

### 5.0 Main Street Revitalization

The Village has two traditional “Main Street” business districts, in addition to the Route 17M corridor. The “Downtown” business district is situated along Main Street near the 1915 Chester Erie Station at the northern end of the Village. It is noted for its three-story mixed-use buildings, pedestrian scale streets and Village offices. “Uptown” is situated at the intersection of Main Street and Academy Avenue. Uptown is noted for its eclectic mix of one and two-story mixed-use buildings and is also the oldest section of the Village.

Today, there are a variety of businesses Downtown, including but not limited to three (3) restaurants, two (2) personal service establishments, a Yoga Studio, a barber shop, a market & deli; [brewery with tasting room](#), [coffee shop](#), and Village Hall, the Police Department and Justice Court. The Downtown business district has many beautiful and prominent mixed-use buildings that provide an excellent foundation for a vibrant mixed-use center. However, many storefronts are vacant and there is a general sense of disinvestment that detracts from its historic character.

Several of the buildings have no “curb appeal”; business names should be conducive to attracting customers and visitors. The wires on some of the buildings need to be consolidated or re-attached in a neater fashion. Unused wires should be removed. Until there are design standards established requiring proper maintenance of the buildings, the downtown area will not attract people who would casually walk down the street to view the other shops.

The Village’s Downtown business district has many of the attributes associated with a successful business community. These include a safe and walkable environment, attractive civic buildings, cultural anchor in the 1915 Erie Railroad Station Museum and a distinct sense of place as defined by the integrity of its historic architecture. These attributes provide a solid foundation on which to sustain a Downtown revitalization effort.

Uptown is the other traditional mixed-use business district, with a variety of business establishments including a barber shop, hair salon, realtor, professional office, insurance office, pizza restaurant, falafel restaurant, and consignment shop. Like the Downtown business district, Uptown has many vacant storefronts and a general sense of disinvestment.



**Above** (top to bottom): View of historic mixed-use building in Downtown Main Street; Village Hall, which is situated in the heart of Downtown on Main Street; and mixed-use building with several business establishments. The buildings above are eligible for listing on the State and National Register of Historic Places.

This Chapter provides a framework for how the public, private and not-for-profit sectors can work together to create an environment that attracts new investment to the Downtown business district and Uptown so that they remain vibrant business, civic and cultural centers of the community for years to come.

**5.1 Civic and Cultural Anchors**

Successful Main Street business districts are not only places where people shop, but they also are places where many civic and cultural activities occur and where the public can gather at community events. In the Village of Chester, Village Hall, the Police Department, and Justice Court are all located within the Downtown business district. So too is the 1915 Erie Railroad Station Museum. These civic and cultural anchors draw people to Downtown every day thereby supporting commercial activity and continued investment in the area.

*This Plan strongly encourages the Village Board to keep its civic buildings Downtown and Uptown and supports private and not-for-profit sector efforts to establish and expand cultural and entertainment activities within these business districts.*

**5.2 Promotion**

Successful Main Street revitalization programs require promotion. Promotion means selling the image and promise of Downtown and Uptown to all prospects. This involves marketing the unique characteristics of each business district to shoppers, investors, prospective businesses and visitors. It also involves the creation of a strategy to promote a positive image of the entire business district through advertising, special events and marketing events carried out by the business community along with the support of civic and cultural institutions.

The Chester Music Series is an important anchor that helps to draw visitors to Downtown; however, the visitors do not avail themselves of the other businesses when they attend the Music Series because the downtown area does not look appealing enough to take a stroll. Other than two restaurants (Rustic Wheelhouse & Clayton Delaney’s & the laundromat) which are close to the music venue and are open late, all of the other businesses are not.



**Above** (top to bottom): Mixed-use buildings that are the major focal point when entering Uptown from Academy Avenue onto Main Street; one-story infill building that houses a restaurant; and residence and mixed-use building in Uptown. Unlike the Downtown business district, there is more eclectic mix of buildings in Uptown, which make it less visually appealing. Parking is also very limited in this business district.

This section describes certain challenges facing each business district along with recommendations for creating an effective promotion strategy.

One of the challenges facing Chester in creating an effective promotional strategy is getting business owners to think of each business district as a whole rather than the sum of its parts. While the Village Board can play a supporting role promoting a positive image of Downtown and Uptown, it is the local business community that needs to take the leading role in promoting a positive image of their business districts. They can do this by sponsoring *special events*; conducting joint advertising campaigns to promote each business district and creating advertising campaigns to market the distinctive characteristics of each business district. Business owners must also work together to ensure the highest quality shopping experience for their customers.

For example, the business community should coordinate their *hours of operation* so that like businesses are open when customers are available to shop. Activity breeds activity and the *coordination of business hours* will benefit the entire business district. The business community should also work together to create *seasonal marketing campaigns* and other special events that are designed to draw customers to the business district.

Doing so will require the cooperation of the local business community but will strengthen each business district. Other measures that can be taken to promote Downtown and Uptown include the creation of special attractions within each business district that are designed to draw people. Activities might include the creation of a seasonal *arts & crafts marketplace* featuring the work of Hudson Valley artists and continue and expand *live music* events at local restaurants. Such activities can draw large numbers of people - providing them an opportunity to discover Chester.

It is also important that the business community reach out to prospective entrepreneurs to encourage them to open complementary businesses. *Business attraction efforts* are needed to fill vacant storefronts and are also needed to create an appealing mix of retail, restaurants, professional services and cultural attractions. The focus of business attraction efforts must be quality - quality design, quality of the goods & services, quality merchandise displays and appealing restaurant settings. A vibrant mix of restaurants, retail and services would give customers a reason to visit time and time again - thereby making Main Street a destination.



**Above** (top to bottom): *Case Study:* Butterfields Cafe on Division Street in Deposit, NY and view of front porch and outdoor seating for the café. The signs, large windows and nice presentation of the exterior and interior of this restaurant, coupled with its menu, make for an inviting culinary destination that has broad appeal.

Both the Uptown and Downtown areas are included in proposed Historic overlay districts, which will only enhance and preserve the historic character of these areas.

**5.3 Organization**

Successful Main Street revitalization efforts are built around a consensus of all the stakeholders who have a stake in the business district so they can work together toward the same goals. In the case of Chester, the stakeholders include the Village Board, Planning Board, local businesses, building owners, not-for-profit agencies and residents.

Business expansion and attraction efforts will likely require financial incentives to ensure a return-on-investment that dictates private sector investment. One tool that is available to assist in business recruitment or expansion is the New York Main Street (NYMS) Program. Each year, the Village must apply for between \$50,000 to \$500,000 through NYMS for local revitalization efforts.

NYMS funds can be made available to entrepreneurs in the form of small grants for façade renovations, interior building renovations and the creation of Main Street anchors. The Village Board must coordinate with the local business community with respect to identifying potential projects, but must take the leading role in pursuing the grant application for NYMS funds and administering the grant.

This type of organizational structure allows the Village to utilize its existing capacity to leverage these funds for Main Street revitalization, while enabling business owners to continue to focus on running their establishments. However, it would be the business community that would take the leading role promoting Main Street and hosting special events.

To formalize the structure of Main Street revitalization responsibilities and role, it is recommended that the Village Board establish a *Main Street Revitalization Committee* for a combined Downtown and Uptown Main Street to clearly identify the responsibilities of each stakeholder in the overall “Main Street” revitalization effort and to strengthen cooperation among various stakeholders over time. These Committees should consist of members from each identified stakeholder group and begin by meeting quarterly to initiate a coordinated Main Street revitalization program.



**Above:** Case Study: View of new infill building situated in the flood zone on Main Street in the hamlet of Livingston Manor in Sullivan County, NY. The revitalization effort in the hamlet began with leadership from the local business community along with strong support from the Town of Rockland and the Sullivan County Planning Department. The new sidewalks and streetlamps were funded through NYSDOT Multi-modal funds and Empire State Development Corporation funds. Business owners could secure matching grants of up to \$10,000 for façade renovations along with \$5,000 matching grants for interior renovations.

Finally, the Main Street Business District was placed within the Sullivan County Empire Zone enabling investors to obtain a 10-year Real Property Tax Credit. Collectively, these incentives – coupled with strong support from the business community and local government has helped to stimulate millions of dollars in new investment and expanded the tax base.

**5.4 Design**

Creating an attractive streetscape requires a careful focus on the design of building storefronts and the streetscape. Downtown and Uptown mixed-use buildings must be restored in a manner that respects their historic architecture and the pedestrian environment must provide a sense of cleanliness, comfort and security. This can be accomplished by having well-maintained sidewalks, street trees, streetlights and street furniture that provide comfort and security for the pedestrian.

Downtown and Uptown businesses owners must also create an inviting atmosphere. This can be accomplished through a variety of measures including attractive window displays, visually appealing facades, appropriate signage, pleasing displays of merchandise and good quality merchandise. It is also vitally important that new infill buildings are designed to complement the architecture of historic buildings that are located throughout each business district. A careful focus on design will make each more appealing thereby enhancing the social and economic vitality of the business districts. Design Guidelines should also be adopted for Downtown and Uptown.

*5.4.1 Façade Renovations*

Renovations to the historic buildings in the Downtown and Uptown business districts must respect the architecture of the buildings. To this end, renovations that remove historic elements of buildings must not be permitted. Also, façade renovations that mask the historic architecture of historic buildings should be prohibited. However, the removal of false facades should be encouraged.

*5.4.2 Window Displays & Merchandising*

The design of window and merchandise displays play an important role in defining the quality of the shopping experience. Window displays should be attractive to the eye and display something of interest that encourages the shopper to enter the store and shop. It is also important the windows remain free of visual clutter (such as temporary sales signs) since such signs block the view of the merchandise within the store. Temporary sales and banner signs also convey an image of cheapness – not quality. Any business can make their windows interesting.



**Above** (top to bottom): *Case Study: Country Emporium* in Walton, NY – an example of nice window display and transparent windows; *The Harrison Gallery* in Williamstown, MA where the display of sculptures and transparency of the storefront window create an inviting appearance; and *Rhinebeck Hardware Store* in Rhinebeck, NY with signage, awning and window and outdoor displays that invite customer interest.

As more and more store owners invest time creating inviting window displays the overall shopping experience in the business district will be enhanced.

As building facades are restored, building owners must retain the transparency of the storefront by maintaining the large display windows. Large display windows provide a great setting for window displays but also allow shoppers to see the merchandise from the street. When well designed, the store is inviting.

If the merchandise is well-displayed, it too becomes an aesthetically pleasing part of the storefront.

Attractive storefronts help merchants to attract customers into their stores. Collectively, they help to create vibrant business district. The Village should discourage business owners from making modifications to any of the storefronts within the business district that would reduce the transparency of the storefront as has happened with several storefront offices in Uptown.

5.4.3 Signs

The signs associated with Chester’s Uptown business district vary from very appealing to unappealing. Signs vary greatly with respect to placement, size, materials, quality and better design is needed. *Sign standards for Downtown and Uptown must be adopted, which regulate sign size, placement and set standards for sign materials and lighting.*

Wood or faux wood signs with down lit gooseneck lamps are recommended. Wall signs should be appropriately placed in the "lintel" (e.g. the sign panel between first and second floor). Pole signs and interior illuminated boxed lighting fixtures will be prohibited in the Downtown and Uptown business districts, as should LED “surrounds” on the display windows.

*There is also a need to limit the placement of temporary window signs.* Temporary window signs will be limited to a small number of seasonal events during the year for a short duration. Even then, the percentage of the storefront window on which these signs are placed will be limited to no greater than 25% of the total window area.

MAIN STREET REVITALIZATION

“FORM A DOWNTOWN AND UPTOWN REVITALIZATION COMMITTEE TO CLEARLY IDENTIFY RESPONSIBILITIES OF EACH STAKEHOLDER IN THE MAIN STREET REVITALIZATION EFFORT AND TO STRENGTHEN COOPERATION AMONG VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS OVER TIME.”

5.4.4 Street Lighting/wiring

The existing utility poles, lights and wiring in Downtown and Uptown detract from the beauty of historic mixed-use buildings. This Plan recommends the Village Board, in cooperation with building owners and the utility companies, explore the feasibility of moving overhead utilities from their current location in front of buildings to the rear of the buildings in the proposed historic overlays. It is a goal of this Plan to replace the current utility poles, cobra lighting fixtures and wires with vintage style pedestrian-scale light poles along the sidewalks in Downtown and Uptown.

5.5 Main Street Revitalization: Goals, Objectives and Policies

Goal 1: Create a socially and economically vibrant mixed-use business districts.

Objectives and Policies: Main Street Revitalization

- DR.1. Keep civic and cultural anchors within the Downtown and Uptown business districts.
- DR.2. Encourage better business owner participation in regional Chambers of Commerce and create local chamber to promote Downtown and Uptown as a whole rather than the sum of its parts.
- DR.3. Emphasize quality - quality design, quality of goods & services, quality merchandise displays and appealing restaurant settings.
- DR.4. Adopt *Design Guidelines* to ensure renovations to historic buildings are done appropriately and infill development strengthens the fabric of the Downtown and Uptown business districts.
- DR.5. Identify complementary and needed businesses or services for Downtown and Uptown.
- DR.6. Review Zoning Law to ensure existing regulations do not hinder efforts to create new business establishments (e.g., off-street parking requirements, permitted density, etc.).
- DR.7. Build capacity for Main Street revitalization efforts by forming a *Downtown and Uptown Revitalization Committee* to clearly identify the responsibilities of each stakeholder in the “Main Street” revitalization effort and to strengthen cooperation among various stakeholders over time.
- DR.8. Apply through the NYS Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) process to secure *New York Main Street* funding to assist business retention and expansion efforts.



Above (top to bottom): Placemaking Tour with the Comprehensive Plan Committee Members at new Pavilion behind Village Hall; corner of NYS Route 94 and Main Street; and view from Pavilion looking at the back of Downtown buildings.

- DR.9. Encourage more housing opportunities above the first floor of mixed-use buildings.
- DR.10. Expand municipal parking areas in Downtown and Uptown business district.
- DR.11. The Village Board, in cooperation with building owners and the utility companies, should explore the feasibility of moving overhead utilities from their current location in front of buildings to the rear of the buildings in the proposed historic overlays.
- DR.12. Identify businesses needing renovation and proper maintenance such as peeling paint, loose bricks and mortar gaps, and require the businesses to correct such deficiencies and conform to the design standards established by the Village Board, including attractive window displays, visually appealing facades, and appropriate signage. Unusual building paint colors such as “shocking blue” will be prohibited. In order to give the business districts a better look for visitors and our residents, fines should be instituted if improvements are not accomplished within a specified time frame. The Village Board will present and pass a Local Law to codify and enforce these requirements.
- DR.13. The Village Board in conjunction with the Chester Historical Society will coordinate and plan outdoor events around the Erie Station and the Larkin Pavilion.
- DR.14. Leaning telephone poles will be replaced. “Zombie” and half poles will be removed. Unused utility wires will be removed, and the remaining wires will be consolidated in a neat fashion.
- DR.15. Parking areas should be expanded behind the downtown businesses including using the Larkin Pavilion area for parking when events are not scheduled there.
- DR.16. Signs will be consistent with the historical character of the Downtown, Uptown and should not be garish and unappealing. Wood and faux wood signs with down lit gooseneck lamps are recommended. Pole signs and LED signs should be prohibited.

*Full EAF Part 3 Discussion: The policies proposed herein are intended to ensure that public investment in Downtown and Uptown is compatible with the historic character of these areas and promotes historic preservation to the greatest practical extent. No adverse impacts are anticipated as a result of these policies.*

MAIN STREET  
REVITALIZATION

“APPLY THROUGH THE NYS CONSOLIDATED FUNDING APPLICATION (CFA) PROCESS TO SECURE NEW YORK MAIN STREET FUNDING TO ASSIST BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION EFFORTS.”

**Problem:**  
Underutilized space.

**Recommendation:**  
Develop an Overall Master Plan for the Village of Chester parcels situated behind the Main Street business district.

**Problem:**  
Cobra lights mounted on utility poles are not very attractive and lighting is not pedestrian friendly.

**Recommendation:**  
Install street lights along Main Street.

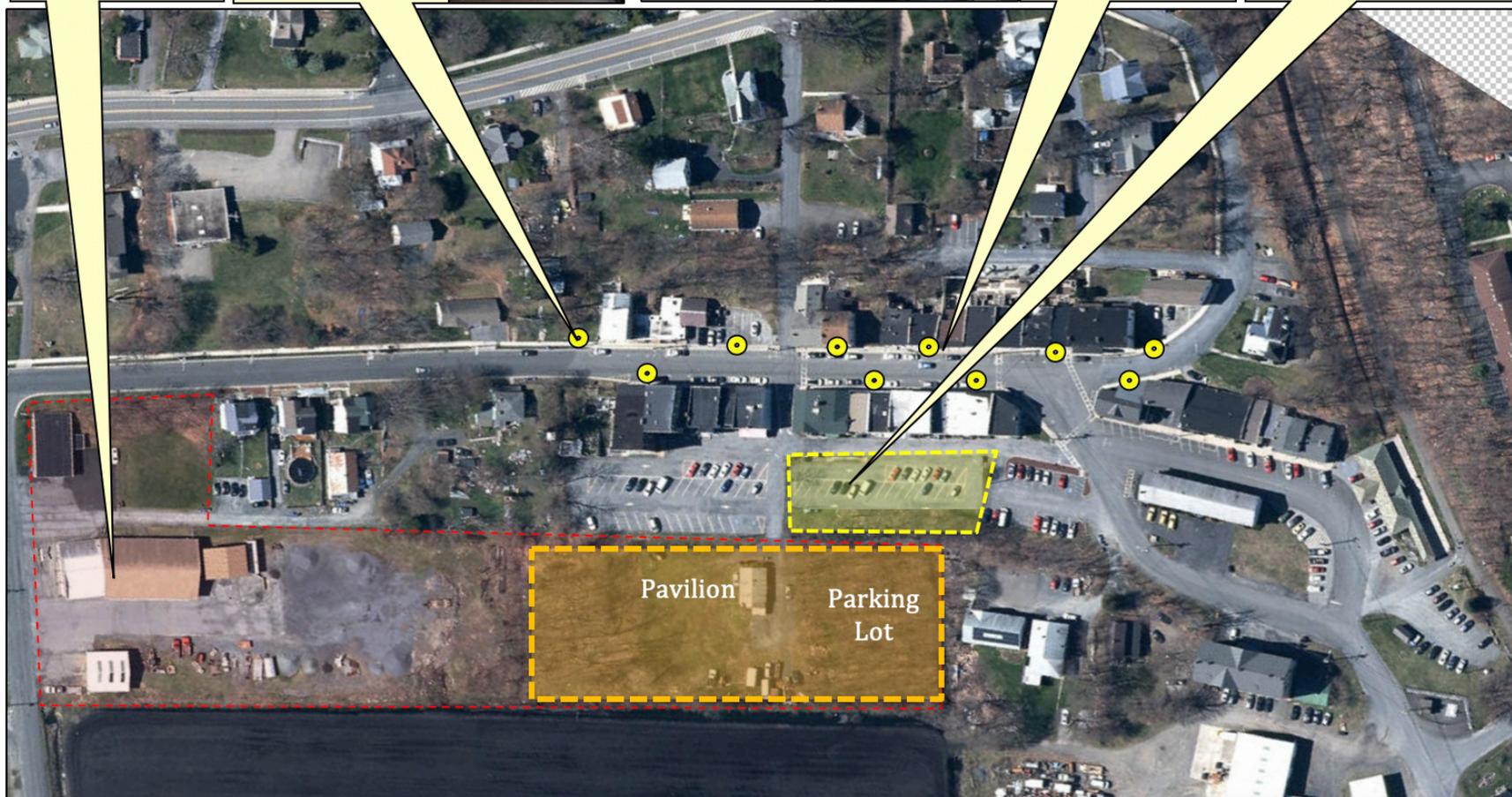


**Problem:**  
Overhead utilities and utility connections on front of buildings is not visually appealing.

**Recommendation:**  
Explore feasibility of moving poles behind buildings or burying electric lines.

**Problem:**  
Separate ownership of four (4) tax parcels stands in the way of creating a consolidated off-street parking area for the Main Street business district.

**Recommendation:**  
Work with property owners to develop an off-street parking lot for the entire business district with room for 30 cars.



## 6.0 Transportation

The Village’s transportation system provides the means that enable its residents, businesses and visitors to get around the community and to the surrounding region. It is an important goal of this Comprehensive Plan to provide an interconnected, multi-modal transportation system, which provides safe and efficient access to all properties and land uses.

A multi-modal transportation system accommodates a variety of travelers including motorists, bicyclists, pedestrians, truckers and rail. The Village is committed to ensuring its transportation system continues to serve vehicular travel but would like to enhance mobility options to its residents and businesses. Such options include improved pedestrian access along the Village’s sidewalk system through sidewalk enhancements, the creation of a trail system to better connect residents to its business districts, institutions, and recreational resources; the designation of bike lanes on streets through “*Complete Streets*” enhancements; and improved public transit.

The Village seeks to improve its transportation system by providing viable mobility options to its residents and businesses, so they are not solely dependent on automobiles for travel and transport. To do this, it will promote alternative modes of transportation, including biking, bus public transit, rail, and walking and work with its Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) – the Orange County Transportation Council (OCTC) - and New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) to expand “Park & Ride” opportunities to meet growing demand.

Over time, Chester envisions an enhanced multi-modal transportation model that encourages healthy, active living, promotes mobility options, increases pedestrian safety and access to community destinations, businesses, reduces environmental impact, reduces greenhouse gas emissions, and supports greater social interaction and community identity. This transportation model will provide safe and convenient travel along and across streets through a comprehensive, integrated transportation network for bicyclists, drivers, pedestrians, public transportation riders, and people of all ages and abilities, including children, youth, families, older adults, and individuals with disabilities.

### COMPLETE STREETS

“NOW, IN COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY, A MOVEMENT IS GROWING TO “COMPLETE THE STREETS.” CITIES AND TOWNS ARE ASKING THEIR PLANNERS AND ENGINEERS TO BUILD ROAD NETWORKS THAT ARE SAFER, MORE LIVABLE, AND WELCOMING TO EVERYONE.... TO ENABLE SAFE ACCESS FOR ALL USERS, REGARDLESS OF AGE, ABILITY, OR MODE OF TRANSPORTATION. THIS MEANS THAT EVERY TRANSPORTATION PROJECT WILL MAKE THE STREET NETWORK BETTER AND SAFER FOR DRIVERS, TRANSIT USERS, PEDESTRIANS, AND BICYCLISTS — MAKING YOUR COMMUNITY A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE.”

- National Complete Streets Coalition

Key elements for achieving this vision will be: 1) improving the street system’s ability to move people and goods safely and efficiently, 2) revitalizing the historic grid network that exists in Chester by implementing Complete Streets solutions and policies, and 3) improving access to and promoting the use of public transport and rail (freight) to reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT).

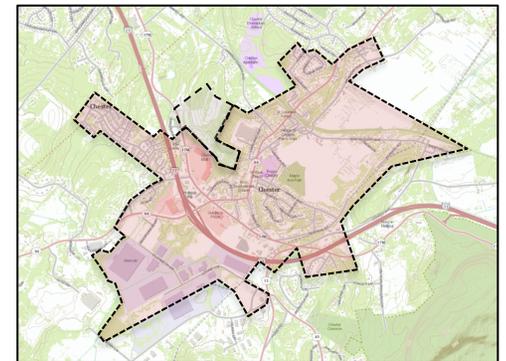
To achieve this vision and objectives, the Village will need to work closely with the Orange County Transportation Council (OCTC), New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT), and private railroads, since each of these entities in some way operate and maintain a portion of the Village’s transportation system.

### 6.1 Improving the Street System

The core of the Village of Chester’s transportation system is its interstate and arterial highways and its *grid street plan* in which streets run at right angles to one another, forming a grid (Map 6-1). Two inherent characteristics of the grid plan, frequent intersections and the right angles of intersections, assist pedestrian and vehicular movement. The geometry helps with orientation and wayfinding and its frequent intersections give pedestrians and motorists many choices of potential routes in which to reach their desired destination. Such choices help to alleviate traffic congestion on a single street by giving motorists alternative routes to reach their destination.

The Village’s street system can be further defined by the functional classification. The Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) created a functional classification system for roadways as follows:

- *Local* - This type of road provides direct access to abutting properties and channels local traffic to collector roads (e.g. residential streets);
- *Minor Collector*: These roads provide connections between arterials and local roads at comparatively slower speeds and carry moderate volumes of traffic (e.g. Maple Avenue and Greycourt Avenue);
- *Major Collector*: Provide connections between arterials and local roads at relatively higher speeds (e.g., Main Street (between Uptown and Downtown), Lehigh Avenue, West Avenue);
- *Arterial*: The function of an arterial is to carry medium-to-heavy volumes of traffic at moderate to high speeds and provide access to major traffic generators (e.g., NYS Routes 17M & 94);
- *Interstate and Limited-Access Highways*: This type of highway moves large volumes of traffic at relatively high speeds to and from locations outside the region. Such highways have limited access via designated exits with no at-grade intersections (e.g., NYS Route 17).



**Above** (top to bottom): NYS Route 17M, which is an arterial highway; view of Park & Ride at the corner of NYS Route 94/Nucifora Blvd., and map showing street system in Chester. Improving the street system will require cooperation with Village, Town, County and State agencies.



The Village’s grid street plan is well-established so improving it involves identifying and then addressing deficiencies in the current infrastructure. This Plan recommends ongoing monitoring of traffic accident data with local and State law enforcement agencies to identify locations in the street system where roadway design may be contributing to traffic accidents. Once deficiencies are identified then improvements can be planned and funding secured to improve traffic safety.

Deficiencies in the present street system include the intersection of Brookside Avenue (NYS Route 17M) and Kings Highway (CR 13), where the roadway geometry results in difficult turning movements. This intersection is a major gateway to the Village of Chester and there is an urgent need to address its deficiencies in light of regional developments such as Legoland and the redevelopment of Camp LaGuardia, which will inevitably increase traffic congestion at this intersection. Failure to address the deficiencies at this intersection will have adverse transportation impacts that will affect the Village, Town and surrounding communities. For the above reasons, securing funding to address such street system deficiencies is a priority of this Comprehensive Plan and should be an action considered for immediate implementation.

To do so, the Village will need to work closely with its MPO, the Orange County Transportation Council (OCTC) to secure funding through the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) to prepare a plan for the improvement of this intersection and to get it on the NYSDOT’s Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) to fund planned improvements. In light of nearby developments with regional impacts (e.g., Legoland), this Plan recommends the Board of Trustees seek UPWP funding to conduct a Corridor Study of NYS Route 17M within the Village/Town of Chester. The study purpose would be to identify needed roadway geometry improvements and complete street enhancements to make the corridor visually appealing and pedestrian friendly.

Another concerning intersection is the Oakland Avenue/Main Street (Route 94)/High Street intersection. The roadway geometry for tractor trailers turning onto Oakland Avenue is too steep, and the sight distance for drivers turning onto High Street from Main Street is poor. The Walton Hose fire company is also located at this intersection. This is the type of intersection that would benefit from a roundabout, which would help to calm traffic and provide uninterrupted traffic flow to help alleviate congestion. Roadway geometry deficiencies must be addressed to accommodate increases in traffic that will inevitably be generated by the regional developments.



**Above** (top to bottom): View of the intersection of Main Street and Maple Avenue showing road and sidewalk system; intersection of Main Street and Elm Street; and view of Main Street and Academy Avenue intersection at gateway to Uptown. Cross Streets such as Walnut Street and Oak Street provide interior connections between Maple Avenue and Elm Street to form the grid.

There are also many locations in the village where sidewalks suddenly end, are missing or are just simply needed. This plan will analyze the connectivity and condition of the sidewalks in the village, identify locations and make recommendations as to what is needed. The Village Board will amend the Zoning Code to require developers to provide sidewalks and connections to the existing sidewalk system.

Looking ahead, it is recommended that the Village Board with its Streets Department continue to identify needed improvements in its street system so that as funding becomes available it is ready to apply for federal and State aid to address such deficiencies. This Plan supports the creation of a detailed inventory of the roadway system, which describes the general condition of road, culvert and sidewalk segments, and any drainage deficiencies that need to be addressed. From such an inventory, a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) would be developed along with a schedule for maintenance and replacement of key segments of the street system.

**6.2 Complete Streets - Revitalizing the Grid System**

Where the Village’s grid system is in good repair, it serves the multi-modal transportation needs of Chester. However, sidewalk improvements to make the community more accessible to persons with disabilities are needed as well as pedestrian and bicyclist systems.



**Above:** The ideal “Complete Street” with accommodations for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit and automobiles.

Courtesy AARP Bulletin.

**Village of Chester, New York**



**Above** (top to bottom): View of sidewalk and crosswalk system in Downtown, which would benefit from enhancements to make the business district more appealing and pedestrian friendly; view of NYS Route 17M corridor with strip commercial development and lack of street trees, which make it uninviting, and view NYS Route 17 M with nice display of antique vehicles associated with a local business establishment. Complete street concepts must be considered in a Corridor Study for NYS Route 17M.

It is an important goal of this Comprehensive Plan to implement *complete street* solutions and policies to revitalize the historic grid network that exists in Chester and to implement them into new streets and highways. In some instances, such solutions would involve repair or replacement of curbing, crosswalks and sidewalks. This is what is needed along Main Street [in Downtown and Uptown]. In other instances, new sidewalks, bike lanes or trails should be considered to better link residential areas to institutions, parks, Uptown, Downtown and the strip retail developments along NYS Route 17M [See illustration below of corridor “Complete Streets” improvements].

This Plan strongly supports streetscape enhancements in the heart of the Uptown and Downtown, which would include new sidewalks and handicap accessible curbing along with streetscape enhancements to make the business district more inviting to pedestrians and bicyclists. *Curbed bump outs* at key intersections would improve sight distance and pedestrian safety.

By bumping out the curb line at a crosswalk, the traffic gets slower, the pedestrians are more visible to oncoming traffic, and pedestrians are clearly directed to these crossing locations which helps channel them to safer crossing locations. The curbed bump outs would help to address the sight distance concerns at busy intersections. This Plan also recommends the introduction of more landscaping along Main Street in Uptown and Downtown to soften the appearance of these business districts. Complete Street enhancements are also needed along NYS Route 17M.



**Above** (top to bottom): View of sidewalk and crosswalk system along NYS Route 55 in LaGrangeville, NY. The top photos showing a round-about, sidewalks, textured crosswalks, pedestrian-scale period lighting and pedestrian benches; middle photo shows tractor-trailer using mountable curb to make turn, and bottom photo showing monument sign for McDonald's. The Route 17 M Corridor in the Village of Chester would be well-suited for such improvements.



**Above:** NYSDOT Region 8 “Complete Street” Improvements on NYS Route 55 in LaGrangeville, NY, with accommodations for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit and automobiles.

**6.3 Improving Access to Public Transport and Rail**

The Village seeks to improve access to public transportation along with business access to freight rail. These efforts would help to lower Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) and Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG), which are important goals of this Plan. Improved public transit is critical to creating a multi-modal transportation system that provides Chester’s residents access to safe, reliable, and affordable connections to employment, education, healthcare, and other essential services for all users including: the elderly and disabled, children, pedestrians, bicyclists, drivers, non-drivers and transit users.

The Village faces a challenge with the extreme shortage of commuter parking for daily bus riders traveling to and from employment in New York City. There is a 97-space Park and Ride lot in Chester at the corner of NYS Route 94 and Nucifora Boulevard. On a daily basis, this lot is filled to capacity with an estimated overflow of 70-100 cars per day parking in the Lowes Home Center parking lot across Route 94. Expanded parking capacity is a necessity that needs to be addressed. Park & Ride Lots enable drivers to ride-share or to use public transit by connecting to the Coach/USA Shortline bus system. The Park & Ride lot is already at capacity and cooperation among the Village/Town of Chester/Orange County/NYS DOT and Coach USA Shortline is needed to find ways to expand its capacity. If a Park & Ride were also developed along the Route 17 M corridor with pedestrian and bicycle connections, it would enable Village residents to walk or bike to public transit thereby creating a truly multi-modal transportation system.

Public transportation is needed to allow Chester’s senior residents to age in place rather than moving to other communities where more essential services are provided. Public transportation is also needed for the Village’s low-moderate income young adult population who need public transit for access to higher education, job training, and job opportunities that are only found in the surrounding region. The Village should look into getting a local bus/jitney service that would travel throughout the Village with stops at the Uptown, Downtown, and the Brookside Avenue districts.

To achieve this goal, the Village will need to work closely with the OCTC to explore opportunities to increase the frequency of bus service to the Village and add additional bus stops with shelters to make the bus service more appealing.

TRANSPORTATION

“THE VILLAGE SEEKS TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED OF THE COMMUNITY BY IMPROVING ACCESS TO PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ALONG WITH BUSINESS ACCESS TO FREIGHT RAIL.”

**Mean Travel Time to Work**

	<u>2010</u>	<u>2017</u>
OC	33.5	33.4
VC	40.3	31.1

OC- Orange County  
VC – Village of Chester

Source: Census Commuting Characteristics Survey 5-year Estimates

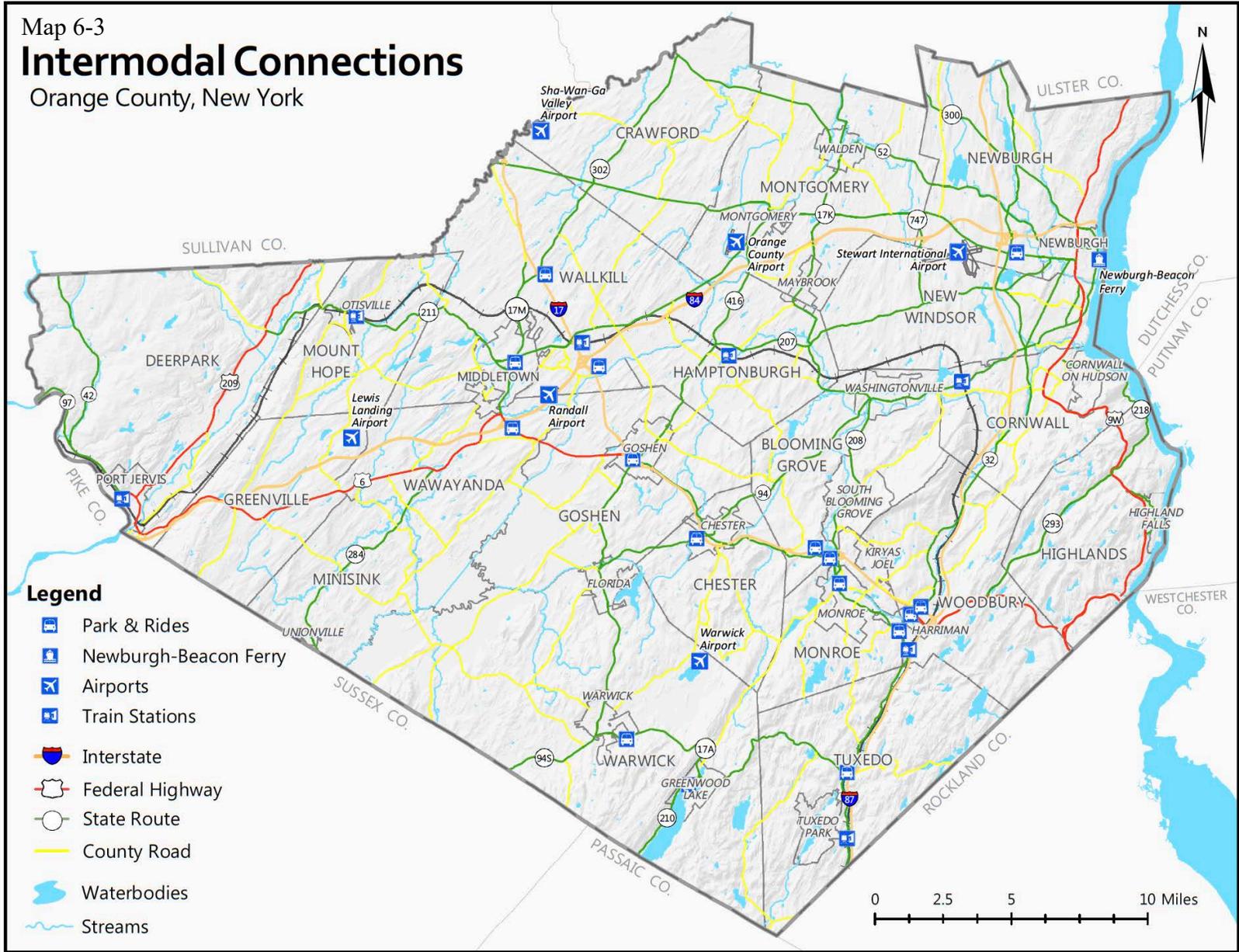
This Plan also recognizes the Middletown & New Jersey Railroad, LLC /New York Susquehanna & Western Railway Corp (MNJ/NYSW), which runs from Sparta Junction in New Jersey to the Port Jervis Line near Campbell Hall and traverses the Town of Chester and eastern portion of the Village, is an important part of its transportation infrastructure. The railway gives local vegetable farmers a competitive advantage and vital connection to transport their produce to market.

To help ensure the long-term viability of the MNJ/NYSW railroad, this Plan supports rail line connections to existing and new agricultural and manufacturing industries within the Village and Town of Chester. Increasing traffic volumes on the railway will help to ensure its long-term viability, while simultaneously helping to reduce VMT on local roadways. Short-term, bus-to-rail service from Chester to Metro North/New Jersey Transit train stations should be provided to enable residents to access passenger rail service to the Metropolitan NYC area. Long-term, passenger rail to the Village could be explored if potential ridership and congestion on local roadways warrant it.



FREIGHT RAIL

“TO HELP ENSURE THE LONG-TERM VIABILITY OF THE MIDDLETOWN & NEW JERSEY RAILROAD, LLC /NEW YORK SUSQUEHANNA & WESTERN RAILWAY CORP (MNJ/NYSW), THIS PLAN SUPPORTS RAIL LINE CONNECTIONS TO EXISTING AND NEW AGRICULTURAL AND MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES WITHIN THE VILLAGE OF CHESTER AND TOWN OF CHESTER.”



6.4 Transportation: Goals, Objectives and Policies

Goal: To provide an interconnected, multimodal transportation system that is safe and efficient, and serves and supports residential and nonresidential land-use in Chester.

Objectives and Policies

Traffic Circulation

- TC.1. Identify safety challenges for pedestrians, bicyclists, or other users through analysis of accident data, and walkability audits; and develop solutions to safety issues.
- TC.2. Prioritize modifications to safety challenges and identify funding streams and implementation strategies, including which features can be constructed as part of routine street projects.
- TC.3. Enhance Chester’s grid street network so that it better accommodates multiple modes of transportation, including bike, bus, pedestrian, truck and vehicular access.
- TC.4. Work closely with its MPO, the Orange County Transportation Council (OCTC), to secure funding through the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) to prepare a plan for “Complete Streets” improvements of the Route 17M corridor and to get it on the NYSDOT’s Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) to fund planned improvements including round-a-bouts.
- TC.5. Establish consistent gateway treatments at the Village’s primary entry-points; including lighting, seasonal banners, plantings and wayfinding sign scheme, to better direct visitors to the Uptown and Downtown and enhance the image of the Route 17 M commercial corridor.
- TC.6. Identify additional funding streams and implementation strategies to retrofit existing streets to include Complete Streets infrastructure. The Village could pursue funding through the NYSDOT Safe Routes to Schools and Transportation Alternatives Program to make complete street improvements.
- TC.7. The Village must coordinate with the Town, OCTC, and NYSDOT to prevent the closure of the exit and entrance ramps at Exits 127 and 128. The closure of these exits would be a disaster for Exit 126 because all traffic would be funneled to one exit, which is already congested especially during rush hour. Study the feasibility of new interchange at southeastern end of the Village.
- TC.8. Require developers to provide at least two means of ingress and egress for large developments.

TRANSPORTATION

“ADVANCE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN RESIDENCES, PARKS, INSTITUTIONS AND THE DOWNTOWN /UPTOWN MAIN STREET BUSINESS DISTRICTS.”

TC.9. The Village must work closely with its Metropolitan Planning Organization and the Orange County Transportation Council (OCTC) to secure funding through the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) to prepare a plan for the improvement of these intersections and to get the projects on the NYSDOT’s Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) to fund the planned improvements. Roundabouts should be built at the following intersections: Brookside Ave & Academy Ave, Oakland Ave & Main St, and Brookside Ave & Lehigh Ave/Kings Highway.

TC.10. The traffic lanes at Brookside Ave & Academy Ave must be redesignated. At present, the left lane is for left turns, the middle lane is for traffic going straight, and the right lane is for right turns. The traffic backs up on the left turn lane because one lane is not enough to handle the traffic. The middle lane should be redesignated as both a left turn and a straight ahead lane.

**Bicycles and Pedestrian Safety**

BP.1. Advance opportunities for bicycle and pedestrian connections between residences, parks, institutions and the Downtown/Uptown Main Street business districts.

BP.2. Require bike racks and amenities for commercial sites, schools, parks and public facilities.

BP.3. Through a *Capital Improvement Plan*, inventory the Village’s sidewalk system in terms of condition, need for repair, replacement or extension and pursue funding through OCTC, NYSDOT, NYSOCR (CDBG) and other agencies to make needed enhancements.

BP.4. Integrate complete streets infrastructure and design features into street design to create a safe and inviting environment for all users to walk, bicycle and use public transportation. Consider designing village environment around people, not cars.

BP.5. Capitalize on the Village's compact development and classic grid system by making enhancements to the street system to better encourage non-motorized transportation modes.

BP.6. Ensure that sidewalk improvements are fully accessible to people with disabilities.

**Public Transportation**

PT.1. Work with the Orange County Transportation Council and Coach/USA Shortline to provide more covered bus shelters and covered bike parking at transit stops in the Village of Chester.

TRANSPORTATION

“INTEGRATE COMPLETE STREETS INFRASTRUCTURE AND DESIGN FEATURES INTO STREET DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION WITHIN LARGE-SCALE DEVELOPMENTS TO CREATE SAFE AND INVITING ENVIRONMENTS FOR ALL USERS TO WALK, BICYCLE AND USE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION.”

- PT.2. Coordinate with the Town of Chester/Orange County/NYSDOT and Coach USA Shortline to find ways to expand the capacity of the Park & Ride lot at the corner of NYS Route 94 and Nucifora Boulevard, [including a tiered parking structure](#). An alternative would be to coordinate with Orange County and Coach USA Shortline to build a parking lot at Camp LaGuardia which can provide much more parking and would keep traffic away from the already congested exit 126.
- PT.3. Coordinate with the OCTC and Coach USA Shortline to increase bus-to-rail service from the Village to Metro-North/New Jersey Transit passenger rail stations.
- PT.4. Work regionally and locally to develop satellite park-and-ride facilities near NYS Route 17 with bus service to New York City.
- PT.5. Integrate complete streets infrastructure and design features into street design and construction within large-scale developments to create safe and inviting environments for all users to walk, bicycle and use public transportation.
- PT.6. Create a local bus/jitney service that would travel throughout the Village and would have stops at the uptown, downtown, and Brookside Avenue districts. Residents could call the service and arrange for local transportation within the Village from their residences. This would be especially attractive for seniors and would help local businesses.

**Rail Service**

- RS.1. Support projects and proposals to help ensure the freight railroads are adequately utilized for commercial use including extension of sidings to local agricultural and manufacturing industries.
- RS.2. Railroad rights-of-way should be preserved for current and future use.
- RS.3. An old-fashioned trolley line running parallel to the Heritage Trail from Goshen through Chester to Monroe should be built. Not only would this attract tourists and residents from all three towns, but the Erie Station would be a tourist magnet for Downtown. The line would also provide a greater sense of history to Chester and would be the perfect complement to the Erie Station. To achieve this vision, the three Villages (Chester, Monroe & Goshen) as well as the Town of Chester would need to work closely with the Orange County Transportation Council (OCTC), the New York State Department of Transportation (NYS DOT), and private railroads to obtain funding for such a project.

FULL EAF PART 3  
DISCUSSION

*“The Complete Streets and other transportation policies are intended to result in significant environmental improvements including the decreased use of private automobiles and decreased traffic congestion resulting in improved air quality, decreased fossil fuel consumption and decreased production of greenhouse gases. Policies regarding expanded public transportation and facilities development may result in fiscal impacts that must be weighed against benefits to public safety and health as well as global environmental benefits.”*

## 7.0 Community Facilities and Services

The Village of Chester provides the services and facilities of local government to the residents of the Village. It attempts to do so in a responsive, cost effective and efficient manner. The Village Board (Mayor and Trustees) along with the various departments: Village Administration (Mayor, Clerk, Treasurer), Building, Planning and Zoning, Water, Police and Justice Court are located in the Village Hall at 47 Main Street. The Street Department is located at 3 Vadala Lane.

### 7.1 Village Government

The Village Government provides a variety of services: day to day governance, administration, building regulations and development, establishing zoning regulations, village planning, code enforcement, providing water, providing for waste disposal, maintaining local roads, sidewalks and infrastructure, arranging elections, organizing police and fire protection, handling environmental issues as well as maintaining parks and playing fields.

Some services are shared with the Town of Chester and even Orange County. Chester Community Park, Chester Public Library, Chester Fire Department, the Chester Union Free School District and the Assessor’s office for example, with the assessor being an employee of Orange County.

### 7.2 Village Administrative Offices

The Village Board has identified the need to expand the municipal complex to meet community needs. Space in general, but public space in particular, at the current Village Hall is less than ideal. The building houses all Village departments except the Street Department and space is limited.

Public meetings are held on the second floor, access being via a steep stairway located in the police department lobby or by way of a small elevator located at the rear of the village offices. If the elevator is used, once on the second floor the clerk guides the resident through the police locker room, a series of ramps and finally a doorway with a step down into the meeting room



**Above** (top to bottom): Village Hall in Downtown Main Street, Chester District Firehouse on Main Street; and Lippincott Funeral Home on Main Street, which is proposed to be the new administrative office of Village government. The Village seeks to provide public facilities and services that are accessible and responsive to community needs in a cost-effective and efficient manner.

Access with a wheelchair, if possible, would be difficult. The restrooms on the second floor are not accessible for wheelchair dependent individuals.

The small conference room on the first floor will barely accommodate 8 people although the public is permitted to attend some meetings that take place there. Office of the Village Clerk is located on the first floor as well as shared office space for the Village Treasurer and the other office personnel.

The office of the Mayor, the Building Department and the Village Historian with the Chester Historical Society have offices on the second floor.

Plans call for the Police department and the Justice Court to remain at 47 Main Street and Village administrative offices to move to a recently purchased historic (1894) building at 92 Main Street next to the Presbyterian Church. The new offices and public spaces there would be ADA compliant.

Communicating with residents is a major function of government. Planning and Zoning Boards need to be able to project plans, letters, maps and other data so that everyone can see what is being presented /discussed. The Village Board should explore having its meetings recorded and shown on local cable network, available on Youtube or similar streaming services.

The Village emergency point person needs to be able to inform residents of emergency situations and providing emergency instructions and updates (such as in major storms). This could be done via robocall and email systems, which is a recommendation of this Comprehensive Plan.

The Village has a website which recently went through a redesign. More needs to be done with the website. The Village website should be visually engaging, responsive, kept up to the minute and it should be easy to use (intuitive). This plan recommends further enhancements to the website to make it more useful in the communication with its residents and others. It is also recommended that all public meetings of the Village Board and appointed boards should be recorded and posted on the Village website.

The plan also recommends that the Village engage a grant writer to pursue available funding for qualifying municipal and community projects.

VILLAGE  
ADMINISTRATIVE  
OFFICES

“THE VILLAGE BOARD HAS IDENTIFIED THE NEED TO EXPAND THE MUNICIPAL COMPLEX TO MEET COMMUNITY NEEDS. SPACE IN GENERAL, BUT PUBLIC SPACE IN PARTICULAR, AT THE CURRENT VILLAGE HALL IS LESS THAN IDEAL.”

**7.3. Village Street Department**

The Village of Chester Street Department is responsible for the maintenance and improvements of the Village street systems. Typical duties and functions of the department include paving, weekly street sweeping, snow and ice removal, curb and sidewalk replacement and repair, drainage projects, roadside mowing, mowing between the sidewalk and the curb, weekly grass and brush pick up, fall leaf vacuuming, and pick up of the municipal garbage bins on Main Street and in the Village offices. The Village code states the property-owner is responsible for snow removal and maintenance of sidewalks, however, the Village Street Department takes on much of this responsibility of sidewalk repair and replacement.

Excluding State and County roads, the Street Department maintains approximately 12 centerline miles of road. According to a 2009 Town/Village Cost of Services Study, “the most pressing concern on an annual basis is the maintenance and replacement of old deteriorated sidewalks.” This Comprehensive Plan recommends an inventory of the sidewalk system and development of long-term plan to provide for connecting sidewalks throughout the village as well for repair and replacement when needed of existing sidewalks. The plan also recommends requiring sidewalk inclusion, when appropriate, in site plans going forward. Funding through CFA grants and consideration of a *sidewalk special district* to fund needed improvements could be explored.

The Street Department has a fleet of road equipment necessary to perform road maintenance and repair. The central garage facilities include office space, a 3-bay maintenance shop with a lift and a pit, a large 4 bay garage for vehicles, a salt storage shed, 2 underground storage tanks, one 2,000-gallon tank for gasoline storage and one 500-gallon tank for diesel fuel. A building-needs assessment and cost evaluation is recommended should the needs of the Department change.

**7.4 Police Department**

The principle mission of the Village of Chester Police Department is to enforce all laws and ordinances in a fair and impartial manner through the prevention of crime, protection against criminal attack, loss or damage to property, and by preserving order in public places. The Chester police headquarters, located in Village Hall, serves as the operations center for the department.

STREET DEPARTMENT

“THIS PLAN RECOMMENDS AN INVENTORY OF THE SIDEWALK SYSTEM AND DEVELOPMENT OF LONG-TERM PLAN FOR SIDEWALK REPAIR AND REPLACEMENT.”

With the relocation of some Village Departments to the new location at 92 Main Street, the space at 47 Main Street will be reconfigured to allow front entrance to access the Police Department.

There is a direct relationship between increased population and the number, frequency and type of crimes committed and a need for additional emergency safety resources. As development is proposed, studies should be conducted to determine the impact of an increasing population on police services and whether more officers are needed to support the mission of the department.

**7.5 Fire and Ambulance**

Fire protection in the Village and Town of Chester is provided by the Chester Fire Department. Since the fire district boundaries do not coincide with municipal boundaries, Chester’s fire district (“District”) includes portions of land located outside of the Village. The District has three (3) fire companies.

The Walton Engine and Hose Company (Station No. 1) is located in the Village and serves the Village as well as northern portions of the Town of Chester. This firehouse also houses the Fire Department’s training facilities, meeting room and Chief Officer’s office.

Ambulance service is provided by Mobile Life Support Services, a private ambulance company.

The Village has a dedicated and well-trained group of volunteer providers, but as other communities in the region are finding, there are concerns with the adequacy of volunteer staff numbers during certain times of the week, especially during working hours on weekdays.

As the area grows, new residents are often commuters and therefore may not be available during the week. Time-pressed commuters may not feel able to devote the time to training and service or may be unaware of the vitally important role that volunteer service providers fulfill in a rural area such as Chester.

The Village and its residents should continue to support high-quality volunteer fire services that are adequately staffed with trained and properly equipped personnel. This Plan supports programs to attract and retain volunteer providers.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

“AS DEVELOPMENT IS PROPOSED, STUDIES SHOULD BE CONDUCTED TO DETERMINE THE IMPACT OF AN INCREASING POPULATION ON POLICE SERVICES AND WHETHER MORE OFFICERS ARE NEEDED TO SUPPORT THE MISSION OF THE DEPARTMENT.”

7.6 Water Service

The Village of Chester Water System was established in 1892. The source of this supply was a surface water supply known a Walton Lake, which is located in Monroe, NY. The Village continues to obtain parcels through tax foreclosure to protect the watershed, but additional measures are needed to protect this water source. The Village also has two wells situated in the Town.

Walton Lake has a DEC permitted withdrawal of 800,000 gallons per day. A second groundwater source was used in the early 1960s and was permitted for use by the Village of Chester in 1973. The overall permitted capacity is 1.1 million gallons per day.

According to its Annual Drinking Water Quality Report, in 2017, the Village produced 168,156,000 gallons of water for a daily average of 460,701 gallons of water per day. The distribution system consists of over 28 miles of water main ranging in sizes from 2" to 12 ".

Three (3) water storage tanks have a combined storage capacity of 2 million gallons. The 2017 Report showed 14.0% of this volume was unaccounted for, which is significantly higher than the 4.8% reported in 2004. There is a need for on-going monitoring and upgrades to the system to address leaks and use.

All of the original 1892 cast iron distribution pipes were replaced with plastic pipes and the Village annually works on replacing the water mains that were installed in the 1960s.

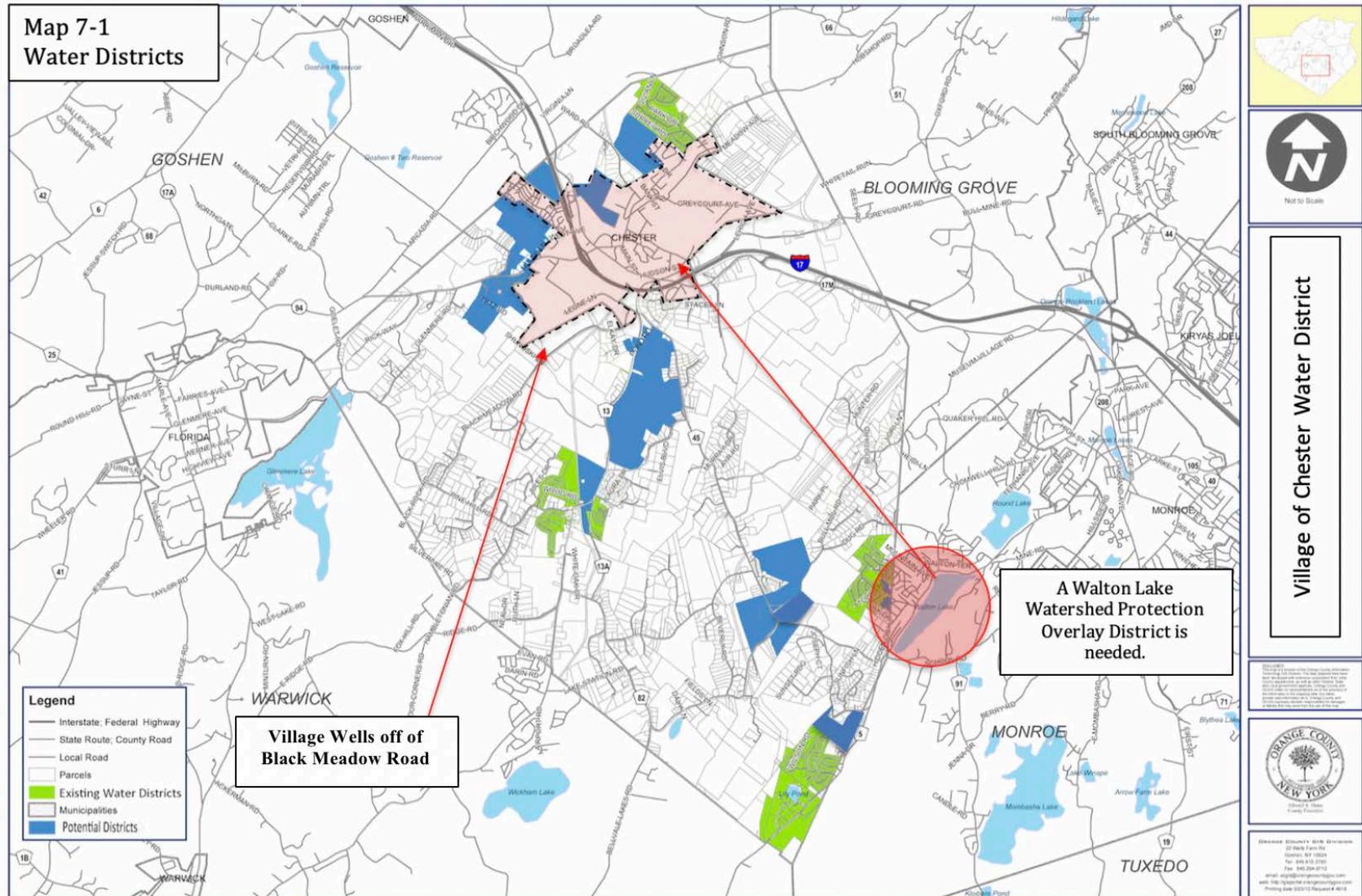
This Plan supports an on-going policy of systematically upgrading the system over time.

However, grant funding through the Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) should also be sought, when funding becomes available. Walton Lake watershed protection measures should include property acquisition and development of a "Watershed Protection Overlay District" with the Town of Monroe.

*Full EAF Part 3 Discussion: The community facilities and services goals, objectives and strategies provided in this Chapter are intended to ensure that necessary public utilities and community services are provided in a cost-effective and efficient manner in order to protect the health, safety and welfare of the community.*

WATER DEPARTMENT

“WALTON LAKE WATERSHED PROTECTION MEASURES SHOULD INCLUDE PROPERTY ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT OF A “WATERSHED PROTECTION OVERLAY DISTRICT” WITH THE TOWN OF MONROE.”



**7.7 Sewer Service**

Sewer service is provided by The Moodna Basin Sewer Commission, which provides sewer service to the Village, as well as the Town of Chester and parts of the Town of Monroe. Moodna Basin wastewater flows into a county-operated treatment facility in Harriman, which discharges into the Ramapo River. The County will be expanding the Harriman plant [to address capacity requirements and accommodate growth](#). This Plan supports continued efforts to upgrade these existing municipal sewer plants to meet the growth needs of the Village.

The policy of this 2019 Plan is to prohibit the construction of small individual wastewater treatment facilities in the Village. The Town’s previous experience with such facilities has not been good. Surrey Meadows and the King Tract once had their own treatment plants that developed problems, and many other communities in the region had similar experiences.

**7.8 Schools**

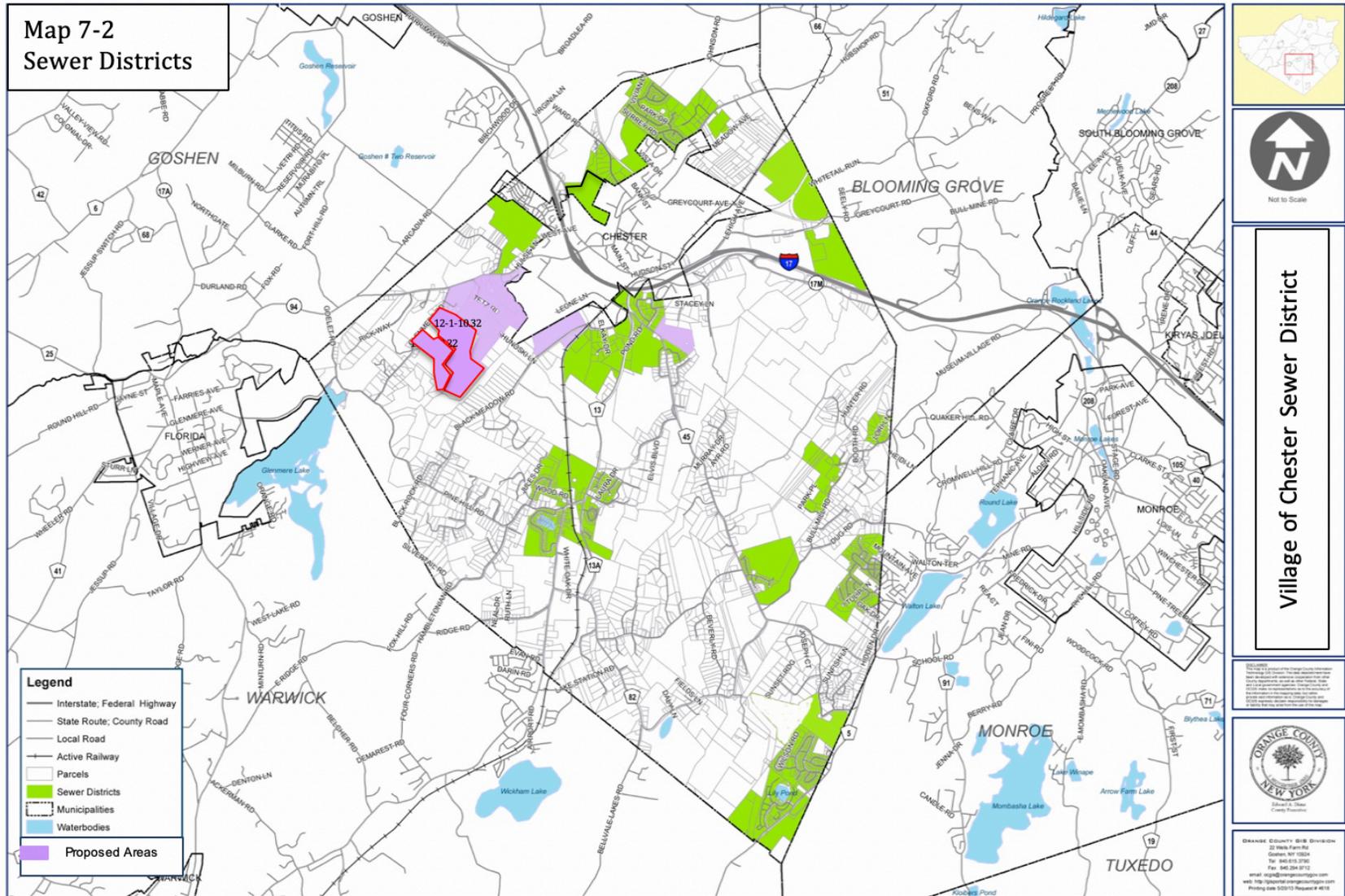
The Village of Chester lies entirely within the Chester Union Free District. The Chester Union Free School District enrolls 1,019 students with a student teacher ratio of 13:1. The schools in the district include the Chester Elementary School (K-5) and the Chester Academy (6-12). Both are physically located in the Town of Chester) The old high school, built in 1935 and now vacant, is in the Village on Maple Avenue.

As residential developments are proposed in the Village of Chester or proposed to be annexed into the Village, it is important that the Planning Board utilizes the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) law to assess potential impacts on student enrollment within Chester Union Free School District. When impacts are anticipated, the developer should provide appropriate mitigation measures to help ensure the community can continue to offer the highest quality of public education available to its residents.

This Plan recommends the Village Board work with the school district to protect recreational amenities (such as the ballfields on Walnut Street/Vadala Road) for future school and public use. [The Village should work with the Chester Union Free District to develop a “reuse plan” for the school building on Maple Avenue.](#)

SCHOOL FACILITIES

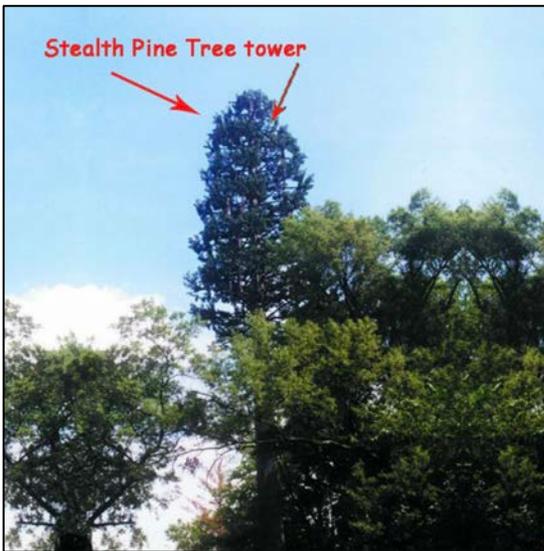
“THE VILLAGE SHOULD WORK WITH THE CHESTER UNION FREE DISTRICT TO DEVELOP A “REUSE PLAN” FOR THE SCHOOL BUILDING ON MAPLE AVENUE.”



7.9 Broadband and Wireless Communications Network

A Village-wide state-of-the-art broadband and wireless communications network is an important goal of this Plan. The Village should insist its franchised broadband providers continue to upgrade its broadband network in the Village. Cellular service also needs to be expanded to address areas where there are gaps in coverage. Cell towers should first be considered on existing structures (e.g., silos, steeples or existing towers).

The placement of new wireless towers must be planned to mitigate potential visual impacts and must be designed to be inconspicuous in nature through tower placement or stealth design (see examples below). Increasing reliance on cell phones makes cell service an obligation for public safety in the Village.



Above (left to right): Stealth Pine Tree cell tower and stealth silo cell tower and utility shed.

Full EAF Part 3 Discussion: The Village of Chester must have access to state-of-the-art broadband and wireless communication networks so that it can remain a competitive place for business and to ensure emergency responders can effectively respond to natural disasters. Ensuring that cell towers are designed to complement community character will help to preserve the integrity of Chester’s historic districts. No large adverse impacts are anticipated.

BROADBAND AND WIRELESS COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK

“A VILLAGE-WIDE STATE-OF-THE-ART BROADBAND AND WIRELESS COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK IS AN IMPORTANT GOAL OF THIS PLAN.”

**7.10 Community Facilities and Services: Goals, Objective and Policies**

**Goal:** Maintain, fully utilize and enhance existing Village facilities according to their level of service and in a manner consistent with the community’s high level of expectation and the needs for services.

**Objectives and Policies: Community Facilities**

- CF.1. Ensure building-needs assessments and cost evaluations are analyzed prior to construction or renovation of public facilities, and that the final public facility is compatible with adjacent structures, surrounding structures and neighborhood.
- CF.2. Provide public facilities that serve as examples of the desired development quality in Village.
  - The design of new public facilities and the renovation of existing facilities will meet U.S. Green Building Council rating system standards and meet current best management practices that provide for efficient and cost-effective operations over the expected life of the facilities.
  - New public facilities should emphasize efficient service-delivery systems to meet existing and anticipated community needs.
  - Design in context to surroundings.
- CF.3. Every property to be acquired for a community facility must be evaluated upon its own merits to ensure the property fulfills the multitude of Village needs at the time of purchase and in the future.
- CF.4. Plans for new facilities should include opportunities for future additions and expansions. New facilities should be capable of containing multiple Village departments, agencies and offices.
- CF.5. When impacts on schools are anticipated, developers must provide appropriate mitigation measures to help ensure the community can continue to offer the highest quality of public education available.
- CF.6. Cooperate with Chester Union Free District to protect recreational amenities (such as the ballfields on Walnut Street/Vadala Road) for future school and public use and work with them to develop a “reuse plan” for the school building on Maple Avenue. In this way school facilities will be in harmony with the Village’s vision of future land-use.
- CF.7. Work with the Town of Monroe to create a Walton Lake watershed protection overlay district.
- CF.8. Budget for continued annual replacement of water line segments to protect water supply system and pursue funding through the Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) process for upgrades.

COMMUNITY  
FACILITIES AND  
SERVICES

“MAINTAIN AND FULLY UTILIZE EXISTING VILLAGE FACILITIES ACCORDING TO THEIR LEVEL OF SERVICE AND IN A MANNER CONSISTENT WITH THE COMMUNITY’S HIGH LEVEL OF EXPECTATION AND THE NEEDS FOR SERVICES.”

- CF.9. Create a capital improvement plan (CIP) for capital facilities with an asset management plan that identifies funding sources. A CIP would assess the useful life of capital facilities, maintenance needs and replacement schedules.
- CF.10. The Village recognizes that private development, especially large projects, have an impact on and create future liabilities for community facilities and services, such as infrastructure, sewer, police, etc. Those impacts and future liabilities must be addressed and, if possible, mitigated during the planning process.

**Public Safety**

- PS.1. Create an environment that encourages respect, mutual responsibility, community outreach and cooperation between public safety officials and citizens through citizen education programs, safety education programs, mediation, conflict-resolution services and other outreach opportunities.
- PS.2. Provide citizens with the highest quality public safety services and facilities by maintaining high levels of training opportunities for police, fire, and rescue personnel. Establish public safety levels of service and consider these levels when evaluating the impact of future land-uses on Village services.
- PS.3. Upgrade cellular service to ensure cell users can access emergency responders through the 911 system in the event of an emergency.
- PS.4. Establish an emergency automatic call system (reverse 911 robocall). Residents would receive emergency information, instructions and updates from the Village’s emergency point person.

**Telecommunications and Wireless Facilities**

- TC.1. Strive for the highest level of broadband network is available throughout the Village to give Chester a competitive advantage in its business retention and recruitment efforts.
- TC.2. Pursue public and private partnerships to complete projects linking major facilities (e.g. Village government, cultural institutions, business and industrial parks) with fiber optic networks.
- TC.3. Seek State and federal grants in cooperation with service providers to provide broadband and wireless communication service to underserved areas of the Village.
- TC.4. Require co-location on wireless communication antennas on existing towers.
- TC.5. Wireless communication towers should first be considered on existing structures (e.g. water tanks, silos, steeples) or existing towers.
- TC.6. New wireless communication towers must be designed to be inconspicuous in nature through tower placement or stealth design (e.g. silo or stealth tree).

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

“STRIVE FOR THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF BROADBAND NETWORK AVAILABLE THROUGHOUT THE VILLAGE IN ORDER TO GIVE CHESTER A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN ITS BUSINESS RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT EFFORTS.”

### 8.0 Jobs and Housing

For Chester to prosper, future development within the community has to involve new investments in its:

- agricultural sector,
- commercial gateways,
- business and light industry parks,
- Downtown and Uptown business districts,
- along with the adaptive reuse of underutilized sites with access to water, sewer and transportation infrastructure.

Successful economic development must also include diversified housing opportunities for employees at various economic levels.

This Plan supports an environment that protects Black Dirt farmland and diversification of agriculture along with growth in businesses and industries, which all create local employment opportunities.

In order for the Village to remain competitive in the global economy, it needs state-of-the-art broadband and telecommunications infrastructure. Providing it is an important goal of this Plan.

This chapter begins with a discussion of trends in Chester’s economy as well as opportunities and concludes with a discussion of housing resources and needs within the Village.

#### 8.1 Trends in Employment Status and Industries

In 2017, nearly 60% of Chester’s civilian labor force of 3,225 people was employed in three industries:

- educational and health services (28.2%),
- retail trade (19.9%),
- and arts, entertainment & recreation (10.8%).



Above (top to bottom): LP Transportation, Inc., which is a trucking company situated between Brookside Avenue and Main Street that has been in business for over 100 years, Black Dirt farmland as seen from Vadala Road looking toward Downtown; and The Castle Fun Center located on Brookside Avenue in the west end of the Village.

In 2010, only 44.2% of the civilian labor force was employed in the top three industries. Since 2010, the arts, entertainments & recreation industry joined Chester’s top three industries, which is likely related to employment growth at The Castle Fun Center.

Between 2010 and 2017, the fastest growing industries were:

- arts,
- entertainment and recreation;
- communications and information;
- transportation, warehousing & utilities;
- other services; and
- retail trade.

Declining industries during this time included:

- agriculture, forestry and mining;
- wholesale trade;
- finance, insurance and real estate;
- manufacturing;
- construction; and
- public administration reflecting the diminishing role of these industries as major employers (see Table 8-1).

Growth in educational & health services and retail trade industries were modest, but their share increased as other industries lost employment. Chester’s talented and well-educated workforce with educational attainment above the Orange County average makes it an attractive community for growing businesses (see Chapter 2, page 14, Table 2-4).

Furthermore, Chester has excellent transportation access (e.g., U.S. Route 6, NYS Routes 17 (Interstate 86), 17M, 94 and the MNJ [NYSW] rail line, which gives it a competitive advantage in attracting industries that need access to regional markets.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

“CHESTER HAS EXCELLENT TRANSPORTATION ACCESS (E.G., NYS ROUTES 17, 17M, 94 AND THE MNJ [NYSW] RAIL LINE, WHICH GIVES IT A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN ATTRACTING INDUSTRIES THAT NEED ACCESS TO REGIONAL MARKETS.”

<b>Table 8-1</b> <b>Trends in Employment Status and Industries</b> <b>2010-2017</b>										
<b>Employment Characteristics</b> <b>(Age 16 and over)</b>	<b>Orange County, New York</b> <b>Trends from 2010-2017</b>				<b>Village of Chester</b> <b>Trends from 2010-2017</b>				<b>Percent</b> <b>Change</b>	<b>Percent</b> <b>Change</b>
	<b>2010</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>COUNTY</b>	<b>VILLAGE</b>
<b>Total</b>										
<b>Persons 16 Years and Over</b>	279,978	100.0%	292,199	100.0%	3,225	100.0%	3,464	100.0%	4.4%	7.4%
<b>In Labor Force</b>	<b>189,079</b>	67.5%	<b>189,468</b>	64.8%	<b>2,216</b>	68.7%	<b>2,195</b>	63.4%	0.2%	-0.9%
Civilian Labor Force	181,849	65.0%	185,146	63.5%	2,203	68.3%	2,195	63.4%	1.8%	-0.4%
<i>Employed</i>	<b>170,431</b>	60.9%	<b>174,770</b>	59.8%	<b>2,075</b>	64.3%	<b>2,066</b>	59.6%		
<i>Not Employed</i>	11,418	4.1%	10,376	3.6%	128	4.0%	129	3.7%		
Armed Forces	7,230	2.6%	4,322	1.5%	13	0.4%	0	0.0%		
Not In Labor Force	90,899	32.5%	102,731	35.2%	1,009	31.3%	1,269	36.6%		
<b>Industry</b>										
Educational & Health Services	45,493	26.7%	45,304	25.9%	540	19.3%	582	<b>28.2%</b>	-0.4%	7.8%
Retail Trade	21,743	12.8%	24,231	13.9%	369	15.1%	412	<b>19.9%</b>	11.4%	11.7%
Professional services	14,619	8.6%	15,553	8.9%	143	9.8%	143	<b>6.9%</b>	6.4%	0.0%
Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	10,638	6.2%	9,757	5.6%	194	6.8%	109	<b>5.3%</b>	-8.3%	-43.8%
Public administration	12,297	7.2%	12,207	7.0%	198	8.1%	144	<b>7.0%</b>	-0.7%	-27.3%
Manufacturing	13,489	7.9%	12,592	7.2%	143	9.0%	84	<b>4.1%</b>	-6.6%	-41.3%
Transportation, warehousing & utilities	9,531	5.6%	10,984	6.3%	89	5.6%	129	<b>6.2%</b>	15.2%	44.9%
Construction	12,231	7.2%	10,860	6.2%	77	5.2%	56	<b>2.7%</b>	-11.2%	-27.3%
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	11,618	6.8%	14,210	8.1%	63	3.9%	223	<b>10.8%</b>	22.3%	254.0%
Wholesale Trade	6,284	3.7%	5,741	3.3%	120	6.8%	28	<b>1.4%</b>	-8.6%	-76.7%
Communications and Information	4,307	2.5%	4,215	2.4%	14	5.1%	45	<b>2.2%</b>	-2.1%	221.4%
Other Services (except public admin).	6,320	3.7%	7,769	4.4%	91	4.5%	111	<b>5.4%</b>	22.9%	22.0%
Agriculture, forestry and mining	1,861	1.1%	1,347	0.8%	34	1.6%	0	<b>0.0%</b>	-27.6%	-100.0%

*Source:* 2010 U.S. Census Bureau DP-3 Table and 2010-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates DP-3 Table.

In recent years, Chester has successfully attracted major employers to its business parks, which have provided employment opportunities for local residents, even as there were declines in other industries. However, this Plan recommends a strategy that strives to maintain a diverse economic base so that the local economy is more resilient to declines in one industry or another.

**8.2 Economic Development Goals**

The Village has many assets to build upon as it pursues its future economic development goals. Among these are its strong local government; Black Dirt farmland; historic mixed-use Downtown and Uptown business districts, commercial centers along NYS Route 17 M and NYS Route 94, and its industrial parks. Furthermore, there are remaining “shovel-ready” sites within its industrial parks, which are likely to attract new businesses to the community.

Chester strives to create a diverse economy that provides needed services and good paying job opportunities; improves the appearance and quality of the built environment; strengthens the local tax base; and enhances the quality of life for its residents. To accomplish this goal, there are a variety of economic development policies that can be pursued by the Village Board and its partners (i.e., County and State agencies and the local farming and business community). Specific policies by industry are provided below.

*Agriculture*

Chester’s Black Dirt comprises roughly 20% of the Village’s land area making the need for agricultural economic development pronounced. The Chester Agricultural Center, LLC owns much of this Black Dirt farmland with plans to promote organic farming and help new farmers to get established. The Village can assist in this effort by helping to ensure the County maintains and repairs the drainage canals and pump stations that make the Black Dirt farmland viable. Vegetable farming by its very nature is labor intensive and relies on farm workers to be viable. This Plan recognizes there is a need for both affordable farmer and farm-worker housing. To address this need, amendments to the Village Zoning Law should be considered to increase opportunities for farmer and farm-worker housing. Please refer to Chapter 3.0-Environment for specific goals, objectives and policies in support of agricultural economic development.



**Above** (top to bottom): Chester’s industrial park along Nucifora Boulevard and Elizabeth Drive; area used for self-storage and truck terminal with redevelopment potential and Chester’s Black Dirt farms in the Village.

### *Main Street Revitalization*

The Village has two traditional “Main Street” business districts. The “Downtown” business district situated along Main Street near the 1915 Chester Erie Station at the northern end of the Village. It is noted for its three-story mixed-use buildings, pedestrian scale streets and Village offices. “Uptown” is situated at the intersection of Main Street and Academy Avenue. Uptown is noted for its eclectic mix of one and two-story mixed-use buildings and is also the oldest section of the Village.

The Downtown business district has many beautiful and prominent mixed-use buildings that provide an excellent foundation for a vibrant mixed-use center. However, many storefronts are vacant and there is a general sense of disinvestment that detracts from the historic character of Downtown. Like the Downtown business district, Uptown has many vacant storefronts and a general sense of disinvestment.

A successful “Main Street Revitalization” effort will require a sustained commitment among local government, business owners and building owners to “*organize*” the revitalization effort. Organization establishes consensus and cooperation by building partnerships among the various groups that have a stake in the commercial district.

By getting everyone working toward the same goal, the revitalization effort can provide effective, ongoing management and advocacy for these mixed-use business districts. Once the organization is in place, it must “*promote*” the Downtown and Uptown business districts to create a positive image of these business centers to instill community pride and make these centers more attractive to consumers and potential investors in the business districts. Promotion would include such things as special events and marketing campaigns to attract new customers and visitors to Downtown and Uptown.

In order to compete with regional retailers, Chester must retain the distinct historic charm of its Downtown and Uptown. It can do so by placing each within an historic district and adopting design guidelines to ensure the original architecture of its mixed-use buildings are preserved to retain the integrity of its traditional business districts.



**Above** (top to bottom): The Rustic Wheelhouse restaurant on Main Street in the heart of Downtown; Allan's Falafel restaurant on Main Street in Uptown; and view of mixed-use buildings on north side of Main Street in Downtown business district. Residences above-the-store are common in Downtown and supported by this Plan.

The focus on “*design*” also includes the streetscape, which should provide a safe, walkable and comfortable environment for shoppers, workers and visitors (e.g., ADA compliant sidewalks, pedestrian lighting, benches and trees).

Efforts to strengthen the “economic vitality” of Downtown and Uptown are also needed.

This involves efforts to retain existing business establishments, while attracting new businesses that the market can support to create a balanced and inviting commercial mix in these business districts. Converting unused commercial space on the ground floor into an economically productive business will help to strengthen the business district and make it more economically viable.

A local “Chamber of Commerce” or “Main Street Revitalization” organization should also be established to help business owners improve their merchandising skills to make individual stores, and in turn, the entire business district more inviting to shoppers, workers and visitors. Coordinating business hours is also important to give consumers an expectation of when shops will be open for business within these business districts.

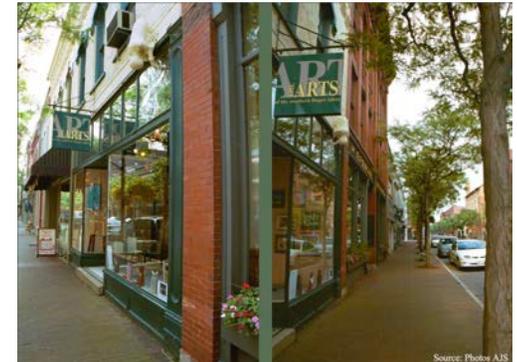
Chester’s historic Downtown and Uptown have the potential to become vibrant mixed-use centers by providing shoppers and visitors with a unique and exciting shopping experience where consumers can interact with small business owners and each other.

The creation of an organization to undertake Downtown and Uptown revitalization efforts should be underway as soon as possible so that Chester is ready to attract some of the visitors from Legoland to the Village as they seek nearby attractions during their vacation. Such an organization could also help the Village Board to pursue a New York Main Street grant to assist business and building owners in investing into their businesses to make them more inviting and vibrant.

### *Industrial and Industrial Park Development*

The Village of Chester zoning map designates a large area south of NYS Route 17 and along Nucifora Boulevard, Elizabeth Drive and Leone Lane as M-1, Light Manufacturing – Research.

### **Village of Chester, New York**



**Above** (top to bottom): Images of attractive mixed-use business districts with appealing window displays and merchandising displays that invite shoppers into the stores and make the business district more inviting.

The zoning map also designates a M-2, Manufacturing District on the north side of NYS Route 17 and the west of Oakland Avenue in the vicinity of Princeton Street. This Plan supports the existing zoning designation of these areas as M-1 and M-2. However, this Plan also recognizes that there is redevelopment potential of the lands between NYS Route 17 and Route 17M, that are currently used for storage, trucking terminals and storage yards that could also be suited for a mix of commercial businesses such as office, retail, hotels and restaurants (see aerial of area on next page). A more detailed analysis of this area for inclusion within the B-2 General Business District with concurrent adoption of “design guidelines” is a policy recommendation of this Plan.



**Mixed Use:** The Village has a finite area within its boundaries and should encourage mixed-use projects along the Route 17M commercial corridor. These kinds of projects can increase affordable housing within a vibrant walkable neighborhood in addition to providing increased revenue to the Village on per acre basis over types of development.



Above (top to bottom): Brakewell Steel Company sculpture/building; Iron Mountain within the Village’s industrial park; and Steris Corp., which is also situated within the Village of Chester industrial park on Elizabeth Drive. This Plan supports the creation of a diverse economic base, including light industry.

Chester’s industrial park has excellent transportation access from NYS Route 17 (Future I-86) for light industry and warehouse distribution facilities. Its light industrial park also has access to central water and broadband, which are prerequisites for many industries. The light industrial park is “shovel ready,” meaning the infrastructure is in place to accommodate new buildings.

This Plan strongly supports efforts to attract new businesses to shovel-ready sites within the light industrial park in order to broaden the Village’s tax base while expanding employment opportunities for its residents. The Village Board must continue to work with NYSDOT to ensure it’s culverts along NYS Route 17 are properly maintained to prevent flooding of the industrial parks and lower lying lands between NYS Route 17 and NYS Route 17M.

*Service and Retail Industries*

The Village’s zoning map designates areas along Route 17M as B-2-General Business along with a small area along the Hudson Street Extension. The B-2 General Business Zoning District (District) allows for assembly halls, automotive sales, banks, garages and filling stations, hotels and motels, offices, personal-service establishments, restaurants, shopping centers, taverns and theaters, subject to site plan review by the Planning Board. Uses allowed by Special Permit include, autobody and refinishing shops, recreational facilities, trucking terminals and repair and servicing facilities.

The B-2 General Business District provides for the largest variety of permitted non-residential uses within any zoning district within the Village. This Plan supports continued development of commercial, office and mixed-use development within the B-2 General Business Districts.

However, this Plan also supports the adoption of design guidelines for this commercial corridor. The design guidelines would provide guidance for creating a more aesthetically pleasing, walkable and functional commercial corridor over time.

It is recommended that such guidelines include both standards (requirements) and guidelines (suggestions), to guide the Planning Board’s review of new commercial development.



**Above** (top to bottom): The Tractor Supply Co. in the Chester Mall Shopping Center, Brookside Avenue (Route 17M); Outdoors, which is an outdoor sport shop situated at 6 Howland Street in Downtown; and Orange Bank & Trust Company on NYS Route 17M opposite the entrance to the Chester Mall.

### *Other Industries*

One of the fastest emerging industries in the Village is the arts, entertainment and recreation industry, which grew by 254% between 2010 and 2017. Chester's natural setting, as well as its established events, Black Dirt farms and access to the Heritage Trail, make it an attractive destination for tourists and a desirable location to draw new residents.

The Village also has the opportunity to become a base camp for outdoor enthusiasts who want to take advantage of the Heritage Trail and nearby regional parks and trails such as Goosepond Mountain State Park, the Highlands Trail, Appalachian Trail. This Plan supports continued growth in this industry.

### *Telecommunications*

The Village Board should continue to advocate to ensure its telecommunications infrastructure, including broadband and cellular is continually upgraded by service providers to meet the rapidly changing needs of the business and residential community.

### *Chester Union Free School District Campus*

The Chester Union Free School District (CUFSD) owns a school campus on Maple Avenue and the 1935 Art Deco School on Maple Avenue is presently vacant. The district does not presently have a use for the building. The building, constructed in the 1930s, needs major repairs, which are estimated to cost up to \$4 million dollars. The options for the use of the school and campus are as follows:

- 1) Spend \$4 million to upgrade the building with the hope of finding a tenant to lease it to;
- 2) Lease the building as is to a tenant; or
- 3) Lock the doors and mothball the building until such time enrollment justifies its reuse.

[School district voters recently turned down a proposal by the CUFSD to demolish the building. This Plan strongly recommends that the Village work with the School District to find an appropriate adaptive reuse of the school building.](#)

## **Village of Chester, New York**



**Above** (top to bottom): The Chester Union Free School District Art Deco Building, which is presently used as the Orange-Ulster BOCES Learning Center; aerial view of school building and campus; and aerial view showing relationship of school campus to Chester Community Park. This property is an important education, employment, and recreation center and its future use should provide like benefits.

The ballfields are heavily utilized by the School District, which does not have room on its other campuses for ballfields. The ballfields on Maple Avenue were recently upgraded and the District needs additional ballfields and recreational amenities for its existing schools in Chester.

Based upon the current circumstances and projected future need, the School District is leaning toward the fourth option, which is to demolish the school building, retain the gymnasium and expand the ballfields to include regulation size soccer and football fields.

It is an important goal of this Plan to retain the ballfields for recreational use for the schools and for public use when not needed for school activities. Should the school district’s plans change, this Plan also supports the adaptive reuse of the School District’s Art-Deco Building for continuing education, economic development or senior housing opportunities.

The school campus is situated within the Village’s RS-Residential Single-Family Zoning District. The Village should consider an Overlay Zone for the Maple Avenue school campus to better guide the reuse of this very important property to something that is consistent with this Plan.

**8.3 Housing**

Today, the Village contains a diverse range of housing types. The Census’s American Community Survey for 2017 shows the Village’s housing stock consists of single-family homes (32.8%), attached single-family units (22.6%) (townhouses), and multi-family units (44.6%). With respect to homeownership, owner-occupied housing is 65.6% of the housing stock and renter-occupied housing the remaining 34.4%. This Plan support maintaining the current owner to renter mix.

The Village reached this situation via the approval, over several decades, of a disproportionate number of high-density condo-style and rental townhouses, and comparatively few single-family housing developments. The ripple effect of this imbalance is a substantial population that pays taxes at a lower assessment rate, and a transient resident base with less financial and emotional investment in the local area.

Consequently, this Comprehensive Plan strongly recommends the adoption of policies and evaluation of proposed building projects with the intention of rebalancing the single-family housing to multi-family housing ratio to a more even mix.

HOUSING

“THIS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN SEEKS TO CONTINUE A WIDE RANGE OF HOUSING TYPES AND COSTS, INCLUDING SINGLE-FAMILY DETACHED HOMES, LIVING-OVER-THE-STORE APARTMENTS, AND TOWNHOUSES THAT MAY EITHER BE FOR SALE OR RENT. IT ALSO SEEKS TO MAINTAIN THE CURRENT OWNER TO RENTER RATIO THAT HAS PROVEN TO BE A HEALTHY MIX FOR THE VILLAGE.”

The Village’s zoning map devotes the largest developable land area to residential development in the RS-Residential-Single Family Zoning District, which has a minimum lot area requirement of 12,500 square feet approximating 3.48 dwelling units to the acre.

The RA-Residential Agricultural District encompasses mostly Black Dirt Lands, which are poorly suited for residential use. The minimum lot area requirement in the RA Zoning District is 80,000 square feet, or 1.83 acres. The Village also seeks to pursue additional options to encourage farmer and farmworker housing in close proximity to its Black Dirt farmland to help sustain Black Dirt farming in the Village.

The Village seeks to pursue additional options for its senior citizens by encouraging the development of multiple dwellings for senior or age-oriented housing in affordable owner/rental units in close proximity to shopping and transportation services.

This Plan, however, does not recommend that affordable units be concentrated in one area, but rather such units are integrated as a small component of market-rate housing developments throughout the Village.

To create more affordable units, the Village should consider a mandatory set-aside for large-scale residential developments of 25 or more units, where 10% of the units are reserved for accessible, senior (55 years and over) or affordable workforce housing.

In 2017, the U.S. Census showed the Median Household Income (MHI) for the Village was \$68,500.

While there is housing to serve the Village’s low-moderate income residents and higher income residents, there is a gap in affordable workforce housing (i.e., those earning 100-120% of the MHI in the Village. In other words, those households earning between \$68,500 and \$82,200.

Another program the Village could consider that incentivizes the creation of farmer, farmworker or affordable workforce housing (as defined above) is Section 485-a of the Real Property Tax Law of New York State. A detailed description of the program is provided on the next page.

FARM HOUSING

“THE VILLAGE ALSO SEEKS TO PURSUE ADDITIONAL OPTIONS TO ENCOURAGE FARMER AND FARMWORKER HOUSING AS PART OF A STRATEGY TO ENSURE THAT HOUSING IS AVAILABLE TO HELP SUSTAIN BLACK DIRT FARMING IN THE VILLAGE.”

This law, at local option, authorizes a declining 12-year partial exemption from real property taxation and special ad valorem levies for non-residential property converted to a mix of residential and commercial uses. The property must be located in a city, town, or a village. The creation of dwelling units above the first floor of Downtown buildings would be eligible. This program could also apply to a warehouse or agricultural building that might be converted to farmer live-work space.

According to the requirements of Section 485-a, an eligible conversion must have a cost in excess of \$10,000 or a higher amount stated in the local law adopted by the Village. The exemption applies only to construction commenced subsequent to the date on which the local law adopted by the Village takes effect.

The exemption does not apply to improvements for dwelling units in a hotel and also does not apply to ordinary maintenance and repairs. However, the exemption would apply to the conversion of vacant second and third story space in Downtown, that are converted to dwelling units or warehouse space to mixed residential/commercial space. The exemption is calculated as a percentage of the "exemption base," which is the increase in assessed value attributable to the conversion. The exemption is calculated using the following method:

<u>Year of Exemption</u>	<u>Percentage of Exemption</u>
1 through 8	100% of Exemption Base
9	80% of Exemption Base
10	60% of Exemption Base
11	40% of Exemption Base
12	20% of Exemption Base

This Plan supports the adoption of a Local Law to opt into the 485-a Real Property Tax Law Exemption for the purposes stated above.

*Full EAF Part 3 Discussion: The strategies provided below are not likely to result in significant or large adverse environmental impacts. Promotion is intended to attract tourism to the area, or to capture tourism that is already headed to the local region. This could increase vehicular traffic and increase the daytime population, but much of the traffic is already headed through or by the Village.*

REAL PROPERTY TAX  
LAW SECTION 485-A

“THIS LAW, AT LOCAL OPTION, AUTHORIZES A DECLINING 12-YEAR PARTIAL EXEMPTION FROM REAL PROPERTY TAXATION AND SPECIAL AD VALOREM LEVIES FOR NON-RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY CONVERTED TO A MIX OF RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL USES.”

8.4 Jobs and Housing: Goals, Objectives and Policies

Economic Development

ED.1. Promote economic development that builds upon the strengths of the Village and region.

- Promote arts, entertainment and recreational businesses, based upon the agricultural, cultural, historical, and recreational attractions of the Village and surrounding area.
- Work cooperatively with business organizations to promote the Village of Chester through a Chester Chamber of Commerce.
- Encourage light industrial uses within the Village’s existing industrial and light-industry parks.
- Encourage the Chester Agricultural Center, LLC to partner with the Orange County Land Trust, Scenic Hudson and Equity Trust, to attract new farmers to Chester’s Black Dirt by bringing the price of land to within reach of new farmers by only leaving farming rights to the land and purchasing development rights.

ED.2. Downtown and Uptown Revitalization.

- Work with building and business owners in Downtown and Uptown to sustain a “Main Street Revitalization” effort consisting of a not-for-profit organization to spearhead the effort, promotion of the Downtown and Uptown Business Districts, development of “design guidelines” to ensure building renovations respect the original architecture of buildings, and economic restructuring to enhance the economic vitality of these traditional mixed-use business districts.
- Designate Downtown and Uptown as historic districts.
- Work with utilities to reduce presence of overhead utilities on Main Street in Downtown and Uptown and to replace cobra lights with more pedestrian friendly vintage style street lighting.
- Incorporate Complete Streets enhancements along Main Street in Downtown and Uptown, along with ADA compliant sidewalk improvements.
- Work with Downtown and Uptown businesses to secure New York Main Street funds for building renovations, apartments-above-the store, and streetscape enhancements.
- Continue to work with local businesses to sponsor special events and re-establish a farmer’s market.
- Complete plans for a performing arts stage and new parking area behind Village Hall.

ED.3. Promote a diversified economic base that takes advantage of emerging opportunities.

- Cooperate with County, regional and State efforts, as well as those of local business organizations within the Village, to promote economic development consistent with the vision of this Comprehensive Plan.
- Support economic growth that creates jobs that match the occupational needs of the Village’s residents.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

“WORK WITH BUILDING AND BUSINESS OWNERS IN DOWNTOWN AND UPTOWN TO SUSTAIN A “MAIN STREET REVITALIZATION” EFFORT.”

- Coordinate with telecommunications providers to ensure planning for broadband and cellular service is consistent with the Village’s goals, objectives and policies of this Comprehensive Plan.

ED.4. Promote shovel-ready industrial and office parks to create employment opportunities.

- Cooperate with landowners to promote Chester’s shovel ready sites.
- Evaluate existing zoning regulations in areas with redevelopment potential, like the M-2 Manufacturing Zoning District between NYS Route 17 and NYS Route 17M to see if changes to zoning designation may be warranted to further the economic development goals of the Village.
- Facilitate adaptive reuse of the Chester Union Free School District buildings on Maple Avenue for economic development and or senior housing opportunities

ED.5. Facilitate well-designed development within the Village’s business zoning districts.

- Develop design guidelines for new commercial development within the B-1 and B-2 zoning districts.

ED.6. Implement design standards, complete street and traffic calming measures along Route 17M.

**Housing Opportunities**

HD.1. Promote a wide range of housing types and costs, including single-family detached homes, multiple dwellings and townhouses that may either be for sale or rent.

- Housing should be developed within the areas designated for such use and at the densities prescribed by the Village zoning law and zoning map.
- Support affordable senior housing in areas with access to nearby shopping and transportation services.
- Promote the integration of affordable units within a variety of different housing developments and types throughout the Village, rather than clustering such units in one large-scale affordable-housing complex.
- Promote major employer assistance in developing workforce housing in close proximity to the Chester industrial park for employees of businesses that are situated within the industrial park.

HD.2. Encourage provision of handicap-accessible dwelling units for people with physical disabilities.

HD.3. Consider mandatory set-asides for affordable units within large-scale housing developments that are targeted to affordable senior housing, farmer or farm worker housing, or workforce housing.

HD.4. Consider opting into the New York State Real Property Tax Law Section 485-a program to provide incentive for farmer, farmworker and affordable workforce housing.

HD.5. Provide affordable housing for seniors who desire to age in place and promote the Village to medical providers to bring needed medical services to the Village.

HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES

“PROMOTE A WIDE RANGE OF HOUSING TYPES AND COSTS, INCLUDING SINGLE-FAMILY DETACHED.”