

Goals and Strategies

Based on the information from the community survey, public workshop and public meetings, the following goals and recommended strategies are presented to assist Colchester in reaching their long-term vision for the Town. These strategies offer a variety of options that Colchester could implement in the future.

Agriculture and Rural Character

Goal: Agricultural operations will be enhanced and supported, and agricultural resources within the Town will be preserved. Open spaces will be available for future agricultural uses. Residential growth will be balanced with these needs but will also reflect the need to balance growth with the security of individual property rights.

Strategy 1: Colchester should continue strong support of the agricultural district program and work to encourage eligible landowners join the agriculture district program. Recent changes to the ag district law now allows individuals to be included in a district at any time rather than waiting for an eight year review to take place.

Colchester should ensure that all provisions and procedures of the New York State Agriculture and Markets Law 25AA, Sections 305 and 305-a are followed. This law is also referenced in Town Law.

Agricultural districts protect farms from nuisance suits, eminent domain takings and regulations that interfere with farming. In addition to encouraging owners of active farmlands (which include forestlands) to remain in an agricultural district, Colchester should ensure that they fully implement requirements of the New York State Agricultural Districts Law. Specifically, the Town should:

- Require an Agricultural Data Statement to be made on applications before the Town that affect property within 500 feet of a farm located in an agricultural district. This includes applications for subdivision and site plan review, should the Town enact one.

- Notify landowners identified on the Agricultural Data Statement so they may comment on the effect of proposed changes to their farm operation.

- Evaluate the possible impacts of the proposed project so that local land use decisions do not contradict the goals of the Agricultural Districts Law.

Strategy 2: To help make sure Section 310 of the New York State Agricultural District Law is met, Colchester should require placing agriculture disclosure notices on subdivisions as recommended in the Delaware County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan. Section 310 requires landowners who sell or transfer property located in

an agricultural district to provide prospective residents with a disclosure notice prior to assigning a purchase contract.

Strategy 3: The Town should work to educate landowners about the agricultural value exemption program and seek to implement this with eligible landowners. At the same time, the local assessor should enforce the penalties for farmland conversion to non-farm uses.

Strategy 4: Ensure that the Town provides information on other tax benefits for eligible agricultural lands including the farm building exemption portion of the Real Property Tax Law, the New York State Farmers School Tax Credit; the 480A program for Forest Land, and the NYS Historic Barn Credit.

Strategy 5: Consider offering additional local tax incentives for agricultural properties and other agricultural businesses such as maple syrup production, forestry, small livestock or hobby farms, farm stands, honey production, etc. Offering local tax incentives is an expansion of the existing state-level ag assessment program and would be a way the Town could help and encourage smaller scale farming and farmers. The Town would have to set some criteria to know what type of farm business would be eligible, but this could be an important program to help out those small farmers that currently do not meet the requirements to be eligible for state ag exemptions (\$10,000 in income and 10 acres).

Strategy 6: Consider implementing a local Right-to-Farm law to enhance protection of agricultural operations and demonstrate support for the local farm community.

Strategy 7: Support use of conservation easements to protect agricultural lands and open spaces. The Town could create a voluntary Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program utilizing existing state, federal and private funding. In addition, Colchester should support the Watershed Agricultural Council's Whole Farm Easement Program to protect working farmland. Conservation easements can be either sold or donated to a qualified non-profit organization or to the Town. Easements are voluntary agreements with landowners that permanently restrict the type and amount of development that may take place on a parcel of land. The land remains private and on the tax rolls. The owner is free to sell, lease, or rent it as before, but the easement limits use to agricultural production and related uses. The Town should also support the Watershed Agricultural Council's Whole Farm Easement Program and work to educate local farmers about these options.

Strategy 8: Work with the County to implement the County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan.

Strategy 9: Enhance forestry and woodland operations by supporting and encouraging use of conservation easements to protect working woodlands. Conservation easements can be either sold or donated to a qualified non-profit organization or to the Town and are equally useful for protecting farmland and woodlands.

Strategy 10: The Town could consider adopting a Right to Practice Forest Management law, similar to the one recommended in support of agriculture.

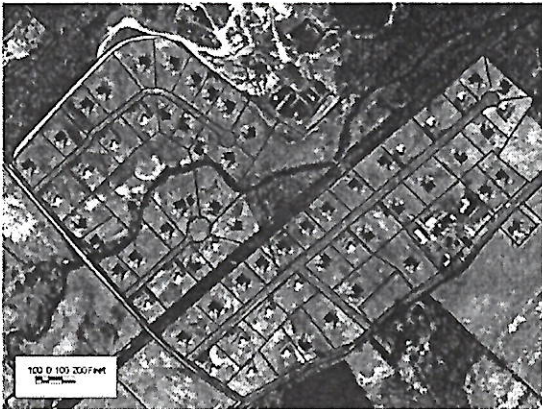
Strategy 11: Consider amending the local subdivision law, or adopting new local laws to better protect agriculture and farmland. Some or all of the following techniques could be considered:

- a. Require buffer strips as part of non-agricultural development in or near existing farms. This buffer would separate farm and non-farm uses. This could be a requirement of subdivision.
- b. Authorize the use of conservation and clustered subdivisions so that a portion of the parcel of land is protected for farming, forestry or open space. These options can be authorized in the subdivision law and could be voluntarily applied or required when deemed necessary by the Planning Board. Some communities require use of these techniques under certain circumstances (for example when there are a lot of environmental limitations on a site or when it is a major subdivision.) The examples below illustrate these techniques.
- c. Review and revise setbacks, road frontage requirements, and septic system requirements. These common requirements often serve to “spread” out housing development. Setbacks and road frontage requirements in particular can also result in uniform, suburban-style developments. When that happens, rural character is often diminished. Colchester should examine use of these requirements and consider making adjustments so that more flexible development can be done on a site-by-site basis. These requirements can be established in a local law.

An Illustration of Clustering



This photo simulation illustrates a conventional subdivision at a density of one dwelling per four acres where the minimum lot size equals four acres. Note how all land in this parcel is “used” by being split up and becoming part of individual home lots.



This photo simulation illustrates a conventional subdivision at a density of one dwelling per two acres where the minimum lot size equals two acres. As above, note that all land in this parcel is “used” by being part of individual home lots.



This illustrates a clustered subdivision at a density of one dwelling per two acres, but houses are clustered around the existing farmstead with minimum lot sizes of one acre. The majority of the parcel remains as open space. This subdivision would allow continued farming, and protects the stream corridor on the property. Ownership of the preserved parcel could remain with the original landowner, be owned by a homeowners association, or by one of the new landowners as a type of “estate lot”.

An Illustration of Conservation Subdivision

Conservation Subdivision Photosimulation
Primary Environmental Features



Step 1: Identify primary conservation areas to preserve. In this case, the stream and a buffer are critical.

Conservation Subdivision Photosimulation
Secondary Environmental Features



Step 2: Identify secondary conservation areas to preserve. In this case, productive agricultural areas are preserved.

Conservation Subdivision Photosimulation
Developable Areas



Step 3: Identify buildable areas of the parcel.

Conservation Subdivision Photosimulation
Final Step Layout



Step 4: Place house lots and roads in the buildable portion of the parcel.

Strategy 12: Consider establishing several districts in Colchester where housing density, or other lot layout standards could be established. An important tool that can be used to ensure that new residential growth is consistent with the goals of this plan is to establish a density for new housing. Commonly, density is set by establishing a minimum lot size. However, in rural areas, that often results in rural sprawl where the entire land base is subdivided and little is left undeveloped. Large minimum lot sizes also force people to buy large lots and can cause housing affordability problems. Colchester could work to separate out density from minimum lot size if the Town implements this strategy. When density is set as the number of dwellings allowed per acre rather than minimum lot size, it gives the Town and landowner much more flexibility to creatively develop a parcel and at the same time offers opportunities for protection of some of the parcel for farming, forestry or open space.

If Colchester does establish a density program, consider offering a development bonus (where more houses can be built than allowed under local law) when a percentage of a parcel is retained as farmland, when areas of soils classified as prime or statewide importance are excluded from development and preserved for agriculture, or when creative lot layout techniques are used such as conservation subdivisions or clusters.

Note on Setting Density: Density is a measure of how many structures are allowed on a per acre basis. Some communities set density by establishing a minimum lot size. This is not usually recommended because a) use of minimum lot sizes may make some lots not affordable by forcing people to buy a larger lot than they may want (if a large minimum lot size was required); b) use of minimum lot sizes typically result in all land being subdivided into uniformly sized lots (which results in a suburban style development); c) use of minimum lot size does not allow a landowner to be creative and flexible in the development of a site; and d) use of minimum lot sizes does not adequately protect sensitive environmental features. A better way to ensure that development is consistent with community and environmental goals is to establish a true density. This would be measured as the number of units allowed per acre. Minimum lot sizes would only be dictated by requirements for siting a septic. Use of density also allows creative and flexible lot subdivision, and leaves land available for preservation. It gives the landowner or developer more freedom to create a desirable subdivision.

Density controls only the number of dwellings. It would allow all uses that Colchester has now and would not dictate what use is permissible, but instead would control the amount of development.

There are several options that could be considered to establish density in Colchester:

- a. Establish a density for development for the entire town (one district covering the entire town.)
- b. Establish several districts, each having a density tailored to meet the goals of that district. These could include an agricultural district, rural district, hamlet

district(s), and steep slope district. These options are described below.

Agricultural district. This district would and set a low development density that favors agriculture and very low-density residential use. This would not establish zoning, but would allow the Town to set density and other layout and dimension standards designed to protect and encourage agricultural operations. The boundary of an agricultural land use area could coincide with the current NYS agricultural districts.

Rural District. This would include all other lands not in the agricultural area, hamlets or in steep slopes and ridgelines. A rural land use area would allow the Town the capability to establish a moderate density for residential development. The density could be higher in this district than in the agricultural area. As in the agricultural land use area, the local law would establish an appropriate density. This option would be especially helpful in rural areas outside of the NYC Watershed.

Hamlet District. The purpose of this district is to establish a higher density consistent with the character, infrastructure, and environment found in the hamlets. See page 59 for a full description of this idea.

Steep Slope District. This district could include all the steep slope and ridgeline areas in Town and would establish a very low density and layout standards to protect the slopes and prevent erosion and maintenance of rural character. See page 57 for a full description of this idea.

Strategy 13: In order to ensure that personal property rights and Town goals are balanced, Colchester should make sure that:

- a. Local land use laws such as subdivision, site plan review, or others have clearly stated reasons for the regulations and information and/or data to back them up. The Town Board should specify the public purpose and explain how the laws advance that objective;
- b. A deliberate and understandable process of enacting and amending land use regulations is followed and that citizens are actively involved in discussion and aid in development of any proposed laws. The Town and affected landowners should be involved in meaningful discussions. The process also includes required public notice and hearing, and Town board and county planning board approval, fulfilling state environmental review requirements, and filing with the New York Department of State;
- c. The Town treats all similarly situated properties equally and that local boards act consistently when imposing standards on landowners. Standards and requirements should be applied uniformly;
- d. This Comprehensive Plan be reviewed every five years and kept up to date and relevant to the community and that once adopted. This process gives residents and landowners a strong role in shaping the future of the Town.

Strategy 14: Use incentives: If you decide that you want to set a density either with or without establishing districts, then also offer an incentive in return. One incentive is to offer a density bonus. These are incentives authorized under New York State law. Essentially it is when you give a landowner MORE density (more houses) in return for providing something desired by the Town such as protection of a ridge or steep slope, placing a conservation easement to protect open space, providing affordable lots or houses, building a hiking, horse, or ATV trail through the property, etc.

Strategy 15: If Colchester chooses not to establish districts, then the Town can still consider using many of the techniques listed below including use of conservation subdivisions, clustering, setting density, or using incentives.

Environment:

Goal: The Town's natural and aesthetic resources will be preserved.

Strategy 1: Important steep slope areas should be protected for their role in contributing to the Town's scenic and rural landscape, the area's abundant wildlife populations, and water quality. There are several ways this can be accomplished. One or more of the following methods can be implemented singly or together as desired by the Town:

a. Designate ridgelines and slopes in excess of 15% as a critical environmental area as authorized under SEQRA. A Critical Environmental Area (CEA) designation essentially requires that within this area, the planning board must take a harder look at the environmental impact of the proposal before making a decision. A CEA makes any action within that area a Type I action under SEQRA and a Full EAF, rather than the short form EAF would need to be filled out and evaluated. There are no other regulations attached. CEA's are also useful tools to educate people about the critical nature of these areas and is another avenue to get people involved in the planning and review process. Other government agencies also need to take into consideration the existence of a CEA during their project development.

b. Initiate a transfer of development rights program from the ridgelines and steepest parts of the mountains to lower areas of the Town. A transfer of development rights program (TDR) allows landowners to transfer the right to develop one parcel of land to a different parcel of land.

What is TDR? This program shifts actual development from one area to another. Parcels of land where the development rights originate are called the sending parcel. When the rights are transferred from this parcel, the land is permanently restricted from building with a conservation easement. The parcel of land to which the rights are transferred to is called the receiving parcel. TDR programs are based on the concept that property owners have a bundle of different rights, including the right to use land, lease, sell and bequeath it, borrow money using it as security, construct buildings on it, and mine it. Some or all of these rights can be transferred or sold to another person. When a landowner sells property, the rights are transferred to the buyer. TDR enables landowners to separate and sell the right to develop land from their other property rights. They usually involve only the private market – most are a transaction between private landowners and developers. Local governments do not have to raise taxes or borrow funds to implement a TDR. Under a TDR program, landowners retain their equity by selling development rights and they can still maintain all the other rights on the land. The Town would need to designate areas eligible for being sending and receiving parcels. Development rights can be transferred from steep slope and ridgeline areas to another area in Town that is more conducive for building. For example, if someone is eligible to have three house lots (based on a three acre minimum lot size), they can sell the rights to those three house lots to someone in the receiving area and that is where they would be built. The drawback to this

program is that it is technically quite complicated and usually is an unfamiliar concept to most people.

c. Establish a steep slope district with standards that protect these areas. This district would give the Town the ability to establish density or other standards to protect these resources. The district could include various standards to be used to protect the ridgelines and steep slopes such as making sure new buildings are sited away from ridge tops; preserving existing vegetation for screening and erosion control; helping the structure be designed to blend in; controlling glare from exterior lighting (by using full-shielded cut-off fixtures), and using erosion and sedimentation control methods. You can require or allow the voluntary use of the conservation subdivision design technique in these areas to preserve as much open space as possible. Another option to consider implementing in this district would be to prohibit placement of structures on very steep slopes within the district, or above a certain elevation.

More importantly, having a steep slope district can allow Colchester to set an appropriate density for development here. Density could be set preferably as true density measured as the number of dwellings per acre (more flexible) or as minimum lot size (a less flexible method). A steep slope district should have a lower density (fewer number of dwellings per acre, or a larger minimum lot size.)

d. Consider establishing a site plan review law that includes review and standards for protection of steep slopes and ridgelines.

Strategy 2: Current state (and NYC) regulations require setbacks of septic systems from streams. Colchester could reference applicable state and city laws in local subdivision or other land use laws so that landowners are aware that these regulations exist. In addition, consider establishing a local building setback to ensure that stream banks and a strip of natural vegetation are not eliminated, as these are crucial to stream water quality.

Strategy 3: Establish a site plan review law (as outlined above) and ensure that its provisions allow for review of, and have standards for, protection of streams, steep slopes, and reduction of erosion and sedimentation.

Strategy 4: Work with Delaware County and participate in their DCAP and highway management plan program. Colchester should work with those agencies and organizations involved in implementing the County DCAP program so that town level programs related to nonpoint sources of pollution are consistent with DCAP. (DCAP is the county strategy to reduce contaminants and pollutants in the watershed.) These include the Delaware County Planning Department (stormwater and flood management, Cornell Cooperative Extension (precision feed management for dairy farms), Delaware County Soil and Water Conservation District (stream corridor management) and the Delaware County Department of Public Works (pollutant reductions from roads).

As part of the County DCAP effort, the Town should consider participating in the County road program to inventory and assess the Town roads for their contribution to phosphorus levels in water. In addition, consider working with the County to implement a Town

Highway Management Plan that addresses phosphorus management and implements necessary stormwater-management practices.

Delaware County has developed a comprehensive strategy to protect watershed areas from contamination, degradation and pollution. This strategy is called DCAP, or the Delaware County Action Plan. It is designed to help county residents, farmers, businesses, and communities meet water quality parameters and objectives without loss of opportunities for economic vitality. Specifically, DCAP is designed to reduce contaminants and reduce phosphorous levels in the watershed. Components of DCAP include projects related to stormwater and flood management, work with dairy farmers via implementing precision feed management, stream corridor management, watershed modeling of the Cannonsville Basin, and reduction of pollutant loads originating from roads.

Strategy 5: Fully implement all State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) provisions to ensure that potential environmental impacts of new projects are identified and mitigated. During SEQR, future developments should also be reviewed against goals and standards as outlined in this Comprehensive Plan.

Strategy 6: Facilitate training for the Colchester Planning Board and Town Board on SEQRA so that this law is effectively administered. SEQRA can effectively mitigate environmental impacts of new projects even in the absence of other local land use laws. The New York State Department of State can be contacted to provide free SEQRA training. Ensure that all SEQR materials including the law, guidelines, and manuals are on hand for use by the Town and Planning Board.

Strategy 7: Continued use of on-site septic systems is likely for the foreseeable future. Given the high likelihood of septic system failure, Colchester should explore formation of an on-site septic maintenance district for the protection of health and safety. Formally known as “decentralized management of on-site treatment facilities”, the US Environmental Protection Agency promotes this method for rural areas not likely to be served by central sewers. Further, the Town should consider all available treatment options for handling wastewater in the hamlet areas including constructed wetlands, small package plants, decentralized management systems, biological treatments, and other technologies that are available.

Strategy 8: Consider establishing wellhead and spring protection districts to protect drinking water sources.

Colchester's Hamlets

Goal: Strengthen the economic capability and visual character of Downsville in Colchester.

Strategy 1: Enhance the visual character and economic development of Main Street Downsville. The Town should coordinate and work with local businesses, business organizations, community groups, and the county to implement the aesthetic and economic development recommendations made in the Downsville Downtown Assessment, prepared by The Catskill Center. (See Appendix 1 for a full set of these recommendations for Downsville.)

Goal: Strengthen the role of hamlets in Colchester.

Strategy 1: Cooks Falls, Corbett, Downsville, Horton, and Shinhopple, should all continue to be recognized and promoted as important locations within Colchester.

Strategy 2: Consider setting up a “hamlet” ad-hoc committee to the Town Board to discuss issues related to the hamlets. This committee should meet on a regular basis. It could be made up of citizen or business representatives from each of the hamlets, along with a representative from the Town Board. Regular meetings can work to address issues, as well as improve communication between the Town and these locations.

Strategy 3: Consider initiating a Town newsletter on a regular basis (2 or 4 times per year). This newsletter should also have space for each hamlet to report on news, events, or other items. Similarly, if the Town sets up a web site, specific areas related to the hamlets should be included.

Strategy 4: If the Town establishes a site plan review law, (see full description of this recommendation under Economic Development, strategy 2), it should include provisions to ensure that new development proposed in a hamlet is consistent with the layout, environment, and character of that hamlet.

Strategy 5: Consider establishing hamlet district. This would be a district that would encompass each designated hamlet in Town. The purpose of this district could be to establish residential density that is consistent with the environment, infrastructure, and character of the hamlets and that results in new growth that is consistent with hamlet-style development. Ideally, the hamlets should be the preferred locations for new residential growth. Residential density should be higher in the hamlets than other locations in Town. Higher density in the hamlets will help make future public infrastructure more affordable and will work to reduce rural residential sprawl. If the Town does establish hamlet land use areas, the boundaries should be drawn around current hamlet areas plus additional land for “room to grow”. Consider using the hamlet boundaries established for the New York City Watershed as a way to determine where current hamlets are.

Economic Development

Goal: Bluestone mining and timbering remain vital components of Colchester's economy.

Strategy 1: Work with the New York State Bluestone Association and Cornell Cooperative Extension of Delaware County to educate landowners about the potential economic benefits of integrating forestry and bluestone mining on their land.

Strategy 2: The Town should promote these industries but ensure that they are conducted with best management practices to ensure personal safety and environmental stewardship.

Goal: A diverse and revitalized economy will provide job opportunities, businesses that cater to the needs of residents and visitors alike, and build-upon Colchester's greatest strengths – its' natural resources, beauty, and small Town nature. A variety of quality employment opportunities will exist to attract, and keep young families in Town. Commercial growth and economic activities will be done, however, in a manner that complements and enhances the existing small Town and rural character of the Town and will not negatively impact the environment.

Strategy 1: The Town should coordinate and work with local businesses, business organizations, community groups, and the county to implement the economic development recommendations made in the Downsville Downtown Assessment, prepared by The Catskill Center. (See Appendix 1 for a full set of these recommendations.)

Strategy 2: Develop and implement a local site plan review law according to New York State Town law Section 274-a. Consider requiring site plan review for all structures over 400 square feet. The purpose of site plan regulations would be to ensure that the development of individual parcels do not have an adverse impact on adjacent properties or the surrounding area. Such regulations also ensure that the parcel's development fits properly into the community and conforms to its planning objectives. A site plan shows the proposed development and use of a single parcel of land. The Planning Board is authorized to review the arrangement, layout and design of the proposed use. It also contains the specifications that the site plan drawing must include for review and the standards it must meet. For commercial structures, the site plan could review access, parking, landscaping, buffering, drainage, utilities, roads, curbs, lighting, building design, and any other intended site improvements. For residential structures, the site plan could review setbacks and placement of the structure and septic system. Consider having the site plan review law's standards well illustrated so that the Town's expectations are clear and understood by both the planning board and applicant.

Strategy 3: Support and continue to promote Colchester through brochures such as those published by the Colchester Chamber of Commerce, and in publications such as the Delaware County Community Directory.

Strategy 4: Aggressively work towards providing enhanced telecommunication

infrastructure. Work with the County, the CWC, and telecommunication businesses to find ways to enhance the area's access to high speed Internet. Work to activate cell towers to provide cell service.

Strategy 5: Support the local Chamber-sponsored web site. Seek funds to initiate a Town web site to be linked to the Chamber's site. Local government programs, laws, activities, departments and staff should be highlighted on the web site. Consider posting minutes of the boards and this Comprehensive Plan on the site.

Strategy 6: Work with the County planning and economic development office to identify and attract new businesses or programs that could economically benefit Colchester.

Town Appearance

Goal: Improve the aesthetic character of the Town. Junk and trash along roads and on properties will be eliminated.

Strategy 1: Adopt new regulations to control junk cars and run down buildings.

Strategy 2: Coordinate with County agencies to arrange for an annual junk car removal program in Colchester.

Strategy 3: Consider arranging a semi-annual “bulk garbage” day where residents could, for a fee, bring large junk items to a central location in Town for removal.

Strategy 4: Consider adopting a site plan review law and include standards for and review of lot layout and building design so that new development is consistent with the architecture and character of the area. (See full description of site plan review recommendation under Economic Development, strategy 2.)

Strategy 5: Promote development of new welcome signs and plantings for major roads at the entrance to the hamlets and at Town boundaries. These signs should be uniform in appearance.

Strategy 6: Coordinate a Town-wide beautification program where individuals, community groups, volunteer organizations, and other groups work to pick up trash and junk along roads. There are established programs through the Delaware County Solid Waste program already in place for clean-up days that the Town can utilize.

Strategy 7: Enhance use of the Town transfer station in efforts to improve appearance of the Town. Consider use of expanded hours, and acceptance of other types of trash and garbage at the transfer station as a way to encourage people to properly dispose of junk and trash.

Public Services

Goal: Emergency services in Colchester will have sufficient staff, funding, and equipment to provide quality fire, police, and ambulance services.

Strategy 1: Complete the Emergency Action Plan and put it into effect as soon as possible.

Strategy 2: Should the Town decide to eliminate the local police department, fully utilize county and State Police services in its absence.

Strategy 3: Increase the numbers of volunteers for fire and emergency service operations by working with the local fire departments to initiate an advertising and promotion campaign to recruit volunteers. This could include placement of signs and banners around Town in important and well-traveled locations, placement of public service announcements on radio and newspapers.

Strategy 4: Consider offering a more tangible benefit or incentive to Emergency and Fire volunteers. This could be in the form of a tax incentive, a cash benefit, or even a college tuition stipend.

Strategy 5: Consider contracting with paid emergency departments to respond during off-hours or as a backup. This cost could be shared among other municipalities in the area.

Goal: Enhance enforcement of local laws in Colchester.

Strategy 1: Ensure that all local laws have adequate enforcement capability. Make sure that adequate enforcement procedures are detailed in local laws and that procedures are consistent with New York State laws. All local laws should be written in clear language, with definitions of key terms and phrases.

Strategy 2: Clearly outline job duties and expectations for enforcement. Ensure there is training for enforcement personnel.

Strategy 3: Develop and distribute a local law enforcement booklet for residents and landowners. This booklet should detail enforcement procedures in the Town, including how to report violations; procedures that are to be followed; and names and contact information for enforcement personnel and Town Justices. Involve enforcement personnel and Town Justices in developing the content of this brochure. The brochure can be distributed with each application for a building permit or other approval issued in the Town.

Strategy 4: Promote continued cooperation and communication between the Building Department and the Planning Board. Consider developing a job description for the

building inspector to include monthly reports to the Town and Planning Boards and attendance at Planning Board meetings.

Strategy 5: All Town departments should be aware of each other's programs and activities and how they relate to each other. Promote cooperation in enforcement of regulations as they are written. Consider holding semi-annual meetings of all Town boards and staff to communicate and coordinate activities and processes. Also consider initiating a procedure whereby each board, elected or appointed official receives each others reports and minutes.

<p>Goal: Provide for public infrastructure that promotes appropriate economic development, communication, and efficient use of tax dollars.</p>
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Strategy 1: Consider all available technological options for provision of sewer infrastructure in Downsville and other hamlets. For hamlet areas not currently served by central sewer lines, the Town should consider all available treatment options including constructed wetlands, small package plants, decentralized management systems, biological treatments, and other technologies that are available. Many of these technologies could provide environmentally sound and economically viable alternatives to central sewer systems.

Strategy 2: Work to map all water system lines included springs, lines and shutoffs.

Recreation

Goal: A variety of recreational opportunities in Colchester will take advantage of the areas' open spaces, natural resources, and existing facilities to provide for active and passive activities for all ages.

Strategy 1: Communicate regularly with the Downsview Central School District to develop ways to optimize use of school facilities for community recreational opportunities.

Strategy 2: Approach NYC and Delaware River Basin Commission authorities about establishing a golf course in the area below the dam. This would provide recreation for all area residents and tourists. Fees could be used for continued maintenance of the property. In recognition of the need to control use of chemicals and pollutants from a golf course, propose the golf course to be constructed and operated according to the USGA/Audubon International standards for sustainable golf course development. This program, advocated by the USGA, promotes use of environmental planning and best management practices to control use of pesticides, chemicals, and excess water runoff. For more information on this program contact Audubon International at 1-518-767-9051 (www.audubonintl.org) or the USGA at 908-234-2300 (www.usga.org).

Strategy 3: Work with New York City to enhance public use of the reservoir and provide for all types of recreation on the reservoir and land around it. Establishment of reasonable fees for this opportunity can become a future funding source for NYC.

Strategy 4: The Town should aggressively review each new property to be purchased by New York City in Colchester for its potential recreational value. During the 120-day review period required prior to acquiring any land, the City must consult with the Town, United States EPA and NYS DEC to determine the recreational uses to be allowed. Colchester should take this opportunity to promote recreational uses of those lands.

Strategy 5: The Town should work with NYSDEC, the USEPA and the regional Sporting Advisory Subcommittee to ensure that a comprehensive review of existing and potential recreational uses on currently owned City property takes place according to the MOU. This could be an opportunity to enhance recreational uses on city owned lands.

Strategy 6: Support efforts and provide leadership to implement the various recommendations included in the Catskill Center's Community Empowerment Initiative (February 2001) especially the following:

- a. Improve the Covered Bridge Park with public restrooms, a bluestone path, playground facilities, etc.
- b. Create an access trail from the Covered Bridge to the Town pool/school grounds and Fireman's Field. A "heart walk: or nature trail could branch off this.

Historic Features

Goal: Historic properties, structures, artifacts, and landscapes will be preserved and a greater understanding and appreciation of these resources will develop.

Strategy 1: Support the local historical society's efforts to map local cemeteries.

Strategy 2: Work with the library and historical society and consider providing assistance to build a community building to house a local historical museum for education and maintenance of local historical artifacts. This facility could also house the library. Town assistance could take several forms: provision of funds; support and assistance in grant writing; use of Town staff to be used when local matches are needed; or use of Town property. This building could serve many functions. In addition to a museum and library, a community center building could also serve as a recreation facility, meeting room, and a central location to improve services for residents and visitors.

Strategy 3: Investigate and promote the possibility of registering additional historic sites and structures with the State and National Historic Register Programs. The State and National Registers of Historic Places are the official lists of buildings, structures, districts, objects and sites significant in the history, architecture, archaeology and culture of New York and the nation. The same eligibility criteria are used for the State and National Registers. In New York, the Commissioner of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, administers these programs. Some potential locations, in addition to those already listed, that may be eligible for this program could include the old creamery sites, historic barns, and some structures in Downsville. Registration of historic sites on the National or State Historic Register is voluntary.

Strategy 4: Participation in state and federal historic programs could lead to more opportunities for grants and technical assistance related to historic preservation in Colchester. There may also be opportunities to develop historic district(s) through this program. National historic districts are not the same thing as a local historic district. The local version is a regulatory program. The national historical district is not a regulatory program. Benefits of being included on a state or national register, or in a historic district, are:

- Properties that are in a historic district, or properties determined to be eligible for a district receive a measure of protection from the effects of federal and/or state agency sponsored, licensed or assisted projects through a notice, review and consultation process.
- Owners of depreciable, certified historic properties may take a 20 percent federal income tax credit for the costs of substantial rehabilitation as provided for under the Tax Reform Act 1986.
- Registered properties receive a priority consideration from federal and state agencies in space rental or leasing.

- There are no restrictions placed on private owners of registered properties or those in a district. Private property owners may sell, alter or dispose of their property as they wish. If state or federal funds are used or if a state or federal permit is required for alteration to a historic resource, the proposal will be reviewed by the SHPO staff - regardless of listing status.

Strategy 5: Utilize SEQRA and its procedures to ensure that historic resources in Colchester are not negatively impacted when new development occurs. The environmental review process ensures that historic preservation is considered in the planning stages. Review of historic sites or structures is authorized in SEQRA.

Strategy 6: Investigate grant opportunities through the State Historic Preservation Office and work to identify and develop tools for historic preservation such as including financial incentives for rehabilitation projects.

Strategy 7: Develop a Colchester brochure that highlights the historic and recreation resources in Town. This could be done as a self-guided driving/walking tour.

Strategy 8: To highlight the area's bluestone industry, work to implement the Catskill Center's Community Empowerment Initiative recommendation to create a display explaining the bluestone industry and its role in the area. This display could be housed at the Covered Bridge Park or at the community center should one be developed in the future.

Strategy 9: Work with the historical society and community groups to promote and assist in finding funding for erecting historical markers throughout the Town. These markers would emphasize specific historical events, sites, and people. This could be coordinated with the self-guided driving/walking tour (See strategy 7 above).

Housing

Goal: Housing remains affordable and a variety of housing options will be available for senior citizens.

Strategy 1: Encourage development of senior housing opportunities. This type of housing, including assisted living centers and senior apartments may be especially helpful if located near Downsville so residents can take advantage of public infrastructure, shopping opportunities, and the social environment offered in the hamlet.

Strategy 2: Should any major subdivision occur, consider offering a density bonus to the developer in exchange for provision of dedicated affordable lots or homes in the subdivision. This option would work only if some base density or minimum lot size was established in Colchester.

Transportation:

Goal: Local roads will continue to be maintained in a safe and high quality condition, new development will not negatively impact the capacity or level of service of local roads, and the Town's budget will not be adversely impacted by the addition of new public roads.

Strategy 1: Local road standards should result in new roads that are built in a manner that meets the Town's safety, aesthetic, and environmental protection goals. Update the existing minimum requirements for new roads, streets and highways to be consistent with the Delaware County rural road standards or the ASHTO standards for rural roads. Such standards will help slow traffic and ensure that new roads are consistent with the rural character of Colchester. During this update, consider the following rural road standards:

Road width: 18 feet and 2 lanes

Shoulder width: 1'-2' on 2 sides of gravel and grass

Use of cul-de-sacs should be limited, but where they are the only option, road standards could be:

Road width: 18' and 2 lanes

Shoulder width: 1'-2' on 2 sides of gravel and grass

Speed limit: 25 mph (average daily traffic load of less than 100 vehicle trips per day)

Turnaround should have a radius of 30' with a 10-foot right-of-way. For very low-volume cul-de-sacs (10 or fewer homes), a T or Y-shaped turnaround could be allowed as it results in a smaller road surface.

Strategy 2: Work to retain roadside trees wherever feasible. Tree-lined roads serve to reduce traffic speeds and also contribute to the rural character of the area. Although this is especially important in the hamlet areas, other rural roads can also benefit from having roadside trees. In hamlet areas, consider initiating a street tree planting program.

Strategy 3: The Town should consider participation in programs offered by the Cornell Local Roads Program to inventory, classify and manage local roads in Colchester. Local roads are classified based on traffic volumes, types of vehicles using the road, and the adjacent land use. For this task, use the *Manual: Guidelines for Rural Town and County Roads* (Local Roads Research and Coordination Council. December 1992. New York State Department of Transportation. Albany, NY 50 pp.) for low-volume roads with fewer than 400 cars per day as recommended by the New York State Department of Transportation, Local Roads Research and Coordination Council and the publication *Classifying and Managing Low-Volume Local Roads* (Geoffroy, Donald, P.E. 1996. Cornell Local Roads Program, CLRP Report # 96-6). These manuals outline a classification system for low-volume roads, offer guidelines for the rehabilitation of a low-volume road, and contain local road maintenance guidelines and recommendations

for traffic control.

Strategy 4: New development should be built in a manner so that there are no negative impacts to the capacity or level of service of state, county, or local roads. (Level of service is a grading system for roads and intersections and is based on traffic flow. It is useful in making an assessment of existing traffic conditions.) The Town's subdivision regulations should take into consideration methods to control future traffic congestion by reducing the number of driveways from a subdivision or other development to an arterial road. These techniques include: restrictions on the number of driveways or access drives that are allowed from a subdivision to the arterial; use of shared driveways and/or access roads to the public roadway; setting minimum separation requirements for driveways; and requiring that the subdivided properties will have driveways entering to the lowest classification of road serving the property.

Strategy 5: The Town recognizes that there is much confusion between New York State Route 206 and County Route 7 (Cat Hollow). County Route 7 is designated as part of the NYS Route 206 Touring Route although it is a county road. Because County Route 7 carries state markers identifying it as a touring route, travelers expect the same level of service as a state road, including plowing and annual repairs. The County DPW can not provide that same level of service and as a consequence, receives numerous complaints about road conditions and confusion about the roads' designation. Further confusing the matter is the fact that County Route 7 accesses NYS Route 206 in Roscoe and in Downsville. As a result of this confusion and to assist in creating a more understandable transportation system for visitors, it is recommended that the Town of Colchester support the transfer of County Route 7 to New York State to be a state designated road.

NYC Watershed:

Goal: Increased communication and understanding between the Town and New York City will be beneficial for the Town's future. The Town will take full advantage of funding, technical assistance, and other programs offered through the Watershed Agreement.

Strategy 1: Work with NYC to implement a program where watershed lands are opened up for timber harvesting and stone quarrying activities when done using best management practices.

Strategy 2: Continue to actively promote installation of a filtration system for New York City.

Strategy 3: Communicate regularly with NYCDEP, the County Planning Department, the Catskill Watershed Corporation, and the NYS Department of State so that Colchester can take advantage of technical assistance, grants or other funding available for projects in Town as they become available.

Strategy 4: New York City controls water releases in the Pepacton Reservoir. As a result of high water levels in the reservoir, rain and snowmelt waters are released directly into the East Branch of the Delaware River. Recent statistics have shown that flooding has occurred downstream because the water levels in the reservoir have been kept at 100% capacity. For example, a 5.5 inch rain in August 2003 resulted in a 10 foot flood at the monitoring station in Harvard, NY and the reservoir was at 98.2% capacity. A 2.05 inch rain in October of 2003 resulted in the river cresting at 12 feet when the reservoir was at 100.4% capacity. This data indicates that when full, even smaller rain or snowmelt events can cause rapid high levels of flooding downstream which creates a threat to the health and safety of residents residing along the East Branch. In order to avert this dangerous situation, carefully timed scheduled releases must be done. In order to ensure that the town's interests and concerns about this flooding are being addressed, the Town should work to have New York City devise a flood hazard prevention plan and actively work with the County Emergency Management Service to incorporate adequate response procedures relating to these water releases in the county hazard mitigation plan. The Town should also develop their own hazard mitigation plan to address all potentially hazardous conditions, including flooding resulting from water releases from the reservoir. Colchester should work with and remain an active participant in the Watershed Coalition and the Catskill Watershed Corporation as one approach to address this problem.

Action Plan

The following table summarizes all the recommendations and potential strategies that Colchester could implement to meet the vision and goals detailed in this plan. Each action is also identified by the priority of implementing the task (time frame), which group or organization could implement the task (task to be done by) and potential funding sources, if needed. The time frames are organized as follows:

- High Priority
- Intermediate Priority
- Long-term Priority
- Ongoing (task can be implemented on an ongoing basis)

Ultimately, the Town Board has the primary responsibility to implement this plan. They can assign specific duties and tasks to various groups including the planning board, or they can appoint ad-hoc committees to help them. The groups that could be involved in implementing these tasks include:

- Town Board (TB)
- Planning Board (PB)
- Delaware County Planning Department (DC)
- Local organizations and Business Groups (LO)
- Building Inspector (BI)
- Ad-Hoc Committee (AC)
- Town Assessor (TA)

Action	Time Frame	Task to be Done By*	Potential Funding Source, if needed	Plan Reference
Agriculture and Rural Character				
Fully implement all requirements of NY Ag District Law	O	PB		48
Encourage continued support of and recruit landowners to participate in NYS Ag District program	O	TA		48
Educate landowners about ex value exemption program and enforce penalties when farmland is converted.	O	TA		49
Implement local right-to-farm law	H	TB		49
Consider adding local tax incentives for small agricultural properties and operations	I	TB		49
Support use of conservation easements to protect remaining farmlands and woodlands	O	TB, PB		49
Consider amending local subdivision law to better	H	TB with input	NYS DOS, NYC, Funding may be needed for	50

Action	Time Frame	Task to be Done By*	Potential Funding Source, if needed	Plan Reference
protect agriculture and farmland (buffering, clustering, conservation subdivisions, etc.)		from PB, DC, and perhaps AC	county, attorney or consultant fees, possible via Catskill Watershed Corp.	
Consider establishing density requirements for new development	H	TB with input from PB, DC, and perhaps AC	NYS DOS, NYC, Funding may be needed for county, attorney or consultant fees, possible via Catskill Watershed Corp.	53
Work to balance Town goals and personal property rights.	O	TB, PB		54
Environment				
Initiate mechanisms to protect steep slope areas. Several methods and options are outlined in plan.	H	TB with input from PB, DC, and perhaps AC	NYS DOS, NYC, Funding may be needed for county, attorney or consultant fees.	56
Consider establishing a local setback to protect streams	I	TB with input from PB, DC, and perhaps AC		55
Establish a site plan review law (this recommendation is made to address many issues in other topic areas as well).	H	TB with input from PB, DC, and perhaps AC	NYS DOS, NYC, Funding may be needed for county, attorney or consultant fees.	57
Work with Delaware County and the DCAP programs	O	TB		57
Fully implement SEQRA and facilitate training for Planning and Town Board members.	O	TB, PB		58
Consider use of septic maintenance districts or other alternatives for managing wastewater.	H	TB	NYS DOS, NYC, NYS EFC Funding may be needed for county, attorney or consultant fees.	58
Consider establishing wellhead and spring protection districts to protect water sources.	H	TB	NYS DOS, NYC, NYS EFC Funding may be needed for county, attorney or consultant	58

Action	Time Frame	Task to be Done By*	Potential Funding Source, if needed	Plan Reference
			fees.	
Colchester's Hamlets				
Implement economic development recommendations made in the Downsville Downtown Assessment.	O	TB, LO	New York State Small Cities Grant Program, also contact NYS Department of State	59
Set up hamlet ad-hoc committees to the Town Board to discuss, communicate about, and solve issues related to the hamlets.	H	TB, AC		59
Consider initiating a town newsletter.	O	TB	Possibly Catskill Watershed Corp.	59
Consider establishing hamlet districts to implement specific to the hamlet areas.	H	TB with input from PB, DC, and perhaps AC	NYS DOS, NYC Funding may be needed for county, attorney or consultant fees.	59
Economic Development				
Work with landowners to explore economic benefits of integrating bluestone mining and forestry operations.	O	LO	Possible funding from the bluestone industry	60
Promote bluestone and timber industries but ensure that best management practices are used to promote environmental stewardship and personal safety.	O	TB, LO		60
Continue to promote area through brochures and other methods.	I	LO		60
Aggressively work to enhance telecommunication infrastructure.	H	TB, LO, DC		61
Seek funds to initiate a Town web site and link to Chamber site.	I	TB, LO,	Chamber of Commerce or other business groups	61
Work with county to identify and attract new businesses.	O	TB, DC		61
Town Appearance				
Adopt new regulations to control junk cars and enhance building maintenance.	H	TB with input from	Funding may be needed for county, attorney or consultant fees.	62

Action	Time Frame	Task to be Done By*	Potential Funding Source, if needed	Plan Reference
		PB, DC, and perhaps AC		
Initiate a junk car removal program.	H	TB		62
Establish a semi-annual bulk-garbage day.	H	TB		62
Develop new welcome signs and plantings for major roads at the entrances to hamlets and Town boundaries.	I	AC, LO	Local fundraising	62
Coordinate a Town-wide beautification program.	O	TB, LO, AC	Local fundraising	62
Public Services				
Complete and implement the Emergency Action Plan.	H	TB		63
Consider eliminating local police department.	I	TB		63
Work to increase fire and emergency service volunteers by establishing a recruitment campaign and incentives.	O	LO, TB	Local fire departments	63
Amend local laws to ensure strong enforcement capabilities.	H	TB		63
Develop job duties and expectations for local enforcement activities.	I	TB		63
Design and develop local law enforcement booklet.	L	TB, BI		63
Promote on-going communication between the various boards, enforcement staff and town departments.	O	TB		64
Map all water system lines.	I	TB		64
Recreation				
Work with Downsville School to promote use of school facilities by the community.	O	LO, AC		65
Work to develop a golf course below the dam.	L	LO, AC		65
Work with NYC to enhance access to and use of the Reservoir.	H	TB		65
Review all properties to be purchased by NYC for their	O	AC, PB		65

Action	Time Frame	Task to be Done By*	Potential Funding Source, if needed	Plan Reference
recreational potential.				
Ensure that the scheduled review of recreational uses with NYSDEC, USEPA, and Sporting Advisory Committee takes place.	I	TB		65
Work to implement recommendations made by the Catskill Center's Empowerment Initiative.	I	LO, AC		65
Historic Features				
Support efforts to map local cemeteries.	L	LO, TB	PRESERVE NY GRANT	66
Consider providing assistance to build a community center to house, among other uses, a historical museum.	I	TB, LO, AC	NYS EPF GRANT	66
Investigate and promote registration of historic sites with the State and National Historic Register program.	L	LO AND PRIVATE LAND OWNERS	PRESERVE NY GRANT	66
Consider developing a National Historic District (not a local, regulatory district).	L	LO AND PRIVATE LAND OWNERS, TB	PRESERVE NY GRANT	66
Use SEQRA and its procedures to ensure thorough review of projects and their impacts on historic resources.	O	PB		67
Seek grants for historic preservation programs	I	LO, TB	PRESERVE NY GRANT, NYS EPF	67
Develop a new brochure highlighting the historic and recreation resources, possibly as a walking tour.	H	LO	Local fundraising, historical organizations/advocates	67
Seek funds and create a display explaining the bluestone industry and its role in the area.	I	LO	BLUESTONE INDUSTRY CONTRIBUTIONS	67
Seek funds for and promote use of historical markers throughout Town.	I	LO	??	67

Action	Time Frame	Task to be Done By*	Potential Funding Source, if needed	Plan Reference
Housing				
Encourage development of senior housing opportunities, especially near the hamlets.	O	TB, PB		68
Consider offering incentives for provision of dedicated affordable lots when major subdivisions occur.	I	TB		68
Transportation				
Update local road standards so they are consistent with accepted rural road standards.	I	TB		69
Retain roadside trees wherever possible, and consider tree planting in hamlets.	O	TB AND HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT		69
Consider participating in the Cornell Local Roads Programs.	H	HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT		69
Ensure that the Town subdivision law considers traffic impacts and use access management methods to reduce negative impacts.	I	TB		70
NYC Watershed				
Work with New York City to increase access to watershed lands for timber harvesting and stone quarrying.	H	TB, LO		71
Actively promote installation of a filtration system for New York City.	H	TB		71
Take full advantage of all technical assistance, grants or other funding as it becomes available through NYS DOS, NYC DEP, county or Catskill Watershed Corporation.	H	TB, LO		71