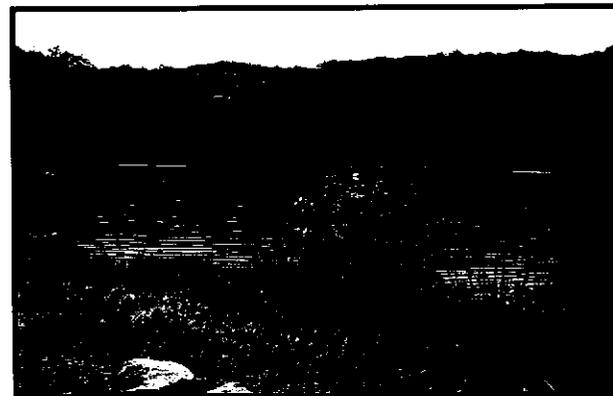
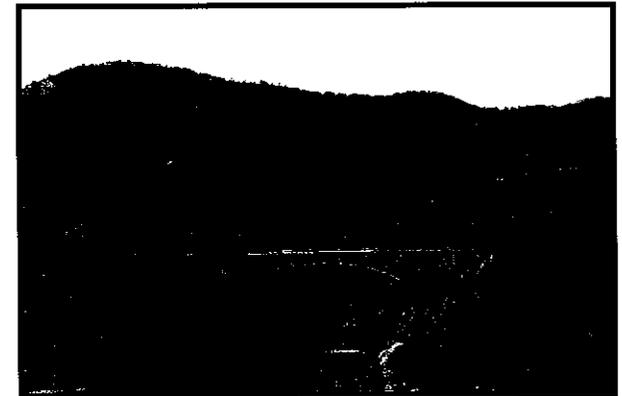
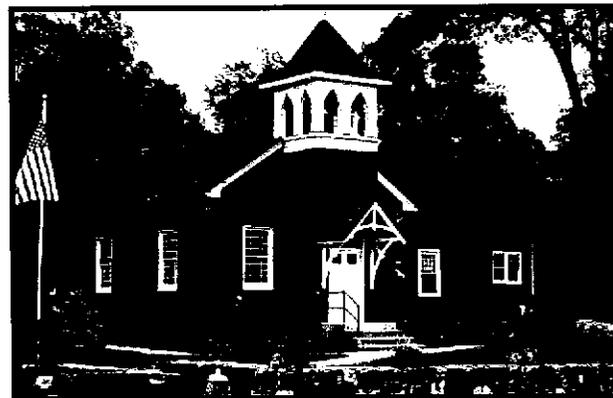


# Town of Highlands

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## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



# TOWN OF HIGHLANDS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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Orange County  
New York

Prepared by:

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November 2007

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## I. INTRODUCTION: THE PLANNING PROCESS

This Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Highlands, New York, evolved through a twelve-month planning process that involved both individual meetings with the Town Comprehensive Plan Committee and joint meetings with both the Town and Village of Highland Falls Comprehensive Plan Committees. The Town of Highlands and the Village of Highland Falls Comprehensive Plan Committees collaborated in the identification of common issues and objectives, as a basis for the development of their separate Comprehensive Plans.

Under the existing New York State Law, the local governing body for this plan, the Town Board, is responsible for the task of preparation and potential adoption of a Comprehensive Plan. In order to provide input to its consultants, the Town Board created a Comprehensive Plan Committee consisting of the Town Supervisor and members of the Town Board, the Planning Board, other committees and community members. Meetings were held roughly once every two months, identifying existing conditions, goals and objectives, various plans and tools to implement such plans.

This Comprehensive Plan consists of eight chapters. Chapter II, Existing Conditions, details existing land use, zoning, demographics, environmental factors, and community facilities. Chapter III, Goals and Objectives, details issues discussed with the Comprehensive Plan Committee, such as recreation and river access, transportation and infrastructure, economics and commercial development, residential development and community facilities and services. Chapter IV presents the Conceptual Plan that is based on the Goals and Objectives, Chapter V is the Land Use Plan, and Chapter VI presents suggested zoning text and map changes. Chapter VII details Community Design and Appearance, the Fort Montgomery Hamlet Center Design Plan, and the Route 9W Corridor Plan. Chapter VIII includes the Tourism Plan and the Consolidation of Municipal Services with the Village of Highland Falls. Chapter IX covers implementing tools for the Town to utilize previously described plans.

This document identifies features in the community that should be preserved and enhanced and suggests measures to protect these special assets in order to maintain and upgrade the quality of life in the Town of Highlands.

## II. EXISTING CONDITIONS

To propose future plans for the Town to guide preservation and growth, the community's existing conditions must be identified as a base line for various proposals. Based on the existing conditions of the Town of Highlands described in this chapter, subsequent chapters identify plans and initiatives the Town could implement in order to shape its future. Existing land use, zoning, socioeconomic conditions, community facilities and environmental factors are all described herein.

### Location

The Town of Highlands is located in Orange County, New York, just north of the Bear Mountain Bridge adjacent to the Hudson River. The Town is bordered by the Palisades Interstate Park to the south, lands held by the United States Military Academy at West Point to the west, the Village of Highland Falls to the north, and the Hudson River to the east. The principal road located in the center of the Town is Route 9W, which runs north-south. Although the Town is geographically quite large, most of its land area is owned by other governmental entities, such as the United States Military Academy at West Point and the Palisades Interstate Park Commission properties (see Exhibit 1, Site Location). Lands outside these properties and outside the incorporated Village of Highland Falls are known as the Hamlet of Fort Montgomery. In general, this comprehensive plan focuses on the land use and demographic characteristics of the Hamlet of Fort Montgomery.

### Existing Land Use and Zoning

#### Land Use

While there is some vacant land in the Town, environmental factors such as steep slopes and ridgelines, and the extensive land held by both the Palisades Interstate Parks Commission and the United States Military Academy at West Point limit future development.

The Hamlet of Fort Montgomery features the following existing land use categories (see Exhibit 2, Existing Land Use):

- Single-Family Residential
- Multi-Family Residential
- Commercial
- Public/Quasi-Public
- Parks
- Vacant

#### Single-Family Residential

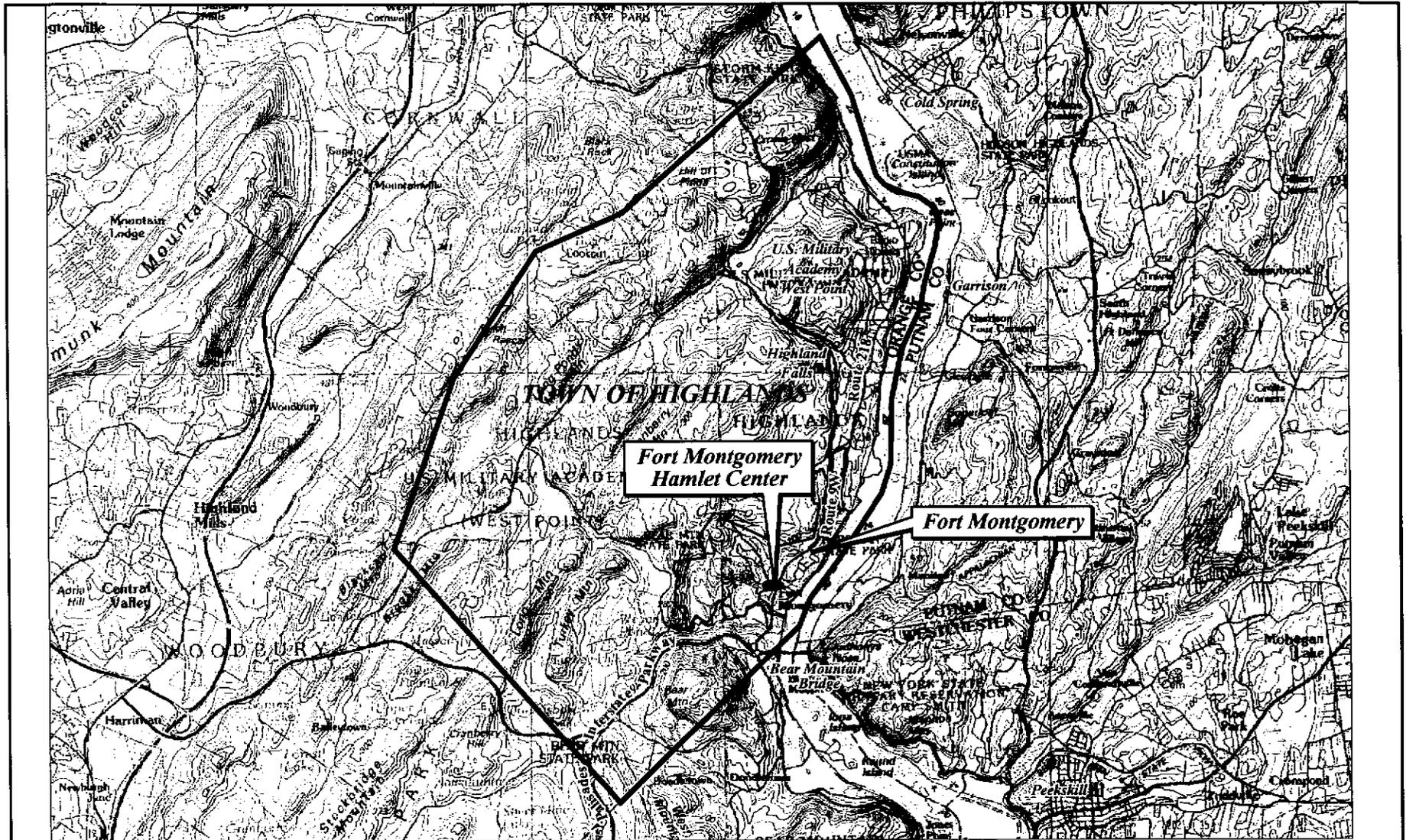
Single-family residential land uses are the most prevalent in the Hamlet, located primarily to the east and west of Route 9W. The neighborhoods in close proximity to the current Post Office, where Canterbury Road, Firefighters Memorial



*A single-family neighborhood off of Route 9W*

Drive and Route 9W converge, consist largely of smaller lots and more densely developed neighborhoods, while homes in the higher terrain on the western areas of Fort Montgomery sit on much larger lots. In most neighborhoods, the housing stock is in good condition.

One of the major issues with existing single-family residential development in the western portion of the Hamlet as identified by the Comprehensive Plan Committee, is that recent development has disturbed ridgelines and viewsheds. Other issues are the long dead end access roads that serve the residential areas and the lack of public utilities.

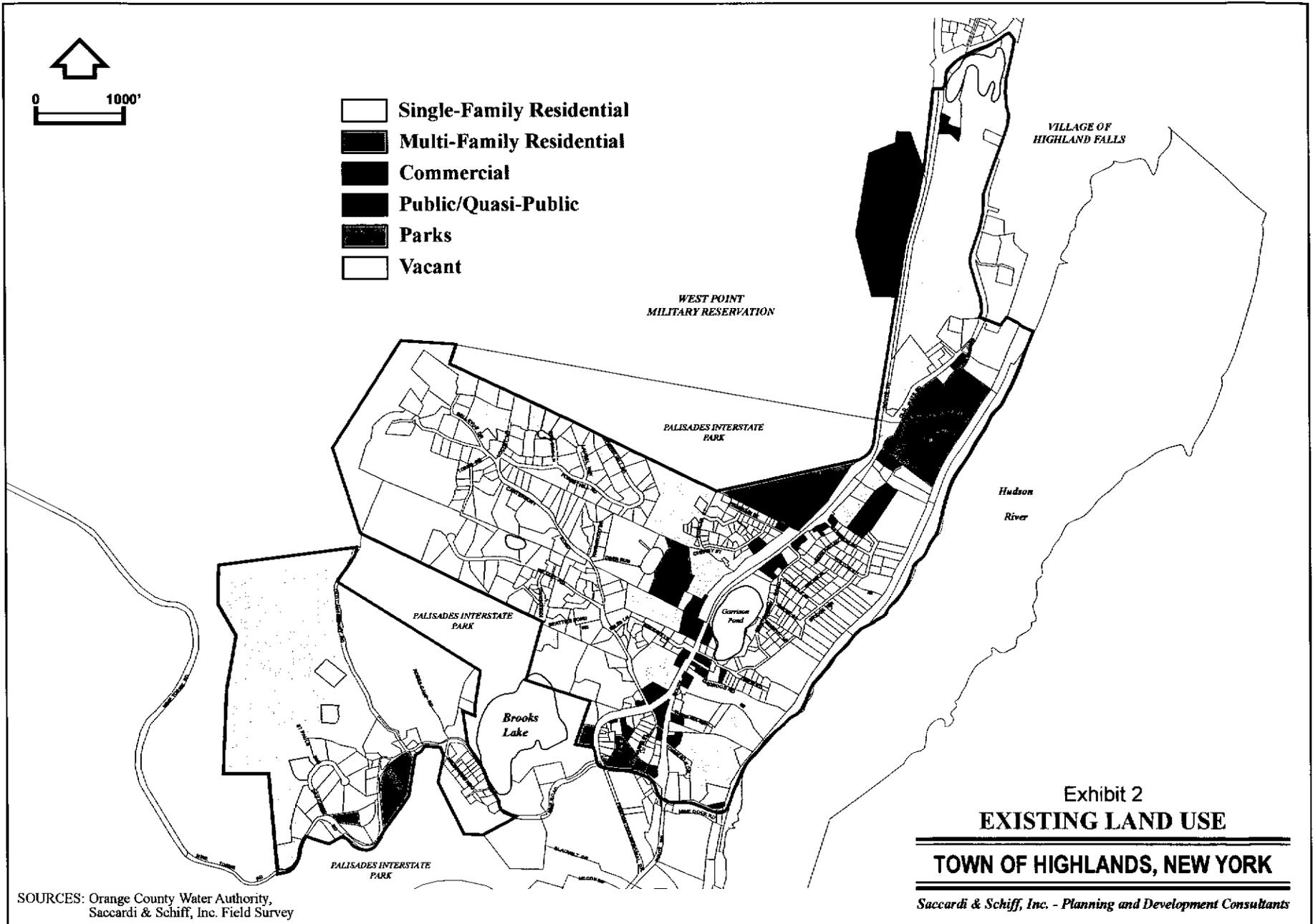


Base Map Source: MapCard, Version 2.0

Exhibit 1  
SITE LOCATION

**TOWN OF HIGHLANDS, NEW YORK**

*Saccardi & Schiff, Inc. - Planning and Development Consultants*



**Multi-Family Residential**

The Multi-family Residential category is located in only a few locations, and includes mobile home courts. The two mobile home courts are located in the southwestern corner of the Town on Mine Road/Mine Torne Road and on the eastern side of Route 9W at its intersection with Old State Road. Other multi-family units are located just south of Garrison Pond on Route 9W and the two newest developments are located at the corner of Firefighters Memorial Drive and Mine Dock Road, and the Corbin Hill development across from Garrison Pond.



*The recently constructed Corbin Hill development*

**Commercial**

Commercial land use in the Hamlet is found mostly on Route 9W, between its intersection with Firefighters Memorial Drive and Old State Road. Most commercial development appears in the form of auto-oriented highway uses. This category includes uses such as the Holiday Inn just north of Garrison Road, the historic home recently converted to a gift shop and inn across from Garrison Pond, and several scattered delicatessens, taverns and similar establishments.

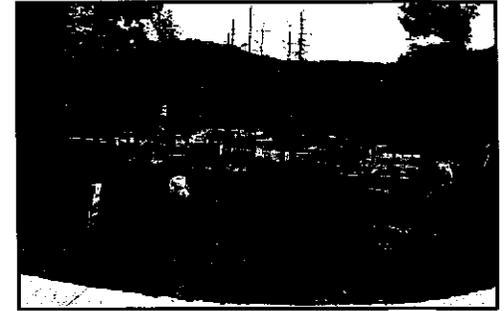
**Public/Quasi-Public**

The Public/Quasi-Public category is found mostly along Route 9W, Firefighters Memorial Drive, and Old State Road. These uses consist of the high school and elementary school, several churches, a post office, a police station, fire station and a vacant lot on Firefighters Memorial Drive, just west of Route 9W. There are a number of architecturally distinctive churches near the center of the Hamlet. Historic attractions in Fort Montgomery include two churches on

Route 9W at the gateway to the Hamlet, the Garrison Home, the Fort Montgomery Fort and Battleground site, and the Bear Mountain Bridge.

**Parks**

Existing Town parks include: Brooks Park on Firefighters Memorial Drive, Patriot Gardens behind the Town Police Station, and the Palisades Interstate Park that surrounds much of the Hamlet.



*Brooks Park off of Firefighters Memorial Drive*

**Vacant**

Vacant land in the Hamlet is found in a number of areas, such as most of the land between Route 9W and Old State Road, parcels located at the western edges of Town on Canterbury Road, and a few parcels located in, or in close proximity to the center of Fort Montgomery.

**Zoning**

In the Town of Highlands there are nine existing zoning districts, eight of which are residential, the other commercial. Of the nine districts, eight are indicated on the existing zoning map. The eight districts are (see Exhibit 3, Existing Zoning):

- R-1R Riverside Residence
- R-1 Mountain Residence
- R-2 Single-Family Residence
- R-3 Single-Family Residence
- R-4 Single and Two-Family Residence
- R-5 Apartment Residence
- R-MHC Mobile Home Court
- B Business

<b>R-1-R</b>	<b>Riverside Residence</b>	<b>40,000 s.f. Minimum Lot*</b>
<b>R-1</b>	<b>Mountain Residence</b>	<b>40,000 - 80,000 s.f. Minimum Lot**</b>
<b>R-2</b>	<b>Single-Family Residence</b>	<b>20,000 s.f. Minimum Lot</b>
<b>R-3</b>	<b>Single-Family Residence</b>	<b>7,500 s.f. Minimum Lot</b>
<b>R-4</b>	<b>Single- and Two-Family Residence</b>	<b>5,000 s.f. Minimum Lot</b>
<b>R-5</b>	<b>Apartment Residence</b>	<b>5,000 s.f. Minimum Lot</b>
<b>R-MHC</b>	<b>Mobile Home Court</b>	<b>150,000 s.f. Minimum Lot</b>
<b>B</b>	<b>Business</b>	<b>15,000 s.f. Minimum Lot</b>

\* 20,000 s.f. if served by municipal sewage system  
 \*\* 30,000 s.f. if served by municipal sewage system

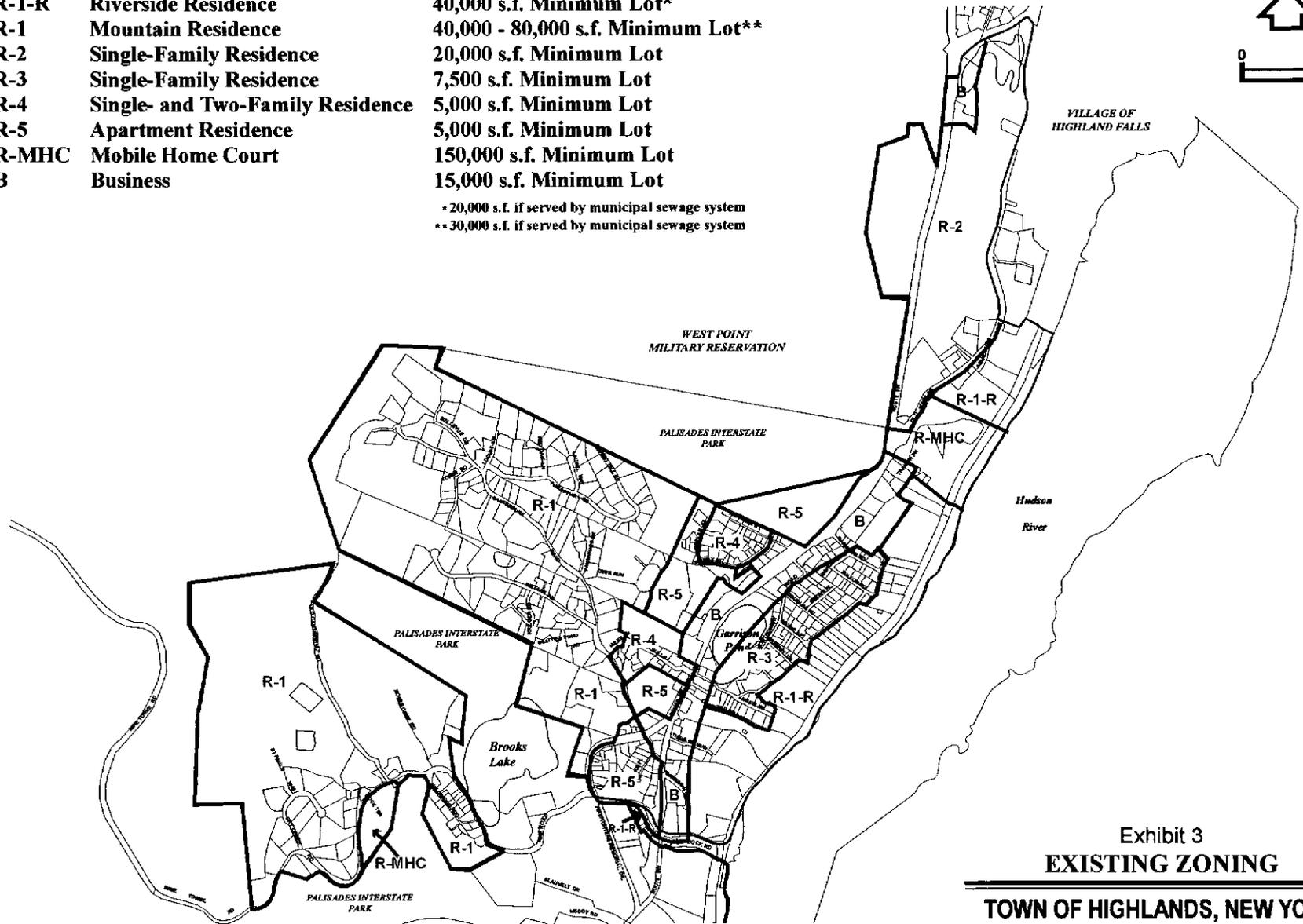
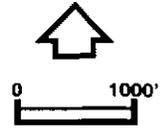


Exhibit 3  
**EXISTING ZONING**

**TOWN OF HIGHLANDS, NEW YORK**

*Saccardi & Schiff, Inc. - Planning and Development Consultants*

BASE MAP SOURCE: Orange County Water Authority  
 ZONING SOURCE: Town of Highlands Zoning Code

The principal Town zoning issues are a stated need to consider greater limitations in the existing B and R-5 districts, and inconsistencies with the zoning districts in the Hamlet Center. These items are discussed further in Chapter V.

**Socio-Economic Factors**

*Demographics*

- **Population**

In 1990, the Hamlet of Fort Montgomery had a population of 1,450<sup>1</sup>. By 2000, the Hamlet population decreased two percent to 1,418. Recent estimations of the 2007 population show an increase of 10 percent to 1,561. This population trend is expected to continue through 2012, when the population is estimated to reach 1,654, or six percent greater than 2007.

- **Households**

The number of households in the Hamlet increased slightly between 1990 and 2000, from 568 to 574. Households are estimated to have increased about nine percent to 626 households in 2007. By 2012, households are expected to increase an estimated six percent to 664.

The average household size decreased from 2.55 in 1990, to 2.47 in 2000. In 2007, it is estimated that household size increased slightly to 2.49, and will remain constant at 2.49 in 2012.

- **Age**

The Hamlet’s population is aging with the median age of 30 increasing to 40 between 1990 and 2000. Significant growth is projected in the baby-boomer and older population cohorts, with an increase of approximately 150 persons, a 50 percent increase of persons aged 55+ between 2000 and 2012.

<sup>1</sup> This number does not reflect the population of the United States Military Academy at West Point or the Village of Highland Falls.

**Table II-1  
Population Trends and Projections Age 55+**

Age	1990	2000	2007	2012
55-64	151	134	190	229
65-74	79	100	91	116
75-84	60	55	76	77
85+	11	13	24	32
Total	301	302	381	454

Source: United States Census Bureau and ESRI

The data presented in Table II-2 shows a decline in population for the 25-34 age group between 1990 and 2007, with slight estimated growth in 2012. This age cohort typically represents first time homebuyers. As shown in Table II-3, after 2007 the projections show stabilized growth in school-age children, including pre-school children. The significant increase in aging population signifies that in the near future there could be a large increase in demand for senior housing.

**Table II-2  
Population Trends and Projections Ages 25-34**

Age	1990	2000	2007	2012
25-34	277	191	136	139

Source: United States Census Bureau and ESRI

**Table II-3  
Population Trends and Projections School Aged  
and Pre-School Children**

Age	1990	2000	2007	2012
0-4	115	84	92	95
5-19	280	275	334	335

Source: United States Census Bureau and ESRI

• **Race**

In 1990, over 95 percent of the Hamlet’s population was white. By 2000, the percentage decreased slightly to 93 percent. It is estimated that while the overall population of white persons increased from 1,313 in 2000 to 1,430 in 2007, the overall percentage in the Hamlet will decrease further to 92 percent. The trend continues in 2012, when the white population is projected to increase to 1,493, while the overall percentage will decrease further to 90 percent.

**Table II-4  
Race and Ethnic Origin**

Race	1990	2000	2007	2012
White	1379	1313	1430	1493
Black	14	25	35	41
Asian & Pacific Islander	4	16	20	25
American Indian	6	10	9	11
Hispanic Origin	47	85	115	142

Source: United States Census Bureau and ESRI

The African American, Asian and Pacific Islander and Hispanic populations are all increasing at higher rate than whites. The African American population is estimated to have increased 40 percent between 2000 and 2007, and another 17 percent between 2007 and 2012. Despite the large percentage increase, overall the African American population remains at just over two percent of the total population in the Hamlet. The Asian and Pacific Islander population increased by 25 percent between 2000 and 2007, and is estimated to increase another 25 percent by 2012. Again, despite the large percentage increase, compared to the total population, the Asian and Pacific Islanders constitute fewer than two percent. The Hispanic population increased over 35 percent between 2000 and 2007, and by 2012 an additional increase of 23 percent to 142 persons is projected.

• **Income**

The median household income in Fort Montgomery was \$40,865 in 1990. By 2000, median household income increased to \$62,369. It is estimated that these numbers will continue to increase to \$79,567 in 2007 and to \$94,720 by 2012. The HUD threshold for eligibility in its Community Development Block Grant Program for 2006, is a median income of \$59,900 for a family of four. This represents 80 percent of the Orange County Median.

**Table II-5  
Household Income**

Household Income	1990 <sup>2</sup>	2000	2007	2012
< \$15,000	81	5	6	4
\$15,000-\$24,999	78	26	16	15
\$25,000-\$34,999	62	54	35	16
\$35,000-\$49,999	139	69	72	65
\$50,000-\$74,999	141	159	153	117
\$75,000-\$99,999	15	100	125 <sup>3</sup>	136
\$100,000-\$149,999	9	73	148	163
\$150,000-\$199,999	16 <sup>4</sup>	9	44	91
\$200,000+		0	26	55

Source: United States Census Bureau and ESRI; Income levels supplied by HUD.

- Very Low Household Income Levels
- Low Household Income Levels
- Median Household Income

<sup>2</sup> The 1990 Census data for Household income is based on a sample, unlike the remainder of the 1990 data that is based on a whole population.

<sup>3</sup> HUD estimates that the median income in 2007 in Orange County is \$76,400. ESRI estimates a median income of \$79,567 for the Hamlet of Fort Montgomery.

<sup>4</sup> The 1990 Census categorized household income up to \$150,000+, while the 2000 Census included a \$200,000+ income category.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) indicates that for Orange County in 2007, a four person household with an income of less than \$59,000 is defined as “low income” and households with incomes less than \$38,200 are considered “very low income”. The HUD supplied income limits for Orange County estimate that the 2007 median income \$76,400. While the cost of living and inflation has increased and will continue to increase since 1990, households considered to be very low income are expected to decrease overall. Calculating low income levels by factoring in a four percent yearly inflation rate, in 1990 there were 81 households with an income of less than \$15,000. By 2000, the number of low income households (under \$25,000) decreased to 31 households. In 2007, the number of low income households is expected to increase to 57 households under \$35,000, but by 2012 households under \$35,000 should decrease to 35.

As shown in Table II-5, based on actual and projected household incomes between 1990-2012, 39 percent of households in the Hamlet were under the median income, while 32 percent were over in 1990; 27 percent of households reported incomes below the median, while 32 percent were over the median in 2000; in 2007, 45 percent of households will be under the median income while 35 percent are over; and in 2012, it is expected that 33 percent of households will be under the median income while 46 percent will be over.<sup>5</sup>

If the projected population trends continue through the 20 year horizon of this Plan, it is anticipated that the Hamlet would grow by about 315 persons from 2012 to 2027, to a population of 1,969. Based on this population estimate, it is expected that the amount of households in the Hamlet should increase by about 75 to 100. While many of these households will consist of families, a large portion will also comprise

<sup>5</sup> Both the United States Census and ESRI data provide a median household income, but only display income ranges when describing the total households in Fort Montgomery. As such, in the calculation of the percentage of households above and below the median income, this analysis does not include households located within the income range of the median income.

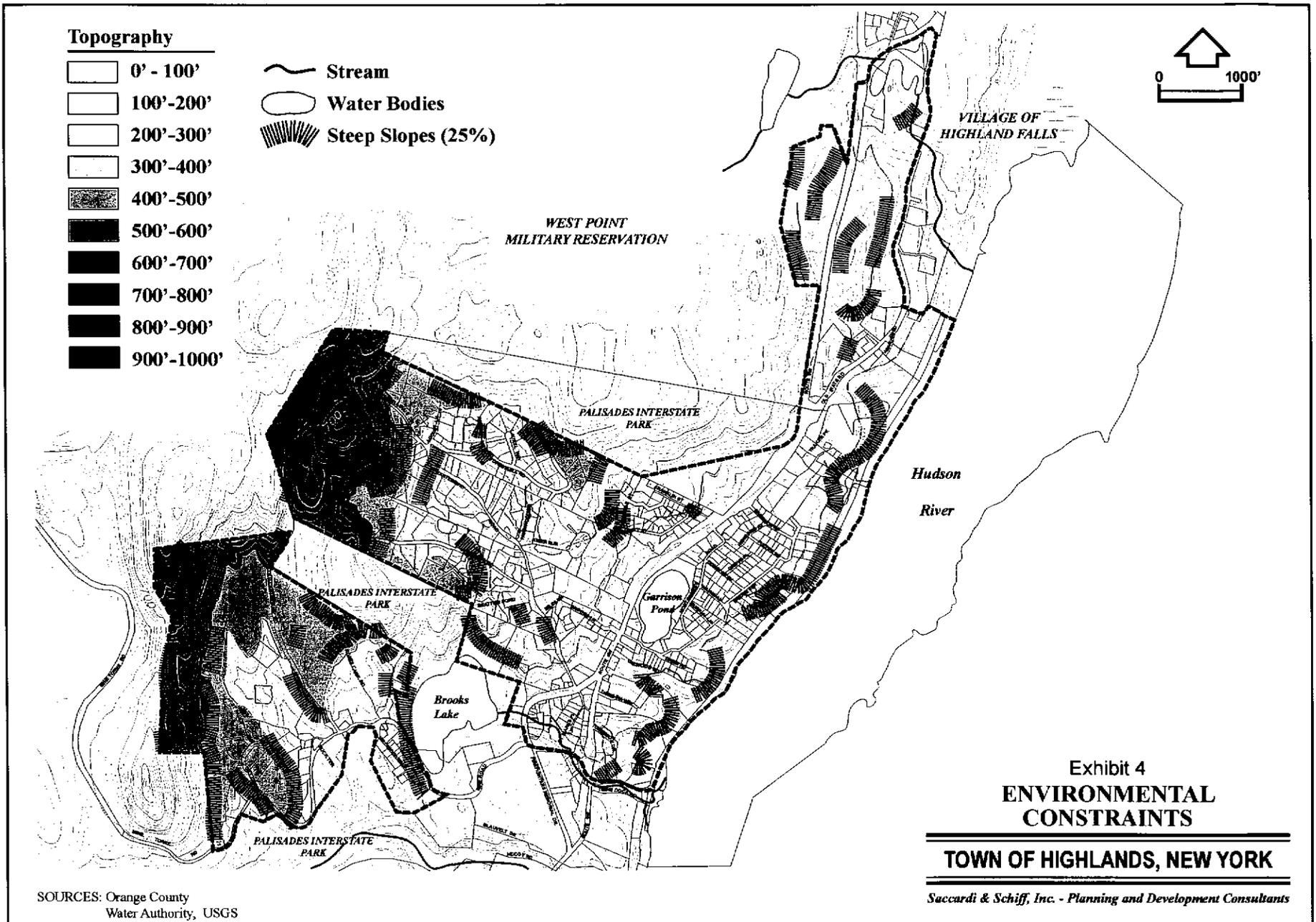
of a growing senior population. There is presently sufficient land area identified in this Plan to accommodate the different levels of growth needed in the Hamlet while still protecting significant environmental features.

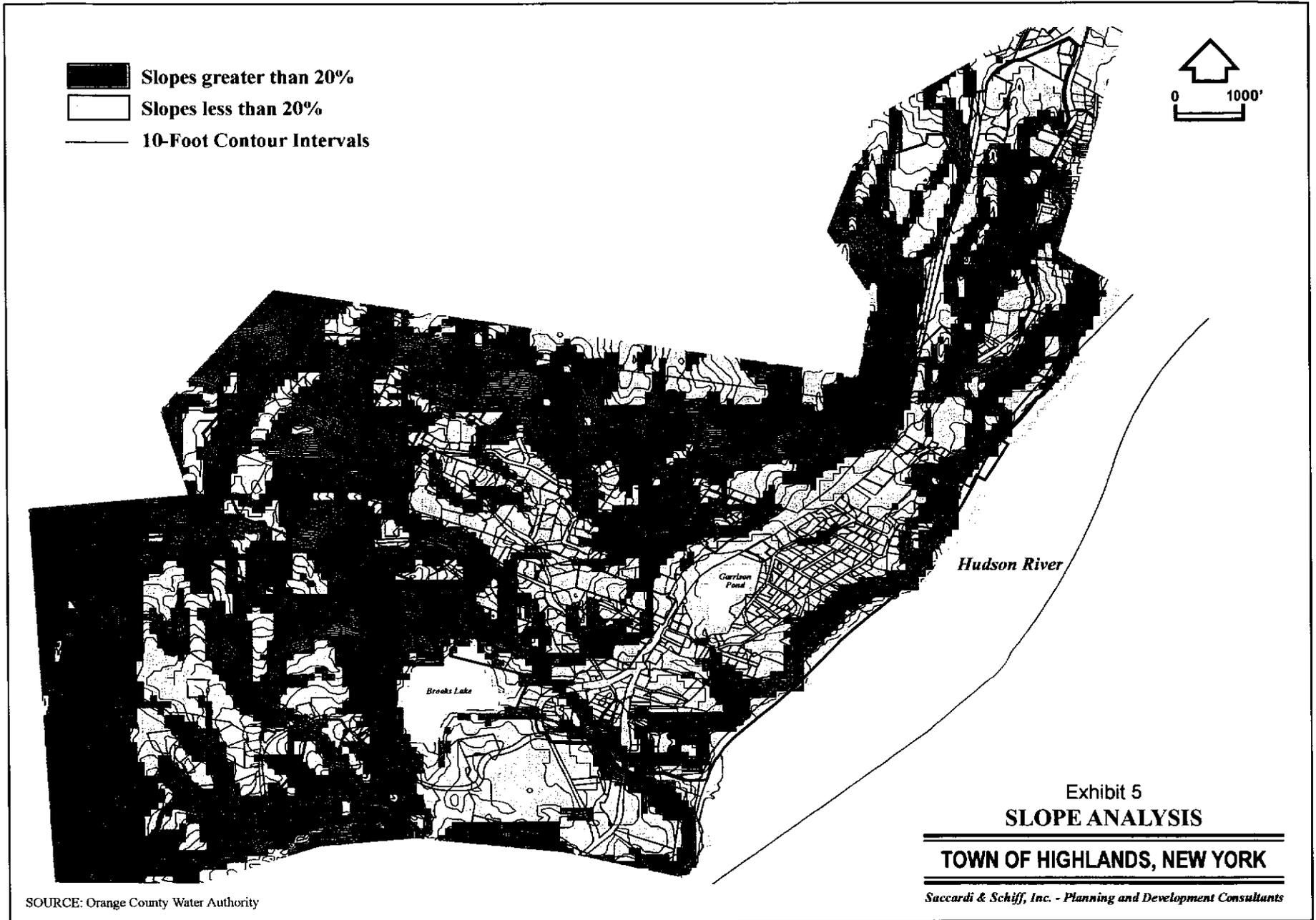
## **Environmental Factors**

### ***Steep Slopes and Water Bodies***

The terrain of the Hamlet of Fort Montgomery can be characterized as extremely rough; on its east side is a steep drop off that leads down to the Hudson River, and on its west side are highly elevated mountainous hills. This topography combined with other factors greatly constrains further growth. Remaining undeveloped land consists largely of steep slopes, which restricts growth and connections to needed infrastructure such as water and roads. The difficulty in developing such land allows Fort Montgomery to encourage the preservation of open space.

The main bodies of water located in the Town (excluding lakes on the United States Military Academy at West Point reservation) are Brooks Lake, Crystal Lake, Garrison Pond and the Hudson River. Through both open space buffers and preservation, all four water bodies can be protected for future use by the public. The Hudson River allows the Hamlet the opportunity to expand recreation activities and also provide scenic views valued by both residents and tourists. Garrison Pond is one of, if not the most, visible water body in the Hamlet. Its location on Route 9W allows the Hamlet to create a more scenic highway while also providing recreational opportunities to residents in close proximity. Crystal Lake is located at the intersection of Route 218 and Route 9W, right on the border of the Village of Highland Falls. The Crystal Lake area not only has potential for a recreational use, but also provides opportunities to strengthen the gateway on the northern edge to both the Hamlet and the Village. Brooks Lake is currently utilized by the Town’s Recreation Department and is a valuable asset to the hamlet.

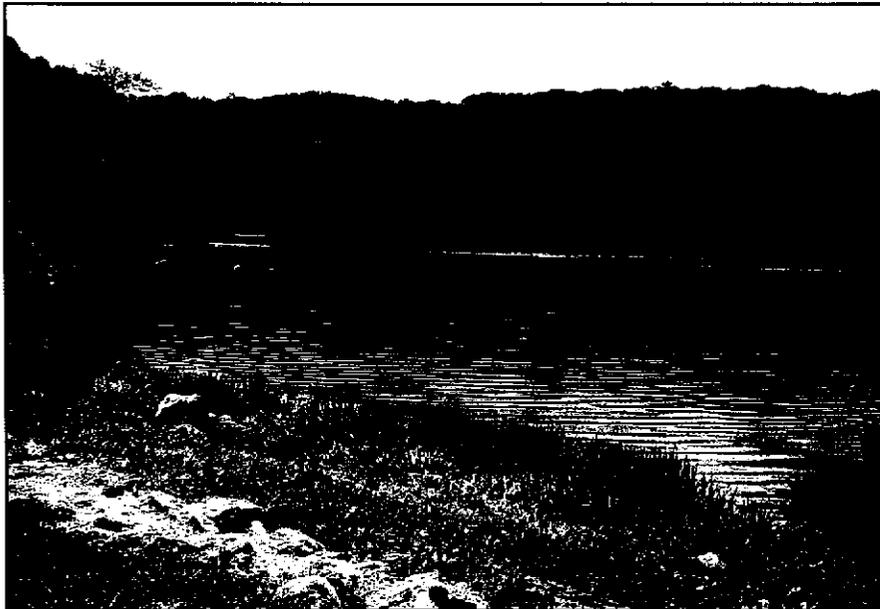




### *Open Space and Recreation*

The Town of Highlands Recreation Department provides recreation facilities and services to both the Town of Highlands and the Village of Highland Falls. The recreation department is staffed by two year round employees; the Recreation Director and a part-time secretary. During the summer months the staff consists of twelve lifeguards, a Waterfront Director, four gate attendants at Long Pond, two adult supervisors and twelve counselors for the Summer Playground Program, and five teenagers for maintenance.

The Town of Highlands recreational facilities include: the Long Pond Recreational Lake, leased from the United States Military Academy at West Point, Brooks Park, (leased from the Palisades Park Commission) and Roe Park in the Village of Highland Falls. In addition, the Recreation Department uses space in the elementary and high school buildings for other activities.



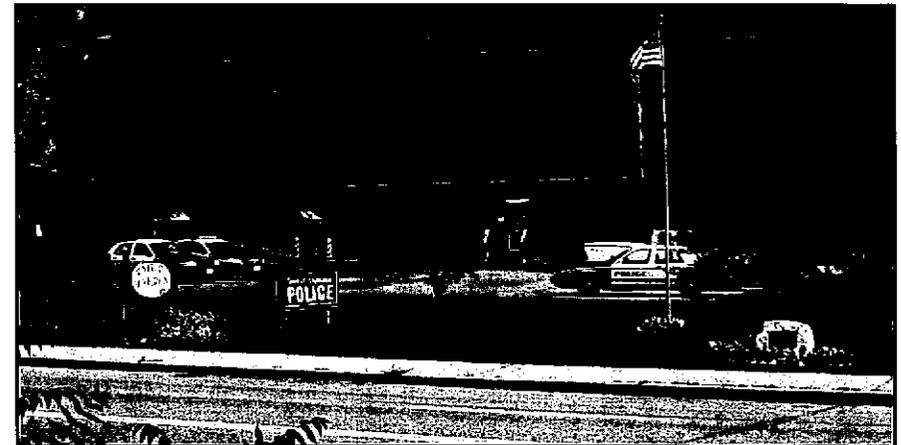
*Brooks Lake at Brooks Park*

The Recreation Department offers a variety of children and adult activities to residents of the Town and Village including: baseball, softball, swimming, youth soccer and basketball, ice-skating, and karate. While the department has most recently completed construction of a new pavilion, playground, dugouts and one ball field at Roe Park in the Village, there is an existing need for a community center for youth and seniors, as well as additional ball fields.

### **Community Facilities and Services**

#### *Police Department*

The Town of Highlands Police Department is located on Route 9W, just north of Garrison Pond. The department employs 22 part-time officers, including the Chief of Police, that utilize four marked patrol cars, as well one unmarked vehicle used by the Chief.



*The Town of Highlands Police Department*

The police department serves the unincorporated areas of the Town, including the Hamlet of Fort Montgomery, and provides back-up services to the Village of Highland Falls and parts of the West Point campus. According to correspondence from the Police Chief, the current staffing can normally handle the everyday call volume in

the Town, and development in the near future is unlikely to create a significant increased demand for services. The current police station is located in a temporary structure which is in poor condition and sits on land that was originally ceded to the Town for park use<sup>6</sup>, and therefore there is an existing need for a new station.

### ***Fire Department***

The Fort Montgomery Fire Department serves the entire Town and assists the Village of Highland Falls in certain circumstances. The fire department currently owns the following equipment: a 1956 Ford F-800 that handles 750 gallons per minute (GPM), a 1969 Diamond Reo with a 750 GPM John Beam pump, a 1991 Pierce Lance with a 1,250 GPM pump, a 1976 Ward LaFrance Pumper/Tanker with a 1,500 GPM pump, a 1994 American Rural Rescue Ford with high angle rescue equipment, a 1981 Sutphen Quint mid-mount aerial ladder with a 1,500 GPM pump, and a 1997 Ford F-250 Chief's vehicle.

While the fire department appears to have sufficient space at its current location, if expansion were required, there is currently vacant land adjacent to and behind the existing building.

### ***Ambulance Service***

The Town of Highlands Ambulance Corps (THAC) provides ambulance service to both the Village of Highland Falls and the Town of Highlands and operates out of a Town owned building located on Route 218 just north of the Route 9W intersection in the Village of Highland Falls. The Corps has 22 members that operate two Basic Life Support Ambulances. The Town of Highlands Ambulance Tax District employs one full-time paid EMT who works Monday through Friday and two part-time EMTs that work a total of 40 hours per

<sup>6</sup> The Patriot Gardens Park is located on the rear part of this parcel.

week. According to correspondence from THAC, within three to five years the THAC is unlikely to have sufficient staff to respond to emergency calls.

### ***School System***

#### **Highland Falls- Fort Montgomery Central School District**

The school district is currently comprised of four schools: the Fort Montgomery Elementary School, the Highland Falls Elementary School, the Highland Falls Middle School and the James I. O'Neill High School. These schools combine to enroll students ranging from Kindergarten to 12th grade. The high school currently enrolls students from the Town of Highlands, Village of Highland Falls, the United States Military Academy at West Point and the Town of Garrison.<sup>7</sup>

The recent enrollment figures for the Highland Falls-Fort Montgomery Central School District are as follows:

- Fort Montgomery Elementary School (Grades K-2) – 198 Students
- Highland Falls Elementary School (Grades Pre-K, 3 & 4) – 125 Students
- Highland Falls Middle School (Grades 5-8) – 250 Students
- James I. O'Neill High School (Grades 9-12) – 597 Students

The school district currently enrolls a population of 1,170 students, with an estimated cost per pupil for the 2006-2007 academic year of \$7,618 per student. Average class size in the school district is estimated at 22-students/per class. The School District is not currently planning any capital improvement projects.

In addition to school-related sports activities, school athletic fields are currently used by recreational programs that cater to both the Town and the Village, but maintenance and upgrades to the facilities

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.hffmcsd.org>, December 14, 2006.

are undertaken solely by the School District. To continue the current level of maintenance, it is necessary for the school district to pursue a shared cost and maintenance agreement with the Town and Village.



*The Fort Montgomery Elementary School*

### **Libraries**

The Town of Highlands does not currently have its own library. Town residents are served by the Highland Falls Library. The library was chartered in the late 19th century by the New York State Department of Education. It is located on the east side of Main Street, just south of Schneider Avenue. The library is currently staffed by a director and one senior clerk, both of whom are full-time positions, five part-time clerks, and one student page.

The library currently has capacity to meet minor increases in demand from both the Town and Village. If the area were to experience a large increase in population growth, the library could address this by hiring additional staff and extending its hours. However, no physical expansion of the library would be required.

As indicated in the previous text, the various community facilities that serve the Town population are not concentrated in one geographic area. Commercial uses are located along the length of Route 9W. However, at the intersection of Route 9W, Canterbury Road and Firefighters Memorial Drive, the basis for a true hamlet center are apparent. There is a traffic signal on Route 9W, and the Town Post Office is here serving as an important community gathering space. A number of historic structures and attractive churches are nearby. Unfortunately, the area is dominated by Route 9W traffic. A plan for a more cohesive pedestrian-friendly center is critically needed in this location to tie the entire Fort Montgomery Hamlet together and to create a focus for the Town of Highlands.

### III. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

After discussing existing conditions and planning issues facing the Town, the Comprehensive Plan Committee devised a series of Goals and Objectives that formed their future vision for the Hamlet of Fort Montgomery.

#### Residential Development

To provide housing for present and future residents, and guide future development:

1. Maintain and enhance the quality of life that exists in various neighborhoods throughout the Town, including the preservation of environmental features and open space, provision of quality community facilities and services, promotion of high quality site and architectural design, burial of utility wires, and the separation and buffering of uses considered incompatible with residential neighborhoods.
2. Evaluate opportunities for senior housing, affordable housing, and starter housing for public sector employees and volunteers who serve the Town.
3. Consider the use of traditional and non-traditional zoning techniques where zoning is designed to achieve desired residential and open space objectives; this could include incentive zoning, clustering and Floor Area Ratio maximums.
4. Support better enforcement of the existing zoning codes to address property maintenance issues.
5. Provide updated zoning regulations that will help focus development in desired areas, and facilitate the development of a variety of housing options including senior and workforce housing above ground-floor commercial development in the Hamlet center.

6. Provide parking regulations that account for mixed-use developments with both retail and residential parking needs.
7. Evaluate the extent and location of business/commercial zoning districts in the Hamlet of Fort Montgomery. Consider modifying the boundary of the existing B commercial district to limit strip commercial and ensure that commercial uses are concentrated and minimize filtering of commercial areas into adjacent residential neighborhoods.
8. Implement measures requiring viewshed analyses for new projects and propose design guidelines to minimize light pollution and color and design restrictions for proposed ridgeline developments.
9. Revise 70-foot height provision in the R-5 Zoning District (This objective was implemented during preparation of the Comprehensive Plan).
10. Consider the reduction of permitted multi-family density in the R-5 district in order to address demands on infrastructure and compatibility with existing neighborhoods.



*View towards the Hudson River and Bear Mountain Bridge from Corbin Hill.*

#### Transportation and Infrastructure

To support existing and future residential and commercial development:

1. Consider consolidation of Town and Village water and wastewater treatment facilities or, alternatively, expand the Town's existing wastewater treatment plant, and bring new wells into operation for expanded public water supply.
2. Maximize parking opportunities and provide additional parking in the Hamlet Center to serve existing and future business activity and encourage more pedestrian traffic.
3. Revise zoning regulations to address contemporary needs, including the requirements that visitor parking be provided at new residential developments.
4. Provide increased stormwater protection for existing streams, addressing erosion and sediment control and flooding issues.
5. Ensure that new development properly protects wetlands and water bodies, utilizing best management practices, and upgrading stormwater, sanitary sewage, and water supply facilities, where necessary, to mitigate site-specific impacts identified through the environmental review process.
6. Provide landscaped treatment and visual relief for the community gateway along Route 9W.
8. Provide sidewalks and promote traffic calming measures in the Hamlet Center and along Route 9W to enhance pedestrian safety. These may include: signalization, crosswalks, turning lanes and speed limit reduction.
9. Encourage provision of parking to the rear of developments in the Hamlet Center.
10. Investigate opportunities for secondary access to Canterbury Road to reduce the undesirable effects of a long, dead end roadway.
11. Encourage the Town to become commuter friendly by providing van/bus service to the Garrison Train Station. Encourage tourism by providing van/bus service to Woodbury Commons, Cold Spring and other locations.
12. Consider hiring a code enforcement officer.



*Entrance to Fort Montgomery from the south on Route 9W*

7. Implement environmentally sustainable practices including: water conservation measures; green building techniques; landscaping; buffers; tree preservation (better enforcement of Town tree ordinances); and, forest maintenance.
1. Consider consolidation of facilities and services for efficiency and cost savings.
2. Provide additional storage space for Department of Public Works vehicles and equipment.
3. Ensure that the interior and exterior of all public buildings are properly maintained.
4. Continue to increase the level of services for a growing population, including housing and recreational facilities and programs.
5. Work with local fire districts and other local volunteer organizations to continue to provide high quality services; help

monitor or recruit volunteers through the provision of affordable housing opportunities.

6. Encourage and promote recycling compliance for commercial accounts by better enforcement and education. Investigate innovative recycling programs (including pursuing grants for recycling coordination).
7. Acquire and develop sites for additional outdoor recreation including baseball and soccer fields for use by the Village, the Town, the school district and other organizations.
8. Keep Town Post Office in its current location and build the Hamlet Center around this important community facility.
9. Continue to pursue State and Federal grants for waterfront access, historic preservation, commercial area rehabilitation and ADA accessibility.



*The Fort Montgomery Post Office located at the intersection of Firefighters Memorial Drive and Canterbury Road*

10. Promote energy conservation and environmentally sustainable practices including green energy and the use of solar power.

## Recreation and River Access

To provide additional recreation fields and facilities to serve the Town and balance development and preservation goals:

1. Promote Hudson River access in the Town.



*The Hudson River boat launch at the Fort Montgomery marina*

2. Create a Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) to address the previous goal and other future waterfront projects. An LWRP would present the Town with additional ideas and related policies for public access to the Hudson River, as well as empower local decision making for waterfront projects. Without an LWRP, the State has increased control over the future of the Town's waterfront.
3. Consider further consolidation (Town and Village) of maintenance responsibilities for recreational facilities.
4. Apply funds from new construction toward specific recreation projects.

5. Acquire and develop sites for additional outdoor recreation, such as baseball and soccer fields, playgrounds, basketball courts, picnic areas, nature trails and swimming, for use by the Village, the Town, the school district, and various clubs and organizations.
6. Upgrade existing and create new recreation programs and indoor facilities to provide additional recreation opportunities for youth and seniors. A recreation center would be desirable to supplement the library, schools and church facilities.
7. Improve the open space character along portions of Route 9W by creating front yard landscaping strips for development along the right-of-way, where appropriate. The Town should avoid strip commercial development along the roadway.
8. Provide additional landscaping and urban design treatment within the Hamlet of Fort Montgomery. (See also Economic and Commercial Development Objectives).
9. Implement ridgeline protection measures and minimize light pollution. Require viewshed analyses for new projects. Implement design guidelines for commercial and residential development.

**Economic and Commercial Development**

To provide local employment opportunities, necessary tax ratables, and a broad array of services for community residents:

1. Pursue opportunities for increased tourism by:
  - Creating a regional tourism organization involving Rockland, Orange and Putnam Counties, Garrison, Cold Spring, Highland Falls and West Point;
  - Building on the natural resources and historic sites in the Town;

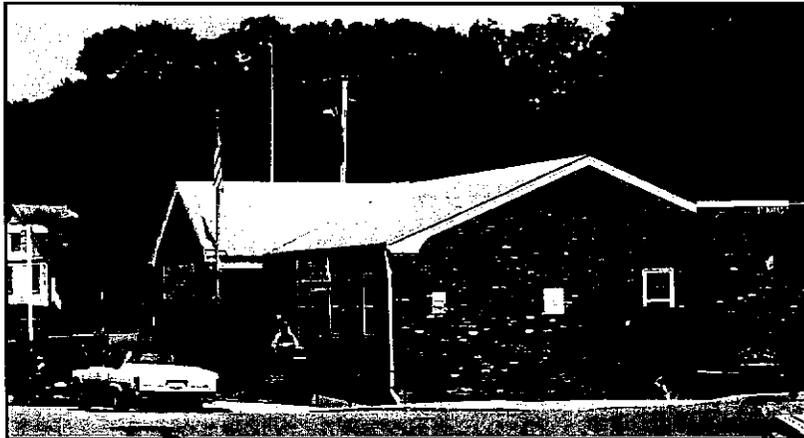


*The Garrison Home located on the west side of Route 9W across from Garrison Pond*

- Encouraging regional destination tourism through marketing efforts, partnering with other organizations and communities in the Hudson Valley;
  - Publicizing upgrades to local hotels, bed and breakfasts and motels;
    - Creating new brochures;
    - Creating a tourism website and putting links on other regional tourism websites to Highlands/Highland Falls destinations and other nearby sites (Bear Mountain, Boscobel, West Point, NYSOPRHP, I Love NY, Woodbury Commons, Cold Spring, etc.);
    - Participating in statewide efforts to promote tourism at battle sites; and,
    - Promoting hiking publicizing the Appalachian Trail crossing at Bear Mountain Bridge.
2. Work with West Point Visitors Center to make specific information about historic areas in the Town and Village available to tourists (including maps, brochures, information about special events, etc.).
  3. Select geographic areas for economic activity that are suitable for commercial development in terms of location, access and environmental constraints.
  4. Control strip development on Route 9W throughout the Hamlet of Fort Montgomery.
  5. Encourage façade and streetscape beautification for commercial properties by creating/promoting grant programs, which

provide public funds to individual property owners for facade improvements, lighting and architectural design standards if design guidelines are met.

6. Provide and/or require landscaped screening areas to buffer commercial areas that exist along major roadways and that are adjacent to residential development, and ensure that commercial building designs, façades and signage are properly planned to maintain and improve the overall aesthetic qualities of the Town.
7. Create a clearly defined hamlet center on Route 9W in the Town in the vicinity of the existing Post Office.



*The Fort Montgomery Post Office*

8. Reuse existing vacant and underutilized buildings while maintaining sufficient parking for new uses.
9. Recommend implementation of property maintenance laws, and pursue enforcement of building codes and façade treatments to minimize signage and building condition violations.

## IV. CONCEPTUAL PLAN

The Conceptual Plan was created to organize the Goals and Objectives into a broad, graphic form that highlights the most relevant issues facing the Hamlet, before delving into the detailed plans that follow in the subsequent chapters.

Exhibit 6, the Conceptual Plan, graphically details the following broad planning principles:

### **Create a Hamlet Center**

The Town has identified a need for a concentrated multi-use hamlet center. The existing center of Fort Montgomery currently consists of scattered homes, businesses, and a post office located at the intersection of Route 9W and Firefighters Memorial Highway. To encourage mixed-use growth, the Town should amend its zoning to include the Fort Montgomery Hamlet Center (FMHC) district. This zoning change would allow residential units above commercial and office uses, as well as higher densities and a pedestrian scale environment (further detailed discussion of the existing and proposed zoning in the Town is located in Chapter VI). A Hamlet Center could be created by focusing on ideas such as encouraging growth around the existing post office, creating signage and design guidelines, considering sites for senior housing, additional commercial development and open space.

The Post Office should be used as a centerpiece to attract new businesses and residents, in both development and redevelopment efforts. Currently, the Post Office is one of a handful of uses in the existing Hamlet Center that draws in residents. The Town should encourage the Post Office to remain in its current location and implement ideas detailed in the Hamlet Design Plan, located in Chapter VII.

Another step the Town can take towards creating a Hamlet Center is to develop signage and design guidelines. Implementation of signage

and design guidelines would encourage consistent architectural style and signage in both new development and redevelopment in the Hamlet. Appealing architectural design and signage would attract new businesses and customers.

Providing additional opportunities for senior housing in the Hamlet would assist in the creation of a Hamlet Center while also addressing a need in the community. Senior housing in the Hamlet Center would integrate the senior population into the community as well as support the local businesses while also reducing dependency on automobiles.

A concern voiced by the community is current and future traffic congestion at the intersection of Canterbury Road and Firefighters Memorial Drive. For residents living on, or just off of Canterbury Road, the only possible exit is through the Hamlet Center. Prior proposals for adding additional access to Canterbury Road do not appear to be practically feasible at this time. Suggested intersection improvements are presented in Chapter VII.

### **Strengthen Route 9W Corridor and Maintain an Attractive Gateway**

The Route 9W corridor, stretching from Garrison Pond to Old State Road, has some viable and attractive development mixed with some strip commercial development with unattractive signage, poorly defined on-site parking and circulation and minimal landscaping. Most of this area is located within the Business (B) zoning district. The Town should limit future strip development in the B zoning district and encourage high quality development through the adoption of design guidelines.

Many existing uses along the Route 9W corridor have little or no front yard landscaping. Landscaped buffers should be added to enhance

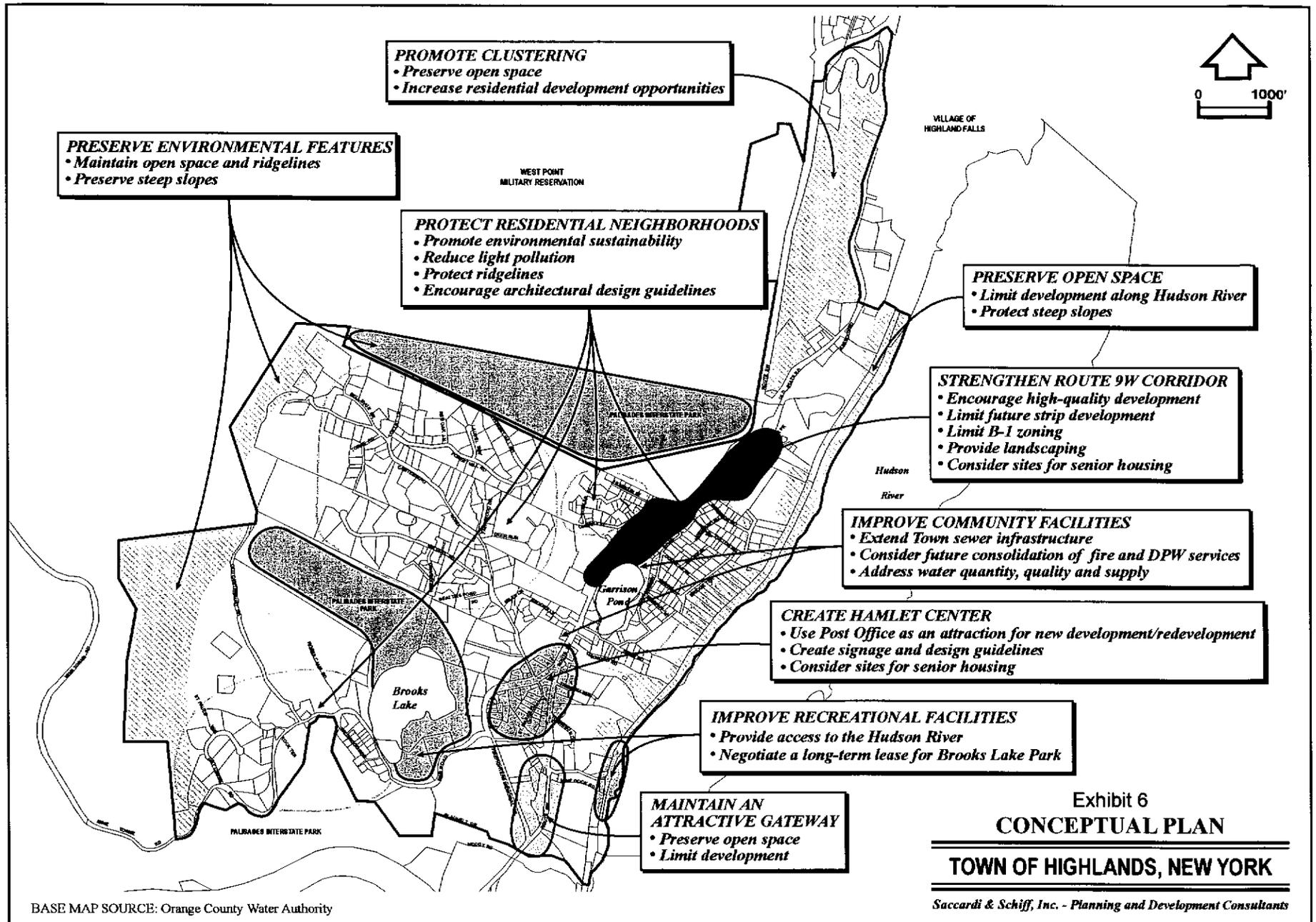


Exhibit 6  
**CONCEPTUAL PLAN**  
**TOWN OF HIGHLANDS, NEW YORK**  
 Saccardi & Schiff, Inc. - Planning and Development Consultants

the aesthetics of the corridor. These buffers would shield parking areas, especially front yard parking lots. For future development the preferred site layout of parking would be to the rear or sides of a building.



*Existing commercial uses on the west side of Route 9W*

To enhance and maintain the corridor, further strip development along Route 9W should be discouraged. Future retail growth should be focused in the Hamlet Center, which would preserve open space in the Hamlet, while not weakening businesses in the Hamlet Center with larger regional or national chains.

The extent of the B zoning district should be revised along the Route 9W corridor. The existing zoning map allows the B zone to extend uninterrupted through over a mile of the Town. Currently, the B district does not distinguish between permitted uses and bulk requirements for hamlet type commercial development and highway commercial development. The zoning text should be revised to increase the minimum front yard setback, add a minimum landscaped buffer along frontage and a maximum Floor Area Ratio (FAR) to control the total amount of development permitted on each lot. The zoning amendments are described in further detail in Chapter VI of this Plan.

Encouraging high quality development is another part of strengthening the Route 9W corridor. Greater landscaping efforts and encouraging the use of high quality materials and design will improve the aesthetics of the corridor.

### **Protect Residential Neighborhoods and Provide Additional Housing Opportunities**

The Town should protect residential neighborhoods and provide additional housing opportunities through activities such as, but not limited to, promoting environmental sustainability, reducing light pollution, protecting ridgelines, developing and implementing architectural design guidelines and pursuing greater senior, affordable and workforce housing opportunities. Providing greater affordable and workforce housing opportunities will assist in retaining the 25-34 age group that is steadily decreasing in the Town. Preserving open space along the western edges of Town as well as along the Hudson River protects the Town ridgeline. Light pollution can be addressed by restricting the direction and amount of lighting allowed, including instituting regulations such as maximum foot candles and mandatory light shields, in both existing and future development, especially commercial development.

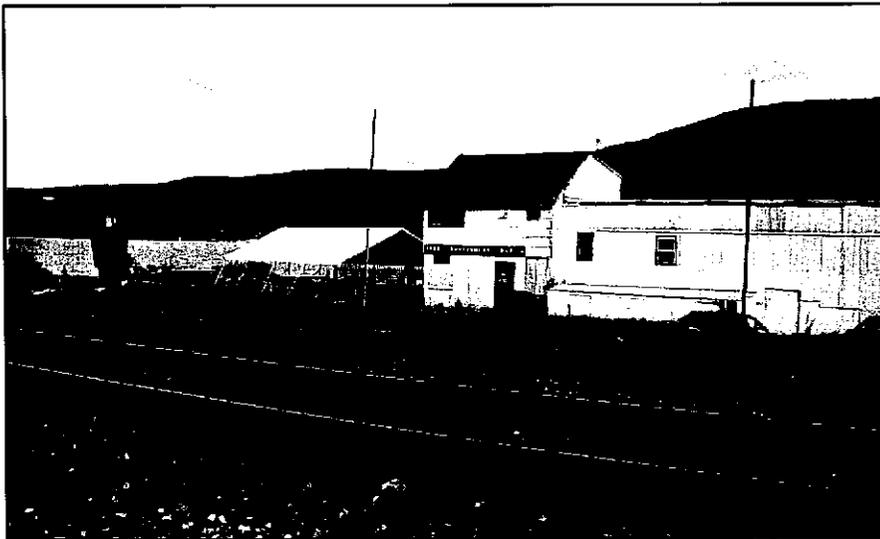
Environmental sustainability can be promoted in a number of ways, including encouraging cluster development. A cluster development refers to a form of residential development that coincides with the amount of units allowed under conventional zoning but instead of using large uniform lot sizes, concentrates buildings in a more compact subdivision while conserving land for open space. The Town can use cluster development to protect and conserve environmentally sensitive land while also preserving open space. Other ways to promote environmental sustainability include reducing density in the R-5 district and minimizing the extent of lands included in the R-5 district. Additionally, reduction in density in the R-1 area along Canterbury Road can be achieved by further strengthening the

adjustments to lot size for parcels with steep topography, similar to the deduction in the R-1R lands along the Hudson River.

### **Preserve Open Space and Improve Recreational and Community Facilities**

The Town has an opportunity to preserve open space while improving recreational and community facilities. Preserving steep slopes and ridgelines, providing access to the Hudson River, the recent successful negotiation of a long term lease for the use of Brooks Park, and addressing issues with the sewer and water infrastructure are all important measures to preserve open space and create additional recreation opportunities.

To preserve open space and environmental features in the Hamlet, residential and commercial development must be limited along Route 9W and along the Hudson River, as well as on ridgelines and steep slopes. While this reduces the buildout capacity of the Hamlet, such measures will maintain the existing environmental quality.



*The Fort Montgomery Marina and the Conrail freight line*

The Town should provide access to the Hudson River through the Fort Montgomery Marina if the property is purchased. Access to the River will provide recreational opportunities for both residents of the Town of Highlands and its visitors. The Town has also negotiated a long term lease with the Palisades Interstate Park Commission for the use of Brooks Park. A long term lease will now allow the Town to expand and upgrade existing services at the park.

Many of the existing community facilities in the Hamlet are in need of improvement. Sewer infrastructure needs to be expanded to reach more residents, allowing development to occur on smaller lots and decrease dependency on septic systems. Due to areas of significant groundwater contamination in close proximity to the Hamlet Center, the Town must seek to address water quantity, quality and supply; this may mean purchasing water from the United State Military Academy at West Point or the Village of Highland Falls, or some form of land conveyance from West Point in order for the Town to find a new water source.

The Conveyance Parcel is 248 acres of land along Route 9W, just to the north of Fort Montgomery, that will be made available by the United States Military Academy at West Point to the Village of Highland Falls for potential development. Given the environmental constraints present on this site, its future use will consist of a significant amount of open space area, including potential trails and passive recreation areas.

## V. LAND USE PLAN

The Land Use Plan (see Exhibit 7) identifies a proposed future development pattern for the Hamlet. The broad land use categories shown in this document are guided by the Goals and Objectives identified by the Town of Highlands Comprehensive Plan Committee and the previously described Conceptual Plan. The land use categories are as follows:

### **Residential**

The *Very Low Density Single-Family Residential* use consists of the largest land area among the land use categories shown on the Plan. The area occupies much of the land along the Hudson River, and much of the elevated terrain in the western portion of the Hamlet. This category permits a density of up to one unit per acre. The intent of this category is to preserve open space, ridgelines and steep slopes.

The *Low Density Residential* use is located only in the northeast portion of the Hamlet, particularly in the area between Route 9W and Old State Road, zoned R-2. While it is recommended that much of this area remain undeveloped, if development occurs, the terrain allows for small scale development patterns, especially in a cluster form. Cluster development would allow the Town to create housing opportunities while preserving open space and environmental features. The permitted density in R-2 zone is approximately two units per acre.

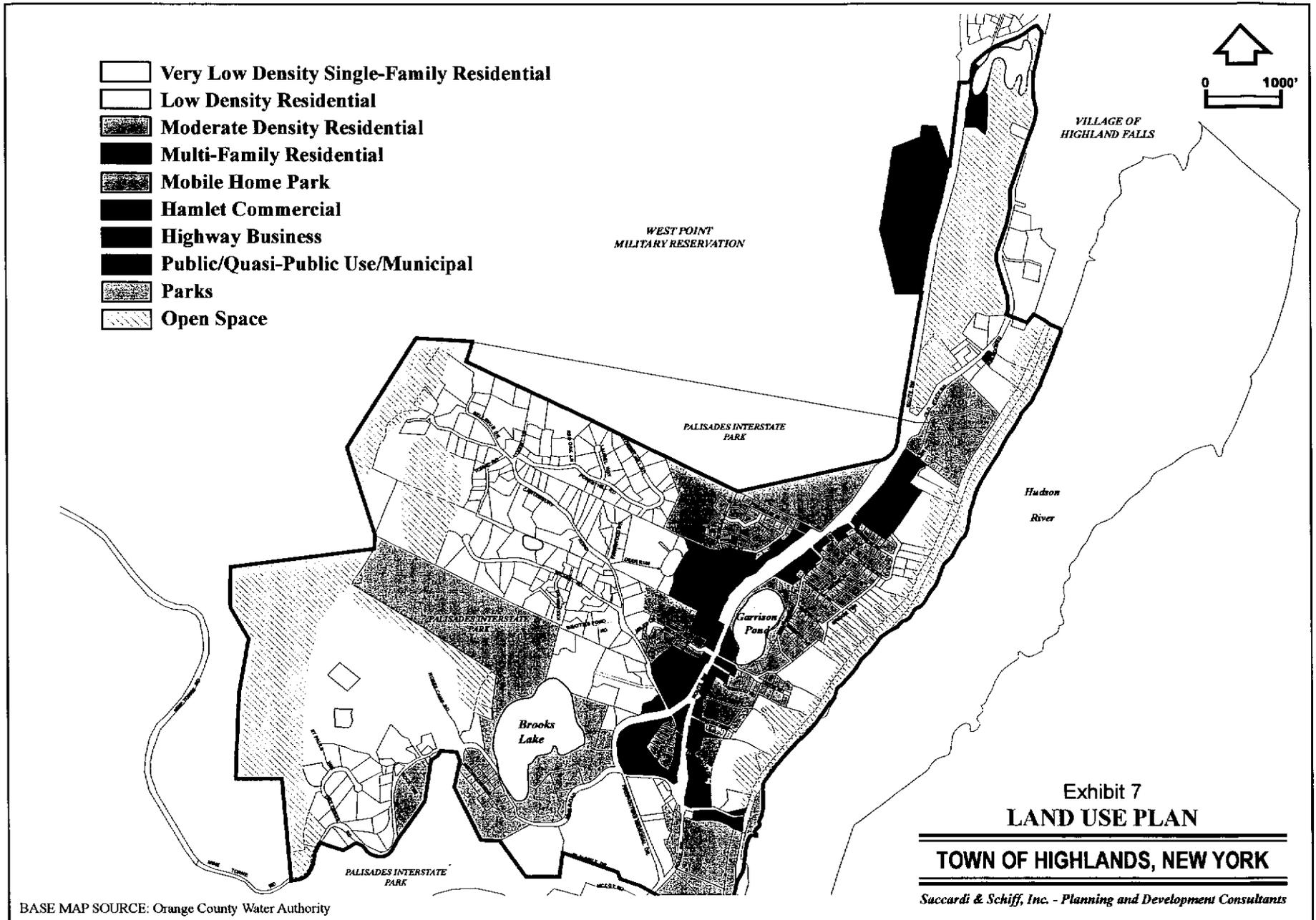
Much of the *Moderate Density Residential* uses are located in the central area of the Hamlet in close proximity to Route 9W, particularly in neighborhoods set back behind commercial uses. Most of this category is located within the Town sewer district. This category generally describes areas that are zoned R-3, which allow about six units per acre, or areas zoned R-4, which allow about nine units per acre (i.e., lots of 7,500 square feet and 5,000 square feet respectively).

The *Multi-Family Residential* use is located in close proximity to the Hamlet Center south of Garrison Pond and north of Mine Dock Road. The one exception is the Corbin Hill Development located further north on the west side of Route 9W in an elevated area. The existing R-5 zoning allows about 17 units per acre in the multi-family category, but it is recommended that the Town amend its zoning for this district to permit 8 units per acre. This reduction in density is not anticipated to adversely impact affordable or workforce housing because it will be offset by new residential opportunities in the proposed Fort Montgomery Hamlet Center district and other zoning map and text changes.

The *Mobile Home Park* category is found in two areas where such residential development already exists; one is located on the east side of Route 9W and Old State Road, where the two roads intersect, the other on Mine Road/Mine Torne Road, west of Brooks Lake. Current zoning regulations allow about 11 units per acre on a site of at least 3.4 acres; or a total lot area of at least 150,000 square feet and a minimum of 4,000 square feet per dwelling unit.

### **Commercial**

A new hamlet business district is proposed for the Fort Montgomery Hamlet Center, generally along Route 9W within close proximity of the Firefighters Memorial Drive intersection, as well as on Firefighters Memorial Drive stretching from Route 9W to just west of Canterbury Road. Existing commercial zoning consists of just one category, the Business District (B). The B zoning district does not differentiate between highway commercial and hamlet commercial. Zoning regulations for the existing B district require a minimum lot area of 15,000 s.f., however, no Floor Area Ratio (FAR) is provided to establish the maximum amount of development per acre of land. It is proposed that the Town create the Fort Montgomery Hamlet



Commercial (FMHC) District to provide revised zoning regulations to this portion of the Town, while keeping a revised version of the B District for highway commercial areas. The FMHC district would allow a minimum lot area of 10,000 s.f. and an FAR of 1.0. Residential units would be permitted above commercial uses in buildings in the Hamlet Center. Table V-1 presents a comparison of the existing and proposed zoning.

**Table V-1**  
Comparison Between Existing and Proposed Zoning  
in the Hamlet Center

Zoning Category	Existing B <sup>1</sup>	Proposed FMHC
Min Lot Area (s.f.)	15,000	10,000
Max. Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	None	1.0
Maximum Lot Coverage	50%	80%

The proposed zoning changes would allow greater density in the Town while reducing the minimum square footage needed for a buildable lot. These amendments to the zoning text will encourage the growth of a pedestrian friendly Hamlet Center, where people can live, shop and work, instead of future auto-oriented larger scale commercial development. See Section VII for the illustrated Hamlet Center plan.

The *Highway Business District* would be located primarily along Route 9W between Garrison Pond to south of Old State Road. It is recommended that the Highway Business district establish an FAR of 0.20, increase the front yard minimum to 40 feet, and require a 10 foot minimum landscaped buffer along all road frontage.

The proposed changes to the zoning code would restrict the size of commercial development by incorporating an FAR requirement and

a larger front yard setback. A landscaped buffer along Route 9W frontage would enhance scenery for those in cars or on sidewalks. Developing and implementing design guidelines would encourage greater building and façade quality, require parking to the rear of buildings, and landscaping. Detailed recommended zoning changes along with design guidelines are presented in subsequent chapters of this report.

**Table V-2**  
Proposed Highway Business Zone Regulations

Zoning Category	Existing B	Proposed B <sup>1</sup>
Min Lot Area (s.f.)	15,000	15,000
Max. Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	None	0.20
Maximum Lot Coverage	50%	25%
Minimum Landscaped Buffer Along Frontage (in feet)	None	10
Front Yard Minimum	30	40

### Public/Quasi-Public Use

The *Public/Quasi-Public Use* category consists of areas scattered around the Town. This category includes uses such as schools, a firehouse, a post office, churches, and other facilities, many of which are important historic resources such as the churches located south of the Route 9W and Firefighters Memorial Drive intersection.

### Parks and Open Space

The Parks category consists of property held by the Palisades Interstate Park Commission (including Brooks Park), the Fort Montgomery Marina, and a vacant parcel located behind the elementary school on Route 9W. The *Open Space* category identifies recommended open space buffers that the Hamlet should create in order to limit future development along the Hudson River and Route 9W, as well as its scenic ridgelines and steep slopes on its western edges.

<sup>8</sup> Proposed changes to the B zone are detailed on p. VI-7.

## VI. RECOMMENDED ZONING TEXT AND MAP CHANGES

### **Zoning Text**

As previously noted, the Zoning Ordinance for the Town of Highlands contains one non-residential zoning district and eight residential districts. The Business District (B) is located along both sides of the entire length of Route 9W through the Hamlet of Fort Montgomery. The residential districts are located to the east and west of this commercial spine, with residential densities generally following land use patterns and environmental constraints, particularly topography and steep slopes.

The Ordinance contains a number of Special Exception uses, which are subject to approval by the Planning Board. The Planning Board also has the authority to review cluster developments and site plans for a number of uses. The Ordinance contains provisions for telecommunication facilities and planned unit developments, two contemporary planning and zoning items. The Zoning Ordinance also includes language that sets forth procedures for the Zoning Board of Appeals in terms of variances and interpretations, and the Town Board for zoning text and map amendments. Other sections in the Ordinance address non-conformity, definitions and parking requirements.

There are several instances where zoning map changes are suggested to provide consistency with the Land Use Plan. These are discussed below and shown on Exhibits 8 and 9.

### ***B-Business District***

A major concern with the current B district is that it extends over one mile in length along Route 9W. With some significant land areas undeveloped and underutilized, the result of development under this zoning could be an extensive highway strip pattern running through

the entire Hamlet. Furthermore, existing land use patterns, particularly near the Canterbury Road, Mine Road and Route 9W intersection suggest the need for different zoning standards in the center of the Hamlet, to contrast with other commercial areas along Route 9W. The Plan recommends that the Zoning Ordinance be amended to provide for two business districts, one for the Hamlet Center and a second for the balance of Route 9W.

Currently, the permitted uses in the B District include: motor vehicle sales, offices, personal service uses, repair shops and retail establishments. In addition to these uses, a broad array of Special Exception uses are permitted subject to Planning Board approval. These Special Exception uses include: residences above stores, religious institutions, libraries, museums, community centers, clubs, animal hospitals, parks, bowling alleys, gas stations, funeral homes, restaurants, taverns, hotels, motels, indoor and outdoor movie theatres, wholesale businesses and certain industrial uses, among others.

The proposed uses permitted in the B district would be retail shops, offices, restaurants, shops for custom work, recreational services, and recreational facilities. Included among the Special Exception uses allowed in the B would be religious uses and other community facilities, hotels and motels, animal hospitals and veterinarians, repair shops, motor vehicle sales, gas stations as well as various other uses, shown in Table VI-1. Residential uses would not be permitted under the proposed zoning text.

Within the proposed Fort Montgomery Hamlet Center District, retail, restaurant, office, personal service and similar uses would be permitted with regulations designed to make this a pedestrian-friendly hamlet center. Certain residential uses, such as apartments above stores and senior housing would be Special Exception uses. Existing homes

**Table VI-1  
Proposed Business District Uses Regulations**

Residential Uses	FMHC District	B District
Dwelling Uses above first Floor Commercial Uses	SE	X
Senior Housing	SE	X
<b>COMMUNITY FACILITIES</b>		
Place of Worship	P	SE
Nursery School	P	SE
Recreation Facilities	P	P
Library, Museum, Community Centers	P	SE
Schools	SE	SE
Membership Clubs	SE	SE
Fraternal Organization	SE	SE
Utilities	X	SE
<b>BUSINESS USES</b>		
Animal Hospital	X	SE
Auto Laundry	X	SE
Bank	P	SE
Bowling Alley	X	SE
Eatery Establishment, Drive Thru	X	SE
Filling Station	X	SE
Funeral Home	X	SE
Green House	X	SE
Hotel	SE	SE
Motel	X	SE
Motor Vehicle Sales	X	SE
Office	P	P
Parking Garage	SE	SE
Recreational Service	P	P
Radio/TV	X	SE
Repair Garage, Shop	X	SE
Restaurant	P	P
Retail Shop	P	P
Shop for custom work	SE	P
Tavern	SE	SE
Theatre (not drive-in)	X	SE
Veterinarian	X	SE
Vocational School	X	SE
Wholesale Business	X	SE
<b>INDUSTRIAL USES</b>		
Non-nuisance Industry	X	SE
Printing or Publicly	X	SE
Research	X	SE

P = Permitted Uses  
SE = Special Exception Uses  
X = Prohibited Uses

such as those on Route 9W and Firefighters Memorial Drive in close proximity to the Hamlet Center would be permitted uses as part of the mixed-use pattern of development essential to a viable hamlet center.

Community facilities, such as places of religious worship, museums, postal facilities and other governmental offices, would also be Special Exception uses. Some of these same uses, such as retail, restaurants, and offices would also be permitted in the Highway Commercial (B) District, along with a variety of other commercial uses by Special Exception permit. Additional regulations would be provided for auto-related uses.

The dimensional regulations for development in the current B zone need to be revised to meet the objectives of the two business districts suggested herein. The current B zoning district requires a minimum lot area of 15,000 square feet. Building height is limited to 35 feet; maximum coverage is 50 percent. There is currently no Floor Area Ratio (FAR) requirement to establish the maximum amount of total development. Proposed lot and bulk controls are shown in Table VI-2. If utilized, the Floor Area Ratio requirement would establish the maximum amount of development per lot. For example, at an FAR of 0.20, a one-acre lot would be limited to approximately 9,000 s.f. of commercial development. The 9,000 s.f. would be the maximum square footage with either a one, two or three story building; the taller the building, the lesser the amount of building coverage.

**Table VI-2  
Existing and Proposed Business District Dimensional Regulations**

	Existing B District	FMHC District*	Proposed B District
Min Lot Area	15,000 s.f.	10,000 s.f.	15,000 s.f.
Max Coverage	50%	50%	25%*
Maximum Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	None Required	1.0	0.20*
Min Lot Width	50 ft	50 ft	50 ft
Maximum Height	35 ft	35 ft	35ft
Min Yards			
Front	30	None Required	40 ft*
One Side	20	None Required	30 ft
Both Sides	40	10 ft	40 ft
Side Corner	20	10 ft	20 ft
Rear	30	20 ft	30 ft
Minimum Landscaped Buffer along frontage	None Required	None Required	10 ft*

\* New or modified requirements

This plan recommends an FAR maximum of 0.20 in the B district and 1.0 in the FMHC district. The proposed 0.20 FAR in the B district would also be consistent with the amount of parking typically needed for highway commercial development. The Zoning Ordinance has some parking ratios with appropriate parking standards (i.e., 1:200 s.f for commercial) but others that are too high (i.e., 1:150 s.f for office development). Parking is currently permitted in all required yards throughout the B District, including the front yard. While parking in the front yard and highway commercial use is typical, the plan recommends a 10 to 20 foot setback with a grass separator strip in between the parking and the sidewalk for aesthetics and traffic control. Parking in the front yard should be avoided wherever possible along Route 9W and should be precluded in front yards for new development in the heart of the Hamlet Center. As such, in addition to updating the parking ratios in the B zone, design requirements for off-street parking need to be expanded to require landscaped treatment and buffers areas, particularly along the edges of parking lots along Route 9W. Landscaped islands within large parking lots should also be required.

The parking ratios in the FMHC district should vary significantly from standards in the B district. Ratios should be lower with common parking and shared parking encouraged to promote a more pedestrian friendly environment.

Parking for residential uses is less of a zoning issue in the Hamlet; however, it would be desirable to adjust the current 1.5 spaces per multiple dwelling unit to a ratio that varies based upon the number of bedrooms per unit (e.g., 1.0 for studios, 1.5 for one and two bedroom units and 2.0 for three or more bedrooms), plus a certain percentage for visitor parking. Also, a separate parking ratio for senior housing should be considered, in addition to the nursing home requirement already provided in the Town zoning.

### ***Residential Districts***

Although there are eight residential zoning districts listed in the zoning text, only seven appear on the Town's Zoning Map. (The unmapped R-6 Apartment Motel-Residence District should be deleted from the Ordinance.) Most of the community is zoned for relatively low densities in the following three districts:

- R-1 Mountain Residence
- R-1R Riverside Residence
- R-2 Single Family Residence

The R-1 district encompasses nearly all of the Canterbury Road and Mine Road areas west of Route 9W in Fort Montgomery. The minimum lot area in the R-1 district is 30,000 s.f. (lots with public sewer) to 40,000 s.f. (lots without public sewer). However, lots without sewers and with some steep topography, at 11 to 20 percent natural grade, must have a minimum lot area of 60,000 s.f. Lots with additional steep terrain - over 20 percent natural grade - must have a minimum lot area of 80,000 s.f. Similarly, the maximum lot coverage varies with the maximum lot size (15, 20 and 25 percent). Building coverage on a 40,000 s.f. lot is 25 percent, which is quite high, permitting a 10,000 s.f. footprint and a 20,000+ s.f. house. On a 60,000 s.f. lot, the coverage is 20 percent (12,000 s.f. footprint and 24,000+ s.f. house). On an 80,000 s.f. lot, the maximum coverage is 15 percent (12,000 s.f. footprint and 24,000+ s.f. house). Clearly, this zoning allows very large single-family homes in the R-1 district, which could overwhelm adjacent properties and affect the visual environment.

The development potential in the Canterbury Road area is limited due to its environmental constraints and lack of public sewers. Access is also restricted since Canterbury Road is a long, dead end. A further reduction in density or an increase in the adjustments

for environmentally constrained lots was suggested during the comprehensive planning process. When the Town updates the Zoning Ordinance, such changes should be considered in addition to the restriction of maximum house sizes.

The R-1-R district is a variation of the R-1 district for lands along the Hudson River, where the minimum lot area is 40,000 s.f. for lots without public sewers, and 20,000 s.f. for lots with sewers. This district also contains lot area deductions for steep terrain (50 percent for 25-35 percent slopes; 25 percent for lots with slopes of 35 percent or greater; and 25 percent for wetlands and flood hazard areas). The maximum lot coverage in the R-1-R is 10 percent, resulting in a maximum footprint of 4,000 s.f. and an 8,000+ s.f. house.

The R-2 district has a minimum lot area of 20,000 s.f. This district is located between Route 9W and Old State Road, just south of the Village of Highland Falls, and also includes the high school property. The R-2 does not have a sliding scale for lot area or coverage relative to the slope of the terrain like the R-1 or deductions for environmental features like the R-1-R.

To be consistent, a similar resource protection formula should be added to the R-2 district, recognizing that this large area does have environmental constraints, which should be addressed as part of any future development of the area. The maximum coverage for all R-2 lots is 20 percent. On a 20,000 s.f. lot, a house with a 4,000 s.f. footprint would be permitted in the R-2. Again, this could be an 8,000+ s.f. house.

The Town should add a residential floor area ratio requirement to the Zoning Ordinance, particularly for the R-1 Districts so that extremely large single family homes would not be permitted on steep terrain in Fort Montgomery, where erosion control, grading and aesthetics are concerns. An FAR of 0.15, for example, would permit an 6,000 s.f. home on a 40,000 s.f. lot.

- **R-3, R-4, R-5 and R-MHC (Mobile Home Court)**

The R-3, R-4 and R-5 districts permit greater densities and additional residential use-types in the built-up portions of Fort Montgomery. The residential neighborhood east of Garrison Pond is zoned R-3. In this district, single-family homes are permitted on 7,500 s.f. lots. Lot coverage is 30 percent. The R-4 district, which exists to the west of Route 9W, north of Cherry Street and along Brooks Lane, allows single and two family homes with a minimum lot area of 5,000 s.f. for single family and 6,000 s.f. for two family dwellings, both with a maximum lot coverage of 35 percent. In the R-5 Apartment Residence District, which is present in three locations to the west of Route 9W, multi-family development is allowed at 17.4 dwelling units per acre. The maximum building height, formally at 70 feet was recently reduced to 45 feet. Multi-family development is subject to Special Exception Permit approval.

The maximum density in the R-5 should distinguish between townhouse development and apartment style housing. Presently it does not. Both densities should be reduced from the current 17.4 dwelling unit per acre. A townhouse density of 8 dwelling units per acre and a multi-family development density of 12 units per acre are recommended.

Additional areas for potential multi-family development are adjacent to the Hamlet Center. Given the concept of providing a walkable center in this location, townhomes or multifamily housing, perhaps for seniors, would be desirable. The R-MHC (Mobile Home Court) District permits mobile homes and is mapped in two locations in the Town. Mobile home courts are not permitted in any other district. The mobile homes provide an affordable alternative to traditional single family housing in the Town of Highlands.

Planned Residential Developments (PRD), which allow the clustering of residential development as single family, townhomes or multi-family housing, is subject to a Special Exception Permit in the R-2,

R-3, R-4, R-5 and R-1-R Districts. PRDs are not permitted in the R-1.

The PRD is a Special Exception use that allows mixed residential developments including one family, two family or multi-family developments at the following densities:

- R-2: 2.4 dwelling units (du.)/acre
- R-3: 5.7 du/acre
- R-4: 8 du/acre
- R-5: 10 du/acre

R-1-R: 1.3 du/acre (with sewers), slope and environmental deductions do not apply.

Note that these densities are slightly higher than the density otherwise permitted in each of these zoning districts; except the R-5 District. Most other lot and bulk controls would be determined by the Planning Board based on the review of an overall development plan. Although potentially an excellent development tool, the plan submission requirements and the review and approval process for PRD developments need to be strengthened.

Absent from the existing Town zoning are regulations dealing with adult uses, affordable housing and senior housing of various types, including active adult (55 and over), independent living, senior housing with services, assisted living and continuing care retirement communities. The current regulations combine homes for the aged and senior housing together as one Special Exception use. Beyond that confusion, neither use is listed on the Table of Use Regulations. New regulations should be adopted for senior housing.

Affordable/workforce housing could be incorporated into the PRD Zoning in the Town of Highlands. The PRD regulations provide for a modest increase in density above that otherwise permitted in the given Zoning District. Approval for a PRD could be conditioned on

the sale or rental of half of these bonus units as below market housing that would meet the needs of volunteers, municipal workers, school district employees and young people looking for a starter home in the community. Incentive could also be included for quality design in the B zone, height in the FMHC zone.

### **Zoning Map Changes**

To fully implement the proposed land use changes described in the previous chapter, the Town Zoning map would be revised. Although the map remains largely unchanged from the original, a few important changes are recommended herein:

#### ***Decreased Density***

- **R-5 to R-4**

This decrease in density occurs in the center of the Hamlet along St. Mark's Place, where there is an existing neighborhood of single-family homes. Maintaining the R-5 density in this area could disturb the stability of the existing housing stock.

- **R-5 to R-3**

The area proposed to be rezoned from R-5 to R-3 is on the west side of Poplar Street. Rezoning this area R-3 would allow future development to conform to the adjacent stable single family neighborhood to the east.

- **R-5 to R-1**

This zoning change is limited to one parcel located on the west side of Route 9W, directly across from the entrance to Garrison Road. This parcel is currently held by the Palisades Interstate Park. While no development is likely to occur on this parcel, if it were to become available for future development, R-1 zoning would greatly restrict the possible use and encourage that at least part of the property remain as open space.



- **R-MHC to R-1R**

The decrease in density in this area is largely to address further expansion of the existing Mobile Home Court on the east side of the railroad tracks. While development is unlikely due to the proximity of passing trains, this would allow the Town to implement a continuous open space buffer along the Hudson River.

### *Increased Density*

- **B to the proposed Fort Montgomery Hamlet Center District (FMHC)**

The increased density in this area is a result of rezoning the Hamlet Center from the existing B district to the proposed Fort Montgomery Hamlet Center (FMHC) zoning district. The existing B district does not allow mixed-use and senior residential development, while the FMHC would. This rezoning would allow development as proposed in the Hamlet Design Plan and prevent strip commercial development in the area of the existing Hamlet Center.

- **R-1 to R-3**

This zoning change occurs in two places. The most important is proposed adjacent to the previously described decrease in density of R-5 to R-3, along Poplar Street. Rezoning this area to R-3 would allow the extension of the residential neighborhood to the east, further strengthening the existing fabric of the neighborhood.

The second place this rezoning occurs is along Mine Road in close proximity to Brooks Lake, largely due to a need for zoning to match the existing use. While this area is presently zoned R-1, which requires 40,000 square feet per building lot, many of the present homes in the existing neighborhoods are built on lots of much smaller size. The zoning adjustment would allow a homeowner to avoid future issues of non-conformity.

- **R-1R to R-3**

This zoning change occurs east of Route 9W, off both Oakwood Road and Theresia Way. The zoning change would allow the existing residential neighborhood to the north to expand. Increased residential development in this area would also provide a larger population to support current and future shops and restaurants in the Hamlet Center.

### *Commercial to Residential*

- **B to R-5**

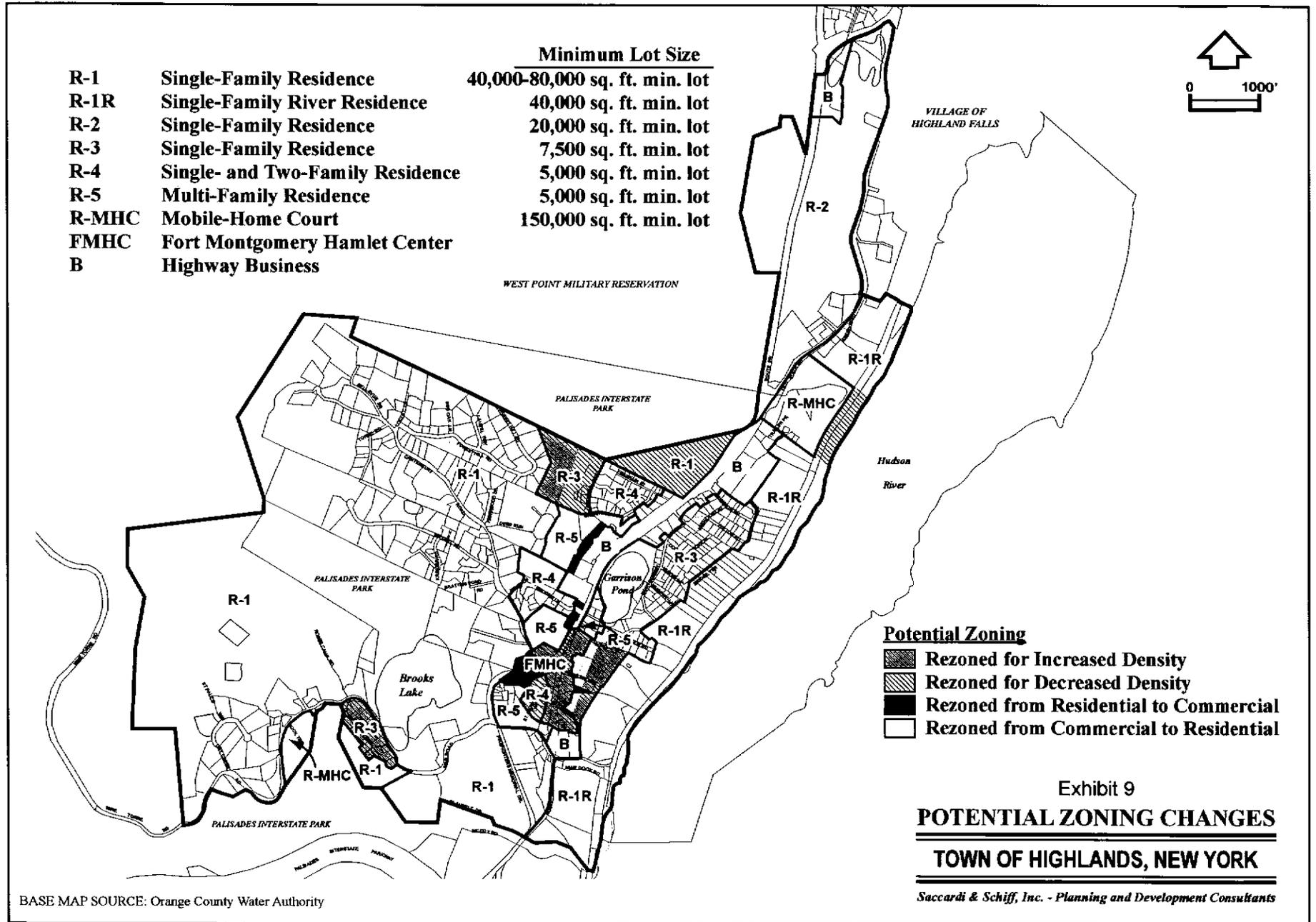
This zoning change would apply to an area adjacent to and south of Garrison Pond along Route 9W. The existing uses are both multi-family and commercial. Rezoning this area to the R-5 district would encourage further multi-family development as well as improve the aesthetics of the pond and surrounding uses. New development and redevelopment would improve the scenery along Route 9W as well as become more attractive for future recreational uses.

- **B to R-3**

This zoning change is recommended in two general areas. The first area is to the east of Route 9W off of Oakwood Road and Theresia Way. The other area is further north, east of Route 9W, off of Montgomery Road and Highland Avenue. This recommended change from a B to an R-3 district allows future residential uses to conform to the adjacent residential neighborhoods and will also provide room for expansion of existing neighborhoods.

- **B to R-4**

The change from commercial to residential zoning applies to two parcels off the west side of Route 9W on Cherry Street. The two lots are presently residential, conforming to the adjacent and surrounding residential uses. This zoning change will restrict development of commercial activities within the existing residential neighborhood.



### ***Residential to Commercial***

- **R-1R to FMHC**

This zoning change addresses a single parcel in the Hamlet of Fort Montgomery just south of Theresia Way on the east side of Route 9W. Incorporation of this parcel into the proposed FMHC district would allow greater flexibility and encourage future use to strengthen the entrance to the Hamlet.

- **R-4 to B**

This zoning change is limited to two parcels with frontage on the west side of Route 9W. Both parcels are at the intersection of Route 9W and Brooks Lane; one parcel sits to the north of Brooks Lane, the other to the south. This zoning change would strengthen commercial uses along the corridor that are both adjacent to and nearby the two parcels. (See also Route 9W Corridor Plan in Chapter VII)

- **R-5 to FMHC**

The area proposed to change from residential to hamlet commercial is located along Firefighters Memorial Drive, adjacent to and west of Canterbury Road. Much of this area is studied in the Hamlet Design Plan (see Chapter VII). Development and redevelopment of the properties in this area would strengthen both the commercial and residential elements of the Hamlet.

- **R-5 to B**

This proposed zoning change is located in two areas. The first is on the south side of the existing Fort Montgomery Fire Department on Route 9W. In this first area, the zoning should be changed so that in the unlikely event that the Fire Department were to move, the land use would conform to the nearby commercial uses. The second area proposed to be rezoned to B is just to the north of the Fire Station, across from Garrison Pond. The area consists of two parcels that were divided by the existing zoning. The proposed zoning would allow the proposed shopping center to be on a fully conforming lot.<sup>9</sup>

Prior to adopting some or all of the above zoning changes, the Town would need to further study specific boundaries, ownership and potential issues such as the creation of non-conformity. This could be undertaken as part of the environmental review process that would precede such changes.

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<sup>9</sup> The northern lot is currently zoned R-5 and B. Though the Town has approved the construction of a shopping center at this location, construction has not yet started.

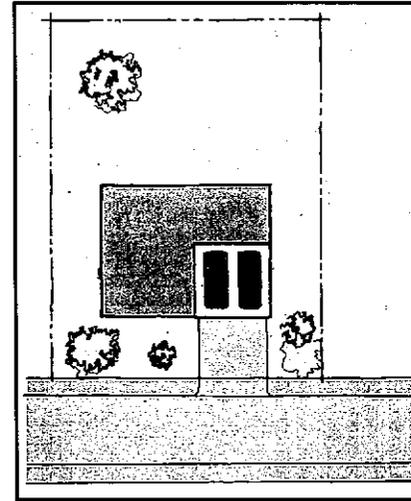
## VII. COMMUNITY DESIGN AND APPEARANCE

The Town of Highlands should adopt design guidelines that the Planning Board can utilize in its efforts to ensure that residential and commercial development properly address the natural and made environments. These guidelines should include the following principles:

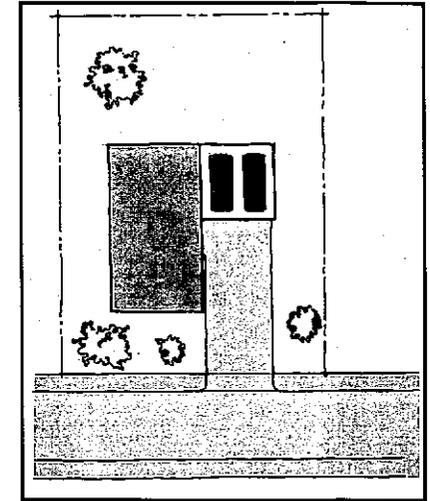
### Proposed Design Guidelines

#### *Suggested Single-Family Residential Design Principles*

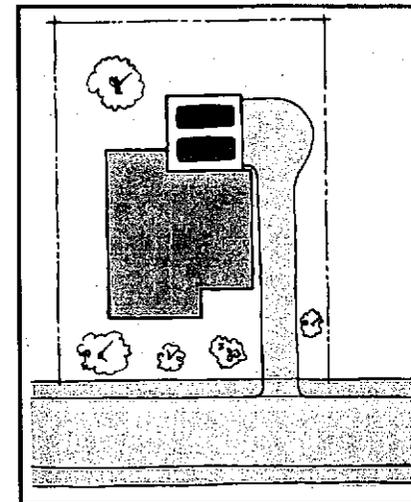
- Preserve on-site vegetation as much as practical to protect the natural environment; clear cutting should be strictly avoided.
- Minimize grading to protect the existing characteristics of the site; when grading is necessary, create smooth contours instead of sharp cuts and fills; avoid construction on steep slopes (greater than 20%) and/or on soils with poor soil bearing capacity.
- Maintain adequate setbacks for buildings on ridgelines, and provide a landscape buffer within the inner boundary of the setback to blend with the surrounding natural environment (Exhibit 10).
- Create variety in site design within a framework of streets that prevent monotonous appearance; in low density areas, like Canterbury Road, vary setbacks and lot widths to create different pockets of visible open space; in higher density areas such as the neighborhoods adjacent to Route 9W, maintain even setbacks and lot widths to create a stronger sense of place.
- Wherever possible, eliminate garages facing the street; when unavoidable, garages should be recessed approximately ten feet from the front facade of the house.
- Utilize traditional building materials such as fieldstone, brick, wood, or stucco (not synthetic) for facade treatment, avoid



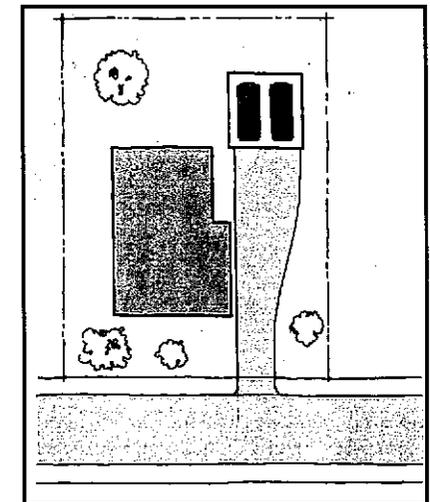
*Garage placed at front of house facing street (undesirable).*



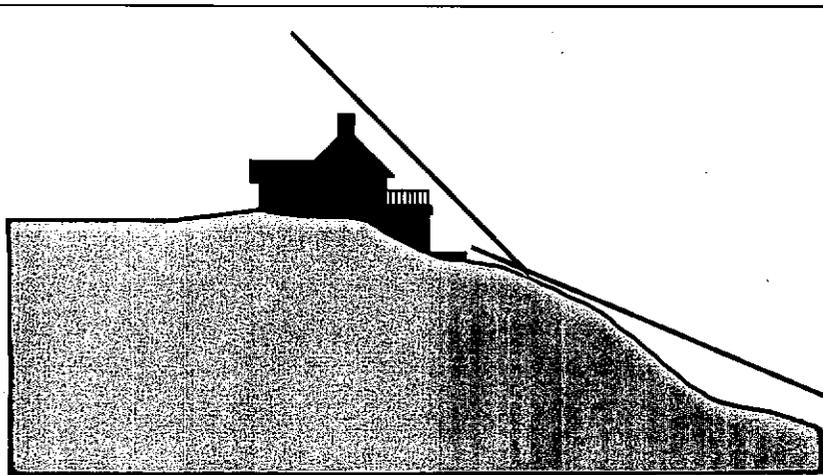
*Garage set back, away from street.*



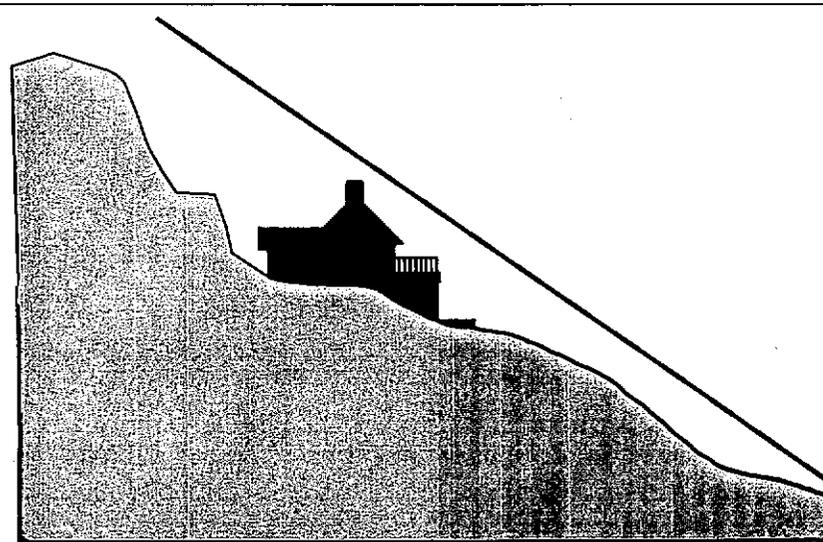
*Garage placed in rear of house, removed from street.*



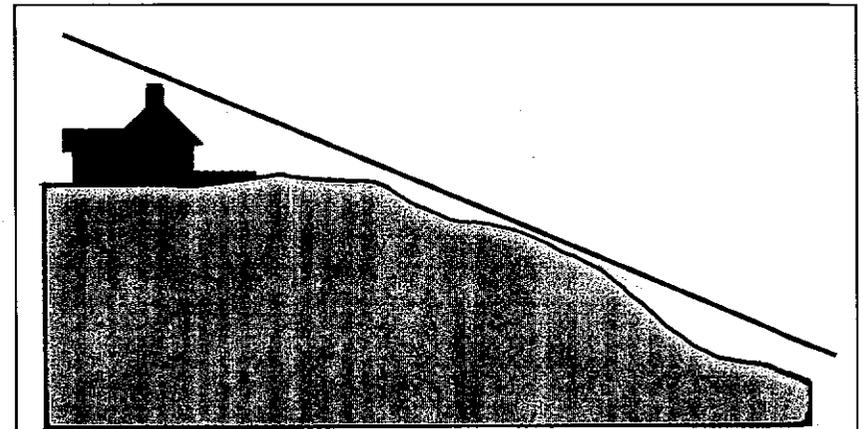
*Garage detached, away from street.*



*Buildings placed on or adjacent to steep slopes disrupt ridgelines. (Undesirable solution).*



*Buildings placed below ridgelines help protect steep slopes and views. (Better solution).*



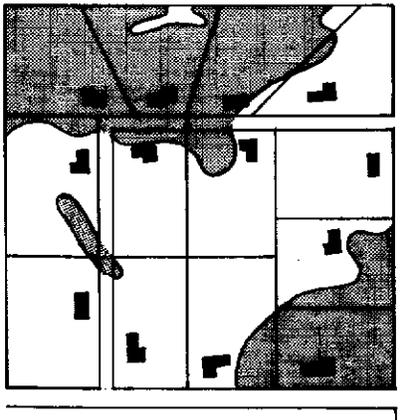
*Buildings placed back from steep slopes can completely preserve ridgelines and views. (Preferable solution).*

Exhibit 10  
**RIDGELINE AND VIEWSHED  
PRESERVATION TECHNIQUES**  
**TOWN OF HIGHLANDS, NEW YORK**

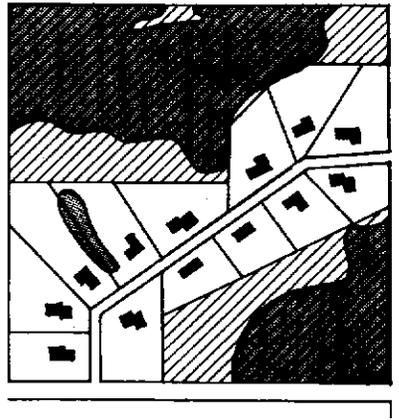
*Saccardi & Schiff, Inc. - Planning and Development Consultants*

excessive usage of glass; clearly define the main entrance to the house with the help of porches, steps or porticos.

- Avoid long uninterrupted walls on the front elevation: instead include wall offsets, projections and/or changes in floor levels to create architectural variety.
- Use colors that blend with the surrounding natural environment.
- Orient buildings to maximize views for occupants and preserve privacy while minimizing the visual impact of the building on existing viewsheds. It should be recognized when reviewing new development proposals that the Town is included in the Hudson Highlands section of the Scenic Areas of Statewide Significance (SASS).
- Provide landscaping that blends with the surrounding environment.
- Encourage cluster development to preserve open space and create housing opportunities; locate buildings away from environmentally sensitive areas, such as wetlands, waterbodies, poor soils, steep slopes, and wildlife habitat areas.



*A conventional subdivision does not conserve environmentally sensitive lands.*



*A cluster subdivision layout protects environmentally sensitive land and preserves open space.*

### ***Suggested Multi-Family Design Principles***

- Provide safe effective pedestrian and vehicular circulation patterns within multifamily developments; provide pedestrian walkways.
- Provide adequate on-site parking to meet resident and visitor demands and avoids negative impacts on the adjacent uses.
- Avoid box-like buildings through the provision of building offsets, projections, balconies and setbacks.
- Minimize impact on surrounding properties; use green buffers or parking areas with buffers to separate hard-scope from adjacent properties

### ***Suggested Commercial Area Design Principles***

- Minimize the impact of commercial properties upon surrounding residential properties.
- Minimize the number of curb cuts; entrance and exits should be carefully designed so that they do not disturb the traffic movement.
- Wherever practical, connect adjacent commercial establishments and surrounding neighborhoods through the provision of paved sidewalks.
- Discourage parking areas in front of the buildings that have a negative impact on the streetscape. Instead, place parking to the side or rear yards of building. Use landscaped buffers (minimum 10 feet wide) or natural stone walls between highway/roadway frontages and buildings/parking areas and adjacent properties.
- When larger parking areas are used, place landscaped islands at regular intervals within the parking lots to soften visual impact.
- Locate service, mechanical-utilities, storage, and garbage disposal areas away from direct public view and screen them effectively through landscaping and/or walls or fences.



*Lack of landscaping and curbcuts pose a safety hazard to both drivers and pedestrians, and also provide an unattractive streetscape.*



*Proper landscaping and design treatment can provide a safer and more attractive atmosphere for existing highway development setback from the road.*

- Drive-through lanes should be located in a manner that traffic does not disturb the movement of pedestrians.
- Automobile-oriented establishments, such as gas stations, drugstores and banks with drive-thru windows, should orient the building closer to the road and locate automobile-related activities to the side or rear of the building.
- Outdoor sales and display areas, such as firewood displays, ATMs, vending machines, news racks, amusements, and seasonal sales, should be integrated with the overall site design.
- Store windows, display units, canopies, awnings, sidewalks, benches, outdoor dining areas, and signage should face the street so as to create an engaging visual environment.
- Utilize traditional building materials such as fieldstone, brick, wood, or stucco (not synthetic) for facade treatment. Use colors that blend with the surrounding natural environment and surrounding traditional buildings. Avoid the use of high intensity colors and/or metallic or fluorescent colors.
- Pedestrian scale lighting should be used wherever appropriate, and should not exceed 15 feet in height. Ideally, lighting should be similar from one development to the next, especially in the hamlet area.
- Wood carved and/or sandblasted, raised letter signs are preferable for their historical look and image; Lighting should be low-level and minimize glare—backlit and light-box signage are undesirable; marquee signs listing multiple tenants of a commercial establishment should be avoided
- At the hamlet's gateway, utilize signage, landscaping at building orientation to provide community identity, emphasizing the historic character of the area.

### Route 9W Corridor Plan

The Route 9W Corridor Plan illustrates how the suggested guidelines can be utilized as part of site plan review and approval. The area described in this plan begins just to the south of the intersection of Route 9W and Old State Road and ends at Brooks Lane. (See Exhibit 12, Route 9W Corridor Plan).

The three major design issues that should be discouraged in the Hamlet are: (1) inconsistent signage; (2) lack of landscaping; and (3) parking in the front yard of commercial properties with uncontrolled access to Route 9W.

#### *Signage*

Many commercial properties along Route 9W feature oversaturation of and inconsistencies in signage, which can be observed in Exhibit 11. This plan recommends better control of the size, placement, and number of signs to improve the visual aesthetics of commercial properties. Lighting for commercial signs should be at low levels, and the Town should discourage marquee signage and backlit light-box signage, both of which tend to cater to larger scale, high speed roadways. Large billboard signs should be eliminated, and a new signage program should be developed not only for commercial properties, but also for directional signage leading visitors to historic attractions and major destinations. Signage displayed at auto-related uses should be carefully considered. Banners, flags and other outdoor displays should be prohibited wherever possible.

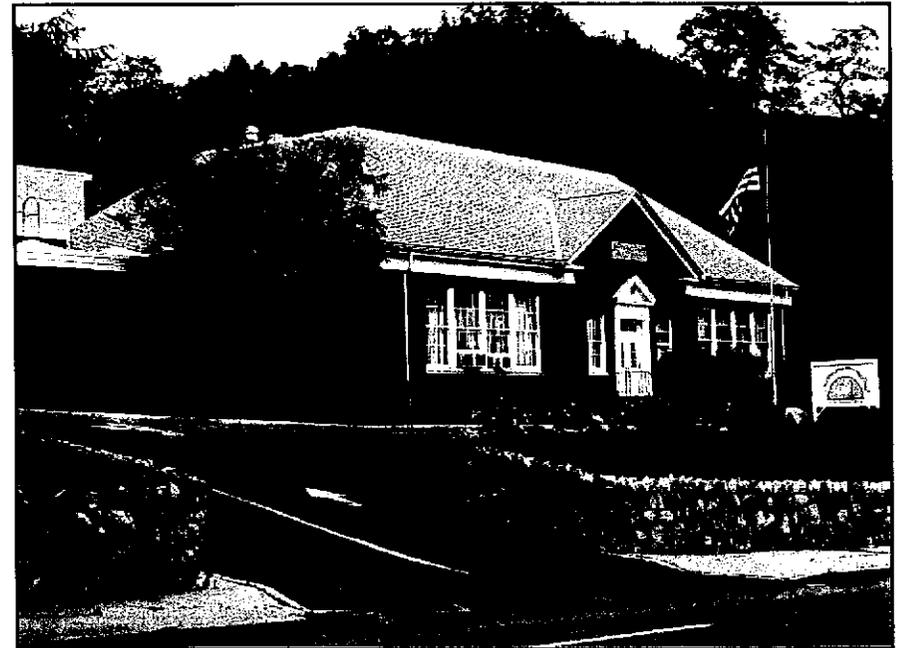
#### *Landscaping*

The lack of landscaping on many properties is evident in Exhibit 11. Properties devoid of landscaping create unappealing scenery to those passing by along Route 9W. Landscaping adds more life to a streetscape, creates a barrier from the road for those walking in and out of businesses, and also conceals parking. In addition, landscaping

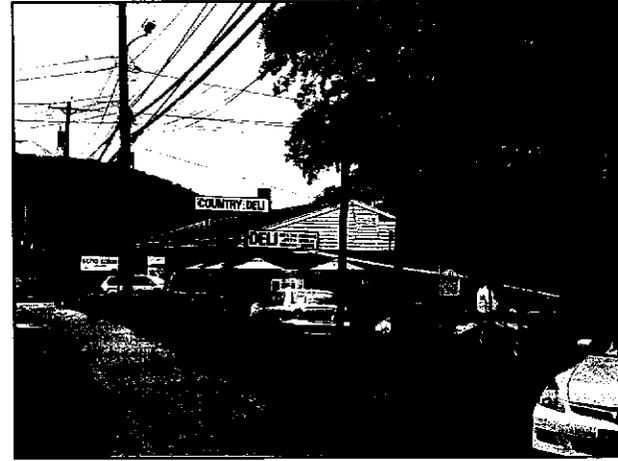
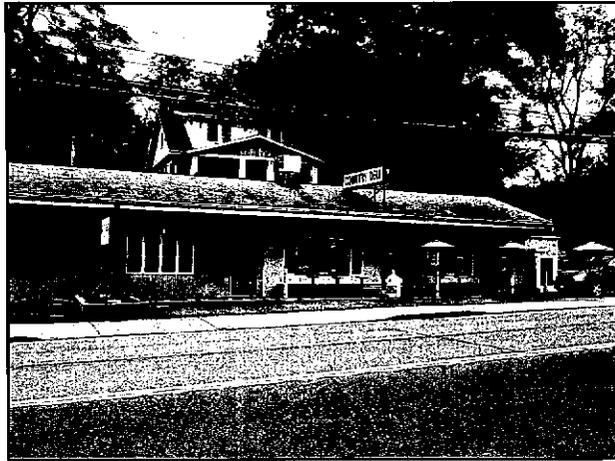
helps to buffer and soften the visual impacts of commercial uses from neighboring residential uses and gives neighborhoods protection from noise, lighting and other issues.

#### *Parking*

The location of parking is also important to the corridor plan. Wherever possible, parking should be located to the rear of buildings to strengthen pedestrian and street activity; parking offered at the front of commercial properties often does not offer proper pedestrian connections from the sidewalk to the buildings, and paved surfaces provided in front of new development is often unattractive. Where front yard parking is unavoidable, the Town should encourage landscaped separation strips and the division of larger parking lots into multiple smaller lots that will not appear as overwhelming.



*The Fort Montgomery Elementary School demonstrates site design the Town should encourage: rear parking, landscaped site frontage and proper signage.*



Existing Commercial Uses

*The photographs above exemplify site design that the Town should discourage: inconsistent signage, no landscaping and parking in the front.*

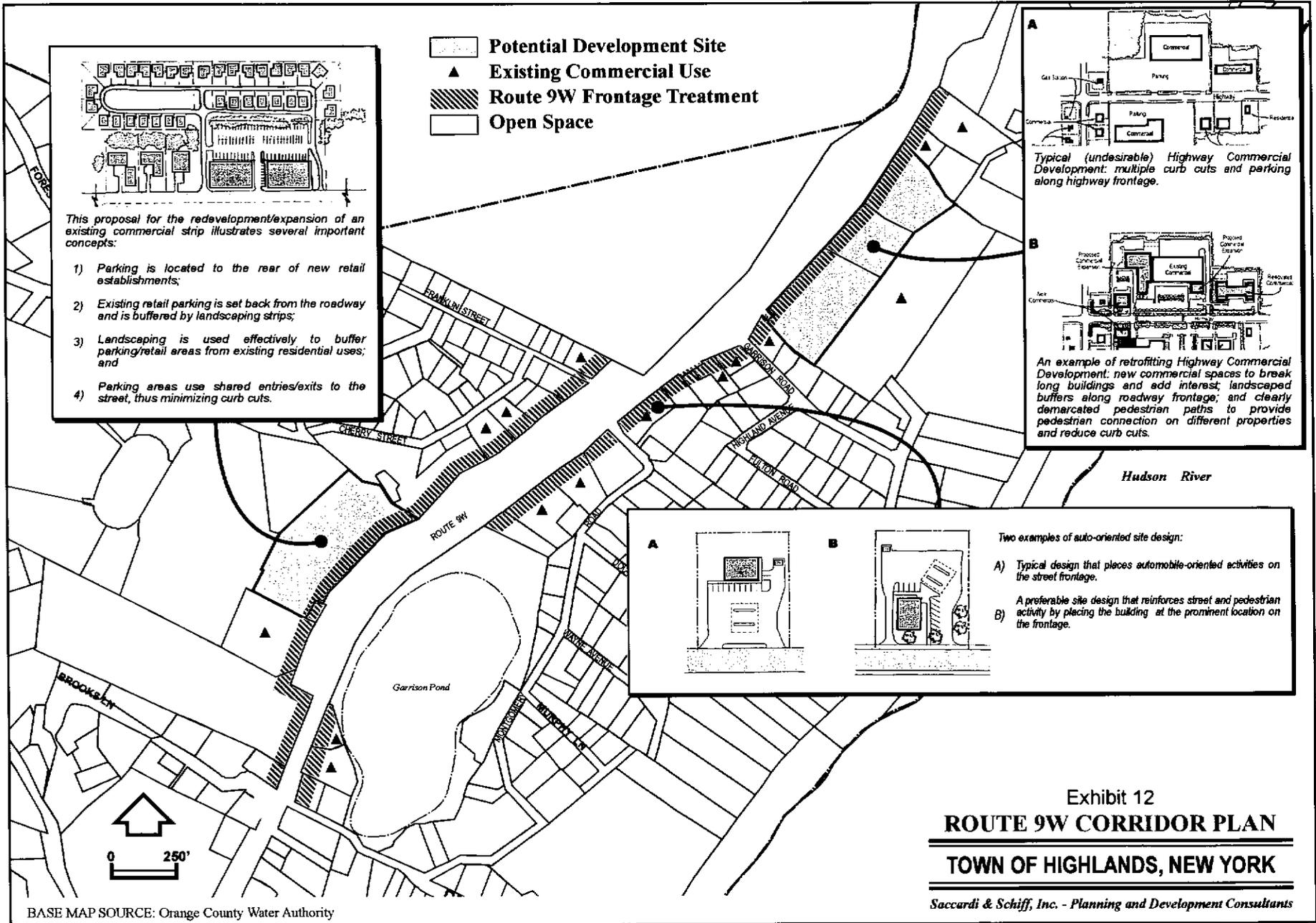
Exhibit 11

ROUTE 9W

EXISTING CONDITIONS

TOWN OF HIGHLANDS, NEW YORK

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The Town can use design solutions like those at the elementary school as a model for future site design along Route 9W. While many of the commercial uses on Route 9W may remain auto-oriented, implementing the design concepts presented herein would encourage a more pedestrian friendly corridor.

Traffic safety on Route 9W should be also be addressed further with the New York State Department of Transportation (DOT). The Town should propose a reduction in vehicular speed limits, provision of signalization and turning lanes and other measures along Route 9W.

### **Hamlet Design Concept**

The Town of Highlands has an opportunity to create a Hamlet Center that could offer the same services and draw elements from many of the successful hamlets in the Hudson Valley. The Post Office and Brooks Park, located within the existing Hamlet Center, are significant amenities used in everyday life that would form the basis for a charming and practical community.

This design concept presents a graphic vision of what this Hamlet Center could become, based on three design parameters:

#### ***Creation of an identifiable gateway to promote and preserve hamlet identity for people entering the Hamlet Center***

As shown in Exhibit 13, a defined gateway is achieved through the enhancement of the roadway and pedestrian environment leading into and within the Hamlet Center. Design features include: landscape and sidewalk improvements and a potential roundabout at the intersection of Firefighters Memorial Drive and Canterbury Road/St. Marks Place.

At the intersection of Firefighters Memorial Drive and Route 9W, the existing restaurant and the convenience store are proposed to

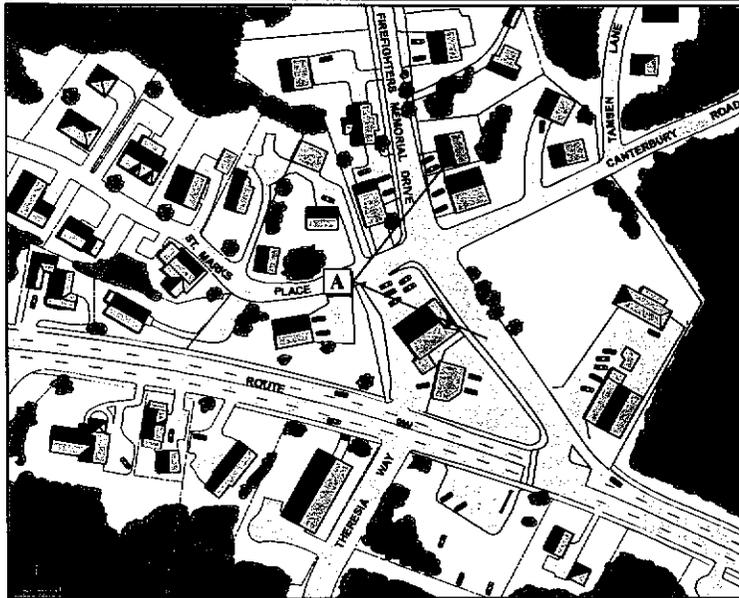
remain but with enhancements. Improvements to the restaurant could include improved vehicular and pedestrian access and a new outdoor dining patio that faces the proposed hamlet green. The convenience store could be remodeled and reoriented and its grounds improved through landscaping. This would be especially important at the rear of the building, which lies directly in the line of sight to drivers and pedestrians approaching the Hamlet from the south on Route 9W.

Finally, the hamlet gateway could be further improved by developing the site located on the east side of Route 9W at the apex of the intersection with Firefighters Memorial Drive. This property is currently used as an ad-hoc sales yard for used cars and is occupied by a large billboard, which is not an ideal welcome to the Hamlet Center. As shown in Exhibit 13, this property could be developed with a small roadside retail building or restaurant with parking in the rear.

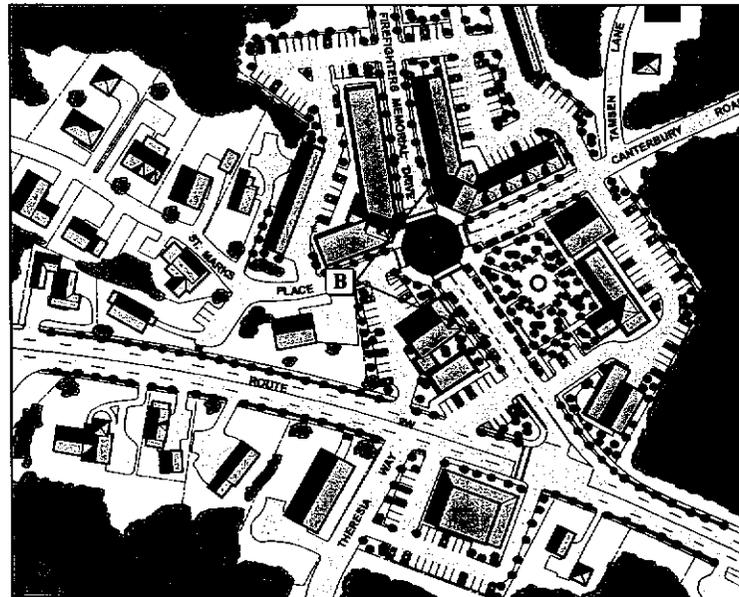
#### ***Creation of a safe, effective, and visually appealing pedestrian circulation system to ensure pedestrian safety and enhance pedestrian interest in the streetscape***

As shown in Exhibit 13, a new pedestrian oriented center is created with the placement of buildings, landscaping and pathways, and through the buildings' relationship to the street. The proposed buildings that front the south side of Canterbury Road and St. Mark's Place and both sides of Firefighters Memorial Drive south of these two streets would not be set back from the road. Rather, they would address the street directly to allow for retail or commercial activities to occur at the street level and provide access to proposed senior residential uses above.

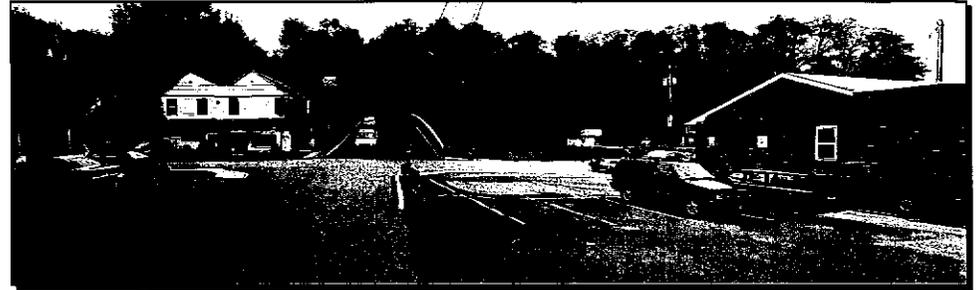
While the majority of parking is located to the rear, on-street parking is still encouraged. The hamlet green and all sidewalks in the Hamlet Center are landscaped with trees and grass to provide a pleasant and interesting pedestrian experience. The street surface surrounding the



Existing conditions of the Fort Montgomery Hamlet Center.



Proposed Hamlet Design Concept for the Fort Montgomery Hamlet Center.



A Existing conditions at the intersection of St. Marks Place and Firefighters Memorial Drive.



B Proposed Hamlet Design Concept streetscape rendering of the Hamlet Center at the intersection of St. Marks Place and Firefighters Memorial Drive.

Exhibit 13  
**HAMLET DESIGN CONCEPT**  
**TOWN OF HIGHLANDS, NEW YORK**

Saccardi & Schiff, Inc. - Planning and Development Consultants

roundabout is different than that of the street, and includes defined crosswalks for pedestrians and traffic calming. Throughout the plan, decorative street furniture such as benches, bike racks, and street lighting could be used to enhance the pedestrian experience.

Traffic flow and congestion is a concern that was identified by the community regarding this plan. The Hamlet Center is currently the only exit for those living in the higher terrains of Canterbury Road. At this time, none of the proposals for alternative routing of Canterbury Road traffic appear practically feasible. However, it does not appear that there is enough remaining land with buildable terrain to significantly increase the traffic count on Canterbury Road and in the Fort Montgomery Hamlet Center.

***Creation of defined focal points and common open spaces to increase visual interest and public activity and to promote community pride***

This is achieved in the Plan through the creation and placement of several key architectural elements designed to promote social interaction among residents, provide opportunities for relaxation and recreation, and promote civic and commercial activities. These elements include a well defined intersection at Firefighters Memorial Drive and Canterbury Road/St. Marks Place, possibly a roundabout and/or a specially designed pavement area, a new hamlet green and several new mostly residential buildings. The housing in this area could be used for senior citizens and empty-nesters.

The hamlet green proposed for the vacant parcel on the northwest corner of the intersection of Firefighters Memorial Drive and Canterbury Road/St. Marks Place is designed to be the central public space of the Hamlet Center. Surrounded by buildings that may include ground-floor retail with residential uses above, the hamlet green would provide a central open space for public activities such as concerts, holiday activities and a farmers' market. The roundabout and hamlet green are place-making elements that work in concert with

the proposed buildings along the streets to define the public space.

Architecturally, the intersection of Firefighters Memorial Drive and Canterbury Road/St. Marks Place works in service of two axes: one that controls sightlines from the roads to the center of the intersection; and another that relates the intersection and roundabout to the Hamlet Green and buildings that surround it. This can be observed in Exhibit 13 by the alignment of a taller corner building on the southeast corner of the intersection aligned with a central open space in the hamlet green, and ending with another taller building mass at the northwest corner of the hamlet green. A secondary axis aligns the Post Office with a proposed new building located across the hamlet green. Together these axes could work as organizational devices to define the spatial relationships of the Hamlet Center.

To implement the Hamlet Design Concept, it is necessary for the Town to amend its zoning to include the proposed Fort Montgomery Hamlet Center (FMHC) district. Compared to the proposed B district, this zoning district will include, but is not limited to, smaller buildable lots, greater Floor Area Ratio, reduced yard requirements, reduced coverage requirements and allows commercial uses more appropriate for a hamlet center, rather than a highway. The FMHC district would also allow residential use, including potential senior housing.

## VIII. ADDITIONAL PLAN PROPOSALS

### A. Tourism Plan

#### *Introduction*

The Town of Highlands and Village of Highland Falls identified strengthening tourism and economic development activities as key short-term Comprehensive Plan goals. To achieve these goals, the communities need to increase the marketing of recreational, cultural and historic resources located in the Town and Village and also capitalize on their unique location between many existing popular tourist attractions. The Plan provides information on existing regional tourism organizations with which the communities' can partner identifies opportunities to increase tourism activities and offers strategies to maximize these resources and activities. The Plan incorporates the existing Village, Town and Chamber of Commerce activities and integrates the Goals and Objectives developed during the planning process to produce proposals for the continued marketing of these important communities throughout the Hudson Valley and beyond.

The Village of Highland Falls and the Town of Highlands are exceptionally well located amidst rich and historically significant architectural, recreational and cultural resources. In addition, the central and riverfront location, varied topography and historic, recreational and cultural attractions within and surrounding the Town of Highlands and the Village of Highland Falls put these communities in a unique position to maximize their connection to these existing resources and attract more visitors to the area. While some coordinated tourism and marketing efforts exist within the region, the Village and Town should undertake efforts to continue to promote their communities as tourist attractions.

#### *Regional Approach*

Many tourist organizations located throughout the Hudson Valley provide information on sites, activities and programs available to visitors to the area. On a regional level, Orange, Rockland, Putnam and Westchester Counties have tourism offices and chambers of commerce, with extensive databases and websites providing information and links to local events. These websites not only provide valuable resources on special events, activities and attractions, but also on transportation, lodging, restaurants, and shopping.

In addition to events located within the Town and Village, many adjacent local communities sponsor special events, which bring people from outside the area to visit. These include: cultural heritage festivals, Renaissance Fairs, skiing events, Civil War reenactments, antique



*A regional tourist event*

and custom car shows, food festivals, and concert series. Highlands and Highland Falls can coordinate with neighboring communities to publicize these events and potentially offer cooperative events. Providing community sponsored buses to and from local events would encourage visitors initially attracted to an event in a different Town, to come to Highlands and Highland Falls.

The communities can also capitalize on their location adjacent to the Appalachian Trail, which crosses the Bear Mountain Bridge. In addition to existing trails, the Town and Village can pursue greater hiking opportunities through identifying spurs off of the Appalachian Trail, possibly leading hikers into both the Town and Village centers.

Many trail and hiking related brochures, pamphlets and websites can provide links to local chambers of commerce, lodging and restaurant information for Highlands and Highland Falls. Currently, some trail and hiking related websites provide links to the Hamlet of Fort Montgomery, however, no further information is provided. Using these existing opportunities to publicize the Town and Village is an easy and immediate way to get information out to users.

In addition to the Appalachian Trail crossing and the many hiking opportunities at Bear Mountain and the Palisades Parks, the region offers a variety of other outdoor activities including bicycling, swimming, ice skating, canoeing, rafting, tubing and horseback riding. Outdoor races and activities, which pass through several communities, provide a particularly good opportunity for tourism involvement by Highlands and Highland Falls. The Avon Foundation sponsors an annual relay race, which begins at the Bear Mountain Bridge and ends in New Rochelle. The Town of Highlands and Village of Highland Falls can pursue providing buses, lodging, food and beverages to race participants.

Hudson River excursion tours of the area include: Trans-Hudson ferry service between Peekskill and West Point, NY Waterway offers cruises from West 38<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan to Tarrytown; and River Rose Tours and Cruises offers sightseeing cruises and private rentals of paddlewheel boats on the Hudson originating in the revitalized waterfront of Newburgh, New York. The unique location of Highlands and Highland Falls and the potential development of riverfront access/marinas offer new opportunities to connect with existing tours and draw in sailors and boaters from the Hudson River.

The Town and Village can connect with surrounding communities to create a new regional tourism organization. Partnering with Rockland, Orange, and Putnam Counties and Garrison, Cold Spring, Highland

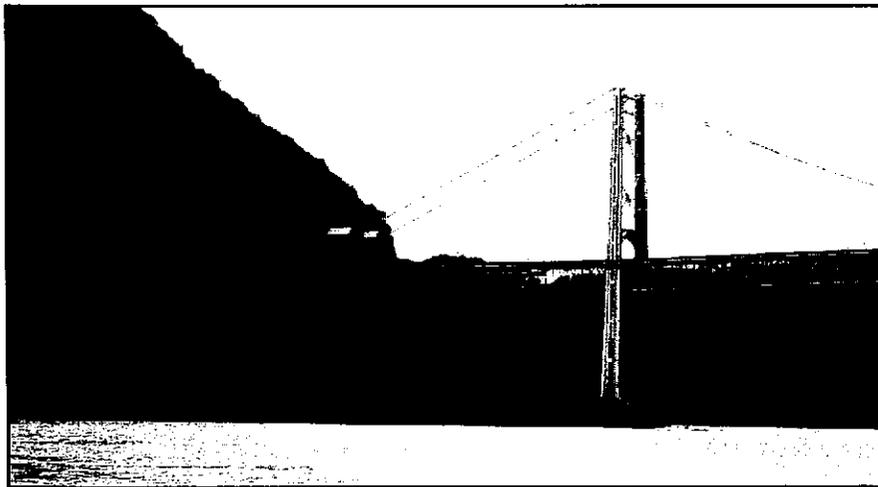
Falls and West Point would create the opportunity for Highlands and Highland Falls to establish a common regional identity. This identity could focus on common histories, including the Revolutionary War and Native American history; the Hudson River, open space resources, and local architecture. A regional tourism organization would allow the various communities to join together for special events, education programs and celebrations. The organization could develop its own logo, newsletter, and videos and design and install common signage and street banners. By holding regular meetings, this regional organization could become a powerful information source and resource for residents, visitors and private entities looking to hold events or develop attractions in the region. The regional organization could pursue public/private partnerships to promote activities and attractions.

In the short term, the Village and the Town can work closely with on going inter-municipal and regional tourism efforts. There are many existing regional environmental, governmental and tourist organizations in the Hudson Valley including: Hudson River Valley Greenway, the National Parks Service, the Palisades Interstate Park Commission, the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area, the Hudson River Valley Institute at Marist College, I Love NY, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and many others. Such established groups can provide technical support to Highlands and Highland Falls to:

- Publicize local events on existing regional tourism websites;
- Provide links on regional tourism websites to local restaurants, hotels, and shopping; and
- Coordinate with existing historic and military battlefield tours and reenactments.

For example, the Hudson River Valley Greenway (HRVG) is a New York State agency created to develop a “regional strategy for preserving scenic, natural, historic, cultural and recreational resources while encouraging compatible economic development and maintaining the tradition of home rule for land use decision-making.”<sup>10</sup> Currently, both the Village of Highland Falls and the Town of Highlands are Hudson River Valley Greenway Compact Communities. Participation in the Hudson River Valley Greenway planning program is voluntary, and communities that participate can receive technical assistance and funding for local land use planning projects which support the goals of the Greenway program. The Village and the Town can utilize these existing resources to promote existing tourist related development efforts.

Providing public access to the Hudson River is a key recreation and tourism goal for both the Village and the Town. Currently, the Greenway is developing the Hudson River Greenway Water Trail (HRGWT) and the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area,



*The Hudson River and Bear Mountain Bridge*

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.hudsongreenway.state.ny.us/>

both of which aim to preserve, protect and interpret 156 miles of Hudson River waterfront. The HRGWT focuses on the improvement of public access to the Hudson River, and the diversity and heritage of the riverside communities of the Hudson River Valley. A series of public festivals are held near several stopover points along the Hudson River. Since 2002 the HRVG has designated seventy-one sites as part of the HRGWT, installed a dozen informational kiosks, provided marker flags to designated sites with flag poles, partnered with the Hudson River Watertrail Association, Inc. to update their guidebook and make it the official guide of HRGWT, added a signs program and awarded over \$300,000 in Water Trail Grants. The Village and the Town should coordinate with the HRVB for partnering, and funding opportunities.

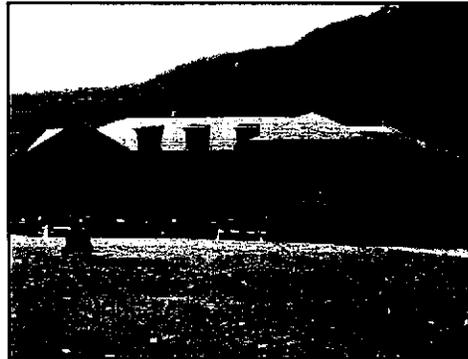
Another important regional organization with which the Village and Town have previously partnered is Scenic Hudson, which works with local communities, residents, developers, and other regional and state organizations to control growth and promote preservation along the Hudson River. Scenic Hudson has been actively involved with the Town of Highlands in the preservation of important historic structures at Fort Montgomery and will continue to be involved in the potential development of marinas in both the Town and the Village. While Scenic Hudson’s focus is not on tourism, they will provide valuable resources and guidance for any tourist related waterfront development in these communities.

The Orange County Department of Tourism, located in Goshen, NY provides extensive information on local and regional events and highlights the United State Military Academy at West Point on its website. The website (<http://www.orangetourism.org>) contains a great regional map, lists contact information for events, hotels, restaurants, and transit, and has one link to Hudson Valley Tourism. The Village and Town can coordinate with the County to ensure that they provide additional information about, and links to, Highlands and Highland Falls destinations.

### *Localized Tourism Efforts*

In addition to the general tourism goals discussed earlier in this section, through the comprehensive planning process, the Village and Town Committees identified specific goals and objectives to promote local tourism and support economic development.

Within and immediately adjacent to the Town of Highlands and the Village of Highland Falls are many activities that attract tourists to the region. A variety of cultural and historic sites including Fort Montgomery, The United States Military Academy at West Point, the Hudson Highlands, Bear Mountain State Park, the Appalachian Trail, and many others draw people to the area and provide the Town and Village with the opportunity to draw these visitors to their communities for extended visits. The Village of Highland Falls Historic Downtown Plan, prepared in December 2003, recommended specific signage design and plan for the Village to promote the historic downtown as a destination in and of itself, as well as a place to stop on the way to West Point. The communities can explore creative ways to highlight and celebrate their rich history and architecturally significant buildings including commemorative plaques, decorative pavers and interpretive signage, which can be installed along primary gateways to direct visitors to the community.

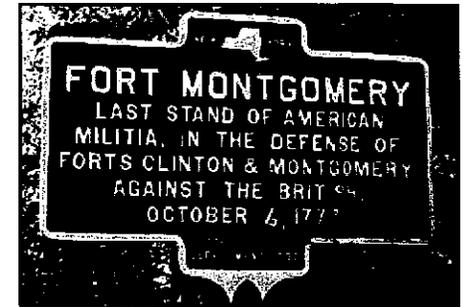


*The historic Bear Mountain Inn*

Both the Village and the Town currently have some regulations in place to protect and preserve environmental features within the municipalities, however, the Comprehensive Plan includes additional techniques to ensure these important attractions remain viable

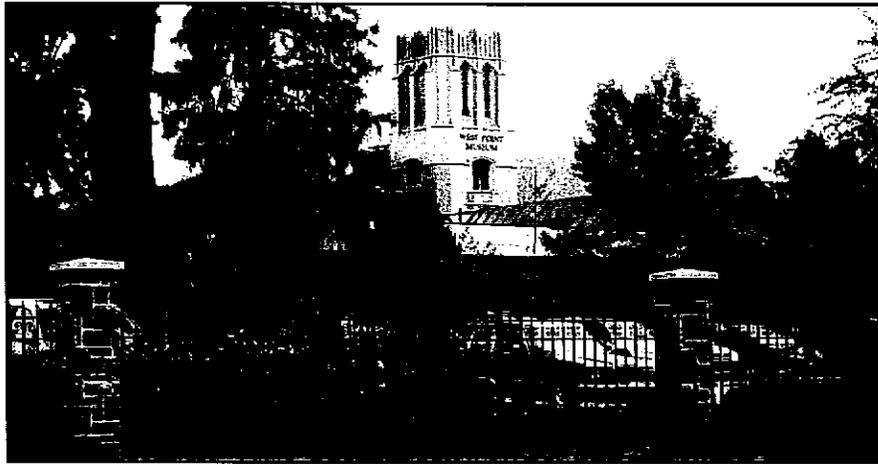
for years to come. For example, the Town Plan calls for ridgeline protection, minimizing glare from lighting and upgrading building facades in the hamlet center. The Village Plan recommends design guidelines focusing on façade and streetscape beautification, and landscaped screening along Routes 218 and 9W. Incentive and grant programs are available to assist in funding these efforts.

Both the Village and the Town stated interest in working with the Chamber of Commerce to prepare a new tourism brochure highlighting not only the tourist sites and attractions within the Village, but also regional attractions. The brochure would include contact information for local hotels, bed and breakfasts, and restaurants. This brochure can be made available at a number of visitor's centers including: along the Palisades Interstate Parkway, Boscobel, Woodbury Commons, at Bear Mountain Park, at the Fort Montgomery Visitor's Center, and at the United States Military Academy at West Point.



*Fort Montgomery is home to a historic Revolutionary War era fort and battleground.*

Developing a website is a key component of the overall tourism plan. The website casts a wider net, gives the Village the opportunity to attract visitors from farther afield and can be frequently updated to provide information on seasonal events, upgrades to local hotels, bed & breakfasts and restaurants. The Village can provide links to and from regional tourism websites to Village of Highland Falls destinations. For example, currently, the Village of Highland Falls website <http://www.highlandfallsny.com> promotes the Village as the "Gateway to West Point" and includes links and information about different sites and accommodations available at the United States Military Academy at West Point. However, the West Point Visitor's Center website, <http://www.usma.edu/publicaffairs/vic.htm>,



*The United States Military Academy at West Point Visitors Center.*

does not currently provide links to tourism resources in the Village of Highland Falls. The Town and the Village can work with West Point to coordinate information on their respective websites, provide cross-promotions for lodging and dining in the Village during USMA athletic activity weekends.

### *Next Steps*

Short term implementation of the tourism plan would involve coordinating directly with existing regional tourism, government and recreational organizations, to provide links on their website to Highlands and Highland Falls attractions. This would be an immediate, relatively low cost alternative, which could be pursued using existing resources.

The Town and Village could pursue grants to fund more capital intensive tourism initiatives including producing a brochure and developing a website. The formation a regional tourism organization can be spearheaded by the Town and Village, which would develop fund raising policies and goals to self-perpetuate.

For a more comprehensive tourism outreach program, the Village and the Town should pursue hiring an economic development consultant to prepare a regional tourism feasibility study. The study could involve inventorying existing tourism resources, developing recommendations for outreach and partnering opportunities with other local and regional organizations including Putnam and Orange Counties. The Village and Town would form a selection committee, which should also include representatives from tourism agencies. The committee would develop and issue an RFP for developer interest and evaluate the proposals. Because this may be a joint effort, funding the tourism feasibility study could be derived from the municipal budget. However, Putnam, Rockland and Orange Counties could also provide funding for a study with a regional scope.

### **B. Consolidation of Municipal Services**

Both the Town of Highlands and the Village of Highland Falls identified consolidation of municipal facilities and services as a goal in their Comprehensive Plans, recognizing that the benefits of consolidation could include: more efficient provision of local services; more effective public administration for these services and potential cost savings for merging personnel, equipment and offices.

#### *Progress Already Made in the Consolidation of Services*

In addition to the preparation of several studies, the Town and Village have made significant progress with regard to consolidation. Currently, they share the following facilities and services:

- **Department of Public Works**

The Town Highway Department and Sanitation Department provide service to the Town and the Village. Roadway maintenance, garbage and recycling pick up, and snow removal are all managed by a joint Department of Public Works, which increases efficiency, and limits and distributes the cost for these services between the municipalities.

- **Tax Assessor**

The Village and the Town share a tax assessor, whose office is located in Town Hall.

- **Ambulance Service**

The Town of Highlands Ambulance Corps (THAC) provides ambulance service to both the Village of Highland Falls and the Town of Highlands. The Town of Highlands Ambulance Tax District employs one full time paid EMT. It is anticipated that in three to five years, THAC will need to employ additional personnel to accommodate increasing demand. Because this is a joint service, any increase in tax burden required to hire additional personnel would be distributed to the Town and the Village.

- **Recreation Department**

The Town of Highlands Recreation Department provides recreation facilities and services to both the Village and the Town. In addition, the Village, the Town and the Highland Falls-Fort Montgomery School District share many recreation facilities.

As noted throughout the document, both the Town and the Village have indicated the need for additional ball fields and for a dedicated community center as the Recreation Department currently relies on space in the local schools for youth and senior programs and activities. Both the Town and the Village, and the Highland Falls – Fort Montgomery School District have indicated that the distribution of maintenance costs between the various entities should be reevaluated to better balance the cost loads. More coordination between these three entities should occur, particularly in light of the need for additional facilities.

- **Highland Falls Library**

The Highland Falls Library, which serves both the Village and the Town, is one of 47 members of the Ramapo Catskill Library System (RCLS), a state-funded system serving libraries in Rockland, Orange,

Sullivan and Southern Ulster County. In 2006, approximately 90 percent of the operating budget for the Highland Falls Library was provided from tax revenue from the Town of Highlands.

- **Building Department**

Pursuant to inter-municipal agreement, the Town Building Department provides services to both the Town and Village of Highland Falls.

### *Additional Consolidation*

This Plan recommends that the Town and Village create a task force to determine whether it is in the public interest to consolidate the following services and facilities in these contiguous communities:

- **Wastewater Treatment Facilities**

Currently, the Village of Highland Falls and the Town of Highlands operate separate wastewater treatment plants. The Village STP currently has additional capacity. The Town's STP is operating at capacity and has experienced inflow and infiltration issues during periods of heavy rain. By consolidating their wastewater treatment plants, the municipalities can help defray initial costs (and potentially apply jointly for grants), minimize land acquisition, and combine and reduce overall operating and maintenance costs. In addition, with one efficiently operating STP, the municipalities may be able to increase operating capacity, minimizing the need for further significant expansion.

- **Water Supply**

Water pressure and supply within the Village are adequate. Although water lines generally run to Garrison Pond (Franklin Street), no existing comprehensive public water supply infrastructure exists in the Town<sup>11</sup>. The Town of Highlands purchases approximately 75,000 gpd from the Village to serve some residents, while other

<sup>11</sup> Water lines run under Firefighters Memorial Drive, but these lines are not hooked into anything.

Town residents, particularly those east of the Hamlet Center, are on individual wells. Contamination from a now defunct gas station and the deep rock topography has prevented the Town from developing an active and productive water source for the Hamlet. The Town has asked for land from West Point for additional wells and is in the process of testing additional wells to expand their water supply.

- **Department of Public Works (DPW)**

While the Village of Highland Falls employs a Highway Superintendent that reports directly to the Village Board, the Town of Highlands Highway Superintendent receives funding from the Town Board but is more autonomous in comparison. The Town Highway Superintendent is responsible for both Town and Village sanitation, as well as bridge maintenance and repair.

It is suggested that the Town and Village consider combining their public works departments into a joint operation. The consolidated Department of Public Works would employ a director, a professional engineer, who would oversee a number of related functions such as highways, sanitation, water, sewer and buildings.

- **Police Services**

At present, the Village and the Town maintain separate police forces, though the Town recently conducted a consolidation survey and also approached the New York State Police regarding their assuming police duties in the Town<sup>12</sup>. The Town of Highlands Police Department consists of 22 part-time officers and one part-time chief; one officer is on duty at all times. The Town Police Department is located in a temporary structure on Route 9W, where they have been located for 20 years, and are currently actively seeking more permanent space. The Village Police Department maintains a full-time staff with

part-time officers as needed. Both the Village and the Town have expressed interest in consolidating their police forces. The advantages of consolidation include: one central location for departments, minimizing land acquisition, construction and maintenance costs and reduction of duplicative administrative services.

- **Separate Facilities**

This Plan recommends that the following services and facilities remain separate.

### ***Fire Department***

Currently, the Village and the Town maintain separate volunteer fire departments. The Village Fire Department is a fifty member, 100 percent volunteer force. The Village owns their equipment though they lease their building from the Fire District. The Village does not currently own a ladder truck, and as such, relies on mutual aid departments to provide a ladder truck at fires.

The Fort Montgomery Fire Department is also a 100 percent volunteer department. The Fire Department owns their firehouse and rents their equipment from the Fire District. In addition, the Town pays rent to the Fire Department to park vehicles at the firehouse. In general, for daytime emergency service calls, the Highland Falls and Fort Montgomery fire departments would both be dispatched under an existing automatic aid agreement.

At present, both the Highland Falls and Fort Montgomery Fire Departments have indicated a preference to maintain separate fire departments and though they anticipate additional needs in the future, their emergency service capabilities are currently sufficient.

### ***General Government Functions***

The Town of Highlands government is run by the Town Supervisor and a Town Council. The Village of Highland Falls operates with a

<sup>12</sup> At the time of the survey, the New York State Police indicated that the Town of Highlands Police Department should continue to serve the emergency needs of the Town of Highlands

Mayor and a Village Board of Trustees. Each municipality maintains separate administrative functions including a clerk, and building inspector, etc. This Plan recommends that the municipalities continue to function separately.

Notwithstanding continued separate governments, there are certain areas where joint actions could occur to help save money purchasing supplies may be less expensive, for example, if done jointly. Use of outside consultants (engineers, attorneys, etc.) could perhaps be more efficient if done in tandem, as has been the case for the Comprehensive Plan. A joint regional tourism strategy is recommended in the Plan, with funding for the Town and Village, and outside sources, which may be more inclined to participate if done in an inter-municipal manner. The Zoning Board of Appeals, a joint effort, is another example of consolidation. Though the Town and the Village maintain separate Planning Boards, the responsibilities of the Zoning Board have been consolidated. Through discussion with various members, it appears that this arrangement has worked well for both municipalities and should therefore continue.

## IX. PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

### A Five-Year Action Program

Implementation of the Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Highlands will require a number of actions including: (1) an update of the Town Zoning Ordinance and Map; (2) the adoption of certain other regulations and guidelines suggested in the Plan; (3) the expenditure of funds for public facilities and improvements; and (4) initiation of the proposed regional tourism program. Although the Comprehensive Plan is designed to cover a 15 to 20-year timeframe, the following Action Program establishes priority items that should be pursued over the next 5 years or so.

#### *Town Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map*

The Comprehensive Plan calls for several zoning map changes and various zone text amendments. Perhaps the most significant of these proposed changes deals with commercial zoning along Route 9W. As previously described, the Plan calls for two business districts; one for the Fort Montgomery Hamlet Center (FMHC), and a second for other commercial areas along Route 9W (B). Lot and bulk controls in these two districts should be designed to help the Town avoid unattractive strip commercial uses along Route 9W, and promote a pedestrian friendly hamlet center at the intersection of Route 9W, Canterbury Road and Firefighters Memorial Drive.

The zoning update should also include text changes to residential zoning districts, new zoning for senior housing, and potential amendments to the Planned Residential Development (PRD) zoning. The PRD would provide workforce housing for municipal and school employees, volunteers and young people looking for a starter home.

The Town could either prepare a comprehensive re-write of the entire Zoning Ordinance, or it could approach the amended zoning changes in an incremental manner. If it pursues zoning changes incrementally, the Town should give priority to commercial zoning regulations.

As the proposed zoning is adopted, the Town should implement text that addresses zoning restrictions that currently prohibit sustainable and energy efficient features. Property owners that intend to make improvements such as solar panels should not be restricted by height restrictions if the features are a reasonable size and are not a nuisance to neighbors.

#### *Design Guidelines for Residential and Commercial Development*

The Comprehensive Plan calls for a number of “quality of life” regulations and guidelines that focus on aesthetic issues in the Hamlet of Fort Montgomery. Among these updates are: sign design guidelines, ridgeline protection regulations, property maintenance laws, and architectural review procedures; all of which are priority items that the Town Board should pursue as part of a Five-Year Action Program.

#### *Public Facilities and Improvements*

The Town should move to implement the following projects with the assistance of potentially available Federal, State or County grant funds that would augment Town funds:

- Develop waterfront access on the Hudson River.
- Provide additional water supply and sanitary sewer service to properties immediately east and west of Route 9W.
- Continue consolidation of services with the Village of Highland Falls, including public works, recreation, and police protection.
- Coordinate with the school district and the Village in the funding of the additional recreation facilities and programs at the High School and other locations.

- Improve facades, signage and landscaping of private properties along Route 9W, with the assistance of funding from State and federal programs, if available, and remove unsightly signage on both public and private property.

### ***Regional Tourism***

The Town should work with the Chamber of Commerce and various governmental agencies, including the Village of Highland Falls, Orange County, Putnam County, the Palisades Interstate Park Commission, and others to pursue the recommended regional tourism program. This effort should be based on a professionally prepared feasibility study that sets forth a tourism strategy and brings the myriad of attractions together in one cohesive strategy. It is suggested that the Village and Town seek State or County funding, issue a request for proposals, and then select an economic consultant with specific expertise in tourism. The consultant service should be provided under the direction of both the Town Board and Village Board of Trustees.

### ***Plan Adoption and Environmental Review under SEQRA***

Adoption of a Comprehensive Plan is a Type I Action under the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA), suggesting that a generic environmental impact statement be prepared prior to Plan adoption by the Town Board. The Comprehensive Plan does not have to be adopted under New York law; however, if adopted, it would be a stronger, more effective policy document. Certain plan recommendations, including the zoning text and map changes would also require a SEQRA review prior to adoption. If these items are covered in one generic review of the Comprehensive Plan, subsequent environmental reviews can be more streamlined.

In the event that the Town decides to pursue a full Generic Environmental Impact Statement, it would follow the basic SEQRA procedural steps as outlined below.

The initial steps in the SEQRA process would include lead agency determination, adoption of a positive declaration requiring preparation of a generic DEIS, and scoping. This would be followed by the development of the draft impact statement, a policy document that recasts the Comprehensive Plan as the Proposed Action, and describes impacts, mitigation measures and alternatives. After a public hearing, which would be held on both the Comprehensive Plan and the DGEIS, a Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement would be prepared, responding in broad policy terms to each of the comments from the public and various outside agencies. Comments from the County and surrounding communities on the Town's Comprehensive Plan would be sought and responded to in the FGEIS. After review of the FGEIS, the Town Board would consider and adopt an Environmental Finding Statement followed by formal adoption of the completed plan. This process would require approximately one year, following the timeframe set forth by SEQRA.

Alternatively, the Town could decide to consider adoption of the Comprehensive Plan based on a more abbreviated environmental assessment review, resulting in a Negative Declaration (i.e. with no Draft Generic EIS provided). This procedure would require a subsequent SEQRA review for the implementation techniques, such as the adoption of zoning text and map changes.