open an office in the building.



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<sup>7</sup> Ranked the second-best place to live in Orange County in 2019 by the popular online service Niche.



*Highland Falls Senior Citizen Center* – The Senior Center was formerly a meeting space for the Knights of Columbus organization before being purchased by the Village in 2013. With assistance from a DASNY (Dormitory Authority of the State of New York) grant and CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) funds, the Village was able to renovate the building to transform the space into the community’s first Senior Center.



*Village Hall* – Village Hall sits in the village center at the corner of Main Street and Schneider Avenue. Village Hall is one of the most important historic buildings in the Village. The Italianate-style former bank building was completed in 1894. The building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and houses the Historical Society.



*Main Street* – Main Street is the center of commercial activity for the Village. Around 50 properties in the downtown that house commercial activities rely on a well-maintained and inviting Main Street.



### **Issues Analysis**

Underutilized buildings and substandard public spaces hinder the potential of Highland Falls. Overcoming these issues should be a priority of the Village. Projects that improve the public realm demonstrate the Village’s commitment to the long-term prosperity of the community.

### **Historic Resources**

The historic character of the Village is one of its most valuable assets as well as one of its most significant issues. About a quarter of all buildings were constructed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and over half of all buildings were constructed before the second World War. In addition, nearly three out of every four residences in the downtown area are in pre-war buildings as well. The result is a built environment that epitomizes the positive aspects of a traditional downtown and takes visitors on a journey through history.

The quality of this experience is dependent on the condition of the Village’s historical resources and the way they are connected. To promote the historic resources of Highland Falls, the Village became a designated *Certified Local Government*, *Main Street Community* and *Preserve America Community*. Main Street is also a designated historic district. These programs recognize the cultural and natural heritage of the village while committing financial and technical assistance to the preservation of the defining historic character and special places. Banners, plaques, informational materials, and promotional items are a few of the ways the village has been able to enhance the downtown experience, drawing greater numbers of visitors to downtown businesses while increasing local pride in the history and culture of the community.



## Highlights

*Town of Highlands Historical Society* – Founded in 1980 by a group of residents, the Historical Society provides educational and visitor information to the community through the preservation of maps, photographs, videos, and any other materials relating to local heritage. Visitors to the Historical Society can also take a walking tour trail guide.

*Historic Thayer Hotel* – The Thayer Hotel, built in 1829, is a six-story, 151-room hotel on the grounds of the Military Academy at West Point. The Thayer Hotel is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

*Thayer Gate* – Thayer Gate is the historic entrance to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. The gate was renamed after Colonel Sylvanus Thayer with the renaming of West Point Hotel.

*Historic Train Depot* – Built in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the shingle-style Train Depot was formerly the station for passengers on the West Shore Railroad until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Once the railroad began transporting freight exclusively, the site began transitioning into a marina. Following a flooding event, the marina was damaged beyond repair and was closed. The Train Depot remains one of the most unique buildings in the region on the western shore of the Hudson River.



## Issues Analysis

The Village of Highland Falls has some of the country's finest 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century architecture. In consideration of the age and heritage of many of these buildings, they are also either listed on or qualify for listing on the state and national register. These attributes can be enhanced with LWRP funds. Continued investment in the historic and cultural resources of the downtown will strengthen Highland Falls as a heritage tourism destination.

## Tourism Resources

Much of the local tourism economy is defined by history, sporting events at the Military Academy, and the natural beauty of the region. Maintaining the existing resources and improving the connections between them should be a priority.

Providing adequate accommodations that meet the demand of visitors is essential to the sustainability of the tourism market in the long-term. Currently, there are 12 establishments with a total of 635 rooms within 5 miles of the village downtown that offer accommodations for overnight visitors. The Old Guard Hotel is a planned \$39 million luxury hotel financed by four West Point graduates and an additional partner. The hotel will be five stories and include a nearly 2,000 square-foot restaurant with seating for 137 people, two large banquet rooms, meeting rooms, a 1,275 square-foot rooftop lounge for up to 76



people, and an over 3,500 square-foot outdoor event deck. The project is expected to be complete by the summer of 2020. If successful, the Old Guard Hotel will demonstrate that the local tourism economy is moving in a positive direction.

Most local tourism services are managed by the Chamber of Commerce. Although the Chamber is affiliated with the Town of Highlands, the organization is responsible for providing support services and marketing for its members in the village. The Chamber prepared the Village tourism brochure showcasing member businesses and providing a reference for visitors to the downtown. The Chamber is also responsible for listing member businesses on a wayfinding sign near Thayer Gate as well as a kiosk/walking map at the three-tiered garden in Roe park. The Chamber website is a central location for local businesses. The website includes links to other regional tourism websites and for popular destinations in the village. Through the Chamber, any business can grow by increasing their promotional capacity, connecting directly with the local customer base, and raising their profile by participating in community activities run by the organization.

### Highlights

#### *West Point Museum, Visitors Center and Military Academy*

– The U.S. Military Academy at West Point draws the largest number of visitors to Highland Falls. While the Visitors Center has been hosting people since 1952, the Museum has been open to the public for more than 150 years. The Visitors Center and West Point Museum are the first stop for the thousands of tourists who are interested in touring West Point, experiencing life as a cadet, learning about the history of the Army and its military conflicts, or just visiting the Army gift shop. West Point Office of Community Engagement data shows that nearly 930,000 people entered the Visitors Center and Museum between 2012 and 2018, including an estimated 312,000 who took tours of the Military Academy<sup>8</sup>. Visitation during this period was lower than usual since the Visitors Center closed for renovation between June 2016 and December 2017.



### Issues Analysis

Highland Falls is uniquely situated between some of the most important natural and man-made places in our country's history. Visitors to West Point and the Highlands should also be visiting the village downtown. There is an opportunity to develop a strategy for bringing each unique tourist group into the village. Tourism resources are also an attractive reason to live in Highland Falls. The Old Guard Hotel is a positive sign that the local tourism market is growing and is projected to continue.

### Natural Resources

The local geography is defined by the rolling hills and deep forests of the Highlands region, the steep slopes of the Hudson River Valley, and the several freshwater sources and their tributaries. The Hudson

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<sup>8</sup> Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress, *The Village of Highland Falls and West Point: Finding a Balance*, 2018, p.12.





River and Highlands were designated part of the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area in 1996. The Hudson River is also a designated American Heritage River.

In a dense built environment such as Highland Falls, access to the natural world is only available through the dedication of areas for the conservation of its natural features and the development of public waterfronts. The most valuable natural features in Highland Falls are its waterbodies and the tributaries connecting them.

Residents have expressed a recognition of the value of having a connection with these natural places. The inventory of natural resources identifies the most valuable resources.

### Highlights

*Highland Brook* – Highland Brook flows through the edge of the downtown area, crossing under Main Street and West Point Highway to the Hudson River. Connecting the downtown to the Hudson River, it is a local treasure.

*Con Hook* – Con Hook is a preserved island and marsh area off the eastern shore of the village. Con Hook is a valuable ecosystem for a variety of local wildlife and vegetation, including bird species often sought by members of the Audubon Society.

*Roe Pond* – Roe Pond is the central water feature of Roe Park, the largest public park and center for recreation in the Village. Both the pond and park are named after Major general Charles Francis Roe, a graduate of West Point, cavalryman and major-general for New York State, and a resident of Highland Falls until his death in 1932.

*Pells Pond* – This private pond is named after the Pells family, wealthy aristocrats related to the family of the famous J.P. Morgan that once owned an estate nearby.

*Hudson River* – The Hudson River is the most valuable natural resource for Highland Falls and one of the most important waterways in United States history. The Hudson River has acted as the major driver of artistic, economic, and recreational endeavors in the region for generations. During the Revolutionary War, General Washington recognized the strategic importance of this point along the Hudson, resulting in the construction of several forts and military installations, which would eventually become West Point. While much of the strategic value of the river has diminished, its scenic and recreational value has remained significant. Unfortunately, there is limited access to the river. The only direct access point to the Hudson in Highland Falls at





the site of the historic train depot. The lack of access to the Hudson River is a result of the steep slopes. The topography also significantly reduces opportunities for greater development. The result is a considerable area on the east side of the village that is preserved forests and ridges overlooking the historic river.

### **Issues Analysis**

The numerous water bodies and protected natural areas are significant resources in the village that are generally underutilized. These places could provide opportunities for additional recreational assets such as a beach and swimming area, boat access, a fishing dock, and new trails. The ability to own a home with adjacent to one of these natural resources, to visit a park with options for water-based activities, or walk a trail overlooking a beautiful natural landscape, are attractive reasons to live or visit anywhere. However, most of these unique resources are highly underutilized, either lacking public access or protections from encroaching development. The Village should work to protect these resources and their natural value, provide public access to these places where possible, and improve the connections between them. At Roe Pond, where there is public access, the Village has recognized the inadequacy of the existing amenities and committed funds to their improvement. If successful, the Village should be encouraged to implement similar actions elsewhere.

### **Parks and Recreational Resources**

There are several recreation opportunities and public spaces for people to enjoy. Recreational resources offer special experiences that add to the quality of life in the village while the well-designed and landscaped public spaces add to the attractiveness of the village.

All administration, logistics, maintenance, and new construction related to the village's parks is the responsibility of the Town of Highlands Recreation Department. The Village does not have a designated park official or department. The Village does have a Public Works department and a volunteer beautification committee that support the efforts of the Town Recreation Department. The beautification committee is uniquely responsible for the selection and maintenance of any plantings in the village. This includes flower arrangements in municipal parks, potted and hanging plants along streets, plantings for village gateway signage, and any festive or commemorative decorations. Every park or recreational resource highlighted is managed under this administrative structure.

### **Highlights**

*Ladycliff Park* – Ladycliff Park is the main park area in the downtown where residents, workers and shoppers on Main Street can sit outside and relax. The 1.4-acre pocket park has been owned and managed by the Village since the early 1980s.

*Veterans Memorial Park* – Memorial Park was established in 1951 as a commemoration of local veterans of World War II. The 1.5-acre park offers benches and a large gazebo for visitors to stop and rest among the trees and plantings.



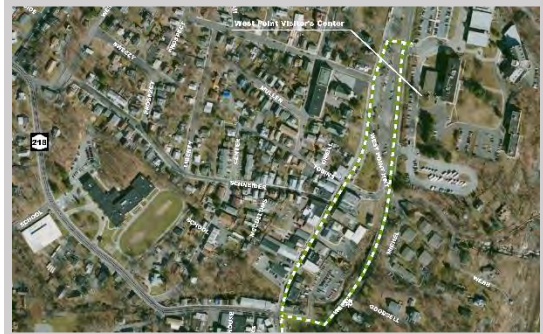
*Sgt. William Banks Memorial Park* – Sgt. William Banks Memorial Park is a 0.1-acre park at the corner of Center Street and Tobins Lane. The Village has owned and maintained this amenity for nearby families since the late 1970s.



*Roe Park and Extension* – Roe Park is the main public space and recreation area in Highland Falls. Located at the west end of Walnut Street, the nearly 9-acre park includes an array of recreational amenities such as baseball fields, basketball and tennis courts, swimming facilities and fishing.



*Highland Falls Greenway Trail* – The Highland Falls Greenway Trail is an established downtown trail loop that connects the West Point Visitor's Center to Roe Park. The approximately 2-mile trail uses the existing sidewalks on Main Street, West Point Highway, Walnut Avenue, and Dale Avenue, highlighting historic buildings and public parks along the way.



### **Issues Analysis**

The village has a healthy mix of public spaces. The smaller parks offer green space, a place to eat outdoors and play areas for each neighborhood while the larger central park provides the facilities for residents to participate in outdoor athletics or enjoy a leisurely stroll. The amenity that the village is lacking is a connection to the Hudson River for the public. If the uses are unique and the design is inviting, a public access point to the Hudson River in Highland Falls would not only be a valuable amenity for residents but would attract additional visitors to the village.

There is also a planned trail connection to the Empire State Trail, which will add further value by linking Highland Falls to two long-distance trail routes. The first will move south-to-north from New York City to Canada while the second will travel east-to-west from Albany to Buffalo. The resulting trail network will be a continuous 750-mile route, making it the longest multi-use state trail in the nation. When completed, Highland Falls will be one of a handful of communities on the west side of the Hudson River that will have a connection to the Empire State Trail.

### **Waterfront Resources**

While the Village has several waterbodies and waterways, there are few places for the public to experience these resources. This is especially true for the Hudson River. Currently, there is one point of direct access to the Hudson River at the site of the historic train depot at the end of Station Hill Road. Previously, this site had a public marina and green space, but the property has been privately-owned and public access has been restricted since 2012. Therefore, an inventory of the properties at the waterfront along with other potential places to allow the public to experience the Hudson River were inventoried.



## Highlights

*Waterfront Redevelopment Project Area* (Burks & Burns Property; West Point Property; Tear Drop Parcel; Historic Train Depot; Station Hill Road) – The focus of this project area is the redevelopment of the highly underutilized waterfront and only access point to the Hudson River in the village. The five resources listed were identified in the 2017 Waterfront Redevelopment Feasibility Study as the main components of the waterfront area that would need to be addressed for any site plan to be viable.

*Ridgeline Properties* (DPW Garages; C.D. Parry Company Property; Peter L. Aloe Property) – The ridgeline properties are four properties covering nearly 35 acres at the end of Havens Road that have unique views of the Hudson River and valley.

*Crystal Lake Tributary Resources* (Crystal Lake Tributary; Village Sewage Treatment Plant; Bessemer Trust Company Property) – The components of the Crystal Lake Tributary Resources are the tributary connecting Crystal Lake to the Hudson River, the 1.5-acre parcel of the Village-owned Sewage Treatment Plant, and a 5.8-acre vacant forested parcel managed by the Bessemer Trust Company. Public access to the tributary may be feasible through the development of a connection between the Village-owned Sewage Treatment Plant and the adjacent Bessemer Trust Company property.

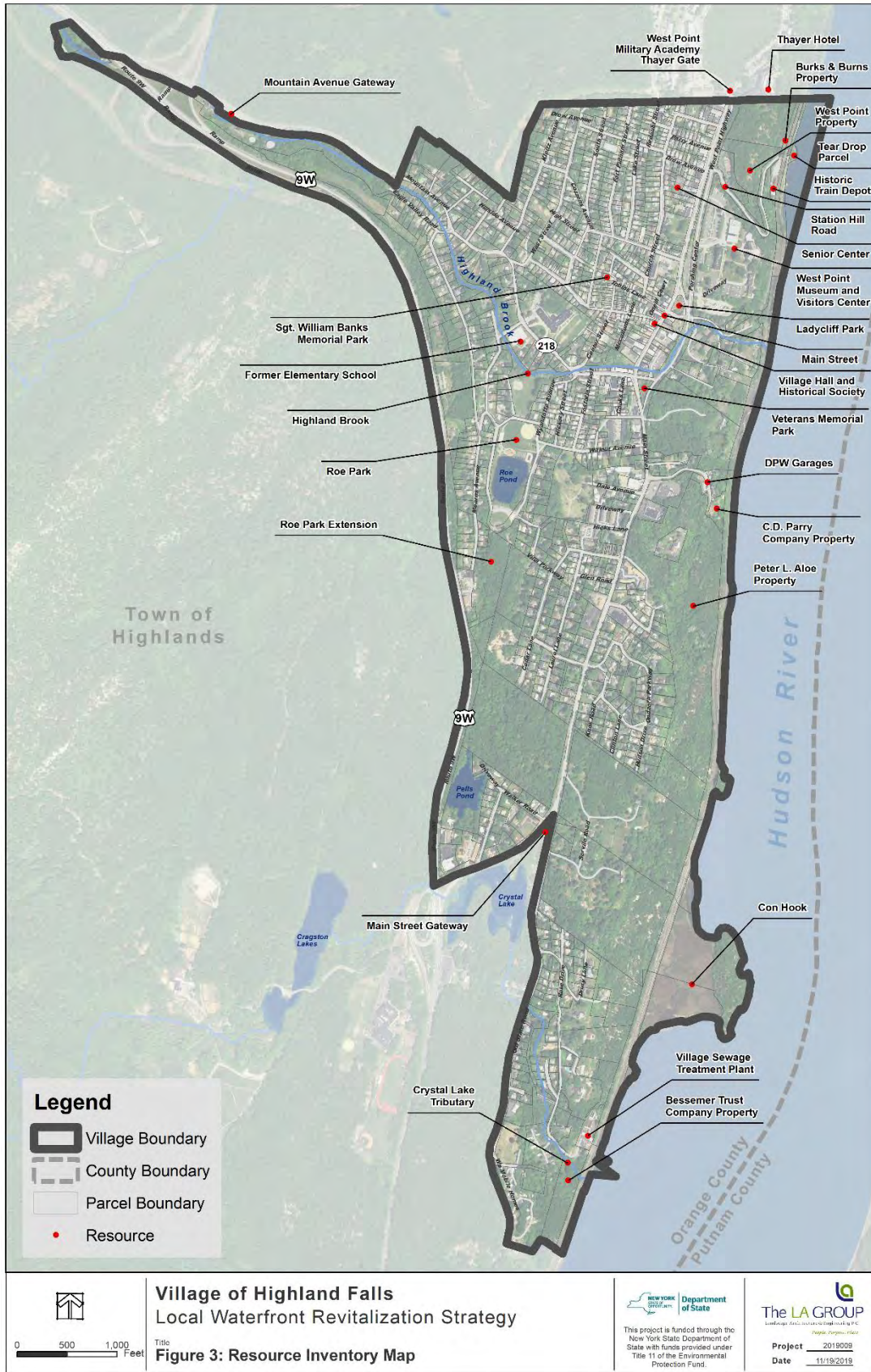


## Issues Analysis

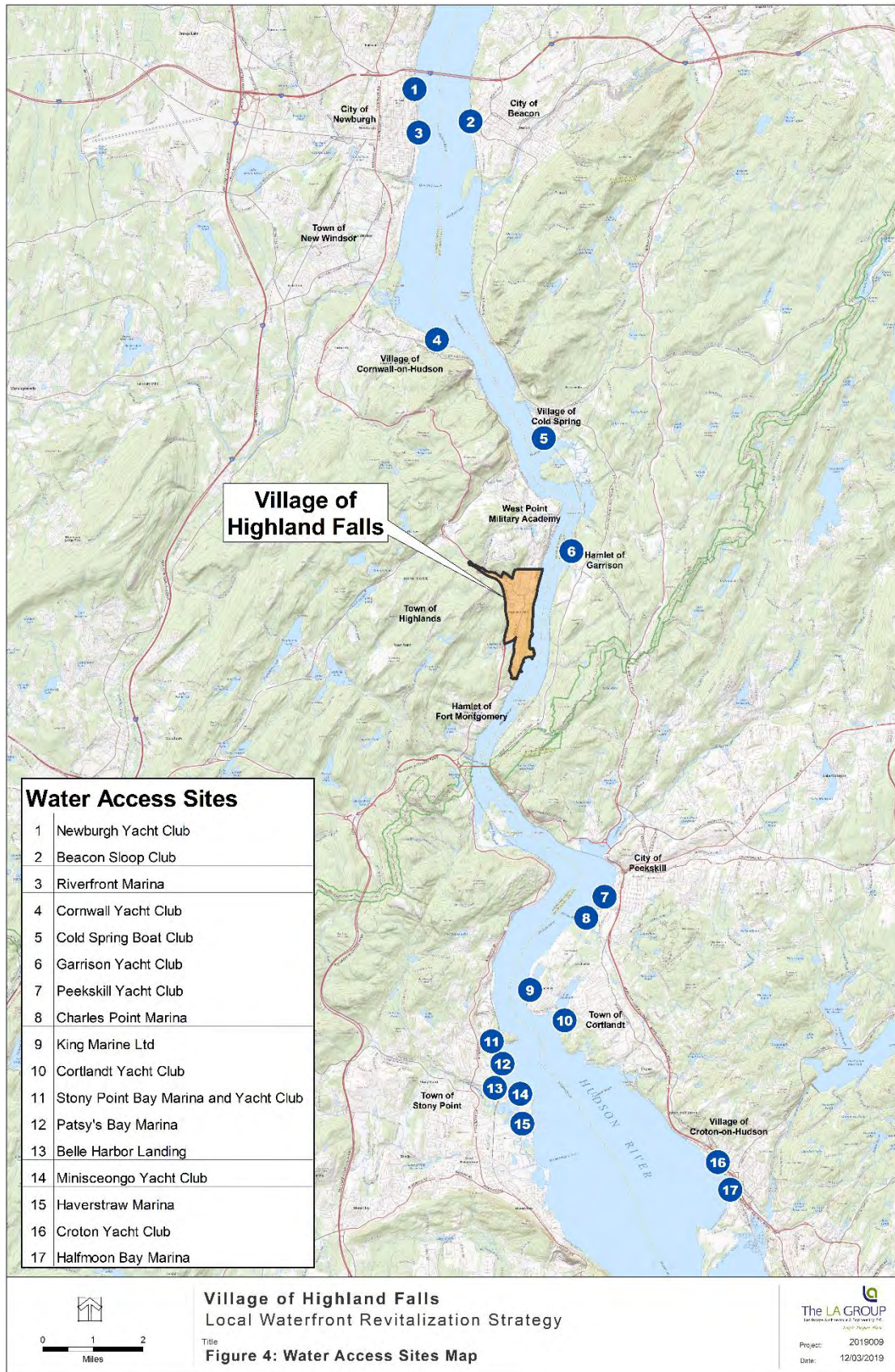
Although there is no existing public access to the Hudson River, there are several opportunities for the Village to provide access. Currently, the Waterfront Redevelopment Project Area is the only place where the public could interact directly with the Hudson River. However, there are properties with the potential to provide additional public access along ridges overlooking the Hudson. Scenic trails and viewpoints could provide breathtaking views of the river. See Water Access Sites Map for locations of marinas in the region and note there are none in Highland Falls. The nearest marina on the west side of the Hudson River is Cornwall Yacht Club. Across the river is the Garrison Yacht Club and Cold Spring Boat Club.











## **Transportation Overview**

The Village of Highland Falls has multiple transportation 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 can be found in Figure 5. See Appendix E for the complete Village of Highland Falls Transportation Strategy.

Highlights of the Transportation Strategy include:

- 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 U.S. Military Academy at West Point. This gap exists due to the limited green space north of Ladycliff Park. There are no attractions in this area, and it is currently used primarily for parking (Municipal Lot B).
- 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 is examined in detail in the June 1, 2017 "Highland Falls waterfront Redevelopment Feasibility Study Final Report".

### *Issues Analysis*

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 (apart from routine maintenance), updates to the adjacent sidewalks and pedestrian facilities are required to meet ADA Standards.





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 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.

### *Recommended Improvements*

The crosswalks in the Village of Highland Falls should 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.

The median between Main Street and West Point Highway should 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.

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.

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 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.



**Concept for Trail System along Station Hill Road**







Existing study area conditions.



## **Land Use and Regulations Overview**

An overview of land patterns and regulations in the Village of Highland Falls is an essential component of any community revitalization effort. The purpose of this analysis is to better understand the history of land use and development in the village prior to making recommendations for waterfront and community revitalization projects. Projects that are compatible with the existing land patterns and regulations are more likely to be implemented and have a lasting positive impact on the community.

### *Land Ownership*

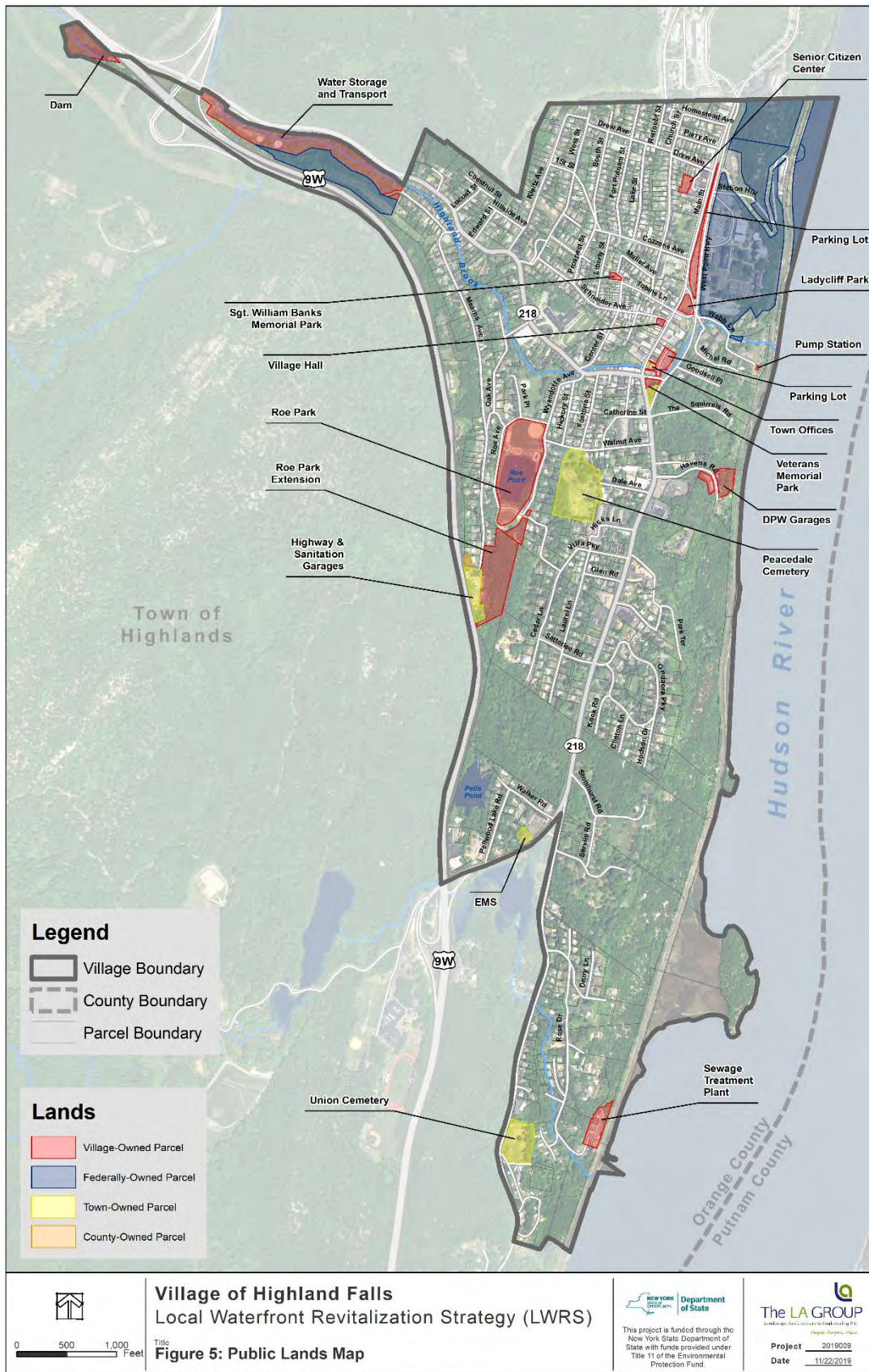
Land ownership patterns in Highland Falls are closely related to the history of land development. At the center of the village, where the first homes and businesses were built, there are smaller lots mostly owned by separate private individuals. The larger lots overlooking the Hudson River continue to be owned by some of the wealthier families and individuals who were able to afford the premium rates for the view and wanted to construct homes outside the noise of the downtown. Newer single-family homes in residential subdivisions are largely toward the southern end of the village, springing up in the 20<sup>th</sup> century due to the lack of available land in the village center as demand for housing increased.

The Village of Highland Falls is primarily a community of many small private landowners, but there are considerable land areas owned by a single private entity. The larger private landowners include CSX Corporation, which owns and manages the railroad that runs along the eastern edge of the village, the Common School District, a few families and trusts that own historical family estates and protect the natural qualities of the land around them, and several development groups that have constructed residential communities within Highland Falls.

Just under 120 acres of land in the Village is owned by a public entity. The Village and federal government are the largest public landowners. While the Village owns many properties that serve as municipal parks or provide needed community services, the land owned by the federal government is entirely for the operations or protection of the Military Academy at West Point. The Town of Highlands owns a few properties in Highland Falls as well. These include two cemeteries, half of Veterans Memorial Park at the entrance to the village downtown, a depot for emergency medical services, garages and offices for the Town Highway and Sanitation Department, and a small historical office building on Main Street that serves as the Town Hall. Town services that are available at the Main Street offices include the clerk, tax assessor and collector, comptroller, building department, and supervisor. The office building is also the location of the Town Court and all meetings for the Town Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals. Only one property is owned by the County. It is a small vacant parcel between State Route 9W, a single-family home fronting Mearns Avenue, and the Town Highway and Sanitation Department garages and offices. There is no activity at the site nor has the County detailed any plans for the property.







### *Land Uses*

The Village of Highland Falls is a residential community. Around 80 percent of all properties in the village are classified as residential, with most being single-family homes. Commercial uses are the second most frequent use. However, apartments make up over a quarter of these commercial uses, reinforcing the residential nature of the village. Most commercial activities are located along the major roads of County Route 218 and Main Street, while most residences are on side streets off these major roads. The result is a built environment where visitors can purchase goods and services without having to disturb residential areas and residents can live near these businesses with less concern for the noise, traffic and safety issues that come with highly active commercial areas. The closeness of residential and commercial uses also results in a walkable community where residents do not need to rely on a car to visit local businesses. See Current Land Use Map.

Residential and commercial properties are relatively frequent and small compared to the larger properties under community services, public services and parks. Much of this is due to the nature of the activities at properties classified under these uses. Most residential uses are single-family homes on lots of less than an acre, while most commercial uses are in downtown row buildings often with a mix of uses.

Community services are primarily the uses for local schools, whether it is the Highland Falls-Fort Montgomery Central School District or the Military Academy at West Point. Community services can be found throughout the village, but the greatest concentration of these activities is along Main Street and West Point Highway. Most are not for services to the local community but instead part of the Military Academy, the West Point Visitors Center and the Military Museum. While the Visitors Center and Museum are unique assets for the Village, the land for the Military Academy remains unused.

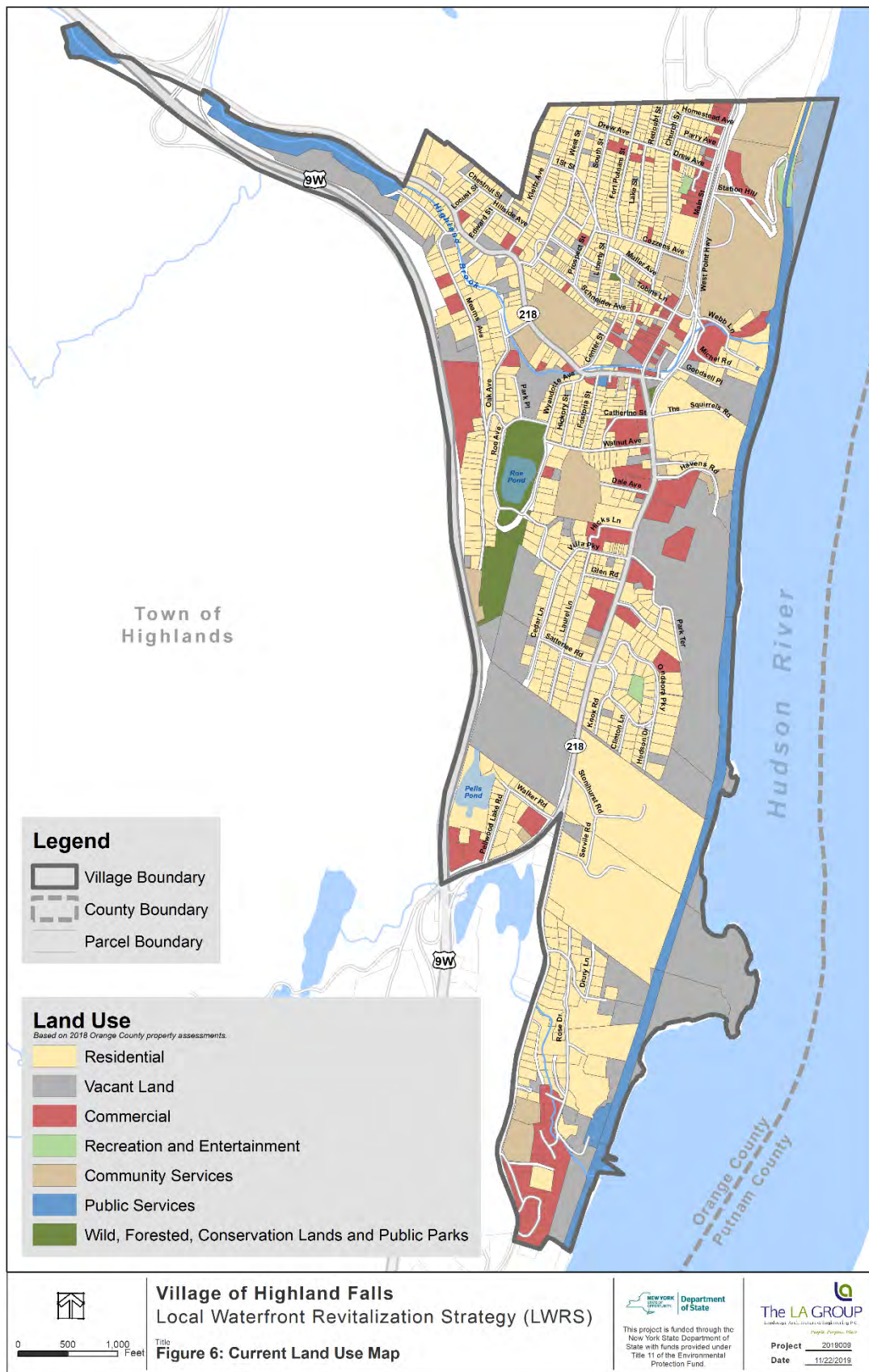
Land for public services is mostly concerned with two functions, the storage and distribution of water to the village and the use of rail by the CSX Corporation to transport freight. These activities are at the edges of the village.

There are a few parks of a smaller scale throughout Highland Falls, but the largest and most prominent is Roe Park. The walking path, playground, sports facilities, and pond are valuable amenities for residents. Roe Park is also the only dedicated public area with a connection to a body of water. Adjacent to the park is a large forested area that is planned to be formally integrated into Roe Park. This parcel is already designated as a public park space, therefore there are no expected changes to the distribution of parks in the Village.

Vacant and underutilized land in Highland Falls presents several challenges as well as opportunities. While some vacant properties are small lots sprinkled throughout the residential areas, most are larger lands purposefully left untouched to conserve the natural environment. Commercial and residential are the most frequent uses surrounding vacant properties. In these places, if any new development is proposed, uses should be encouraged to be compatible with the nearby commercial and residential uses. For the larger lands currently being protected, any proposed uses should be encouraged to be compatible with the conservation mission of the landowner and take advantage of the unique natural features on site.







## *Zoning*

All existing and proposed uses of land in the Village of Highland Falls are regulated based on the zoning district the property falls within. Highland Falls has 8 classes of districts that are either residential (R) or business (B). Most of the village is within a residential district. These districts are largely concerned with maintaining the primarily residential character of neighborhoods surrounding the downtown. Nearly all the business districts are along Main Street, preserving the downtown as the mixed-use and commercial center for the village. As the number of the residential district increases, the desired dwelling density increases. As business districts increase, lots have the capacity to be larger and of a more automobile-oriented design. All buildings in the Village must be under a height of 35 feet<sup>9</sup>.

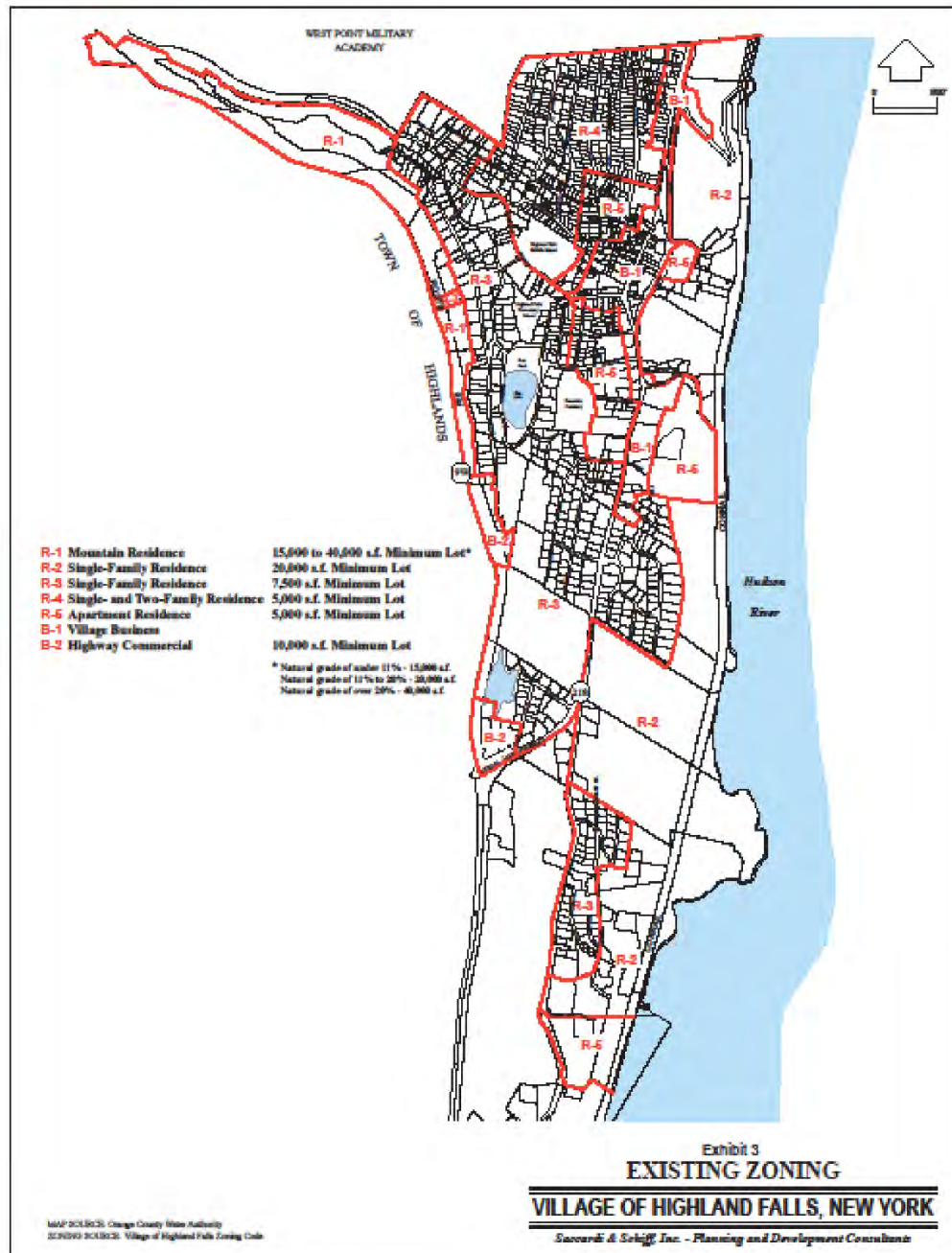
The Village Code details all the regulations for each zoning district and any other land use regulations that go above and beyond the general requirements for the districts. A copy of the Village Code is available at Village Hall or online at [ecode360.com](http://ecode360.com). An overview of each zoning district is provided below.

- R-1 District, Mountain Residence – This district is intended to regulate residences in areas with significant steep slopes and other valuable natural features that reduce the amount of land able to be developed.
- R-2 District, Single-Family Residence – Restricts residential development to only single-family detached dwellings on medium lots but allows for planned residential development with multiple plots as well as bed-and-breakfasts after site plan review by the Planning Board.
- R-3 District, Single-Family Residence – This district is nearly identical to the R-2 district. Uses that are prohibited in R-3 districts but not in R-2 include nursery schools, colleges and universities, country clubs, and commercial marinas. However, horticulture-related uses such as greenhouses are allowed following site plan review from the Planning Board.
- R-4 District, Single- and Two-Family Residences – This district allows for more flexibility on the type of housing able to be developed.
- R-5 District, Apartment and Multiple-Dwelling Residence – The R-5 district allows all types of residential development, except mobile homes and planned residential developments with multiple plots.
- R-5A District, Apartment, Multiple-Dwelling and Affordable Housing – The R-5A District is nearly identical to the R-5 District but focuses entirely on residential uses.
- B-1 District, Village Business – The B-1 district is open to all residential uses and community facilities, but only parks, playgrounds and bus shelters do not require site plan review from the Planning Board.
- B-2 District, Highway Commercial – Residential uses are not allowed to be developed in the B-2 District.

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<sup>9</sup> Multifamily housing developments in the R-4 and R-5 districts may be permitted to be as high as 45 feet if the Planning Board determines they meet the standards stated in § 240-29P and § 240-29S of the “special exception authorization” process.





Saccardi & Schiff, Inc.

II-6

Village of Highland Falls  
Local Waterfront Revitalization Strategy (LWRS)

Title  
Figure 7: Village Zoning Map

NEW YORK  
Department  
of State  
This project is funded through the  
New York State Department of  
State with funds provided under  
Title 11 of the Environmental  
Protection Fund.

The LA GROUP  
Landscape Architecture  
Project  
20180230  
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## D. REVITALIZATION PROJECTS AND IMPLEMENTATION

Over the past few years, the Village has invested approximately \$4.5 million toward community infrastructure, parks, public spaces, and Main Street improvements. In 2017, the Village was awarded a DOS grant to develop this Local Waterfront Revitalization Strategy focusing on the redevelopment of the historic former train depot and only public access to the Hudson River waterfront in the Village. The Village recently applied for the Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) program as well. Even though the application has not yet been successful, the process of public outreach has resulted in creating a new synergy between the Village's many partners, especially West Point. The ongoing improvements and planning initiatives have greatly improved communications among partners and have resulted in a unified vision. This has led to community enthusiasm and momentum for moving forward with tangible actions that will work together towards positive change.

The LWRS is a critical part of a more detailed planning process that moved the community beyond the “wouldn't it be nice” phase. The community outlined 17 projects that they believe to be not only feasible but achievable over the next 5-10 years. These projects work as a cohesive set of actions designed to create a vibrant and sustainable economic development model for the downtown and waterfront.

Table 10: Summary of Recommended Projects, outlines the top projects to move forward. Each of the projects is detailed in Project Profiles presented on the following pages. Each Project Profile provides a description, land use and ownership, strengths and challenges, local and regional impacts, potential funding sources, and next steps.



**View west overlooking the waterfront.**





**Table 10: Summary of Recommended Projects**

#	Title	Type	Priority	Potential Funding Opportunities
1	Highlands Station and Marina Redevelopment	Redevelopment	High	DOS LWRP; HRVG; ESD; DEC Environmental Restoration; DEC Local Stewardship Planning; OPRHP Parks; EFC GIGP; OPRHP Historic Preservation; NYSCA Preserve NY
2	Roe Park Forest Trails and Interpretive Area	Recreation	High	DOS LWRP; HRVG; OPRHP Recreational Trails
3	Main Street and West Point Highway Redesign	Transportation	High	DOS LWRP; HRVG; ESD; OCTC TIP; DOT TEP; CDBG; HCR NY Main Street; OEA JLUS
4	Highland Falls-Industrial Development Agency Business Incubator	Economic Development	High	DOS LWRP; ESD; HCR NY Main Street
5	Village Zoning Code Update	Planning	High	DOS LWRP; HRVG; OPRHP CLG
6	Highland Falls Economic Development, Tourism and Marketing Strategy	Planning	High	DOS LWRP; ESD; NYSCA Architecture + Design; HRVNHA Heritage Development; OEA JLUS
7	Highland Brook Environmental Assessment and Trail Feasibility Study	Recreation	Medium	DOS LWRP; HRVG; OPRHP Recreational Trails; DEC Environmental Restoration; DEC Local Stewardship Planning; OPRHP Parks; EFC GIGP; DEC Tributary Restoration and Resiliency; EFC Clean Water Fund; DEC WQIP
8	Townwide Trails Master Plan	Planning	Medium	DOS LWRP; HRVG; OPRHP Recreational Trails
9	Village Signage Plan	Planning	Medium	DOS LWRP; HRVG; ESD; NYSCA Architecture + Design; HCR NY Main Street
10	Gateway Improvements Plan	Planning	Medium	DOS LWRP; HRVG; ESD; NYSCA Architecture + Design; HCR NY Main Street
11	Ladycliff Park Improvements	Recreation	Medium	DOS LWRP; HRVG; ESD; DEC Local Stewardship Planning; EFC GIGP; OPRHP Parks; NYSCA Architecture + Design
12	Municipal Center	Redevelopment	Medium	DOS LWRP; ESD; OPRHP Certified Local Government; HCR NY Main Street; CDBG; NYSCA Architecture + Design
13	Main Street Architectural Design Guidelines and Façade Improvement Program	Planning	Low	DOS LWRP; HRVG; ESD; NYSCA Architecture + Design; HCR NY Main Street; NYSCA Preserve NY
14	Memorial Park Improvements	Recreation	Low	DOS LWRP; HRVG; ESD; DEC Local Stewardship Planning; EFC GIGP; OPRHP Parks; NYSCA Architecture + Design
15	Village Welcoming Center and Museum	Economic Development	Low	DOS LWRP; ESD; HCR NY Main Street; NYSCA Architecture + Design
16	Downtown Parking Garage	Transportation	Low	DOS LWRP; ESD; DOT TEP; OCTC TIP; EFC GIGP
17	Downtown Lighting Redesign	Infrastructure	Low	DOS LWRP; ESD; HCR NY Main Street; HUD Community Challenge; DOT TEP; CDBG; OCTC TIP; NYSEDA Clean Energy Communities



**Project Type:** Redevelopment.

**Priority:** High.

**Parcel(s):** 103-15-2.1; 103-15-2.2; 103-15-4.

**Description:** Redevelop the underutilized waterfront and only access point to the Hudson River based on the selected alternative from the 2017 Waterfront Redevelopment Feasibility Study. Project components include improvements to Station Hill Road, a new public waterfront park, two new parking areas, reuse of the historic train depot for a commercial use, a new small marina, a kayak launch, and an extended dock for 75-foot to 100-foot private and commercial boats.

**Existing Land Use:** RV Park; Single-family residence; Multi-family residence; Vacant.

**Zoning:** Single-Family Residence (R-2).

**Land Ownership:** U.S. Government; A&I Builders, LLC; Burks and Burns families; CSX Railroad.

**Project Strengths:**

- Re-establish public access to the Hudson River.
- Revitalize and reuse of historic train depot.
- Potential docking facility for yachts and commercial boats.

**Project Challenges:**

- Multiple property owners.
- Safety of Station Hill Road and track crossing.
- Cost to rehabilitate the historic train station.
- Trains are loud and long. Schedule is not regular.
- Waterfront space is confining. Rising sea level from flooding.

**Local and Regional Impacts:**

- Provide improved waterfront access and redevelopment opportunities as part of a wider waterfront and economic development initiative.
- Shoreline restoration and storm resiliency improvements with public access and accessibility improvements to the Hudson River.
- Improved crossing and interface with CSX.
- Water-based connection to nearby riverfront communities with tourism port for the Village and West Point.

**Estimated Timeline:** 1-5 years.

**Potential Funding:** DOS LWRP; HRVG; ESD; DEC Environmental Restoration; DEC Local Stewardship Planning; OPRHP Parks; EFC GIGP; OPRHP Historic Preservation; NYSCA Preserve NY.

**Next Steps:** Appraise properties. Negotiate purchase prices and acquire all property on the waterfront through the Village, a regional partner organization or a private developer. Apply for design and engineering funding. Select qualified firms through an RFP process.





**Project Type:** Recreation.

**Priority:** High.

**Parcel(s):** 105-2-15; 105-3-1.

**Description:** The Village of Highland Falls will transform a 5-acre undeveloped forested property south of Roe Park into a unique educational and recreational trail system. The new trails and interpretive area will be designed to provide space for educational programming for local students and organizations, leisure, and recreational activities. The property will serve as the main trailhead in the Village, with direct access to parking at Roe Park and a connection to the existing pathways and trails at Roe Park as well as the regional greenway trail network.

**Existing Land Use:** Vacant; Municipal Park.

**Zoning:** Single-Family Residence (R-3).

**Land Ownership:** Village of Highland Falls.

**Project Strengths:**

- Formal use for highly underutilized vacant land.
- Create the only urban nature experience in the region.
- Existing educational programming can be easily tied in.
- Low upfront and maintenance costs relative to higher intensity development.
- Village already owns the land.
- Property is accessible from the main park in the Village (Roe Park), which is undergoing improvements.

**Project Challenges:**

- Increased annual municipal expenses with more park space to manage.
- Considerable wetland areas throughout potentially requiring bridges.
- Scope and scale will require the Village to seek funding assistance.

**Local and Regional Impacts:**

- Increase the attractiveness of Highland Falls as a place to live and visit.
- Connect natural resource and habitat conservation to education and recreation.
- Establish an anchor experience at a new trailhead for the local and regional trail network.

**Estimated Timeline:** 1-3 years.

**Potential Funding:** DOS LWRP; HRVG; OPRHP Recreational Trails.

**Next Steps:** Apply for design and engineering funding. Determine highway and recreation department implementation capabilities.





**Project Type:** Transportation.

**Priority:** High.

**Parcel(s):** 103-15-5.

**Description:** The Village will work with West Point to convert Main Street and West Point Highway into one-way roads with bike lanes, improved on-street parking, additional park space, and improved traffic flow.

**Existing Land Use:** Municipal Park; Public Parking Lot; Road.

**Zoning:** Village Business (B-1).

**Land Ownership:** Village of Highland Falls; State of New York; U.S. Government.

**Project Strengths:**

- Create a continuous linear park from Thayer Gate to Ladycliff Park.
- Improve accessibility of on-street parking.
- Increase activity on Main Street.
- Improved pedestrian and bicyclist connectivity.
- Improve traffic flow.

**Project Challenges:**

- Substantial change in traffic patterns.
- Overcome safety concerns of the U.S. Department of Defense.
- Village will need to seek funding assistance.

**Local and Regional Impacts:**

- Create synergy between West Point tourism and local business development.
- Create a pedestrian-friendly connection between West Point and downtown.
- Sidewalks and bike lanes to connect with the local and regional trail networks.
- Create new public space for leisure, recreation and events.

**Estimated Timeline:** 5-10 years.

**Potential Funding:** DOS LWRP; HRVG; ESD; OCTC TIP; DOT TEP; CDBG; HCR NY Main Street; OEA JLUS.

**Next Steps:** Approach West Point and the State DOT with proposal. Apply for design and engineering funding.





**Project Type:** Economic Development.

**Priority:** High.

**Parcel(s):** Site unknown to date.

**Description:** The Village will work with the Orange County Industrial Development Agency (IDA) to develop a small business incubator in downtown Highland Falls. The incubator will provide a collaborative and creative space for residents and West Point cadets to develop businesses before transitioning to a private commercial space on Main Street. The incubator will work with regional business professionals, lending institutions, the Military Academy at West Point, and other groups to provide every individual the tools to succeed. The focus of the business incubator will be on contemporary ideas that target the priority markets of tourism, high-tech, health care, recreation, and the arts. Artificial intelligence technology is the preferred option. The incubator will either be a direct extension of the IDA's Accelerator program or be modeled after it.

**Existing Land Use:** Vacant storefront; Vacant commercial.

**Zoning:** Village Business (B-1).

**Land Ownership:** Private landowners; Village of Highland Falls.

**Project Strengths:**

- Convert vacant storefronts into active uses.
- Small business development and job growth.
- Incentivize young residents and cadets to live and work in Highland Falls.
- Access to business courses and marketing at a significantly reduced cost.
- Connect small business owners with seed money through partner lending institutions and investors.
- Build off the success of the IDA Accelerator program.

**Project Challenges:**

- Requires coordination between the IDA, the Village and West Point.
- High upfront costs.
- Scope and scale will require the Village to seek financial assistance.

**Local and Regional Impacts:**

- Improved relationship between West Point, the Village and the IDA.
- Increase the attractiveness of Highland Falls as a place to live and visit.
- Establish Highland Falls as a regional small business center.
- Act as a model for other municipalities in the region.
- Increased business activity and reduction in commercial vacancies will increase local tax revenues.

**Estimated Timeline:** 5-7 years.

**Potential Funding:** DOS LWRP; ESD; HCR NY Main Street.

**Next Steps:** Coordinate with the IDA and West Point to understand level of interest, capacity and role for the Village. Apply for feasibility funding.





**Project Type:** Planning.

**Priority:** High.

**Parcel(s):** N/A.

**Description:** Following an update to the Comprehensive Plan and completion of the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP), the Village will draft amendments to the Zoning Code. Based on the recommendations of these documents, this project will be the highest priority of the Village because the recommendations of these documents will be codified following the adoption of the amendments by the Village Board.

**Existing Land Use:** N/A.

**Zoning:** N/A.

**Land Ownership:** N/A.

**Project Strengths:**

- Codify regulatory recommendations.
- Establish planning precedent for future grant applications.
- Regulatory project that does not include physical changes to the Village.
- Opportunity for the public to shape their community.
- Utilize momentum from LWRS planning process.

**Project Challenges:**

- Overcoming planning fatigue.
- Maintaining a narrow scope to focus on issues not covered extensively by recent and ongoing planning projects.

**Local and Regional Impacts:**

- Set a vision for the future that will direct Village growth and development in a manner that address contemporary issues.
- Comprehensive Plan and zoning will be more aligned with local and regional plans and projects in development or completed since 2009.

**Estimated Timeline:** 1-3 years.

**Potential Funding:** DOS LWRP; HRVG; OPRHP CLG.

**Next Steps:** Apply for zoning update funding.





**Project Type:** Planning.

**Priority:** High.

**Parcel(s):** N/A.

**Description:** A comprehensive tourism development strategy and marketing plan that identifies existing assets and market gaps, evaluates the current state of village marketing, develops a unified brand for Highland Falls, and provides recommendations for strengthening local tourism and marketing efforts. The strategy will include an implementation process with potential funding sources as a guide for the Village. A list of project partners will be provided as well to increase the success of marketing efforts. This project is a priority for the Village because the findings and recommendations will inform all other economic development, tourism and marketing efforts.

**Existing Land Use:** N/A.

**Zoning:** N/A.

**Land Ownership:** N/A.

**Project Strengths:**

- Establish a unified brand for the community.
- Provides information on tourism user groups that can inform future economic development, tourism and marketing efforts.
- Consolidates community support around a common vision.
- Opens the Village to funding programs that can assist with implementing the recommendations.
- Gathers support from regional economic development, tourism and marketing entities that can boost the Village's efforts.

**Project Challenges:**

- May require coordination with several levels of government.
- Maintaining strong, accessible and consistent marketing well beyond the end of the project.
- Scope and scale will require the Village to seek financial and design assistance.

**Local and Regional Impacts:**

- Increase the profile of the Village and the region through targeted marketing campaigns.
- Improve the connection between West Point tourism and the Village.
- Improve the connection between all tourism resources in the area.

**Estimated Timeline:** 1-3 years.

**Potential Funding:** DOS LWRP; ESD; NYSCA Architecture + Design; HRVNHA Heritage Development; OEA JLUS.

**Next Steps:** Approach West Point, Town of Highlands and Orange County with proposal. Apply for plan funding.





**Project Type:** Recreation.

**Priority:** Medium.

**Parcel(s):** 101-1-1; 102-7-1; 102-7-2; 102-7-15; 102-7-14; 102-7-3; 102-7-4; 102-7-5; 102-7-6; 102-7-7; 102-7-8; 102-4-9; 104-13-1; 104-13-15; 104-3-34; 104-3-24.2; 104-5-15.2; 104-5-11.2; 104-6-16.1; 103-15-8; 104-6-4.2.

**Description:** Create a recreational and interpretive trail experience along Highland Brook. The new trail will build off previous conceptual designs for a trail extending from the Village gateway and water filtration plant off Mountain Avenue, to the falls overlooking the Hudson River. The Village will have a unique trail amenity that provides space for natural exploration and recreation while protecting the historic waterway from which the Village gets its name.

**Existing Land Use:** Municipal water supply; Single-family residences; Apartments; Former elementary school; Municipal park; Vacant; Municipal offices; Parking lot.

**Zoning:** Single-Family Residence (R-1, R-2, R-3); Apartment Residence (R-5); Village Business (B-1).

**Land Ownership:** Village of Highland Falls; Town of Highlands; State of New York; Various private landowners.

**Project Strengths:**

- Protect an important natural resource and habitat corridor from encroaching development.
- Flood mitigation through riparian buffers.
- Transform a highly underutilized asset.
- Provide a new recreational, educational, and tourism amenity.
- Several existing concepts exist.
- Connection to Roe Park.

**Project Challenges:**

- Brook passes through a significant amount of private property.
- Some areas with narrow rights-of-way hinder trail along the brook.
- Steep slopes.

**Local and Regional Impacts:**

- Increase the attractiveness of Highland Falls as a place to live and visit.
- Connect natural resource and habitat conservation to education and recreation.
- Connect parks and trails to enhance the regional recreation network.
- Stormwater erosion issues and flooding.

**Estimated Timeline:** 1-3 years.

**Potential Funding:** DOS LWRP; HRVG; OPRHP Recreational Trails; DEC Environmental Restoration; DEC Local Stewardship Planning; OPRHP Parks; EFC GIGP; DEC Tributary Restoration and Resiliency; EFC Clean Water Fund; DEC WQIP.

**Next Steps:** Apply for feasibility and master planning funding.





**Project Type:** Planning.

**Priority:** Medium.

**Parcel(s):** 103-15-2.2; 103-15-6; 103-15-7; 105-5-2; 105-5-3; 105-5-5; 105-5-6.212; 108-1-27; 109-3-10; Public roads and waterways.

**Description:** The Village will work with the Town of Highlands to develop a master plan for the improvement, enhancement and development of the regional trail network. The feasibility and implementation strategy for the following projects will be included in the master plan:

- Hudson River Ridgeline Trail (Fort Montgomery to Thayer Gate).
- Highland Falls to Fort Montgomery Bike and Pedestrian Improvements.
- Wilderness Trail (West Point property behind McDonalds).

**Existing Land Use:** Municipal, state and county roads; River; Vacant; Single-family residences; DPW garages; RV Park; Fast Food Restaurant.

**Zoning:** Village Business (B-1); Single-Family Residence (R-2); Apartment Residence (R-5).

**Land Ownership:** Village of Highland Falls; Town of Highlands; State of New York; A&I Builders; Sidamon-Eristoff family; C.D. Parry Company; Peter L. Aloe; McDonald's Corporation; U.S. Government.

**Project Strengths:**

- Improve pedestrian and bicyclist accessibility and safety.
- Attract outdoor recreation enthusiasts.
- Intermunicipal project.
- Incorporates municipally-owned properties.
- Expand public access to the Hudson River.
- Reuse of vacant and underutilized properties.
- Create unique scenic, recreational and tourism amenities.

**Project Challenges:**

- Requires coordination with several levels of government and private property owners.
- May remove some developable land and increase annual municipal expenditure for public parks and trails.
- Little room to expand road rights-of-way in some key areas.
- Dangerous ridgeline and steep slopes in some locations.
- Lack of sufficient infrastructure in Highland Falls and Fort Montgomery.
- Scope and scale will require financial assistance.

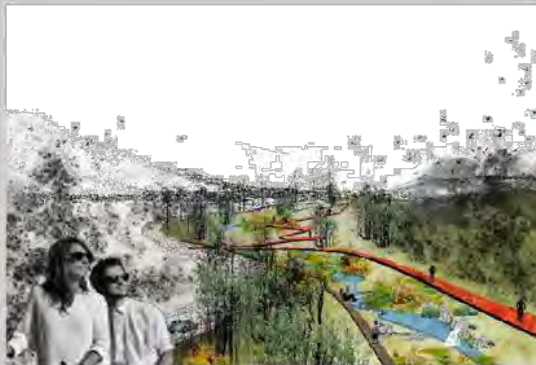
**Local and Regional Impacts:**

- Increase the attractiveness of the region as a place to live and visit.
- Capitalize on the natural and scenic qualities of the steep slopes overlooking the Hudson River.
- Connect with regional, statewide and national marketing and funding.
- Connect parks and trails to improve the regional recreation network.

**Estimated Timeline:** 3-5 years.

**Potential Funding:** DOS LWRP; HRVG; OPRHP Recreational Trails.

**Next Steps:** Approach all parties with proposal to determine level of interest and prioritize project components. Apply for master planning funding.





**Project Type:** Planning.

**Priority:** Medium.

**Parcel(s):** N/A.

**Description:** The Village will work with qualified firms to develop a village-wide information, wayfinding and interpretive signage plan and implement the recommendations. The project will cover interpretive, descriptive, and wayfinding signage locations and design concepts.

**Existing Land Use:** N/A.

**Zoning:** N/A.

**Land Ownership:** Village of Highland Falls; Town of Highlands; State of New York.

**Project Strengths:**

- Create a unified design and brand for the Village.
- Improve navigability for visitors.
- Improve the connection between Village assets.
- Does not conflict with private property since signs will be located in public spaces.
- Beautification project for the Village.
- Create new interpretive experience for visitors.

**Project Challenges:**

- May require significant community coordination.
- Scope and scale will require the Village to seek financial assistance.

**Local and Regional Impacts:**

- Enhance the regional profile of the Village.
- Improve the connection between West Point and the Village.
- Establish a unified tourism and marketing brand.

**Estimated Timeline:** 1-3 years.

**Potential Funding:** DOS LWRP; HRVG; ESD; NYSCA Architecture + Design; HCR NY Main Street.

**Next Steps:** Apply for master planning funding.





**Project Type:** Planning.

**Priority:** Medium.

**Parcel(s):** N/A.

**Description:** Redesign the northern gateway off Mountain Avenue and the southern gateway at the intersection of Main Street, Old State Road and Molly Corbin Way. Ensure these gateways are attractive, visible and well-maintained since they provide a first impression of Highland Falls to visitors.

**Existing Land Use:** N/A.

**Zoning:** N/A.

**Land Ownership:** Village of Highland Falls; State of New York.

**Project Strengths:**

- Connect visitors with the unified design and brand for the Village.
- Upgrade gateway areas.
- Signs will be located in public spaces.
- Beautification project for the Village.

**Project Challenges:**

- May require coordination with multiple levels of government.
- Scope and scale will require the Village to seek financial assistance.

**Local and Regional Impacts:**

- Enhance the regional profile of the Village.
- Identify Highland Falls as a distinct place in a greater region.

**Estimated Timeline:** 1-3 years.

**Potential Funding:** DOS LWRP; HRVG; ESD; NYSCA Architecture + Design; HCR NY Main Street.

**Next Steps:** Apply for design and engineering funding.





**Project Type:** Recreation.

**Priority:** Medium.

**Parcel(s):** 103-15-5.

**Description:** The Village will adopt and implement a concept plan for improvements to Ladycliff Park, including new sod, walkways, wayfinding and interpretive signage, benches, lighting, water feature, and landscaping. The project will also determine the feasibility of constructing a covered pavilion or amphitheater in Ladycliff Park as a centerpiece for downtown festivals and events such as the farmers market, a performing arts venue and space for events. The scope of the project has the potential to expand if Main Street and West Point Highway are redesigned.

**Existing Land Use:** Municipal park; Parking lot.

**Zoning:** Village Business (B-1).

**Land Ownership:** Village of Highland Falls.

**Project Strengths:**

- Municipally-owned land.
- Create outdoor event and performing arts space in the downtown.
- Upgrade the Village's central park.
- Address connectivity and accessibility issues.

**Project Challenges:**

- Potentially reduce off-street parking in the downtown.
- Increase annual municipal budget for park and facilities maintenance.
- Scope and scale will require the Village to seek financial assistance.

**Local and Regional Impacts:**

- Connect the Village to the regional performing arts community by creating space to host major events and performances.
- Raise the profile of the Village farmers market.
- Increase the attractiveness of the downtown.
- Create new public space for leisure activities, recreation and events.

**Estimated Timeline:** 3-5 years.

**Potential Funding:** DOS LWRP; HRVG; ESD; DEC Local Stewardship Planning; EFC GIGP; OPRHP Parks; NYSCA Architecture + Design.

**Next Steps:** Apply for master planning, design and engineering funding.





## 12 Municipal Center

**Project Type:** Redevelopment.

**Priority:** Medium.

**Parcel(s):** 104-13-1.

**Description:** The Village will work with qualified firms to evaluate the feasibility of several reuse opportunities for the former elementary school on Mountain Avenue. One possibility is to relocate municipal offices on Main Street to the former elementary school. This would free up needed space in the downtown.

**Existing Land Use:** Vacant.

**Zoning:** Single-Family Residence (R-3).

**Land Ownership:** Highland Falls-Fort Montgomery Central School District.

**Project Strengths:**

- Reuse of a highly underutilized building in the downtown that is off the tax rolls and replace the existing municipal offices with revenue generating uses.
- Only public properties.
- Will increase available downtown parking.
- Potential to support other community facilities.

**Project Challenges:**

- Requires coordination with the Central School District.
- Scope and scale will require the Village to seek financial and technical assistance.

**Local and Regional Impacts:**

- Model for other school reuse projects in the region.
- Improve relationship between Village government and Central School District.

**Estimated Timeline:** 3-5 years.

**Potential Funding:** DOS LWRP; ESD; OPRHP CLG; HCR NY Main Street; CDBG; NYSCA Architecture + Design.

**Next Steps:** Approach the Town of Highlands with the proposal. Apply for feasibility and master planning funding.





## 13

**Project Type:** Planning.

**Priority:** Low.

**Parcel(s):** N/A.

**Description:** The Village will work with the historical society, the Town of Highlands and qualified industry professionals to develop architectural design guidelines for the downtown and establish an architectural review board. The guidelines will define a common vernacular for the downtown that is consistent with the historic character of Main Street. Once established, the Village will seek funding and technical assistance to help property owners along Main Street to meet the guidelines for topics such as façade improvements and business signage.

**Existing Land Use:** Municipal services; Mixed-use; Commercial; Residential; Religious; Institutional; Municipal park; Parking lot; Public roads.

**Zoning:** Village Business (B-1).

**Land Ownership:** Private landowners; Village of Highland Falls.

### Project Strengths:

- Create a unified design and brand for the downtown that results in a more inviting sense of place.
- Establish a municipal fund to assist private property owners with meeting improvements and design conformance.
- Preemptive action to reduce conflicts from future development.

### Project Challenges:

- May require coordination with multiple levels of government.
- Some property owners may see these regulations as a hindrance.
- Scope and scale will require the Village to seek financial and technical assistance.

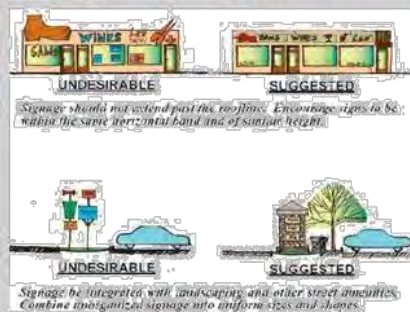
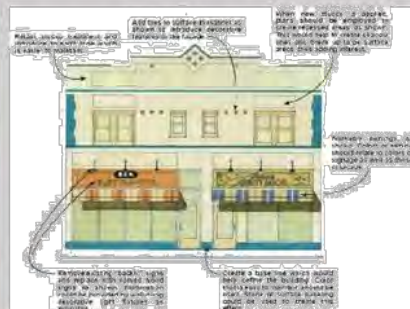
### Local and Regional Impacts:

- Enhance the tourism experience through the preservation of the unique historic elements of the downtown.
- Improve downtown aesthetics.
- Establish Highland Falls as the historic center of the Town of Highlands.
- Connect the architecture of West Point to that of the Village.

**Estimated Timeline:** 3-5 years.

**Potential Funding:** DOS LWRP; HRVG; ESD; NYSCA Architecture + Design; HCR NY Main Street.

**Next Steps:** Apply for planning funds to develop guidelines for downtown.





## 14 Memorial Park Improvements

**Project Type:** Recreation.

**Priority:** Low.

**Parcel(s):** 103-15-5.

**Description:** The Village will layout design improvements for Memorial Park. The design and appearance of this park is significant since it acts as the gateway entrance to the urban core and West Point. Components of the project will include site and facility analysis, site surveys, a connectivity plan with signage concepts, a preliminary programming matrix, a phasing strategy, and an implementation strategy with cost estimates.

**Existing Land Use:** Municipal park; Parking lot.

**Zoning:** Village Business (B-1).

**Land Ownership:** Village of Highland Falls; Town of Highlands.

**Project Strengths:**

- Municipally-owned land.
- Scope of work is well-defined and manageable.
- Improved veterans memorial.
- Upgrade the Village's gateway park.
- Maximize the usability of limited public space.
- Address connectivity and accessibility concerns.

**Project Challenges:**

- Size of the park limits opportunities.
- Scope and scale will require the Village to seek financial assistance.

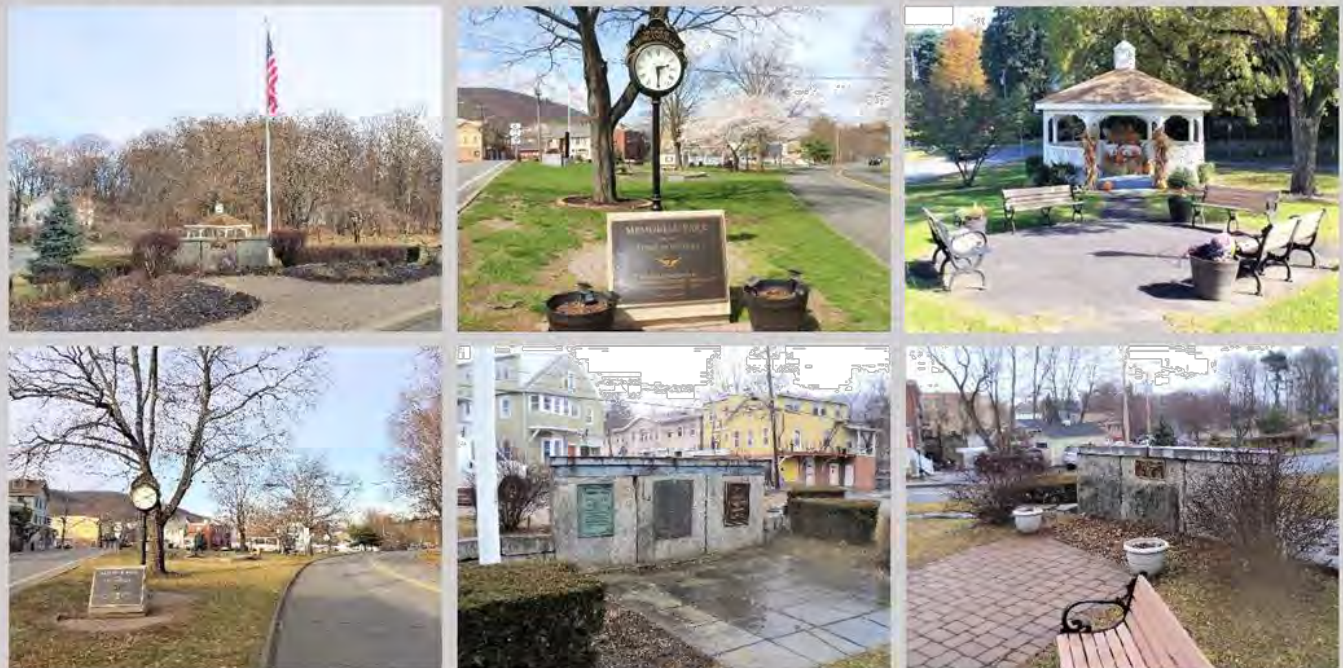
**Local and Regional Impacts:**

- Improved relationship with West Point by enhancing the veterans and military memorial.
- Create a more attractive gateway to the downtown and West Point.
- Expand public space for leisure activities, recreation and events.

**Estimated Timeline:** 3-5 years.

**Potential Funding:** DOS LWRP; HRVG; ESD; DEC Local Stewardship Planning; EFC GIGP; OPRHP Parks; NYSCA Architecture + Design.

**Next Steps:** Apply for design funding.





## 15 Visitor Welcoming Center and Museum

**Project Type:** Economic Development.

**Priority:** Low.

**Parcel(s):** 104-3-24.2.

**Description:** The Village will work with its regional partners and qualified private firms to locate and create a welcoming center and museum in the downtown. The project will require the completion of an initial feasibility study with an implementation strategy, a design and engineering study, and a phased plan for all new construction and renovations. Components of the welcome center and museum that will be considered include an informational kiosk, a Margaret Cochran Corbin "Molly Pitcher" exhibit, an Orange County Tourism satellite office, and a new office for the Highlands Historical Society. The Orange County Tourism Welcome Center & Film Office in the Town of Goshen will serve as a model for this project. A vacant lot adjacent to Highland Brook at the entrance to Main Street will be the first location considered for the welcoming center and museum.

**Existing Land Use:** Vacant.

**Zoning:** Village Business (B-1).

**Land Ownership:** Main Street Land LLC.

**Project Strengths:**

- Reuse of a vacant property.
- Improve the navigability and attractiveness of the downtown.
- Create an interpretive area, trailhead and gateway to the downtown with connection to a Village aesthetic and brand.
- Central location for information.
- Increase activity on Main Street.

**Project Challenges:**

- Requires coordination with multiple levels of government and a private property owner.
- Unknown site conditions.
- May increase annual municipal expenses and remove a property from the tax rolls.

**Local and Regional Impacts:**

- Consolidate local and regional tourism offices and services.
- Historic society and County tourism office will be better positioned to interface with visitors and their target audiences.
- Create the regions first exhibit dedicated to a prominent female veteran.
- Connect the Village's history to West Point and military history.
- Establish a unique amenity that could be a model for other municipalities in the region.

**Estimated Timeline:** 5-7 years.

**Potential Funding:** DOS LWRP; ESD; HCR NY Main Street; NYSCA Architecture + Design.

**Next Steps:** Coordinate with Orange County Tourism and the Highlands Historical Society to determine their level of interest. Apply for feasibility study funding and receive award and contract





**Project Type:** Transportation.

**Priority:** Low.

**Parcel(s):** N/A.

**Description:** Locate and construct a new parking garage to maximize parking opportunities and provide additional parking in the downtown to serve existing business activity and encourage more pedestrian traffic. This project is in the preliminary stages and therefore will require all components of a development project from predevelopment through construction to be completed. Three parcels behind the Village Hall have been identified as the preferred location of the parking garage. An alternative that will be explored is the existing Town hall parking lot off Veterans Way.

**Existing Land Use:** Parking lot.

**Zoning:** Village Business (B-1).

**Land Ownership:** Village of Highland Falls; Town of Highlands.

**Project Strengths:**

- Increase downtown parking.
- Free up spaces elsewhere in the downtown for more productive uses that further meet the needs of residents and visitors.
- Access to Main Street and Mountain Avenue from off-street parking.
- May reduce conflicts between vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists.
- More manageable traffic flows because concentrated parking area.
- May reduce vehicle traffic and increase pedestrian activity on Main Street.

**Project Challenges:**

- May have negative visual impacts on surrounding residences.
- May increase traffic on side streets from cars accessing the garage.
- May encourage more driving instead of alternatives.

**Local and Regional Impacts:**

- Make downtown Highland Falls a more attractive and accessible destination.
- Increase storefront activity with more feet-on-the-street.

**Estimated Timeline:** 5-7 years.

**Potential Funding:** DOS LWRP; ESD; DOT TEP; OCTC TIP; EFC GIGP.

**Next Steps:** Apply for funding to develop a feasibility study.





## 17 Downtown Lighting Redesign

**Project Type:** Infrastructure.

**Priority:** Low.

**Parcel(s):** N/A.

**Description:** The Village will establish a new downtown lighting design and complete related utility improvements. The project will improve energy efficiency and enhance the downtown streetscape around a common Village aesthetic. Project components to be considered include installing pedestrian-oriented lighting through Main Street, completing an electrical systems plan, replacing old utility poles and wires, and considering the feasibility of placing wires underground or behind buildings.

**Existing Land Use:** Public rights-of-way; Public road; Municipal park; Parking lot.

**Zoning:** Village Business (B-1).

**Land Ownership:** Village of Highland Falls; U.S. Government; Orange & Rockland Utilities.

**Project Strengths:**

- Create a more pedestrian-oriented downtown experience.
- Reduce municipal utility costs long-term.
- Can extend existing lighting design.
- May improve system safety.
- Only in public rights-of-way.
- Significant public support for improving lighting and electric utilities.
- Several funding opportunities support lighting improvements.

**Project Challenges:**

- Will require coordination with multiple levels of government and private utility company.
- Many uncertainties because the Village has old utility systems that have been put together in a piecemeal fashion.
- Scope and scale will require the Village to seek financial and technical assistance.

**Local and Regional Impacts:**

- Increase the attractiveness of the downtown.
- Reduces energy waste.
- May be a model for other municipalities in the region.

**Estimated Timeline:** 3-5 years.

**Potential Funding:** DOS LWRP; ESD; HCR NY Main Street; DOT TEP; CDBG; OCTC TIP; NYSERDA Clean Energy Communities.

**Next Steps:** Coordinate with Orange and Rockland Utilities to determine level of interest, establish a scope and create a preliminary work plan. Coordinate with West Point to determine level of interest and apply for funding.



## **APPENDIX: See Separate Document**

### **LIST OF APPENDICES**

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# **APPENDIX HIGHLAND FALLS LOCAL WATERFRONT REVITALIZATION STRATEGY**

## **LIST OF APPENDICES**

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- Appendix B Overview of Existing Planning Documents
- Appendix C Village of Highland Falls Transportation Strategy
- Appendix D Funding Opportunities

# **Appendix A**

## **Recent Accomplishments Chart**



## List of Recently Completed Projects or Projects Underway - from DRI Application

Project Description	Project Type	Amount	Source
New sidewalks, trees and curb replacements	Main Street Improvements	\$ 200,000	DOT multi-modal grant
Streetscape improvements	Main Street Improvements	\$ 50,000	Village of Highland Falls
Street paving	Main Street Improvements	\$ 190,000	DOT multi-modal grant
New LED lighting	Main Street Improvements		NYPA outright grant
Main Street building improvements and beautification project (8 bldgs)	Building Construction and Renovations	\$ 540,000	Restore NY; Orange County IDA
Senior Citizen Center purchase and renovations	Building Construction and Renovations	\$ 350,000	DASNY grant; CDBG
Highland Falls Library renovations	Building Construction and Renovations	\$ 82,000	DASNY grant
School district capital projects, including improved sports facilities, classroom advancements in technology, and structural improvements	Building Construction and Renovations	\$ 20,000,000	Highland Falls-Fort Montgomery Central School District
Holiday Inn expansion	Building Construction and Renovations	\$ 1,000,000	Private
Old Guard Hotel construction	Building Construction and Renovations	\$ 25,000,000	Private
McDonald's renovation	Building Construction and Renovations	\$ 1,000,000	Private
Wallkill Savings and Loan renovation	Building Construction and Renovations	\$ 1,000,000	Private
Auto Spa construction	Building Construction and Renovations	\$ 5,000,000	Private
USAA Financial Center renovation	Building Construction and Renovations	\$ 5,000,000	Private
PenFed Building purchase and redevelopment	Building Construction and Renovations	\$ 7,000,000	Private
Bear Mountain Bakery opening	Building Construction and Renovations		Private
First Command Financial opening	Building Construction and Renovations		Private
Renovation of 425 Main Street for new restaurant	Building Construction and Renovations	\$ 1,000,000	Private
Davis Barracks expansion	Building Construction and Renovations	\$ 250,000,000	West Point
West Point Visitor's Center improvements	Building Construction and Renovations	\$ 25,000,000	West Point
Keller Hospital improvements	Building Construction and Renovations	\$ 25,000,000	West Point
Camp Bucker renovation	Building Construction and Renovations	\$ 30,000,000	West Point
Research and Development Building construction	Building Construction and Renovations	\$ 250,000,000	West Point
Memorial Park improvements	Parks and Public Spaces	\$ 1,000,000	Village of Highland Falls
Ladycliff Park sidewalk improvements	Parks and Public Spaces	\$ 80,000	Village of Highland Falls
Ladycliff Park improvements	Parks and Public Spaces	\$ 1,000,000	Village of Highland Falls
Roe Park improvements	Parks and Public Spaces	\$ 1,000,000	DASNY grant; Village of Highland Falls
Revolutionary War Preservation Project	Parks and Public Spaces	\$ 12,000,000	West Point
Centralized Parking Garage construction	Infrastructure	\$ 150,000,000	West Point

<b>Project Description</b>	<b>Project Type</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Source</b>
Campus street pavement and improvements	Infrastructure	\$ 1,000,000	West Point
James I. O'Neill High School infrastructure renovation	Infrastructure	\$ 30,000,000	West Point
Camp Natural Bridge renovation	Infrastructure	\$ 10,000,000	West Point
Parking garage construction	Infrastructure	\$ 10,000,000	West Point
Water Plant renovation	Infrastructure	\$ 5,000,000	West Point
Wastewater Treatment Plant renovation	Infrastructure	\$ 25,000,000	West Point

*Source: 2019 DRI application*



## **Appendix B**

### **Overview of Existing Planning Documents**

## **Task 9 - Review of Existing Plans and Meet with Community Leaders**

Several previous planning efforts from the Village of Highland Falls and its partners have been conducted on the topics of waterfront and community revitalization. These plans were prepared by a variety of professionals and community stakeholders from diverse backgrounds offering unique perspectives on the problems and solutions for the village. In addition, each planning process incorporated input from the public to assess the existing conditions, needs and opportunities of the community. By reviewing the findings and recommendations of each plan, a preliminary list of needs, opportunities and revitalization projects was able to be outlined. This review process will be followed by an inventory and analysis to compare the existing conditions to previous conditions to establish trends and determine what community needs have yet to be met. The relevance of each plan's recommendations will be determined through consultation with community leaders, the Waterfront Advisory Committee and the public.

After reviewing several existing local and regional plans and their recommendations for Highland Falls, the following were determined to be the most valuable to the development of a waterfront and community revitalization strategy for the village. Additional plans may be reviewed as the planning process proceeds. If so, a summary of the plan and its relevant recommendations will be included in the final report. Because the reports include several reports from West Point and a significant regional perspective from Orange County, interviews with adjacent community leaders was determined to be unnecessary.

### *Local*

Village of Highland Falls Comprehensive Plan (June 2009) – The 2009 Comprehensive Plan was prepared by the consulting firm Saccardi & Schiff, Inc. (now part of VHB Engineering, Surveying and Landscape Architecture, P.C.) for the Village of Highland Falls. The Comprehensive Plan details the framework for the future of land use and zoning in the Village. This framework was developed through an open planning process that incorporated an analysis of existing conditions and resources, community visioning driven by the public and a select planning committee, a conceptualization of the plan's recommendations, a proposal for land use and zoning changes, and a strategy for implementing the Comprehensive Plan. The Village is preparing to update the Comprehensive Plan within the next few years. The analyses and recommendations presented in the Waterfront Revitalization Strategy will be incorporated into the update.

Relevant recommendations from the document include:

- Strengthen downtown with additional streetscape improvements along Main Street, signage and façade improvements, beautification projects, and tourism marketing efforts focused on the natural resources and historic character of the Village.
- Preserve available Hudson River views and environmentally sensitive lands, including steep slopes, vegetation and waterbodies.

- Develop a strategy for public waterfront access through the redevelopment of the marina, the railroad property and the teardrop parcel. Reduce the number of allowable housing units on strategic waterfront parcels to increase the amount of valuable open space while continuing to allow residential development.
- Develop sites for additional outdoor recreation and consider expanding Roe Park.
- Work with regional partners and nonprofits to secure outside funding for projects and tourism marketing.
- Provide landscaped treatment and visual relief for community gateways.
- Wayfinding signage in the downtown, especially to public parking facilities.

West Point and the Town of Highlands Relationship (May 2013) – A 2013 study of the relationship between the Town of Highlands and the U.S. Academy at West Point led by Academy cadets. The objectives of the study were to influence West Point policy toward the Town of Highlands, improve information dissemination and collaboration between all parties, connect policy makers at West Point and the Town of Highlands, and present recommendations for initiatives that would be mutually beneficial.

Relevant recommendations from the document include:

- Create more joint Town and Academy events that run throughout the year.
- Develop a pilot cadet shuttle service.
- Set up a Highland Falls rental pavilion for vendors to sell goods during sporting events at West Point.

Waterfront Development Project of Highland Falls – West Point Cadet Study (May 2017) – A 2017 study led by West Point cadets to develop scenarios for the redevelopment of the historic train station property on the Hudson River waterfront in the Village of Highland Falls. The possible uses for the waterfront that were explored included culture, family-oriented, recreation, transportation, and cadet activities. The conclusion of the study was that transportation-related uses would be the most valuable and most affordable.

Relevant recommendations from the document include:

- West Point restricts the ability for the Village to expand and grow. Therefore, the Academy should be willing to assist the Village in the redevelopment of underutilized property.
- Alternatives should be considered at other places in the Village or along the waterfront if feasible.
- Waterfront redevelopment factors include, unattractive existing facilities, fragmented ownership, site inaccessibility, approvals and permitting, and deciding between waterfront-related uses with more public access or higher use private development with less public access.



Highlands: University of Pennsylvania, School of Design, Department of Landscape Architecture Green Stimuli Studio (2017) – Students from a graduate landscape architecture studio course at the University of Pennsylvania developed master plans for public recreation areas and design concepts for new trail connections in the Highlands region with a focus on the Village of Highland Falls. Ideas were primarily concerned with improving local connections to the region’s various water resources through scenic lookouts, trails, boardwalks, green spaces, and launch sites for canoes, kayaks and small boats.

Relevant recommendations from the document include:

- Add tourism and recreational opportunities to regional water infrastructure such as dams and reservoirs.
- Connect people with the existing natural assets such as the Hudson River and the ridge of the valley. There are opportunities for more exciting special experiences and various views.
- Improve the accessibility of Main Street to West Point visitors. The Village is often ignored by the 3 million visitors per year to West Point.
- Reducing surface parking provides additional opportunities for public spaces. This could be accomplished with a parking garage, which could also increase available parking downtown.
- Revive the Main Street core. Main Street businesses and streetscape should be a representation of what makes Highland Falls special, from art studios and galleries celebrating the Hudson River School to seafood restaurants serving locally-sourced fish.
- Consider adding bike lanes to Main Street.
- Stitch together existing parks and green spaces with trails and bike paths from the western mountains to the Hudson River. This would be a unique trail experience in the region.
- Consider a ferry from Garrison to Highland Falls.
- Create a trail along Highland Brook.
- Use the West Point property adjacent to McDonalds for a trail system with lookouts that would provide safer and more scenic pedestrian access to the waterfront.
- Add a marina and/or boat launches at the waterfront.

Highland Falls Waterfront Redevelopment Feasibility Study (June 2017) – A study prepared by The LA Group, P.C. to determine redevelopment opportunities for the site of the historic train station and only public access point to the Hudson River. The components of the study were a planning review with a presentation of applicable case studies and best practices, an analysis of the site’s existing conditions, conceptualizations of three site development alternatives and programming, and a list of recommended next steps. The recommended improvements to the waterfront site were part of a wider waterfront and economic development initiative for the Village of Highland Falls. The study was funded by the Hudson River Valley Greenway initiative and directed by a coalition of local stakeholders, including the Village of Highland Falls, the Town

of Highlands, Orange County, Scenic Hudson, the Hudson Highlands Land Trust, and the West Point Garrison.

Relevant recommendations from the document include:

- Land purchase and CSX Railroad coordination are fundamental elements to the success of any public waterfront redevelopment efforts moving forward. Details on how to properly coordinate with the CSX Transportation Company's NY Territory Public Project Liaison are provided in the report.
- Potential programming for the depot building includes a restaurant/eatery, a museum and visitors center, outdoor/aquatic sport outfitting, and multiple storefronts.
- Consider developing the waterfront site into a water transportation hub and connect programming at the site to regional tourism initiatives.
- Improve the connection between the waterfront and Main Street.
- Attract high-end clientele by incorporating travel lifts capable of launching boats up to 50 feet.
- Diversity features to attract a variety of potential user groups and to reach year-round use.
- Utilize natural visual resources.
- Utilize adjacent underdeveloped parcels for Village and regional use.
- Any projects should follow DEC's Universal Access Initiative.
- All development and improvements should be hurricane and flood resilient. Future detailed plan development should employ and emulate the guidelines and recommendations set forth within the NYS DEC Sustainable Shorelines Program and Scenic Hudson's Revitalizing Hudson Riverfronts Publication.
- A market study may be necessary to ensure the feasibility of any commercial uses.
- Any future marina operations, vehicular traffic, and boat storage and services should not interfere with or prohibit the public's use and enjoyment of the parkland and other programmed site elements.
- Alternative 3 is the preferred development scenario for the waterfront.

The Village of Highland Falls and West Point: Finding a Balance (2018) – An examination of the reasons why the Village of Highland Falls has experienced stagnant growth despite a large visitor base to West Point and a significant supply of highly educated and industrious labor from West Point cadets, staff and their family members who live at or visit the Academy. The study methodology included an analysis of socioeconomic data, interviews with key stakeholders and local leaders, a storefront business survey, and attendance at a community meeting for the Village beautification committee. The result of the study was a description of the issues and opportunities in Highland Falls and several recommendations from the perspective of the Academy, the municipal government, business owners, and Village residents. The study was commissioned by the Orange County IDA and completed by Hudson Valley Patterns for Progress.

Patterns for Progress is a non-profit organization that provides a variety of market research and technical services to communities and other non-profits in the region.

Relevant recommendations from the document include:

- Improving collaboration and shared services for housing, schooling, employment, and the purchase of goods and services will go a long way to reducing the disconnect between the Village and West Point cadets, staff and visitors.
- Highland Falls must improve the downtown aesthetic and fight against negative stereotypes about the Village to attract more West Point cadets and staff to venture off the campus and into the Village. The Village has a responsibility to entice people to visit downtown instead of other regional shopping centers.
- Highland Falls should set an initial benchmark off capturing at least 10% of all West Point visitors to boost the local economy.
- The Village should adopt façade standards and prioritize maintaining its historic character.
- The Village should seek funding from the state and county governments to implement the recommendations of the 2017 Waterfront Feasibility Study.
- Highland Brook is an underutilized scenic and recreational asset that should be developed as a destination for residents and visitors.
- Capitalize on the Village's position within the regional "Revolutionary War Corridor", a collection of historic sites and battlefields stretching from Stony Point to Newburgh.
- Consider options for changing downtown traffic flow, improving the pedestrian experience, and reorganizing parking.
- West Point and the Village should work together to determine if there are any excess Academy properties that could be conveyed to the Village.

### *Regional*

The Town of Highlands: From Bear Mountain to West Point (1999) – The Town of Highlands and the Village of Highland Falls participated in the Countryside Exchange, an international planning program through the Glynwood Center for Regional Food and Farming headquartered in the Village of Cold Spring just across the Hudson River. Over the course of 7-days, a team of professionals, led by a local organizing committee, conducted interviews, toured the community, reviewed existing plans, and met with residents to assess the needs and opportunities of Highland falls before presenting their findings and recommendations at a public forum. Topics covered by the study included historic resources, Main Street revitalization and tourism.

Relevant recommendations from the document include:

- Improve the visibility and accessibility of Highland Brook.
- Improve the aesthetic of infrastructure around Highland Brook to help highlight the brook and improve the appearance at the entrance to the business district.



- Ensure public access to Highland Brook through the property between the brook and the Post Office on Main Street.
- Explore options for reducing the visual clutter on Main Street from overhead wires.
- Form a local tourism partnership consisting of all stakeholders.
- Encourage desired tourism growth and minimize the negative impacts of inappropriate development through zoning ordinances, design guidelines and site plan review procedures.
- Develop a local brand and marketing tagline. Incorporate these in all literature, signage and marketing materials.
- Improve wayfinding signage design and locations throughout the downtown.
- Complete a market study to define the current market and assess leakages.
- Take advantage of the proximity to the Appalachian Trail.
- Communicate potential development opportunities and shovel-ready sites to the County to increase the Village's outreach capacity.
- Continue evaluating excess lands owned by West Point that could be conveyed to the Town of Highlands or Village of Highland Falls.
- Establish a local nonprofit community organization and/or business group.
- Consider a Community Grants Fund from private individual contributions to implement needed neighborhood-scale projects.
- Complete a comprehensive survey of historic resources. Apply for a multi-property nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.
- Develop a design guide for building renovations and new development to preserve the local character where applicable. Some topics to consider include, signage, paint colors, street furniture, public spaces, and the design of new buildings. A Historic Design Review Board could be established to advise the Planning and Zoning Boards on matters requiring conformance with the guide.
- Develop trails that connect historic, cultural and recreational sites.
- Improve the visual experience along State Route 9W.
- Improve the gateway area to the village at the County Route 918 and State Route 9W intersection with more visible signage. Consider adding a list of services and attractions. Wayfinding signage to these services and attractions should be consistent and well-placed throughout the Village.
- Install an informational kiosk in the center of downtown. Consider locating the kiosk at the north-end of the central parking lot between Main Street and West Point Highway.
- Improve the pedestrian experience along Main Street to provide an attractive atmosphere for downtown shoppers. This should include street furniture, plantings and well-maintained sidewalks.
- Consider making Main Street a one-way heading south. The West Point Superintendent stated his willingness to have traffic out of Thayer Gate be directed down Main Street instead of on the West Point Highway.
- Designate off-street parking spaces at the Town Hall parking lot for public officials so on-street parking adjacent to main Street businesses is open for patrons.

- Improve the pedestrian connections between the West Point Visitors Center and Main Street. Improve the visibility and quality of crossing from the Visitors Center.

Orange County Greenway Compact (June 2013) – A review of municipal and county plans, initiatives and policies across Orange County to demonstrate the County’s alignment with the principles of the Hudson River Valley Greenway program. The report includes an analysis of the compatibility of County plans with the five core principles of the Greenway program, a summary of relevant recommendations from the County Comprehensive Plan, and a brief description of the applicable components of the County Design Manual. This assessment was completed as part of the County’s application to become a Greenway Compact Community. The Greenway Compact is a voluntary regional planning vision directed by the public and supported by the New York State Hudson River Valley Greenway Council that oversees the program. Completion of this report makes the County eligible for specific funding opportunities for projects supported by the Compact. Municipalities who adopt the Compact are eligible to apply to become a Greenway Community and future funding opportunities. The Village of Highland Falls is a Greenway Community.

Relevant recommendations from the document include:

- Protect, preserve and enhance natural resources, including natural communities, open spaces and scenic areas as well as cultural resources including historic places and scenic roads.
- Encourage economic development that is compatible with the preservation and enhancement of natural and cultural resources.
- Promote increased public access to the Hudson River.
- Work with other Greenway Communities to develop mutually beneficial regional strategies.
- Identify and protect historical and cultural resources that enhance the sense of place and quality of life of residents. Promote awareness about natural, cultural, scenic, and historic resources as a component of an overall economic development strategy.
- Link the natural and built environment with well-designed scenic roads and multi-use trails.
- Conserve natural land resources in a sustainable, linked combination of parks, open spaces, and waterfronts.
- Adequately maintain existing parks and strategically acquire or facilitate the preservation of additional parkland and prominent vistas. Develop facilities to meet the needs of all users.
- Utilize the recreation and open space potential of waterfront resources.
- Maintain existing and provide for future expansion of pedestrian and bike trails.
- Offer quality living environments and active village centers that attract a strong and diverse workforce.

Orange County Economic Development Strategy (2015) – A comprehensive strategy for regional economic development in Orange County developed by the Orange County Department of Planning in 2015. In collaboration with several regional organizations and other county departments, the Department of Planning evaluated the current economic conditions, the key industries, municipal codes, and projected growth potential of Orange County. A survey of municipal elected officials and key stakeholders was also completed to provide insight into how economic trends are directly impacting people at a local level. From this analysis, a set of goals were developed with recommendations that outline a 5-year strategy for Orange County and its partners to achieve their goals. The main goals set by Orange County are attract and assist businesses improve economic development capacity, strengthen key industries, and create a supportive culture for small businesses.

Relevant recommendations from the document include:

- Capitalize on the major tourist attractions. Three out of the top five tourism attractions outside the New York City metropolitan area are located in Orange County. These are the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, Woodbury Commons Premium Outlets, and Storm King Art Center.
- Organize a recreational page on the tourism website concentrating on walking/cycling trails and nearby amenities.
- Create culinary adventure tours centered around breweries, wineries, distilleries, farms, farmers markets, and lodging facilities.
- Encourage place-based retailers and chambers of commerce to participate in cooperative marketing promotions.
- Improve/increase mapping and signage for tourism destinations.
- Design and implement a broad marketing program to increase overnight visitation.
- Develop and map water trails along the County's 3 rivers; encourage riverfront communities to include facilities to attract more boaters.
- Work with museums, historic sites, arts venues and others to create themed destination trails and itineraries.
- Work with municipalities, businesses, and private developers to incorporate amenities for trail users (e.g., rest rooms, water stations).

Orange County Comprehensive Plan 2019 Update – Proposed Final (April 2019) – The five-year update to the County's Comprehensive Plan performed by the County Planning Board. The Plan focuses on streamlining the components of the previous Comprehensive Plan and developing a new supplemental chapter on transportation issues. The Plan consists of a review of previous plans, a discussion of emerging needs, a summary of the public participation process, a description of the county-wide vision, an analysis of socioeconomic data, and a list of goals to achieve.

Relevant recommendations from the document include:



- Implement more trail connections to the Orange County Heritage Trail and create a county-wide trail network.
- Preserve natural resources and open spaces for future generations.
- Consider Complete Streets criteria, such as a connected road network, bike lanes, accessible sidewalks, and other facilities to increase safety and ease of use.
- Promote neighborhood-scale commercial and institutional use that are pedestrian friendly.
- Preserve land with steep slopes, wetlands, floodplains and riparian buffers, scenic views, and historic and culturally-significant resources.
- Enhance local amenities such as parks, trails and tourist attractions.

### **Summary of Recommendations (Draft)**

The review of existing plans revealed several revitalization projects that have been frequently recommended for Highland Falls. With considerable planning support, these projects will have a much greater chance of being funded and implemented.

Therefore, due to the level of support, the following plan recommendations will be incorporated into the Waterfront Revitalization Strategy for Highland Falls:

**Recommendation 1: Complete Main Street streetscape and sidewalk improvements.** This includes installing street furniture and plantings and maintaining these amenities along with sidewalks. These streetscape elements should extend across the entire corridor.

**Recommendation 2: Outline a consistent design vernacular for the downtown with a focus on the Main Street corridor.** This should begin with an inventory of historic and culturally significant buildings along Main Street followed by the development of a Main Street design guide for building renovations and new development and the establishment of a Historic Design Review Board to assess conformance with the guide.

**Recommendation 3: Develop a village signage plan.** Components of the plan include signage design concepts, gateway signage designs and a site master plan, a location and design for a downtown informational kiosk, and a master plan for the location of village signage.

**Recommendation 4: Develop a village marketing plan.** Components of the plan include a market study to determine target audiences and market gaps, a review of existing regional tourism initiatives, designing a village brand, creating a marketing tagline, designing and distributing marketing materials, and an implementation strategy. The brand and tagline should be incorporated into all village banners and signage.

**Recommendation 5: Directly fund or seek financial assistance to fund façade and signage improvements for Main Street buildings.** This could include creating a

new funding stream by submitting multiple properties to the National Register of Historic Places using the historic building inventory, assistance from the county, state grant opportunities, and an option to create a local Community Grants Fund from private individual contributions to implement needed neighborhood-scale projects. The Village should also work with regional partners and nonprofits to secure outside funding.

**Recommendation 6:** **Proceed with the implementation of the preferred waterfront redevelopment concept.** Several planning efforts have presented the Village with a variety of potential redevelopment concepts for the waterfront. Each recognizes the recreation, open space and tourism potential that the waterfront is not achieving in its current state. Therefore, the Village should immediately proceed to the next step of implementing the preferred concept.

**Recommendation 7:** **Complete a feasibility study for the development of a trail along Highland Brook.** This would include a land use and ownership study, an analysis of site conditions, a review of previous design concepts, a robust community participation process to gather ideas and support for the project, development of cost estimates, and an implementation strategy with a list of opportunities for funding support and an estimated project timeline.

**Recommendation 8:** **Create a green space, natural resources and conservation areas inventory.** The inventory could include parks, pocket green spaces, conservation easements, steep slopes, water resources and access points, wetlands, protected state lands, and the various infrastructure that connects these places. Such an inventory would be a valuable asset in the development of a trail connectivity and land conservation master plan for the Village.

**Recommendation 9:** **Develop a master plan for the downtown that ties together all of the design and engineering recommendations from existing plans.** Topics to cover in the master plan include converting Main Street into a one-way heading south, complete streets that incorporate facilities to increase safety and ease of use for all transportation modes, options for reducing the visual clutter on Main Street from overhead wires, designating off-street parking spaces at the Town Hall parking lot for public officials, an improved pedestrian connection between the West Point Visitors Center and Main Street, and a parking plan that would reorganize surface parking and study the potential for a parking garage that would increase opportunities for new development and open space downtown.

**Appendix C**  
**Village of Highland Falls Transportation Strategy**



# **Village of Highland Falls Transportation Strategy**

**December 2019**



**Prepared for the Village of Highland Falls**



**Prepared by Foit-Albert Associates**



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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 11<sup>th</sup> 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		
	Main Street	West Point Highway
Speed Limit	30	30
Existing AADT* (year)	No data	4429 (2016)
No of Travel Lanes	1 NB, 1 SB	1 NB, 1 SB
Lane Width	10 ft	12 ft
Shoulder Width	0 ft	0 ft
Accessibility Features/ADA Compliance	17 non-ADA compliant crosswalks 2 ADA compliant crosswalks	
Additional Features	On-street parking, both sides of street  Continuous sidewalk on western side, partial sidewalk on eastern side	Partial sidewalk on eastern side, partial sidewalk on western side

\* As defined in the *Highway Capacity Manual, 6<sup>th</sup> 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.





Exhibit 1: Map cracking and patch repairs on the Lower Corridor of Station Hill Road

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 "3<sup>rd</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.

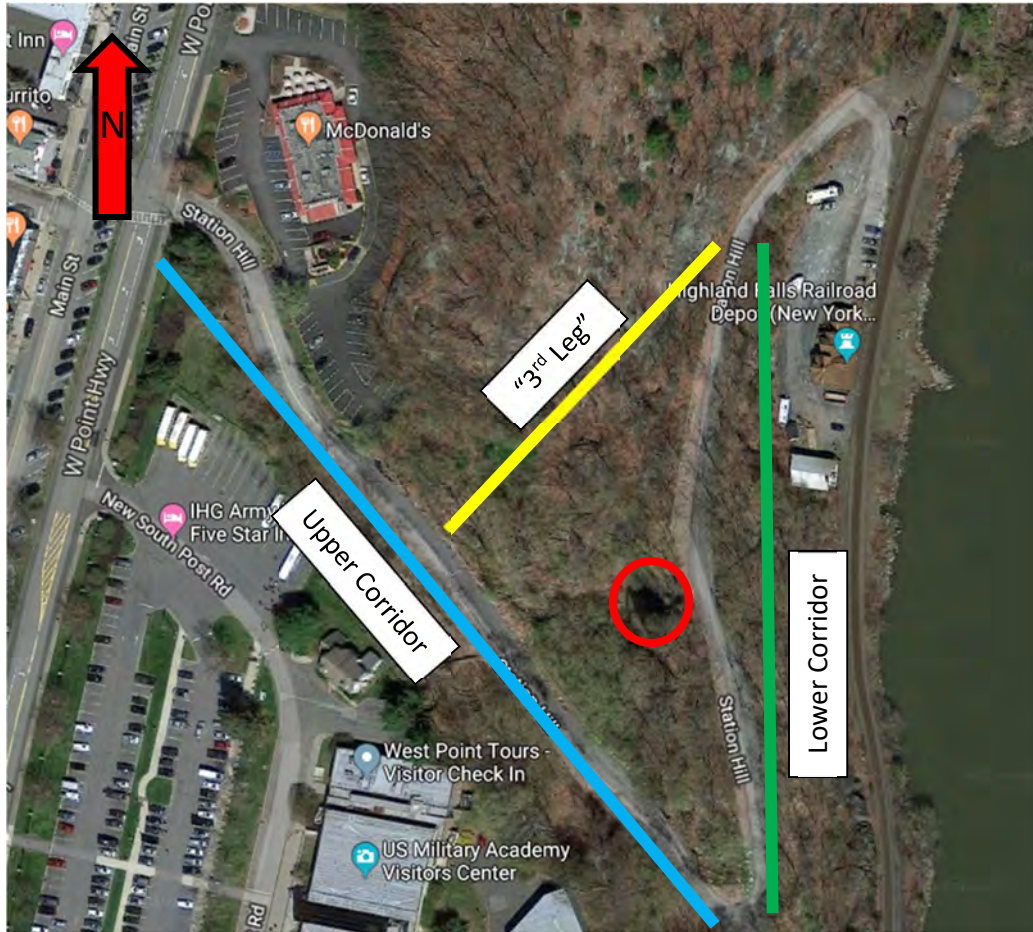


Exhibit 2: Station Hill Road to waterfront

## 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.

Proposed Roadway Data		
	Main Street	West Point Highway
Speed Limit	30	30
Projected AADT (2020)	N/A	4519
No of Travel Lanes	1 SB	2 NB
Lane Width	11 ft	11 ft
Shoulder Width	0 ft	0 ft
Accessibility Features/ADA Compliance	23 ADA compliant crosswalks	
Additional Features	On-street parking, both sides of street  Continuous sidewalk on both sides of street  7 ft wide bicycle lane, western side of street	On-street parking, western side of street  Continuous sidewalk on both sides of street.  7 ft wide bicycle lane, eastern side of street

### 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.





Exhibit 3: Map of The Ramble, located in New York City's Central Park



Exhibit 4: Photo from The Ramble, located in New York City's Central Park, showing vegetation, rocks, and the natural landscape used to create trails for park visitors

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.



Exhibit 5: Wilderness exploration concept, influenced by “The Ramble,” located in NYC’s Central Park

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 from the waterfront, 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.



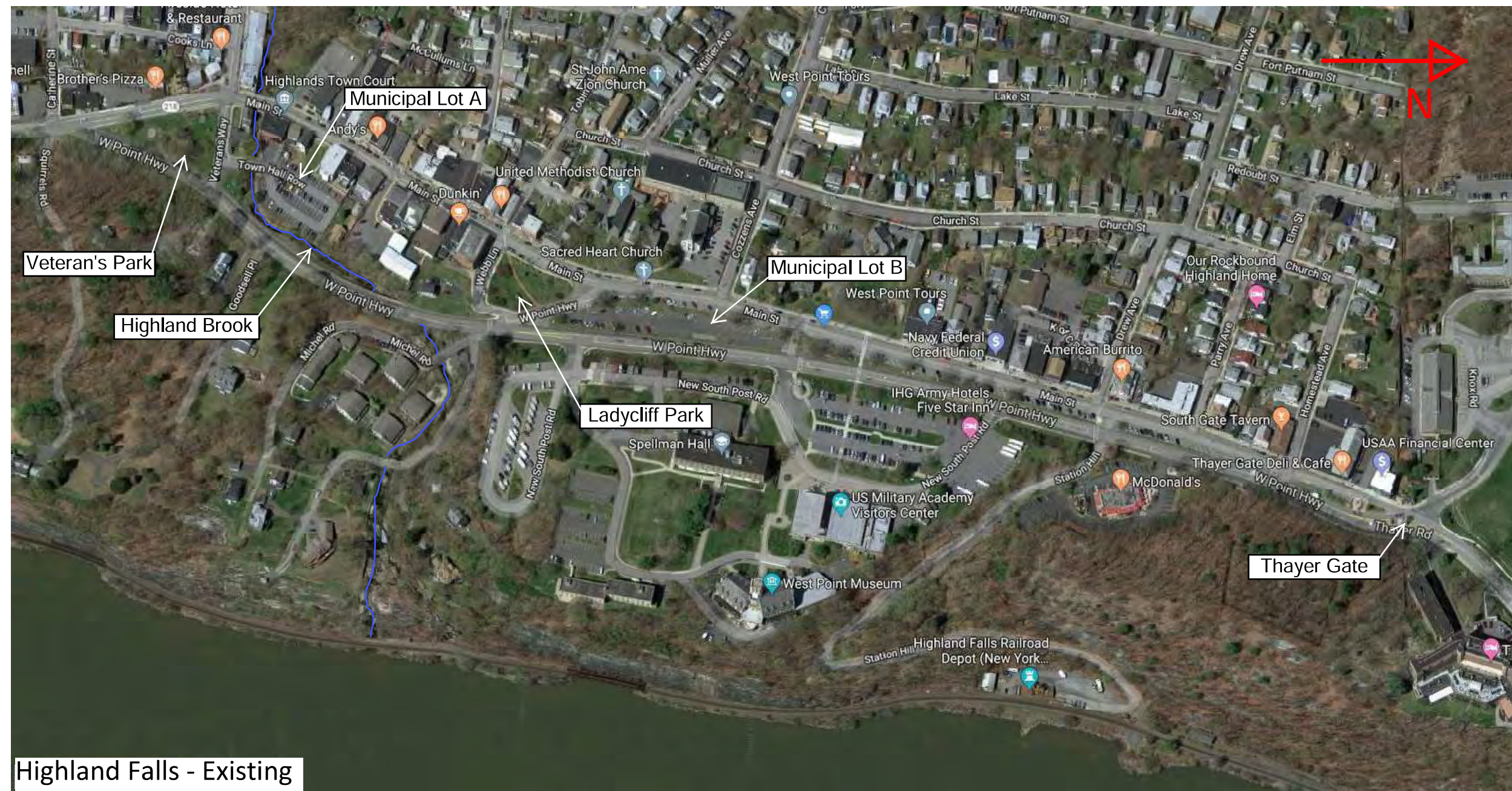
## **Appendix**

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**Village of Highland Falls Existing Aerial**

**Village of Highland Falls Proposed Aerial**











## **Appendix D**

### **Funding Opportunities**

## **Funding Opportunities (Draft)**

### **NY Department of State (DOS)**

*Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP)* – Matching funds for local governments to participate in the State’s Coastal Management Program (CMP) by preparing and adopting a Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP). A Local Waterfront Revitalization Program consists of a planning document prepared by a community, and the program established to implement the plan. A LWRP may be comprehensive and address all issues that affect a community's entire waterfront, or it may focus on a critical component. After completing the report, the grantee is eligible to receive funding to implement the entire LWRP or a component.

### **Hudson River Valley Greenway**

*Community Grant Program* – Grant funding to develop and implement a plan that balances Greenway criteria of economic development considerations with resource protection and promotion objectives.

*Conservancy Trail Grants* – Funding for recreational trail projects, including trail construction, planning and design; trail rehabilitation or improvement; and trail education or interpretation.

### **Empire State Development**

*Economic Development Purposes Grant Program* – Funds for economic development initiatives and projects that create or retain jobs, generate increased economic activity and improve the economic and social viability and vitality of local communities.

*Excelsior Jobs Tax Credit Program* – Provides job creation and investment incentives to firms in such targeted industries such as biotechnology, pharmaceutical, high-tech, clean-technology, green technology, financial services, agriculture and manufacturing. Firms in these industries that create and maintain new jobs or make significant financial investment are eligible to apply for up to four new tax credits. The benefit-cost threshold is at least \$10 of investment and new wages for every \$1 of tax credit.

*Market NY* – Supports regionally themed marketing projects that promote tourism destinations, attractions and special events, as well as tourism facility capital improvement projects. Additionally, eligible projects include the hosting, coordination and execution of special events new to New York State, and the promotion of agritourism and craft beverage tourism.

*Regional Council Capital Fund Program* – Funds for capital-based economic development projects intended to create or retain jobs; prevent, reduce or eliminate unemployment and underemployment; and/or increase business or economic activity in a community or region.

*Start-Up NY Program* – Offers new and expanding businesses the opportunity to operate tax-free for 10 years on or near eligible university or college campuses in New York State.



*Strategic Planning and Feasibility Study Project Grants* – Funds for strategic development plans for a city, county, or municipality or a significant part thereof and feasibility studies for site(s) or facility(ies) assessment and planning. Projects should focus on economic development purposes, and preference shall be given to projects located in highly distressed communities.

### **NYS Department of Transportation (DOT)**

*Transportation Enhancement Projects Program (TEP)* – Funding for transportation projects of cultural, aesthetic, historic and environmental significance. Eligible projects must fall into one or more categories established by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and must have a total project cost of at least \$200,000.

### **NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)**

*Environmental Restoration Grant Program* – Rolling grants that are meant for environment improvement and protection. The grants specifically focus on areas that include water protection, environmental justice, and solid waste.

*Hudson River Estuary Program Local Stewardship Planning* – Funding to help communities and local organizations advance six categories of local projects and programs through planning, feasibility studies, and/or design. These categories are: (1) Climate adaptation along the Hudson river; (2) Water supply and waste-water infrastructure resiliency; (3) Green infrastructure to reduce combined and separated sewer overflows; (4) Watershed planning and management; (5) Conservation of natural resources and open space planning; and (6) Natural scenery stewardship planning.

*Hudson River Estuary Program Tributary Restoration and Resiliency Grant* – Restore free-flowing waters to benefit water quality, conserve and restore habitat, and increase flood resiliency for communities in the Hudson River estuary watershed.

*Water Quality Improvement Project Program (WQIP)* – Reimbursement grant program for implementation projects that directly address documented water quality impairments or protect a drinking water source. Eligible projects are identified by priority level and scoring rubric. Funding amounts are dependent on project type.

### **NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC)**

*Green Innovation Grant Program (GIGP)* – Competitive grants to projects that improve water quality and demonstrate green stormwater infrastructure. Selected projects maximize opportunities to leverage the multiple benefits of green infrastructure, spur innovation in the field of stormwater management, build capacity to construct and maintain green infrastructure, and/or facilitate the transfer of new technologies and practices to other areas across the state.

*Clean Water State Revolving Fund* – Interest-free or low-interest rate short-term and long-term financing for wastewater and water quality improvement projects. Eligible projects include any

traditional, “non-traditional”, point source, or land acquisition projects clearly related to the preservation, improvement, or protection of water quality.

### **NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP)**

*Boating Infrastructure Grant Program* – Grants to construct, renovate, and maintain either publicly or privately-owned boating infrastructure with public access. May apply funds to grant administration, preliminary costs, and information and education materials as well.

*Certified Local Government (CLG)* – Funds for training for municipal officials; public education programs, surveys and designations undertaken as part of a comprehensive plan; correction of deficiencies in CLG performance; and demonstration projects on critical issues, such as compliance with state building and fire codes.

*Parks Grant Program* – Matching grant for the acquisition, development and planning of parks and recreational facilities to preserve, rehabilitate or restore lands, waters or structures for park, recreation or conservation purposes and for structural assessments and/or planning for such projects.

*Recreational Trails Grant Program* – Grants for the maintenance and restoration of existing recreational trails, development and rehabilitation of trailside and trailhead facilities and trail linkages for recreational trails, purchase and lease of recreational trail construction and maintenance equipment, construction of new recreational trails, acquisition of easements and fee simple title to property for recreational trails or recreational trail corridors, and assessment of trail conditions for accessibility and maintenance.

*Historic Preservation Grant Program* – Grant to improve, protect, preserve, rehabilitate, restore or acquire properties listed on the State or National Registers of Historic Places and for structural assessments and/or planning for such projects.

### **NYS Council on the Arts (NYSCA)**

*Architecture, Planning, and Design Program* – Grants for the advancement of the arts in 15 discipline-based funding areas. Within each of the 15 discipline-based funding categories NYSCA provides the ability to request funds in a range of varying subcategories, including but not limited to General Operating Support, Project Support and Re-grants and Partnerships.

*Preserve NY Program* – Grants for historic structure reports, building condition reports, cultural landscape reports, and cultural resource surveys.

### **NYS Office of Housing and Community Renewal (HCR)**

*Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)* – A federal program funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) administered in the State of New York through Homes and Community Renewal (HCR). The program provides financial assistance to eligible cities,



towns, and villages with populations under 50,000 and counties with an area population under 200,000. Eligible communities can apply through the New York State Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) for any three programs: “Microenterprise”; “Public Facilities & Public Infrastructure”; and “Community Planning”. Funding for “Economic Development” and “Small Business” grants are available in open round applications. Projects that benefit low- and moderate-income families and are supported by the relevant regional economic development council (REDC) will be given priority.

**NY Main Street Program** – A comprehensive grant program that provides funds and technical assistance for façade renovations, interior renovations, and streetscape enhancements for properties located in established mixed-use (commercial, civic and residential) “Main Street” or downtown retail districts that are pedestrian-oriented and comprised of traditional mixed-use buildings. Funds cannot be used for demolition or new construction. The program has four components:

1. **Downtown Anchor** – Funds to support a standalone, single site, “shovel ready” renovation project.
2. **Target Area Building Renovations** – Matching grants for exterior facade and storefront renovations or interior renovations for commercial or residential units.
3. **Streetscape Enhancement** – Funds to complement a Target Area Building Renovation. May be used for activities such as: planting trees; installing street furniture and trash receptacles; providing appropriate signs; and performing other activities to enhance the Target Area.
4. **Technical Assistance** – Funds to assist projects that will directly improve a community’s capacity or readiness to administer a future New York Main Street building renovation program.

### **Orange County Transportation Council (OCTC)**

**Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)** – Multi-modal capital program that lists projects to be undertaken in Orange County over a five year timeframe by the State Department of Transportation (DOT). This is a required product of the transportation planning process for projects funded with Federal Highway or Federal Transit funds. Projects can cover a variety of transportation-related topics including highways, bridges, bikeways, pedestrians, and transit.

### **NYS Energy Research and Development Agency (NYSERDA)**

**Clean Energy Communities Program** – Grants offered for clean energy projects after completing four of the ten NYSERDA high-impact actions designed to save money, create jobs, and improve the environment. Also provides tools, resources, and technical assistance.

### **U.S. Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA)**

**Joint Land Use Study (JLUS)** – Department of Defense provides technical and financial assistance to state and local governments to undertake cooperative studies between an installation and surrounding communities to carry out the recommendations.

**Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area (HRVNHA)**

*Heritage Development Grant* – Grant for programming, interpretation and marketing that support the mutual goals of the HRVNHA and applicants. Projects must be consistent with the Heritage Area mission and Management Plan.