

Village of Highland Falls Comprehensive Plan 2024 Update



Village of Highland Falls
Orange County, New York



The LA GROUP
Landscape Architecture & Engineering P.C.

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FEBRUARY 2024 FINAL DRAFT



Highland Falls 2024 Comprehensive Plan Update

Hudson River Valley Greenway Community Contract #: PL 20-03-04-O
Village of Highland Falls, Orange County, New York

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This document was prepared with funding provided by the Hudson River Valley Greenway Community Planning Program and the Village of Highland Falls.

The Hudson River Valley Greenway was established by New York State through the Greenway Act of 1991. Since then, the Greenway has been committed to the preservation, enhancement, and development of the world-renowned scenic, natural, historic, cultural, and recreational resources of the Hudson River Valley while supporting projects consistent with economic development goals and the tradition of municipal home rule.



**Hudson River
Valley Greenway**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Village OF 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 emanated directly from residents and stakeholders that participated in the Village's public outreach program. Additionally, this approach and resulting projects and initiatives are supported by its strongest partner, the U.S. Military Academy at West Point (West Point). The vision is to revitalize a downtown environment that marries 218 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 3 million annual West Point visitors. This connection has the power to generate a tremendous impact by drawing residents and visitors to the downtown area to work, recreate, and relax. The program proposed in this application includes a welcoming, pedestrian-oriented 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 the Appalachian Trail, Hudson Highlands West, and the Empire State Trail. There is also the opportunity to establish a water connection with the Village of Cold Spring on the eastern shoreline of the river. Visitors could travel by water taxi between the two destinations establishing the depot waterfront parcel as a new public dock facility.

These experiences are to be shared by visitors from across the state, the nation and even the world through a multi-media branding and marketing program that proudly exhibits the Highland Falls community as an authentic extension of the West Point community. In realizing this vision through the integrated revitalization and branding/marketing program, Highland Falls will create a dynamic downtown environment that becomes a "must-go" destination.

The program will build upon a strong and sustainable foundation comprised of the following basic elements:

- Historic gateway to U.S. Military Academy at West Point.
- Location on and relationship to the Hudson River.
- Proximity to the Hudson Highlands, Fort Montgomery State Historic Site, and 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.
- The availability of a deep and diverse community of people, resources, and facilities ready to support and participate in the revitalization efforts.

In summary, downtown Highland Falls represents a place rich in history and endeared by the residents of the Village of Highland Falls. While its heritage is a strength, the passage of years has seen the infrastructure age, building stock deteriorate and vacancy rates increase. Technology and societal norms have continued to evolve while the downtown has been challenged to keep pace. But the community recognizes that the time for a revitalized downtown Highland Falls has come – the following statement was made at one of the recent community meetings and encapsulates the determination and commitment of the entire community: *"This is Our Time!"* This perspective is bolstered by years of public outreach, planning, and organizing projects and initiatives. The culmination of these efforts is a

revitalization strategy comprised of a series of integrated and complementary projects and programs that will transform downtown Highland Falls into a center where residents and visitors will be immersed in a revitalized downtown environment. An environment that proudly evokes its history; provides venues for dining and entertainment; provides civic spaces for festivals and events; incorporates up-to-date infrastructure and technology; and is a regional hub for commerce through the availability of goods and services.

In achieving this revitalized state, the downtown will provide opportunities for employment across a range of business and service sectors. The impact will be an improved local and regional economy from increased employment opportunities, wages, and sales; cultural enrichment; and an enduring imprint on the lives of residents and visitors. After years of preparation, the Village is poised to act on implementation of its revitalization strategy and bring the residents' vision to reality.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Description

The project is an update of the 2009 Comprehensive Plan that recognizes the plans and projects that have been completed since its adoption and uses these accomplishments as a foundation for new initiatives to complete the vision for Highland Falls into the 21st century. See Figure 1, “Location Map”, for the geographic location of the Village. Specifically, this update focuses on land use, zoning and development issues and will incorporate the vision, goals, and objectives from the 2020 Waterfront Revitalization Strategy into the revised Comprehensive Plan.

The Update includes an implementation strategy with a list of actionable public improvement projects and updates to the village’s regulations relating to management of land use and new development. Preliminary cost estimates and a list of applicable grant programs will be included with all projects to assist with their implementation. The Comprehensive Plan Update is also fundamentally a guide for shaping private development and supplementary regulatory recommendations to address the most pressing land use and zoning issues facing the Village.

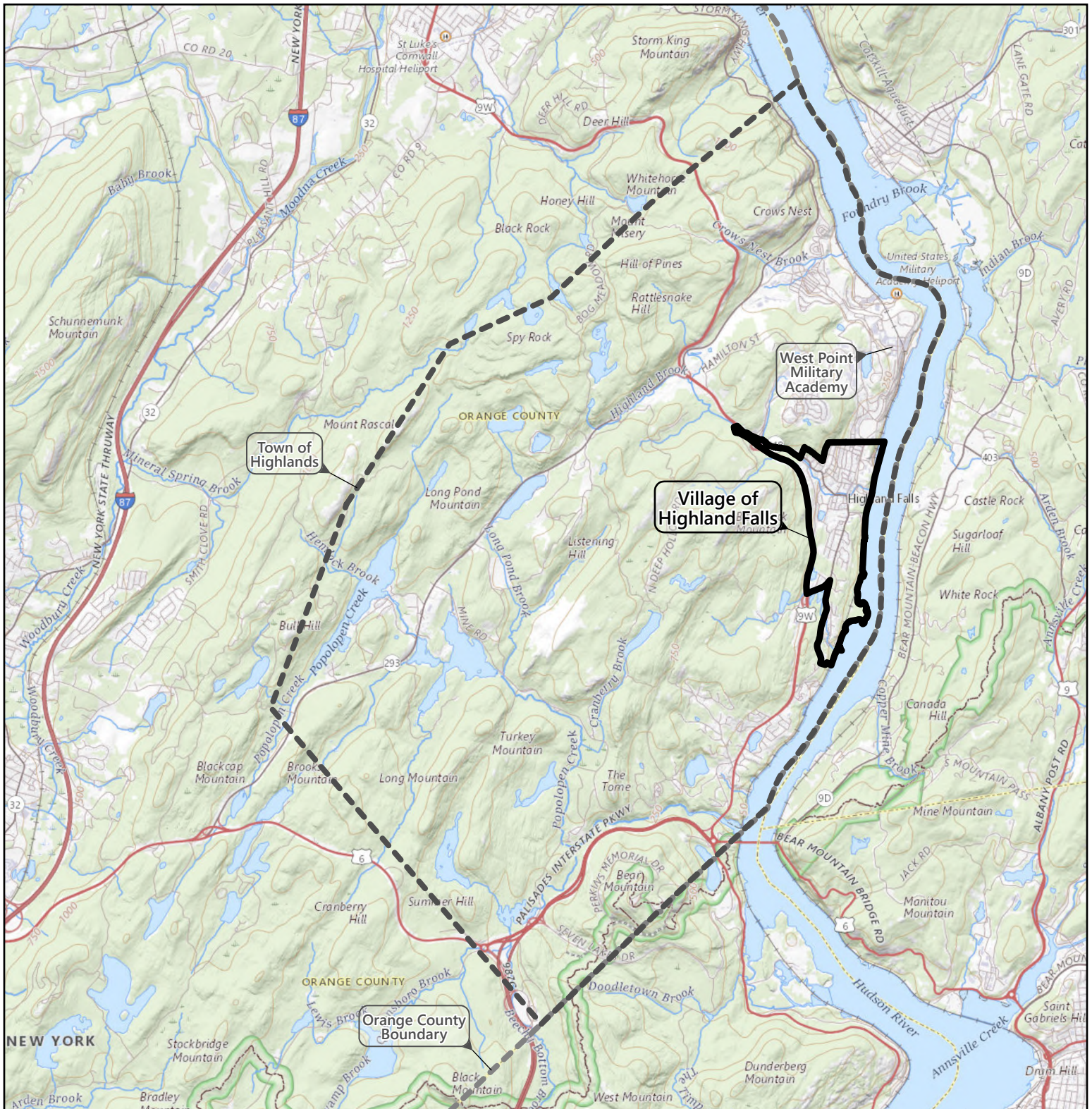
The intent of the initiatives listed in the plan update is to bring about broad-based improvement to the overall quality of life for Village residents. Since the adoption of the current Comprehensive Plan, the Village and surrounding region have experienced significant changes in the local and regional land use pattern and the overall economy.

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 State. The Village is also at the edge of the New York-Newark-Jersey City metropolitan area, which is the largest in the country and projected to continue growing. People have long been attracted to Highland Falls for its proximity to natural, historic, and cultural assets such as the U.S. Military Academy at West Point (hereafter referred to as “West Point”) and Bear Mountain State Park. West point ranks third among the most visited tourist attractions in New York State outside New York City; and Bear Mountain is the most frequented state park in the region. Furthermore, visitation to Bear Mountain is only expected to increase as New York State plans for improvements to existing facilities and the addition of new recreational trail routes in the park. Visitors to these attractions find it difficult to navigate to Highland Falls and visitors to Highland Falls have limited access to information on these attractions. The Comprehensive Plan Update is an opportunity to address these issues and create a community that no longer feels separated from the region, but instead is an integral part of it. It also can be how the community, municipal officials, and regional partners work together to prepare the Village for the projected growth in residents and visitors to Highland Falls, Orange County, and West Point.

Downtown Highland Falls acts as the year-round center for services and events for the Town of Highlands and the surrounding region. The downtown area is characterized by a variety of products and services within a quaint, compact, and walkable setting of two- and three-story buildings around the historic Main Street with views of the Hudson River. An important component of creating an attractive place for people to live, work and visit is the quantity and quality of places offering goods and services. A downtown business survey conducted in 2018 concluded that the business mix in the Village is not conducive to drawing customers from surrounding areas or attracting visitors. During the process to update the plan, the existing land use regulations and zoning code were evaluated so that revisions could be developed to help address this problem.

Since the 2009 Plan, there have been several focused planning efforts that have included recommendations for topics such as waterfront redevelopment, small business development, municipal services, cell service and internet connectivity, parks and recreation, and shared services with the Town of Highlands and the Military Academy at West Point. The Comprehensive Plan Update is an opportunity to consolidate these plans and formalize their recommendations with the adoption of the update and amendments to the municipal code.

Village of Highland Falls
2024 Update of the Comprehensive Plan



1 inch = 7,000 feet
0 3,500 7,000 Feet

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Village of Highland Falls, Orange County, New York

Title

Figure 1: Location Map

Source: USGS The National Map

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Project 2019028

Date Feb. 2024

1.2 Comprehensive Plan Update Process

The Comprehensive Plan Update process will gather consensus on the investment of public funds and amendments to the local land use regulations and zoning codes that will realize the community's vision for the future. The process included the following steps to accomplish this goal:

- A survey and informal discussion for municipal officials to determine the most pressing land use, zoning and development issues that need to be addressed immediately.
- A Project Steering Committee consisting of a representative group of residents, municipal officials, business owners, and community leaders who will hold regular meetings and direct the project.
- A profile of the community that describes the demographic characteristics (based on what is available from the 2020 census), economic conditions, municipal services and expenditures, land use, and zoning.
- A public outreach process to facilitate public engagement in the planning process and solicit input on the community vision, issues, and opportunities.
- A plan area analysis that provides neighborhood-level solutions that recognize the unique qualities of each while tying them to the community vision.
- An implementation strategy that includes a list of actions to be taken by the Village and recommendations for grant programs if needed.

The Highland Falls Comprehensive Plan Update will advance each of the five Greenway Criteria.

The plan recognizes that the natural beauty of the Hudson Highlands and Hudson River, the historic significance of the Village and West Point, and the inviting nature of a walkable and mixed-use Main Street have always drawn people to live, work or visit Highland Falls. The plan will present strategies to protect and enhance these resources as the Village faces greater development pressure in an expanding region. The plan will also consider resources that are underutilized and present solutions to improve their visibility without negatively impacting their inherent value. Since Highland Falls has little developable land, most of which is occupied, the plan will need to consider strategies for concentrating growth in the existing centers while preserving its valuable resources and the character of the community.

The Village continues to work with its local and regional partners to develop mutually beneficial strategies for natural and cultural resource protection, economic development (including necessary public facilities and infrastructure), public access and heritage and environmental education. The Village is a partner in the regional efforts of West Point, the Town of Highlands, Orange County, the Mid-Hudson Planning Consortium, Mid-Hudson regional organizations, the Hudson River Valley Greenway Council, and New York State. The plan will allow the Village to ensure that local design and land use regulations are compatible with these regional efforts.

In recent years, the Village has completed several project-based plans, studies, political initiatives, and investments to enhance and celebrate its waterfront, public parks, cultural amenities, and historic resources. Despite these efforts, the Village has yet to realize its tourism potential. The plan is an opportunity to evaluate the results of recent plans and revitalization projects and develop the next phase of economic and tourism development in the downtown. This next phase will focus on design, land use, zoning, and recommendations for public investments that maximize benefits from natural, cultural, and historic resources in the downtown and existing neighborhoods for the strategic growth and revitalization of the Village.

The plan incorporates the recommendations of several previous plans, including a West Point cadet study, a Penn State student studio design project, a 2017 Waterfront Redevelopment Feasibility Study, and an

ongoing waterfront revitalization strategy, to improve public access to the Hudson River waterfront and the connection to the Village downtown. This includes the enhancement and expansion of sidewalks at the James I. O'Neill High School, and trails that will improve the link between the Highland Falls Greenway Trail, West Point Greenway Trail, the Hudson River waterfront, and the greater Hudson River Valley Greenway Trail System. The plan is an opportunity to evaluate if any changes to the current infrastructure, design, land use and zoning in downtown and nearby neighborhoods are compatible with the proposed waterfront and trail projects or if changes are needed. The plan will also provide the opportunity to determine how best to capitalize on added tourism from the implementation of the Empire State Trail by New York State.

The plan will present contemporary solutions to the village design, land use, zoning, signage, and infrastructure that address modern concerns while recognizing the cultural and historical heritage of the Village. In addition, by highlighting the iconic and historic buildings, natural places, and cultural amenities that define the village and its storied place in the Hudson River valley, the village becomes a more attractive place for people to live, work and visit. Some of the resources that will be highlighted include the Hudson River itself and the areas adjoining the river, the historic train depot on the Hudson River waterfront, Highland Brook and Falls, the US Military Academy (USMA) at West Point, the Thayer Hotel, USMA museum and visitors center in Highland Falls, Hudson Highlands, the Bear Mountain State Park, the Appalachian Trail, the Storm King Art Center, and several historic places in the village on the national register.

1.3 Public Participation

The elements of the vision as expressed above and in Section 2.2 are directly derived from an inclusive, sustained, and strategic approach to public participation in the community visioning and planning process. The Village has productively utilized the extra time to update and organize its downtown revitalization priorities and the following activities have been undertaken and completed:

- Main Street Forum – In 2019 the Village conducted a forum to discuss the strengths, needs and opportunities of the Main Street corridor. Attendees ranged from state and county officials to downtown businesspersons. The forum focused on ways that the resources of the community and the region could be applied to support the downtown revitalization.
- Local Waterfront Revitalization Strategy (LWRS – DOS #C1001153) – In 2020, the Village utilized funding from the NYS Department of State to complete the development of an LWRS. To start the effort, the Village conducted a series of resident outreach efforts that encompassed the geographic area of the Hudson River waterfront and downtown Highland Falls. Due to the proximity, the ingress and egress, multiple points of connectivity and association, the delineated strategy boundary of the LWRS encompassed the downtown area. The result was a list of publicly generated projects that are strategically prioritized by resident support and degree of social and economic impact. The strategic list of projects is the basis for the projects outlined in this application.
- DRI & NY Forward Public Meeting – On Tuesday, September 7, 2021, and Thursday, September 8, 2022, the Village facilitated a public meeting at the Senior Citizen Center to solidify public support for the DRI and NY Forward applications and gather further input on the strengths, needs and opportunities specific to Village residents.

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- Public Information Meeting – On Thursday, December 8, 2022, the Village conducted an informational session presenting the final draft of the plan and the appended zoning analysis. Comments from residents were recorded for inclusion in the final plan update.
- *Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee* – To meaningfully consider the public input received, a “*Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee*” was appointed by the Board of Trustees to review the comments from the public information meeting and suggest methods for implementation. The Committee conducted a series of virtual meetings in the Spring of 2023 with a summary report issued to the Board of Trustees at the conclusion of their meetings in May of 2023.

For the formulation of the DRI program, the Village has undertaken a sustained and inclusive public outreach effort. The goal is to gather input on the vision, needs of the community, and priority objectives and projects. The program consisted of the following components to provide maximum opportunity for public input and participation:

- *Village Website* – The website serves as an indispensable resource for the community to provide input, particularly in the intervening time during 2020 and early 2021 when the pandemic required limitations on in-person interaction. In addition to serving as an information portal during development of the Village’s downtown revitalization program, the website will transition to its next phase of usefulness by providing information on post announcement activities, planning, and meetings.
- *Petition in Support of the 2021 DRI Program for downtown Highland Falls* – Once the proposed projects and initiatives were presented, residents were provided an opportunity to directly express their support for the proposed DRI program. To provide a means to express this support the Village formulated and made available a petition for residents to sign in support of implementing the revitalization program. Approximately 300 people signed the document.

The Village has also built partnerships with key stakeholders who have contributed to the recent momentum. These include the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, Hudson River Valley Greenway, NYSEDA, NYS Palisades Interstate Park Commission, Scenic Hudson, Hudson Highlands Land Trust, Town of Highlands Historian and Historical Society, Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Council, Orange County Industrial Development Agency (IDA), University of Pennsylvania School of Design and Regional Plan Association.

CHAPTER 2 COMMUNITY PROFILE

2.1 Historic Overview

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. 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.

In 1982, the Village of Highland Falls played a significant part in American history when the West Point community welcomed back the Iranian hostages comprised of fifty-two American diplomats and citizens that were held hostage for 444 days making it the longest hostage crisis in recorded history. As the host community for this event, Highland Falls was dubbed "*Hometown USA*." This moment in history represented a turning point for Highland Falls. It shown the light on the community as the true partner of U.S. Military Academy of West Point.

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.

2.2 Community Vision

The vision for downtown Highland Falls is to bring forth the authentic character of this area of the Village so it flourishes as New York's quintessential downtown. In realizing this vision, Highland Falls is creating a dynamic downtown environment to become a "must-go" destination building upon a strong and sustainable foundation comprised of the following basic elements:

- Historic gateway to U.S. Military Academy at West Point.
- Location on and relationship to the Hudson River.
- Proximity to the Hudson Highlands, Fort Montgomery State Historic Site, and 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.
- The availability of a deep and diverse community of people, resources, and facilities ready to support and participate in the revitalization efforts.

The vision for downtown Highland Falls embodies the following characteristics:

1. A vibrant environment attracting a diverse population of residents to live, work, and raise a family in a walkable setting rich with cultural, recreational, and leisure-time activities.
2. A registered Climate Smart Community that encourages sustainable vehicular travel through convenient availability of electric charging stations to support the use of electric vehicles among residents and visitors to downtown Highland Falls.
3. Encouragement of healthy living through enhancement of a purposeful downtown environment that encourages pedestrian movement as a primary means to travel among the diverse and compact land uses (residences, places of employment, service providers, recreational assets, dining, shopping, lodging) of downtown Highland Falls.
4. A center for commerce, housing of varying types and levels of affordability, farm-to-table foods and beverages, recreation, and new waterfront accessibility.
5. A quality of life that is enhanced through integrated private and public amenities which complement one another and provide diverse offering goods, services, and cultural experiences.
6. Opportunities for employment among downtown businesses from entry-level positions to skilled, management-level positions.
7. A recognized center for encouragement of entrepreneurial development encompassing a range of businesses from start-up microenterprises through prosperous businesses and corporations.

2.3 Planning Initiatives

A mix of local and regional planning efforts has been conducted on the topics of downtown, 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 plans were determined to be the most valuable to the development of a waterfront and community revitalization strategy for the village.

Village of Highland Falls Interim Study of Dissolution (2021) – On July 2, 2021, a petition calling for a referendum on dissolution of the Village of Highland Falls was submitted to the Village Board of Trustees in accordance with the New N.Y. Government Reorganization and Citizen Empowerment Act (Article 17-A of the General Municipal Law). The Village Board, as required by law, passed a resolution calling for a referendum on the proposed dissolution by the electors to be held on November 8, 2021. The dissolution process will follow the Voter-Initiated timeline outlined in General Municipal Law Article 17-A. While this report provided the Village with useful information, the referendum was not successful.

Local Waterfront Revitalization Strategy (2020) – Through a grant awarded from the NYS Department of State, the Village completed the development of an LWRS. The Village conducted a series of resident outreach efforts that encompassed the geographic area of the Hudson River waterfront and downtown Highland Falls. 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. The result was a list of publicly generated projects that are strategically prioritized by resident support and degree of social and economic impact.

2021 Project Implementation Strategy (2021) – This planning strategy is a follow up to the LWRS. It provides detailed information on how to move forward with the many projects outlined in the LWRS and among ongoing initiatives across the central business district.

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

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 across the Hudson River.

2.4 Village Accomplishments

Past Investment

In recent years, the Village has demonstrated the capacity to not only successfully administer multiple projects funded through various grant programs, but the Village has also matched municipal funds with available grants to improve sidewalks in the downtown area, install/replace street trees, conduct renovations of individual buildings, replace deteriorated lighting fixtures, and purchase and renovate a building for use as a Senior Center. These projects have occurred over a sustained period and in a “piecemeal” fashion as available funding has allowed. Over the last two years, the Village has undertaken a purposeful effort to formulate a comprehensive strategy that will integrate complementary projects to address revitalization in an impactful manner.

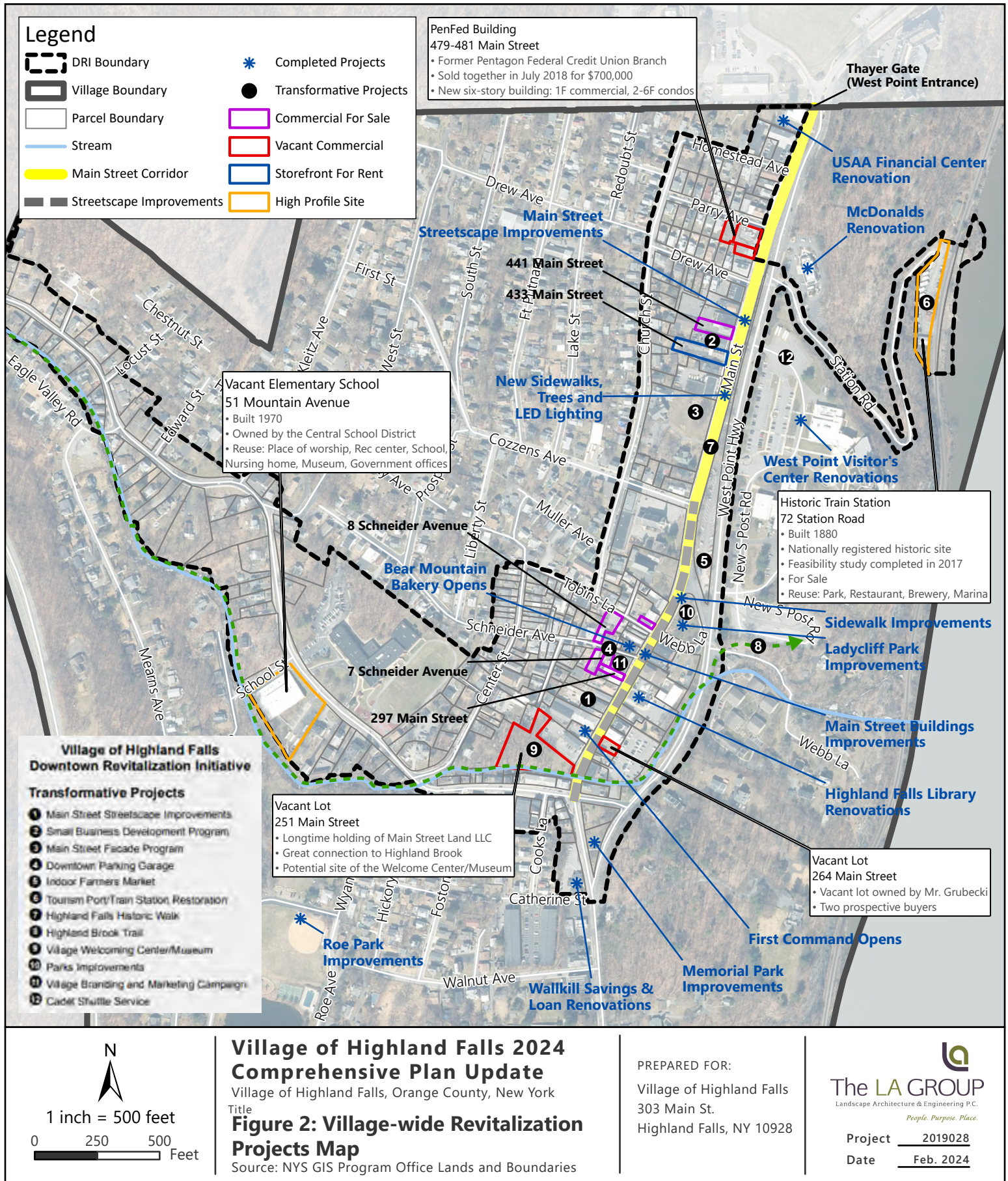
From an implementation perspective, the underlying premise of the Village revitalization strategy is to maximize the return of past investments made through a mix of public and private investment. For example, the funds awarded from the NYS Department of State (DOS) through the Local Waterfront Revitalization program have directly led to the readiness of the priority projects listed in this application. Another example is the Thayer Hotel and Spa project. The project received a \$1.9 million award through the 2019 CFA round that is leveraging private investment to complete this transformative project at the northerly end of Main Street. The intent of the revitalization strategy is to access state and federal grant programs to further augment the impact of projects such as the hotel and resort project through improvement of needed infrastructure and public spaces and parks. Park and the planned infrastructure improvements will functionally and visually connect the central portion of the downtown area and northerly portion around the proposed hotel and resort. The center southerly portion of streetscape has already been improved funded through a past NYS Department of Transportation multi-modal grant. This project will extend those improvements to form an expansive, unified streetscape along Main Street.

Summary of Village-wide Revitalization Projects

Table 1, “List of Recently Completed Projects or Projects Underway,” lists planning projects and capital improvements in downtown Highland Falls that have been recently completed or are currently underway. The highlights of some ongoing and future projects are provided in the narrative below. The program of improvements will directly and indirectly improve the quality of life in downtown Highland Falls.

TABLE 1 – LIST OF RECENTLY COMPLETED PROJECTS OR PROJECTS UNDERWAY		
Project Type	Project Description	Source
Main Street Improvements	New sidewalks, trees, and curb replacements (\$200,000)	DOT multi-modal grant
	Streetscape improvements (\$50,000)	Village
	Street paving (\$100,000)	DOT multi-modal grant
	New LED lighting	NYPA outright grant
Building Construction and Renovations	Eight Main Street building improvements and beautification project (\$540,000)	Restore NY; Orange County IDA
	Senior Citizen Center purchase and renovations (\$350,000)	DASNY grant; CDBG
	Highland Falls Library renovations (\$82,000)	DASNY grant
	School district capital projects, including improved sports facilities, classroom advancements in technology, and structural improvements (\$20 million)	Highland Falls-Fort Montgomery Central School District
	Holiday Inn expansion (\$1 million)	Private
	Old Guard Hotel construction (\$25 million)	Private
	McDonald's renovation (\$1 million)	Private
	Wallkill Savings and Loan renovation (\$1 million)	Private
	Auto Spa construction (\$5 million)	Private
	USAA Financial Center renovation (\$5 million)	Private
	PenFed Building purchase and redevelopment (\$700,000)	Private
	Bear Mountain Bakery opening	Private
	First Command Financial opening	Private
	Renovation of 425 Main Street for new restaurant (\$1 million)	Private
	Davis Barracks expansion (\$250 million)	West Point
	West Point Visitor's Center improvements (\$25 million)	West Point
	Keller Hospital improvements (\$25 million)	West Point
	Camp Bucker renovation (\$30 million)	West Point
	Research and Development Building construction (\$250 million)	West Point
Parks and Public Spaces	Memorial Park improvements (\$1 million)	Village
	Ladycliff Park sidewalk improvements (\$80,000)	Village
	Ladycliff Park improvements (\$1 million)	Village
	Roe Park improvements (\$1 million)	DASNY grant; Village
	Revolutionary War Preservation Project (\$12 million)	West Point
Infrastructure	Centralized Parking Garage construction (\$150 million)	West Point
	Campus street pavement and improvements (\$1 million)	West Point
	James I. O'Neill High School infrastructure renovation (\$30 million)	Public
	Camp Natural Bridge renovation (\$10 million)	West Point
	Parking garage construction (\$10 million)	West Point
	Water Plant renovation (\$5 million)	West Point
	Wastewater Treatment Plant renovation (\$25 million)	West Point

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Summary of Downtown Transformative Projects

The revitalization strategy for the downtown is to maximize the effectiveness of private and public investment to the downtown to accomplish the vision by targeting projects which are compatible with local and regional goals. The goals for downtown are:

- Improve the form and function of downtown Highland Falls through implementation of a comprehensive program of integrated projects and services that strategically enhance the attractiveness of downtown to residents and visitors alike.
- Expand and improve connections between downtown businesses, service providers, institutions, parks and the local population and visitors.
- Provide a responsive and diverse product-based and service-based marketplace.
- Enhance the appearance of downtown in both the public realm (park areas, public buildings wayfinding and streetscape) and the private realm (private buildings – existing and new, signage, and open spaces).
- Provide a memorable downtown experience through the provision of exceptional cultural attractions, products, and services as well as viewsheds and public spaces.
- Improve all modes of transportation – pedestrian, vehicular, and transit.
- Upgrade recreational and leisure time opportunities through parks and recreational areas with facilities that support community festivals, events, active and passive recreation while serving as potential venues for literature and the visual and performing arts.

These goals are supported by the long-term strategy of the Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Corporation (MHREDC) to develop a specific urban approach. The current draft of MHREDC's Strategic Plan includes several goals which are aligned with local investment priorities. Some of the major topics include leveraging natural assets for tourism and attracting new businesses and residents, improving key infrastructure, small to medium sized business development, and building sustainable partnerships.

At the County-level, the Village of Highland Falls was identified as a Priority Growth Area in the most recent update to the Orange County Comprehensive Plan. The County intends to support concentrated growth in the existing historic centers of the region, such as Highland Falls, which already include a prominent central business district. A strategy was adopted which calls for focusing efforts on the promotion and expansion of existing assets and key industries which define a locality. These industries are agriculture, arts, manufacturing, technology, medicine, and tourism. The goals of the strategy include:

1. Balance economic growth by attracting new business interests and assisting existing businesses.
2. Invest in public funds to ensure sufficient water and sewer capacity, easy access to transportation, full wireless technology service, and an array of housing options.
3. Work with employers to provide workforce training and educational programs for residents, to increase the pool of skilled labor.
4. Create a supportive culture for small businesses, including general training and resources for business owners.

The following projects are either contemplated or in process in the Village. Together they will provide a diversity of employment opportunities both vertically up and down the wage scale; and horizontally across differing employment types (entry-level, management, etc.) and job types (skilled, unskilled, professional, service-oriented, public sector/private sector, etc.) Additionally, as the traditional central business district for the region, the area is also host to small business owners, shopkeepers, sole proprietorships, and microenterprises.

Thayer Hotel and Spa at 479 Main Street will transform an entire block along upper Main Street into destination-style hotel and resort. The project encompasses seven parcels that in their current condition are a blight on this section of Main Street and the residential neighborhood that adjoins them. The project will impact the quality of life in the downtown area in a positive manner through construction of a new resort-style hotel with amenities and on-site enclosed parking. The net effect being a wholistic project impact where private on-site building design is complemented by adjoining elements of the public streetscape. Also, the project is located within several hundred feet of the South Gate entrance to the US Military Academy at West Point. The intent is to have an aesthetic to the design that contributes to the quality of the surrounding environment. The enhancements will ensure that pedestrian and multi-modal transportation and mobility for all people can not only be accommodated but is enhanced through complete accessibility and enjoyment of the surrounding environs of both the built and natural environment.

The new parking garage at the intersection Main Street and West Point Highway will provide a central location for parking up to 600 vehicles. Since the Village is the owner of the site, the garage will include off-street “upper-bound” and “lower-bound” EV charging stations that will begin the transition of the downtown area into a sustainable environment that can support the use of electricity as the next primary form of vehicle propulsion. This centralized location within the downtown area will allow visitors and residents alike to park at the garage one time and leave their vehicle as they walk around downtown to access goods, services, or local restaurants. The mixed-use portion of the building will provide space for a new Village Hall to house the municipal government services and other retail and/or office-type uses.

Upon departure of the municipal offices into the new mixed-use building/parking garage, the existing Village Hall building at 303 Main Street will become available for adaptive reuse. As a qualifying historic structure, this building will be restored for mixed-use including office or retail use on the first floor and the provision of affordable housing on the upper floors. The quality-of-life enhancements will primarily be derived from new job opportunities housed in the first-floor commercial space, and an expanded range of housing types for persons of low and moderate income.

The Waterfront Redevelopment Project on Station Road will provide first-time public access to Highland Falls’ only riverfront property. The quality-of-life benefit will occur in two ways: The first will be from the establishment of public access to the river shoreline to enjoy the spectacular viewshed and the surroundings of the dramatic slopes to the shoreline through this section of the Hudson River. The activities are to be both passive and active through the inclusion of a new waterfront park area for the public to enjoy the river views up and down the Hudson River. The new park area will be fully accessible so people of all age groups and people with disabilities can fully enjoy the park and waterfront area. The second benefit will be derived through the construction of a waterfront pier that will be sized to accommodate large watercraft. As a result of the input received through the development of the LWRS, a pier has been included in the plan to accommodate boaters, including those who may be arriving on larger boats or an inter-community water taxi to come to Highland Falls via the Hudson River. The possibility of providing a whole new mode of water-based transportation to access the Village waterfront and downtown area will be hugely beneficial to the downtown area businesses.

2.5 Demographic Profile

Population

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. Both the Village and West Point are counted within the Town population count. The Town's 2020 population was 12,939 with the Village's accounting for 3,825 residents, and the West Point Military Academy accounting for 6,800 residents. The hamlet of Fort Montgomery to the south accounts for only an estimated 1,500 residents in the Town.

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 the 2020 Census, Highland Falls has a population of 3,825, a decrease of 75 people since 2010. Table 2 illustrates the local, regional, and statewide population trends over the last 20-year period.

TABLE 2 – POPULATION CHANGE 2010-2020				
	2020	2010	Population Change 2010 - 2020	% Change 2010-2020
Village of Highland Falls	3,825	3,900	-75	-2.0%
Town of Highlands	12,939	12,492	447	3.5%
Orange County	401,310	372,813	28,497	7.1%
New York State	20,201,249	19,580,000	621,249	3.1%

Source: 2020 Census

Regional data from the last two decades shows Orange, Rockland, and Westchester Counties as the fastest growing counties in the Hudson Valley region. 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. 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).

Age

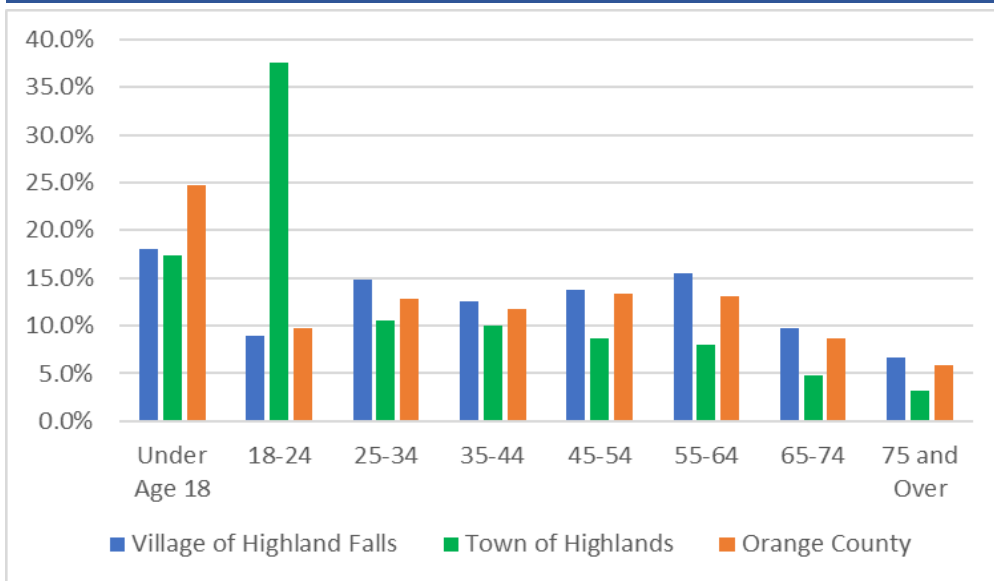
The Village population is dominated by long-time residents aging in place. Recent estimates from the American Community Survey suggest that most homeowners have lived in the Village for a decade or more. An ongoing effort to attract younger people to live and work in the Village is needed to not only support the community but to provide the base of services to older residents.

The median age in Highland Falls increased between 2010 and 2019 by 3.7 percent from 40.2 to 41.7 years. The latter exceeds the Town of Highlands median age of 24.1 years, which is influenced by the cadet population at West Point. As illustrated in Table 3 below, the Village 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 age 45 and over.

TABLE 3 – MEDIAN AGE			
	2010	2019 (est.)	% Change, 2010-2019
Village of Highland Falls	40.2	41.7	3.7%
Town of Highlands	23.6	24.1	2.1%
Orange County	36.5	37.3	2.2%
New York State	37.9	39.2	3.4%

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

TABLE 4 – DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION BY AGE GROUP, 2019 ESTIMATES

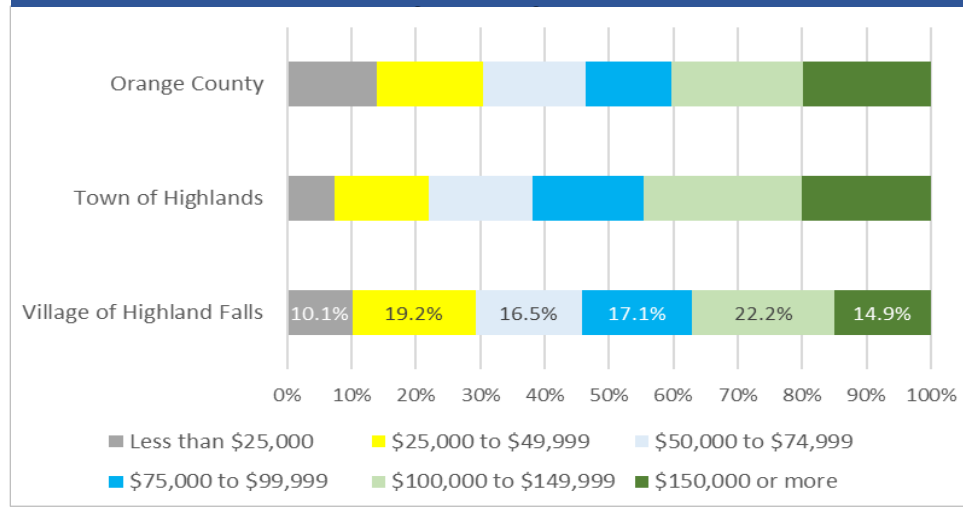


Source: U.S. Census and ESRI (2019 estimates)

Median Household Income

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. According to data gathered in 2019, 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). The distribution of households by income is illustrated in Table 5. 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.

TABLE 5 – DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLDS BY INCOME, 2019 ESTIMATES



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

CHAPTER 3 EVALUATION OF COMMUNITY ASSETS

3.1 Overview

Highland Falls is a desirable place because it is listed among the safest and most livable villages in New York. 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.

This section provides a summary of the basic services and resources in the community and outlines the most needed actions moving forward. Each resource is classified under Economic Development, Commercial Redevelopment, Tourism, Land Use and Zoning, Community Buildings and Services, Infrastructure, Transportation, Natural Resources, Parks and Public Spaces, and Historic Resources.

3.2 Downtown Business District

Commercial Businesses

Dominated by retail and local services. High proportion of service establishments that are of limited value in attracting visitors and a relative lack of specialty retail stores. For more variety, customers must travel to Cornwall or take advantage of the options available at West Point.

TABLE 6 – MAIN STREET BUSINESSES 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%
TOTAL	66	100.0%

Commercial Real Estate Transactions

Table 7 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 were the former Pentagon Federal Credit Union (or “PenFed”) building at 481 Main Street and the former Christina Hotel building at 479 Main Street. The credit union building has been vacant since the credit union relocated to West Point. Both structures are 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 and a new “Church of Latter-Day Saints” building has been erected.

TABLE 7 – COMMERCIAL PROPERTY SALES ON MAIN STREET			
Address	Property Type	Date	Sale Price
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.

Recent or Impending Job Growth

The downtown is host to employers who provide a diversity of employment opportunities both vertically up and down the wage scale and horizontally across differing employment types (entry-level, management, etc.), and job types (skilled, unskilled, professional, service-oriented, public sector/private sector, etc.) Additionally, as the traditional central business district for the region, the area is also host to small business owners, shopkeepers, sole proprietorships, and microenterprises.

The direct assistance projects listed above and the other ancillary improvements (increased parking, electric vehicle charging stations, expansion of affordable housing, and streetscape enhancements) will provide a strong, sustainable basis for downtown Highland Falls to be an employment center now, and into the future and to fulfill the referenced vision as a vital center for employment, residential living, and cultural enrichment.

Opportunities and Recommendations

The opportunities available downtown will attract investment in real property through restoration of existing, historically significant buildings and the construction of new buildings to meet the demand of the growing local and regional markets. The result will be a downtown that continues to function and serve as a genuine community center. Additionally, the adjoining US Military Academy at West Point continues to function as an attraction of national significance. Therefore, the intent is to also provide a welcoming environment and complementary services/activities (lodging facilities, dining experiences, shopping, and leisure time activities) that enhance the visitor experience.

The Village should continue to build on the following projects to maximize the revitalization of downtown Highland Falls:

- Improve pedestrian connectivity.
- Expand job opportunities across a spectrum of skill levels and occupation types.
- Expand public parking through construction of the downtown's first parking structure.
- Improve sustainability of vehicular travel through inclusion of electric vehicle charging stations at the new parking structure mentioned above, and throughout the downtown area.
- Increase the availability of affordable housing on Main Street.
- Establish public accessibility to the Hudson River shoreline and viewshed.
- Provide access to downtown attractions and destinations through waterfront assets.
- Improve local governmental services through the relocation of the Village Hall to a more accessible and centralized location.
- Enhance civic and municipal park spaces to augment downtown festivals and events.
- Increase commercial property valuations throughout the downtown area.

The Village should also continue to advance the initiatives in the Local Waterfront Revitalization Strategy (LWRS) which can be used as the catalyst to redevelop the downtown. The projects supported in the LWRS are ready for implementation through both private and public collaborations of investment.

An inventory of the properties at the waterfront along with other potential places to allow the public to experience the Hudson River was completed as part of the LWRS. Currently, there is only one point of direct access to the Hudson River at the site of the historic train depot at the end of Station Hill Road, formerly known as the Highland Falls Marina. 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. The site is used commercially to lease apartments in the depot building and RVs in the parking lot. The land is currently for sale.

The cost of the property may exceed the amount the Village is able to pay, there is a limitation in the size and depth of the property and the need for additional land to make a vision possible, depot structure is on the historic register, and safety concerns related to the active railroad tracks. Specific actions the Village should undertake include the following:

1. Obtain funding to purchase the land, complete the planning and engineering needed to the preferred concepts for the waterfront from the 2017 Waterfront Redevelopment Feasibility Study.
2. Develop a financing strategy for the property so that the Village, IDA, and Orange County have a strategy for financing the acquisition and redevelopment of the property. This could include updating the County's Uniform Tax Exemption Policy (UTEP), if necessary, for the IDA to direct more funds quickly to the site.
3. Purchase the train depot property to open the waterfront to the public from A&I Builders LLC.
4. Purchase the privately-owned property to the north for parking.
5. Establish the property as a planned unit development (PUD) so that the Village can control the type of uses permitted on the land. This will ensure consistency with the recommendations in the LWRS while allowing for a flexible list of uses.
6. Develop and issue an RFP for potential developers of the site.
7. Make pedestrian and vehicle improvements to Station Hill Road including adding a scenic overlook.

8. Consider assistance from the National Development Council, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that does the job of a consultant firm, LDC and IDA all in one. Establish a local authority or nonprofit to manage the waterfront property.

3.3 Tourism

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 meets 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 completed 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 highlighting 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 has the opportunity to 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.

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 8 provides a list of the fourteen major attractions in and around Highland Falls.

TABLE 8 – ATTRACTIONS IN THE HIGHLAND FALLS REGION

Bear Mountain State Park (Highlands)	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 rd 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 highlighting the history of the U.S. Army
Woodbury Commons (Woodbury)	A retail shopping center of regional significance consisting of over 250 shops.

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. 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 is not regularly updated 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 9, 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.

TABLE 9 – ATTENDANCE AT STATE PARKS AND HISTORIC SITES

	2008	2018	Net Change 2008-18	
			Number	Percent
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 10). 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 Ec 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.

One of the most attractive and popular lodgings 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.

TABLE 10 – ACCOMMODATIONS WITHIN A 5-MILE RADIUS OF HIGHLAND FALLS

Property	No. Of Rooms	No. of Reviews on TripAdvisor*	Average Rating on TripAdvisor*
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)
TOTAL	505		

*As of 11/18/2019

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. Visitation during this period was lower than usual since the Visitors Center closed for renovation between June 2016 and December 2017.

Opportunities and Recommendations

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. This demand of visitors can be supported through the growth of overnight accommodations and expanded downtown restaurant diversity to increase the stability and sustainability of the tourism market. The proposed Thayer Hotel and Spa project is a positive sign that the local tourism market is growing and is expected to continue. The Thayer Hotel and Spa project 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. If successful, the Thayer Hotel and Spa will demonstrate that the local tourism economy is moving in a positive direction.

3.4 Land Ownership, Land Uses and Zoning Overview

Introduction



Article VII of Village Law within the consolidated laws of New York State provides the authority for the regulation of land use for incorporated villages across the state. As a first consideration, §722 of Article VII sets forth the authority for villages in New York State to prepare a comprehensive plan. Among the purposes the comprehensive plan serves, the plan can set forth goals and objectives for land use regulation. With adoption of the plan and related guidance for such regulation, a village can then formulate a zoning law based upon the guidance in the comprehensive plan. By this procedure, this update provides guidance as to the revisions planned for the village zoning law.

The Village of Highland Falls last prepared a comprehensive plan in 2009, adopted by the Village Board on July 20, 2009. However, the current Zoning Chapter (240) of the Village Code was adopted in August of 1971. The village has not undertaken a complete update of the zoning law since that time. Rather, an incremental approach has been taken with focused updates occurring to specific subjects or needs. For example, recent updates occurred with the passage of two local laws to amend the Zoning Chapter. Local Law No. 3 was adopted in August of 2020 to modify the applicability of special exception regulations to wireless communication facilities, and Local Law No. 4 was adopted in July of 2022 to increase the required minimum lot area per dwelling unit in the B-3 District.

However, in consideration of the age of the overall Zoning Chapter, the village, through the plan update development process will undertake a more wholistic view of the basic elements of the land use regulatory program so that the needs of the community addressed. A summary of each of these elements is discussed below and a detailed analysis of the Zoning Chapter is appended to this update (see Appendix A).

Land Ownership

The pattern of parcel ownership in Highland Falls is closely related to the history of land development. At the center of the village, where the first settlement took place, there are smaller lots mostly owned by separate private individuals. The larger lots overlooking the Hudson River continue to be owned by families and individuals who prefer waterfront property with views of the river and are outside of the more active downtown area. Due to the presence of larger lots, newer single-family, residential subdivisions occurred toward the southern end of the village. Largely built in the early 20th century, these dwellings are larger in size and continue to provide highly desirable living conditions with central proximity to the river and downtown Highland Falls.

Except for the area noted above, the Village of Highland Falls is primarily a community of private, owner-occupied dwellings on small lots. This pattern of ownership is typical for a small village with long established municipal water and sewer services that facilitate the dense residential development pattern. With that as the predominant ownership characteristic, there also continue to be notable areas of the village with larger lots under the ownership of 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 several development groups that have constructed residential communities. The practical effect of this enduring ownership of these larger lots is the protection of natural qualities (e.g., mature vegetation, natural contours, open space, etc.) that contribute to a stable and pleasing quality of life.

At just under 120 acres of land, the federal government is one of the largest public owners of land within the Village. While the Village owns many properties that serve as municipal parks or provide needed community services, the parcels under federal ownership relate entirely to the operations of the U.S. Military Academy (USMA) at West Point. The Town of Highlands owns a few parcels 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, municipal 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 Orange 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 and the County has not indicated any immediate plans for its use.

Land Uses

As with most villages in upstate New York, the predominant use of land in the Village of Highland Falls is residential. Approximately 80 percent of all properties in the village are classified as residential, with most being single-family dwellings. Commercial uses are the second most frequent use. However, mixed-use is very evident with apartment use comprising over a quarter of the building space in the commercial districts of the village. This circumstance reinforces the predominantly residential nature of the village. Typical of the land use pattern, commercial uses also appear along the most heavily traveled access corridors of County Route 218 and Main Street, while residential use is predominant on the side streets of these corridors with high counts of average daily vehicle traffic. The result is an older built environment where visitors traveling in and out of the village can access 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. Also, the proximity of residential dwellings and commercial uses results in a walkable community where residents do not need to rely on a car to patronize local businesses.

The area of residential and commercial parcels in the village is relatively small compared to the larger parcels typically found in suburban settings. This dynamic reflects the older nature of the community with smaller building footprints and long-standing access to municipal water and sewer services. Attributes of this pattern of smaller lots with dense building coverage include a charming and well-scaled living environment, and a strong sense of neighborhood and community because of residents living near one another.

Notable public/institutional service uses are primarily the local schools, whether it is the Highland Falls-Fort Montgomery Central School District or the US Military Academy (USMA) at West Point. Other noteworthy public/institutional service uses can be found throughout the village, but the greatest concentration is found along Main Street and West Point Highway. As a unique circumstance to Highland Falls, most of the larger parcels through these corridors are affiliated with the USMA including: The West Point Visitors Center, and the Military Museum. While the Visitors Center and Museum are a notable feature of the streetscape and a unique asset and a destination-style attraction, a significant portion of the surrounding land area, also under the ownership of the USMA, is vacant and remains unused.

Other land under public service use is mostly associated with two functions, the storage and distribution of water to the village, or the transport of freight as part of the CSX Corporation rail network. These uses and associated parcels are located at the perimeter of the village. There is no indication that the use of these properties will change soon.

There are a few smaller-scale municipal parks 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 vacant to conserve the natural environment. Commercial and residential are the most frequent uses surrounding vacant properties. Among these parcels, if any new development is proposed, the form and intensity of proposed uses should be compatible with the nearby commercial and residential uses. For the larger parcels currently being protected, any proposed uses should be encouraged to complement the enduring conservation mission of the landowner and to the extent possible, conserve the unique natural features on site.

Zoning

As noted above, the Village of Highland Falls has a compact development pattern on small-to-medium sized parcels, with a well-defined street pattern and distinct commercial, mixed-use, and residential neighborhoods. As a result, the Village's zoning law has been structured to preserve and continue this pattern of development. The Town of Highlands, and primarily, the Hamlet of Fort Montgomery, has evolved in a somewhat compact pattern similar to the Village due to the prevalence of steeper slopes and limited private land within the Town. Specifically, the Hamlet of Fort Montgomery is a mixture of small and large parcels with scattered commercial development along US Rt. 9W. West of US Rt. 9W, the development is more rural with larger parcels in greater frequency as the elevation increases. In addition, most lands within the boundaries of the Town of Highlands are occupied by the USMA and are under the ownership of United States Government, along with parcels owned by the Palisades Interstate Park Commission. As a result, privately-owned parcels are confined along the Town's western boundary, along US Rt. 9W and the Hudson River.

An overview of land use 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 existing condition of land use and development in the village prior to making recommendations for land use regulation going forward. Future projects that have design elements (scale, building massing and architecture, aesthetic appeal) which complement the existing land patterns are more likely to be implemented and result in a lasting, positive impact on the community.

All existing and proposed uses of land in the Village of Highland Falls are regulated based upon the zoning district in which they are located. Highland Falls has eleven zoning districts that are differentiated by the principal use permitted – either residential (R) or business (B). Most of the village is within one of the eight residential districts. These districts are concerned with maintaining the primarily residential character of neighborhoods surrounding the downtown. Most of the area within one of the business districts is along Main Street, preserving the downtown as the commercial and mixed-use center for the village. Depending upon the district, limits on development density (building coverage) varies. Lastly, except for the height allowance in the R-4 and R-5 Districts, the height of all residential buildings in the Village must be under 35 feet^[1].

The Village Code details all the regulations for each zoning district and a paper copy of the Code is available at the Village Hall or an electronic copy can be reviewed online at ecode360.com. A summary overview of each zoning district is provided below. Additionally, in consideration of the age of the current zoning law, this update to the Comprehensive Plan includes an analysis of the Zoning Chapter (240) in Appendix A. The analysis assesses the current zoning regulations and sets forth a series of recommendations for improvements to the zoning law and associated map.

^[1] 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.

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. The district permits all single-family and two-family detached dwellings, parks and playgrounds, and accessory structures related to the residences such as a private garage or swimming pool. Any development or change of use that includes multiple residential plots, a bed-and-breakfast, a school, or a country club is permitted but requires site plan review by the Planning Board. Residents are also allowed to start home-based occupations or open home offices following site plan review.

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. The district allows for community-related facilities too, but only parks and playgrounds do not require site plan review. All types of accessory activities on properties in this district are permitted outright. The district even permits commercial marinas to be constructed and existing fuel-oil storage and distribution facilities to be maintained if the owner goes through site plan review with 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 in the type of housing able to be developed. Only townhouses, mobile homes, and multifamily housing are not allowable residential uses in the R-4 district. However, only new single-family and two-family detached dwellings do not require site plan review. The only major difference from other residential districts is the restriction of general community facilities to only bus passenger shelters and utilities. Industrial uses are not permitted. The larger lot coverages, smaller lot widths and yard requirements, and higher density of dwellings per lot permitted result in denser residential areas of single- and two-family residences.

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. However, only single- and two-family detached dwellings do not require site plan review. Any type of accessory use is permitted outright. Most business uses are restricted while most community facilities are permitted. All these activities require site plan review from the Planning Board. Industrial uses are not permitted. Like the R-4 district, the design of the district is expected to be denser, but the larger lots and focus on multifamily housing results in a much greater density of dwellings.

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. There are no other permitted uses other than the listed residential uses. The R-5A district is the only residential district where the share of the lot able to be occupied is restricted (40 percent).

R-6 District, Apartment-Motel Residence – The R-6 District

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. Accessory uses are restricted to private garages, off-street parking areas, private signs, and any customary

uses not related to retail services or any of the prohibited uses listed in the Village Code. For the most part, any business that is not automobile-oriented is either permitted or allowed following site plan review by the Planning Board. Exceptions include filling stations and parking garages, but both require site plan review. The only industrial use allowed in the district is a printing or publishing plant, which requires the owner to undergo site plan review. The overall design of this district is smaller lots almost entirely covered with buildings open to the sidewalk or street.

B-2 District, Highway Commercial – Residential uses are not allowed in the B-2 District. At the same time, all types of accessory use are permitted following site plan review by the Planning Board. While the focus of the district is on community facilities and business activities, there are some restrictions. These include, public passenger transportation stations or terminals, greenhouses, parking or storage garages, and retail stores. All industrial uses listed in the Village Code are allowed. Only printing and publishing plants are permitted without undergoing site plan review. On average, lots in this district are expected to be larger and building uses either fronted on or were surrounded by parking.

B-3 District, Commercial Business – As with the B-1 District, the B-3 district lists multi-family residential uses and community facilities as allowed upon site plan review and approval by the Planning Board. Other permitted uses or uses allowed upon site plan review and approval from the Planning Board largely reflect the standards listed in the B-1. Those principal uses not allowed in the B-3 District include single-family dwellings, public utility structures, filling stations, greenhouses/horticulture, pool halls/arcades, wholesale businesses.

Preservation of Community Resources

The Village of Highland Falls is a Compact Community in Orange County and pledges to meet the five Hudson River Valley Greenway Criteria for natural and cultural resource protection, economic development, public access, regional planning, and heritage and environmental education. The Village is also a registered Climate Smart Community committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to a changing climate. It adopted the New York State Climate Smart Communities Pledge, which comprises the following ten elements:

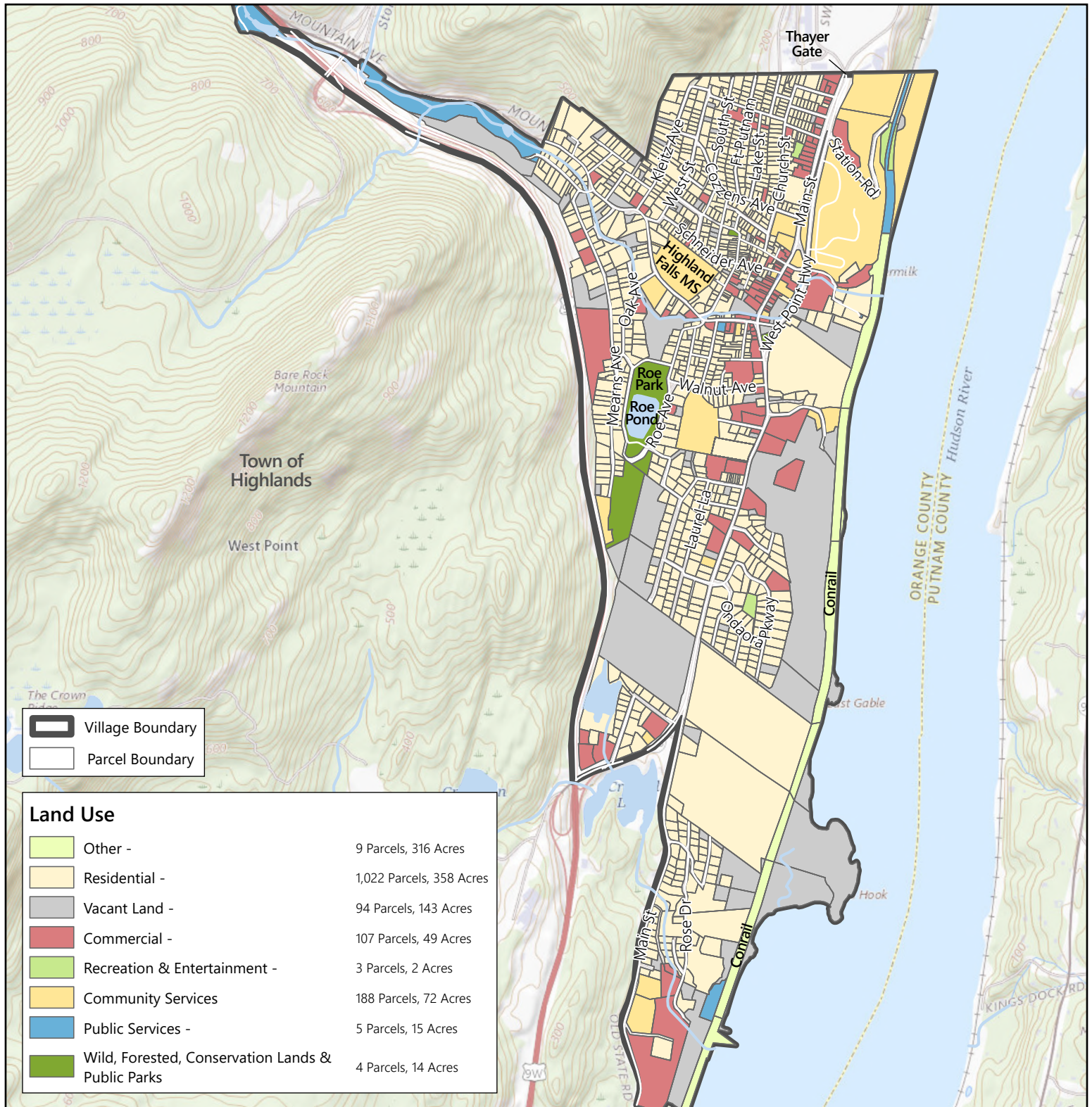
- Pledge to be a Climate Smart Community.
- Set goals, inventory emissions, plan for climate action.
- Decrease community energy use.
- Increase community use of renewable energy.
- Realize benefits of recycling and other climate-smart solid waste management practices.
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions through use of climate-smart land-use tools.
- Enhance community resilience and prepare for the effects of climate change.
- Support development of a green innovation economy.
- Inform and inspire the public.
- Commit to an evolving process of climate action that encourages sustainable vehicular travel through convenient availability of electric charging stations to support the use of electric vehicles among residents and visitors to downtown Highland Falls.

Analysis and Recommendations

This update to the comprehensive plan is providing an opportunity to review this referenced revision to density and the overall status of the Zoning Chapter to make sure that land use regulation is occurring in a manner that is consistent with the needs of the residents. To conduct such a review, a zoning analysis has been conducted to review the following elements of the Zoning Chapter:

- Zoning district boundaries – To provide guidance as to the optimal levels for basic land uses – residential, commercial, institutional, recreational, etc. are provided for.
- Dimensional standards – To provide guidance as to the optimal standards for dimensional and bulk requirements.
- Ancillary requirements – To provide guidance as to the suitable standards for functional land use support elements such as parking, signage, stormwater management, etc.

A copy of the zoning analysis is appended to this plan (see Appendix A).



1 inch = 1,500 feet

0 750 1,500 Feet

Village of Highland Falls 2024 Comprehensive Plan Update

Village of Highland Falls, Orange County, New York

Title

Figure 3: Land Use Map

Source: NYS GIS Program Office Lands and Boundaries

PREPARED FOR:

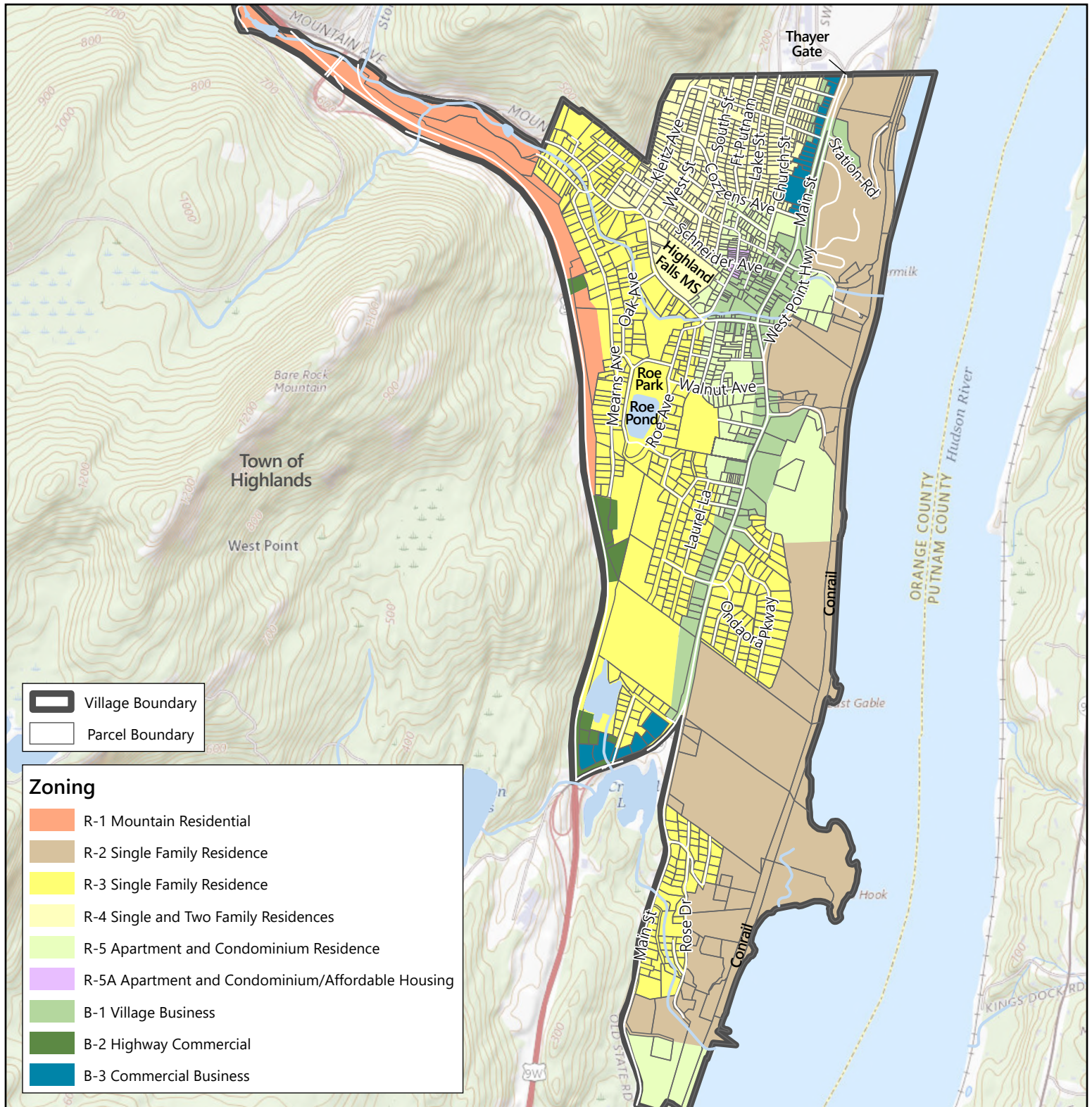
Village of Highland Falls
303 Main St.
Highland Falls, NY 10928



The LA GROUP
Landscape Architecture & Engineering P.C.
People. Purpose. Place.

Project 2019028

Date Feb. 2024



1 inch = 1,500 feet

0 750 1,500 Feet

Village of Highland Falls 2024 Comprehensive Plan Update

Village of Highland Falls, Orange County, New York

Title

Figure 4: Zoning Map

Source: Orange County Planning Department

PREPARED FOR:

Village of Highland Falls
 303 Main St.
 Highland Falls, NY 10928



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3.5 Community Buildings and Services

Community Buildings

The Village owns Village Hall, the Public Works property, the Senior Center, the sewer treatment plant, the water treatment plant, two municipal parking lots and multiple park/open space areas. Table 11 lists and details the properties owned by the Village. Figure 5 shows the location of most community buildings.

TABLE 11 – VILLAGE-OWNED PROPERTIES						
	Property Address	Tax Map Parcel #	Description			
1.	303 Main St.	104.-3-17.1	Village Hall			
2.	26 Havens Rd.	105.-5-2	DPW Facilities			
3.	27 Havens Rd.	105.-5-3	DPW Facilities			
4.	15 Drew Ave.	103.-16-26	Senior Center			
5.	US Hwy. 9W	101.-1-1	Water Reservoir			
6.	95 Rose Dr.	109.-3-11.1	Sewer Plant			
7.	44 Web Lane	104.-6-8.1	Sewer Plant			
8.	Main St.	103.-15-5	Parking Lot			
9.	2 Center St.	103.-21-2	Municipal Park			
10.	Main St. and Mill St.	104.-5-11.2	Municipal Park			
11.	Roe Park	105.-2-15	Municipal Park			
12.	31 Roe Ave.	105-3-1	Municipal Park			

Source: 2020 Village of Highland Falls Real Property Tax Data

Former Elementary School – Built in 1970, the former elementary school for the Highland Falls-Fort Montgomery Central School District has been vacant since 2012. At its peak, over 200 students from kindergarten through third grade were enrolled at the elementary school. Today, the only activity at the site are the buses that park at the school and deliver kids to and from the middle school directly across the street. The property is still owned by the Highland Falls-Fort Montgomery Central School District who have been interested in working with the Village to find a new use for the 1.36-acre site. The Village has expressed their preference to reuse the building but are open alternatives. Based on the municipal code, options for the property include a place of worship, a recreation center, a school, a nursing home, a museum, or government offices. 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 veteran with housing and other basic needs to open an office in the building.



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. Programming for the Senior Center is the responsibility of the Town of Highlands Recreation Department. The Recreation Department often collaborates with the Highlanders Senior Citizens Club that covers Highland Falls, Fort Montgomery, and West Point. Everything from food drives to public meetings occurs at the Senior Center, making it an essential component of civic life in Highland Falls. Therefore, the appearance and accessibility of the building, and the frequency and visibility of its events, are priorities.



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. The three-story building is an important community resource because it houses the offices for all the Village departments, the mayor and his staff, and the Police Department. The Town of Highlands Historical Society is also located within the Village Hall. These offices provide essential services to residents and visitors. As both the physical and functional center of the Village, improving the visual quality and accessibility of Village Hall should be a priority.

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. The accessibility of their storefronts is just as valuable as the aesthetic of the streetscape. Currently, pedestrians can



easily navigate the village center on a continuous network of sidewalks and walking paths connected to Main Street. However, there is an opportunity to improve connections between adjacent residential neighborhoods and Main Street businesses where sidewalks are lacking or in need of repair. Another concern is the lack of beautification elements along Main Street. The design and placement of street trees, awnings, streetlights, benches, sidewalks, and signage can impact the amount of foot traffic for local merchants. The Village has already completed nearly \$500,000 in infrastructure and streetscape improvements to Main Street with assistance from State funds. Most recently, the Village completed streetscape improvements to northern Main Street, which included new street trees and planting. The Orange County IDA (Industrial Development Agency) also awarded \$45,000 to the Village to help offset engineering expenses for building façade improvements along Main Street as part of a Restore NY grant.

Unfortunately, all these improvements are often overshadowed by the negative visual impact of utility poles and their network of cables and power lines.

Opportunities and Recommendations

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 while incentivizing and igniting improvements by private property owners. On this basis the following recommendations are made:

- Participate in state and federal grant programs such as the NY Forward grant program. This program specifically provides funding assistance to improve downtown areas in smaller communities like the Village of Highland Falls – it is an ideal fit, not only with a purpose and intent that focuses on small communities like Highland Falls, but with significant funding levels that can spur real improvements and sought-after changes.
- The Village should continue to update the streetscape as funds become available.
- Develop architectural design guidelines for downtown (Main Street) and establish an architectural review board. There should be a historical component to this review as well. Once established, provide financial and technical assistance to help property owners along Main Street to meet the guidelines for topics such as façade improvements and business signage.
- The focus of improvements should be on making the downtown area more accessible and welcoming.
- Construct new sidewalks from County Route 218/9W to the James I. O'Neill High School. Research funding opportunities through the NYSDOT's Safe Routes to School grant program.

Community Services

The Town and Village have a long history of effective and cost-efficient collaboration, sharing of services, and delivering of joint services. A strong and well-functioning "division of labor" already exists between the Village and Town on several critical services. As would be expected, the primary service areas delivered by the Village reflect services found in communities that are densely populated such as water, sewer, public works, police, fire, community beautification and special events. Existing differences in services, shared services and services already provided by the Village for Village and Town residents, and services provided by the Town on a town-wide basis include the following services.

- Joint Building Inspector/Code Enforcement – Through an inter-municipal agreement, the Village and Town operate a joint Village and Town Building Inspector and Code Enforcement operation.
- Joint Village and Town Planning Board and Joint Village and Town Zoning Board of Appeals – Through an inter-municipal agreement, the Village and Town operate a joint Village and Town Planning Board and a Joint Zoning Board of Appeals. Both communities have their own Comprehensive Plan, zoning and land use regulations created and approved by the individual municipalities. Upon dissolution the Town can adopt a new Comprehensive Plan and land use regulations encompassing the former Village.
- Refuse Collection – The Town provides refuse collection on a town-wide basis, including the Village.

- Recreation and Park Services – The Town currently provides an array of recreation and park services and programs for youth, adults, and seniors, including Village residents, on a town-wide basis.
- Town-wide Assessment – The Town Assessor provides assessment services for the town and the village.
- Ambulance Services – The Town funds ambulance services on a town-wide basis, including the Village.
- Justice Court – The Town provides Justice Court services on a town-wide basis, including the Village.
- Dog Control – The Town provides dog control services on a Town-wide basis, including the Village.

Village Police Services

The Village of Highland Falls Police Department provides 24/7 with staff that includes 1 full time Chief (vacant), 2 full time sergeants and 5 full time (1 vacant) and 9 part-time police officers. One of the full-time police officers is assigned to detective functions. The Officer-in-Charge indicated that the Village Department provides 24/7 coverage and has a minimum staffing of two officers per shift. The Department serves a densely populated community with an active business district and covers several large events hosted by the Village as well as those at West Point including football games, graduation, and alumni events all of which create a dynamic community environment. West Point football season can bring 45,000 to 50,000 visitors to the community on a weekend. The Department detective investigates crimes and generates arrests. In 2019 the Department made 162 arrests of which 10 were felonies, 100 misdemeanors and 52 violations. During 2019, the Department managed 39 traffic accidents and issued 1,084 parking and traffic citations.

The Village Department currently provides its own police dispatch services. There is one dispatcher available 24 hours, every day of the week. The Village dispatch staffing includes 3 full-time staff and 5 part-time dispatchers. During peak times such as during special events, two dispatchers are assigned. Dispatch receives calls directly from the public into dispatch and receives 911 calls through Orange County Dispatch. The dispatchers also manage requests for assistance from the public that walk into the police department and provide non-emergency assistance. They also monitor 5 security cameras located in the Village and they monitor the Village's license plate readers and report activity to officers. In addition, they develop and provide statistical reports, provide location information and history to officers in the field, manage police reports, manage lost property collection and disbursement, and provide a wide range of additional administrative tasks.

Opportunities and Recommendations for Police Services

A 5-year plan has been established by the Village to make the Highland Falls Police Department a more effective and more efficiently run Police Department.

General Recommendations

- Identify and send someone to grant writing training.
- Seek grants and programs that would be of financial benefit to the Village, as well as improve public safety.
- Target based enforcement of problem areas.
- Incorporate a community policing project into field training. This would allow the recruit to learn about the community he/she is going to serve.
- Continue the great partnership we have with other County, State and Federal agencies.
- Maximize services in a cost-effective manner.

Staffing Recommendations

- Identify and recruit candidates that are reflective of the community that we serve.
- Fully staff the department.
- Increase training opportunities.
- Identify and train members as police instructors and range safety officers to further in-house training.
- Reduce turnover.
- Increase the number of field training officers.
- Fully train and certify officers for various needed police duties.

Building Recommendations

- Address the third-floor storage room which is filled with old and useless items and upon cleaning it out, install an orderly and functional storage system for storing department equipment.
- Have the first-floor floors refinished.
- Streamline the property room to be more functional and better organized.
- Renovate the locker room bathroom.
- Explore the possibility of renovating the radio room, bathroom, and kitchen. area into one large meeting room/ multipurpose room with a bathroom.

Community Policing

- Develop patrol plans that implement community styled policing and effective policing strategies.
- Identify an Officer to send to D.A.R.E. school (building bridges to the future for school-aged children).
- Explore a Police Athletic League, which would offer athletics and additional activities to the youth and teen population of the community.
- Continue the National Night Out Program, building on the successes of years past and finding ways to improve these events.
- Coffee with a cop. A monthly program where members of the community can meet with the Police chief, giving the public access to the Police Department in an informal and inviting setting.
- Deploy bicycle patrols and walking patrols during community events and busy times.

- Continue the project good morning program.

Fire Services

The Highland Falls Fire Department is an all-volunteer fire service providing fire protection to the residents of the Village for almost 100 years. Highland Falls Fire Department Incidents Highlands Falls Fire Company. The Fire Department provides services through a partnership with the Highland Falls Volunteer Fire Company, Inc. which is a not for profit 501(c)3 corporation. The Village of Highland Falls Volunteer Fire Department, Inc. owns and maintains the current fire house located at 9 Mountain Avenue, Highland Falls and leases the fire house to the Village for \$27,100 per year for use of the Fire House. The Village provides financial support for operations costs, workers compensation and the length of service award program (LOSAP). The Village owns and maintains all fire vehicles, apparatus, and equipment and can transfer the assets to a Fire District or sell the assets. The Fort Montgomery Fire District provides the residents of the Town of Highlands who live outside the Village of Highland Falls with fire services.

Opportunities and Recommendations for Fire Services

As a volunteer service, the Highland Falls Fire Department needs additional volunteers to continue to provide fire protective services. Therefore, a proactive recruitment program is recommended so that staffing levels and the overall quality response can be maintained. It is envisioned that the program would consist of active outreach efforts, particularly among the young adults of the community to be introduced to volunteerism and enriching impact it can have both for the individuals who join and the overall community of fellow residents they serve.

3.6 Infrastructure

DPW Services

The Village currently contracts for part-time engineering services. This includes the water and sewer systems serving more than 3,600 Village residents and corresponding underground distribution and collection systems, additional streets, highway, and parks systems.

Opportunities and Recommendations for a 5-Year Plan for General DPW Services

- Consider incentives and other means to attract and retain quality employees.
- Continue to update and replace our fleet of vehicles and equipment.
- Continue to update our infrastructure, roads, and sidewalks.
- Upgrade water and sewer lines throughout the Village.
- Replace outdated fuel and oil storage tanks at the DPW garage.
- Continue training for employees in safety, workplace violence as well as job specific training.
- Improve and expand the storage yard behind the Little League field at Roe Park to improve out item 4 and sand storage.
- Investigate how to alleviate flooding around the DPW building.

Sewer Services

The Village currently provides sewer services for most of its Village residents. The Village owns and operates a sewer treatment plant and maintains the Village sewer collection system. The Village treatment plant staffing includes: 1 Chief Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator, 2 Waste Water Treatment Plant Operators and a Wastewater Maintenance Worker. Currently, the full cost of operations and capital improvements is covered by sewer fees paid by the beneficiaries within the Village Sewer Fund. Currently there is no Village tax levy support for the sewer service.

Opportunities and Recommendations for a 5-Year Plan for Sewage Treatment Plant

- Replace the four west side rotating biological contactors (RBC's).
- Rehabilitate the south digester tank.
- Continue DEC required training for licensed operators.
- Upgrade the digester furnace to burn methane rather than oil, saving the Village money and being more friendly to the environment.
- Replace the gravity thickener steel access bridge.

Water Services

The Village Water Service provides water to Village residents and extends water services to Town residents outside the Village located in Water Districts #1 and #2. The Town Highway Department maintains the water lines outside the Village. The Village Water Service provides water to most of the Village residents which includes approximately 1,157 active Village accounts. In addition, the Village sells water to a subset of Town users located outside the Village. The budgeted Village water system staff includes 1 Chief Water Plant Operator and a Water Plant Operator. The Water Plant Operator position is vacant, and the Village is actively recruiting for the position.

The Village has initiated the engineering phase for the replacement of an initial section of water lines with an estimated cost of \$3.4M. Village officials are funding the engineering phase with water fund revenues and are seeking grants to support the project. A bond has been authorized, however, not yet issued as the Village is hopeful that through grants and other revenues, the full amount of the bond will not be needed. The Village and Town have both implemented remote meter reading systems which have significantly reduced the time dedicated to meter reading. Currently an account clerk in the Village Clerk's Office manages the billing for the water services for Village residents. The Village sets its rates at a base amount for the first 5,000 gallons for each 6-month billing period and then charges a rate per 1,000 gallons that covers all costs. The fees cover operations, maintenance, and debt. The Village also bills the Town for the water services provided to the Town Water Districts which includes a rate add-on for a share of the capital costs. The Town then bills the property owners in the two Water Districts.

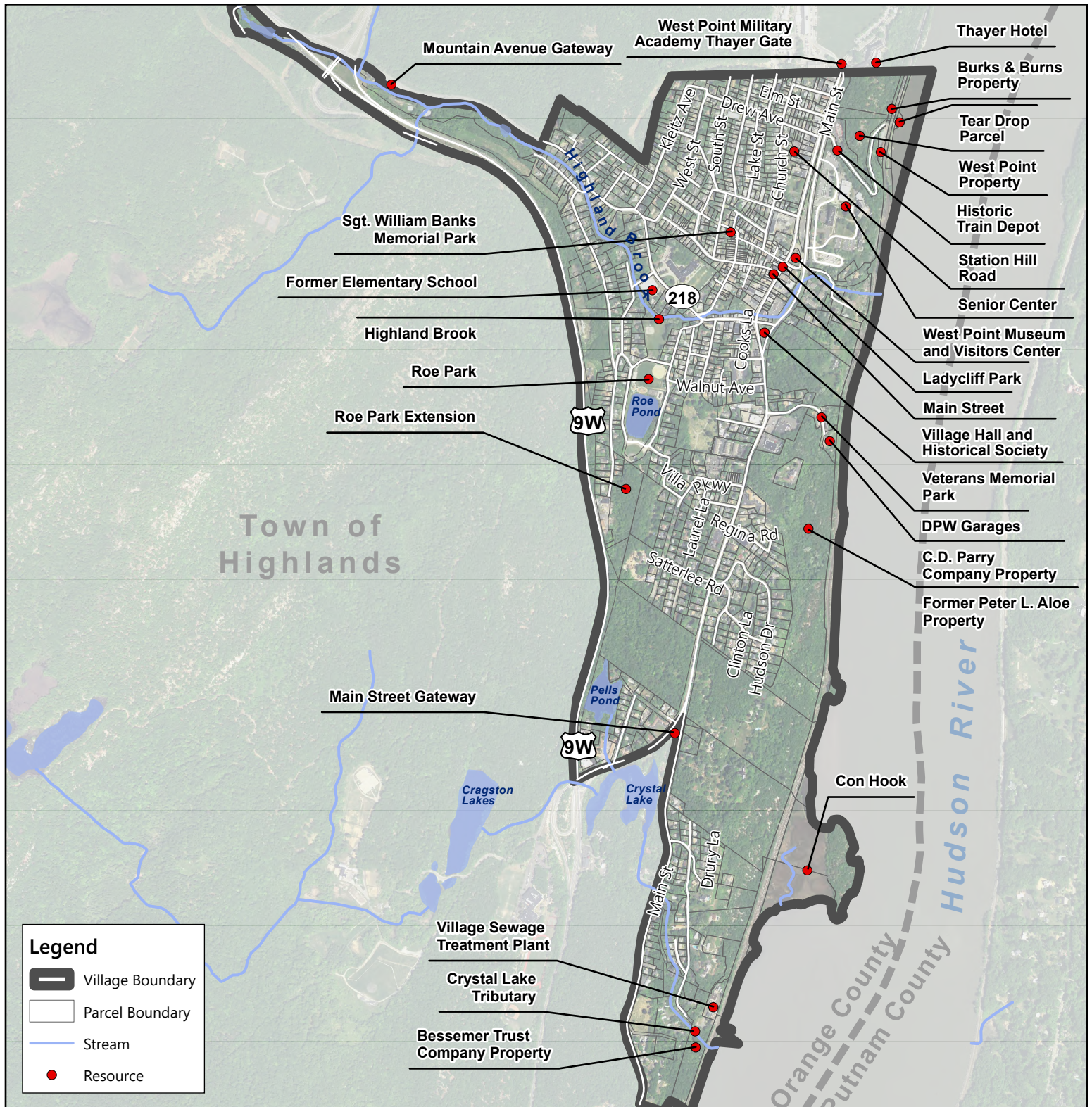
Opportunities and Recommendations for a 5-Year Plan for Water Services

As with most municipal governments, the water lines are aging and in some instances are experiencing capacity issues. The Village has been evaluating the condition of its infrastructure over the past number of years. The Village is prioritizing its needs and is planning to address the replacement incrementally over the next 20 years. A one-time renewal and/or replacement of the entire system is typically cost prohibitive for municipalities. Therefore, the recommendations for water services are as follows:

- Install metering pit past storage tanks (2 meters and telemetering to plant) registering the amount of water entering system.
- Replace (2) Backwash pumps at Water Plant. (3000GPM@ 50HP) as the pumps have been actively in service for over 65 years. If the pumps were to fail, the plant would be out-of-service.
- Connect 6" watermain Cedar Lane to Villa Parkway. (300ft).
- Replace waterlines in Ondaora Parkway.

2024 Update of the Comprehensive Plan

- Replace watermain in Cragston including line to WWTP.
- Replace drain valve at Lower Bog Meadow Dam.
- Replace House pumps (2) at Water Plant (200GPM @ 20 HP).
- Upgrade the “Bog Meadows” reservoir through removal of all trees and shrubs from the Bog Meadows Dams and increase the height of the Upper Bog Meadows Spillway.
- The Village Engineer should prepare a report on the replacement of village water mains.



1 inch = 1,500 feet
0 750 1,500 Feet

Village of Highland Falls 2024 Comprehensive Plan Update

Village of Highland Falls, Orange County, New York

Title

Figure 5: Community Resources

Source: NYS GIS Program Office Lands and Boundaries

PREPARED FOR:

Village of Highland Falls
303 Main St.
Highland Falls, NY 10928



Project 2019028

Date Feb. 2024

3.7 Transportation

The Village of Highland Falls has multiple transportation features that were evaluated and given consideration as part of the LWRS. 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.

Connectivity to the downtown area is a core consideration for the successful implementation of the vision for downtown Highland Falls. The transportation system serving downtown Highland Falls is multi-modal in its makeup and function. This circumstance is a direct result of the heritage of the Village and its evolution since its establishment in 1906. Settlement of the Village began in the downtown area, developing concentrically from the core outwardly into the residential neighborhoods through a series of interconnected roads, streets, pathways, and sidewalks. Regional connections were further enhanced via passenger and freight rail lines. In consideration of this history, the downtown is inextricably linked to these neighborhoods and the surrounding region.

Today the downtown is connected to the rest of the region by two main roads, State Route 9W and County Road 218 and the CSX west shore rail line. State Route 9W is a major roadway along the western Hudson River, linking Highland Falls to markets in Fort Lee, New Jersey, and New York City in the south and Albany and the Capital Region to the north. Since the 1930s, the state route has served as the primary means for the movement of freight and passenger vehicles to and from the Village and therefore a significant factor in the growth and development of the downtown. County Road 218 is an extension of Main Street to Storm King Highway and State Route 9W. State Route 9W and County Road 218 are also valued for their scenic experience. Due to the constraints of the regional terrain and preferences of early inhabitants to locate settlements along the Hudson River, these roads were required to traverse many mountains, valleys and forested areas which provide some of the most breathtaking views of the Hudson River and New York landscape.

Prior to the rise of automobiles as the preferred mode of transportation, rail service was the preferred mode of travel for passengers and to transport freight. Now owned by CSX Railroad and restricted to the transport of freight, the rail line along the west shore of the Hudson River was the primary route for freight from New York City ports to the Village and for local passengers to the many other communities of the Hudson River Valley. The former train depot remains as a beautiful reminder of this past. The historic significance of the station house was recognized by the state and federal government in 1982 with its listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Although the depot is no longer functioning, the site remains an asset to the downtown by providing an area for waterfront activities and public access to the Hudson River. This is a unique amenity for a central business district.

Within the downtown, pedestrians can easily visit local businesses, parks, and other special places with the use of a connected network of sidewalks and walking paths. Whether its strolling through Ladycliff Park, window shopping on Main Street, or taking the Highland Falls Greenway Trail to Roe Park, the Village downtown is completely accessible for pedestrians. Main Street is fully connected by sidewalks but there is an opportunity to improve connections between adjacent residential neighborhoods and Main Street businesses. Increasing downtown pedestrian circulation and connectivity will improve the pedestrian experience, reduce the potential for conflicts between different transportation modes, reduce traffic by

removing the need for an automobile in the downtown, and put more feet on the street to increase the liveliness of downtown and generate more business activity. The intent is to utilize funding through available state and federal grant programs to significantly improve these connections and downtown area destinations, businesses, and service providers.

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 Transportation Strategy includes the following findings:

- 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).

Opportunities and Recommendations for Transportation

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 the 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 would 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 would 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 would 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 would complete a continuous loop of sidewalk back to Municipal Lot A. The sidewalk between Highland Brook and West Point Highway would have a strip of grass added to create a wider buffer zone. Highlighting this brook would 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.

3.8 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 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 their 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.

Highland Brook – Highland Brook flows through the edge of the downtown area, crossing under Main Street and West Point Highway to the Hudson River. The brook, from which Highland Falls gets its name, extends from Bog Meadow Pond in Black Rock Forest to the Hudson River and acts as a natural separation between the downtown and the rest of Highland Falls. These places are local treasures, providing an escape from urban life and close to downtown.



Con Hook – Con Hook is a preserved island and marsh area off the eastern shore of the village. The natural outlet is owned by the Sidamon-Eristoff family. The family has a long-storied history of great work in the conservation field and therefore has chosen to protect the natural value of the area. 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. Con Hook is also a popular stop for boaters and kayakers on the Hudson River. Although the island once had a beacon light to mark its location for passing boats, there is no existing public or private access to the island from the shore.



Crystal Lake and Tributary – Crystal Lake is located at the entrance to the village in the Town of Highlands, between the southern off-ramp of State Route 9W, County Route 218, and Old State Road out of Fort Montgomery. The lake is protected from greater development due to steep slopes, rocky terrain, and its proximity to a highway.



Although Crystal Lake is outside the village, there is a tributary through Highland Falls that connects the lake to the Hudson River. The flow of water to the Hudson River is controlled by a dam, which can be accessed from a gate off Old State Road at the intersection with Rose Drive. An access road to the north-side of the lake is available off County Route 218 across from the Town police station. There is no public access to Crystal Lake or its tributary.

Roe Pond – Roe Pond is the central water feature of Roe Park, the largest public park 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. The pond is popular for fishing, relaxing and a casual stroll. Roe Pond is part of an ongoing redesign of the park. New features related to the pond will include an improved walking path and boardwalk, a new fishing pier, a new gazebo, a new fountain on the south side of the pond, a picnic grove off the walking path, and general shoreline improvements.

Pells Pond – Pells Pond sits on the western edge of the village between State Route 9W and Pellwood Lake Road. The 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. The parts of the pond away from Route 9W are surrounded almost entirely by single-family homes with small private docks for fishing and boating. Pells Pond is a special amenity for these homeowners as it is the only waterbody in the village where access is entirely private.



Hudson River – The Hudson River is the most valuable natural resource for Highland Falls and one of the most important places in United States history. The Hudson River has functioned 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 is 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.

Opportunities and Recommendations

The numerous water bodies and protected natural areas are significant resources in the village that are 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 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.

3.9 Parks and Public Spaces

The village has a healthy mix of public spaces. The smaller parks offer green space, a place to have a picnic 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 lacks 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 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.

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. More public access points along the Highland Falls riverfront are a primary need as the only other nearby access is on the west side of the Hudson River is Cornwall Yacht Club. Also across the river is the Garrison Yacht Club and Cold Spring Boat Club.

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 has a Public Works department and a volunteer beautification committee that support the efforts of the Town of Highlands 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.

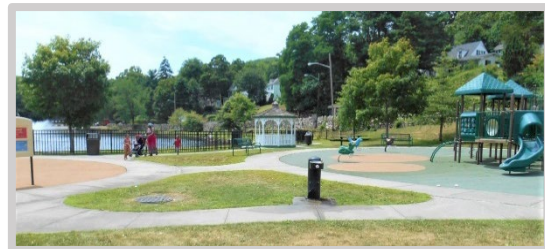
Ladycliff Park – Ladycliff Park is the main park area for the downtown area. Centrally located, the park is a place where residents, workers and shoppers on Main Street can sit outside and relax. The 1.4-acre pocket park has been owned and managed by the Village since the early 1980s.



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.

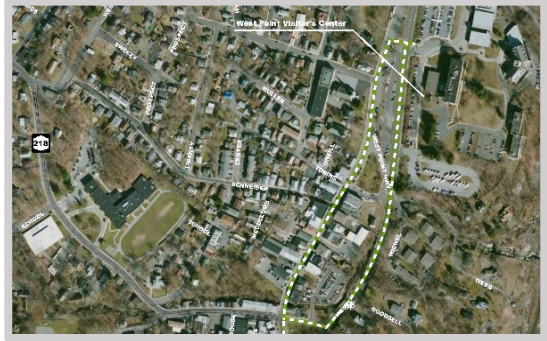


Sgt. William Banks Memorial Park – Sgt. William Banks Memorial Park is a 0.1-acre park at the corner of Center Street and Tobin's Lane. The Village has owned and maintained this amenity for nearby families since the late 1970s.



Roe Park– 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. The pathways throughout the park are in poor condition, not inviting to walkers, and there is no accessible connectivity between the neighborhood and the park. In addition, there is erosion occurring along the walkway edges as well as around Roe Pond. Future improvements will establish for the first time an accessible connection to the water's edge for fishing, as well as accessible routes from the south parking lot to the playground and swimming pool facilities and into the woodland area to the new dog park. Expanding the opportunity for recreation to people with disabilities and physically challenged is a priority to the Village since they are experiencing an aging population while also have a growing the number of families with young children.

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.



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.

Hudson Highlands Park – In 2020, The Scenic Hudson Land Trust, Inc. (Scenic Hudson) purchased 31.8 beautiful and ecologically important acres to protect important scenic views and to work with the Village of Highland Falls to create a passive recreation park within a dense village environment that otherwise lacks easy visual access to the Hudson River. A 10-minute walk from the homes of 2,500 village residents and the U.S. Military Academy, the land slopes to the river from a ridgetop with rock outcropping, mosses and ferns, and the ecologically sensitive pitch pine habitat. The lower elevations of the property offer spectacular views of the Hudson River, Castle Rock Unique Area and the shoreline of Garrison, NY. The land is predominantly undeveloped heavily wooded ridgeline with over 2,000 feet of frontage along the Hudson River and an important component of the scenic panorama of the Hudson Highlands from the Hudson River. Much of the eastern boundary of the property (+/- 2400 ft) abuts the railroad that runs along the Hudson River. The property is one of the few undeveloped shoreline parcels in the village and it is surrounded by commercial and residential development. The property lacks direct access from all the surrounding roads however a trailhead is envisioned at the end of Havens Road near the Highway Garage.



A Natural Resources Inventory, funded by a DEC Estuary Grant which the Village awarded in 2021, will augment the Rapid Ecological Assessment conducted by Scenic Hudson in 2020. The property is suitable for passive recreation uses like hiking, enjoying the river views, bird watching and learning about the site’s natural and cultural history. Due to the presence of steep slopes and shallow soils, mountain biking should not be allowed. Since the eastern prickly pear has an S1 conservation status in the state of NY, a management and monitoring plan should be established to preserve the population. The few remaining remnants of structures should be assessed for structural integrity. A future comprehensive plan will consider site conditions, habitat protection and enhancements, historic and cultural remnants, and their protection. It will provide the foundation for all future improvements including access, a trail system including initial paths and potential expansion, scenic overlooks, interpretive opportunities, and management of vegetation including invasive species.

Opportunities and Recommendations

Improve parks through the development of a Master Plan for Ladycliff Park and Memorial Park and expand recreational opportunities in Roe Park, to the new Hudson Highland Park, and construct a hike-bike off-road trail between the Village and Fort Montgomery along County Route 218. Details of these parks and trails recommendations are found below.

Ladycliff Park and Memorial Park

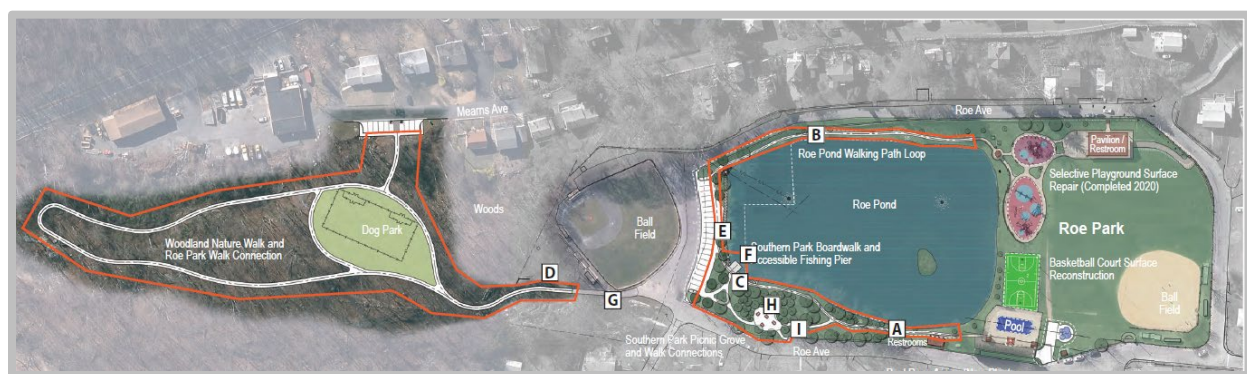
The Village of Highland Falls is seeking funds to assist in the development of a Master Plan for both Ladycliff Park and Memorial Park. These parks are the endpoints of the urban core which defines the Village. The focus of the improvements is on streetscape and infrastructure improvements, building rehabilitation and façade improvements, the development of new recreational and cultural amenities, and economic development.

Highlands Station And Marina Redevelopment

The focus of this project area is the redevelopment of the poorly utilized 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 marina, a kayak launch, and an extended dock for 75-foot to 100-foot private and commercial boats. This land is currently on the market.

Roe Park Improvements and Interpretive Trail System

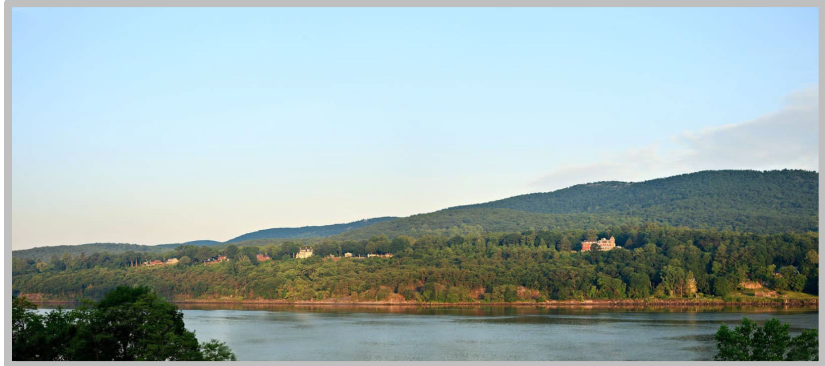
The project is the construction of recreational improvements to Roe Park. The proposed work will enrich the lives of the residents by providing new recreational opportunities as well as establishing accessible connectivity between the residential neighborhood and the park's features. Improvements include an amphitheater, new dog park, a woodland nature walk, an accessible boardwalk and fishing pier at the southeast corner of the pond, a new picnic grove at the southern end of the pond, and an accessible walking path loop around Roe Pond. These projects will bring new recreational opportunities to the Village, connect children and adults with nature, and establish for the first time an accessible connection to the water's edge for fishing, as well as accessible routes from the south parking lot to the playground and swimming pool facilities. All improvements will be designed to meet industry best practices while providing sustainable development solutions to minimize disturbance to the landscape.



An additional improvement will be to develop a unique educational and recreational trail system in the 5-acre undeveloped forested property south of Roe Park. 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.

Hudson Highland Park

An application will be made to the HRVG Trail Conservancy Grant Program design, engineer and construct the trailhead and trail system in this new park area. Further funding will be sought for the development of a Wayfinding and Interpretive Signage Plan.

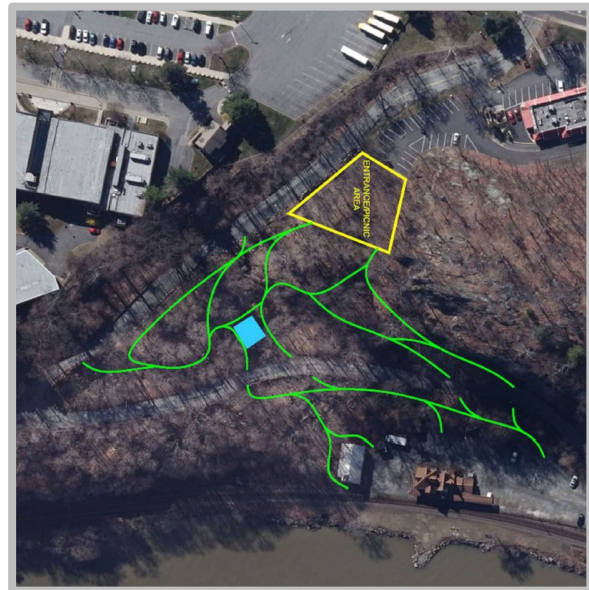


Hudson River Ridgeline Trail

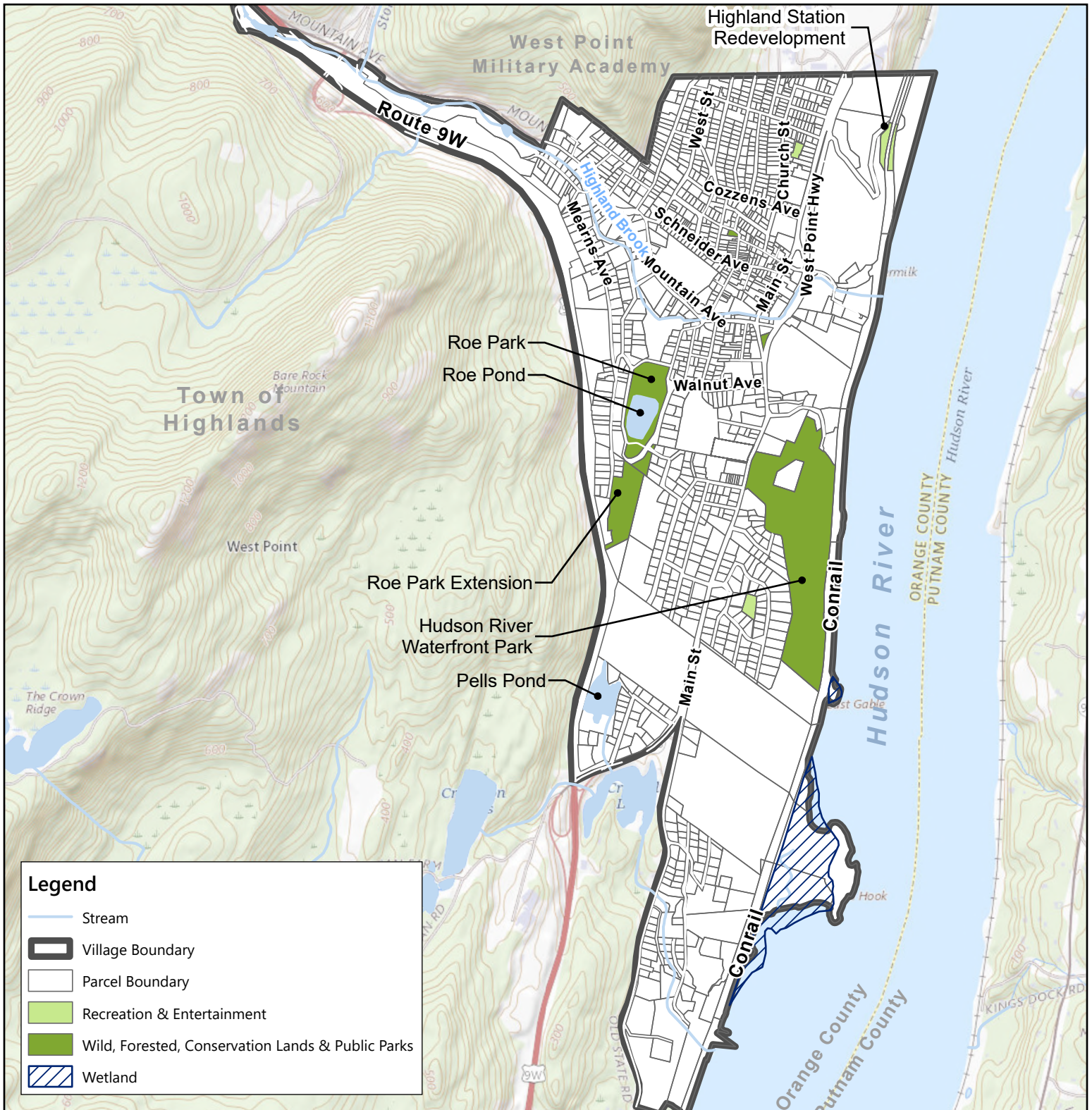
The Village plans to work with the Town of Highlands to develop a hike-bike off-road trail along County Route 218 between Thayer Gate in the Village and Fort Montgomery. This trail would connect to the Appalachian Trail just west of the Bear Mountain Bridge.

Highlands Station and Marina Redevelopment

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 a trail System by the historic train depot



1 inch = 1,500 feet
 0 750 1,500 Feet

Village of Highland Falls 2024 Comprehensive Plan Update

Village of Highland Falls, Orange County, New York

Figure 6: Parks & Recreation Areas Map

Source: USGS The National Map

PREPARED FOR:

Village of Highland Falls
 303 Main St.
 Highland Falls, NY 10928



The LA GROUP
 Landscape Architecture & Engineering P.C.
 People. Purpose. Place.

Project 2019028
 Date Feb. 2024

3.10 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 19th 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.

Town of Highlands Historical Society – The Village is the home of the 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. These items are available to the public at the Historical Society offices in the Village Hall building. Visitors to the Historical Society can also take a walking tour trail guide. This guide details the significance of several buildings and places from the Village of Highland Falls through the hamlet of Fort Montgomery. One of the main attractions of the guide is the Walk of Fame. With the guide, visitors can walk around the village and read about historic people and events designated by a Walk of Fame marker. The markers are the result of a collaboration between the Highland Falls Local Development Corporation, the Village government, West Point, and the Town Historian.



Historic Thayer Hotel – The Thayer Hotel is a six-story, 151-room hotel on the grounds of the Military Academy at West Point. The hotel is named after Colonel Sylvanus Thayer, often referred to as the "Father of the Military Academy, was the fifth Superintendent of the Academy who oversaw the construction of the original West Point Hotel in 1829. Several prominent Americans stayed at the West Point Hotel, including Ulysses S. Grant, Washington Irving, and Edgar Allan Poe. Many others have been there since the Thayer Hotel officially opened in 1926. In recent history, the hotel famously housed the former Iranian hostages in 1981 after they returned to the United States. The treasured history, incredible views of the Hudson River and valley, location on the Military Academy grounds, connection with West Point Tours, and world class staff makes the Thayer Hotel one of the best places in the area to stay, visit or hold an event. 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. The gate was replaced during the Second World War, including the construction of a new stone structure, installation of new stain glass windows, and placement of a sculpture of the Military Academy crest and several reliefs. A plaque from the Class of 1943 can be found at the entrance, dedicating the gate to the Military Academy and the nation. Today, an estimated 2-3 million people enter West Point each year, which includes staff, cadets, employees, delivery people, and other non-tourists. For all these visitors, Thayer Gate is their first impression of the Military Academy. Anyone who passes through Thayer Gate is following in the footsteps of the countless military personnel and renown generals of American history who visited West Point as cadets and as officers of the United States Army. The entrance at Thayer Gate is currently being redesigned to be more secure and more efficient passage into West Point.



Historic Train Depot – Built in the late 19th century, the shingle-style Train Depot was formerly the station for passengers on the West Shore Railroad until the mid-20th century. Once the railroad began transporting freight exclusively, the site began transitioning into a marina. Following a minor flooding event, the marina was damaged beyond repair and had to be closed. Since the marina closed, the building has been divided into separate rentable residential units while the surrounding property is used as a RV park. Although the Train Depot is no longer operational, the building retains most of its historical qualities that led to its listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The Train Depot remains one of the most unique buildings in the region on the western shore of the Hudson River. The property is currently owned by a private limited liability corporation.



Opportunities and Recommendations

The Village of Highland Falls has some of the country's finest 18th, 19th, and early 20th century architecture. In consideration of the age and heritage of many of these buildings, they are also either listed 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.

Banners, plaques, informational materials, interpretive signage, and promotional items are a few of the ways the village can expand 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.

The Village should continue to seek a permanent accessible location for the Town of Highlands Historical Society.

Programs and projects should be implemented that 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.

CHAPTER 4 SUMMARY OF REVITALIZATION PROJECTS

4.1 Downtown Transformative Projects

Development goals will take advantage of opportunities and develop projects that position downtown Highland Falls as a remarkable central business district with a dynamic and interactive mix of land uses. The elements contributing to his revitalized environment include retention and expansion of job opportunities across a range of skill levels and job types and introduction of new uses that provide a sustainable setting for work, living and leisure/recreation activities. The Village will perform the revitalization through the utilization of strategic funding opportunities to support projects that are ready to construct and implement in accord with the initiatives of this comprehensive plan. Accessing available funding will play a critical role in prioritization of transformative projects that contribute to sustainability and resilience while maximizing job creation, and diversifying project benefits across a spectrum of beneficiaries.

The Village has made productive use complimentary planning efforts such as local waterfront strategic plan to formulate an inclusive and strategic approach for meaningful and sustainable revitalization. As a result of the broad-based plan development process, the Village has further condensed and focused the downtown revitalization area and refined related revitalization initiatives that will bring impactful and transformative change to downtown Highland Falls. Furthermore, through a strategic prioritization process, the projects listed below have been purposefully selected based upon the degree of impact to revitalization needs as defined by the residents and local business owners.



Thayer Hotel and Spa Streetscape – The revitalizing impact of the Thayer Hotel and Spa project is broad based by leveraging substantial private investment in the downtown and serving as a destination-style lodging, dining, and event-hosting venue. This project was identified as the priority project from the Mid-Hudson Region during the 2019 funding round of the CFA. To extend the project’s impact, streetscape improvements and extension of Ladycliff Park are also planned.

Summary of Project Readiness for Implementation	
Project name:	Thayer Hotel and Spa Project and Associated Streetscape Improvements
Project budget:	Approximately \$40 million
Anticipated impacts and project justification:	Supporting a private, transformative downtown project bringing job growth, increased commerce, and expansion of lodging; expansion of park area; new sidewalk, planting beds, street trees, curbing, benches, trash receptacles, new infrastructure for drainage/sewer/water; removal of blight; improved walkability and connectivity; expanded park area for events and linear farmer's market space; and will include installation of curb-side EV electric charging stations.
Project schedule and readiness:	Funding in place including a \$1.9 million ESD grant (2019 CFA priority project).

New Downtown Mixed-Use Building

– Locate and construct a new mixed-use building inclusive of a 600-car parking garage at Main Street and West Point Highway to provide additional parking in the downtown area to serve existing business activity and encourage healthy pedestrian movement. In addition to the enclosed



parking structure, the building will introduce a mix of uses including new street-level retail and office space. Among the tenants of the building will be the Village of Highland Falls through relocation of the Village Hall within the building. This project has completed conceptual design and the building will consist of 6 levels (two below grade and four above). The retail/office space will face Main Street.

Summary of Project Readiness for Implementation	
Project name:	New Downtown Mixed-Use Building
Project budget:	\$20 million
Anticipated impacts and project justification:	A transformative downtown project introducing the first structured parking in downtown for up to 600 vehicles, including enclosed spaces with EV charging stations; providing new retail/office space including space for new municipal offices; encouraging increased healthy pedestrian movement through centrally locating parking within walking distance of all downtown destinations; and will include provision of a shuttle to and from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.
Project schedule and readiness:	The project developer has completed conceptual design; a private-public approach to funding is proposed; it envisioned that state grant program funds (e.g., NY Forward program funds) could be used to offset construction costs related to the provision of public parking garage spaces; the EV charging stations; and an upgrade of public park elements.

Highlands Station and Marina Redevelopment

– The redevelopment of the currently underutilized waterfront and only access point to the Hudson River based on the selected alternative from the 2017 Waterfront Redevelopment Feasibility Study. This is the project of highest priority for the Village as outlined in the 2021 Project Implementation Strategy. 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 marina, a kayak launch, and an extended dock for 75-foot to 100-foot private and commercial boats. The immediate next steps are for the Village to acquire the waterfront property and the adjacent property on the north boundary. Implementation of the project will be coordinated with Scenic Hudson and Orange County. Implementation will also consider zoning tools to limit the type of development such as an overlay district or conservation easement.



Summary of Project Readiness for Implementation	
Project name:	Waterfront Redevelopment
Project budget:	\$800,000 for land acquisition; other project costs TBD.
Anticipated impacts and project justification:	The waterfront redevelopment project will revitalize the Village's only waterfront access into a publicly accessible park with a public pier for small and large craft access and establish a waterfront restaurant at the former train station. Benefits include revitalization of the currently blighted property and preservation of the site as a public park; establishment of a publicly accessible waterfront attraction within the downtown area; job growth; improved multi-modal access to downtown from water-based craft.
Project schedule and readiness:	TBD.

ADAPTIVE REUSE OF VILLAGE HALL – The existing building housing the Village's municipal office is approximately 13,700 sq. ft. over three floors. With the transfer of the Village Halls to the new mixed-use building described above, this project will adaptively reuse the building for a mix of commercial space on the first floor with affordable housing provided on the second and third floors. The proposed uses will expand commercial opportunities inclusive of job growth while also providing up to 12 new affordable dwelling units in the middle of the downtown area on Main Street. The building is historically significant so restoration will be done according to the guidance of the NYS Office of Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation and the U.S. Dept. of Interior guidelines.



Summary of Project Readiness for Implementation	
Project name:	Adaptive Reuse of Village Hall
Project budget:	\$4 million
Anticipated impacts and project justification:	The existing building at 303 Main Street is owned by the Village and it currently serves as the Village Hall. The space is not well-suited to the needed functions of municipal office space, and it needs substantial restoration. The move of the Village Hall to the mixed-use building described above will create an opportunity for adaptive reuse of the building for first floor commercial space (office, retail, dining) and upper floors for the establishment of approximately 10-12 affordable housing units. The adaptation of the building to these uses would expand opportunities for affordable living in the downtown area; expand real property valuation in downtown; add commercial space for a range of uses; and bring additional job growth.
Project schedule and readiness:	Concurrent with the move of the Village Hall to the new mixed-use building, the Village will initiate preliminary design for building restoration and undertake a competitive solicitation process for selection of qualified private developer/contractor to undertake the project and manage the commercial and residential space. Preliminary design and developer/contractor solicitation are anticipated by late 2023.

4.2 Village-wide Revitalization Projects

This report is a means to advance the projects that were identified as a priority for the Village of Highland Falls in the 2020 Local Waterfront Revitalization Strategy and Downtown Revitalization Initiative Application submitted in 2019. The intention is to give direction to the community as to how to proceed to get projects accomplished.

The Village identified a total of 18 projects to move forward over the next ten years. The projects are listed in order of priority, but the Village recognizes that this is highly dependent on both available funding opportunities and the Village budget over the coming years.

Where known or a high potential exists, details have been provided regarding the type of project, description, estimated costs, immediate next steps, and recommended path forward to implementation. Individual projects will be matched with potential federal, state, regional or local grant programs where eligible and practical. To help guide future grant applications general information about relevant programs has been detailed.

The chart on the following page presents a summary of the recommended projects including the name, type of project, priority level, and the potential funding opportunities that best match each project. The individual project sheets that follow the chart provide detailed descriptions, the parcels that are involved, the zoning classification and existing use of the site, ownership information, estimated cost (when available), immediate next steps, and potential funding opportunities. Cost estimates, where provided, were derived from a variety of sources, and are based on information available at the time. A detailed cost estimate will be required for all individual projects in this report. A complete description of funding opportunities is listed at the end of the report.

TABLE 12 – SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED PROJECTS

No.	Title	Type	Priority	Potential Funding Opportunities
1	Highlands Station and Marina Redevelopment	Parks & Economic Development	High	DOS LWRP; HRVG; ESD; DEC Environmental Restoration; DEC Local Stewardship Planning; DEC Climate Smart Program; OPRHP Parks; EFC GIGP; OPRHP Parks and/or Historic Preservation Grant Program; NYSCA Preserve NY
2	Gateway Improvements Plan	Beautification	High	DOS LWRP; HRVG; ESD; NYSCA Architecture + Design; HCR NY Main Street
3	Comprehensive Plan Update	Planning	High	DOS LWRP; HRVG Community Grant Program
4	Economic Development, Tourism and Marketing Strategy	Economic Development	High	DOS LWRP; ESD Various Programs
5	Hudson Highlands Park Development	Parks	High	DOS LWRP; HRVG Conservancy Trail Program; OPRHP Recreational Trails
6	Roe Park Interpretive Trails	Parks & Recreation	Medium	DOS LWRP; HRVG Conservancy Trail Program; OPRHP Recreational Trails
7	Ladycliff Park Master Plan	Parks	Medium	DOS LWRP; HRVG; NYSCA Architecture + Design; OPRHP Parks
8	Main Street and West Point Highway Redesign	Transportation	Medium	HCR NY Main Street Program
9	Townwide Trails Master Plan	Recreation	Medium	DOS LWRP; HRVG Conservation Trail Grant; OPRHP Recreational Trails Program
10	Village Signage Plan	Economic Development	Medium	DOS LWRP; HRVG; ESD; NYSCA Architecture + Design; HCR NY Main Street
11	New Municipal Center	Community Development	Medium	OPRHP Certified Local Government; USDA Rural Development Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Program in New York
12	Highland Brook Environmental Assessment and Trail Feasibility	Recreation	Low	DOS LWRP; HRVG; OPRHP Recreational Trails; DEC Environmental Restoration; DEC Local Stewardship Planning; DEC Tributary Restoration and Resiliency
13	Memorial Park Improvements	Parks	Low	DOS LWRP; HRVG; OPRHP Parks
14	Main Street Architectural Design Guidelines	Planning & Economic Development	Low	NYSCA Architecture + Design; HCR NY Main Street Program
15	Village Welcoming Center and Museum	Economic Development	Low	DOS LWRP; NYSCA Architecture + Design
16	Public Parking Garage	Transportation	Low	DOT TEP; OCTC TIP; EFC GIGP; ESD Strategic Planning and Feasibility Study Project Grants
17	Downtown Lighting Redesign	Infrastructure	Low	NYSERDA Clean Energy Communities LED Lights Program; NYSDEC Climate Smart Communities Program; NYSHCR CDBG Public Facilities & Public Infrastructure Program

PROJECT #1: HIGHLANDS STATION AND MARINA REDEVELOPMENT

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 marina, a kayak launch, and an extended dock for 75-foot to 100-foot private and commercial boats. This land is currently on the market.

Priority: High

Basic Parcel Data:

- ✓ **Tax Map Nos.:** 103-15-2.1; 103-15-2.2; 103-15-4
- ✓ **Zoning:** Single-Family Residence (R-2)
- ✓ **Existing Land Use:** RV Park; Single-family residence; Multi-family residence; Vacant
- ✓ **Land Ownership:** U.S. Government; A&I Builders, LLC; Burks and Burns families; CSX Railroad.

Estimated Cost: \$800,000 for land purchase only

Immediate Next Steps:

- ✓ Complete property appraisal (completed by Scenic Hudson in 2020).
- ✓ Determine the Village's capacity to acquire the waterfront property and property adjacent and north. Assess alternative means of ownership that accomplish Village goals.
- ✓ Coordinate with Scenic Hudson or Orange County to develop a plan for acquisition and site control. Consider zoning tools to limit the type of development such as an overlay district or conservation easement.
- ✓ Negotiate purchase price of parcels.
- ✓ Apply for funding to complete the site design and engineering.
- ✓ Apply for funds to complete Phase 1 of construction.



Potential Funding Opportunities:

Empire State Development (ESD)

- ☑ *Strategy Planning and Feasibility Study Project Grants*
- ☑ *Purposes Grant Program*
- ☑ *Regional Council Capital Fund Program*
- ☑ *Environmental Restoration Grant Program*

Hudson River Valley Greenway

- ☑ *Community Grant Program*
- ☑ *Conservancy Trail Grants*

NYS Council on the Arts (NYSCA) – Preserve NY Program

NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)

- ☑ *Climate Smart Communities (CSC) Grant Program*
- ☑ *Environmental Restoration Grant Program*
- ☑ *Hudson River Estuary Program Local Stewardship Planning*
- ☑ *Hudson River Estuary Program Tributary Restoration and Resiliency Grant*
- ☑ *Water Quality Improvement Project Program (WQIP)*

NYS Department of State (DOS) – Local Waterfront Revitalization Program

NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC) – Green Innovation Grant Program (GIGP)

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

- ☑ *Parks Grant Program*
- ☑ *Historic Preservation Grant Program*

PROJECT #2: GATEWAY IMPROVEMENTS PLAN

Description: Develop recommendations for site and landscape improvements to the following sites:

- ✓ Hannibal: West Point Mule (Memorial, Main Street/West Point Highway)
- ✓ Shop Local Sign (Main Street/West Point Highway)
- ✓ Northern Village Gateway Welcome Sign (Mountain Ave)
- ✓ Central Village Gateway Welcome Sign (Havens Road)
- ✓ Southern Village Gateway Welcome Sign (Main Street/Molly Corbin Way)

Priority: High

Basic Parcel Data:

- ✓ **Tax Map Nos.:** Public right-of way
- ✓ **Zoning:** Not applicable
- ✓ **Existing Land Use:** Primarily vacant
- ✓ **Land Ownership:** Village of Highland Falls; NYS

Estimated Cost: \$7,500 for concept level plans

Immediate Next Step: Allocate funds through Village budget or apply for landscape design funding.

Potential Funding:

Empire State Development (ESD) – Strategy Planning and Feasibility Study Project Grants

Hudson River Valley Greenway – Community Grant Program

NYS Council on the Arts (NYSCA) – Architecture, Planning, and Design Program

NYS Department of State (DOS) – Local Waterfront Revitalization Program

NYS Office of Housing and Community Renewal (HCR) – NY Main Street Program



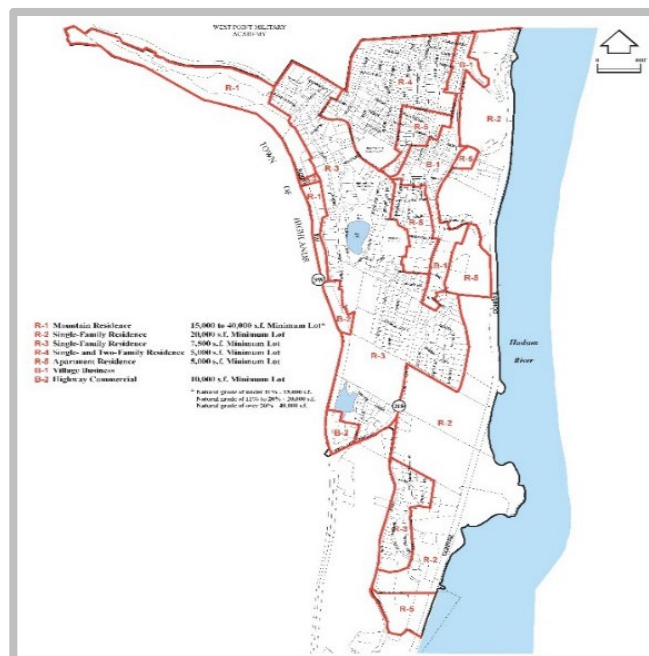
PROJECT #3: COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

Description: Update to the Comprehensive Plan with inclusion of the recommendations to the 2019 Local Waterfront Revitalization Strategy (LWRS).

Priority: Highest

Basic Parcel Data:

- ✓ **Tax Map Nos.:** Village-wide
- ✓ **Zoning:** Variable
- ✓ **Existing Land Use:** Residential, commercial, institutional, recreation, industrial, mixed-use, vacant/open space.
- ✓ **Land Ownership:** Village-wide public, private ownership



Estimated Cost: \$20,000

Immediate Next Steps:

- ✓ This project was awarded a \$10,000 grant in December 2020 by the Hudson River Valley Greenway. It can be activated once it is accepted by the village and a contract with the HVRG is signed.
- ✓ This grant program requires a \$10,000 match which will need to be allocated by the Village Board.

Potential Funding Opportunity:

Hudson River Valley Greenway – Community Grant Program. Awarded December 2020.

PROJECT #4: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, BRANDING AND MARKETING STRATEGY

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.

Priority: High

Basic Parcel Data:

- ☒ **Tax Map Nos.:** Not applicable
- ☒ **Zoning:** Not applicable
- ☒ **Existing Land Use:** Not applicable
- ☒ **Land Ownership:** Not applicable

Estimated Costs: None available

Immediate Next Steps:

- ☒ Approach West Point, Town of Highlands and Orange County with proposal.
- ☒ Apply for plan funding.

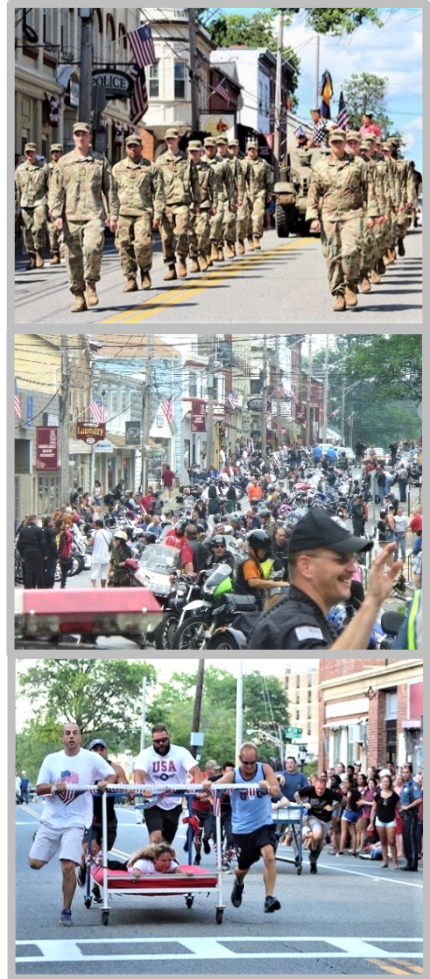
Potential Funding Opportunities:

New York Dept. of State (DOS)/Empire State Development (ESD) – NY Forward Program

NY Department of State (DOS) – Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP)

Empire State Development (ESD)

- ☒ *Economic Development Purposes Grant Program*
- ☒ *Strategic Planning and Feasibility Study Project Grants*



PROJECT #5: HUDSON HIGHLANDS PARK MASTER PLAN

Description: This 31.8-acre beautiful and ecologically important property stretches from Pine Terrace Road east to the CSX Railroad off the Hudson River was recently purchased by Scenic Hudson, a regional land trust. This property will provide the public with breathtaking views of the Hudson River from a ridgetop containing unique pitch pine habitat. Its topographical, bedrock and access constraints make it ideal for short hikes, picnicking, and birdwatching. Scenic Hudson will work with the village to support local efforts to create a park at this site. A 3.5-acre portion of the property fronting Route 218 will remain in private ownership to provide the opportunity for future potential commercial development.



Priority: High

Basic Parcel Data:

- ☑ **Tax Map No.:** 105-5-6.212
- ☑ **Zoning:** Apartment and Condominium/Affordable Housing (R-5A), Single-Family Residence (R-2)
- ☑ **Existing Land Use:** Vacant
- ☑ **Land Ownership:** The Scenic Hudson Land Trust

Estimated Cost: To Be Determined

Immediate Next Steps:

- ☑ Scenic Hudson will remain caretaker of the property with the future intention of putting a conservation easement that protects the land from future development.
- ☑ Schedule a workshop with Village residents to guide the recreational use of the property.

Potential Funding:

Hudson River Valley Greenway – Conservancy Trail Grants

NYS Department of State (DOS) – Local Waterfront Revitalization Program

NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) – Recreational Trails Grant Program

PROJECT #6: ROE PARK INTERPRETIVE TRAILS

Description: Develop a unique educational and recreational trail system in the 5-acre undeveloped forested property south of Roe Park. 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.



Priority: Medium

Basic Parcel Data:

- ✓ **Tax Map Nos.:** 105-2-15; 105-3-1
- ✓ **Zoning:** Single-Family Residence (R-3)
- ✓ **Existing Land Use:** Forested municipal parkland
- ✓ **Land Ownership:** Village of Highland Falls

Estimated Cost: None available

Immediate Next Step: Apply for design and engineering funding. Determine highway and recreation department implementation capabilities.

Potential Funding:

NYS Department of State (DOS) – Local Waterfront Revitalization Program

Hudson River Valley Greenway – Conservancy Trail Grants

NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) – Recreational Trails Grant Program



PROJECT #7: LADYCLIFF PARK MASTER PLAN

Description: The Village will develop a master 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. Components of the project will include site and facility analysis, site survey, site plan, a connectivity plan with signage concepts, a preliminary programming matrix, a phasing strategy, and an implementation strategy with cost estimates.



Priority: Medium

Basic Parcel Data:

- ☒ **Tax Map No.:** 103-15-5
- ☒ **Zoning:** Village Business (B-1)
- ☒ **Existing Land Use:** Municipal park
- ☒ **Land Ownership:** Village of Highland Falls

Estimated Cost: None available

Immediate Next Step: Apply for master planning funding through the NY Forward program.

Potential Funding:

New York Dept. of State (DOS)/Empire State Development (ESD) – NY Forward Program

Hudson River Valley Greenway – Community Grant Program

NYS Council on the Arts (NYSCA) – Architecture, Planning, and Design Program

NYS Department of State (DOS) – Local Waterfront Revitalization Program

NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) – Parks Grant Program

PROJECT #8: MAIN STREET AND WEST POINT HIGHWAY REDESIGN

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.



Priority: Medium

Basic Parcel Data:

- ✓ **Tax Map No.:** 103-15-5
- ✓ **Zoning:** Village Business (B-1)
- ✓ **Existing Land Use:** Municipal Park; Public Parking Lot; Road
- ✓ **Land Ownership:** Village of Highland Falls; NYS; U.S. Government

Estimated Cost: Unknown at this time

Immediate Next Steps:

- ✓ Apply for funding through the NY Forward program
- ✓ Approach West Point and the State DOT with proposal
- ✓ Apply for feasibility analysis and design funding

Potential Funding:

New York Dept. of State (DOS)/Empire State Development (ESD) – NY Forward Program

NYS Office of Housing and Community Renewal (HCR) – NY Main Street Program

PROJECT #9: TOWNWIDE TRAILS MASTER PLAN



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)

Priority: Medium

Basic Parcel Data:

- ☑ **Tax Map No.:** Public right-of way
- ☑ **Zoning:** Village Business (B-1); Single-Family Residence (R-2); Apartment Residence (R-5)
- ☑ **Existing Land Use:** Municipal, state and county roads; River; Vacant; Single-family residences; DPW garages; RV Park; Fast food restaurant
- ☑ **Land Ownership:** Village of Highland Falls; Town of Highlands; NYS; A&I Builders; Sidamon-Eristoff family; C.D. Parry Company; Peter L. Aloe; McDonald's Corporation; U.S. Government



Estimated Cost: None available



Immediate Next Step: Approach all parties with proposal to determine level of interest and prioritize apply for master planning funding.

Potential Funding:

NYS Department of State (DOS) – Local Waterfront Revitalization Program

Hudson River Valley Greenway – Conservancy Trail Grants

NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) – Recreational Trails Grant Program

PROJECT 10: VILLAGE SIGNAGE PLAN

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.

Priority: Medium



Basic Parcel Data:

- ✓ **Tax Map No.:** Not Applicable
- ✓ **Zoning:** Not Applicable
- ✓ **Existing Land Use:** Not Applicable
- ✓ **Land Ownership:** Village of Highland Falls; Town of Highlands; NYS



Estimated Cost: None available

Immediate Next Steps:

- ✓ Prepare cost estimate
- ✓ Apply for funding for a signage plan

Potential Funding:

New York Dept. of State (DOS)/Empire State Development (ESD) – NY Forward Program

Empire State Development – Economic Development Purposes Grant Program; Excelsior Jobs Tax Credit Program; Market NY; Regional Council Capital Fund Program; Start-Up NY Program; Strategic Planning and Feasibility Study Project Grants



Hudson River Valley Greenway – Community Grant Program

NYS Council on the Arts (NYSCA) – Architecture, Planning, and Design Program

NYS Department of State (DOS) – Local Waterfront Revitalization Program

NYS Office of Housing and Community Renewal (HCR) – NY Main Street Program

PROJECT 11: NEW MUNICIPAL CENTER

Description: The first option involves working with an qualified developer to construct a new, mixed-use building in the downtown area. The other option involves adaptive reuse of an existing school building. Under this scenario, 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.

Priority: Medium

Basic Parcel Data

- ☒ **Tax Map No.:** 104-13-1
- ☒ **Zoning:** Single-Family Residence (R-3)
- ☒ **Existing Land Use:** Vacant
- ☒ **Land Ownership:** Highland Falls-Fort Montgomery Central School District

Estimated Cost: None available

Immediate Next Steps:

- ☒ Approach the Town of Highlands with the proposal
- ☒ Apply for feasibility and master planning funding
- ☒ Prepare a cost estimate

Potential Funding:

New York Dept. of State (DOS)/Empire State Development (ESD) – NY Forward Program

NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) – Certified Local Government (CLG) Program

USDA Rural Development – Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Program in New



PROJECT #12: HIGHLAND BROOK TRAIL FEASIBILITY



Description: Develop a feasibility analysis for the development of a recreational and interpretive trail 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.

Priority: Low

Basic Parcel Data:

- ✓ **Tax Map Nos.:** 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
- ✓ **Zoning:** Single-Family Residence (R-1, R-2, R-3); Apartment Residence (R-5); Village Business (B-1)
- ✓ **Existing Land Use:** Municipal water supply; Single-family residences; Apartments; Former elementary school; Municipal park; Vacant; Municipal offices; Parking lot
- ✓ **Land Ownership:** Village of Highland Falls; Town of Highlands; NYS; Various private landowners



Estimated Cost: None available

Immediate Next Step: Apply for feasibility and master planning funding

Potential Funding:

NYS Department of State (DOS) – Local Waterfront Revitalization Program

Hudson River Valley Greenway – Conservancy Trail Grants

NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) – Recreational Trails Grant Program

NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)

- ✓ *Environmental Restoration Grant Program*
- ✓ *Hudson River Estuary Program Tributary Restoration and Resiliency*

PROJECT #13: MEMORIAL PARK IMPROVEMENTS

Description: Prepare a master plan for design improvements for Memorial Park. The design and appearance of this park is significant since it acts as the gateway entrance to the downtown and United States Military Academy (West Point). Components of the project will include site and facility analysis, site survey, site plan, a connectivity plan with signage concepts, a preliminary programming matrix, a phasing strategy, and an implementation strategy with cost estimates.

Priority: Low

Basic Parcel Data:

- ✓ **Tax Map No.:** 103-15-5
- ✓ **Zoning:** Village Business (B-1)
- ✓ **Existing Land Use:** Municipal park
- ✓ **Land Ownership:** Village of Highland Falls; Town of Highlands

Estimated Cost: None available

Immediate Next Step: Apply for funding for the master plan

Potential Funding:

- ✓ Hudson River Valley Greenway – Community Grant Program
- ✓ NYS Department of State (DOS) – Local Waterfront Revitalization Program
- ✓ NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) – Parks Grant Program



PROJECT #14: MAIN STREET ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

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.

Priority: Low

Basic Parcel Data:

- ✓ **Tax Map No.:** Not applicable
- ✓ **Zoning:** Village Business (B-1)
- ✓ **Existing Land Use:** Municipal services; Mixed-use; Commercial; Residential; Religious; Institutional; Municipal park; Parking lot; Public roads
- ✓ **Land Ownership:** Private landowners; Village of Highland Falls

Estimated Cost: None available

Immediate Next Step: Apply for planning funds to develop guidelines for downtown.

Potential Funding:

NYS Council on the Arts (NYSCA) – Architecture, Planning, and Design Program

NYS Office of Housing and Community Renewal (OCR) – NY Main Street Program



PROJECT #15: VILLAGE WELCOMING CENTER AND MUSEUM

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.

Priority: Low

Basic Parcel Data:

- ✓ **Tax Map No.:** 104-3-24.2
- ✓ **Zoning:** Village Business (B-1)
- ✓ **Existing Land Use:** Vacant
- ✓ **Land Ownership:** Main Street Land, LLC

Estimated Cost: None available

Immediate Next Steps:

- ✓ Coordinate with Orange County Tourism and the Highlands Historical Society to determine their level of interest
- ✓ Apply for funding to develop a feasibility study

Potential Funding:

NY Department of State (DOS) – *Local Waterfront Revitalization Program*

NYS Council on the Arts (NYSCA) – *Architecture, Planning, and Design Program*



PROJECT #16: PUBLIC PARKING GARAGE



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.

Priority: Low

Basic Parcel Data:

- ✓ **Tax Map No.:** Not Applicable
- ✓ **Zoning:** Village Business (B-1)
- ✓ **Existing Land Use:** Parking lot
- ✓ **Land Ownership:** Village of Highland Falls; Town of Highlands

Estimated Cost: None available

Immediate Next Step: Apply for funding to develop a feasibility study



Potential Funding Opportunities:

Empire State Development (ESD) – Strategic Planning and Feasibility Study Project Grants

NYS Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) – Transportation Enhancement Projects Program (TEP)

NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC) – Green Innovation Grant Program (GIGP)

Orange County Transportation Council (OCTC) –

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

PROJECT 17: DOWNTOWN LIGHTING REDESIGN

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.



Priority: Low

Basic Parcel Data:

- ✓ **Tax Map No.:** Not applicable
- ✓ **Zoning:** Village Business (B-1)
- ✓ **Existing Land Use:** Public rights-of-way; public road; municipal park; parking lot
- ✓ **Land Ownership:** Village of Highland Falls; U.S. Government; Orange & Rockland Utilities

Estimated Cost: None available

Immediate 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

Potential Funding Opportunities:

NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) –
Climate Smart Communities Program

NYS Energy Research and Development Agency (NYSERDA) –
Clean Energy Communities Program LED Lights Program

NYS Office of Housing and Community Renewal (HCR) –
Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Public Facilities
& Public Infrastructure Program
NY Main Street Program



CHAPTER 5 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

5.1 Plan Implementation Strategy

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. Through past participation in relevant grant programs, the application development process 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 12, "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.

As a final consideration, there has been much input received concerning revisions to the Zoning Chapter (240) of the Village Code. Specific focus with the comments received relate to:

- Consideration of updated standards for minimum lot area per dwelling and establishment of a revised limit which allows for reasonable density while preserving the quaint and "small town" character of the Village.
- Consideration of updating the limit on building height in commercial districts that will allow for more building volume but again, not in a manner that detracts from the Village character.
- Consideration of rezoning certain parcels within the commercial zoning districts back to residential so that the surrounding residential character is preserved.
- Consideration of installing a planned unit development district (PUDD) option that can accommodate a mix of uses that are beneficial to the Village by making efficient use of space, expanding the taxable base of the village in a dynamic manner, and are responsive to the needs of the residents as they relate to increased employment opportunities, expanded choices for housing, and expanded choices for goods and services.

5.2 Summary of Funding Opportunities

Empire State Development

NY Forward Program – This program is modeled after the Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) Program. Through the end of 2023, the state has funded two rounds of the NY Forward program and six rounds of the DRI program which helps communities implement related revitalization projects within a defined area of the downtown. The NY Forward Program is a separate program from the DRI program with funds available for smaller communities exclusively. Therefore, this program is well-suited to the Village of Highland Falls and many of the downtown improvement initiatives listed in this plan update are eligible for funding under NY Forward.

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 assessment and planning. Projects should focus on economic development purposes, and preference should be given to projects located in highly distressed communities.

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.

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 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.

Climate Smart Communities Program – Provides 50/50 matching grants for eligible climate mitigation and adaptation projects. Funds are available for two broad project categories – implementation and certification. The first project category supports implementation projects related to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions outside the power sector (transportation, methane, and refrigerants) and climate change adaptation (e.g., reducing flood-risk, increasing natural resiliency, extreme-event preparation, relocation or retrofit of critical infrastructure, and improving emergency preparedness).

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.

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.

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.

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 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 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 façade 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 period 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.

US Department of Agriculture Rural Development

Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Program in New-York - This program provides affordable funding to develop essential community facilities in rural areas. An essential community facility is defined as a facility that provides an essential service to the local community for the orderly development of the community in a primarily rural area, and does not include private, commercial, or business undertakings.

Rural Energy for America Program Renewable Energy Systems & Energy Efficiency Improvement Loans & Grants in New-York - The program provides guaranteed loan financing and grant funding to agricultural producers and rural small businesses for renewable energy systems or to make energy efficiency improvements. Agricultural producers may also apply for new energy efficient equipment and new system loans for agricultural production and processing.

Rural Energy for America Program Renewable Energy Systems & Energy Efficiency Improvement Loans & Grants in New–York - The program provides guaranteed loan financing and grant funding to agricultural producers and rural small businesses for renewable energy systems or to make energy efficiency improvements. Agricultural producers may also apply for new energy efficient equipment and new system loans for agricultural production and processing.

US 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.

Appendix A

Village of Highland Falls

Zoning Analysis

Prepared in support of the Update to the Village Comprehensive Plan

February 2024

Purpose and Introduction:

A fundamentally important aspect of municipal governance in New York State is the authority of the local governments to regulate and management land use, The principal method for such regulation is through adoption and administration of a locally adopted zoning law. The Village of Highland Falls regulates land use in the Village through Zoning Chapter (240), of the Village Code. Typical to local zoning law among municipalities in New York State, Chapter 240 is comprised of:

- Regulations establishing zoning districts, and various procedures for the administration and review of defined land uses, and the establishment of review boards (planning board and zoning board of appeals) with assigned authority and procedures to undertake such reviews.
- Tabular schedules outlining permitted and allowed land uses and dimensional standards for placement of buildings and/or structures.
- An official zoning map which provides delineations of the zoning district boundaries as set forth in the regulations of the law.

The purpose of this analysis is to provide an explanation of the land use heritage, present empirical data regarding the current makeup of land use in the village so an informed decisions can be reached by residents and village officials as to the desired outcome for land use pattern going forward and make recommendations as to the appropriate regulations to put in place to achieve the desired outcome.

The Heritage of the Existing Land Use Pattern and Zoning

The existing zoning regulations contained in Chapter 240 were in large part adopted under Local Law No. 5 in August of 1971. Since that time, numerous revisions to the Zoning Chapter have been made with focus on changes to specific sections or subjects, but a complete and comprehensive update the overall Chapter has not occurred.

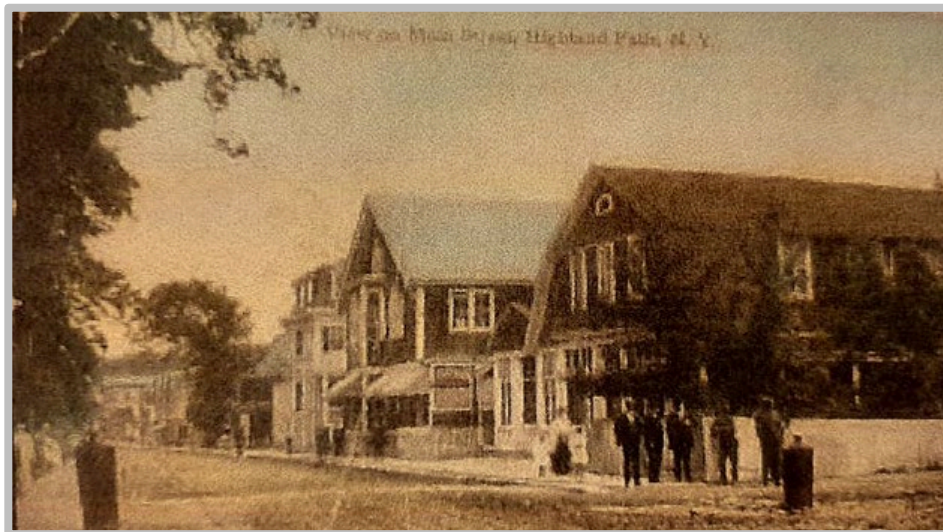


Photo #1 – North
Main Street,
Highland Falls, NY,
circa early 1900's.

Also, through the years of enforcement of the current zoning regulations, the zoning map has undergone comparatively little change. The basic reason for this circumstance is the settled nature of the built environment in the village. First incorporated in 1906, the settlement of the village (formerly Buttermilk Falls) has long been established and has taken on the classic pattern of a community with a heritage of over 100 hundred years. The referenced pattern has the following characteristics that are typical to a community with a settlement history dating back to the 19th century:

1. Commercial uses are concentrated in the central core as this is the area of the oldest settlement. The early years of rail access for passengers and freight enhanced the settlement of this area.
2. Characteristics typical to this circumstance are parcels of smaller lot area, densely situated, with comparatively higher levels of building coverage, and a high frequency of narrow setbacks or “zero-lot line” building placement.
3. The street pattern is comprised of streets that are typically narrow in width with consistent block dimensions. The land uses in the central core of the village are predominantly commercial or mixed-use in nature with a variety of goods and services (commercial and institutional) available.
4. Parcel ownership is split between absentee and owner-occupied as residential uses occur within a range of formats from single-family detached homes to multi-dwelling buildings and owners may, but increasingly do not live in the building.
5. Residential uses adjoin and encircle the core with a similar street pattern and lot area sizes. The general nature of the residential pattern is that the dwellings closest to the core are typically higher in density and smaller in floor area.
6. The areas at the edges of the village, and farthest from the core find a pattern that is again predominantly residential in nature, but the density lessens concentrically as the distance from the core increases. Parcels areas may be slightly larger and uses are more frequently single-family dwellings with the highest concentrations of owner occupancy.
7. The concentric nature of the pattern described above has been disrupted by the onset of increased vehicle use. The street corridors that serve as the primary accessways to and from the village core have a pattern of development consisting of a mix of commercial and residential uses with frontage directly on the more heavily traveled accessways. This pattern of “corridor development” fragmented the residential neighborhoods and dissolved the concentric pattern.

The heritage of the land use pattern is a key component to understanding the dynamics of existing land use in the village and determining to what degree this pattern should be preserved and reenforced; or changed through revision to use schedules and dimensional standards to accommodate desired land uses and/or changes in the intensity and frequency of these uses.

Another factor, and of particular importance to the Village of Highland Falls, is the makeup of the commercial zoning districts and the characteristics of the commercial uses within these districts. Commercial land use has obvious implications to the fiscal conditions of the village economy, but the level and intensity of commercial land use also directly impacts the fiscal status of the village government and its annual budget. The principal source of revenue for the village government is the real property tax levy.

The basic elements of the real property tax levy are as follows: real property consists of the area of the land comprising the parcel and any improvements (buildings, structures) that may exist on the parcel. The value is then the primary determinant to setting the rate (dollars per thousand dollars of value) of tax that is levied. Once the expense side (costs to provide the governmental services of the village) of the budget is determined, the amount of revenue is calculated to cover the expenses. If the total property valuations have not grown sufficiently to cover the additional expenses, then the rate of taxation increases to provide sufficient revenue to cover expenses.

Also factoring into the consideration of property value and its effect on the real property tax is the ratio between the revenue generated from real property tax paid and the costs of public services provided. A primary factor affecting the ratio between the revenue generated and the cost of services provided is land use type – in general terms the types are agricultural, residential, commercial, industrial, vacant (open space). Residential land use requires most services when compared to agricultural, commercial, industrial, or vacant land use. This has been borne out in the study of the cost of services (public education and municipal government) for residential, agricultural, commercial, and industrial land use. Furthermore, the studies conducted reinforce the importance of the agricultural/commercial/industrial properties, commonly referred to as the “tax base” to the municipal budgetary process. A recent “Cost of Community Services” study has been conducted by the American Farmland Trust to understand the fiscal contribution of existing land uses based upon one of the land use types mentioned above. The study is inclusive of a summary of community service costs in relationship to land uses (residential [including farmhouse], commercial & industrial, and working & open land) for communities in selected states across the country. For New York State, the study summarizes the results of a cost of services analysis for 12 municipalities on an annual basis for a period ranging from 1989 through 2005. The results of the studies performed for New York State communities are as follows:

Summary of Cost of Community Services¹				
Selected Communities in New York State				
Community	Land Use Type			Source
	Residential (including farmhouse)	Commercial & Industrial	Working and Open Land	
Amenia	1:1.23	1:0.25	1:0.17	Bucknall, 1989
Beekman	1:1.12	1:0.18	1:0.48	American Farmland Trust, 1989
Dix	1:1.51	1:0.27	1:0.31	Schuyler County League of Women Voters, 1993
Farmington	1:1.22	1:0.27	1:0.72	Kinsman et al., 1991
Fishkill	1:1.23	1:0.31	1:0.74	Bucknall, 1989
Hector	1:1.30	1:0.15	1:0.28	Schuyler County League of Women Voters, 1993
Kinderhook	1:1.05	1:0.21	1:0.17	Concerned Citizens of Kinderhook, 1996
Montour	1:1.50	1:0.28	1:0.29	Schuyler County League of Women Voters, 1992
North East	1:1.36	1:0.29	1:0.21	American Farmland Trust, 1989
Reading	1:1.88	1:0.26	1:0.32	Schuyler County League of Women Voters, 1992
Red Hook	1:1.11	1:0.20	1:0.22	Bucknall, 1989
Rochester	1:1.27	1:0.18	1:0.18	Bonner and Gray, 2005
Average	1:1.32	1:0.24	1:0.34	

Although the study is performed by the American Farmland Trust with the primary focus of demonstrating the importance of agricultural uses, it does also provide an understanding the affect other land use types can have on municipal budgeting. As described above, the land use pattern of the Village of Highland Falls is older, and highly developed with virtually no agricultural or industrial use in existence. However, the information gained from the referenced study is instructive as to the relationship between land use and the cost of services, and the associated impact that varying types of land use and land use concentrations can have on a municipal budget.

The implication of studying various land use types and concentrations is that land use (type, frequency, and intensity) can influence the approach taken to zoning district formation and regulation. The first section of this analysis will quantify the types of existing land uses present in the village. With the extent of existing land use quantified, the relevance and importance of the ratio between the types and concentrations of land use and cost of services in Highland Falls will come into focus.

¹ Cost of Community Services Studies – p 4, American Farmland Trust, September 2016.

Land Use – Inventory of the Existing Pattern

Understanding the makeup of the existing land use pattern is a fundamental element to zoning regulation. The reason being is that the existing pattern of land use is a fundamental consideration to the basic uses allowed in a district (e.g., residential, commercial, institutional, industrial, etc.). As evident in the cost of services analysis referenced above, the location, types, and intensities of use can affect valuations and the associated funds derived from the real property tax levy. The pattern can also influence dimensional standards for setbacks and the massing of building allowed. Therefore, in addition to the map of existing land use in Figure 3, this analysis includes a breakdown of existing land uses by parcel and acreage based upon the land use classifications as made by the local real property tax assessor.

Fundamental to the determination of property value is the (land) use of the property. To facilitate the process of determining use in a consistent and systematic manner, the New York State Office of Real Property Services publishes an “Assessor’s Manual” which sets forth the procedure for classifying land use types. The system of classification consists of land use divisions detailed by a three-digit numeric code in nine categories. The first digit represents the general land use type, and the second and third digit further detail the characteristics of the use. The nine categories of use are as follows:

Land Use Classifications		
Classification Listing		
Code:	Category of Land Use	Description
100	Agricultural	Property used to produce crops or livestock.
200	Residential	Property used for human habitation. Living accommodations such as hotels, motels, and apartments are in category 400.
300	Vacant Land	Property that is not in use, is in temporary use, or lacks permanent improvement.
400	Commercial	Property used for the sale of goods and/or services.
500	Recreation & Entertainment	Property used by groups for recreation, amusement, or entertainment.
600	Community Services	Property used for the well-being of the community.
700	Industrial	Property used for the production and fabrication of durable and non-durable manmade goods.
800	Public Services	Property used to provide services to the public.
900	Wild, Forested, Conservation Lands & Public Parks	Reforested lands, preserves, and private hunting and fishing clubs.

Source: NYS Office of Real Property Services – Assessor’s Manual

The table below provides an example of how the classifications of uses are further detailed within the Real Property Services classification system. The examples of the divisions of uses shown in the table below are under the 500 – Recreation & Entertainment category.

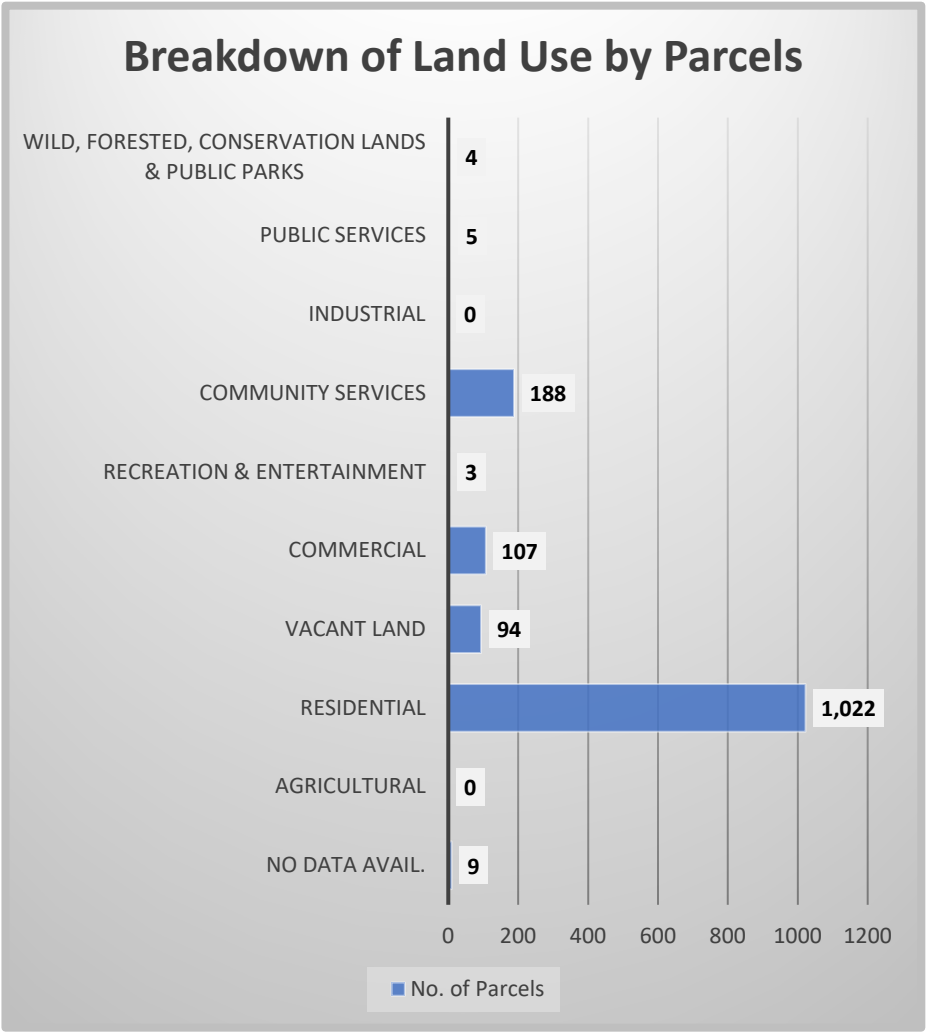
Land Use Classifications		
Example of How Land Uses Are Divided Within a Land Use Category		
Code:	Category/Division/Subdivision of Land Use	Description
500	Recreation & Entertainment	Category of land use.
530	Amusement Facilities	Division of land use.
531	Fairgrounds	Subdivisions of land use.
532	Amusement Parks	
533	Game Farms	
534	Social Organizations	

Source: NYS Office of Real Property Services – Assessor’s Manual

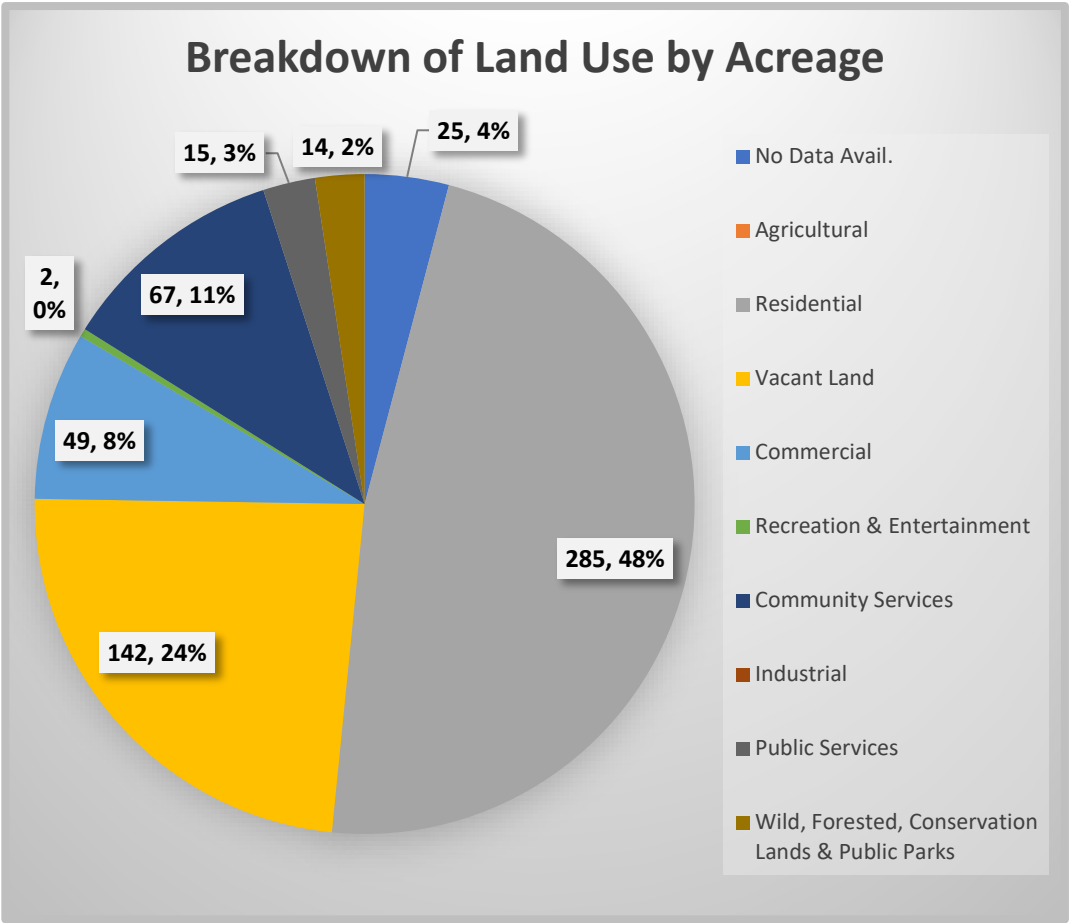
During the process of assessing the value of each property, the assessor will classify a land use code for each parcel in the community using numerical coding system from the manual referenced above. Once the land use classification is made, the existing land can then be mapped resulting in the map shown in Figure 3. The land use classification data can then be cross tabulated by the number of parcels, amount of acreage, and parcel valuation. Each of these data points provides valuable information concerning the land use pattern and is useful baseline information for decisions relating to future land use management through updates to the village zoning law and map. The existing land use data is as follows:

Land Use Classifications											
Village of Highland Falls – Breakdown of Existing Land Use Data											
Land Use Type	Classification Code	Number of Parcels	% of Total	Acres (±)	% of Total	Land Assessment	% of Total	Total Assessment	% of Total	Full Market Value	% of Total
	None	9	1%	24.71	4%	Unknown		Unknown		Unknown	
Agricultural	100	0	0%	0	0%	Unknown		Unknown		Unknown	
Residential	200	1,022	71%	284.82	47%	\$38,208,000	12%	\$237,334,400	39%	\$255,197,936	39%
Vacant Land	300	94	7%	142.04	24%	\$4,491,240	1%	\$5,890,840	1%	\$6,334,400	1%
Commercial	400	107	7%	49.48	8%	\$7,327,300	2%	\$53,311,000	9%	\$57,323,900	9%
Recreation & Entertainment	500	3	0.2%	2.35	0%	\$281,100	0%	\$668,400	0%	\$718,700	0%
Community Services	600	188	13%	66.88	11%	\$257,757,400	83%	\$298,180,700.00	50%	\$320,624,100	49%
Industrial	700	0	0%	0	0%	\$0	0%	\$0	0%	\$0	0%
Public Services	800	5	0.3%	15.32	3%	\$676,200	0%	\$6,794,273	1%	\$7,305,700	1%
Wild, Forested, Conservation Lands & Public Parks	900	4	0.3%	14.47	2%	\$354,200	0.1%	\$576,700	0.1%	\$620,100	0.1%
Total		1,432	100%	600.08	100%	\$309,095,440	100%	\$602,124,836	100%	\$648,124,836	100%

Source: Orange County Office of Real Property Services – 2022 Assessment Data



Source: Orange County Office of Real Property Services – 2022 Assessment Data



Source: Orange County Office of Real Property Services – 2022 Assessment Data

Analysis of Existing Land Use

The update to the Village Comprehensive Plan is an ideal means to analyze the municipal zoning and provide guidance relating to improvements to local zoning laws as according to New York State Village Law, §7-722 – Village Comprehensive Plan, subsection 11: *“All village land use regulations must be in accordance with a comprehensive plan as adopted under this section.”* Also, the Village of Highland Falls has demonstrated a long-standing commitment to keep the zoning regulations and associated map of the Zoning Chapter (240) of the Village Code up-to-date and responsive to the needs of the residents and the local businesses.

With NYS Village Law providing the basis and in furtherance of the referenced commitment, the Village Board of Trustees authorized preparation of this zoning analysis within the context of the update to the Village Comprehensive Plan to review current zoning regulations, standards, and procedures. Based upon the analysis conducted and input from the residents, the analysis will conclude with recommendations for improvements to the Zoning Chapter. The analysis will then be appended to the adopted update of the Village Comprehensive Plan to serve as a reference for the adoption of future revisions to the Zoning Chapter. This approach will ensure that forthcoming revisions to zoning regulations are properly grounded in the Village Comprehensive Plan as specified in NYS Village Law.

To fulfill the purpose as described above, the analysis will include a review of the following aspects of zoning in the Village:

- Analysis of existing land use in the village – this section of the analysis will present relevant data from the existing pattern of land uses in the village, present findings from the data collected, and set forth recommendations for edits or revisions to the zoning chapter and associated zoning map.
- Analysis of supplemental regulations of the zoning chapter.
- Analysis of the format and structure of the Zoning Chapter and make recommendations for updates that will improve administration of the Zoning Chapter.

Based upon a review of the existing land use data, the following are noteworthy characteristics of the existing land use pattern:

Lack of Agricultural Use – In consideration of the development history of the village as a community of densely situated dwellings with a commercial/service center, there are no agricultural uses present beyond residential-scale gardening.

Physical Constraints Have Influenced Development

- A basic factor that has contributed to the dense nature of the existing land use pattern is topography. The presence of steep slopes limits the areas where development can be accommodated. Therefore, the pattern of development, particularly in the residential neighborhoods, is displaying elements of high concentration and density. Such elements include small parcel sizes, comparatively high levels of building coverage, and limited lot frontage on village streets.
- Therefore, the residential dwellings have been concentrated in the areas where favorable or marginally favorable slopes exist to support building development and access.

Residential Land Use

- As with most upstate New York villages of a similar profile (age, population, geographic size), the dominant land use, in terms of both the number of parcels by classification and land area by classification, is residential. Residential uses comprise 1,022 (or 71%) of the 1,432 total parcels, while occupying approximately 284.8± acres (or 47%) of the 600.08 total acres of the village. This yields an average residential lot size of approximately 12,140 sq. ft., or just over a quarter of an acre.
- The small average residential lot area is indicative of dense residential neighborhoods and is characteristic of community with development heritage dating back to the 19th century.
- Types of residential uses and dimensional standards. Review of the existing land use map and the current zoning map finds that existing residential use is located within one of the eight residential zoning districts (R-1 Mountain Residence; R-2 and R-3, Single-Family Residence; R-4 Single and 2-Family Residence; R-5 Apartment Residence; R-5A Apartment Residence/Affordable Housing; R-6 Apartment-Motel Residence; and R-MHC Mobile Home Court).

Furthermore, review of the use schedules and dimensional schedules finds that varying types of residential use are adequately allocated across the available districts and adequately reflect the existing form of residential use present and dimensional standards adequately reflect current lot sizes and relationships between buildings and property boundaries.

Residential Land Use – Owner Occupancy v Absentee Ownership

- The other factor that can affect residential land use is the status of owner occupancy. Characteristics typically found with owner-occupied dwellings are: Comparatively better interior/exterior building condition as on-site occupancy by the property owner usually results in regular property maintenance; property valuation that appreciates over time; and as a more subjective consideration, owner-occupancy tends to have a stabilizing influence on the overall quality of life in a community.

- As with existing land use, the status of owner occupancy compared to absentee ownership represents a “snapshot” of the current condition and is subject to change but reporting on occupancy status allows for the ability to track trends with residential owner occupancy as future analysis of land use is conducted in the village. Data relating to ownership is tracked by the American Community Survey (ACS) as compiled by the US Census Bureau. According to the 2020 ACS, there are 1,828 total dwelling units in the village, of which 230 (or 12.6%) are vacant, yielding 1,598 occupied dwelling units. Of the occupied dwelling units, 832 (or 52%) are owner-occupied, yielding 766 (or 48%) renter-occupied dwelling units.
- This level of owner occupancy is further supported by County RPS data relating to property owner mailing addresses. Of the 1,022 parcels classified under residential use, 999 parcels had information relating to the owner mailing address (23 parcels had this data field blank.) Of the 999 parcels with available owner address information, 551 parcels (or 55%) had an owner mailing address that matched the parcel address indicating a likelihood of owner occupancy. The remaining 448 parcels (or 45%) with an owner mailing address that did not match the parcel address. The RPS data regarding owner occupant addressing is consistent with the ACS data relating to owner/renter occupancy.
- Based on the data presented above, nearly half of the residential dwellings/residentially used parcels in the village are absentee owned. In relative terms, the resulting level of owner occupancy is mixed. When compared to Orange County, owner occupancy is lower, as the County has an owner-occupancy rate of 68%. However, the village rate of owner occupancy is consistent with New York State which has an overall rate of 54%.

Preservation of Residential Neighborhoods

- The dense residential neighborhoods are characteristic of a community with development heritage dating back to the 19th century. In consideration of this well-established land use pattern, the form and make-up of the existing residential use, the residential lifestyle in Highland Falls is a highly coveted element of the overall quality of life in the village. Therefore, the desire among the residents to embrace this dynamic and preserve the character of the neighborhoods is strong. These neighborhood characteristics include the following: a predominant presence of residential dwellings with very infrequent commercial or other types of uses present; and small parcels which contribute to compact, dense building placement with small yards and high degrees of building coverage. These characteristics contribute to resident interaction and cohesion and a strong sense of neighborhood and community among the residents.
- Therefore, the extent of residential zoning districts and the associated use regulations and dimensional standards should be structured to not only protect residential use but improve its appeal to future residents in the short and long term.

Valuation

- Residential land use comprises 39% of the total full market value.
- The ratio between the valuation of improved residential parcels to the valuation of the land only is approximately 6:1. This is a strong ratio that indicates improvements of worth have occurred and the condition of the overall housing stock has been maintained through the years.
- As mentioned in the introductory section of this analysis, the implication of this high concentration of residential land use is a comparatively high cost for the services to meet the needs of the residential occupants. However, the residents' strong support for preservation of residential neighborhoods is an overriding consideration. Any further erosion of residential use due to sprawling commercial use into existing residential neighborhoods should be prohibited. The impact of service costs to meet the residential need can be offset by revisions to the commercial land use regulations as suggested below.

Vacant Land

- Considering the comparatively small land area of the village, and the long-established nature of the existing land use pattern it is expected that the amount of vacant land will be limited. Therefore, 94 parcels (7% of the total parcels in the village), or 142± (24% of the total land area of the village) are classified as vacant.
- The relationship between the number of vacant parcels (94 – which is limited considering that there are 1,432 total parcels in the village) and the amount of vacant land (142± acres or approximately one-quarter of the land area of the village).
- Therefore, the zoning regulations which will manage the development of the remaining vacant land should be carefully reviewed. Such review should include consideration of
 - ☑ The context of land uses immediately adjoining or near vacant parcel(s).
 - ☑ The sensitivity of the surrounding environs, both natural and built; and
 - ☑ The degree to which identified needs of the community are met by the proposed use. Examples of such needs include: The provision of affordable housing and/or senior housing, the degree to which the project may contribute to providing goods and/or services that the community needs or desires, the degree to which new employment opportunities are created, and the degree to which local services (roads, water, sewer, fire prevention, emergency medical, etc.) are impacted by the proposed use.

Commercial Land Use

- With residential land use as the dominant use both in terms of the number of parcels and land area, the remaining forms of developed (e.g., commercial, industrial, and/or institutional) uses are expectedly less. Also, as with most other upstate village settings, the commercial uses that are present exist with a limited footprint – within a centralized business district or “downtown” area.

- Regarding the physical aspects of commercial land use as reflected in the County RPS data, commercial uses comprise 7% of the parcels in the village (107 of 1,432 total lots), while occupying 8% of the land area (approximately 49.5± acres of 600.08 total acres). This yields an average commercial lot size of approximately 20,143 sq. ft., or almost one-half of an acre.
- In addition to the basic data from the County RPS land use classifications, a more in-depth analysis was undertaken using RPS tax parcel data for each parcel within the village's existing commercial zoning districts. The purpose of the more in-depth analysis is to provide a greater understanding of the character of the existing setting among the commercially used properties in the village. In turn, this more in-depth understanding is intended to provide the basis for zoning regulations going forward that preserve the desirable aspects of the built environment while allowing for adaptive reuse of existing land and/or buildings that accommodate the needs of the residents into the 21st century.

With this purpose and intent understood, the RPS data was collected for each parcel within one of the three commercial districts (the Village Business (B-1) District; the Highway Commercial (B-2) District; and the Business Commercial (B-3) District) of the village zoning code. The breakdown and overall totals for the data collected is as follows:

Village of Highland Falls
2024 Update of the Comprehensive Plan

Village of Highland Falls – Selected Parcel Data Village Business (B-1) District							
	PARCEL ACRES	PARCEL SF	# OF BUILDINGS	YEAR BUILT	# OF STORIES	BUILDING HEIGHT (FT)	BUILDING SF
TOTAL:	76.65	3,340,627	166				506,300
AVERAGE:	0.44	19,089	1.07	1936	1.94	31	3,778
MEDIAN:	0.13	5,718	1.00	1950	2.00	32	2,370

Source: Orange County Office of Real Property Services – 2022 Assessment Data

Village of Highland Falls – Selected Parcel Data Highway Commercial (B-2) District							
	PARCEL ACRES	PARCEL SF	# OF BUILDINGS	YEAR BUILT	# OF STORIES	BUILDING HEIGHT (FT)	BUILDING SF
TOTAL:	21.75	947,941	5				14,906
AVERAGE:	2.72	118,493	0.63	1959	1.14	26	2,981
MEDIAN:	1.65	71,914	1.00	1950	1.00	26	2,386

Source: Orange County Office of Real Property Services – 2022 Assessment Data

Village of Highland Falls – Selected Parcel Data Business Commercial (B-3) District							
	PARCEL ACRES	PARCEL SF	# OF BUILDINGS	YEAR BUILT	# OF STORIES	BUILDING HEIGHT (FT)	BUILDING SF
TOTAL:	10.77	469,303	21				115,474
AVERAGE:	0.63	27,606	1.24	1948	2.09	31	6,793
MEDIAN:	0.39	17,094	1.00	1950	2.00	32	4,533

Source: Orange County Office of Real Property Services – 2022 Assessment Data

Village of Highland Falls Commercial District Totals and Summary Analysis			
	PARCEL ACRES	PARCEL SF	# OF BUILDINGS
TOTAL:	109.17	4,757,871	192
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Source: Orange County Office of Real Property Services – 2022 Assessment Data

Summary analysis of existing commercial land use and zoning:

The findings from the data presented above are as follows:

- Based on land area under commercial zoning and number of buildings, the B-1 District is the village's primary commercial zoning district.
- In consideration of the overall character and the goals for the downtown area, there does not appear to be a clear and compelling need for the B-3 District. Regulation of land uses and setting dimensional standards that accomplish the goals of this plan and meet the needs of the residents could be more effectively accomplished through elimination of the B-3 District and revising the regulations and standards of the B-1 District as the primary district for the downtown area.
- The location and boundary of the B-1 and B-3 Districts encompass existing commercial uses that have long-standing heritage as the community's "central business district". As such, the area within the two districts is recognized as the community's commercial center for goods and services.
- The parcel area and the height and area of buildings, particularly among the parcels currently within a commercial zoning district are very modest with parcel size averaging less than $\frac{1}{4}$ of an acre in the commercially zoned areas; the average building height across all three commercial districts is two stories; and average building size reflects the smaller parcel size with average building sizes ranging between 2,981 sq. ft. and 6,793 sq. ft. Therefore, although building coverage and overall development is relatively dense, building scale and massing is modest and reflect the generally small parcel size.
- Notably absent are concentrations of tall, multi-story (e.g., 4 or more stories) buildings.
- The commercial building stock particularly within the B-1 and B-3 Districts has an average and median age in excess of 70 years. The average and median ages are indicators of a commercial district with a high degree of building stock that is either listed on the state and/or federal registry of historic structures or qualifies for listing. The retention of these buildings and the elements that contribute to historic designation is a key consideration as to future restoration efforts and building utilization going forward.
- Review of the existing land use map and the current zoning map finds that in most instances, existing commercial uses are located within one of three commercial districts. However, there is one notable exception along Main Street towards the southerly portion of the street between the intersection of Main Street and Cedar Lane, and Main Street and Walker Road. Through this section, although the area continues to be under residential use, the Bi1 District extends through this area, particularly along the west side of Main Street to the intersection with Walker Road.

Consideration should be given to the accommodation and regulation of electric vehicle charging stations. The number of electric vehicles is increasing, and this trend is likely to continue and even increase. Therefore, it is recommended that regulation of electric vehicle

charging stations (number, placement, and type) be enacted within the area encompassed by each of the three commercial zoning districts.

- Of note, is the accommodation of mixed-use within the commercially zoned districts (currently B-1 and B-3). Mixed-use occurs when residential uses and commercial uses are accommodated within the same parcel and/or building. The code for both the B-1 and B-3 District establishes a density standard based upon a ratio between total lot area and the number of dwellings. Under this approach, the code sets forth a density standard for residential use at 2,500 square feet of lot area per dwelling unit. In consideration of the factors that influence setting the density standard (e.g., the predominate size of parcels, the character of the existing building stock, the availability of infrastructure (road capacity, pedestrian accessibility, municipal sewer/water capacity, and the capacity to accommodate parking), a revision of the density level (minimum lot area per dwelling unit) is recommended for revision to 1,500 square feet of lot area per dwelling.
- This comparatively small area of commercial use is typical for villages in upstate New York. As explained above, the dominant nature of the residential portion of the existing pattern is directly grounded in the heritage of the village as the community grew from the center out. As such, the commercial section at the core of the development pattern (particularly with Highland Falls and the adjoining nature of the downtown area to the US Military Academy at West Point) represents the oldest portion of the original settlement. Functionally, the commercial uses in the downtown area have historically been the source for goods and services. This function continues today but the reliance on the downtown as the principal source for goods and services had been diminished by the onset of the automobile and the ability to conveniently access goods and services in the surrounding suburbs. However, with the onset of technology and the convenience of “online access,” the need for travel is diminishing and interest is increasing in returning to downtown, not only to once again access goods and services but to live and work and pursue leisure time activities. Downtown Highland Falls is particularly well positioned to participate in this renewed interest due to the proximity of the surrounding neighborhoods and the convenient walkable character that the compact nature of the village facilitates. Lastly, accommodation of vehicular traffic and associated parking continues to be a need as the adjoining presence of the US Military Academy, and interest in the products and services of the downtown area businesses continue to be a destination for visitors and residents alike.

- Types of commercial uses. Review of the use schedules and dimensional schedules finds that varying forms of commercial use are, adequately allocated across the available districts and adequately reflect the existing form of commercial use present and dimensional standards adequately reflect current lot sizes and relationships between buildings and property boundaries. The listings of permitted commercial uses or uses subject to discretionary review and approval as a “special exception use” appear to be varied and inclusive of variety of uses that should adequately serves the needs of the community and the commercial marketplace. However, the nature of commercial land use and the physical need for space (lot and/or building) appears to be in a period of evolution and change. Therefore, from a zoning perspective, the management and regulation of future commercial land uses in the downtown area should recognize the varied nature of land uses that downtown settings will need to accommodate going forward. The varied nature of principal uses will include retail sales, service-related businesses (e.g., both professional – legal accounting, and medical; and non-professional), leisure time and entertainment (e.g., performing arts and dining), recreational (e.g., parks, playgrounds, open space), residential (e.g., multi-family in varying rental and ownership formats), and institutional and government (e.g., village hall, public service-related uses). The continued success of the downtown area will be dependent upon the capacity of zoning regulations to adapt to the changing nature of land uses to serve the needs of the community.



Photo #2:

The characteristics of the buildings along this section of Main Street as shown in the photograph to the left, are representative of a majority of the commercially used buildings in the Village. These characteristics include front yard orientation, limited height of 2-3 stories, a high degree of lot coverage, and limited lot size.

- Dimensional standards for commercial land use. Regarding regulation of buildings accommodating commercial use, and their location within a lot, their form, and their mass, a balance needs to be struck between the anticipated need for more mixed-uses and the retention of the existing scale of the built environment that is part of the heritage and charm of the village. The compact nature of the parcels and buildings existing in the downtown area (e.g., small lot sizes and limited building height – consisting of 2-3 stories) are a result of a development pattern grounded in the unique heritage of the village. As such, there is limited interest among the residents in accommodating multiple story buildings with high density uses whether they be multi-unit residential buildings or commercial use buildings.

Community Services

Another anticipated outcome in the evolution of the village's land use pattern is the significant concentration of community services. As described above, these uses involve services that are for the "well-being" of the community. Therefore, services provided to address public health, safety and welfare are listed under this use classification.

- The village as the long-established center for such services, finds that the physical aspects of community service use as reflected in the County RPS data, comprises 13% of the parcels in the village (188 of 1,432 total lots), while occupying 11% of the land area (approximately 66.88± acres of 600.08 total acres). This yields an average community service lot size of approximately 15,496 sq. ft., or about one-third of an acre.
- The nature of uses associated with the community service classification can be vital to the overall quality of life in the community. In a circumstance such as Highland Falls where the land area of the overall village is compact, the land use pattern is highly developed, and the population has been relatively stable, the level of parcels/land area for community services is also stable and demonstrating limited growth or contraction.
- As such, it is anticipated that the current level of land use under this classification is likely to remain steady or grow slightly or shift depending upon the fluctuations in demand. Therefore, land use schedules among the commercial use districts should be accordingly accommodative of these uses.

Recreation and Entertainment; Industrial; Public Services; and Wild Forested, Conservation Lands & Public Parks

- In total, these remaining categories of land use represent a minor segment of the overall land use pattern in the village. As such, the physical aspects of recreation and entertainment; industrial; public services; and wild forested, conservation lands and public parks use as reflected in the County RPS data, comprises only .6% of the parcels in the village (9 of 1,432 total lots), while occupying 5% of the land area (approximately 29.79± acres of 600.08 total acres).
- Unlike average lot size in other use categories, the average lot size within this classification is comparatively larger at 2.68± acres. This is likely due to the character of the uses accommodated within these classifications (e.g., public parks, open space preservation areas, outdoor recreation) and the inherently larger footprints associated with these uses.

Analysis of Supplemental Uses and Regulations

This part of the analysis focuses on Article VII (Supplemental Use and Dimensional Regulations) of Chapter 240. This section sets forth regulations relating to ancillary buildings and uses (e.g., accessory buildings, structures, and uses) and dimensional standards to manage the mass and shape of permitted uses (e.g., minimum floor area requirements for residential dwellings). The following comments are offered based upon a review of the referenced article and assessment of the regulations and the format by which they are presented:

- The supplemental regulations of this Article are divided into four parts: 1.) Minimum residential floor area requirements; 2.) Standards for the placement and height of fences and walls; 3.) Standards for off-street parking and loading; and 4.) Standards for sign location, size, and height. The dimensional specifications associated with each of the referenced parts appear to be adequate and well-suited to the existing conditions.
- Regarding parking as a supplemental, support use to the permitted uses downtown, the parking schedules provide for an exemption from the required parking levels for residential and nonresidential uses within a described geographic area downtown. In consideration of the compact and dense nature of the downtown development pattern and limited space available overall for commercial use, the provision of an exemption is reasonable and beneficial. Therefore, it is recommended that the exemption continue.
- However, the regulations are haphazardly presented as a more logical sequence within the context of the overall chapter that could be achieved. This is due to the passage of time since the adoption of the core zoning regulations in 1971. Multiple references to revision dates spanning the intervening years were noted throughout the entire Article. In some instances, the regulations appear to have “accumulated” over time and the logical sequencing and flow to the regulations has been diluted.

A representative example of the jumbled nature of the regulations within the article is the format of the off-street parking exemption that is available within a specified geographic area for residential and non-residential uses. Such an exemption is an important regulation as this clause can have a significant impact on the overall design of a proposed project. Yet the description of the area for the referenced exemptions is narratively described in an Editor’s Note at the bottom of the parking schedules. Additionally, a close review of the note found that there appears to be a gap in one of the geographic areas described. A superior format would be presentation of the exemptions within a section of the regulations and referencing these exemptions to an area on the Village Zoning Map. This alternative method will provide a clear explanation of the exemption and the geographic area that it covers.

Recommendations

The heritage of the village; the long-established nature of the land use pattern, including the pervasive and dominant nature of residential use; and support of the residents to preserve the qualities of the residential neighborhoods in the village are all factors which influence the following recommendations:

- The heritage of the village, the nature of content of the land use pattern, and the existing substance of the built and natural environment contribute to a charming atmosphere with an appealing quality of life. As such, the basic components of the land use pattern should be retained and preserved. Therefore, the basic elements of the zoning district delineations, use schedules and dimensional standards should remain unchanged.
- To ensure proper scale and sizing of future new buildings or modifications to existing buildings two revisions to the existing standards and regulations in the commercial districts are recommended:
 1. The minimum lot area per dwelling unit should be revised to 1,500 sq. ft.
 2. The maximum building height in commercial districts should be set at 45 feet. Allowance for an additional 10 feet of height should also be made in instances where the building wall is setback and additional 10 feet from the property line.
- With the recommended adjustment for the minimum lot area per dwelling unit standardized to 1,500 sq. ft. for all commercial buildings, the need for the B-3 District is eliminated. To effectuate this recommendation, the B-1 District would be extended over the parcels currently within the B-3 District boundary. Under this approach, commercial uses in the downtown area, both existing and planned, as referenced above can be accommodated through the administration of one zoning district.
- In consideration of input received during the development of this plan, residential zoning should be restored to:
 1. The parcels along the west side of Main Street from Glen Road southward to Walker Road (the parcel at the corner of Walker Road and Main Street would remain under a commercial district designation).
 2. Three parcels on the east side across from the intersection with Glen Road and on either side of Regina Road.
- However, it is further recommended that use schedules across each district be reviewed to insure that listed uses reflect the current uses in the district and that any new uses have been given consideration for inclusion in the schedule either a permitted use, a use allowed after review and approval as a special exception use' or a use that should be prohibited.
- The scale of future commercial use within the existing commercially zoned properties should be scaled to match the capacity of the existing built environment. The appeal of downtown Highland Falls rests with its charm and intimate landscape. Future development should seek to conform with the current scale and massing of the existing building stock.

- To the extent that larger-scale new development needs accommodation, it is recommended that consideration be given to developing and enacting a Planned Unit Development District (PUDD) provision within the existing zoning chapter. Such a PDD provision can be structured to allow for limited situations where larger-scale development can occur providing that certain pre-established purposes and design parameters are met. This would allow for flexibility and creativity of design while at the same time providing a means to consider limited instances where a larger-scale development could be advantageous.
- In the interest of preserving and enhancing the unique qualities of the built environment it is recommended that design guidelines be developed so shape the mass, scale, and appearance of future development can serve to enhance and augment these underlying characteristics. The design guidelines are recommended as just that “guidelines” and not “requirements.” Close attention to building architecture, the orientation and placement of buildings or building additions, the texture of exterior building treatments, types of windows, building color, the architecture of ancillary infrastructure should carefully adhere to established guidelines that incorporate the historic qualities and overall design of existing buildings. Once developed, the guidelines are envisioned to be incorporated into the review procedures of the Planning Board and resulting design considerations would be stipulated as conditions of the approval granted and enforceable during the subsequent construction of the project and prior to the issuance of certificate of occupancy and/or completion.
- Future development and uses within the commercial zoning districts, particularly in the downtown area, are recommended to be widely inclusive of small-scale businesses providing a range of goods and services to the residents and visitors to the community. With the fast-paced and continuing evolution of commercial uses, the structure of associated zoning schedules concerning use should allow for wide variation in the mix of uses allowed within the district and within individual parcels. This recommendation is made with expectation that creativity and flexibility of use within the small footprints of the existing building stock will be a key element in the continued viability of the buildings as centers for commercial and residential use.
- The regulatory approach of allowing for mixed-use should be complemented by a coordinated and ongoing recruitment effort to target certain uses that meet resident/visitor needs while building a broad base of interesting and appealing uses for the downtown area. Examples of such targeted uses within the commercial districts include, but are not limited to artisans (performing and applied arts); small-scale boutiques offering unique goods and services; local entrepreneurs – experience demonstrates that “home-grown businesspersons” are oftentimes the most successful as they understand the nature of the local market and have a detailed understanding of local resident’s needs; dining – variations of quality, well prepared food offer the type of highly sought experiences that would augment and enhance a mixed-use environment in downtown Highland Falls.
- The commercial zoning regulations, design guidelines and recruitment efforts recommended above should be further coordinated with an effort to retain and augment the historic nature of the downtown area. A local historic tax credit could be matched with the state historic tax credit to induce restoration of the existing building stock to preserve and build back the historic qualities that add to the unique qualities of the built environment.

- Regarding residential zoning, it is recommended that the existing zoning map should be revised to restore residential zoning along Main Street from Glen Road to Walker Road. This recommendation is made in consideration of the current underlying use of parcels through this section as residential. Also, this will serve to protect the residential qualities of the residential neighborhood which currently adjoins these parcels.
- Regarding parking, it is recommended that the existing exemptions be delineated on the Village Zoning Map. In consideration of the compact scale of the downtown area, the exemption provision is worthy of continuation but the geography of the area where the exemption applies should be mapped, thereby highlighting its availability, and providing a clearer understanding of the area in which the exemption applies.
- As a final recommendation, during the review of the existing zoning chapter the original date of adoption of the core zoning law (August 10, 1971) was noted. Also noteworthy is the numerous dates of revisions throughout each article of the current law. As stated previously, the diligence in keeping zoning regulations current is laudable. However, the net effect of these numerous incremental revisions to a law that originated over 50 years ago is a fragmented presentation of regulations with presentation of various provisions using differing methods (e.g., editor's notes, revised text, tabular revisions, etc.). The concern with the status is the difficulty in comprehending the regulations and the risk of missing a relevant provision that is located elsewhere in another section, table, notation, and/or definition.

Also, the construct of the overall chapter could benefit from an update as well. For example, use schedules for the residential districts and commercial districts are in two different schedules at two separate locations in the document; general chapter definitions and definitions for various sections are in several different locations.

Lastly, the zoning map itself should be updated to reflect the recommended elimination of the B-3 District and address the numerous parcels that are "split-zoned", or those parcels with a zoning district boundary bifurcating the parcel. Split-zoned parcels are problematic in several ways: conflicting uses (e.g., residential/commercial) can occur within the same lot. This circumstance makes effective administration of the zoning regulations challenging, while creating confusion for the property owner and potentially affecting property valuation. The technology available through electronic or digital mapping is much more precise. Therefore, it is recommended that a new, digital map of the zoning districts be revised so district boundaries can be set to match property lines. Under this recommendation the districting would remain unchanged, but the split-zoned parcels would be eliminated.

In summary, the chapter and related zoning map would benefit from an update that focuses on reorganization according to a logical flow to the presentation of the regulations and ease of use for both residents and the staff charged with administration and enforcement.