

Village of Monroe

A New Comprehensive Plan for Monroe in the 21st Century

Village of Monroe, Orange County, New York
Draft Comprehensive Plan
April 5, 2016

As recommended by the
Village of Monroe Steering Committee

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Introduction

"The Master Plan for the Village of Monroe cannot be expected to anticipate every need of all the years to come. A final plan for eternity would be a dead hand on all hopes for progress.... It is most important that the Master Plan and zoning structure be re-examined at frequent intervals. They are purposely flexible, and can readily be adjusted to keep pace with the times."

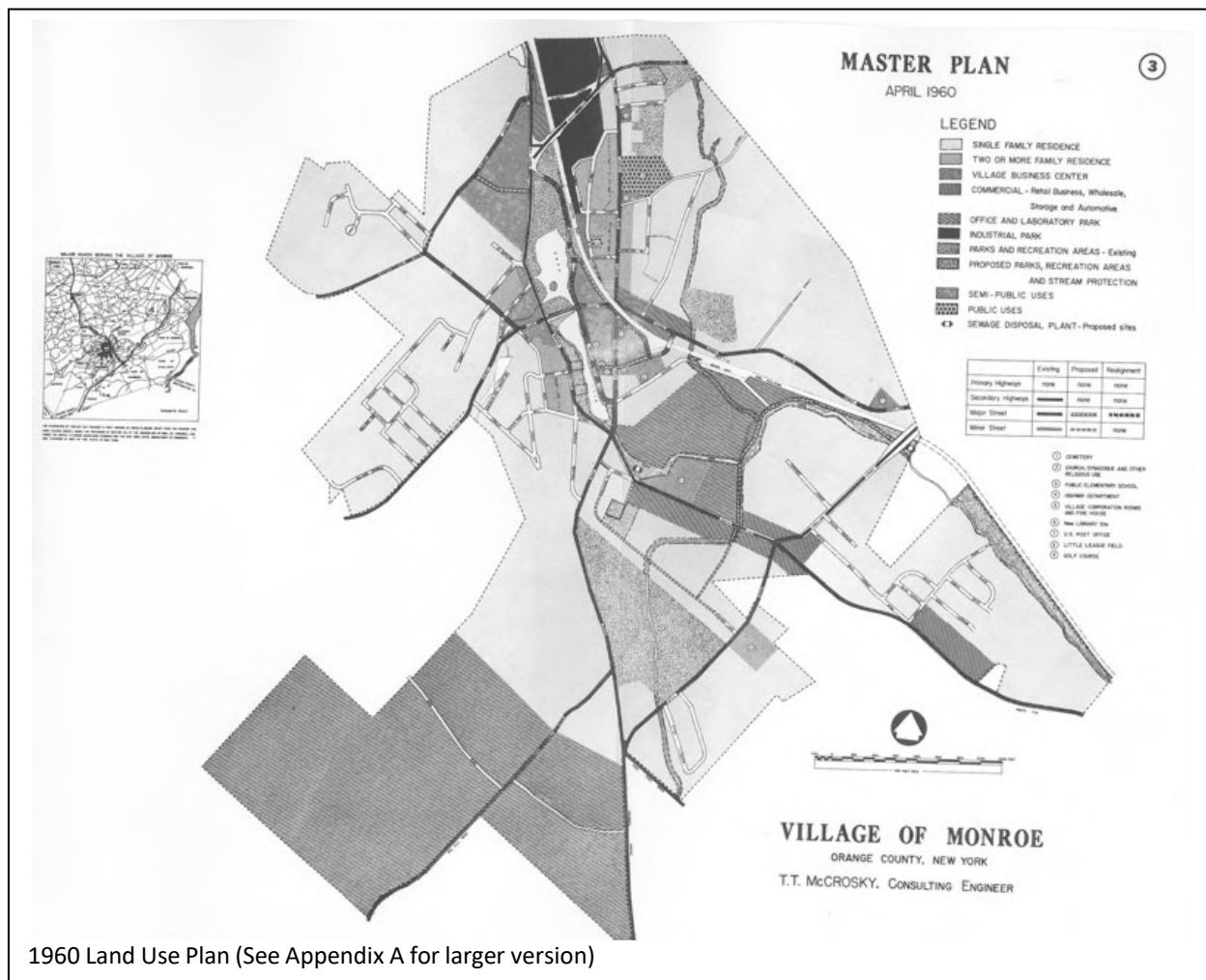
- April 1960 - Master Plan Report for the Village of Monroe

Background

This Plan is the first unified and comprehensive look at the land use and settlement patterns within the Village of Monroe since the original Master Plan was written in 1960. That 1960 Master Plan recognized that an effective plan would require frequent and timely reexamination.

Unfortunately, that 1960 plan did not establish recommendations and protocols to help ensure the periodic reexamination and update. In preparing this Plan, it was discovered that the original 1960 plan was literally locked away in a vault in the Village Clerk's office, its pages crisp and un-creased, it's corners still sharp.

Fifty-two years later, the Village of Monroe - and the world - have clearly undergone significant changes unforeseen by even the most visionary and informed people when the original 1960 plan was written. Although the 1960 Plan has remained relatively untouched, it was the basis for the Village's zoning. Unlike the 1960 land use plan, the Zoning Local Law has been reactively amended from time-to-time to respond to development pressures. This has allowed the Village to grow but not toward a unified Vision based on Citizen input.



1960 Land Use Plan (See Appendix A for larger version)

It has therefore been under a fluid regulatory and policy framework that the majority of lands in the Village have been settled and constructed. While some of the original 1960s policies have endured, such as the development of a majority of Village land for single-family residences, others were less effective, such as proposals for large tracts of office and laboratory parks along Rye Hill Road - recently developed for luxury single-family residences - and in the area of the former Monroe Race Track - now protected open space.

The Village Board, in undertaking this update of the 1960 Comprehensive Plan, agrees with the 1960 Village Board insofar as a Comprehensive Plan must be a "living" document that is intended to be reexamined, updated, reconsidered, improved and adjusted according to the needs of the time. However, the reexamination must be proactive and comprehensive, not reactive and piecemeal. The Village Board therefore has included a timeframe and recommendations to ensure that this plan does not go 52 years before its next update.

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A comprehensive plan is a document prepared by a local government that looks at the interrelated functions of a community, establishes aspirations based on public and stakeholder input and establishes strategies to achieve those aspirations by coordinating the efforts of local government staff, departments and regulatory boards, and to a lesser extent, those efforts of higher layers of government such as the Town, County, State and Federal governments. At its core, a comprehensive plan is a document that sets a destination for a community and maps a course to get there.

A comprehensive plan is not required under New York State law. However, New York State law requires that zoning, if adopted by a Village, be in harmony with a "well considered plan." Generally, all actions of the Village's governing Board of Trustees, departments and regulatory boards should be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. Additionally, other government agencies, whether they are adjoining communities or higher levels of government, must consider the policies and goals of the Village when considering actions that may impact the Village.

This document constitutes the Comprehensive Plan for the future of the Village of Monroe, New York. Among the most important powers granted to a local government by the New York State Legislature is the authority and responsibility to undertake a comprehensive plan and regulate local land use for the purpose of protecting the public health, safety and general welfare of its residents. This plan is intended to provide a foundation and rationale for all future zoning and land use decisions, as well as capital investment and funding requests. It can also assist anyone involved in local policy decision-making and can provide helpful insight to those considering investment within the Village.

Process

In order to prepare this plan, the Village created a Steering Committee which consisted of representatives from the Planning, Zoning and Village Boards, Village Staff, as well as citizen members and local business owners to provide a range of perspectives on local planning and development issues.

Following data gathering, the Steering Committee kicked off the planning phase of the document preparation by conducting a public visioning meeting on April 19, 2012 at Smith's Clove Park to gather information and ideas from residents and other stakeholders. The Committee recognized that the most successful plans must garner support from all potential stakeholders early and include them often.

The Committee preceded the public visioning session by publishing an in-depth article in the weekly free newspaper - *The Photo News*. Additionally, Committee members generated interests by informing family, friends, civic associations and the recently formed Monroe Chamber of Commerce. Additionally, the Village started and advertised a Comprehensive Plan website that would be a repository for the background reports and follow up minutes and drafts, and that would be an easy way for residents and other stakeholders to keep track of the process and provide feedback.

After the Visioning meeting, having determined that the area most in need of intensive planning was the downtown, the Committee held a follow-up design charrette on the downtown. The public visioning meeting was held September 13th, 2012 and was well attended by the public and business people. At this meeting, problems facing the downtown were discussed, as were different approaches to solutions. This more hands-on meeting led to a number of potential physical and programmatic solutions to improve the functioning of the downtown, as well as examples of how the aesthetics of downtown could be improved.

Desiring to engage downtown building owners specifically, a second meeting was held for property owners at Village Hall on October 18, 2012. This was a smaller meeting, and focused mostly on the costs of building



Several page article by Bob Quinn announcing first public kickoff meeting. The Photo News has been an indispensable outlet for keeping the public informed throughout the planning process.



Public charrette on Downtown (Second Public Meeting)

improvements. It included a frank discussion on the needs of downtown landlords, and their ability and motivations to participate in downtown improvements.

Before the Village Board of Trustees adopted this plan and amendments to local land use regulations intended to implement its recommendations, the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee and the Village Board held a public hearing on June 18, 2013 to allow for comments from Village residents and other interested parties on draft recommendations.

This updated comprehensive plan was also subjected to the provisions of the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) under article eight of the New York State Environmental Conservation Law.

Organization

This Comprehensive Plan is organized by theme, with background sections on existing conditions followed by the Plan's Vision Statement, Goals and Objectives, and policies regarding Housing, Recreation/Environment/Culture, Connections, and Downtown/Commerce. The Vision is a short statement about what the Village wishes to achieve over the next 20 years. This is followed by a description of Goals of the plan. These are short and broad aspirations that the Village must pursue in order to achieve its vision. Policy chapters follow the Vision. Each policy chapter is grouped by subject matter, for example, "Plan: Connections" discusses roads and pedestrian circulation, while "Plan: Housing" discusses neighborhoods and affordable housing. Each policy chapter provides additional background, and expands Plan goals into objectives, which are more specific than goals. Lastly, policy recommendations are offered to achieve each objective. Under each objective, a short environmental impact discussion follows. This environmental impact discussion addresses the environmental, social and economic implications of the recommendations. Goals, objectives and recommendations are summarized at the back of the document, and chief responsibility is assigned in an easy reference Matrix.

State Environmental Quality Review

"...All agencies [should] conduct their affairs with an awareness that they are stewards of the air, water, land, and living resources, and that they have an obligation to protect the environment for the use and enjoyment of this and all future generations."

- 6 NYCRR § 617.1

The State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) identifies the adoption of a municipality's land use plan as an Action that is presumed likely to have a significant adverse impact on the environment. SEQRA particularly recommends that a municipality prepare a Generic Environmental Impact Statement (Generic EIS) for the adoption of a Comprehensive Plan.

Generic EISs are broader than site- or project-specific EISs. Because a Comprehensive Plan only sets policy governing future land use and land development, and because zoning only regulates land use and land development, details as to site-specifics (location, size, topography, environmental resources, potential habitat, social setting, etc.) and to project-specifics (square footage, height, operational and construction parameters, etc.) are still to be determined. Therefore Generic EISs should discuss the logic and rationale for the choices made therein.

SEQRA instructs municipalities to base Generic EISs on conceptual information and to identify important natural resources, cultural features, patterns and character. Generic EISs should discuss the implications of policies that narrow future options (such as regulations) as well as analyze hypothetical situations that are likely to occur (such as increased population by increasing the amount of land area where residential development is permitted, or increasing the allowable residential density permitted). (See 6 NYCRR § 617.10.)

Therefore, this Plan not only describes existing conditions and the policies sought to achieve the Village's goals, but a Generic Environmental Impact discussion also follows each objective proposed in this Plan.

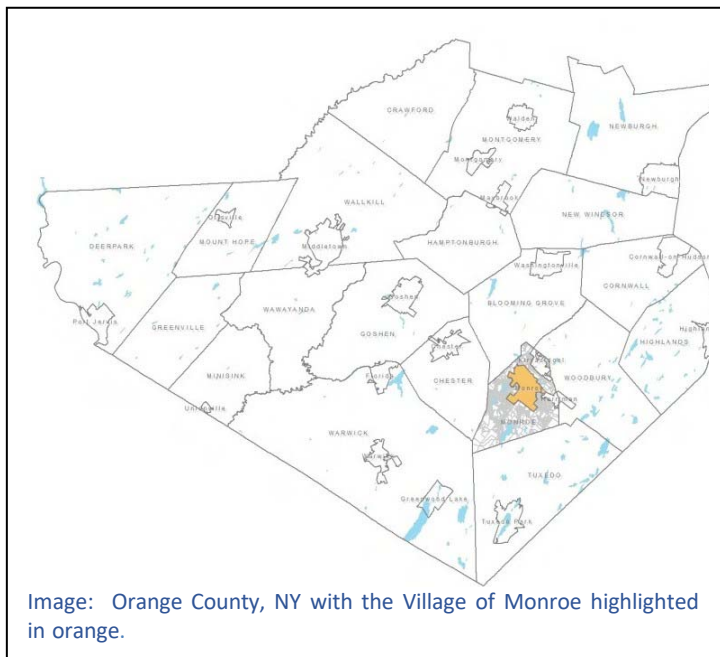
The discussion demonstrates the Village's consideration of environmental, economic and social impacts that might occur as a result of proposed policies, and describes the implications of these policies and the reasoning of the Village in balancing the social, economic and environmental needs of the Village.

Local and Regional Setting

"I gradually became aware that my interiority was inseparable from my exteriority, that the geography of my city was the geography of my soul."

- Aleksandar Hemon, author: *Nowhere Man*

The Village of Monroe is located in the south, central portion of Orange County in the heart of New York State's Hudson Valley approximately one hour north of New York City. The Village consists of approximately 3.5 square miles and is bordered mainly by the unincorporated Town of Monroe and a small section of the Village of Harriman. The Village is the largest by land area and second largest by population of three Villages occupying land within the Town of Monroe (Kiryas Joel being the most populous and Harriman being the smallest and least populous).



The Village has good access to the interstate highway system. New York State Route 208 begins at the northern boundary of the Village and travels north through the County and provides access to New York State Route 17/6 (future Interstate 86), which travels east-west through the County. Route 17/6 provides access to Interstate 87 (NYS Thruway north-south) approximately 3 miles to the east, while Interstate 84 (east-west) is accessible approximately 15 miles to the west. Bus service to New York City is available from within the Village, while rail service is available within two miles. International air travel is available from Stewart International Airport, approximately 15 miles to the north.

The Village also has excellent access to parks and natural resources with Bear Mountain, Goosepond Mountain, and Harriman and Sterling Forest State Parks all within 5 miles. The Hudson River is approximately 10 miles from the Village, and the Delaware River is approximately 20 miles. There are a number of lakes surrounding the Village, and, in fact, the Town of Monroe is often referred to as the Lake Region, reflecting its historic role as a summer retreat. The most notable natural resources within the Village are the Millponds, which form the social, cultural and aesthetic center of the community, if not quite the geographic center.

Existing Land Use

"Every man holds his property subject to the general right of the community to regulate its use to whatever degree the public welfare may require it."

- Theodore Roosevelt

Existing Village Zoning

As stated previously, while Monroe's current Comprehensive Plan was prepared more than 50 years ago and has never been updated. The Zoning Local Law has been amended from time to time in reaction to development pressures and evolving land use concerns and needs. The existing land use plan is therefore exemplified in the existing zoning local law, which is significantly different from the 1960 proposed land use plan.

Compared to surrounding communities, Monroe generally has a relatively low number of zoning districts. Three districts are residential and are differentiated by density; one district is mixed-use residential-commercial; one district is pure commercial; and one is a recreation district for Village-owned parkland. Lastly, there are two overlay zoning districts for multifamily conversion and environmentally sensitive land.

The mixed-use commercial-residential Central Business (CB) Zoning District is centrally located within the Village and encompasses all land around the Millponds, along Maple Avenue and properties on the west side of Route 17M from Bridge Street to Knight Street. Uses permitted as of right in this zone include banks, restaurants, personal services, medical and general offices, retail uses, auto repair, libraries, cultural and religious uses and senior housing. Second story apartments are permitted accessory uses on the second floor, and existing one- and two-family residences are

Will the curtain rise again for Monroe theater?

BY KATHY KAHN
kathy.kahn@photojournal.com

The Monroe 6 Theater, which remains shuttered after the owner was convicted of fraud, could soon be going on the auction block.

Jay Wilkins, the village of Monroe's building inspector, said, "The property was worth over \$5 million at one time, but I expect it will be sold for considerably lower now that we are in the depths of a recession."

But Mayor James Purcell hopes to see the theater bought and reopened.

And he might get his wish via Vermont lawmaker Kevin Mullin.


State Sen. Mullin is also in the theater business, and his company, Glenwood Movieplex Corp., has bought several movie

Nevertheless, it was well received by the community. With the nearest movie theater 10 miles away, it was literally the only game in town – and appeared to do a bustling business until Adie was accused of defrauding potential investors in a Ponzi scheme that involved tearing down a theater in Brooklyn and replacing it with condos.

Adie is waiting to be sentenced on securities and wire fraud charges in federal court in April for bilking investors out of more than \$500,000.

According to numerous press reports, Adie was using the investors' funds for personal use and to try to keep his theaters running.

Neither Adie nor his lawyer, Yonatan Aranoff of Foley & Lardner L.L.C. in Manhattan, could be reached for comment.



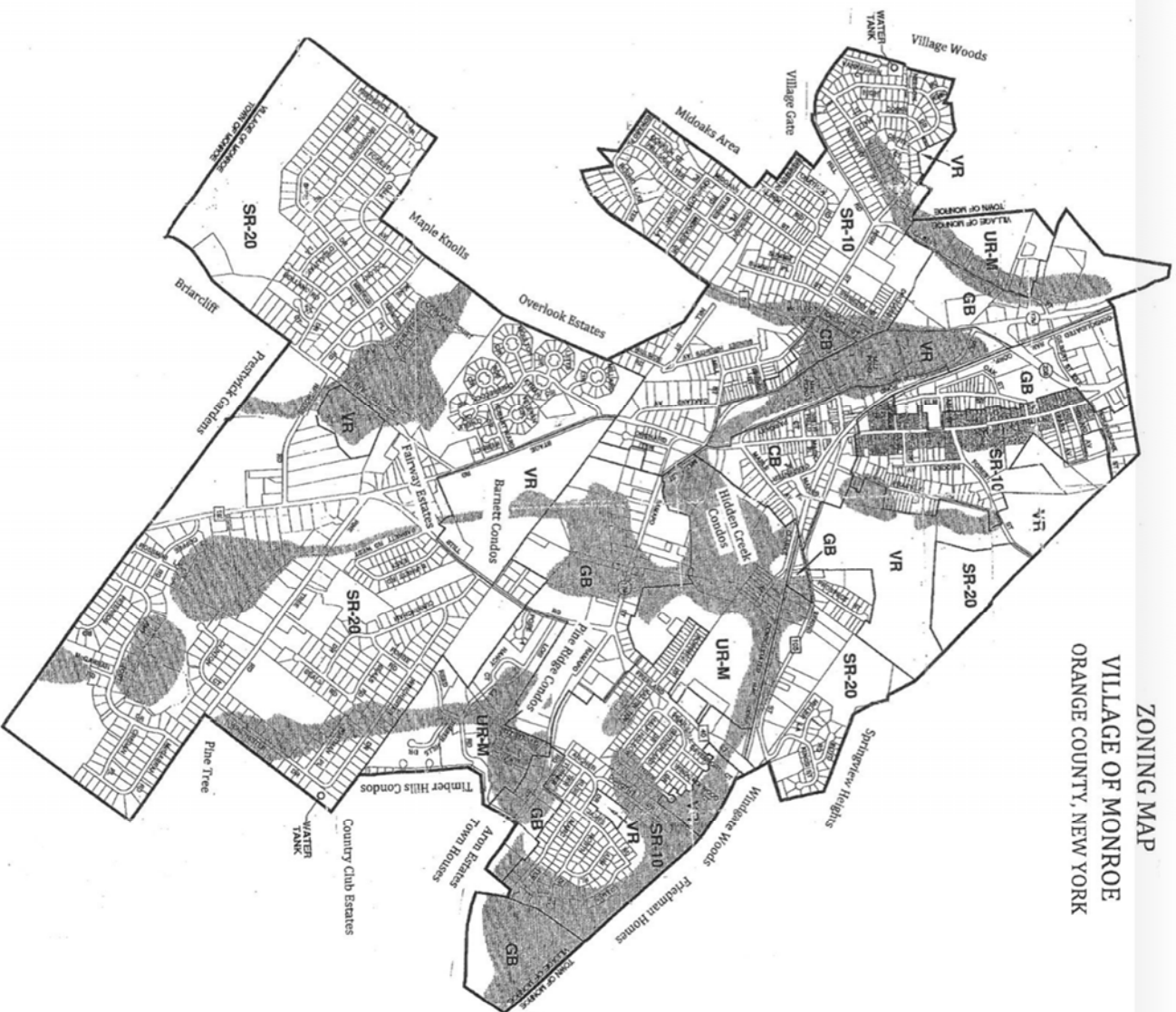
Article by Kathy Kahn of the Photo News. The opening of the Monroe Theater in 2008 was successfully in bringing Monroe Residents - especially children and families back to downtown up until its closure in 2011, when the owner was forced to abandon the project. The possibility of the theater reopening was seen as a strong economic development opportunity by the public participating in citizen outreach during preparation of Monroe Village 2.1. Reopening of a multiscreen movie theater in the downtown is an important element of the Village's plan to revitalize downtown.

permitted to continue. Generally this is the most flexible of the zoning districts in terms of bulk requirements, and there are few controls except for rear setback, building height (up to 50 feet in height is permitted for several uses), and lot coverage (generous control of up to 80% building coverage). Purely residential uses are generally required to meet the requirements of the SR-10 (quarter-acre) Residential District.

Moving out from the CB district along Route 17M to the north and south, land is zoned for General Business (GB). General Business permits most of the same uses as of right as the CB District. However, the GB district requires that uses be located on lots with setbacks, and significant open space. Accessory apartments are not permitted in the GB, although, like in the CB district, existing residential uses are permitted to continue. Senior housing is not permitted in the GB zoning district. Additional uses are permitted in the GB district which may require larger lots including garden centers, sale or storage of lumber and building materials, veterinary and animal kennels, and day care centers. Auto-related uses such as sales, repair and gasoline filling stations are also permitted in the GB (not in the CB). It is noted that the GB district includes areas of the Village previously zoned for light industry, so warehousing, storage and research facilities are permitted. Manufacturing and processing are not permitted anywhere in the Village. Generally, the areas of the Village zoned GB are all purely commercial areas. One noted exception to this is a portion of Elm Street, which has remained predominantly residential in character.

The densest residential district is the UR-M district, which permits few uses by right. These include recreational uses, community service uses (ambulance and fire), libraries, schools, religious assembly uses, convenience stores and single-family dwellings. This district also permits parking structures, mobile home courts, townhouses, multi-family buildings, and convalescent homes as conditional uses subject to minimal requirements of Section 200-60 of the Village Zoning Code containing additional requirements for specific uses. The district is principally intended to promote contemporary multifamily and single-family attached residential development. (Only age-restricted multifamily residential or upper-story apartments are permitted in the CB district.) Only conversion of large homes is permitted in the North Main Street area of the SR-10 District. Density for multi-family dwellings is based on bedroom count with the maximum permitted density set at 10 units per acre for a studio. The maximum density for townhouses is 8 units per net acre after deducting for certain sensitive environmental features as described in the Zoning Code. It is noted that there are few design and aesthetic controls related to the multifamily uses and townhouses permitted in this district. There are currently three UR-M districts in the Village of Monroe. These correspond with 1980s/90s townhouse developments in the vicinity of Stop & Shop Plaza, the recently constructed Hidden Creek Development off of Freeland Street, and a parcel on Gilbert Street currently under construction.

ZONING MAP VILLAGE OF MONROE ORANGE COUNTY, NEW YORK



DISTRICTS

- SR - 20 SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL
- SR - 10 SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL
- UR - M URBAN RESIDENTIAL MULTI-FAMILY
- GB GENERAL BUSINESS
- CB CENTRAL BUSINESS
- LI LIGHT INDUSTRY (distinbished by LL #1 of 1997)
- VR VILLAGE RECREATION
- VR MULTI-FAMILY CONVERSION - OVERLAY (LL #3 of 97 EXTENDED TO INCLUDE PROPERTY TW#207-1-9)
- VR ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE-OVERLAY
- VR COUNTY ROAD
- VR STATE HIGHWAY

Suburban residential zones within the Village include the SR-10 and SR-20 zones. The SR-20 zone comprises the vast majority of the southern portion of the Village as well as the area north of County Road 105 near Smith's Clove Park, where there are multiple recreation areas and sensitive environmental resources.

Generally, the older residential areas within the Village are zoned SR-10. Land along North Main Street zoned SR-10 is also within a Multi-family conversion overlay zone, which permits the conversion of single-family dwellings into multifamily dwellings on lots of at least five acres. Two-family dwellings require 50% greater lot areas than single-family detached dwellings. The 2010 census reports that there are 119 two-family residential structures within the Village of Monroe (60 structures).

Village Recreation Zones correspond with the Village's existing parklands and open space. These include Smith's Clove Park, Crane Park, Airplane Park, the Monroe Country Club (private), and open space parcels throughout the Village. Village recreation allows a very restricted range of uses including agriculture, parks, private recreation, utilities, religious uses and membership clubs.

There are two overlay districts within the Village of Monroe. The Multifamily Conversion Overlay District is located along North Main Street. The purpose of this overlay district is to allow the conversion of existing large dwellings to multiple apartments. This overlay allows the conversion of residential structures to multifamily use, where the SR-10 alone only permits conversion to two-family dwellings. There are few controls that are imposed on this area, and this overlay has led to landowners paving front yards, eliminating sidewalks and grass verges in favor of asphalt drop curbs.

The second overlay district is the Environmentally Sensitive Overlay, which limits use of land by right to only parks and agriculture and requires a conditional use permit for any other use. The aim of this district is to require more significant Planning Board review for those applications that include wetlands, water bodies, flood zones or other sensitive environmental features.

It should be noted that although the Zoning Local Law has been revised from time-to-time, an initial review of the Zoning has indicated a number of potential inconsistencies in the law, dated definitions, and a need to update the Law to reflect court decisions over the last 10 to 20 years.

Development Pattern

It is noted that the built environment actually does reflect the land use Plan as reflected in the Zoning Local Law with three exceptions. This includes the UR-M zoning of the Monroe Racetrack, which would be better zoned VR, the previously described Elm Street GB area,

Figure 1: Existing Land Use

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which would be better zoned SR-10, and Maple Avenue, which would be better zoned SR-10. Also, while the majority of the Village allows two-family residences, the majority of most neighborhoods remain single-family detached dwellings.

Surrounding Areas

The Village is surrounded by the Town of Monroe on almost all sides. One small edge in the east side of the Village, from Route 17M to the Orange County Heritage Trail, is bordered by the Village of Harriman. The land along this border in Harriman is zoned General Business (B-2). This is consistent with the Village of Monroe's zoning in this area which is zoned General Business (GB). The extension of Route 17M into the unincorporated Town is also zoned General Business and is consistent with the Village of Monroe's General Business Zoning.

Town zoning districts bordering the Village are mainly residential with a range of permitted densities including their one-acre, Rural Residential Zoning (RR-1) District, Suburban Residential (SR-20, 15 and 10) Zoning Districts and two Urban Residential Multi-family (UR-M) Districts. Areas to the south and west of the Village are generally one-acre zoning and lower density zoning. The exception to this is the area of Center Hill Road south to Cedar Heights Road and Mine Road and containing the Monroe-Woodbury Bus Garage. This area is zoned SR-10, and allows density consistent with 10,000 square foot single-family lots. The reason for this area of higher density is not clear.

There are several multifamily areas bordering the Village of Monroe in the Town. One multi-family district is off County Route 105, adjacent to SR-20 zoned land in the Village, and has a recently approved clustered townhouse development known as Bald Hill, containing 112 units (36 age restricted) just before the overpass of Route 17/6. It lies between the "Quickway" and the Village of Monroe boundary. A matching multifamily zone corresponding with Lamplight Village is just opposite County 105 from this site. A third multifamily zone is located off of Gilbert Street and corresponds with the Villages UR-M zone currently under application by Smith Farm Multi-Family development.

Land north of the Village between the Village boundary and Route 17/I-86 in the vicinity of Larkin Drive is zoned Industrial.

Existing Relevant Planning Documents

The "Orange County Comprehensive Plan: Strategies for Quality Communities" was prepared in 2003 and last updated in 2010. This plan discusses the challenges local downtowns such as Monroe's are facing in the wake of the development of major retail areas in Woodbury and Middletown. Goals of this plan that are related to Monroe include the recommendation

to take advantage of the proximity to the Heritage Trail and existing bicycle trails along Route 17M, and provide for the connectivity and expansion of these routes. The plan also encourages the diversification of the local housing stock with options for all segments of the population, including seniors. This is particularly relevant to the Village of Monroe where public utilities and local services are available.

Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan

Last year, Governor Cuomo created 10 Regional Councils to develop long-term strategic plans for economic growth for their regions. A key component of Governor Cuomo's transformative approach to economic development, these councils are public-private partnerships made up of local experts and stakeholders from business, academia, local government, and non-governmental organizations¹. The Regional councils have redefined the way the State invests in jobs and economic growth with a more community-based approach.

Given its location within the Mid-Hudson Region, the Village would look to the Mid-Hudson Region's Strategic Plan for Economic Development. The main goals of the Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan include:

- Job creation and investment in the region's developing technology-based industries;
- Initiatives to retain and stimulate existing mature industry; and
- Leveraging the region's outstanding natural resources, tourism and agriculture while recognizing that these attributes are critical to attracting and retaining high-quality jobs.

The State has set aside \$220 million to implement regional strategic plans. In order to be eligible for State funding, a municipality will need to demonstrate a project advances the goals of this strategic plan. Departments and agencies with available funding include Empire State Development (ESD); NYS Canal Corporation (Canals); NYS Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA); Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC); Homes and Community Renewal (HCR/OCR); Department of Labor (DOL); Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (Parks); Department of State (DOS); New York Power Authority (NYPA); Agriculture and Markets (Ag & Markets); Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC); and the Council on the Arts (NYSCA).

¹New York Regional Development Councils website. <http://regionalcouncils.ny.gov/>

People

We are a nation of communities... a brilliant diversity spread like stars, like a thousand points of light in a broad and peaceful sky.

- George H. W. Bush

When drafting a Comprehensive Plan it is vital to understand the demographic, social and housing conditions that are prevalent within a community. In order to develop policies that will serve the residents, employees and businesses of a community, one must have a firm grasp of who those people are, where they live, where they work, and what are their lifestyles and needs. It is also important to understand how population, housing and demographics have changed and how they compare with county-wide and town-wide norms. This gives insight into how a community may be unique or different from the region, and how it is evolving.

Local and Regional Historic Population with Projections

	Village	% Change	Town	% Change	Orange County	% Change
1980	5,996	-	14,948	-	259,603	-
1990	6,672	11.27%	23,035	54.10%	307,647	18.51%
2000	7,780	16.61%	31,407	36.34%	341,367	10.96%
2010	8,364	7.51%	39,912	27.08%	372,813	9.21%
2020	8,755	4.67%	68,554	71.76%	438,977	17.75%

Source: U.S. Census with projections from Orange County Planning Department based on 2000-2009 average gross annual growth rates

Based on 2010 Census data shown above, the population of the Village of Monroe grew by 7.5 percent between 2000 and 2010. This was somewhat slower than the preceding 20 years, and was slower than the Town and County, which also exhibited slowing growth rates. Village growth was also slower than originally projected by Orange County planners in its 1986 Data Book, which anticipated the Village's population to be 9,450 by 2010. In its most recent Master Plan update, the Orange County Planning Department predicts that growth will continue to slow in Monroe, which seems likely given the current land use regulations, and the fact that the majority of unconstrained vacant land in the Village has been utilized.

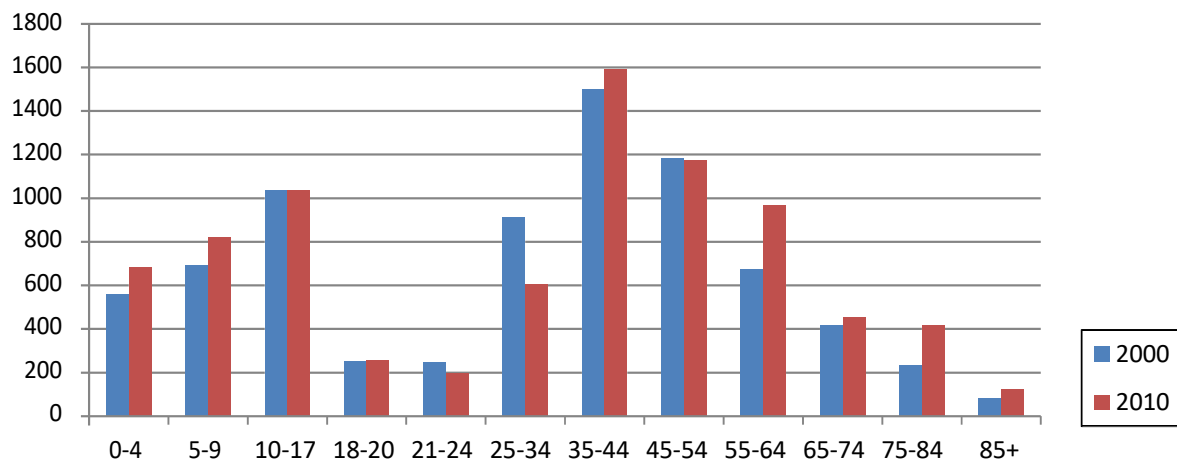
The density of the Village of Monroe is most consistent, in terms of population density, with the neighboring Village of Harriman. For comparison, the table below provides the range of population densities found in surrounding Orange County villages.

2010 Population Density by Village

Village of Monroe	2,422 ppl/sq mi
Chester	1,890
Goshen	1,653
Harriman	2,424
Kiryas Joel	18,341
Warwick	2,805
Woodbury	300

Generally, Monroe aged somewhat from 2000 to 2010 from a median age of 36.3 to a median age of 38.4. However, like many New York Metro and Hudson Valley suburban communities, the shift was generally due to a significant decrease in the 21 to 35 age cohort. All other age cohorts grew or remained stable. This decrease in the "young adult" population is prevalent throughout the region and likely is due to two factors. First, the run-up in housing prices and the recent (2000-2008) market concentration on construction of luxury large houses in the region has left young adults with few options that meet their lifestyle and income needs. Second, the increasingly predominant lifestyle choice of young people to move to more urban environments, which offer greater opportunities for cultural and social interaction as well as more extensive commercial services. This is an important issue on the forefront of local housing policy.

Village Age Distribution Comparison



The Village of Monroe has a higher median household income than the County, and median household income growth outpaced the County between 2000 and 2010. It is likely that this rise was fueled in part by the construction of a significant quantity of luxury housing, namely in the Rye Hill Road, Quaker Hill Road and Prestwick Gardens Subdivisions. It is also likely due to the turnover of housing during the first half of the decade, during which time higher-income

households had been priced out of many areas closer to New York City in Rockland County, New York and Bergen County, New Jersey.

Median Household Income - 2000-2010

	Village	% increase	Town	% Increase	Orange County	% Increase
2000	\$70,809	-	\$50,889	-	\$52,058	-
2010	\$97,863	38.2%	\$59,505	17%	\$68,148	30.91%

Source: 2000 Census; 2010 American Community Survey; 2009 Three County Regional Housing Needs Assessment

Persons Below Poverty Level - 2000-2010

	Village			Town			Orange County		
	All Individuals	Persons 65 and up		All Individuals	Persons 65 and up		All Individuals	Persons 65 and up	
2000	4.8%	5.1%		29.1%	10.9%		10.5%	8.0%	
2010	10.2%	12.8%		no data	no data		10.9%	6.7%	

Source: 2000 Census; 2010 American Community Survey;

While median income has increased, poverty has as well. While the Village shows a percentage of residents below the poverty level consistent with the County, the number has grown considerably since 2000, when Monroe had poverty rates of approximately half that of the County. This poverty rate has more than doubled in the Village for the general population and seniors. The increase in senior poverty may have been at least partially due to the introduction of affordable senior housing in the Village. The general increase is harder to pinpoint. It is likely that this increase has been fueled by the introduction of illegal apartments, or the over-occupancy of existing apartments, since housing affordable to those under the poverty level has not been constructed over the last ten years, with the exception of the before-mentioned affordable senior housing.

Poverty levels differ by the number of people in the family unit and by the age of single-person families. The 2010 poverty level was approximately \$22,000 for a family of four. The poverty level for a single senior citizen living alone is approximately \$10,500.

Village Employment by Industry, 2010

	Percentage of total civilian employed population
Agricultural, forestry, fishing, hunting and mining	0.20%
Construction	5.10%
Manufacturing	8.30%
Wholesale trade	1.70%
Retail trade	12.70%
Transportation, warehousing, utilities	6.50%
Information	1.50%
Finance and insurance, real estate, renting/ leasing	10.10%
Professional, scientific, administrative and waste management	10.90%
Education, health care and social assistance	25.50%
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation & Food service	7.30%
Other services (except public administration)	3.70%
Public administration	6.60%

Source: 2010 US Census

Generally, Monroe residents are largely involved in "office-type" industries, notably the public administration, education, healthcare, social assistance, professional, finance, insurance, real estate, and information industries as shown on the table above. These industries, which mostly require higher education, account for 54.6% of employed Village residents. Skilled laborer intensive industries, such as construction, manufacturing, agriculture/mining and transportation, warehousing and utilities account for the next largest segment of the population at 20%. Retail trade, entertainment and food services also account for 20%, with other industries accounting for just over 5%. Monroe is similar to other communities in Orange County with regard to industry employment.

Trends

Orange County has projected a slowing growth of 4.67% over the next ten years. Under current land use policy this is likely, as the Village's supply of vacant land available for residential development is dwindling. Growth in median household income is not likely to continue as approved housing currently under construction and pending projects are largely for housing with more modest price ranges. While the Village has taken action to help curb the number of new illegal or over-occupied apartments, growth in the poverty level in Monroe will largely be dependent on regional employment trends and the price of real estate with the potential for illegal conversion.

Vision

"The only thing worse than being blind is having sight and no vision."

-Helen Keller

Long range planning begins with a community's vision for its future. The Vision Statement provides a short succinct statement against which all policies and proposals can easily be tested. The Village's vision statement is based upon significant citizen input received at the Public Kickoff meeting held on April 19, 2012. The public was divided into several groups of 10 to 12 people, and a SWOT (strength, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) exercise was conducted to focus stakeholders on the positive and negative attributes of the community as well as evolving opportunities and concerns. Following the SWOT exercise, the public was reassembled and the results were reported back to a master list. Stakeholders were then invited to determine what they believed the most important strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats were. This helped to lead the public to an understanding of how they would like to see their community develop over the next 20 years.

The Steering Committee distilled this stakeholder input into the following Vision Statement:

VisionStatement

"The Village of Monroe will have a strong, attractive, economically vibrant downtown core and adjacent transitional heavy commercial areas, a sustainable mix of more intensive uses along the Route 17M corridor, a range of new housing options for young families and empty nesters within walking distance to downtown, high-quality stable single-family and two-family neighborhoods and abundant recreational and cultural opportunities."

The Following is a list of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats identified by the Public. The number following each item indicates the weighting that each item received based on discussions by the public.

Strengths

Scenic views (2)
Mixed use, concentrated downtown (2)
Millponds and walkway (2)
Local businesses (1)
Proximity to Woodbury Common (1)
School district (1)
Religious community/diversity (1)
Heritage Trail (1) Excellent
water quality (1)
Location, highway access and proximity to
NYC
Concentrated Village Center
Public transportation options
Beauty
Sophisticated, well educated population
Good environment to raise a family
YMCA
Cheesefest
Police / Fire

Weaknesses

Lack of sidewalk connectivity (11)
Lack of senior housing (9)
Parking (6)
Downtown vacant stores (6)
Parks only available to residents (6)
Not enough activities for teens/young
adults (6)
Traffic (5)
Lighting (5)
Need architectural guidelines (4)
Historic resources not supported (3)
High taxes (3)
Roads and curbs in disrepair (2)
Lack of active adult housing (2)
Difficult ingress and egress (1)
Deterioration of housing/multi-family
buildings (1)
No auto dealers (1)
Lack of public interest/ civic responsibility in
community (1)
Need to upgrade parks (1)
No entrance/ gateway to Village
No right turn on red from 105 to Spring
Street
Lack of inter-municipal cooperation/
excessive duplication of services
Lack of cohesion
Lack of multi-story downtown buildings
Competition from outlying shopping centers
Library could be larger
No train station or rail access within Village
Need better downtown marketing
Large deer population
Lack of senior activities
Crane Park deed restrictions



Map of Strengths and Weaknesses from Public Visioning Meeting. Smith Clove Park, Crane Park, Regional Location and the Monroe Theater were identified as particular community strengths, while traffic, and regional big box stores were identified as the biggest threats.

Opportunities

Better use of/ Opportunity for more events in parks, ponds and open space (14)
Heritage trail (9)
Strengthen chamber of commerce (9)
Improve access to downtown (8)
Re-use of movie theater (8)
Mapping/better marketing of parks, businesses and historic resources (7)
Redevelopment of vacant/underutilized properties (4)
Development of condos and rental units in downtown (4)
Main Street grants (4)
Entertainment (3)
Farmers market (2)
Museum (2)
Piggyback off of Woodbury Common visitors/ tourism (2)
Design guidelines / better urban design (1)
Development of vehicle related business (1)
Improve walkability
Diversify housing stock Use of smart code Encourage local businesses
Connect trails to racetrack park
Racetrack
Strengthen / revise zoning

Threats

Traffic (7)
Algae in ponds (3)
Lack of funding for parks (3)
Lack of starter housing (2)
Vacant commercial properties (3)
Parking meters (3)
Taxes (3)
Affordability for seniors (2)
Cultural differences
High commercial rents
Big box stores
Outward migration
Bureaucracy and lack of inter governmental communication
SEQR process
Cost of business start up
Absentee landlords
Direction of street lights
Crystal Run medical building
Potential for flooding
Lack of communication - Village and Town
Misinformation

Once a vision was expressed, the Steering Committee then translated the SWOT input into a list of goals and objectives that should be met by this Plan. These goals and objectives provide a framework describing the aspirations of the community. Goals and objectives will serve as the framework for the policy recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan, and each topic examined within this plan shall be looked at with an understanding of these specific goals and objectives.

The following are the goals as distilled by the Steering Committee from public input. These are repeated in the relevant sections of the plan hereafter along with relevant objectives. To distinguish Goals from Objectives, a Goal is generally a broad aspiration. An objective is more narrowly defined and can be objectively measured. These goals and objectives will be the basis for the policy recommendations of the Plan.

Goals of the Plan

- Create an active, convenient and inviting downtown as the community's civic, cultural, and recreational center as well as a destination for dining, shopping and personal services;
- Expand housing opportunities within the Village to ensure that all residents of Monroe can continue to live in the Village following life transitions;
- Safeguard Monroe's existing stable residential neighborhoods, and improve and enhance marginal areas, especially areas of investment conversions;
- Transform the Route 17M strip-commercial corridor to better address the evolving commercial market and to provide a sustainable balance of uses;
- Improve the multi-modal flow of traffic through the Village, while respecting pedestrians and cyclists;
- Ensure the preservation and protection of the Village's historic, scenic and natural resources;
- Transform Monroe's struggling heavy commercial and industrial areas; and
- Increase the efficiency of local government.

Plan: Housing

“He is happiest, be he king or peasant, who finds peace in his home.”

- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Throughout life, the typical person will spend more time at home than any other single location. This is especially true of children and older adults. Therefore, the homes and neighborhoods we choose inform our life experience perhaps more than any other locational factor. Because of this, most people have strong preferences about where they live. There is a diversity in the type of residences people choose for themselves and their families, but often economic realities reduce the amount of options available, and often the realities imposed by aging or transitioning through various phases of life impose physical prerequisites on our housing choices. It is important to understand the type of housing available in the Village, and the preferences of the current population to insure that housing options are available to accommodate existing residents as they transition through life and confront economic changes, as well as accommodate new residents as the Village's remaining lands are developed.

Existing Conditions

As of the 2010 census the Village has 2,846 total housing units. The Village's existing housing stock has a low vacancy rate with 96.4% of housing currently occupied. Of those occupied units, over 80% are owner-occupied and just under 20% are rental housing. This is a higher homeownership rate than Orange County as a whole, with 31% of all County housing being occupied by renters.

Village Housing Characteristics, 2010

Total Village Housing Units	2,846
Occupied Housing Units	96.40%
Owner Occupied Units	81.5%
Renter Occupied	18.5%
Average household size	3.04 persons

Source: 2010 U.S. Census

The Village of Monroe has an average household size of 3.04 persons per household. By comparison, Orange County has an average household size of 2.86 persons per household.

Housing Units in Structure, 2010

Type of unit	# of units	Percentage of Total Housing Units	
		Village	County
Single Unit, detached	2,115	72.9%	61.9%
Single Unit, attached	208	7.2%	6.6%
2 units	119	4.1%	7.8%
3 or 4 units	192	6.6%	7.3%
5 to 9 units	174	6.0%	6.9%
10 to 19 units	7	0.2%	3.5%
20 or more units	28	1.0%	4%
Mobile home	58	2.0%	2%

Source: American Community Survey - 2010

The vast majority of housing units in the Village of Monroe are contained within single-family detached structures. Two-family residences and townhouses comprise 11.3% of units. Structures with ten or more units per structure, which often reflect modern multifamily housing, constitute only 1.2% of all units in the Village. By comparison, 7.5% of all housing units County-wide contain 10 or more units and just under 62% of all County housing units are single-family detached units. Structures with 3-9 units, which often comprise garden apartments and conversions of large single-family residences, comprise 12.6% of housing units.

As illustrated on the tables below, the great majority of housing in the Village is valued between \$300,000 and \$499,000, while the majority of housing in the Village rents from between \$750 and \$1500 per month. Owner-occupied housing values within the Village are slightly higher than the overall County values with only 36.2% of the County's housing stock being valued between \$300,000 and \$499,999 and 36.2 % being valued between \$200,000 and \$299,999 and only 8.3% being valued at \$500,000 or over.

Value of Owner Occupied Housing Units, 2010

Value of Unit	# of Village Units	Percentage of Total Owner Occupied Units	
		Village	County
Less than \$50,000	32	1.4%	2.2%
\$50,000 - \$99,000	11	0.5%	2.6%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	30	1.3%	4.1%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	32	1.4%	10.4%
\$200,000 - \$299,999	353	15.8%	36.2%
\$300,000 - \$499,999	1569	70.3%	36.2%
\$500,000 - 999,999	206	9.2%	7.6%
\$1,000,000 or more	0	0.0%	0.7%

Source: 2010 U.S. Census

Figure 2: Renter Occupied Housing

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Figure 3: Recent and Pending Development

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Affordability Gap - Owned/Rented Units Orange County, 2006

% of Median Income	50%	80%	100%	120%
	\$31,208	\$49,933	\$62,416	\$74,899
Owner-Occupied Affordable				
Price	\$87,180	\$139,487	\$174,359	\$209,231
Unit Demand	12,726	9,637	9,511	9,529
Unit Supply	3,198	3,884	4,199	8,201
Shortage	9,528	5,753	5,312	1,328
Rental Affordable				
Rent	\$695	\$1,153	\$1,463	\$1,766
Unit Demand	17,213	8,920	3,261	3,247
Unit Supply	7,954	18,506	6,108	1,842
Shortage	9,259	-9,586	-2,847	1,405

Source: 2009 Tri- County Regional Housing Needs Assessment

In 2009, the Three-County Regional Housing Needs Assessment prepared by the Planning Departments of Orange, Dutchess and Ulster Counties was published. This report indicates that the County required approximately 21,921 units of housing affordable to families earning various income of less than 120% of the County Median. Additionally, the report identified the County's specific needs for families earning between \$62,416 and \$74,899 (100%-120% of median income often termed "workforce housing") and for families earning less than \$31,208 (<50% of median income often termed "very-low income" housing).

Based on these County-wide needs, the County has assigned targets to be built by each community by 2020. These targets were assigned on a Town-by-Town basis. The Town of Monroe's estimated target is 7,900 units of owned housing and 4,465 units of rental housing by 2020. Apportioning this amount on the basis of the 2020 projected population, the Village would have a 12.75% share of this target. This would equate to 1,007 owner-occupied units and 569 rental units, which are recommended within the Village of Monroe to meet its total projected affordable housing demand as estimated in 2009.

Related Master Plan Goals, Objectives and Recommended Strategies

Housing Goal 1: Expand housing opportunities within the Village to ensure that all residents of Monroe can continue to live in the Village following life transitions

It is clear from demographic data and from input by the public and stakeholders, that there is a need for housing that is affordable and suited to young professionals and seniors within the Village. To further this goal, the following objectives are being sought:

Objective 1: Provide appropriate higher densities of quality residential use within and near downtown allowing residents to walk to businesses and services without depending on vehicular use.

Recommendation H1.1.1: *Clarify code to provide clear standards for residential density within the downtown.* The CB zoning district already allows accessory apartments in the downtown. This multifamily housing is subject to minimum standards for usable outdoor and indoor recreation, safety controls. Because housing within downtown must adhere to two separate Code sections regarding accessory apartments and multifamily housing, there is some confusion as to which existing standards apply. The Code needs to be revised to provide clear standards for downtown multifamily housing in mixed-use buildings. The intent should be to encourage downtown residency while insuring that there is adequate parking, safety and maintenance controls.

Recommendation H1.1.2: *Regulate minimum apartment size and number of bedrooms in downtown.* There should be standards for minimum apartment sizes within the downtown to ensure quality units are provided. These would be more appropriate than density requirements, since it is Village policy to increase the number of downtown residents. The minimum apartment size requirements suggested are 600 sf for efficiencies; 700 sf for one-bedroom units; 850 square feet for two-bedroom units; and 1000 square feet for three-bedroom apartments. Apartments with more than three bedrooms should be prohibited, as the downtown is not an appropriate environment for large families.

Often apartments on the third-floor and higher are less expensive, and where large apartments are provided on these upper stories the apartments may become over-occupied by non-family households and transient households seeking very inexpensive housing. These types of housing units are not the types of units being sought for the downtown. Therefore, apartments on the third and higher stories of buildings should be limited to one-bedroom or studios, unless an elevator is provided. This will help to reduce the population of walkup units and reserve higher units for singles or the newly married. It will also increase accessibility of housing to seniors and those with disabilities where restrictions encourage elevators to be installed.

Recommendation H1.1.3: *Reconsider requirements for outdoor recreation and on-site laundry facilities in downtown.* Existing standards for outdoor recreation are superfluous given the presence of Crane Park. There are existing Village businesses that provide laundry service, and requiring on-site laundry for even small apartment buildings undermines their viability and success.

Recommendation H1.1.4: *Adjust downtown residential parking requirements and institute fee for residential units not providing parking.* Existing off-street parking requirements of one space per unit are adequate for small efficiency and one-bedroom downtown apartments. However, standard two-space requirements are more appropriate for two- and three-bedroom apartments. It is appreciated that downtown parcels provide limited capabilities for off-street

parking, and the Village does not want to encourage additional curb cuts throughout the downtown for access to individual parking lots. The Village should therefore work to acquire land for municipal parking. Some of this parking can double as commuter bus parking as residential and commuter parking have divergent demand peaks.

The Village should also consider instituting a strict payment-in-lieu of parking fee. Off-street surface parking typically costs approximately \$13,000 per parking space. Structured parking, which is the typical parking solution for downtown environments, often can cost in excess of \$30,000 per parking space. A one-time fee when a residential unit is approved, paired with an annual fee could provide funding for future Village parking expansion and potential future construction of joint parking facilities. An example of a reasonable fee could be \$2000 per parking space at the time of approval of an apartment plus \$250 per parking space thereafter annually, to be assessed as part of the annual property tax. Such a fee should only be assessed where off-street parking is not provided on individual lots.

Generic Environmental Impact Discussion: The recommendation for adjustment of existing standards for downtown housing is not likely to result in significant social, economic or environmental impacts. Generally the recommendations will lead to higher quality units that are more accessible to individuals that are mobility- challenged.

Objective 2: Provide a supply of Affordable and market rate housing designed for senior citizen and active-adult occupancy as a way to allow long-time residents to remain in the community.

Recommendation H1.2.1: Incentivize senior housing through added density, but require plan for dissolution of units if housing is made available to other age groups in the future. To ensure adequate senior housing is provided in the Village, higher densities (up to 20 units per acre) and reduced parking (1.5 spaces per unit) should be allotted for units limited to senior occupancy. Additional building heights (up to five stories and 50 feet) could also be an incentive.

Units should be designed for seniors and should provide single-story living, elevators for access to spaces on the second story and above, and satisfaction of the full parking requirement within enclosed garages should be pre-requisite. Since the demand for senior units, especially market-rate senior units, may wane beyond the 20 to 30 year time horizon, any senior development must be approved along with contingency plans in case units must be offered to non-senior occupants in the future. Such contingency could include consolidation of neighboring units to return the housing to densities and parking requirements (2 spaces per unit) consistent with non-age-restricted housing. Generally, senior housing would be most appropriately located within the CB and GB districts adjacent to the Millponds.

Generic Environmental Impact Discussion: The recommendation could result in higher densities of senior housing within the Village. Generally, senior citizens drive less and demand less public resources - especially school

resources – than families. This will help to mitigate fiscal and traffic impacts from increasing the number of units that can be built within the Village. It is noted that 20 units per acre is consistent with the existing maximum density for affordable senior housing within the Multifamily Conversion Overlay District, so extending that density to market rate housing throughout a larger area within the Village would be consistent. Requiring housing density to be reduced as a condition of transformation to non-age-restricted housing would mitigate impacts that may otherwise go unforeseen. It is noted that the area near the Millponds is especially suited to senior housing given the pending construction of significant private healthcare uses along Route 17M.

Objective 3: Provide a supply of high-quality, affordable ownership and rental housing for young professionals and new families;

Recommendation H1.3.1: *Allow higher residential density in appropriate locations.* One possible location for multifamily or townhouse units would be in the GB District along Route 17M between Stage Road and Still Road. This GB district has several large parcels that have demonstrated limited demand for commercial occupancy. These include the several vacant car dealership lots. Providing a residential option for these parcels, may strengthen remaining GB zoned lands by lowering the amount of commercially zoned land within the Village and decreasing the square footage of existing vacant commercial space. Additionally, some of these lands have limited development potential due to flooding concerns. However, with good design and compensating flood storage, structure parking can be provided within flood zone areas allowing better use of these lands. Apartment units should be generally applied to properties within 500 feet of Crane Park, while townhouses could be permitted in more distant areas.

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Generic Environmental Impact Discussion: The increase in the amount of land available for residential development could result in significant impacts from increased traffic, utility usage, consumption of public services and fiscal impacts. Currently areas to be designated for multifamily use would require zoning amendments, an action that is likely to require more site-specific environmental impact review. The area to be designated for new multifamily residential is approximately 75 acres, although some of this land is environmentally constrained and not buildable. It is estimated that expansion of multifamily uses could conceivably support up to 400 units of new housing. Cumulatively this could result in approximately 150 additional peak hour vehicular trips, and up to 750 to 1,200 more people, 150 to 300 of which are likely to be public schoolchildren. To mitigate potential environmental, fiscal and social impacts, the construction of 10 or more units of multifamily housing will be designated a Type 1 action, to ensure that designation of additional land for multifamily use does not result in unforeseen environmental impacts.

Objective 4: Respect the needs of mobility-challenged persons, such as the disabled and seniors in the design of new housing types.

Recommendation H1.4.1: *Require new multifamily units meet ADA standards and enhanced accessibility standards immediately.* All new multifamily units should be required to meet ADA accessibility standards. This could include only allowing units on floors higher than the second story, where elevator access is provided, or limiting those units to efficiencies and one-bedroom units as an incentive for the provision of elevators. (See Recommendation H.1.1.2.) This standard would exceed the existing Building Code. Additionally, all new multifamily housing proposing more than six units should provide 10% of units or at least one unit that is accessible without steps and via entryways, internal corridors and doorways suitably wide to permit accessibility to those bound to wheelchairs (in excess of current ADA requirements). Such units should also consider accessibility to wheelchair bound people in the design of bathrooms and other living areas.

Generic Environmental Impact Discussion: The recommendation is not likely to result in significant social, economic or environmental impacts. The recommendation is anticipated to lead to higher quality of life for the mobility-challenged.

Housing Goal 2: Safeguard Monroe's existing stable residential neighborhoods, and improve and enhance marginal areas, especially areas of investment conversions.

Objective 1: Protect the scale, density and character of Monroe's stable and well-maintained neighborhoods.

Recommendation H2.1.1: *Eliminate two-family uses as a permitted or special permit use in the SR-20 and SR-10 districts.* The majority of SR-20 and SR-10 zoned land within the Village, outside of the Multifamily Conversion Overlay District, is comprised of high-quality single-family detached neighborhoods. None of these areas have the appearance or character of a two-family neighborhood. In fact, only a handful of existing Village homes within the SR-20

and SR-10 zoning districts are two-family or multifamily. Additionally, the Zoning Local Law already allows any owner-occupied single-family residence to have an accessory apartment.

The SR-20 and SR-10 zoning districts should be amended to no longer allow two-family dwellings or conversion to two-family dwellings. Existing two-family dwellings should be permitted to be occupied as future existing non-conforming structures, limiting expansion and requiring conversion should the unit be vacant for more than one year or should the unit be significantly destroyed. Accessory apartments in owner-occupied single-family dwellings should continue to be permitted. As a clarification - two-family residences should continue to be an acceptable housing type in the UR-M district.

Generic Environmental Impact Discussion: Given that there are approximately 2,000 or so single-family detached dwellings within the SR-20 and SR-10 districts, the elimination of two-family dwelling would technically result in a significant reduction in the number of residences that could be constructed within the Village. However, realistically, the majority of the Village has remained single-family despite the fact that two-family conversion and new two-family dwellings were authorized uses. The elimination of two-family uses is not anticipated to have a significant adverse environmental, social or fiscal impact. However, since all SR-20 and SR-10 district neighborhoods have developed as single-family neighborhoods, elimination of the two-family use and conversion will likely protect the existing character of the community.

Objective 2: Discourage the reuse of existing large homes for multifamily residences.

Recommendation H2.2.1: Require stricter standards for multifamily conversions.

Generally, there are a few existing SR-10 residential areas of the Village that are less maintained, and present aesthetic challenges to the quality of existing neighborhoods. These residential areas are generally the residences

along North Main Street, the residences along Block Alley, and the residences in the vicinity of the intersection of High Street and Lakes Road.



Two North Main Street homes converted to two-family/multifamily. Note the paving of front yards for parking, the replacement of original windows with undersize replacements, and the running of cable wiring on the front facade of the building. This lot, listed for sale, is identified as having three units, but the structure has four separate mailboxes, potentially indicating over-occupancy. The structure next door has badly faded siding, undersized replacement windows, and mismatched wall cladding.

Generally, these areas of the Village correspond with areas of lower homeownership, and greater landlord absenteeism. These are areas that have greater numbers of two-family and multifamily structures, some of which have been found through code enforcement to be occupied by more than one household per living unit (over-occupancy).

To improve the quality of possible future conversions, multifamily conversions should be required to meet the new standards being promulgated for new construction multifamily units, including limitations on the number of bedrooms in apartments within upper stories, minimum apartment size requirements, and requirements for improved ADA accessibility as described previously. Density limitations should be established and should be limited no more than 5 units per acre.

Recommendation H2.2.2: Require stricter property maintenance laws for multifamily residential uses.

The appearance of ill-maintained multifamily conversions of large homes currently has a deleterious influence on the community. The Village should adopt a stricter property maintenance law for multifamily structures.

Issues to be controlled by the guidelines include acceptable materials and uniformity of wall cladding and roofing material; appropriate and original sizing of wall openings (window and doors); location and screening of parking on the site; landscaping and maintenance of yards visible to the public right-of-way; acceptable location of fire escapes; location and screening of refuse containers and building mounted utilities including exterior cabling, meters and satellite dishes; maximum paving of front yards; maximum size of curb cuts; and minimum requirements for street trees, sidewalk, front porches and the pedestrian realm.

Additionally, all structures or lots within the Village containing more than three units of rental housing should be required to designate an on-site or on-call superintendent that is authorized to make repairs or maintain the property on the order of the Building Department.

Recommendation H2.2.3: Encourage alternative reuse of large homes in the North Main Street Area by allowing additional reuse opportunities including professional offices and group homes.

Generic Environmental Impact Discussion: The imposition of significant additional controls on the multifamily conversions in this vicinity of North Main Street and elsewhere throughout the Village is likely to be controversial and impose a financial burden on existing landowners. However, neighborhoods with large multifamily conversions represent the lowest quality neighborhoods, aesthetically throughout the Village. While it was originally thought important to allow grand residences to be converted to multifamily as a means of preserving them and the character of the district, this has failed. In most cases, the architectural detail of the charming large

homes has been lost as landlords replaced original siding, windows, roofs and paint with whatever materials and supplies were cheapest. Utilities were installed on the exterior of buildings, and front yards and sidewalks were paved over in favor of parking for additional units.

The proposed recommendations will likely result in the reduction of multifamily units within the North Main Street area of the Village over time. However, this should be more than offset by provisions to allow and encourage new multifamily residential, including affordable and senior multifamily in the vicinity of the downtown. Impacts on housing affordability are therefore not anticipated. It is anticipated that these recommendations will result in improved aesthetic quality and visual character in the vicinity of North Main Street.

The institution of a multifamily and rental registration law will likely result in more administrative burden on the part of the Building Department. It is likely that the new expanded enforcement role will require a reasonable annual fee to offset costs of inspection and enforcement. The recommendation is anticipated to result in a positive influence on the character of existing neighborhoods. No significant adverse environmental, social or fiscal impacts are anticipated.

Objective 4: Respect the variety of Monroe's older varied neighborhoods and promote homeowner investment by taking a more flexible approach to zoning regulation.

Recommendation H.2.4.1: *Provide flexibility in yard and bulk requirements for older established residential neighborhoods.* While subdivisions constructed more recently than the 1960s often conform with uniform shaped and sized lots, and with uniform placement of homes on lots, the older neighborhoods of the Village tend to be more varied. In these older neighborhoods, roads responded more to topography and less to uniformity. It is more likely to have lots of varying sizes on the same block, flag lots, lots accessed only by an alley, significantly undersized lots and corner lots with little to no rear yards. Attempting to regulate lots that were created prior to Euclidean zoning with strict dimensional standards results in an increased load on the Zoning Board, as many homes are not able to meet uniform lots size or yard standards that were established for the average lot. This also results in additional expenses to landowners wishing to enlarge or otherwise modify their lots or homes.

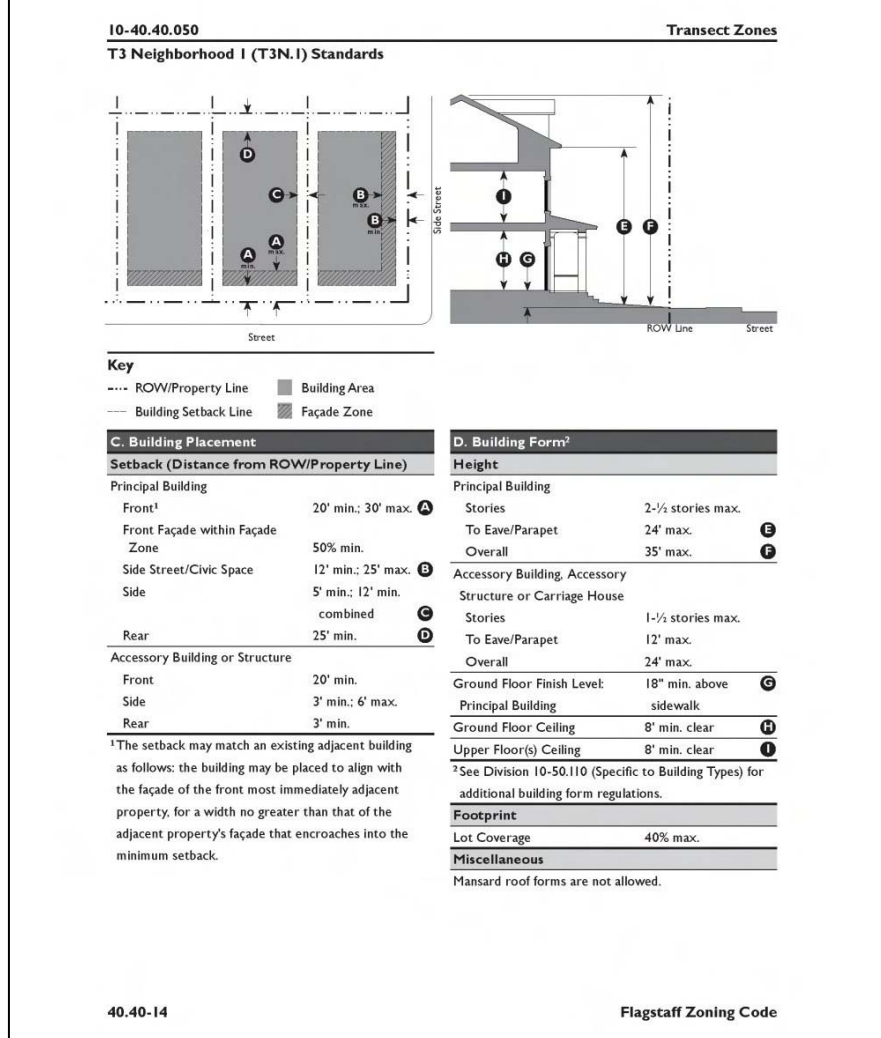
In order to encourage investment by existing land owners, the zoning regulations relative to older residential neighborhoods should be based on a practical approach to yards, setbacks and building heights that maintains the character of the neighborhood while allowing greater flexibility. For example, where an existing lot is undersized in a manner in which it cannot meet the full front and rear yard requirements, that lot should not require a variance to expand, nor should the full deficit be relegated to either the front or rear of the building. Instead, the front and rear yards should both be appropriately adjusted to result in a practical arrangement of the building on the lot that respects the character of the surrounding neighborhood albeit with a reduce building envelope and a smaller resulting residence. These adjustments should be automatic and should not require the added expense of an appearance before the Zoning Board of Appeals.

An effective way to convey this adjustment method would be to provide a diagram showing how a building should be situated on the lot. Smart codes and form based zones already address how to express variable yard and setbacks across different transects in a community. The graphics used in form-based Smart Codes could be a vehicle for regulating flexibility with yards, heights and building placement by establishing percentage requirements rather than strict distance requirements.

Generic Environmental Impact Discussion: The adjustment of regulations to allow for flexibility on future regulation of existing lots is not likely to result in significant environmental impacts. By limiting this flexibility to older Village subdivisions and establishing appropriate controls as to the size, placement and character of the residences to be constructed,

character of the neighborhood can be maintained, if not improved. The adjustment would not permit additional units to be constructed and would not result in added population. This recommendation is not anticipated to result in adverse environmental, social or fiscal impacts.

Form-based Zoning from City of Flagstaff, Arizona. This type of land use regulation can be the basis for flexible yard requirements based on percentages that can be applied to a wide variety of divers lots in a single neighborhood..



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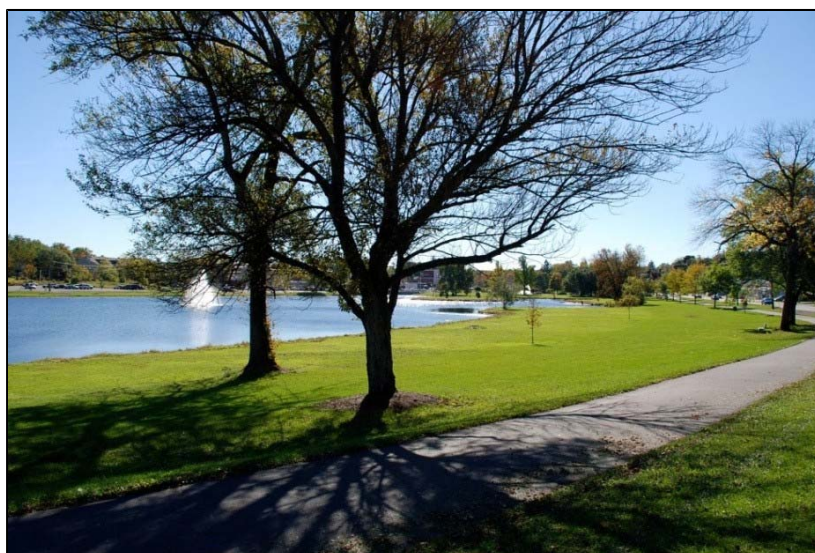
Plan: Recreation, Environment, Culture

“The more successfully a city mingles everyday diversity of uses and users in its everyday streets, the more successfully, casually (and economically) its people thereby enliven and support well-located parks that can thus give back grace and delight to their neighborhoods instead of vacuity. ”

— Jane Jacobs - *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*

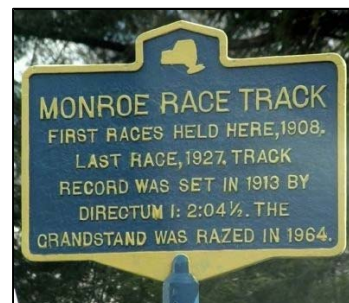
Monroe is a community built around parks. Not only are Monroe's parks located in the physical center of the community, but they also provide Monroe's strong sense of identity. Crane Park is strongly associated with the Village's visual identity, Smith's Clove Park is strongly associated with family social life, and the Monroe Racetrack is strongly associated with the Village's historic identity. Monroe residents have cited quality parks as one of the most notable strengths of the community and have identified existing Village Parks, and the future Heritage Trail as possible opportunities for economic development.

Village Recreation Resources



Crane Park, located in the heart of the Village includes “Airplane Park” and the Millponds, which are a focal point of the Village, one of the most frequently identified “strengths” of the Village during the SWOT analysis, and important resources for the entire Town. The Millponds are approximately 1.5 miles in circumference and are improved with walking trails and benches.

Monroe Race Track, the old Monroe Race Track off Clark Street has been purchased by the Village and is currently undergoing transformation into a nature preserve. The former racetrack is maintained as a walking circuit, and naturalized meadow and wet areas provide opportunities for birding.



Smith's Clove Park (Joint Park with Town), with access from Spring Street, consists of 80 acres of active and passive recreational land. The park is improved with three pavilions, restrooms, parking lots, a skate park, hiking trails, a fitness course, an illuminated football field, three baseball fields, three basketball courts, three age-specific playgrounds, indoor racquetball, tennis courts, an illuminated roller hockey rink, a dog park, volleyball court, handball courts and a 2600 square foot recreation building with multiple activity rooms. The park is maintained by a Joint Parks Commission with members from the Village and the Town. The cost of operation is shared evenly between the Village and the unincorporated Town. For over thirty years the Joint Parks Commission has operated a summer youth program.

Town Recreation Resources

Mombasha Lake is 420 acres, and is owned by Village as stated in the Town Comprehensive Plan. On the northwest end of the lake there is a 40 acre parcel (former Casper Orlando Property) and a 19.8-acre parcel (former Faber Farm property) located in the Unincorporated Town and recently acquired by the Town, which is planned to be incorporated into the Town's network of Parkland.

Alex Smith Pavilion is a Town maintained boat launch and picnic facility on Round Lake.

County Recreation Resources

In 2003, the Orange County Heritage Trail was extended from the previous terminus at Museum Village in the Town of Blooming Grove to Monroe Airplane Park and plans include extension of this trail through the Village and into to the Village of Harriman up to River Road. The closest access location from the Village is currently at Airplane Park near the northern terminus of Goosepond Parkway. The trail is a 10-foot wide paved surface running approximately 11.5 miles along the former bed of the Erie Railroad through a bird/wildlife sanctuary, near historic landmarks, streams and rolling meadows. The trail originates at Hartley Road at the Border of the Towns of Wawayanda and Goshen. The trail exists completely off-road within a former railroad right-of-way for most of its stretch, except for a stretch at the heart of the Village of Goshen, where it shares right-of-way with a number of parking lots and Grand Street.

State Recreation Resources

Sterling Forest State Park is located just south of the Village and comprises 21,935.08 acres of natural forest. It provides habitat to a wide diversity of wildlife and flora, and is available for a range of passive recreation including, hiking biking, hunting, fishing, and snowshoeing. There is a gift shop and visitor's center with rest facilities, and recreational programs are offered.

Goosepond Mountain State Park is located just northwest of the Village and comprises 1,558 acres of passive forest with some meadow and open field. It is open for hiking and horseback riding but does not provide any facilities.

Harriman State Park/Bear Mountain State Park is located approximately 5 miles west of the Village of Monroe and is the second largest State park in New York. It offers extensive recreational resources including over 200 miles of hiking trails, biking, snowshoeing, cross county skiing, horseback riding, boat rental, boat launch, cabins, camp sites, museums, fishing, ice fishing, grills, picnic tables, visitors centers, gift shops, conference centers, inns, restaurants, rest facilities, showers, carousel, pools, playing fields, and beaches.

Environmental Resources

The Village is located at the headwaters of the Ramapo River. The Ramapo River is a United State Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) designated Sole Source Aquifer. This designation means that the US EPA has determined that the aquifer system related to the Ramapo River has been determined to provide the only viable source of water for its two-million downstream users. The designation offers environmental protection to the region from any federally funded, approved, or initiated actions.

The environmental importance of the Ramapo River to the region is therefore demonstrated. The headwaters of the Ramapo River enter the Village of Monroe via the unnamed stream that runs just east of Lakes Road. This stream feeds the Millponds and then travels over the Millpond Dam, where it feeds the stream and wet areas near the Monroe Racetrack and joins a second tributary that enters at the south end of the Village near Amy Todt Road. From the Racetrack, the River travels through the recently constructed Hidden Creek Condominium Development, which has been approved with significant buffers for protection of the River. From there, the River meanders along the south side of the future Heritage Trail (Erie Railroad Right of Way) where it exits the Village behind the former Monroe Ford dealership.

The path that the river takes corresponds with a flood zone, and much of the land along its path, and along the path of its tributaries, is inundated as wetlands. Because of this, the Village has designated an Environmentally Sensitive (ES) Overlay Zoning District that classifies all uses within the ES district except for utilities, agriculture and park uses as a conditional use requiring Planning Board review.

Historic Resources

The Village's downtown contains a relatively large historic district, listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1998, which was integral to its formation and history. This district, also known as Smith's Mill Historic District consists of 81 total acres and approximately 36 properties. The largest properties are the Millponds, Monroe Cemetery and the former Monroe Racetrack Site. The district is an abstract shape, but is generally bounded by New York State Route 17M, Lake Street, Carpenter Place, Oakland Avenue, Orchard Terrace and Ramapo Street, extending as far west as the historic racetrack.

Of the over 70 structures in the district, 47 buildings and 9 structures are considered historic resources (though none are listed on the National Register separately). Other historic structures within the district include the following:

The David Smith House (400 Stage Road) also known as the “Little Yellow House” is a one and a half story saltbox house built possibly as early as 1741. This building is one of the oldest buildings in Monroe and is currently used as the office of the Village Historian.

The David Smith-Jeremiah Knight House (315 Stage Road) was a two and one half story federal-style house with portions dating back to 1741 and adjacent Grist Mill which operated on the Monroe’s Millpond as early as 1750. The mill closed in 1915, was converted to an auto garage in 1921 and was finally destroyed by fire several years later. Only portions of the foundations and dam of the original gristmill remain today.

McGarrah’s Inn, located at 300 Stage Road and recently purchased and renovated by the local masons, was first built around 1800 by John McGarrah and expanded in 1839. After serving as a popular stagecoach stop, it also served as residence of former Village Mayor and Nuremberg Trials prosecutor Frederick Hulse. Despite a number of renovations, the original third floor meeting room has remained largely untouched and preserved.

The remains of the Monroe Cheese Company, located at 30 Mill Pond Parkway is a three-story Italianate factory that was originally built by Julius Wettstein in 1873. It was at this location that Velveeta was invented in 1923. The front wooden portion of the building was removed for the construction of Crane Park in the 1930’s, while the brick section, as well as the underground cheese curing cellars, remain.²

First Presbyterian Church, located at 142 Stage Road is a Greek Revival-style church built in February of 1853. Its large fluted columns make it one of the most recognizable buildings in Monroe. The Manse, or pastor’s residence (shown at right) was built across the street at 131 Stage Road three years later. This house was renovated in 1868 but mainly used for residential purposes throughout its existence.



Image from Monroe Historical Society

Judge William Seaman House (160 Stage Road, shown below right) was first built as a tavern in 1809 and was moved and renovated in 1850.

The Reed and Conklin Buildings: The original Reed building was built by local businessman George Reed in 1894, with the larger Conklin building built shortly thereafter adjacent to the Reed building with a matching early art-deco architectural style. These buildings were recently renovated and are currently utilized as multi-family residences.



Judge William Seaman House, located in the Village’s Historic District. Image by Daniel Case

² Monroe Historical Society. www.monroehistoryny.org

Village Hall (7 Stage Road) was originally constructed in 1865 as a retail store with apartments on upper levels. Fire gutted the building in 1915. Over the life of the building it has served as a dress shop, shoemaker's workshop, grocery and restaurant before being gifted to the Village in 1960 to be used as the Village Hall.

Related Master Plan Goals, Objectives and Recommended Strategies

Goal P1: Ensure the preservation and protection of the Village's historic, scenic and natural resources.

Objective 1: Continue to distinguish Monroe's historic resources through landmarking, signage and recognition.

Recommendation P1.1.1: *Map existing historic resources and make available to the public.* Working with the local historian, historical society and Chamber of Commerce distribute a map of the historic district with information about local historic resources and the Village's history in local places of assembly, the local library and popular shops.

Recommendation P1.1.2: *Start a local historic plaque program to recognize renovated or well-maintained historic buildings.* Encourage local landowners within the Historic District to provide plaques in front of their buildings including the history and/or original pictures of a site. Village Hall should provide a similar plaque as an example. This will encourage walking and draw pedestrians though the entire corridor. This effort could be funded through the Chamber of Commerce or by the Village, as funds permit.

Recommendation P1.1.3: *Require architectural review for structures within the Village's Historic District, and alert local building owners to funding opportunities.* Ensure Architectural Appearance Review Board members are aware and educated on the historic resources contained within the Village. Encourage a close working relationship between this Board, the local historian and the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation for input on properties within the Historic District and those that may have impacts on this district. Building size, architectural style, exterior cladding, roof structures and colors should be encouraged, if not required, to be of a character that will support, protect, and/or enhance the architectural sensitivity and significance of this district. Landowners should be aware that the NYS Historic Preservation Office has funding opportunities and other financial preservation incentives for historic preservation efforts.

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Figure 5 Environmental Resources and Constraints

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Objective 2: Guarantee the quality of water discharged into the Ramapo River Sole Source Aquifer System.

Recommendation P1.2.1: *Treat lot area deductions similarly in cluster or open space subdivisions and standard subdivisions to remove the deterrent to cluster subdivisions.* The current zoning requires that the density of land proposed for cluster subdivisions deduct sensitive environmental lands, including slopes over 20%, wetlands, water bodies and flood zones. However, it does not appear that these limitations apply to standard subdivisions. The Village should consider removing deductions from the cluster subdivision regulations.

Recommendation P1.2.2: *Aquifer protection.* Generally, water within a sand and gravel aquifer is interrelated. Contamination over one area of the aquifer has the potential to impact potable water pumped from other areas of the aquifer. Currently there are several heavy commercial and auto related uses located within the aquifer, including the Village Department of Public Works (DPW). These users should be provided information on the fragility of the aquifer resources and Best Management Practices should be employed, such as the storage of salt and other chemicals in an enclosed building, which is currently done by the Village DPW. It is noted that the Village is looking to potentially locate new wells within the sand and gravel aquifer that underlies Racetrack Park.

Generic Environmental Impact Discussion: While the requirement to deduct sensitive environmental features from the lot area is one way of protecting such resources, clustering, or open space subdivisions, is another tool by which planning boards can allow flexibility in the siting of dwellings in order to avoid impacts to sensitive environmental site features and preserve open space within a development. Thus, there are no adverse environmental impacts resulting from the reasoned choice of the use of clustering and open space subdivisions to protect sensitive environmental features of a property, as they are no less protective of the environment than are the deductions of such features from the lot area for development purposes.

Goal 2: Expand and enhance the already outstanding recreational facilities of the Village.

Objective 1: Enhance the types of recreation available at Crane Park and Airport Park to encourage additional usage and more activity near the downtown.

Recommendation P2.1.1: *Increase passive use amenities at Crane Park while respecting ban on commercial activities.* It should be clear that the longtime ban on commercial activities within Crane Park has served to preserve the park in its current enjoyable open state. This restriction should continue. However, the Village should seek to actively increase the passive use amenities of the park. Examples of potential amenities include picnic tables and grills along Millpond Parkway in the vicinity of Lakes Road; Chess/Checker tables and/or table tennis tables in shaded treed areas, and fitness stations along Millpond Parkway. Installing small-scale amenities along Millpond Parkway will serve as a recreational resource to residents of the downtown, and will make the ponds more attractive to lunchtime users. Fitness stations and

game tables will help to draw both young people and older people to the park, which currently only offers strolling as an activity. A putting green located in a sunny location close to Airplane Park would be a unique public amenity.

The Route 17M frontage should be preserved in its current open state, and any amenities chosen should be high quality and add to the aesthetic quality of the park. An example of this is the landscaped 9/11 memorial near Bridge and Mill Streets that incorporates a former church bell tower as a gazebo. A gazebo could also be constructed at the island in the northerly Millpond, and a decorative bridge to the pond in place of the recently constructed causeway could improve the appearance of the park while offering an additional fishing resource. Currently, fishing is concentrated at the Lakes Road crossing, where sidewalks are narrow, and walkers conflict with casting. The Route 17M frontage would also be a good location for the planting of a butterfly garden or other natural wildflowers. Interpretive signage can be provided for children to identify flowers, birds and butterflies.

One additional possible active amenity would be a small concert band shell. The Village's summer concert series currently uses a portable stage in an area of the park remote from downtown. The Village should consider installing a band shell just north of Lakes Road.

Examples of amenities that could be considered for Crane Park include:

Table Tennis Tables

Klyde Warren Park - Dallas Texas (photo - Dallas Morning News 2012)



Butterfly Garden

Klyde Warren Park - Dallas Texas (photo - Dallas Morning News 2012)



Putting Green

Klyde Warren Park - Dallas Texas (photo - Dallas Morning News 2012)



Concrete Chess Table

New York City Parks - (photo - Concrete Classics - Vendor)



Interpretive Signage Van Saun Park



Decorative Bridge for Fishing/Water enjoyment Van Saun Park



Exercise Station
Haverstraw Waterfront Esplanade



Band Shell
Palm Beach State College (photo: RCP Shelters - Vendor)



Picnic Table

ADA accessible picnic table (photo: Custom Park & Leisure, Ltd.)



Recommendation P2.1.2: *Pursue funding from the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation- Environmental Protection Fund Municipal Grant Program.* This funding may be a good source of funds to provide a raised walkway, parking area and/or interpretive elements in support of the recently acquired Monroe Racetrack Park. It could additionally be used to implement Crane Park improvements as described above.

Generic Environmental Impact Discussion: Adding additional amenities to the Village's Crane Park and Airplane Park are not anticipated to result in environmental impacts. Exercising discretion in the choice of amenities is critical to ensuring that no adverse visual impact or loss of recreational use occurs. Specifically, amenities to be added should be located in a manner that does not impair but rather complements and supports water views and water access. Additionally facilities should be constructed of high quality materials and not impair the passive enjoyment of the existing parks for strolling, and jogging. For example, while picnic tables may be an appropriate new use in areas of the park adjacent to downtown, barbeque facilities would not be appropriate. Any such improvements to the park should be subject to public comment. Additionally, as the center of the community, any improvement such as a band shell intended to support live music or other sound amplified events, should be accomplished in a structure that is also not overly intrusive in appearance, such as the basic shell shown above.

Funding Opportunity: Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation: Up to \$16 million in funding is available under the EPF Municipal Grant Program for the acquisition, planning, development, and improvement of parks, historic properties, and heritage areas. Municipalities and not-for-profit organizations with an ownership interest in the property are eligible to apply. Historic properties must be listed on the State or National Registers of Historic Places. Properties not currently listed but scheduled for nomination review at the State Review Board meeting of June 14, 2012 or September 20, 2012 are eligible to apply. Heritage Areas projects must be identified in the approved management plans for Heritage Areas designated under Title G of the Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Law. All grant awards under this program come with long-term protections, either through parkland alienation law, conservation easements or covenants recorded against the deeds.

Eligible Applicants:

- *Municipalities*
- *State Agencies*
- *Public benefit corps*
- *Public authorities*
- *Not-for-profits*

Eligible Activities:

- *Park Acquisition, Development and Planning Program - for the acquisition, development and planning of parks and recreational facilities to preserve, rehabilitate or restore lands, waters or structures for park, recreation or conservation purposes and for structural assessments and/or planning for such projects. Examples of eligible projects include: playgrounds, courts, rinks, community gardens, and facilities for swimming, boating, picnicking, hunting, fishing, camping or other recreational activities. To ensure the public benefit from the investment of state funds, public access covenants will be conveyed to the State for all park development projects undertaken by not for profit corporations. Conservation easements will be conveyed to the State for park acquisition projects undertaken by not-for-profit corporations.*
- *Historic Property Acquisition, Preservation and Planning Program - to improve, protect, preserve, rehabilitate, restore or acquire properties listed on the State or National Registers of Historic Places and for structural assessments and/or planning for such projects. All work must conform to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. To ensure the public benefit from the investment of state funds, preservation covenants or conservation easements will be conveyed to the State (OPRHP) for all historic property grants.*
- *Heritage Areas System Acquisition, Development and Planning Program - for projects to acquire, preserve, rehabilitate or restore lands, waters or structures, identified in the approved management plans for Heritage Areas designated under section 33.01 of the Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Law and for structural assessments or planning for such projects.*

Plan: Connections

“It’s a dangerous business... going out your door. You step onto the road, and if you don’t keep your feet, there’s no knowing where you might be swept off to.”

— J.R.R. Tolkien

A community's street network provides the framework upon which all land uses depend. The basic purpose of roads is to provide legal physical access to real property. However, the form of a network has implications beyond simple access and conveyance of people and property. During the period of rapid growth from the 1960s through the 1980s, road networks were designed principally with the aim of conveying motor vehicles through a network with the least amount of delay. This led to wide lanes of free flowing traffic, multiple turning lanes, signalized intersections and relatively high speeds.

In the late 1980s and into the 1990s, planners began to consider the implications that this approach had. Wide roads designed principally for vehicles were not well suited to pedestrian and bicycle traffic, encouraged high speeds, led to large volumes of stormwater runoff, and were costly to maintain. Additionally a hierarchy based on residential cul-de-sacs feeding into collectors, which in turn fed into arterials at signalized intersections, was not adaptive to unforeseen development. Eventually as outlying areas grew, intersection delays would decline to failing, leading to installation of additional turning lanes, widening roads further. This left communities with the problems associated with wide roads, along with high levels of delay at intersections.

Now, in communities across the country, a movement is growing to “Complete the streets”. Cities and towns are asking their planners and engineers to build road networks that are safer, more livable, and welcoming to everyone.... to enable safe access for all users, regardless of age, ability, or mode of transportation. This means that every transportation project will make the street network better and safer for drivers, transit users, pedestrians, and bicyclists — making your community a better place to live.

- National Complete Streets Coalition

Increasingly, communities have been looking to calm traffic, rather than expand roads to accommodate it. More communities are looking to interconnect residential streets in classic grid systems, which allows traffic to disperse, rather than funneling traffic into high volume collectors. Narrower curvilinear road design is an effective way to slow traffic to speeds more compatible with pedestrians and residential use, instead of excluding pass-through vehicular traffic from residential streets through a cul-de-sac system.

As the nation's largest generation enters retirement, there is also a new appreciation for pedestrian and bicycle access and mass transit. The need for a street system that respects pedestrians, bicyclists and those with special mobility needs is becoming more apparent.

Design of facilities such as sidewalks and curb cuts at crosswalks are being reconsidered, as an obstacle as small as an eight-inch curb is equally as daunting to a senior citizen, young child, or middle-aged veteran bound to a wheelchair.

Even with motor vehicle conveyance, communities are looking at new approaches to accommodating traffic. Many communities are beginning to understand that poor traffic access and circulation is an impediment to economic development. Consumers are choosing to patronize commercial establishments with easy vehicular access and plentiful parking, even if those uses are more distant than traditional downtown's amidst congested intersections and sparse parking.

With this in mind, communities are looking at ways to make community road systems more "human-scale." Safe speeds are considered just as important as shortened travel times; pedestrian and bicycle traffic is given equal consideration to motor vehicle access; stress-free access to the downtown is as vital as accommodating volume on arterial highways.

Road Network and Circulation

Route 17M is the principal arterial within the Village of Monroe. It originates at New York State Route 17 in the Village of Harriman to the south and runs northwest through the Village and provides access to the central part of the County. Just north (and east) of Route 17M, a former rail line physically separates the northwestern section of the Village with cross-access only at Route 208, Mapes Place (an extension of Lakes Road) and Freeland Street. This former railroad right-of-way is proposed for extension of the Heritage Trail pedestrian/bike path through the Village.

Just north of the future Heritage Trail, County Route 105 parallels Route 17M within the Village as North Main Street and Spring Street, before heading west toward the Villages of Kiryas Joel and Woodbury. New York State Route 208 terminates at Route 17M in the north of the Village and provides access from the Village to the major regional highway system via future Interstate 86 (New York State Route 17/6).

Lakes Road/Lake Street intercepts Route 17M in the Village downtown, forms Monroe's "main street" business district and travels west into the unincorporated Town of Monroe, Town of Chester, Town of Warwick and ultimately provides access to the Village of Greenwood Lake.

Freeland Street/Still Road/Orange Turnpike intercepts Route 17M further to the south within the Village. It starts to the northwest at County Route 105 and ultimately heads south into the unincorporated Town of Monroe and intercepts NYS Route 17 at Southfields (Town of Tuxedo), where it provides access to points south.

Pedestrian Connections

Sidewalks generally run along both sides of the streets in Monroe's Central Business District. Lake Street, Millpond Parkway and Stage Road provide sidewalks along both sides of the street while Carpenter Place provides sidewalks along one side. There are sidewalks along both sides of North Main Street, but many residential landlords along North Main Street have replaced concrete curbs and sidewalks with asphalt drop curbs and parking in front yards to support multifamily conversion.

The Village has constructed stamped and painted asphalt crosswalks at the intersection of Lake Street with Millpond Parkway, Lake Street with Route 17M, at Airplane Park, and at Stage Road with Millpond Parkway. These paths and improved curb cuts improve accessibility and function for those with disabilities. They also are more durable than painted sidewalks and provide a better distinction between the shared and vehicular-only realm.

A continuous 10-foot wide asphalt bike path is provided around much of the Millponds. However, the bike path transitions to concrete sidewalk at certain choke points including at the south end of the ponds, and near the intersection of Millpond Parkway and Lake Street/Lakes Road.

Sidewalks are intermittent along Route 17M north of Stage Road with most commercial uses providing sidewalks along the highway. South of Stage Road, there are no sidewalks along Route 17M.

The presence of sidewalks in the Village's residential areas varies. Generally, in residential subdivisions since the late 1960's, sidewalks have been provided. Older residential neighborhoods generally tend not to have sidewalks. Sidewalk connectivity was noted by the public as the most critical weakness within the Village.

The most notable lack of sidewalks is along Spring Street between Mapes Place and Smith's Clove Park. This particular area would support safer pedestrian traffic between the Village's major recreational facility used by children and the downtown.

The Orange County Heritage Trail is a 10-foot wide paved pathway that runs from Goshen to Monroe within the right of way of the Erie Railroad. This path currently terminates at Airplane Park, but will ultimately proceed through the entire Village and provide safe pedestrian and bicyclist access to the downtown from much of the Village to the south. The Heritage Trail was identified by the public as a significant strength and economic development opportunity within the Village.

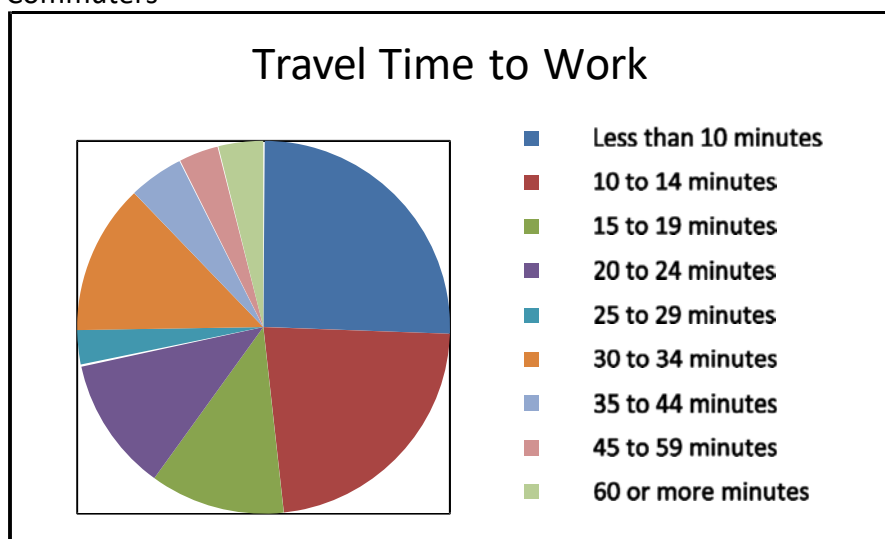
Public Transportation

Coach USA/Short Line bus offers service south to New Jersey and New York City and to shopping and services along Route 17M and along Route 32 in the Village of Woodbury with service continuing to Middletown and Westchester. The main bus stop in the Village of Monroe is the Park and Ride facility located on Millpond Parkway, which provides service to the New York Port Authority Bus Terminal. This is a relatively small facility with only 36 spaces, but is currently planned for expansion. A larger facility is located at Museum Village in the Town of Blooming Grove, which provides service to Westchester and multiple Manhattan locations. Although it has a capacity of 589 spaces, this lot is heavily used with vehicles parking on the grass and along internal roadways.

A Metro North Railroad station is located on NYS Route 17 approximately 2 miles south of the Village border. Rail service provides service to New York City Penn Station via Secaucus transfer and north to Port Jervis.

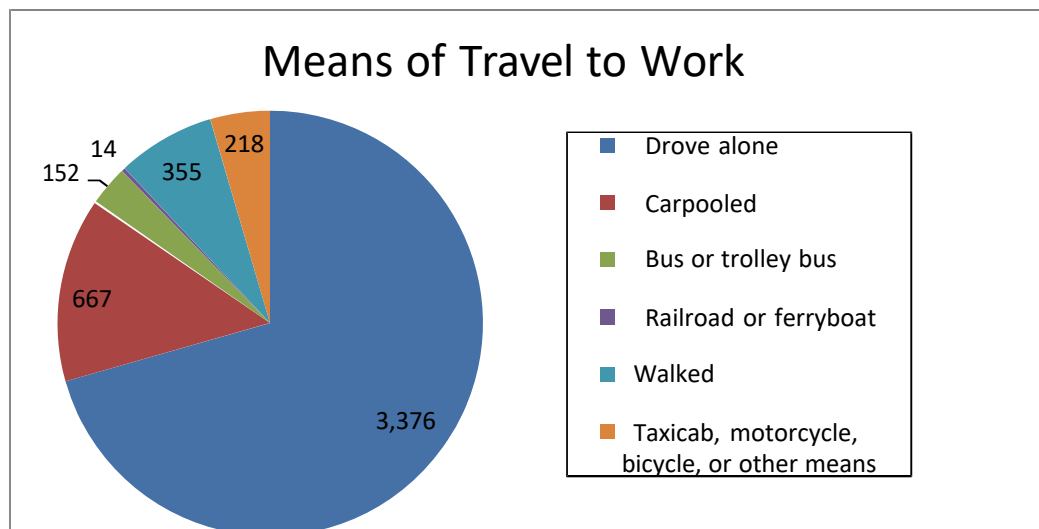
Town of Monroe Dial-a-Bus service is available Monday through Saturday by reservation to shopping areas throughout the Town and Village of Monroe. This service is funded by the County with State grants and a small rider fare.

Commuters



Source: U.S. census, 2010

More than 1/4 of Monroe residents work within 10 minutes travel-time of Monroe and almost half work within 15 minutes.



Source: U.S. Census, 2010

Despite the fact that so many residents live in close proximity to their jobs, the majority (70%) of people drove alone to work. This is the case in the vast majority of other suburban towns and villages. However, a relatively high number (14%) of people also carpoolled to work. Carpooling actually accounted for a higher percentage of the workforce than bus (3.2%) and train (0.3%) combined. More people walked, bicycled, rode a motorcycle or took a taxi to work than used mass transit. It should be noted that people who work from home are classified as walking to work.

It is believed that some of the prevalence of carpooling may be to nearby employment destinations in the Village of Kiryas Joel and in the large retail areas of the Village of Woodbury, Harriman and unincorporated Town of Monroe. This would be consistent with over half of the 610 carpoolers traveling less than 15 minutes to work. However, the other half of the carpooling population travels more than 15 minutes to work, indicating a unique commuting choice relative to the region or a statistical anomaly.

Congestion

There are clearly areas throughout the Village that are subject to significant traffic congestion, especially during the peak AM and PM weekday commuting hours. One cause of this congestion is the fact that the Erie Railroad/Future Heritage Trail divides the majority of the community (and suburban areas of Tuxedo, Chester and Warwick to the south) from the Regional Highway System (Route 17/6 - future Interstate 86). This funnels traffic through three crossing points within the Village at Route 208, Lake Street/Carpenter Place/Mapes Place, and at Freeland Street. There are only two additional crossings in Harriman at River Road and Route 17, and two additional crossings north of the Village at Museum Village Road and the Monroe Park and Ride lot. Additionally, just north of the Village, Route 17/6 - future Interstate 86 also funnels traffic into three major crossing points, Route 208, County Road 105,

and Route 32/17. An additional crossing exists at Forest Avenue providing access to the Village of Kiryas Joel. The traffic funneling effect caused by these two major dividing thoroughfares has resulted in major traffic congestion.

Additionally, traffic capacity at the interchange of Interstate 87 (NYS Thruway) and Route 17/6 - future Interstate 86 and the nearby intersection of Route 32 has resulted in regional traffic detouring onto Route 17M and Orange Turnpike and into the Village. This is especially apparent on summer and early fall Fridays, when traffic is headed north on Route 17/6 - future Interstate 86 toward the Catskills.

At these times, traffic along Route 17M has become exceptionally heavy. More recently, this has also resulted in the number of heavy trucks travelling along Route 17M, which further exacerbates traffic flow.

Based on review of recent impact analyses, the following intersections are the worst in the Village in terms of traffic congestion at peak commuter hours, but especially on Fridays during Catskill Tourism season:

- Route 208 - North Main Street - Schunemunk Street
- Route 208 - Route 17M
- Lakes Road - Route 17M
- Freeland Street/Still Road - Route 17M

The congestion has resulted in bypass traffic increases on the following roads

- High Street, especially at Gilbert Street/Quaker Hill Road, at Bridge Street and Mill Street
- Maple Avenue
- Swezey Place
- Reynolds Road
- Mine Road

The traffic congestion was noted as a significant weakness in the community and was identified during public outreach as the number one threat to the community. Traffic results not only in impacts to the lifestyle of residents, but it also decreases pedestrian and cyclist safety as motorists become frustrated and take more risks such as running yellow and red signals, failing to stop at stop controls, passing on the shoulder, cutting through private parking lots, or increasing speeds.

Additionally, traffic congestion makes it less likely that motorists will stop vehicles to patronize local businesses, as they become intent on making it through the high-traffic area. Local residents are also less likely to venture out of their homes during peak traffic times, and regional residents may seek to avoid the Village, which also impacts local businesses.

Figure 6: AM Traffic Congestion

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Figure 7: PM Traffic Congestion

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Related Master Plan Goals, Objectives and Recommended Strategies

Goal T1: Improve the multi-modal flow of traffic through the Village, while respecting pedestrians and cyclists.

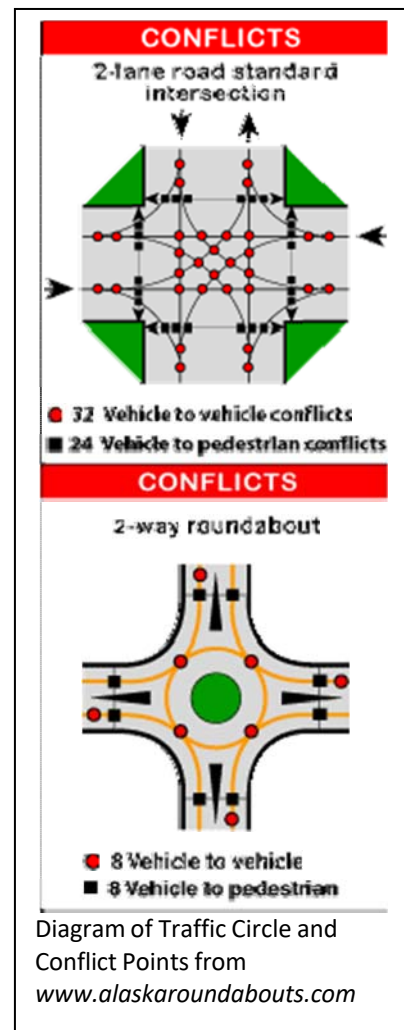
Objective 1: Allow for easier access to downtown from outlying areas and the surrounding communities; work with the State and County to provide innovative solutions that will improve vehicular traffic flow along Route 17M and into and out of the downtown.

Recommendation T1.1.1: *Prioritize flow over speed and traffic time.* The primary strategy to address congestion within the Village will be to approach roadway design and pedestrian systems in a manner that prioritizes flow over speed and travel time. This will make Village traffic less stressful during peak traffic times.

Recommendation T1.1.2: *Prohibit the construction of any new cul-de-sacs, except where no other arrangement is viable.* While the Village should not encourage the interconnection of existing roads in a manner that would impact existing residential neighborhoods in significantly adverse ways, it should require new neighborhoods to interface with existing streets at multiple locations. Additionally, where interconnection of neighborhoods via the elimination of cul-de-sacs is viable and will not result in increasing traffic beyond that volume which is consistent with quality residential neighborhoods, such interconnection should be required.

Recommendation T1.1.3: *Introduce traffic roundabouts at select congested intersections.* The Village highly favors the introduction of traffic roundabouts to increase flow at high volume intersections within the Village. The Village should work with the State and County to explore the replacement of existing congested signalized intersections with traffic roundabouts. Traffic roundabouts are small traffic circles, comprised of an often single-lane counterclockwise circular travel way surrounding a landscaped island. Usually the center island has mountable curbs to allow larger trucks to adequately navigate the circle. Traffic entering the circle must yield to traffic within the circle, which slows traffic along roads approaching the circle, but allows this slowed flow to continue through the circle without stopping.

The New York State Department of Transportation has been touting the safety of traffic roundabouts, since such



roundabouts reduce the potential accident conflict points significantly. Additionally, slower traffic speeds at roundabouts are more compatible with pedestrian traffic, which cross the roads leading to the circle, not the circle itself. The center islands dividing traffic entering and exiting circles help to aid pedestrian circulation. Bicyclists can use the circle as a motorist does since vehicular speeds are compatible with bicycle speeds, or the bicyclist can cross similar to pedestrians. Unlike signalized intersections, roundabouts are not subject to breakdown during power outages. Maintenance and operational costs are also significantly lower than multi-lane signalized intersections.



Picture Demonstrating Operation of Roundabout. Photo Credit: Pedestrian & Bicycle Digital Images Library [www.pedbikeimages.org]

The Village supports the further exploration and potential installation of traffic roundabouts at the following intersections:

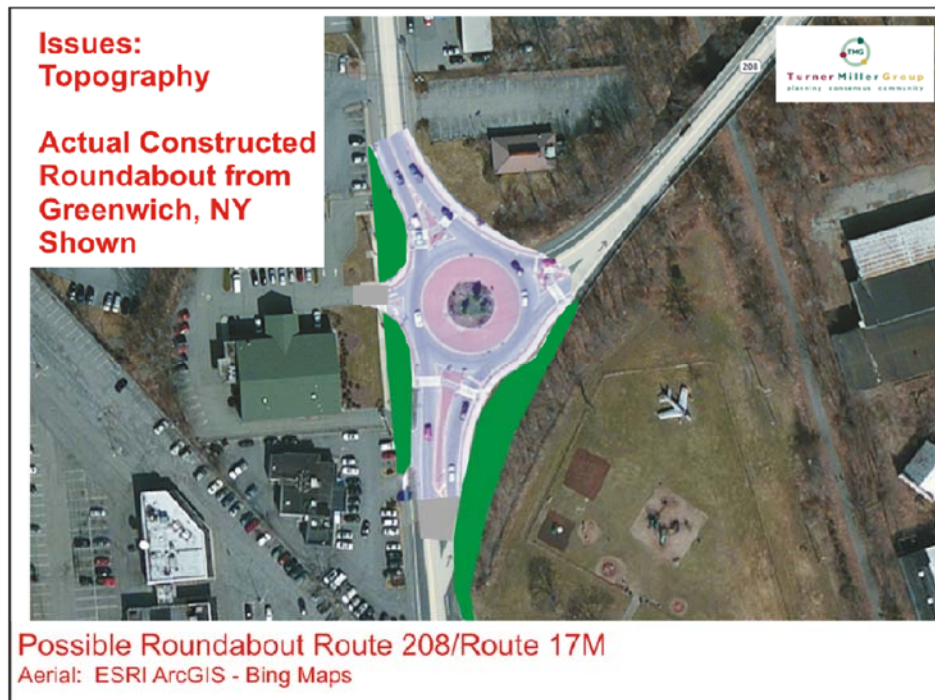
Route 17M/Freeland Street/Still Road



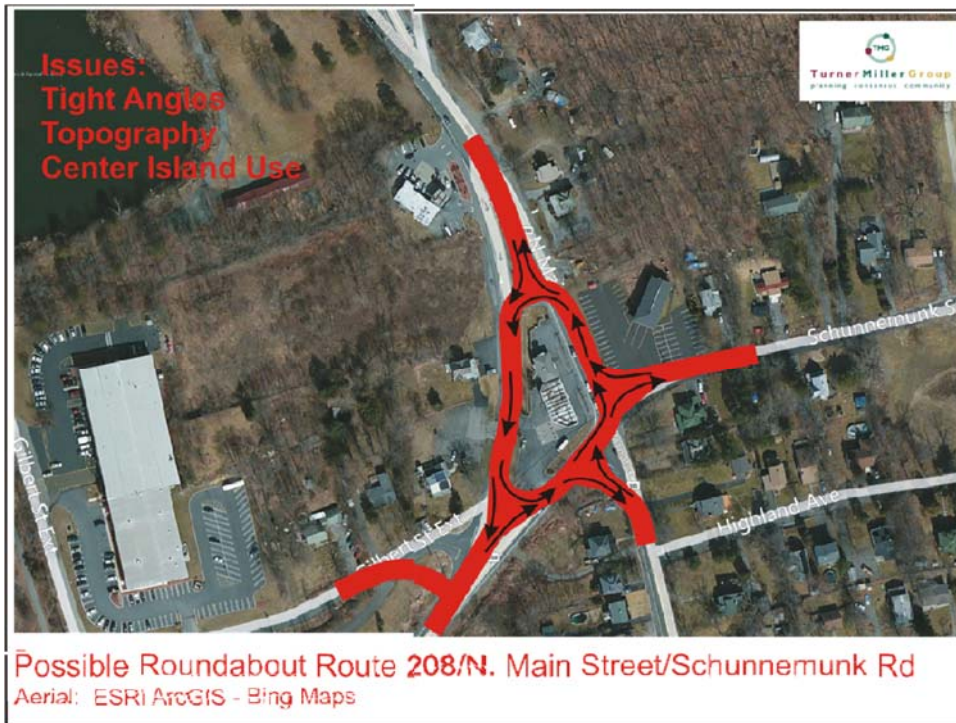
Route 17M/Lakes Road and Lake Street/Millpond Parkway



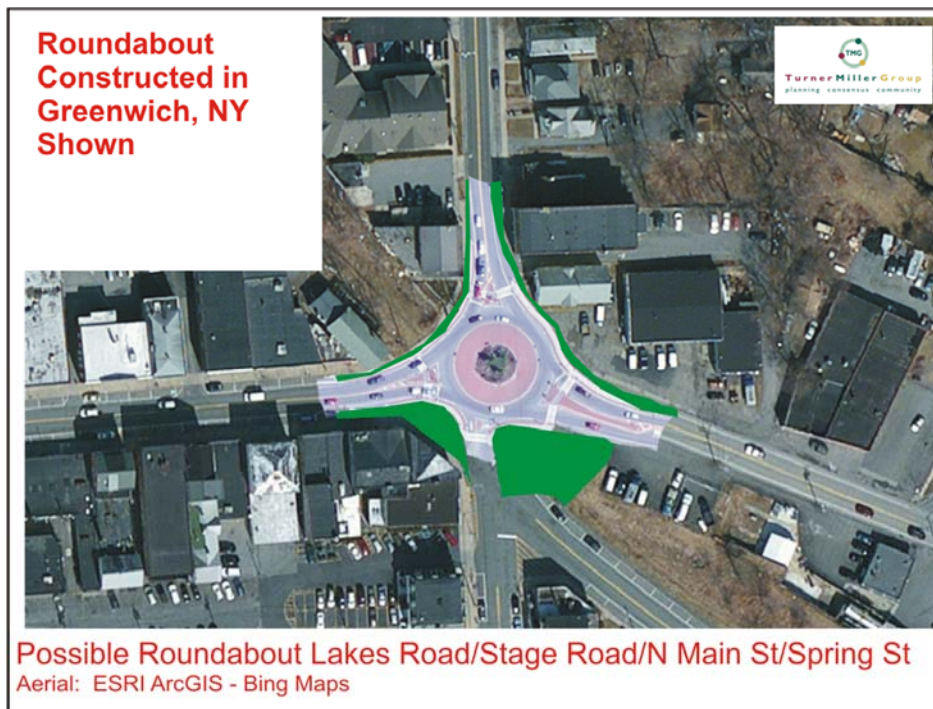
Route 17M/Route 208



Route 208/North Main Street/Schunnemunk Street (modified roundabout)



North Main Street/Lake Street/Stage Road/Carpenter Place/Spring Street



The potential to implement these roadway changes will depend largely on the involvement of State and County government, since all of the intersections considered are on State and County Roads.

Route 17M at Freeland Street and Lakes Road at Route 17M seem to be the most readily adaptable to roundabouts, and these are also the intersections that may benefit the most. The Lakes Road/Route 17M intersection is currently three to four lanes wide at almost all approaches. With installation of a circle, it may be possible to create a boulevard and plant Lakes Road between Millpond Parkway and Route 17M, thereby providing a more grand entrance to the downtown, and allowing easier crossing of Lakes Road for users of the Millponds. Freeland Street and Route 17M are also three to four lanes wide at all approaches, so the installation of a circle may allow adjacent users to recapture some of the right of way as green space.

Route 17M at Route 208 may have grade issues, given that most guidance suggests that grades of less than 4% are optimal for roadways approaching traffic roundabouts. This grade limitation is also relevant to signalized intersections, so it is not necessarily a better alignment in its current state.

Route 208 at North Main Street is the most radical of candidates for conversion to roundabout. In fact, the configuration and the topography of this intersection may make conversion an impossibility, and the presence of the gas station in the middle of this island may make a roundabout dysfunctional.

With regard to Lakes Road/North Main Street, this is perhaps the most critical intersection with regard to encouraging economic development within the Downtown. However, unlike the previous candidates, this intersection does not involve State funding, and in fact, this is not currently an intersection (see below).

Recommendation T1.1.4: Reopen North Main Street to Lake Street and the downtown. The Village should encourage the reopening of the intersection of Lake Street with North Main Street, Carpenter Place and Spring Street. This will require an interruption of the Heritage Trail, but the Village of Monroe believes that this opening will significantly alleviate traffic congestion (by providing an alternative route) at the intersection of Route 208 and North Main Street, especially left turn movements at the Route 208 approach, which currently operates at a failing level of service during the AM weekday peak period. This alternative route would also relieve the failing level of service at the left turn movement from the Route 208 approach which is failing in the PM weekday peak hour.

Further, the current roadway configuration discourages utilization of the downtown, by making downtown businesses more remote from people travelling south along North Main Street. The opening of this intersection would increase accessibility and pass-by traffic through the downtown. If this intersection were opened, Mapes Place at Spring Street could be closed to vehicular traffic. The traffic light at this intersection could then be reprogrammed

to remain green for Spring Street, except for pedestrian activation. Along with sidewalk and/or bicycle path improvements along Spring Street, Carpenter Place and Maple Avenue, this could help provide a safe route for pedestrians and cyclists between Crane Park, Smith's Clove Park, the Heritage Trail, the Monroe Racetrack Park and downtown.

Recommendation T1.1.5: *Reopen Gilbert Street to Route 17M.* Extend Gilbert Street Extension across the future Heritage Trail through to Route 17M. Again, the Village respects the desire to limit the crossing of the Heritage Trail, however, the intersection of Gilbert Street and Route 208 currently poses a danger to motorists. Site distances are limited at the intersection of Route 208 and Gilbert Street Extension and the complex intersection geometry makes left turn movements from Route 208 north onto Gilbert Street confusing and dangerous. This left turn movement also further deteriorates the level of service of the Route 208/North Main Street intersection, as vehicles often queue behind vehicles waiting to make this left turn, when the signal for the left turn movement at the intersection with North Main Street is green.



It is noted that Gilbert Street Extension currently contains the Southeast Orange County YMCA and a daycare use for disabled children. Extending Gilbert Street will not only improve the

safety of the children and families accessing this site by vehicles, but also with sidewalk improvements along Route 17M, safe pedestrian access to these users can also be provided.

The Village retains ownership of the original Gilbert Street Right-of-Way and should work with the County to design a crossing that addresses potential conflicts with users of the Heritage Trail. One potential arrangement would be to install a speed table with an alternative surface treatment such as stamped colored asphalt crosswalks. The elevation and texture change associated with such an arrangement would inform motorists that they are entering the pedestrian realm.

Recommendation T1.1.6: Eliminate right-turn restrictions that discourage traffic flow to the downtown. Work with the County to eliminate right turn on red restrictions. Specifically, at the intersections of Bakertown Road and Spring Street (just over the Village border in the unincorporated Town of Monroe) and at Mapes Place and Spring Street, right turn on red restrictions make it more difficult to enter and exit Monroe's downtown for those originating from the Villages of Kiryas Joel and Woodbury. Additionally, when there is a red signal, the right on red restrictions at Bakertown Road and Spring Street may funnel more traffic onto Freeland Street to the intersection of Route 17M and Freeland Street for those bound for the heart of the Village. This intersection is already operating at low levels of service during peak hours.

At Bakertown Road and Freeland Street it appears that there may be adequate site distance, and adequate room to allow lane extensions to allow for right turns from Bakertown Road onto Spring Street with only a yield control for those travelling toward the downtown. In fact, prior to the current configuration, this intersection previously allowed for right turns on red, and then a right turn red arrow was installed that activated when traffic would exit the daycare or make a left from Freeland onto Spring Street. The County should be contacted to determine if unrestricted right turns could be accommodated.

At Mapes Place and Spring Street, it appears that the large hedge to the northwest of the intersection restricts sight distance. This seems to be the rationale for the right turn restriction. The County should be approached to determine if pruning of this hedge would allow right turns at this intersection to proceed on red.

Generic Environmental Impact Discussion: The measures suggested above recommend several potential physical projects that will have to be analyzed for traffic and construction-specific impacts when and if details of such improvements are designed. However, as a policy, the idea of increasing vehicular flow through the Village is intended not only to support economic development within the Village, but also will result in increased air quality by reducing the amount of time that vehicles are idling at traffic signals. The recommendations include proposals to cross the Heritage Trail Right-of-Way at Gilbert Street, and the future Heritage Trail at Lake Street. It is the intent of this plan that such crossings be done in a way that will minimize conflicts with users of that recreational resource through incorporation of speed tables and roundabouts, to the extent possible. However, the opening of Gilbert Street and Lake Street once more to traffic is seen as paramount from a public safety and economic development standpoint, and impacts to this recreational resource can likely be fully mitigated by design.



Objective 2: Provide and enhance facilities for cyclists and pedestrians connecting downtown, commercial areas, residential areas and parks.

Recommendation T1.2.1: Construct new on-road and off-road facilities for bicyclists and pedestrians connecting Crane Park to Smith's Clove Park. This stretch of new sidewalk and bike path is perhaps the highest priority and will require coordination with the County. It is critical, since it will allow children to safely access Smith's Clove Park from a much larger area of the Village. There is currently no bike or pedestrian access to the park.

Such a bicycle/pedestrian path could originate at the northerly Mill Pond, travel to the future Heritage Trail, and south to Carpenter Place, where it should proceed via a painted on-street bicycle path and pedestrian sidewalk through to Mapes Place to the intersection of Spring Street. There will need to be some consideration as to which side of the road this combination would be best accommodated on and may require narrowing of traffic lanes. On Spring Street (County Route 105), it is suggested that an off-road bicycle path be accommodated on the north side of the street. Integration will be difficult on Mapes Place and Carpenter Place, due to the traffic on those streets and on-street parking.

If the recommendation to open up Lake Street directly to Spring Street and North Main Street is implemented, Mapes Place could be converted to a bike/pedestrian-only path and traffic on Carpenter Place. Another alternative will be to secure an access easement from one of the parcels directly south of the park to allow direct access from the Park to the future Heritage Trail.

Recommendation T1.2.2: *Install additional pedestrian and bicycle connections linking existing neighborhood sidewalks into a unified network.* Such a network would require new off-road sidewalks and/or on-road bicycle paths from Smith's Clove Park to King Street, along Lakes Road south to the Village boundary, along High Street north of Lakes Road, along Stage Road and Rye Hill Road, along Route 17M down to Freeland Street, and along Freeland Street and Still Road.

Recommendation T1.2.3: *Provide pedestrian/bike linkages between park resources.* The Village should link the downtown and Crane Park to the recently constructed Racetrack Park. Such a path could proceed via sidewalks and painted on-street bicycle paths from Carpenter Place, to Maple Avenue to Clark Street.

Objective 3: Provide a trail system along the Ramapo River and its attendant water bodies.

Recommendation T1.3.1: *Provide a trail along the Ramapo River.* The course of the Ramapo River lends itself to an off-road trail. Such a trail could originate at the south end of Crane Park, where it would travel along the riverbank to Racetrack Park, and then could parallel the Heritage Trail all the way south to the Village boundary with Harriman. From the Millponds, a trail could be constructed from High Street south through the former Roscoe Smith property south to the Village boundary.



On-Street painted bike path



Off-Street combination sidewalk/bike path

Generic Environmental Impact Discussion: The policy of improving pedestrian and cyclist facilities throughout the Village will likely require physical changes which will demand consideration of site specific impacts at the time of design. However, as a policy, the enhancement of public cycling and pedestrian facilities is not likely to result in environmental impacts and is likely to result in significant benefits to public health, safety, air quality, noise, stormwater quality all as a result of decreased automobile reliance.

Objective 4: Improve connections at the Village's gateways, especially at the intersections of Route 208 and Route 17M and at the intersection of Freeland Street/Still Street/Route 17M.

Recommendation T1.4.1: *Beautify intersections at major Village gateways.* As stated previously, the Village strongly supports the implementation of traffic roundabouts that would allow traffic to flow unimpeded through busy intersections. Additionally, the Village should recognize that these two intersections are strongly identified with the Village and should work with DOT to provide attractive planted center islands to the extent possible.

If traffic roundabouts are not implemented, the Village should consider planting dense colorful flowers beds and/or other decorative landscape treatments at the corners of these intersections. Such plantings would have to be maintained by the Village but would help to improve the identity of the community. Currently, signs are located at the intersection of Millpond Parkway and Route 17M and at the intersection of Lakes Road and Route 17M. These particular signs would be more appropriately located closer to the Routes 17M and Route 208 Intersection.

Recommendation T1.4.2: *Ban or require permits for temporary signage within Village rights-of-way.* The Village should pass a local law banning or requiring a permit for the posting of signage within public rights-of-way within a certain distance of key Village intersections. Many communities ban posting of signs within public rights-of-way altogether; however, signage is especially unattractive at the Village's key gateways. Such a law should authorize and instruct any Village employee to remove such signage at any time. Special exceptions should be given for the posting of events, which should require a simple permit from the Village Clerk. Fines should be levied for businesses which post "bumper-sticker" type signage on structures within the public right-of-way.

Generic Environmental Impact Discussion: The policy of improving gateway appearance by landscaping and by limiting the types of signage that are permitted in the right-of-way is not likely to result in environmental impacts. Any landscaping or community signage introduced to rights-of-way will require review to ensure that sight lines are not impeded. The policy of limiting or requiring permitting for posting of signage within the right-of-way may result in improved motorist safety as sight lines are improved. Positive aesthetic and community character impacts are also likely. While roadway signage is often used by persons campaigning for election, it is not believed that limiting or requiring permits for posting of such signs will result in social impacts or impede the competitiveness of any particular candidate, as such restrictions would be imposed on all candidates equally, and such limitations would not apply to political signage posted on private property.

Objective 5: Enhance the accessibility and convenience of public transportation options.

Recommendation T1.5.1: *Provide expanded bus facilities near downtown.* The Village enjoys successful bus transit ridership from a CoachUSA depot on Millpond Parkway near the downtown. The Village should make every attempt to encourage additional transit ridership from this location. Such encouragement could be accomplished via provision of expanded



Monroe Sidewalks/Paths

Aerial: ESRI ArcGIS - Bing Maps

parking, provision of rest facilities for transit riders, and heated bus enclosures. Should the Village require a fee for use of public transit parking, such fee should be limited and go towards further parking expansions, as well as maintenance of any transit supportive facilities that are provided.

Recommendation T1.5.2: *Locate future government facilities near park and ride to allow for dual use of facilities.* As a means of increasing government efficiency and decreasing cost, if possible, the Village should consider locating any future contemplated Village use adjacent to existing or planned transit parking. This would allow the rest facilities necessary for the Village use to also be used by transit riders, and could provide shelter by double-tasking a lobby area, courtroom or meeting room that does not normally get used during the day.

Recommendation T1.5.3: *Provide direct mid-block alley access from parking fields to Lake Street.* To the extent possible the Village should promote direct access via alley or walkway to the businesses along Lake Street in the downtown. Such access will allow restaurants and cafes to serve food and coffee to morning commuters, and allow returning commuters to stop in for take-out meals, fresh meat, groceries or baked goods in the evening. This may require coordination with private property owners, although such owners may be willing to dispose of existing alleys to the extent that doing so may relieve them of liability.

Generic Environmental Impact Discussion: The policy of improving access to public transportation may require physical modifications that require site-specific environmental review once a more detailed design is developed. However, as a policy, improving facilities that support transit ridership will likely increase use of mass transit, which will likely result in a decrease in reliance upon individual motor vehicles. This has the potential to result in significant air quality and public safety benefits, and has the ability to increase accessibility to local businesses thereby resulting in potential economic benefits.

Objective 6: Appreciate the pedestrian design needs of less mobile populations such as senior citizens, the disabled and children.

Recommendation T1.6.1: *Promote Complete Streets.* Promote redesign of existing streets into "Complete Streets" that include facilities for safe pedestrian and bicycle travel as well as motor vehicle travel. The idea of a "complete street" is a street that allows access by all persons. Elements of complete streets include:

- Separate travel lanes for pedestrians, cyclists and motor vehicles;
- Measures to reduce conflicts between users - such as reducing curb cuts;
- Slowing speeds to less than 20 miles per hour where cyclists and vehicles share the roadway;
- Physically separating bicycle traffic where higher speeds are allowed; and
- Providing adequate facilities for the disabled including curb cuts, crosswalks with pedestrian signals (push-to-cross).

Recommendation T1.6.2: *Install benches or other types of street furniture.*

Functional and aesthetically pleasing street furniture can contribute to a vibrant outdoor walking environment and an atmosphere of streets as public space. Examples of street furniture include benches, pedestrian-scaled lighting, bike racks, informational signs and kiosks, and waste receptacles. When locating such items within sidewalks, it is important to consider the width of the sidewalk so as to not preclude the free movement of people, including those with disabilities. It is also important to locate them near to businesses that generally stay open late, so that such businesses can police loitering issues.

Lastly, the street furniture should be designed to discourage "riding" by skateboarders, that will often use benches and tables if such furniture is low. Where seats are provided, slats may be oriented from front to back rather than lengthwise to discourage skateboarding use.



Photo: Dan Burden, Walkable & Livable Communities Institute

This street in Hamburg, NY is an example of a complete street. Pedestrians are accommodated on sidewalks, bicycles within the red pavement bicycle paths, and vehicles in the standard center lanes. Traffic is slowed by the narrow vehicle lanes. The number of curb cuts are limited, and the need for left turn movements is reduced by locating roundabouts at the ends of the business district. Crosswalks are clearly marked and curb extensions reduce the distance a pedestrian must travel. Curb cuts allow wheelchair access to the sidewalks, and street furniture is provided for the elderly to rest.

Generic Environmental Impact Discussion: The policy of improving the accessibility of streets to pedestrians and cyclists of varying physical abilities is not likely to resulting in environmental impacts, although it will require physical modifications and construction that will be subject to site-specific environmental review. Such a policy is likely to result in significant benefits to social justice and may result in positive economic benefits as well.

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Plan: Economics (Downtown and Commerce)

"The axis of the earth sticks out visibly through the centre of each and every town or city."

-Oliver Wendell Holmes



The Village of Monroe's downtown was the historic economic and social center of Village life. It sprang up around the railroad depot, which existed at the corner of Lake Street, Stage Road and North Main Street. (Today, the building exists and is used as a cafe with limited operating hours). The front gateway of the Village was the grand Venetian Style four-story building shown in the picture above. This building was recently renovated and today appears as it did in the early 20th century. From this building, Lake Street travelled east to the Millponds, which in fact supported a Mill, an Icehouse and a cheese factory among other heavy commercial uses of the time.

North Main Street supported the grand homes of the upper class, while workers generally lived in smaller homes around the ponds. Several large mansions were constructed on large lots surrounding this development pattern.



<http://www.usgwarchives.net/ny/orange/postcards/ppcs-orange.html>



<http://www.usgwarchives.net/ny/orange/postcards/ppcs-orange.html>

With the proliferation of the automobile in the mid-20th century, the Village's downtown underwent a significant physical change. The railroad line was physically separated from the roadway to increase safety. Carpenter Place was extended and Mapes Place was constructed to eliminate the at-grade crossing. This segmented the business district in half.

The business areas east of the division became more oriented toward heavy commercial, wholesale and industrial. This in turn led to the decline in value of North Main Street residences for residential occupancy, which led to the division of large single-family homes into multifamily residences.

Heavy commercial businesses located west of the railroad tracks, especially around the Millponds, dwindled and closed, and the ponds and the lands around them were donated to the Village for parklands. Primary access to the Village became Route 17M, and after the New York State Thruway was constructed, Route 208 from Route 17/6, now future Interstate 86.

Railroad service ceased in 1986, and commuter rail service was consolidated to Harriman on the Port Jervis Line. Over time, Orange County bought the railroad line and removed the tracks.

The once prominent gateway of the downtown and the Village became the back door to the downtown. The lower-scale rear of the downtown along the Lakes became the front.

During the rise of the automobile, there was a significant transformation in consumer behavior. Small butcher shops, vegetable stands and bakeries dwindled with the rise of the grocery store. Easy vehicular access became the primary quality sought by retailers. Retailers no longer sought to be located near complimentary businesses. It was during this time that the Village's several retail strip centers along Route 17M were constructed. Several automotive dealerships located within the Village, as did larger-scale commercial trades businesses. The flight of retailers from the downtown to outlying retail strip commercial centers heralded the decline of the downtown.

The rents for residential apartment space in the downtown declined as businesses departed, and people no longer sought to be close to retail businesses. This made it difficult to maintain buildings in their original state. For example, when brick facades began to age, they were covered over with aluminum paneling or siding rather than repointed and/or repainted. The architectural features, such as decorative building cornices, window lintels, kick plates that were prevalent on original buildings, diminished over time.

More recently, consumer behavior has increasingly looked to greater consolidation of retail. Consumers sought out lower prices and increased selection available from larger scale retailers at "big-box," "mega-mall," and "super-store" locations near regional highways. This led to an increased decline in the marketability of downtown retail space, and weakened more local highway strip commercial businesses.

several area real estate professionals. These professionals were able to supply the Village with their informed opinions on the state of the various real estate markets.

State of the Housing Market

Starting in 2006 and continuing through today, the regional housing market has been extremely weak. More recently there are some good signs that the New York City, Westchester and Fairfield County housing markets are beginning to recover (significant decline in for-sale inventories), but the remaining metropolitan area is anticipated to remain weak in 2013 and recovery, when it finally does begin, will be slow. Additionally, the Hudson Valley has a plentiful supply of single-family detached and attached housing either constructed and vacant, or permit-ready. Once the housing market begins to recover, it will take some time to work through sales of existing vacant homes, and construction and sales of permit-ready homes.

There are two exceptions to the general weakness in the housing market. The first is for fee-simple single-family attached (townhouse) homes. These homes at the right price point qualify for FHA financing, and lender approval of future homeowners is easier. Generally FHA loans are not available for the luxury-housing segment.

The other exception is for appropriately priced multifamily housing. Because of the number of foreclosures over the last several years, and the inability of many homeowners to sell their homes, a demand for quality rental housing has risen. The current demand is for high-quality multifamily housing with on-site amenities and recreation at a reasonable price point.

State of the Retail Market

There is some discrepancy among real estate professionals on the state of the retail market. Some point to the unwillingness of landowners to lower asking prices as a reason for the numerous vacancies within the Village. Banks are especially unwilling to lower lease and sales prices on real estate that they own. Some claim that the real estate market is only able to support local trade, while others have opined, that even local trade is not enough to support the current retail supply. Some opined that drive-by traffic and convenient parking are the most necessary elements for retail uses, and point to those reasons as why downtown Monroe is having the most problems. Lack of pass-by traffic was also indicated as a detriment to attracting national chains.

State of the Office Market

There is strong agreement that the local office market is very weak. The one exception to this has been for medical offices. Generally medical practitioners have been trending toward

consolidation of businesses into large medical cooperatives that minimize administrative cost and allow doctors to focus on medicine. On the flip side of this is a trend for physician's assistants to open small local offices where they can treat minor illnesses, similar to the local doctor's offices of the mid-1900s.

State of the Heavy Commercial, Warehouse and Industrial Market

There are few areas of the Village that remain appropriate for heavier use. Generally these are in the northernmost part of the Village with the most direct access to Route 17/6. Two particularly strong segments of this market are for self-storage and for flex-space warehousing that allows large steel buildings to be partitioned on a demand basis and provide each tenant with a loading dock and a small office.

Non-Residential Uses Indicated as in High Demand for the Village of Monroe

The following uses were indicated by local real estate professionals as being in high demand in Monroe:

- Auto-repair and auto-related uses
- Movie theater (Although the local movie theater has been closed, this is not due to demand)
- Large multipurpose indoor sports facilities, especially for soccer, lacrosse, dodge ball, kickball, and possibly hockey, but only if very actively programmed
- Large Kosher food store (35,000 square feet or so)
- Child Day Care
- Doggy Day Care/Kennels
- Ethnic foods and restaurants

Retail Marketplace Demographic Study

Looking to take the analysis of the Retail Market further, the Village commissioned the Turner Miller Group to compile economic data indicating the strength of the local retail marketplace.

Turner Miller Group secured economic data from ESRI/Infogroup on the retail marketplace conditions within various distances of Monroe's downtown. The purpose of this analysis was to determine the most recent estimates of economic activity (sales) and projected capacity (consumer demand) for products and services within the Village of Monroe area. It is important to understand this relationship in determining whether Monroe's business district is appropriately sized to serve the surrounding retail market and to determine the demand for various types of retail and service businesses.

The "focal center" of economic activity was determined to be the intersection of Lakes Road and Millpond Parkway. Then, trade areas were defined by considering drive-time from this location. Consumers generally are less willing to travel great distances to get groceries, alcoholic beverages, laundry, and hair and nail services. These types of goods and services are classified as "local trade." A travel time of seven minutes was demarcated as the area most individuals would likely travel for local trade.

People are generally willing to travel somewhat further for clothes, sit-down restaurants, home improvements, and home furnishings. These types of goods are referred to as "area trade" and it is believed that area consumers would likely be willing to travel up to fifteen minutes to receive these types of goods and services.

Lastly, there are more uncommon goods and services, such as fine-dining and specialty restaurants, furniture stores, auto or other vehicular sales. It was established that local consumers would generally be willing to travel 30 minutes by car to receive these types of goods and services, referred to as "regional trade."

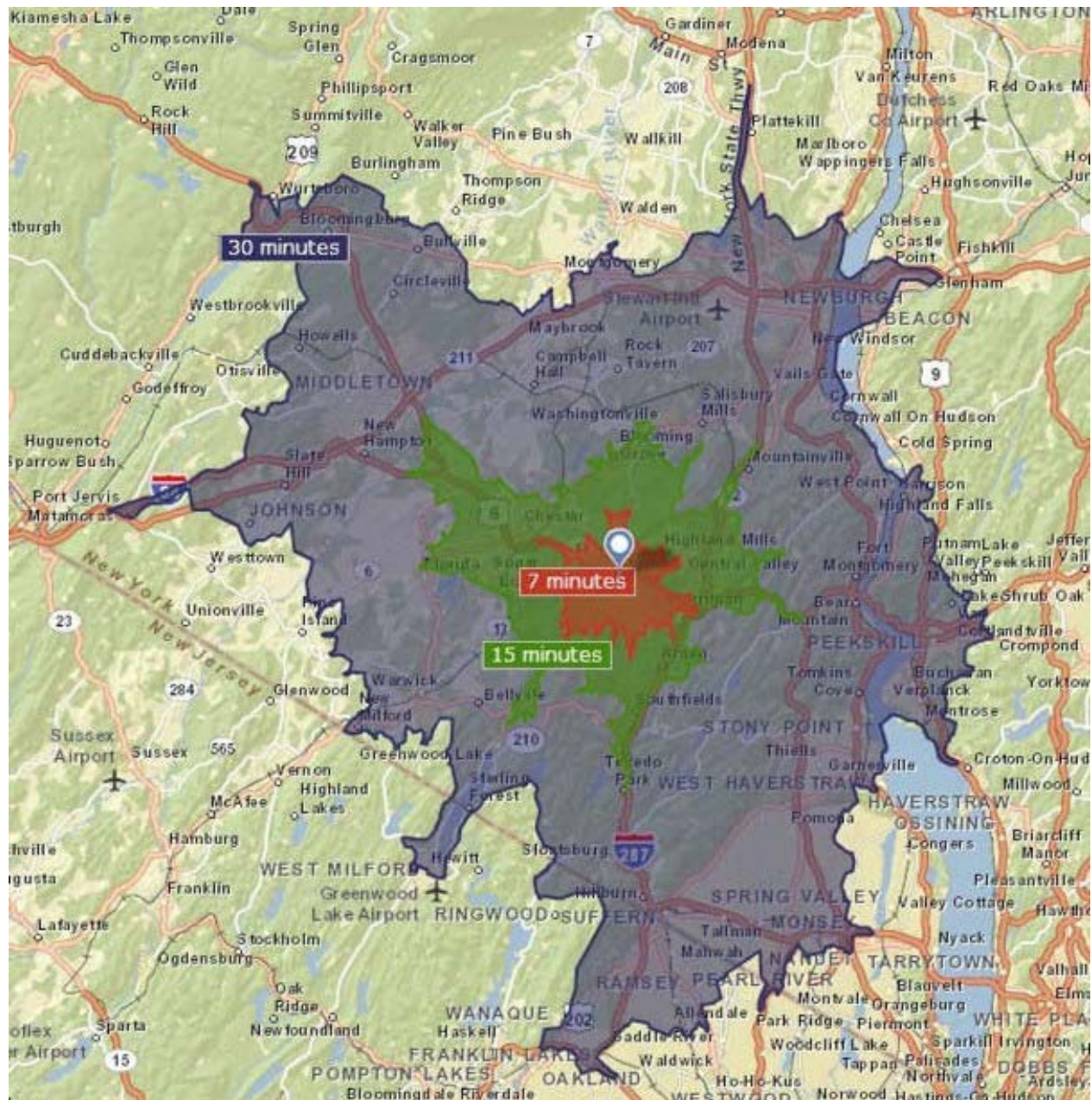
Based on these driving times, three markets were identified:

Local Trade Market - Generally it comprises the Villages of Monroe, Harriman and Kiryas Joel; most of the populated areas of the unincorporated Town of Monroe, including the Walton and Round Lake Areas, Mansion Ridge, and the northwest side of Harriman Heights Road; some rural areas within the Village of Woodbury along Bakertown Road and County Route 105; and some rural areas within the Town of Blooming Grove along Route 208, Craigville Road and Bull Mill Road. This area does not include the Woodbury Commons Outlet Mall, but does include "big-box" retail of Harriman Commons and Woodbury Center.

Area Trade Market - This market includes the Villages of Monroe, Kiryas Joel, Harriman, Chester, Goshen and most of the Village of Woodbury. This trade market stretches along Route 208 to the Village of Washingtonville, along Orange Turnpike to the Hamlet of Southfields, along County Route 210 almost to the Village of Greenwood Lake, along Route 94 to the Village of Florida, and along the Quickway (State Route 17/6) almost to the Interstate 84 interchange. This area includes Woodbury Commons Outlet Mall, and the retail areas of Central Valley, Highland Mills, Chester and much of Goshen.

Regional Trade Market - This market includes approximately two-thirds of Orange County (except for the northernmost and westernmost areas and some southwesterly parts of the Town of Warwick); two-thirds of Rockland County (although much of this area is a State Park and outlying areas include most of Clarkstown, Orangetown and the Nyacks, Haverstraw and Piermont); northwestern Bergen County including Ramsey and Mahwah; Westchester and Putnam Counties in the vicinity of the Bear Mountain Bridge; Dutchess County in the vicinity of the Newburgh-Beacon Bridge; and Sullivan County in the vicinity of Bloomingburg. This area

includes significant retail offerings in Newburgh, Middletown, Ramsey and Nanuet. This area does not include the Palisades Center Outlet Mall.



Once the three "trade markets" were identified, economic and demographic information was compiled and analyzed to determine the overall supply and demand for retail goods and services. Additionally, information on disposable income, the number of existing businesses and employees, and the supply and demand for certain categories of retail goods and services was also available.

Demographics of Trade Areas

	Local Market	Area Market	Regional Market
Driving Distance (min)	7	15	30
Households	10,675	24,441	205,598
Median Disposable Income	\$50,808	\$57,407	\$56,643
Average Disposable Household Income	\$62,282	\$70,438	\$73,598
Median Age	24.5	31.3	36.2
Number of Businesses	1,463	3,576	25,998
Number of Employees	8,431	27,067	238,500
Number of Retail Businesses	330	902	5,792
Number of Retail Employees	2,668	7,809	49,045
Total Retail Supply	\$419,487,777	\$1,000,000,627	\$7,255,351,850
Total Retail Demand	\$307,085,895	\$799,699,052	\$7,118,585,399
Total Retail Gap	-\$112,401,882	-\$200,301,575	-\$136,766,451
Retail Supply per Retail Business	\$1,271,175.08	\$1,108,648.15	\$1,252,650.53
Retail Demand per Household	\$28,766.83	\$32,719.57	\$34,623.81
Retail Gap as a Percentage of Sales	-26.80%	-20.03%	-1.89%
Percentage of Employees in Retail	31.65%	28.85%	20.56%
Retail Employees per Household	0.25	0.32	0.24
Retail Employees per Retail Business	8.084848485	8.657427938	8.467714088

All three of Monroe's trade markets exhibit a negative Retail Gap. That is to say that the businesses within the three markets have annual sales in excess of the annual demands of the population. This means that each of the three markets relies on consumers that reside outside of its boundaries for its annual sales. More retail dollars enter the Monroe market areas than leave it.

The compiled data gave further insight into the retail gap on a category basis. This allowed the Village to analyze whether there were specific types of retail trade that were underserved in the various trade markets.

Local Market - Specific Observations

The local market shows significantly lower than average retail gaps (difference between retail sales at stores and retail demand of residents) for Auto Dealers, Home Furnishings, Specialty Foods, Alcohol and General Merchandise. This means that these businesses depend on a greater amount of "out-of- market" consumers to maintain sales. This may be expected for

Auto Dealers and home furnishings, but indicates that the Specialty foods, alcohol and general merchandise markets may be locally over served.

The local market also shows significantly higher than average retail gaps for boat, motorcycle and RV dealers, furniture stores, lawn and garden, health and personal care stores, gas stations, sporting goods, bookstores, hobby stores, pet supplies, and restaurants and drinking places of all types. These represent opportunities to capture more of the local trade in new establishments. It is noted that since the data was compiled, the Village added a flooring supply store, an auto parts store and several restaurants within the local trade area.

Area Market - Specific Observations

The area market shows significantly lower than average retail gaps for home furnishings stores, building materials and supplies, specialty food stores, clothing stores, general merchandise and miscellaneous merchandise retailers. These businesses are likely over served in the area market.

The area market shows significantly higher than average retail gaps for boat, motorcycle and RV dealers, furniture stores, electronics and appliance stores, health and personal care stores, sporting goods, bookstores, hobby stores, and restaurants of all types. These types of businesses could probably be successfully located within the Village, but should be located in a manner that makes it convenient to access these areas from distant locations.

Regional Market - Specific Observations

The regional market shows significantly lower than average retail gaps for automobile dealers. This type of business is likely over served in the region. People are often willing to travel farther for a "deal" on a car, and there are several competing dealerships in the Ramsey/Mahwah, Middletown/Goshen, Newburgh/Beacon, and Nanuet areas all within the 30-minute drive regional market.

The regional market shows significantly higher than average retail gap for boat, motorcycle and RV dealers, furniture stores, electronics and appliance stores, clothing stores, lawn and garden equipment and supplies, health and personal care stores, sporting goods, bookstores, hobby stores, and restaurants of all types. Due to the lack of regional highway access in the Village, it is not likely that locations within the Village could expect to capture a large portion of regional trade. It therefore suggested that only highly specialized examples of these regional opportunities could successfully locate within the Village.

Obstacles to Economic Development

During both the interviews with real estate professionals, and during stakeholder outreach, the Steering Committee engaged the informed opinions of individuals on what factors acted as obstacles to Economic Development.

Approval Process

There were varying opinions as to whether the Village of Monroe's land use approval process was detrimental to economic development. Some professionals cited grave concerns over costs and delays of coming before the Planning and Zoning Boards of the Village. Others did not feel that the planning process in Monroe put the Village at a competitive disadvantage since it was equivalent to the processes in other area Towns and Villages.

It is widely believed that uncertainty of time and cost is a severe obstacle to economic development. The importance of knowing the price and timeframe for approval at the outset of the approval process is vital, and unforeseen delay and cost undermines marketing of Monroe Village sites, especially when an existing building or site is involved and applicants expect minimal delay.

New York's State Environmental Quality Review Act is largely viewed as a wildcard that has the potential to undermine a project's viability. The threat of a lengthy and costly environmental review was believed to discourage businesses from locating in Monroe, especially businesses for which a New Jersey location is viable.

Aesthetics

The aesthetics of the Monroe Downtown was largely seen as a detriment to the Village serving as a destination for tourism as well as those seeking arts and entertainment-type uses. The conditions of buildings and surface parking areas were largely cited. The aesthetics of the downtown was seen as a counterpoint to the high desirability of the Millponds and Crane Park.

The effects of depreciated aesthetics are two-fold for the general retail market. Consumers do not care to stroll among an unattractive Main Street and potential retailers do not want to establish business relationships with landlords that clearly do not maintain their structures.

Regional Malls

Large regional shopping malls near Route 32 in the Town of Monroe and Village of Woodbury (Woodbury Common, Harriman Commons, etc.) were seen as a detriment for two principal reasons. First, their proximity made local versions of big-box stores - for example hardware stores versus Home Depot - less viable.

The other factor that was seen as an obstacle was increased traffic through the Village that these regional retailers attract. Pass through traffic, especially on Lake Street and Route 17M bound for the regional malls or traffic travelling through the Village to bypass traffic generated by the regional malls, was seen as discouraging local patronage by making access to local retail more congested and stressful.

Limited Access to Downtown Specifically

In a related sense, access to downtown is seen by some as difficult regardless of local regional mall traffic. The congested (especially during Peak PM hours) intersections at Route 208 and Route 17M, Route 17M and Lakes Road, Route 17M and Freeland Street, and Route 208 and North Main Street make it difficult and more time consuming to access the historical downtown. Also, on-street parking is very limited, and there are no quick and attractive access ways to parking located in rear lots.

Related Master Plan Goals, Objectives and Recommended Strategies

Goal E1: Create an active, convenient and inviting downtown as the community's civic, cultural, and recreational center as well as a destination for dining, shopping and personal services.

Objective 1: Decrease the number of vacant ground-level spaces in the downtown.

Recommendation E1.1.1: *Expand permitted uses and allow a change of use without costly or lengthy review.* The Village should revisit its code requirements for the downtown to allow the widest range of retail, personal service, restaurant and other commercial uses within downtown spaces. Transition from one permitted use to another should not automatically require site plan approval. An applicant could be able to appear before the Planning Board and simply describe operational differences between uses such as hours of operation, parking requirements, and signage. The Planning Board has the ability (see Village Code § 200-72.C) to waive the public hearing for permitted uses and should be encouraged to do so unless the Planning Board makes a finding that the change of use may result in substantial public controversy on the basis of noise, odors, traffic, lighting or other externally identifiable impact.

A similar process should be undertaken for the change of use from one restaurant to another. Such applications should similarly be permitted to proceed to the Planning Board without a site plan so that the applicant can describe the proposed changes to the restaurant operations including kitchen equipment, hours of operation, parking requirements, signage, percentage of alcohol sales versus food sales and number of bar seats. Any increase to the percentage of alcohol sales or bar seating, or applications to introduce alcohol sales as a new use should require a public hearing.

As is current practice, the Planning Board is empowered to require reasonable controls for the control of noise and odors, traffic, lighting, and safety of future patrons and area residents, especially with regard to alcohol sales. However, it is intended that the process for receiving approval be within a short time (no more than two meetings), and at minimal cost.

Recommendation E.1.1.2: *Develop marketing prospectus for Monroe Downtown.* Package the retail market place data collected for this Plan and develop it into a prospectus for the Monroe Downtown. Make it available to local property owners to use in attracting potential commercial tenants.

Recommendation E.1.1.3: *Relocate Village Hall and utilize existing Village Hall as a business incubator.* Consider relocating Village Hall to a new, modern, energy efficient, and ADA-compliant building on the periphery of the downtown. Form a Local Development Corporation (LDC) and lease the former Village Hall to the LDC as a business incubator space with new retail, service and restaurant spaces possible on ground floors, and new offices available on upper stories. Consider partnering with local medical conglomerates to train medical services professionals in upper floors to attract additional health-related businesses to Monroe. Since an LDC is not subject to taxation and a low monthly lease can be negotiated with the Village, the LDC should be able to offer very low rents.

Alternatively, the LDC could issue bonds and purchase a different existing space within the downtown for similar purposes. There is some belief that removal of the existing Village Hall structure may increase the function of the downtown. An Empire State Grant award may be possible for funding the relocation of Village Hall and construction of business incubator.

Recommendation E.1.1.4: *Work with Chamber to actively seek downtown tenants to fill vacant spaces.* The Village, in cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce, should actively seek retailers and restaurateurs that fill market opportunities as indicated in the market analysis. Specifically there appears to be strong market opportunities for:

- New restaurants, especially specialty restaurants;
- Sale of boats, RVs, and motorcycles, ATVs, personal watercraft;
- Health and personal care stores;
- Furniture stores; and
- Books, sporting goods and hobby stores.

Generic Environmental Impact Discussion: The objective of decreasing vacant downtown spaces through administrative streamlining, marketing and cooperative efforts with local institutions is not likely to result in environmental impacts as such downtown structures already exist, and reuse, expansion or enhancement of existing community centers is generally less impactful to the environment than the alternative of construction on outlying greenfield sites. The potential relocation of Village Hall and its reuse or the use of another area building as a business incubator is not likely to have significant adverse impacts. Such an incubator could result in competitive impacts on the marketability of other downtown spaces, but this can be mitigated by limiting leases in the incubator to short terms of less than three years. This would actually increase the marketability of existing downtown spaces by allowing businesses to build local market share. Increasing downtown usage would result in

increased vehicular traffic to the downtown. Such vehicular traffic will likely be mitigated by the several traffic and recommendations throughout this Plan as well as improvements to the pedestrian realm and proposed traffic calming measures.

Funding Opportunity: Empire State Development Grants: Funding is available for capital-based economic development initiatives intended to create or retain jobs; prevent, reduce or eliminate unemployment and underemployment; and/or increase business activity in a community or region.

- *Up to \$ 150 million for Regional Council Capital Fund*
- *Up to \$ 20 million for Empire State Economic Development Fund*
- *Up to \$ 4 million for Urban and Community Development Program*

Eligible applicants:

- *Municipalities / Regional Government Councils*
- *BID's*
- *Economic Development Agencies*
- *Businesses*

Eligible Activities

- *Capital expenditures that facilitate an employer's ability to create new jobs in New York State or to retain jobs that are otherwise in jeopardy.*
- *Financing infrastructure investments in order to attract new businesses and expand existing businesses, thereby fostering further investment. Infrastructure investments are capital expenditures for infrastructure including transportation, water and sewer, communication, and energy generation and distribution. Infrastructure also includes the construction of parking garages. Infrastructure Investment may be used to finance planning or feasibility studies relating to capital expenditures.*
- *Economic Growth Investments which foster economic growth through cultural activity, higher education activity, regional revolving loan and grant programs, other local or regional initiatives, agribusiness initiatives, commercial revitalization activities in central business districts or commercial strips, or other projects that may not have direct job creation goals. Economic growth investment projects that are able to provide direct job commitments will be viewed favorably.*

Objective 2: Increase accessibility of the downtown to residents of the surrounding area.

Recommendation E1.2.1: *Promote easier access to Downtown.* The recommendations included in the Connections Chapter of this document will serve to improve accessibility of the downtown to vehicular access. Key to improving downtown access is installing roundabouts or otherwise easing congestions at gateways to the downtown; eliminating "right-on-red" restrictions at Spring Street and Mapes Place and at Spring Street and Bakertown Road; and most notably, reopening Lake Street to North Main Street and Spring Street, preferably via a traffic roundabout.

Generic Environmental Impact Discussion: These environmental impacts are addressed in the Connections Chapter of this document.

Objective 3: Provide easy and convenient parking to service downtown businesses and address actual and perceived parking problems. Expand parking opportunities, particularly the parking lot behind the library.

Recommendation E.1.3.1: *Expand downtown parking.* The Village should expand the number of surface parking spaces within the downtown by acquiring and developing unused land adjacent to existing parking. Lands north of Lake Street may also be used to expand commuter parking, which can be shared with downtown residential use. Areas to the rear of Stage Road offices and restaurants, as well as to the rear of the Library may also be acquired and used to expand parking for the downtown and a reopened Movie Theater.

Recommendation E.1.3.2: *Beautify downtown parking.* New and/or improved parking areas adjacent to downtown should be beautified by the installation of decorative trees, landscaped islands and green or paver yards adjacent to existing downtown buildings. Such yards can double as outdoor spaces for dining or relaxation. Require that refuse containers be fully screened from parking areas. Promote/require central refuse container locations for use by area tenants, businesses and landlords. The Village should seek moneys earmarked for green infrastructure in order to install rain gardens and street trees in existing parking areas to accommodate stormwater runoff in situ.

Recommendation E.1.3.3: *Promote the installation of secondary rear accesses to parking areas by Lake Street businesses.*

Generic Environmental Impact Discussion: The enhancement and expansion of existing parking facilities in the vicinity of downtown is not likely to result in adverse environmental impacts. Recommendations for beautification of parking are likely to result in positive aesthetic impacts and decreased stormwater runoff.

Objective 4: Improve the appearance of downtown especially in areas open to significant public view such as the Ponds;

Funding Opportunity: Environmental Facilities Corporation- Green Innovation Grant Program: The specific monetary allocation for this grant remains TBD. The Green Innovation Grant Program (GIGP) provides grants on a competitive basis to projects that improve water quality and demonstrate green stormwater infrastructure in New York. GIGP is administered by NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC) through the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) and is funded through a grant from the US EPA.

At the heart of green infrastructure is the goal to manage rain where it falls, reducing runoff volume and the need to treat it through grey infrastructure – much of which is already at or near capacity. Stormwater runoff can overwhelm sewer systems and other clean-water infrastructure, leading to pollution of our waterways. Traditional grey infrastructure is also expensive to maintain. Green infrastructure includes decentralized, site-specific projects that manage stormwater and provide a myriad of additional benefits such as increasing property values, revitalizing communities, improving air quality, sequestering carbon and other greenhouse gases, creating green jobs, improving the walkability of communities, reducing the urban heat island effect, and providing natural habitats, to name a few. Working in parallel with traditional grey, clean-water infrastructure, green infrastructure is a cost effective and efficient tool for meeting the goals of the Clean Water Act.

Competitive projects will:

- Create and maintain green, wet-weather infrastructure*
- Spur innovation in the field of stormwater management*
- Build capacity locally and beyond, to construct and maintain green infrastructure*
- Facilitate the transfer of new technologies and practices to other areas of the State*

Eligible Activities:

Funding will be available for the following types of projects:

Permeable pavement- (i.e. porous asphalt, concrete, or pavers) Permeable pavement is designed to convey rainfall through the pavement surface into an underlying reservoir where it can infiltrate, thereby reducing stormwater runoff from a site. Permeable pavement includes pervious asphalt and concrete and pervious pavers such as reinforced turf, interlocking modules and pavers.

Bioretention- Bioretention systems are shallow vegetated depressions often referred to by a variety of names such as bio-infiltration areas, biofilters, rain gardens, bioswales, or recharge gardens. They are very effective at removing pollutants and reducing stormwater runoff.

Street trees or urban forestry programs designed to manage stormwater-

Urban Forestry Programs use a detailed inventory and map of existing and proposed trees to manage and maintain their urban forest. These tools help determine planting sites, select appropriate species, schedule maintenance, and evaluate the most effective practices to ensure tree health and stormwater capacity.

Construction or restoration of wetlands, floodplains, or riparian buffers- Riparian Buffers are vegetated or undisturbed natural areas that filter runoff before it enters a waterbody. Floodplains are a natural water right-of-way that provide temporary storage for large flood events, keeping people and structures out of harm's way and preserving riparian ecosystems and habitats. Constructed Wetlands are shallow marsh systems planted with emergent vegetation that are designed to treat stormwater runoff. They are an extremely effective for pollutant removal, and can also mitigate peak rates and reduce runoff volume.

Stream daylighting – This includes the removal of natural streams from artificial pipes and culverts to restore a natural stream morphology that is capable accommodating a range of hydrologic conditions while also providing biological integrity.

Stormwater harvesting and reuse, (rain barrel and cistern projects) Rain barrels are rooftop catchment storage systems typically utilized in residential settings while cisterns are large-scale rain barrels used in commercial and industrial settings.

Recommendation E1.4.1: *Demonstrate affordable improvements to local landowners.* Provide concept renderings to local landowners in order to demonstrate relatively low-cost measures such as paint, uncovering of brick, awnings, improved signage, lighting and landscaping that can be taken to improve the appearance of downtown buildings.

Recommendation E1.4.2: The Village Architectural Appearance Review Board should use historic photos and renderings of Monroe's historic downtown to make uniform recommendations for the acceptable types of wall cladding, colors, signage, awnings, decorative architectural elements, type of windows, and other architectural features. The Village should seek Main Street grants to assist property owners with such facade improvements as are necessary to bring properties into conformance. To the extent possible, as buildings are restored to their original form, the Village should consider designating additional properties within the downtown which may qualify for inclusion into the historic district and seeking funding in order to continue such facade restorations.

Funding Opportunity: NYS Main Street Program: The New York Main Street (NYMS) Program was created to provide resources for the purpose of assisting New York's communities with Main Street and downtown revitalization efforts. The program has up to \$5.2 million available to stimulate reinvestment in properties located within mixed-use commercial districts and adjacent neighborhoods by providing resources with the goal of establishing sustainable downtown and neighborhood revitalization and investing in projects that provide economic development and housing opportunities.

Eligible applicants:

- *Municipalities*
- *Not-for-profits including BIDs with 1 year or more of service*

Eligible Activities:

Applicants may request between \$50,000 and \$250,000 for two eligible activities:

Building Renovation: *Matching grants to building owners for renovation of mixed-use buildings. Recipients of NYMS funds may award up to \$50,000 in grant funds to building owners. Building renovation grant funds are used to renovate facades, storefronts and commercial interiors, with an additional \$10,000 per residential unit up to a per-building maximum of \$100,000.*

Streetscape Enhancement: *Up to \$15,000 in grant funds for streetscape enhancement activities, such as: planting trees, installing street furniture and trash cans; providing appropriate signs in accordance with a local signage plan; and performing other supportive activities to enhance the NYMS target area. A streetscape enhancement grant will only be awarded as an activity ancillary to a building renovation project and cannot be applied for on its own.*

The Target Area Eligibility: Project must be located in an eligible target area. An eligible target area shall mean an area: (i) that has experienced sustained physical deterioration, decay, neglect, or disinvestment; (ii) has a number of substandard buildings or vacant residential or commercial units; and (iii) in which more than fifty percent of the residents are persons of low income, or which is designated by a state or federal agency to be eligible for a community or economic development program.

V&J Pork Store

A vibrant, hand-drawn illustration of a red brick building. The central feature is a large, arched doorway with a white interior. Above the arch is a small, square window with a green shutter. To the right of the arch are three rectangular windows, each with a yellow shutter. The building is rendered in a textured, painterly style with bold outlines and a rich color palette of reds, yellows, and greens. The drawing is set against a white background.

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Recommendation E.1.4.3: *Improve the appearance of the Millponds.* The Millponds are one of the greatest economic and aesthetic assets to the Village and its downtown. However, over recent years, there has been increasing volumes of algae and kelp due to the reduced depth and flow of the water in the ponds. This has led not only to a deterioration of appearance and occasional odor issues, but also has increased the maintenance costs by requiring frequent removal of pond vegetation and use of chemical treatments.

At some point the Village will be faced with the capital expense of dredging the ponds. It should be acknowledged that it is the policy of the Village that the ponds are vital to Monroe's character and economic health and that the cost associated with pond maintenance is a necessary and prudent investment. The same policy is applied to required improvements to the dam at Stage Road and Route 17M, which also will likely require improvement over the next several years.

Acknowledging the necessity of future capital investments associated with the Millponds, the Village should look for opportunities to leverage costs. For example, the dredge spoils from the pond could be used elsewhere in the park to form an amphitheater at the north end of Crane Park, or to flatten sloping areas or modify the geometry of the ponds.

The energy generated by the water pouring over the Millpond Dam once powered the mill for which the Millpond was named. Dam maintenance may offer the potential to extract this power once more via a micro hydropower generator. Such generators have been installed by the US Park Service for remote locations. The Village could seek a grant from NYSEDA to investigate whether it is cost effective or feasible to capture hydropower from a renovated dam.

Generic Environmental Impact Discussion: The recommendations that will require increased visual quality within the downtown is not likely to result in adverse environmental impacts. Such requirements will impose an added cost upon existing and future landowners within the downtown. Such increased regulation has been deemed necessary due to the past disinvestment of some existing property owners, and is intended to promote a district wide improvement, which should result in increased marketability of downtown properties and therefore increase value. It is noted that any such regulations should be reasonable in requirements, and equitable in application to all landowners in the downtown. It is noted that in addition to the new regulatory requirements, the Village is also recommending substantial public investment in the local infrastructure, which should also improve local property values.

The policy of improving the appearance and function of Crane Park, including the dredging of the Millponds and repair of the dam, is likely to have significant environmental and public health and safety impacts. Such dredging, as well as dam repairs, will need a site-specific environmental review once design details are developed. It is likely that such repairs and improvements will likely require environmental permitting by the Department of Environmental Conservation, which will incorporate environmental mitigations as appropriate.

Funding Opportunity: Energy Research and Development Authority- Flexible Technical Assistance (Flex-Tech): Program provides up to \$50 million statewide to eligible New York State commercial, industrial, and institutional end users with objective and customized studies and engineering analysis to help make informed energy decisions. Successful applicants will work with NYSERDA staff, their NYSERDA FlexTech Consultant, or chosen service provider, to develop a detailed and site specific scope of work. This scope of work will then be reviewed and approved by NYSERDA and NYSERDA cost-share will be set aside. Please contact NYSERDA for scope of work requirements.

Eligible Applicants:

- *Municipalities*
- *State Agencies*
- *Not-for profits*
- *Public and private Educational institutions*
- *Health Care or Agricultural facilities*
- *Commercial and Industrial Facilities*

Eligible study categories include:

- *Energy Feasibility Studies — Studies and customized recommendations for the energy consuming systems at your facility that align with your business goals.*
- *Master Planning — Ongoing identification of energy opportunities for your business. Services include energy, carbon and sustainability master planning, long-term operational and management support, and RFP preparation.*
- *Industrial Process Efficiency — These studies focus on increasing productivity and improving energy performance. Use them to help your company define and reduce energy use per unit of production.*
- *Data Centers — Helps you assess energy efficiency and reduce energy and carbon impacts in your data center support systems. Includes items such as system upgrades or replacement, server virtualization and redundancy optimization.*
- *Benchmarking — Benchmarking and onsite systems and operational assessments recommending low-cost energy-efficiency improvements.*
- *Retro-commissioning — This systematic process helps determine how well building systems perform interactively to meet the operational needs of owners and occupants.*
- *Combined Heat and Power — Rely on these studies to investigate the feasibility of installing combined heat and power.*
- *Peak-load Reduction & Load Management — Develop comprehensive protocols that allow customers to respond to curtailment calls from the New York Independent System Operator (NYISO) during periods of New York electrical system capacity constraints.*

Objective 5: Improve access, connectivity, walkability and lighting with respect to both roads and pathways/ sidewalks in the downtown area; improve the pedestrian experience in downtown including landscaping, street furniture and appropriate delineation of public and private areas.

Recommendation E.1.5.1: Improve alleyway connections between existing parking areas and the front of businesses along Lake Street. Consider taking fee title to existing alleyways. Promote murals by gifted local artists where blank walls exist along alleys. Install lighting, and consider installing cameras at alleyways with blank walls to promote appearance of safety.

Recommendation E1.5.2: *Install curb extensions at mid-block locations to promote safe pedestrian travel from one-side of Lake Street to the other.* Incorporate a speed-table into design to calm traffic and clearly define the downtown as a pedestrian realm.



Example of street lamp within integrated waste receptacle, planter and signage.

Recommendation E1.5.3: *Restripe parking spaces at the southeast end of Lake Street for a drop-off zone.* This will make the downtown more suitable to uses that cater to children, such as schools for dance, martial arts, painting, music instruction, etc.

Recommendation E1.5.4: *Install decorative street lighting with integrated planters, waste receptacles and downtown signage.* Extend lighting into and around Crane Park.

Recommendations E1.5.5: *Install colored stamped pavement crosswalks throughout the downtown as was done around Crane Park.*

Generic Environmental Impact Discussion: Improving the streetscape and physical downtown environment will require construction and physical improvements which will require site-specific environmental review once a detailed design is developed. The policy of improving walkability of the downtown will likely result in positive air quality and public health benefits, as reliance upon motor vehicles will be decreased.

Objective 6: Provide a resident population that will frequent downtown businesses.

Recommendation E.1.6.1: *Partner with local property owners to seek public funds available for the retrofitting of single-story downtown buildings to accommodate additional stories of multi-family housing.*

Recommendation E1.6.2: *Allow multifamily housing around the periphery of downtown.* This would include along Carpenter Place and Millpond Parkway south of the Monroe Theater, as well as in areas adjacent to the Millponds that have exhibited questionable marketability for commercial use, such as the former Saab dealership.

Generic Environmental Impact Discussion: Allowing additional residential density within and at the periphery of the downtown has the potential to increase the population of the Village and result in population based environmental impacts including potential increased sewer and water usage, traffic, school impacts, fiscal impacts

Figure 10: Lake Street Schematic

To be added

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and others. The purpose of this policy is to promote future population in an area where services, transit access and resources are available within walking distance from the downtown. Assuming that there is a finite market potential for new housing within the region, to the extent that such market potential is satisfied in proximity to existing community centers, rather than at remote locations at low densities, environmental impacts associated with new development will be reduced. Growth centered in the Village of Monroe and especially that which occurs in proximity to the downtown is consistent with the Orange County Comprehensive Plan in that it will be within an identified growth area and which will allow the preservation of other areas of the County for open space, biodiversity, resource protection, recreation and water quality protection. With this broader consideration in mind, reasonable additional residential density at densities of less than 12 units per acre (moderate density) and focused in areas of the Village with vehicular access and public water and sewer is likely the policy that will be least impactful of the environment and most consistent with existing Village character. Higher densities would not be consistent with the existing Village character and failing to allow future growth within the Village would encourage greenfield development in surrounding rural areas more appropriate for conservation use. It is noted that each new multifamily residential development will need to consider site-specific impacts as well as impacts to resources, utilities and public services at the time of application to ensure that significant adverse impacts do not occur.

Objective 7: Actively market downtown businesses, local events, volunteer opportunities and local resources, such as parks and historic properties. Seek to better engage and coordinate with the local civic and institutional organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce.

Recommendation E1.7.1: *Work with local religious and institutional uses to expand upon its current schedule of festivals and events held in and around the Crane Park.* Currently, the Village promotes the Monroe Cheese Festival, a Summer Concert Series, Independence Day Fireworks and the Memorial Day and Veteran's Day parades. The Village should consider adding additional events that would draw people to Crane Park and the adjacent downtown. Examples could include Italian-American themed feasts that could be coordinated with the Knights of Columbus and/or Sacred Heart Church or a St. Patrick's Day street fair.

Recommendation E1.7.2: *Hold weekend Farmer's Markets in the Village's commuter lot near the downtown.* A farmer's market is currently held on certain weekdays at the Museum Village. The Village of Monroe could provide an open-air pavilion structure that could accommodate such a farmer's market on the weekends and that could double as a bus shelter during the week. Funding for such improvements may be available through the Department of Transportation and/or through the Department of Agriculture and Markets.

Recommendation E1.7.3: *Consider promoting walking history tour.* The Village should commission a study of local historic properties and determine whether there is an adequate inventory of historic sites and structures of adequate interest to conduct a walking tour. Such a walking tour could be in the form of a pamphlet and map, showing the location of historic structures in proximity to Crane Park, and making such a map available to patrons at area businesses. The Village could promote a historic plaque program that would then provide pedestrians with the story behind these sites.

Funding Opportunity: Agriculture and Markets: The Agriculture Development Program has allocated up to \$3 million in grants for eligible applicants to assist in reducing the cost of financing the construction, expansion or renovation of agriculture project(s) that have a direct benefit to New York producers and significance to the region served by the eligible applicant. The program will be administered by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM). Funding provided by the NYSDAM will be used for a project or projects designed and intended for the purpose of establishing, maintaining, or expanding agricultural operations, or for providing facilities and/or markets for the production, manufacturing, processing, warehousing, or distribution or sale of New York crops, livestock and livestock products.

The goal of this program is to promote agricultural economic development through funding a project or projects that will increase New York farm viability through expansion, value added production, diversification, or long term reduction of operating costs. The minimum amount of program funds that may be applied for is \$30,000. The maximum amount of program funds that may be applied for is \$500,000. The program will generally provide up to 50% of the total cost of an eligible project. The program may provide additional funding to a project if a compelling financial need is identified. Direct grant administration costs shall not exceed 10% of the grant request.

Eligible Applicants:

- Municipalities (including Counties)
- Local & regional Development Corps
- Public Benefit Corps
- IDAs
- Farm Credit Institutions
- Not-for-profits

Eligible Activities: An eligible project is a project designed and intended for the purpose of establishing, maintaining, or expanding an agricultural operation, or for providing facilities and/or markets for the production, manufacturing, processing, warehousing, distribution or sale of crops, livestock and livestock products as defined in subdivision 2 of section 301 of the Agriculture and Markets Law.

Recommendation E1.7.4: *The Village should commission the preparation of a Business Location Map* that could be updated as tenants within the downtown change. Such a map should identify downtown businesses within walking distance of the Crane Park. The business map can be made available at local business locations, and placed in a kiosk at select points near Crane Park, such as the intersection of Route 17M and Lake Street, Route 17M and Millpond Parkway, and Millpond Parkway and Lake Street. Such a kiosk (or sign) would need to be located within the Village right-of-way, since commercial activity is prohibited in Crane Park. Such a map may inform users of the park and area businesses of the downtown's other commercial offerings. The Village may also wish to consider preparing the map for all Village businesses, or limit the map to businesses within a certain walking distance to the Park. The Village should ask the Chamber of Commerce to contribute to the cost of such a program.

Recommendation E1.7.5: *Introduce way-finding signage and/or advertise Village businesses on a Route 17/6 billboard.* There is a large amount of regional weekend traffic that passes by the Village coming from weekend tourist destinations in the Catskills. The Village should consider

installing way-finding signage to the Village from Route 17/6, as well as advertising the Village as a dining destination on a Route 17/6 billboard.

Generic Environmental Impact Discussion: The policy of actively marketing downtown and increasing downtown patronage through programming of local parks is not likely to result in significant environmental impacts. While promoting events in the downtown will bring people (and traffic) to the Village, it will also satisfy recreation needs of local residents. Any impacts from increased populations present in the Village for festivals will be offset by the increased patronage of local businesses, which will increase the viability of Monroe's downtown, and which will allow the Village to continue to be a growth center in conformance with the Orange County Comprehensive Plan. Additionally, such impacts will be short-term in nature and the Village can likely mitigate them by implementing several of the Plan's other recommendations, including recommendations regarding improvements to the Village's transportation network and pedestrian facilities.

Objective 8: Enhance connections from the downtown to Ponds Park, the Monroe Racetrack, the Heritage Trail, Smith's Clove Park and other recreational areas.

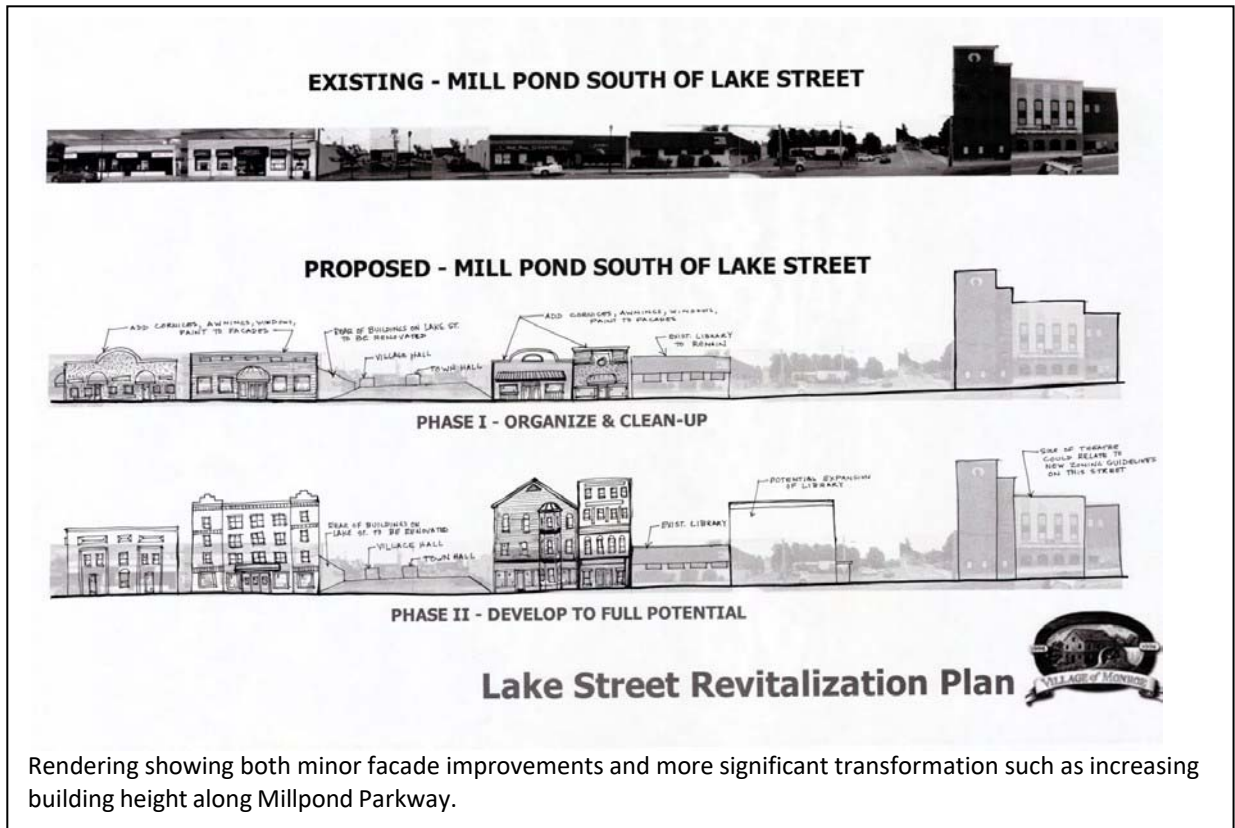
Recommendation E1.8.1: *Promote safe on-road and off-road connections for pedestrians and cyclists between the downtown and its recreational areas.* This recommendation is described in more detail in the Connections chapter of this document. Not only will this allow for children and other users to safely access these facilities, but with proper signage and demarcation of routes, it will also promote added foot traffic through the downtown.

Generic Environmental Impact Discussion: The policy of enhancing off-road connections is assessed in the Connections chapter of this document.

Objective 9: Respect the scale and character of downtown buildings by promoting appropriate building heights at the entrance to downtown from the ponds.

Recommendation E1.9.1: *Encourage building owners along Millpond Parkway to increase their building heights.* As discussed previously, the four-story attractive Venetian Gothic style building at the corner of Lake Street and Carpenter Place was once the landmark of the Village, located at its principal gateway - the railroad depot. Now, the Village's downtown presents the Millpond Parkway frontage as its primary appearance to most area residents and visitors.

If there is a landmark within the current downtown it is the vacant Monroe Theater, which at four stories, stands a bit higher than other buildings in the downtown. It also incorporates a mid-20th century aesthetic, which lends its character to that area of the downtown. The Village should encourage building owners along Millpond Parkway to increase their building heights either through expansion or redevelopment, and provide upper-story apartments. Such a design would provide a stronger character to the downtown as a destination and improve the appearance of its most visible buildings.



Generic Environmental Impact Discussion: The policy of increasing permissible building heights within the downtown is not likely to result in significant adverse environmental impacts, as tall buildings are already present throughout the downtown and are part of its aesthetic character. Any construction-related impacts regarding increasing heights of buildings should be assessed during review of individual site plan applications.

Goal E2: Transform the Route 17M Strip-Commercial Corridor to better address the evolving commercial market and to provide a sustainable balance of uses.

Objective 1: Provide flexibility of use to marginal commercial areas along the Route 17M corridor to better reflect the current retail demand;

Recommendation E2.1.1: *Favor heavy commercial use along Route 208.* Although not strictly speaking along the Route 17M corridor, the commercial area along Route 208 at the north end of the Village, is zoned General Business, but is not well suited for commercial access. The two gas stations in this vicinity are the source of traffic congestion, given the complex traffic alignment in the area. The Village should promote more limited uses in this area, favoring heavy commercial, industrial, warehousing, and office uses instead.

Recommendation E2.1.2: The Village may wish to consider rezoning commercial areas of the Village for residential use and dividing the Route 17M corridor into nodes instead of a linear strip.

Areas for primary consideration of residential rezoning include the area between Stage Road and Freeland Street.

Generic Environmental Impact Discussion: Like the policy of allowing additional residential densities in the downtown, allowing additional multifamily or townhouse residential options along the Route 17M corridor supports the Orange County Comprehensive Plan's recommendations for priority growth areas. (See the Generic Environmental Impact Discussion of Goal E1, Objective 6). The policy of favoring heavy commercial use along the Route 208 corridor acknowledges the traffic congestion along this busy and congested area of the Village. This area of the Village is generally more remote from the downtown and is not suitable for multifamily residential. Additionally the existing traffic congestion in this area as the gateway/exit to the Village of Monroe and a "back-door" for the Village of Kiryas Joel, makes this area ill-suited for additional businesses that result in frequent vehicular trip generation. Instead, the highest and best use for land in this area would be for businesses that benefit from the easy access to the Interstate highway system, as well as those businesses that do not generate significant traffic. The review of the local retail market along with the extent of long vacant retail spaces demonstrates the unsuitability of the Village to support existing retail floor area. Policies of limiting retail use of less developed areas of the Route 17M corridor acknowledge this reality and will result in stronger retail demand where nodes are retained.

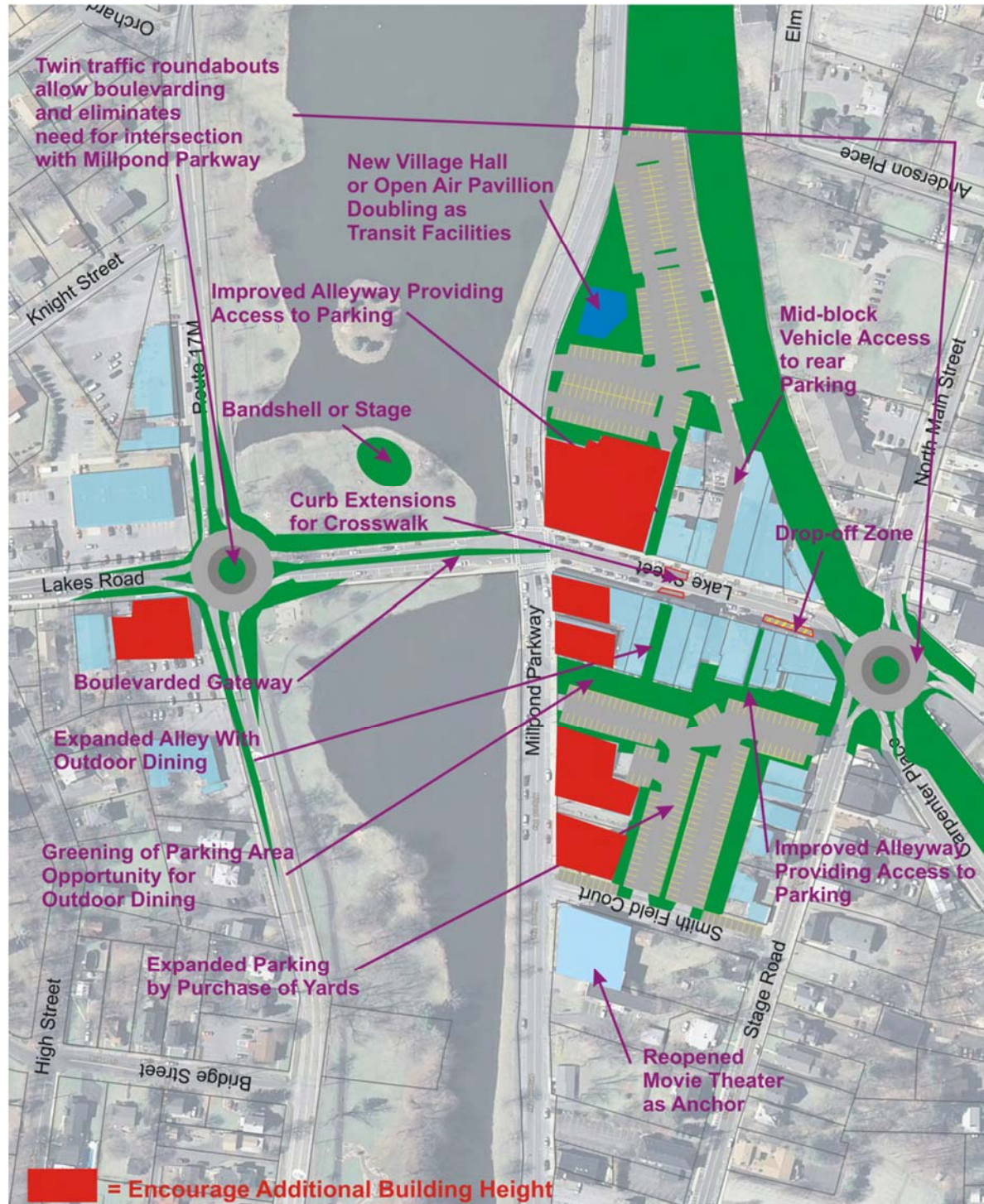
Objective 2: Promote larger commercial uses along the Route 17M corridor that cannot be accommodated in downtown.

Recommendation E.2.2.1: *Establish a minimum floor area per tenant space for any new commercial building constructed within the Village outside of the downtown.* The Village should limit new small-lot and small tenant space commercial uses along the Route 17M corridor. There is already an oversupply of small retail and commercial spaces within the Village, and small spaces remain vacant throughout the Village's downtown and strip commercial centers. The Village should establish a minimum floor area per tenant space for any new commercial building constructed within the Village outside of the downtown. The Village should look to attract businesses over 2,000 square feet in floor area for any new stand-alone restaurants or commercial spaces.

Generic Environmental Impact Discussion: The policy of limiting small retail use to the downtown or existing retail commercial centers acknowledges the inefficiency of retail "sprawl," or locating small businesses in a pattern that increases motor vehicle dependence and reduces the potential for cross-patronization of multiple businesses.

Promoting such a pattern for commercial uses is likely to strengthen the retail potential for both smaller retail uses within the downtown and nodes, and larger retail offerings located along the Route 17M corridor. No adverse environmental impacts are anticipated as a result of this policy, although individual projects will be subject to site-specific environmental review as appropriate.

Proposed Physical Plan for Downtown



Objective 3: Promote a building-on-street appearance, relegating parking to rear yards where possible.

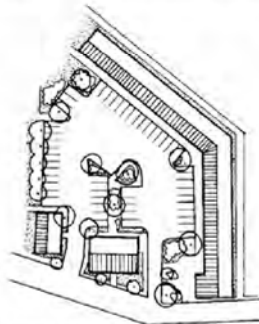
Recommendation E.2.3.1: *Promote more traditional building-on-street appearance.* The Village should promote an aesthetic that places buildings and structures on the road, and relegates parking to the rear or sides of structures. Not only is such design more aesthetically pleasing, but it also allows signage and architecture to be more visible from the street without requiring additional pylon signage.

Recommendation E.2.3.2: *Promote traffic flow between adjacent parking facilities in separate ownership.* Additionally, wherever possible, any new development along the Route 17M corridor should provide cross easements to adjacent properties to allow the interconnection of parking facilities. This will allow the Village to reduce the number of necessary curb cuts and improve traffic flow.

Recommendation E.2.3.3: *Allow additional retail and mixed-use floor area between underutilized parking and streets.* To the extent possible, where existing large parking lots exist in front of existing retail centers, and where there is excess parking during peak periods of

VC.3 Infill Example

The site plan and accompanying photo illustrate an example of infilling that rectified a bad situation created by the initial developer who had thoughtlessly blown a hole in the town's traditional streetscape. After a 1960s developer acquired and pulled down two handsome Victorian homes (in good shape) to erect a long two story motel typical of a highway strip, set back behind 250 feet of bare asphalt along the main street, the lodging business faltered and the premises were sold to a more imaginative soul who saw the opportunity to utilize the front edge of the property more efficiently with two-story buildings once again.



Courtesy American Planning Association (both)

There he constructed three buildings which effectively concealed the parking and provided more leasable space. The entire complex has enjoyed a high occupancy rate since it first opened nearly 20 years ago, with mostly professional offices and service businesses located on the second floor, above retail below. Also worth noting is that trees grace not only the public side of the property but also the interior parking courtyard.



Excerpt from Cattaraugus County Design Handbook

demand, the Village should allow landowners to construct additional retail or mixed-use structures along the road frontage. Such new structures should be of high quality appearance and of architecture styles compatible with the character of the Village. Examples of locations that may qualify for this type of treatment include the Stop & Shop Plaza, the Plaza adjacent to

Monroe Diner. Evidence of parking suitability should be required prior to construction of new buildings.

Generic Environmental Impact Discussion: These policies are intended to improve the aesthetic character of the Village by returning to a more traditional building-on-street form and to make existing retail areas more efficient where excess parking is available. These policies will likely improve the value of existing retail properties and promote better vehicular access. No negative impacts are anticipated as a result of these policies, however future projects will be subject to site-specific environmental review.

Objective 4: Allow for mixed-uses where appropriate and subject to strict design requirements. Promote guidelines to ensure design quality, while instructing future applicants of the Village's design expectations.

Recommendation E2.4.1: *Promote additional mixed-use around Crane Park and on Spring Street.* There may be additional appropriate areas outside the downtown where new mixed-use structures may be appropriate in the future. Generally, these areas would be close to the existing downtown with frontage on Crane Park or along Spring Street. .

Generic Environmental Impact Discussion: Like the policy of allowing additional residential densities in the downtown, allowing additional multifamily or townhouse residential options along the Route 17M corridor supports the Orange County Comprehensive Plan's recommendations for priority growth areas. (See the Generic Environmental Impact Discussion of Goal E1, Objective 6). Site-specific environmental review will be required of future projects.

Goal E3: Transform Monroe's struggling heavy commercial and industrial areas.

Objective 1: Allow for a range of new and innovative uses that leverage the scale of existing buildings in Monroe's existing heavy commercial areas.

Recommendation E.3.1.1: *Allow wider variety of uses for existing large former industrial buildings.* The current structures and land in the Village's remaining industrial and heavy commercial areas are generally large and suited for a variety of uses. The Village should allow a wide variety of uses within these buildings including:

- Industrial, manufacturing, warehousing, and distribution (subject to performance standards limiting odor, noise, air emissions, etc.)
- Indoor recreation such as gyms, indoor sports fields, pools, climbing gyms, bowling, ice rinks, go carts, batting cages, etc.
- Professional offices
- Self-storage
- Storage/office flex space
- Contractor's storage
- Research, laboratory

Given the proximity of these areas to Route 208 and its interchange with Route 17/6, this area is especially well suited for truck and commercial vehicle access. General commercial and residential use in these locations should be discouraged.

Generic Environmental Impact Discussion: See the discussion of Goal E2, Objective 1, regarding the suitability of the area accessed by Route 208 for Heavy Commercial. The area described for this policy is essentially an extension of the Route 208 area, as that area is the principal entry to Monroe's former industrial and heavy commercial areas.

Objective 2: Enhance accessibility to heavy commercial areas from Route 208 and other area roadways.

Recommendation E3.2.1: *Promote access to heavy commercial areas.* Access to existing heavy commercial areas is difficult due to the alignment of the pie shaped intersection of Route 208 and North Main Street. The Connections Chapter of this Plan also made several recommendations including redesigning the intersection into a one-way rotary, and extending the Gilbert Street right-of-way directly to Route 17M.

Generic Environmental Impact Discussion: The environmental implications of this policy are discussed in the Connections chapter of the Plan.

Objective 3: Leverage the presence of the Heritage Trail and promote safe pedestrian and bicycle access to and through these areas.

Recommendation E3.3.1: *Incorporate the future Heritage Trail into the fabric of its existing park system.* As stated previously, it is a Village objective to join Crane, Smith's Clove and Racetrack Parks. This can be done via sidewalks and on-road bicycle paths, but the Heritage Trail will provide an opportunity to accomplish this via an off-road trail. This off-road trail would also connect these park areas to the downtown and to the YMCA. It is noted that there is a strong preference to open Lake Street up to North Main Street and Spring Street across the path of the Heritage Trail. This is seen as a vital economic development and transportation policy that the Village prioritizes over maintaining an uninterrupted bicycle/walking path.

Nevertheless, as shown in the Connection Chapter, installation of a roundabout at that location may make getting through such an intersection more pedestrian and cyclist friendly.

Generic Environmental Impact Discussion: The environmental implications are discussed elsewhere in the Connection and Parks, Recreation and Culture chapters of this Plan.

Goal E4: Increase the efficiency of local government

Objective 1: Streamline development approval processes to make Monroe a small-business-friendly environment.

Recommendation E4.1.1: *Changes of use.* Where a use is transitioning from one permitted use to another within an existing structure or building, the Village should not require a site plan or a public hearing. The Village should instead concentrate on promoting facade or landscaping upgrades to the site. (See also, Recommendation E1.1.1.)

Recommendation E4.1.2: *Increase the number of uses permitted by right in commercial districts.* Where uses are conditional or special permit uses, but do not require specific criteria, the Village should consider reclassifying the uses as permitted.

Recommendation E4.1.3: *Simplify zoning.* To the extent possible the Village's development regulations should be simplified in language and in regulations. Definitions should be modernized, and the code should be brought into compliance with current State laws regarding procedures for the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) and the issuance of variances.

Generic Environmental Impact Discussion: These policy recommendations are generally ministerial in nature and not subject to SEQR. It is not likely that they will result in environmental impacts.

Objective 2: Take advantage of provisions to streamline the State Environmental Quality Review process.

Recommendation E4.2.1: *Designate local Type 2 SEQRA list.* The State Environmental Quality Review Act allows local municipalities to designate their own Type 2 lists for uses that are not likely to result in environmental impacts. The Village should avail itself of this ability especially for small commercial uses and changes of uses within existing structures.

Generic Environmental Impact Discussion: It will be appropriate to discuss the environmental impacts of designating an action as a local Type 2 action. If any large impacts are likely, such an action should not be so designated.

Objective 3: Improve communications and planning efforts between the Village, the Town, and surrounding Villages and Towns and Orange County.

Recommendation E4.3.1: *Seek cross-acceptance of the Plan from the County, Town and Department of Transportation.* It is important to the success of the proposals and recommendations herein that higher levels of government be aware of and accept the policies being promoted. The Village should seek commentary from the Town and County on the policies contained herein. Additionally, the Village will need to establish frequent contact and actively lobby representatives of the Department of Transportation in order to implement the various recommendations on modifications to the transportation network.

Generic Environmental Impact Discussion: This policy recommendation is generally ministerial in nature and not subject to SEQRA. It is not likely that it will result in environmental impacts.

Objective 4: Take advantage of grant funding available from New York State where appropriate.

Recommendation E4.4.1: *Retain a grant writer and/or lobbyist to secure State and Federal Aid.* Several funding opportunities were presented throughout the Economic Development Chapter of this Plan. The Village should retain the services of a grant writer, and explore entering into a contract with a lobbying specialist in order to help secure funding for the strategies contained herein.

Generic Environmental Impact Discussion: This policy recommendation is generally ministerial in nature and not subject to SEQRA. It is not likely that it will result in environmental impacts.

Plan: The Future

*“But little mouse, you are not alone, in proving foresight may be vain:
The best laid schemes of mice and men go often awry, and leave us
nothing but grief and pain, for promised joy!”*

- Robert Burns, *To a Mouse, on Turning Her Up in Her Nest with the Plough*

This Plan document starts with an account of the principal failure of the 1960 Village of Monroe Master Plan - a failure to provide a strategy to ensure its employment and periodic updating. In recognition of the time and effort that has been expended in the preparation of this Comprehensive Plan, and in acknowledgment of the fact that no plan can account for all possible eventualities and outcomes, it is the desire of the Village of Monroe that this Plan become an integral part of the operation of local government. To this end it is the final recommendation of this Plan that a local law be adopted that requires a review and report be commissioned and delivered to the Village Board every five years before the Village Board adopts its annual budget.

For this purpose, it is suggested that the Village Board assemble a five to ten member Comprehensive Plan Review Committee to be comprised of a Village Board member, a member of the Planning Board, a member of the Zoning Board, an appointed representative of the local chamber of commerce or other business group, the Village Engineer, and such other members-at-large as are chosen by the Village Board. Such group shall review the Comprehensive Plan and its Implementation matrix, identify which recommendations have been implemented and prioritize those recommendations that have not yet been implemented. The Committee should also make recommendations as to what issues may have arisen over the preceding year that may require a partial or comprehensive reexamination of the Plan.

It is suggested that instituting such a process will make it more likely that the goals and objectives identified herein may be made a reality, and that this Plan will become an intrinsic element of Village local government, thereby unifying the efforts of its Village, Planning, Zoning and other development review boards, as well as the local business community.

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Timing and Responsibility

The following matrix summarizes the recommendations of the Village of Monroe's Comprehensive Plan, identifies responsible parties that are necessary for implementation of the recommendations, and suggests a time frame for accomplishing the recommendations. Short-term is suggested to be immediate to within three years of adoption of the Plan. Medium-term is suggested to be within eight years of adoption. Long-term is generally believed to take more than eight years for implementation; however, it is noted that long-term recommendations still require steps to be commenced in the short-term to achieve implementation.

					Time Frame	Responsibility			
Plan: Housing						Village	County	State	Private
H	1	1	1	Clarify code to provide clear standards for residential density within the downtown.	Short	x			
H	1	1	2	Regulate minimum apartment size and number of bedrooms in downtown.	Short	x			
H	1	1	3	Reconsider requirements for outdoor recreation and on-site laundry facilities in downtown.	Short	x			
H	1	1	4	Adjust downtown residential parking requirements and institute fee for residential units not providing parking.	Medium	x			
H	1	2	1	Incentivize senior housing through added density, but require plan for dissolution of units if housing is made available to other age groups in the future.	Short	x			
H	1	3	1	Allow higher residential density through new multifamily/townhouse overlay zones throughout the Village focused along the Route 17M corridor.	Short	x			
H	1	4	1	Require new multifamily units meet ADA standards and enhanced accessibility standards immediately.	Medium	x			
H	2	1	1	Eliminate two-family uses as a permitted or special permit use in the SR-20 and SR-10 districts.	Short	x			
H	2	2	1	Require stricter standards for multifamily conversions.	Short	x			
H	2	2	2	Require stricter property maintenance laws.	Medium	x			
H	2	2	3	Encourage alternative reuse of large homes in the North Main Street Area by allowing additional reuse opportunities including professional offices and group homes.	Short	x			x

Plan: Housing (Continued)					Time Frame	Village	County	State	Private
H	2	3	1	Provide flexibility in yard and bulk requirements for older established residential neighborhoods.	Short	x			
Plan: Recreation, Environment and Cultural									
P	1	1	1	Map existing historic resources and make available to the public.	Medium	x			x
P	1	1	2	Start a local historic plaque program to recognize renovated or well-maintained historic buildings.	Medium	x			x
P	1	1	3	Require architectural review for structures within the Village's Historic District, and alert local building owners to funding opportunities.	Short	x			x
P	1	2	1	Treat lot area deductions similarly in cluster or standard subdivisions to remove the deterrent to cluster subdivisions.	Short	x			
P	1	2	2	Institute aquifer protection overlay.	Short	x			
P	2	1	1	Increase passive use amenities at Crane Park while respecting ban on commercial activities.	Medium	x			
P	2	1	2	Pursue funding from the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation-Environmental Protection Fund Municipal Grant Program.	Short	x		x	
Plan: Connections									
T	1	1	1	Prioritize flow over speed and traffic time.	Short	x			
T	1	1	2	Prohibit the construction of any new cul-de-sacs, except where no other arrangement is viable	Short	x			
T	1	1	3	Introduce traffic roundabouts at select congested intersections.	Long	x	x	x	
T	1	1	4	Reopen North Main Street to Lake Street and the downtown.	Long	x	x		
T	1	1	5	Reopen Gilbert Street to Route 17M.	Medium	x			
T	1	1	6	Eliminate right-turn restrictions that discourage traffic flow to the downtown.	Medium	x	x		
T	1	2	1	Construct new on-road and off-road facilities for bicyclists and pedestrians connecting Crane Park to Smith's Clove Park	Long	x	x		
T	1	2	2	Install additional pedestrian and bicycle connections linking existing neighborhood sidewalks into a unified network.	Long	x			
T	1	2	3	Provide pedestrian/bike linkages between park resources.	Long	x			
T	1	3	1	Provide a trail along the Ramapo River.	Long	x			
T	1	4	1	Beautify intersections at major Village Gateways.	Short	x	x	x	

Plan: Connections (Continued)					Time Frame	Village	County	State	Private
T	1	4	2	<i>Ban or require permits for temporary signage within Village rights-of-way.</i>	Short	x			
T	1	5	1	<i>Provide expanded bus facilities near downtown.</i>	Medium	x		x	x
T	1	5	2	<i>Locate future government facilities near park and ride to allow for dual use of facilities.</i>	Long	x			
T	1	5	3	<i>Provide direct mid-block alley access from parking fields to Lake Street.</i>	Short	x			x
T	1	6	1	<i>Promote Complete Streets</i>	Short	x			
T	1	6	2	<i>Install benches or other types of street furniture</i>	Medium	x			
Plan: Economy									
E	1	1	1	<i>Expand permitted uses and allow change of use without costly or lengthy review.</i>	Short	x			
E	1	1	2	<i>Develop marketing prospectus for Monroe Downtown.</i>	Short	x			x
E	1	1	3	<i>Relocate Village Hall and utilize existing Village Hall as a business incubator.</i>	Long	x		x	
E	1	1	4	<i>Work with Chamber to actively seek downtown tenants to fill vacant spaces.</i>	Short	x			x
E	1	2	1	<i>Promote easier access to Downtown.</i>	Long	x	x	x	x
E	1	3	1	<i>Expand downtown parking.</i>	Long	x			x
E	1	3	2	<i>Beautify downtown parking.</i>	Medium	x			x
E	1	3	3	<i>Promote the installation of secondary rear accesses to parking areas by Lake Street businesses.</i>	Long	x			x
E	1	4	1	<i>Demonstrate affordable improvements to local landowners.</i>	Short	x			x
E	1	4	2	<i>Draft and require conformance with downtown design guidelines.</i>	Medium	x			
E	1	4	3	<i>Improve the appearance of the millponds.</i>	Long	x		x	
E	1	5	1	<i>Improve alleyway connections between existing parking areas and the front of businesses along Lake Street.</i>	Medium	x			x
E	1	5	2	<i>Install curb extensions at mid-block locations to promote safe pedestrian travel from one-side of Lake Street to the other.</i>	Medium	x			
E	1	5	3	<i>Restripe parking spaces at the south east end of Lake Street for a drop-off zone.</i>	Medium	x			
E	1	5	4	<i>Install decorative street lighting with integrated planters, waste receptacles and downtown signage.</i>	Medium	x		x	
E	1	5	5	<i>Install colored stamped pavement crosswalks throughout the downtown as was done around Crane Park.</i>	Medium	x		x	

Plan: Economy (Continued)					Time Frame	Village	County	State	Private
E	1	6	1	Partner with local property owners to seek public funds available for the retrofitting of single-story downtown buildings to accommodate additional stories of affordable housing.	Long	x		x	
E	1	6	2	Allow multifamily housing around the periphery of downtown	Short	x			
E	1	7	1	Work with local religious and institutional uses to expand upon its current schedule of festivals and events held in and around the Crane Park	Short	x			x
E	1	7	2	Hold weekend Farmers Markets in its commuter lot near the downtown.	Medium	x			x
E	1	7	3	Consider promoting walking history tour.	Medium	x			
E	1	7	4	The Village should commission the preparation of a Business location map	Short	x			x
E	1	7	5	Introduce way finding signage and/or advertise Village businesses on a Route 17/6 billboard.	Medium	x			
E	1	8	1	Promote safe on-road and off-road connections for pedestrians and cyclists between the downtown and its recreational areas.	Long	x			
E	1	9	1	Encourage building owners along Millpond Parkway to increase their building heights.	Long	x			x
E	2	1	1	Favor heavy commercial use along Route 208.	Short	x			
E	2	1	3	Divide Route 17M into nodes and consider non-residential use along Route 17M.	Short	x			
E	2	2	1	Establish a minimum floor area per tenant space for any new commercial building constructed within the Village outside of the downtown.	Short	x			
E	2	3	1	Promote more traditional building on street appearance.	Short	x			
E	2	3	2	Promote traffic flow between adjacent parking facilities in separate ownership.	Short	x			x
E	2	3	3	Allow additional retail and mixed-use floor area between underutilized parking and streets.	Short	x			
E	2	4	1	Promote additional mixed-use around Crane Park and on Spring Street.	Short	x			
E	3	1	1	Allow wider variety of uses for existing large former industrial buildings.	Short	x			
E	3	2	1	Promote access to heavy commercial areas.	Long	x			
E	3	3	1	Incorporate the future Heritage Trail into the fabric of its existing park system.	Medium	x	x		
E	4	1	1	Establish a procedure for change of use	Short	x			
E	4	1	2	Increase the number of uses permitted by right in commercial districts	Short	x			

Plan: Economy (Continued)					Time Frame	Village	County	State	Private
E	4	1	3	<i>Simplify zoning and subdivision regulations</i>	Short	x			
E	4	2	1	<i>Designate local Type 2 SEQRA list.</i>	Short	x			
<i>Seek cross-acceptance of plan from County,</i>									
E	4	3	1	<i>Town and DOT.</i>	Short	x	x	x	
<i>Retain grant writer and or lobbyist to secure</i>									
E	4	4	1	<i>State and Federal Aid</i>	Medium	x			