

III. SHANDAKEN TOMORROW

A. Future Needs

This section reviews the inherent needs based on current conditions and deficiencies.

1. Population and Housing

According to the Bureau of the Census-Building Permits Annual Summary report, the total number of residential building permits from 1990-1999 totaled 59 units – an average of 6 permits per year. In the previous decade, the number of building permits averaged 19 per year. Building permits are anticipated to be minimal and at a flat rate. The number of houses in Shandaken is anticipated to increase at a steady rate per historical trends. Most existing residential parcels are already built, especially within the hamlet and village areas. However, intensification of existing residential parcels is possible. The cost of housing will continue to be a significant issue, as a lower percentage of housing that is considered “affordable” will exist.

According to the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council - Population Forecasts for Ulster County and the surrounding five counties within the NYC metropolitan statistical area, Ulster County is anticipated to experience a flat growth rate of less than 1%/year until the year 2020. The County total population is projected to increase to 190,389 by 2010 and 203,871 by 2020. The Town of Shandaken population is estimated to increase at a rate of approximately 0.62%/year and reach 3,635 by the year 2020. The proportion of senior citizens to the total population has been steady, but the increase in longevity, plus the likely conversion of part-time residents to full-time retirees, will lead to an eventual increase in that segment of the population. Most will continue to live in their own residences.

2. Land Use and Development

Due to the significant amount of land under the State or NYC ownership as part of the Catskill Park or Forest Preserve, limited opportunity exists for future development to occur in the community. Combining these State or NYC lands with the built hamlet and village environments, approximately 84% of the Town of Shandaken is “built out”. The remaining land that is either vacant, under private ownership, or can be further intensified is estimated at approximately 4,760 acres or 16% of the Town. Most of this potential development is scattered throughout the town and primarily located along the valleys and the Route 28 corridor. According to preliminary calculations, approximately 1,460 acres could see increased development intensities according to existing zoning. In addition, there are private and vacant lands throughout the town that could provide an additional 3,300 acres of development. Full build out of this land is not anticipated within the time frame of this plan. These approximate projections on the remaining land that may be developed in the future do not take into consideration the potential changes in the floodway and floodplain that may result from FEMA’s update of flood zone maps.

Another consideration is the type of development the community wishes to encourage. While property owners do have the right to develop their properties, communities can consider development regulations related to type, density, building materials used and styles that are consistent with the vision of the community and compatible with the surrounding environment. Such development regulations are a way to balance the rights of the property owners and fulfill community needs.

3. Infrastructure

Water & Sewer –Pine Hill and part of Chichester have sewer systems. Phoenicia’s system is in the planning stages. Pine Hill, Phoenicia and parts of Chichester have water service. Continued growth in the hamlets is inhibited by this deficiency and alternative and creative opportunities to serve the entire community should be considered.

Cell Phone Service - The placement of signal transmission equipment is essential to the operation of wireless telephone services for the residents, visitors and emergency service providers. At present, Shandaken lacks needed transmission equipment, except for a cell tower on Highmount. Every opportunity should be examined to identify additional locations for signal transmission equipment placement (utility rights of way, trails, public and private mountain ranges). There are several types of equipment available today – large, intrusive cell towers are no longer the only option. New and innovative technology related to the aesthetic characteristics of signal transmission equipment can allow them to blend into any environment. They can be disguised as trees, church steeples, building peaks and flag poles to minimize the impacts on the surrounding environment, while providing a critical service to the success of the community.

Internet Communication - Additional methods of obtaining high-speed Internet connections (cable modem, satellite, digital subscriber lines) and wireless should be considered.

Pedestrians/Trails – Pedestrian amenities should be maintained and enhanced at each of the major hamlets to encourage community cohesion and vitality. Sidewalk and/or trail systems connecting the commercial main streets of each hamlet and village to the core residential areas should be considered. The Phoenicia Riverwalk should be constructed. The trails currently available should be continued and expanded upon. These trail systems should connect and link each of the hamlets and villages or multi-modal transportation stations. A community-wide greenway, trail and multi-modal plan should be considered. Public/private partnerships will likely be necessary to successfully implement this plan.

Transportation System – Land use and transportation needs should be balanced to meet the communities economic and development needs, while reducing traffic congestion, improving safety and incorporating multi model transportation options. Route 28 is currently operating well below capacity and is capable of handling notable increases in traffic volumes (seasonal or permanent), without the need for additional through travel lanes. The Ulster County Transportation Plan forecasts the Route 28 segment from Phoenicia east to the town line as experiencing an increase in traffic volumes from the latest 5,100 AADT to 6,100 ADT, or a 20% change by the year 2020. While this volume is the highest served in the Town of Shandaken, is considered a low-volume road segment. The volume to capacity ratio for this same section of Route 28 is anticipated to increase from 0.20 to 0.23. This means that this segment will still only carry less than a quarter of its capacity. The remaining road segments are anticipated to see similar growth rates of approximately 1%/year and will continue to operate well below capacity. These projections, documented in the “Ulster County Transportation Plan,” include regional growth patterns, and locations of anticipated growth based on the projected housing, population, and employment bases.

These projections are purely based on past and projected regional trends outlined by the county. Specific development opportunities may arise that could alter these projected patterns. Any major development within any community is normally required to identify and mitigate their direct impact on the highway system, environment and town services, through state, county and town highway access permitting laws and environmental procedures.

The Town of Shandaken experiences seasonal fluctuations in traffic volumes during various times of the year. During high peak seasons, traffic volumes may increase sharply and place additional demand on the transportation system. Continuous monitoring should be performed at the major intersections along the Route 28 corridor, including the entrances to the various hamlets: State Routes 42, 214, and 212 and County Routes 47 and 49A intersections. Evaluation of the need for left turn lanes at these primary intersections should be considered with any major development that may occur. In addition, traffic control devices and street lighting for added safety, should be considered at these locations.

Flood Protection – Development in the valleys must take into account the serious problem of flooding and what mechanisms or programs are available to limit damage to existing structures or new development in the floodplains. Given the narrow topography of valleys and the fact that most private land is found here, future impacts to residents and businesses from flooding must be considered and addressed. The impacts on the Town's infrastructure (buildings, roads, utilities) and emergency services could also be significant. Ways to both minimize flood damages and to handle flood emergencies should be explored.

4. Community Services

Emergency Communication – An alternative emergency communication system needs to be identified in light of Verizon's recent announcement that it will be eliminating many of the public telephones in the Town.

Public Parking - Parking is limited in the village hamlets and part of hamlet revitalization has focused on providing more parking spaces to better accommodate the seasonal population variations. The Town's zoning regulations make provisions for ensuring adequate parking for new construction.

Public Facilities – The Town currently does not have an evacuation center of sufficient size to handle a significant amount of the population, in case of a flood or other disaster. The Town does not have modern, centralized facilities for communication, emergency services and public services. Public restrooms throughout the town are desired.

B. Vision & Goals

The future of the Town of Shandaken must rest on a commonly shared vision of progress. The past, present and future of Shandaken is tied to its unique natural resources – the mountain ranges, the streams, and the valleys. These resources -- magnificent mountains, clear streams, diverse wildlife, spectacular views -- provide the raw material for a healthy, peaceful life style for the Town's residents, balanced with a successful economy based on environmentally sensitive development to sustain them. Based on the history, natural resources and the needs of the community, the Town of Shandaken is a natural peaceful haven that has a significant potential to draw upon the tourism market. With the tourist-based businesses that exist today, plus continued coordinated efforts to enhance these natural resources, Shandaken has a bright future.

To achieve this vision, the comprehensive plan establishes the following goals and objectives (goals are in bold-face type):

A. Protect and preserve the environmental, historical and cultural features and resources within the Town of Shandaken from harm, physical degradation and visual impacts.

- Minimize, through land use planning, zoning and/or development regulations impacts to existing air quality, water quality, wetlands, streams, fauna, flora, visibility, steep slopes and scenic vistas.
- Determine and incorporate needed erosion and sedimentation control, plus storm water management requirements into site plan regulations to maintain regional water quality.
- Identify the most valuable manmade resources, which are of historic, archaeological, or cultural significance, and implement all practicable means to protect and restore these resources. Promote these features in tourism materials.
- The long tradition of arts, crafts and cultural expression in the Central Catskills should be strongly supported and encouraged as a link to the Town's past and an integral part of the future.

B. Promote the economic development of the Town of Shandaken to ensure an acceptable standard of living for its residents.

- Economic development decisions will be guided by the desire to achieve a balance between environmental protection, quality of life and employment opportunities for community residents.
- Recognize the link between economic development and available income-appropriate housing and establish proactive means to ensure that each is in balance with the other.
- Promote and develop four-season tourism based on the Town's extensive natural, historic and cultural resources.
- Promote business activities, which do not negatively impact natural resources or the environment.
- Encourage second homes, cottage industries, arts, crafts, theatre, music and home-based businesses as economic development means.
- Assist local businesses in obtaining financing by establishing links with appropriate agencies and financial institutions.

C. Provide programs and laws to guide future development towards desired patterns within the Town of Shandaken.

- Establish a development pattern utilizing land use regulations, public investment strategies and other means that are consistent with environmental constraints and opportunities, balance the socio-economic needs of the community and respectful of existing or historical land use patterns.
- Employ the Town's Land Use Plan, Zoning Law and Subdivision Regulations to reflect desired traditional development locations, quality and patterns of concentrated hamlets separated by low-density open areas. Existing hamlets should be revitalized and the distinct character of each identified and promoted.

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- Development regulations should be flexible enough to accommodate specific development circumstances, without jeopardizing the development patterns outlines in this Plan. Incentives could be provided to developers who contribute desired types and sizes of development, protect important natural or man-made features.
- Develop a means to support tourism in the area that includes encouraging government and non-profits, businesses and the facilities themselves to better plan, coordinate and expand tourism-related activities.
- Use expanded infrastructure to promote growth in desired areas.
- Certain uses, especially adult businesses and casino gambling, are incompatible with the rural character of the Town and should be limited and restricted to the extent allowed by law.
- Housing opportunities for the full economic range of the Town's population should be encouraged in a form that is compatible with the scale and pattern of increased needs.
- Hamlet boundaries should be reviewed to define the limits within which economic development efforts should be focused.

D. Provide the infrastructure necessary to meet the other Comprehensive Plan goals and to meet the health, safety and quality of life needs of the residents of Shandaken.

- Necessary infrastructure (sewage disposal, storm water and water supply) and public parking must be provided to allow further development in the hamlets.
- State of the art communications services must be provided to facilitate economic growth, particularly in sectors that are dependent on high-speed access to outside markets, and to enhance emergency service response.
- A safe and efficient transportation system should be maintained to meet the needs of the community, particularly the youth and senior citizens.
- Multi-modal transportation (rail, trails, sidewalk) systems should be expanded and linked to the major hamlets and villages.
- Enhanced, affordable public service should be provided to support the quality of life of residents and the experience of tourists.
- Community/cultural centers that bind the history and the future of Shandaken should be encouraged consistent with economic and tourism goals.
- Facilities that meet the day-to-day needs of the town should be considered.
- A flood avoidance, mitigation and protection plan should be developed and implemented to minimize flood damage.

E. Be proactive in establishing regional partnerships to address issues that transcend the Town boundaries

- Develop working relationships and a spirit of cooperation with involved state and federal agencies, and private organizations, to work towards common goals. Facilitate cooperative relationships with involved local, state and federal agencies, NYCDEP, and private organizations, to work together to address the often conflicting environmental and economic issues that face the Catskill region.

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- Work with area Chambers of Commerce or other economic development agencies/groups to develop regional economic incentive programs.
 - Work with NYSDOT, Ulster County, NYSDEC, NYCDEP and other agencies/groups to develop solutions to regional transportation, flooding, water supply and other infrastructure issues.
- F. Develop community education and outreach programs to foster an understanding of key issues facing the Town and encourage public participation in developing effective solutions**
- Develop a public education program to make people aware of key environmental, development, economic, housing, infrastructure and other issues in the Town.
 - Develop effective means to communicate information and obtain input from the community.
 - Continue to provide ample opportunity for public involvement in all Town processes.