



TOWN OF WALTON

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

2006

**TOWN OF WALTON
DELAWARE COUNTY, NEW YORK
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

2006

Planning Board

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I. Existing Conditions in the Town

The Town of Walton is located in the western central portion of Delaware County, just upstream from New York City’s Cannonsville Reservoir and centered approximately 25 miles due south of the City of Oneonta in neighboring Otsego County. New York State Route 10 passes through the Town from east to southwest and New York State Route 206 passes through from northwest to southeast. The two (2) state highways intersect in the Village of Walton, located at the very center of the Town.

The Town of Walton is a picturesque rural town where scenic views abound. Commercial life and employment are located primarily in the Village of Walton, with hills, forests and farmlands covering most of the rest of the Town. Forests prevail south of the West Branch of the Delaware, with active farmland more evident to the north.

Looking up the Delaware Valley from NYS Route 206



Looking southwest from South River Road



A Brief Historical Sketch

Sources:

Mary Robinson Sive: Lost Villages: Historic Driving Tours in the Catskills; Delaware County Historical Association, 1998.

Frank and Helen Lane: Walton Yesteryears, The Reporter Co., 1990.

Helen Lane: The Story of Walton, 1785-1975, Walton Historical Society, 1975.

The Town of Walton was organized in 1797, the same year as Delaware County, the Village having been established eight (8) years earlier.

Early settlers depended on lumbering, logs being transported via the Delaware River downstream to Trenton and Philadelphia. Saw mills and grist mills were also active in the early years, followed by carding and fuling mills as sheep raising emerged as the major agricultural activity in the 1830s; the 1835 census recorded 5,000 sheep in the Town, approximately three times the human population. With the arrival of the railroad in 1872 dairy production emerged to replace sheep as the primary agricultural activity, leading to the establishment of dairy processing as a major local industry. The Breakstone Company began dairy processing in Walton in 1912 and grew as a producer of condensed milk during World War I. It continues to prosper today even since being purchased by Kraft Foods, which continue to produce under the Breakstone name.

Manufacturing of wood products began to replace shipping of raw timber with the establishment of furniture factories in the 1830s and 1840s. Walton Novelty Works produced toys and then baby carriages and doll carts between its opening in 1876 and its closing in the 1930s. The Munn Piano Company produced pianos from 1901 to 1930. S. J. Bailey & Son moved to Walton in 1939,

occupying the facility vacated earlier by Walton Novelty. By 1975, Bailey employed 175 persons in Walton, had additional facilities in Honesdale, PA and Fryeburg, MI and was the second largest manufacturer of unfinished furniture in the US, grossing eight (8) million dollars per year. In 1999, however, Bailey left Walton. Quarrying of bluestone emerged early as an important component of the local economy and has continued to be active until the present day.

A. Physical Characteristics

1. General

The following excerpt from an early writing by J.H. French describes the general topography of the Town of Walton quite well:

“The deep valley of the Delaware River divides the town into two (2) nearly equal parts. The southern half is a broad, rocky, mountainous region with abrupt declivities and a surface too rough for cultivation; the northern half is broken and hilly, but generally well adapted for pasturage ... soil is a shaly loam upon the hills and a fertile alluvium in the valley.”

“Towns of Delaware County,” J.H. French, Historical and Statistical Gazetteer of New York State, 1860.

For the most part, this general description is still influencing the pattern of land use today. The area to the south of the West Branch of the Delaware River is generally forested, with little agricultural production. Agricultural production can almost exclusively be found to the north of the West Branch (see Map 1, Map 2).

At an elevation of around +/- 2400 feet, Bear Spring Mountain Game Management Area is the largest mountain within the Town of Walton. It is located off New York State Route 206, roughly five (5) miles south of the Village of Walton, in the south central portion of the Town. It straddles the Walton/Colchester town line. The Management Area offers camping, hiking, horse trails, hunting and fishing to the public.



2. Steep Slope Areas

A portion of the land area in the Town of Walton is characterized by steep slopes, those in excess of 15% (See Map 3, Map 4). Steep slopes can generally mean high construction costs and difficult development; soils are generally shallow and unstable, creating runoff and erosion problems when disturbed for development. Shallow soils often make standard septic system installation unfeasible for the lack of adequate soil depth to the bedrock. Additionally, clearing of vegetation may risk soil erosion and stream siltation during construction. Removal of trees and installation of impervious surfaces, i.e. buildings, parking areas, and roadways can increase the rate of stormwater runoff to downstream areas and decrease the areas available for water absorption. For all these reasons, steep slope areas are generally difficult to develop.

3. Water Resources

a. Groundwater and Water Supply

There is no public water system in the Town of Walton; however, there is a public water system within the Village and this service has been extended to the Town's industrial park to the south of the Village on South River Road. Generally, residences and businesses outside the Village depend upon private on-site water systems for supply and treatment of potable water. These on-site water systems are primarily fed by groundwater; however, surface water should not be ignored for its contribution.

b. Wetlands

Wetlands are important elements in the natural drainage system of the local environment. They filter sediments and pollutants carried from upland drainage flows and absorb rainfall and spring runoff, reducing flood peaks and downstream flood damage. They also aid in recharging ground water reservoirs, i.e. aquifers. Wetland areas can be a constraint on development, since they must be avoided in order to maintain their value in the hydrologic system and since their mucky soils and

high groundwater conditions make construction difficult and expensive.

Small wetland areas are scattered throughout the Town, primarily along the streams and in the valley and hollow areas and adjacent to the West Branch of the Delaware River (see Map 5). All wetlands are subject to some protection under state and federal law, regardless of size. The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers has regulatory authority over wetlands of any size. Disturbance or filling of a wetland less than a quarter acre in size is generally permitted after notification to and review by the Army Corps. Larger wetland area disturbance requires mitigation of impacts as per Army Corps' regulations. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) has regulatory authority over any wetland that is 12.4 acres in size or larger; the Army Corps. of Engineers will relinquish any of their authority to the DEC on wetlands that are 12.4 acres in size or larger. Although the DEC does not have formal jurisdiction over wetlands smaller than 12.4 acres, they could pursue protection through a combination of the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) and permitting processes. The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (NYCDEP) is particularly sensitive to the disturbance of wetlands during development within the New York City Watershed also and looks to mitigated impacts to them.

c. Streams and Ponds

The Town of Walton has a number of streams that flow through it; some originate within the Town while others just pass through. In the northern half of the Town of Walton one can find Kerr's Creek, Freer Hollow Brook, West Brook, Dry Creek, the headwaters of Loomis Brook, Pines Brook, Third Brook and East Brook. In the southern half of the Town one can find Beers Brook, Weed Brook, the headwaters of West Trout Brook, the headwaters of Wilson Hollow, the headwaters of Baxter Brook, Wakeman Brook, and the headwaters of Chase Brook. The West Branch of the Delaware River flows through the center of the Town and Village of Walton before dropping southwesterly in direction and ultimately forming the headwaters to the Cannonsville Reservoir. For the most part, all of these streams are healthy and abundant with plant and animal species. Some of the best game fishing waters exists in the Town.

There are two (2) significantly sized ponds within the Town that should be noted, i.e. Russ Gray Pond and Launt Pond. Both these ponds can be found in the southern portion of the Town near Bear Spring Game Management Area.

d. Flood Hazard Areas

As stated earlier, the West Branch of the Delaware River flows through the center of the Village of Walton. East Brook, West Brook, and Third Brook all flow into the Delaware River within the limits of the Village. The convergence of these four water courses in a very small area has the potential to create a serious flood hazard area, especially within the Village.

According to the Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) issued by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), each of these streams represents a serious flood hazard (see Map 5). Recent experience of the Town and Village confirms this flood hazard; in January 1996, a warm temperature spike and heavy rain falling on deep snow cover in the surrounding hills resulted in a very serious flooding (and a fire) in the downtown commercial area of the Village.

4. Soils

Soils and surface hydrology in the Town of Walton generally exhibit severe limitations for the installation of septic systems, requiring large leach fields or alternate design systems, primarily due to shallow soil depth (particularly at higher elevations). If, in the future, development pressures should increase then this could potentially be a problem.

A significant amount of the soils in the Town are classified as Severely Limited for the purpose of constructing buildings with foundations. The rest of the soils, for the most part, are classified Moderately Limited for the purpose of constructing buildings with foundations (see Map 6).

It should be noted that these classifications are primarily due to relatively shallow soil depth and should not be cause for alarm. Rather, it should alert property owners to the potential costs associated with building foundations. Additionally, both property owners and the Town’s decision makers should be particularly attentive to septic system design and the potential necessity for alternate septic system design strategies.

5. Forests

Approximately 72% of the land area of Delaware County is forested (Delaware County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan, 2000, page 29). Based on recent aerial orthophotography, approximately 50% of the land area of the Town of Walton is currently forested (see Map 8, Map 9). Most of that acreage is mixed deciduous and evergreen forest.

6. Wildlife

The rural character of the Town of Walton and its proximity to the Catskills contribute to the diversity of fauna in the area. Aquatic and non-aquatic species are plentiful and provide hunting, fishing and viewing opportunities. Information from the DEC indicates that there are two (2) endangered species within the Town, the bald eagle and timber rattlesnake.

B. Demographics

1. Permanent Population

The 2000 population of the Town of Walton is 5,607, according to the 2000 US Census; of which 3,070 persons are considered to live within the confines of the Village (see Table 1: Population Growth below). The population of the Town excluding the Village’s population is 2,537. The population of the Town decreased by 43 persons from 1970 to 1980, increased by 114 persons from 1980 to 1990, and decreased by 346 persons from 1990 to 2000. Thus, in a 30 year time span from 1970 to 2000 the population of the Town has decreased by 275 persons. In comparison, the population of the Town excluding the Village’s population increased by 372 persons from 1970 to 1980, increased by 117 persons from 1980 to 1990, and decreased by 90 persons from 1990 to 2000. Thus, in a 30 year time span from 1970 to 2000 the population of the Town excluding the Village has increased by 489 persons. In comparison, the population of the Village decreased by 415 persons from 1970 to 1980, decreased by three (3) persons from 1980 to 1990, and decreased by 256 persons from 1990 to 2000. Thus, in a 30 year time span from 1970 to 2000 the population of the Village has decreased by 674 persons.

Table 1:
Population Growth, 1970-2000, Town and Village of Walton, NY

	1970	1980	%	1990	%	2000	%	Total % 1970-2000
Delaware County	44,718	46,931	4.9%	47,225	0.6%	48,055	1.8%	7.5%
Walton Town	5,882	5,839	-0.7%	5,953	2.0%	5,607	-5.8%	-4.7%
Walton Village	3,744	3,329	-11.1%	3,326	-0.1%	3,070	-7.7%	-18.0%
Walton, Town excluding the Village	2,138	2,510	17.4%	2,627	4.7%	2,537	-3.4%	18.7%

Source, US Census Bureau

For additional comparison, Delaware County’s population increased by 2,213 persons from 1970 to 1980, increased by 294 persons from 1980 to 1990, and increased by 830 persons from 1990 to 2000. Thus, in a 30 year time span from 1970 to 2000 the population of Delaware County has increased by 3,337 persons.

Thus, the Town of Walton has declined in population while Delaware County has grown in population during the period from 1970 to 2000 (seven point five percent (7.5%) increase for the County vs.

four point five percent (4.7%) decrease for the Town). The Town excluding the Village's population, however, has grown at a faster rate than Delaware County (seven point five percent (7.5%) for the County vs. 18.7% for the Town excluding the Village's population). The Village's population has declined at a faster rate than Delaware County (seven point five percent (7.5%) for the County vs. 18% for the Village's population). The long-term pattern, over the 30 year time frame from 1970 to 2000, the population has been increasing outside the Village (+18.7%), while population within the Village has been decreasing at approximately the same rate (-18.0%).

Over the past decade; however, population has decreased in both the Village and the Town excluding the Village, while Delaware County population increased slightly. The causes of this decline in population cannot be determined with certainty, but contributing factors may include loss of employment in the area, the decrease in household size in the Town, and the sale of homes from permanent residents to second-home owners who are counted at their primary residence for census purposes, and the rising costs of buying a home.

2. Part Time and Seasonal Population

The part-time and seasonal population is somewhat difficult to determine with confidence. The two (2) components of this population are somewhat different. Seasonal population refers to those persons who live in the Town on a full-time basis for some portion of the year, while maintaining a full-time residence elsewhere for the balance of the year. Examples might include people who work during the academic year elsewhere and then spend summers in Walton, or so-called "snowbirds," who live in the Town during the warm part of the year and then head south for the winter. Part-time population refers to those persons who spend two (2) to five (5) days per week in the Town on a regular (even every week) basis but nonetheless maintain their primary residence elsewhere. In the future, this group may increasingly include telecommuters doing work here, maintaining contact with their place of employment via internet and telephone and going to that home base a few days a week; such telecommuting probably is limited now by the lack of high speed internet service. Regular weekenders would also be included in this category.

The total persons in these two categories can be estimated from U. S. Census housing statistics. According to the 2000 Census, there were 2,958 total housing units in the Town of Walton (see Table 4: Comparison of Selected Age Characteristics), of which 567 (19%) were identified as vacant. Of those vacant units, 373 (66% of vacant units; 13% of total housing units) were identified as "For seasonal, recreational, or occasional use." If it is assumed that household size is the same for these units as for permanent residents of Walton (2.33 persons per household), then these housing units represent 870 persons. With a 2000 resident population of the Town of 5,607, this suggests a minimal estimate of part-time and seasonal population of approximately 15% of the permanent population. The actual figure is probably substantially larger, as structures occupied on a regular but not full-time basis (i.e., two (2) – five (5) days a week) are likely to be appear as year-round residences, either occupied or vacant.

The process can be repeated for the Town excluding the Village. Extrapolating from the 2000 Census data, there were 1,444 total housing units in the Town of Walton outside the Village, of which 438 (30%) were identified as vacant. Of those vacant units, 349 (80% of vacant units; 24% of total housing units) were identified as "For seasonal, recreational, or occasional use." If it is assumed that household size is the same for these units as for permanent residents of Walton (2.33 persons per household), then these housing units would represent 813 persons. With a 2000 resident population of the Town excluding the Village of 2,537, this suggests a part-time and seasonal population that may approximate one-third (32%) of the permanent population. These figures also suggest that nearly all of the part-time and seasonal residents are found outside the Village.

These are not direct Census figures and should not be treated as an actual count of part-time and seasonal residents of the Town of Walton. They do, however, suggest the general magnitude of part-time and seasonal population. Further analysis of census figures and other data might produce a more accurate figure and perhaps identify a strategy to differentiate between the part-time and

seasonal components of this group. Nonetheless, it is clear that the estimated part-time and seasonal population is significant. It should be noted that the "1988 Non-Resident Study" prepared by SUNY Delhi suggests that this group will provide a source of economic opportunity for full time residents of Walton and Delaware County, particularly through the service and building trades sectors of the local economy.

Another gauge of the relative importance of seasonal and part-time residents is the proportion of ownership of real property by persons residing outside the Town, an issue discussed in the 1989 Master Plan.

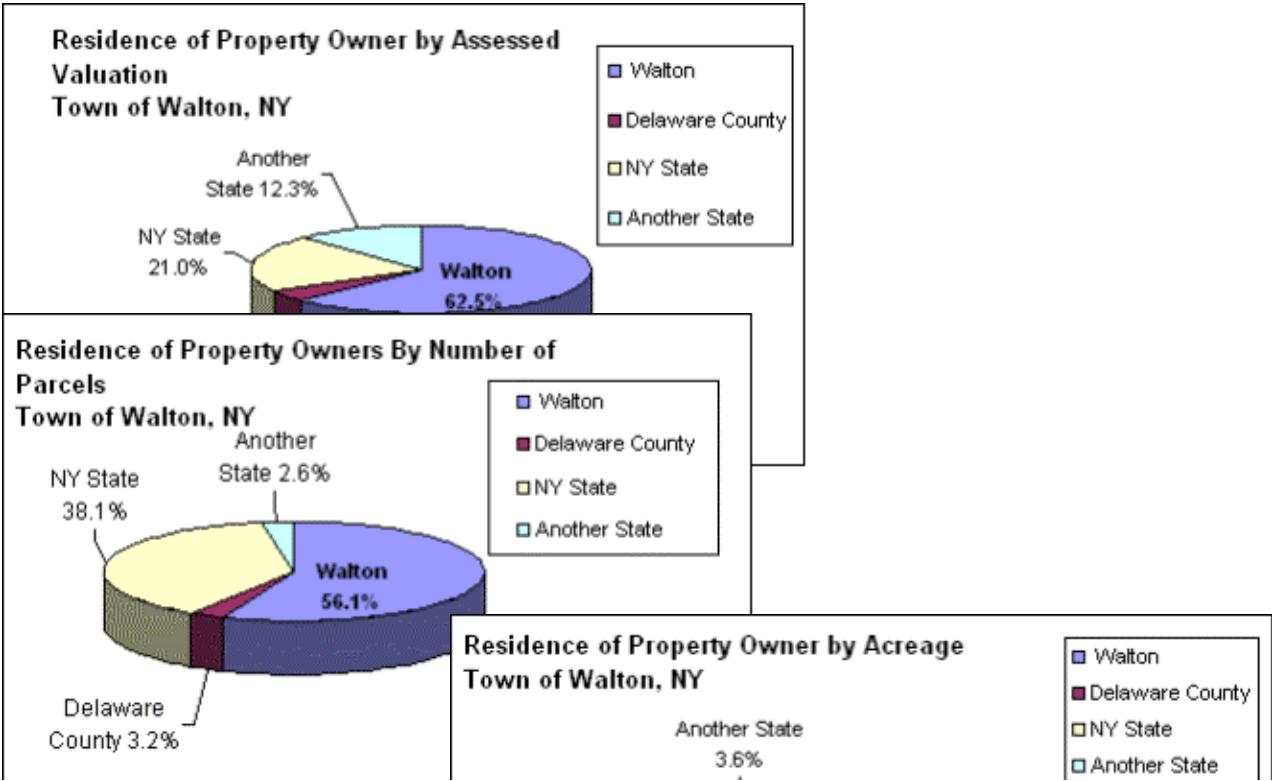
"Over the past thirty years, non-resident ownership of parcels of land has increased more than 450%. In 1950 only seven point four percent (7.4%) of all land parcels were owned by people not living in Walton. In 1987 this figure has risen to 41.0%."

Master Plan, Town of Walton, 1989, p. 14

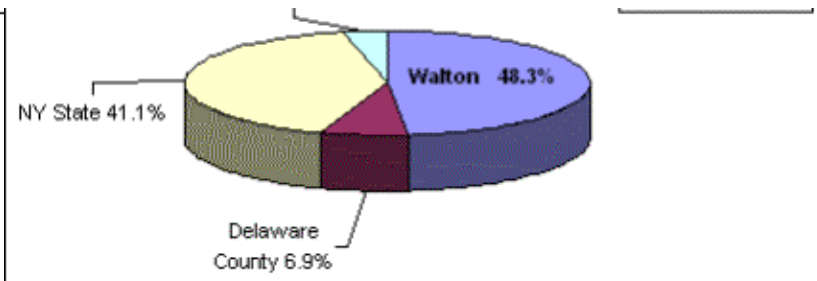
That percentage has now increased to 43.9%.

**Table 2: Proportion of Property Owned by Outside Property Owners
Town of Walton, New York**

Residence of Owner according to ZIP Code of Assessment Record	Assessed Valuation		Number of Parcels		Acreage	
	Assessed Value	Percent	Parcels	Percent	Acres	Percent
Walton	\$ 36,346,443	62.5%	1124	56.1%	28,420	48.3%
Delaware County	\$ 2,444,962	4.2%	64	3.2%	4,062	6.9%
NY State	\$ 12,214,071	21.0%	763	38.1%	24,175	41.1%
Another State	\$ 7,121,942	12.3%	53	2.6%	2,146	3.6%
Total	\$ 58,127,418	100.0%	2004	100.0%	58,803	100.0%



Source: All data provided by
Delaware County Planning
Department, November, 2003.
Data includes
Town excluding the Village
properties only.



Of 2004 total parcels in the Town (excluding the Village), 880 parcels (44%) are currently owned by persons with addresses other than Walton. This outside ownership includes approximately 52% of the Town excluding the Village acreage and approximately 38% of the total assessed valuation of property.

It should be noted that rental property owned by absentee landlords is not distinguishable from second home ownership from these data, although Census data indicate only 137 renter-occupied housing units in the Town excluding the Village area.

Of the 880 parcels owned by outside owners, Delaware County assessment records also indicate the following:

Table 3: Outside* Land Ownership, 2001, Town of Walton, NY

<u>Classification</u>	<u>Parcels</u>	<u>Acreage</u>
Single Family Homes	214	6,217
Mobile Homes	67	974
Seasonal Residence	65	1,613
Vacant Land, 10 acres or less	205	1,339
Vacant Land, more than 10 acres	150	6,636
Wilderness or Forest Land	52	5,100
(not private clubs)		
Private Hunting/Fishing Clubs	4	531
Owned by Public Agencies	79	5,083
Miscellaneous/Other	44 parcels	

* based on ZIP code of tax record

3. Age Characteristics

Census data indicates that Delaware County's senior (over sixty-five) population has been increasing faster than that of New York State for some time. The New York State senior population grew by seven point four percent (7.4%) between 1980 and 1990 while the Delaware County senior population was growing by 13.6%. Between 1990 and 2000, the New York State senior population increased by three point three percent (3.3%) while the county senior population increased by 10.6%.

Comparison of current Census figures for the Town, County and State indicate the same general age pattern. Delaware County and the Town and Village of Walton have a distinctly older population than New York State (see Table 4: Comparison of Selected Age Characteristics below). We may be able to attribute this difference to young people moving out to seek economic opportunity while retirees are migrating from metropolitan areas of the state to the Walton area, perceived as less expensive and more secure. It is difficult, if not impossible, to determine to what extent the increase in County or Walton Town-outside-Village senior population is a function of part-time population graduating to full-time residence in the area, although this type of transitional move into the area is apparently common.

Table 4: Comparison of Selected Age Characteristics, 2001

Town of Walton, NY			
	<u>Over 62</u>	<u>Over 65</u>	<u>Median Age (years)</u>
New York State	15.2%	12.9%	35.9
Delaware County	21.8%	18.6%	41.4
Town of Walton	20.9%	17.9%	41.6
Village of Walton	22.1%	19.4%	40.6

Source: Census 2000

Possible future results of an aging population could be an increasing reliance on a service economy and an increased need for senior support programs ranging from public transportation to low cost housing, senior housing facilities with a continuum of care (from independent to assisted living to skilled nursing care), and improved medical services. It can also be the basis for the development of businesses that cater to the service needs and commercial and recreational interests of the increasing senior population.

C. Housing

1. Housing Units

In 2000 the Town of Walton had a total of 2,958 housing units, an increase of 120 units (four point two percent (4.2%)) over the 1990 census count of 2,838. The Town-outside-Village had a total of 1,444 housing units in 2000, an increase of 102 units (seven point six percent (7.6%)) over the 1990 count of 1,342. Thus, 85% of the net increase in housing units (102 of 120 units) over the past decade is located outside of the Village. Over the 20 years 1980 to 2000, the total number of housing units in the Town has increased from 2,441 units to 2,958, an increase of 517 (21%), of which 397 units (77%) are in the Town-outside-Village area.

**Table 5: Increase in Housing Unit Count, 1980-2000
Town and Village of Walton, NY**

	Housing Units in	Housing Units in	Decade % Increase	Housing Units in	Decade % Increase	Total % Increase
	1980	1990		2000		
Town of Walton	2,441	2,838	16.3%	2,958	4.2%	21.2%
Village of Walton	1,394	1,496	7.3%	1,514	1.2%	8.6%
Town-outside-Village	1,047	1,342	28.2%	1,444	7.6%	37.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

2. Mobile Homes

The number of mobile homes is significant in Walton. According to the 1990 Census, there were 420 mobile homes representing 14.7% of the total housing units in the Town; outside the Village, 373 mobile homes represented 27.8% of all housing units. According to the 2000 Census, there were 433 mobile homes representing 14.6% of the total housing units in the Town; outside the Village, 406 mobile homes represented 28.1% of all housing units. Thus, the number of mobile homes increased outside the Village by 33 units between 1990 and 2000, while the number of mobile homes decreased within the Village by 20 units during the same period. These figures apparently do not include the so-called “double-wide,” manufactured homes delivered as two separate mobile units which together constitute a single home when joined and placed on site; it is this type of manufactured home unit that has become the affordable housing unit of choice in most rural areas. Once properly placed and skirted on a rural property, such units appear to be small single family homes, indistinguishable from the perspective of assessor or census worker.

As land and home prices rise, demand for multiple unit housing may also increase, both in quality rentals and in townhouses and condominiums. The aging of the population will contribute to this trend, easing home maintenance responsibilities of the local elderly and providing an attractive environment for downstate retirees.

3. Housing Affordability

Generally speaking, housing cost is considered affordable up to 30% of household income. Thus, what constitutes affordable housing is partly a function of rent levels and partly a function of wage and salary levels in the community.

According to the 1990 Census, median gross rent as a percentage of median household income was 33.5% in Walton. In the age group 15 to 64 years, 39.6% of renter households spent 35% or more of their income for rent; among those 65 years or older, the proportion that spent 35% or more of gross income for rent rose to 65.6%. It is clear that affordable housing is a problem for the renters in Walton and a serious problem for senior renters.

D. Land Use

1. Existing Land Use

According to Delaware County assessment records, the distribution of land uses in the Town of Walton is as follows (see Map 1):

Table 6: Distribution of Land Uses, Number of Parcels and Acreage
Town of Walton, NY, 2001

	<u>Parcels</u>		<u>Acres</u>	
	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
Agricultural	103	5%	10,961	18%
Residential	1,164	58%	21,412	35%
Vacant Land	579	29%	11,593	19%
Commercial/Industrial	21	1%	202	<1%
Recreation/Entertainment	3	<1%	9	<1%
Community or Public Service	23	1%	2,119*	3%
Wild, Forested, Conservation	101	5%	14,503	24%

Lands and Public Parks

[Parcels Missing Data]	8	NA	4 +/-	NA
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* Includes one 1,981 acre parcel owned by New York City (along the upper Cannonsville Reservoir) and one 63 acre parcel owned by Delaware County (the county landfill).

2. Parcel count and distribution

The Town of Walton, along with many other towns in Delaware County, has experienced a substantial number of subdivisions of land over recent decades. Between 1970 and 1980, the number of land parcels in the Town increased from 941 to 1412, an increase of 471 parcels (50%) or approximately 47 parcels per year. From 1980 to 1990, the number of land parcels increased from 1412 to 1877, an increase of 465 parcels (33%) or approximately 47 parcels per year. From 1990 to 2000, the number of land parcels increased from 1877 to 2004, an increase of 127 parcels (seven percent (7%)) or approximately 13 parcels per year.

Table 7: Increase in Total Real Estate Parcels, 1970 – 2000

Town of Walton, New York			
Year	Total Parcels	Increase per Decade	Increase per Year
1970	941	---	---
1980	1412	471	47
1990	1877	465	47
2000	2004	127	13

The evident slowing of the increase in parcel counts during the last decade may be in part due to a recognition that many lots created over the past 20 years have gone unsold, as evidenced by the number of residential-sized lots currently available but undeveloped in the Town. According to the assessment records, there are currently 339 parcels classified as residential vacant land of various sizes, as follows:

Table 8: Vacant Residential Parcels by Acreage, 2001

Town of Walton, NY	
[Cumulative figures for each category]	
1 acre or less	53 parcels
2 acres or less	103 parcels
3 acres or less	133 parcels
4 acres or less	160 parcels
5 acres or less	184 parcels
6 acres or less	253 parcels
10 acres or less	316 parcels

These 316 vacant parcels represent 29% of the total residential parcels of ten (10) acres or less in the Town. Thus, without further subdivision, the currently available number of residential parcels is probably adequate for the foreseeable future.

Note: 93 of the currently vacant residential lots are smaller than the two (2) acre minimum lot size required under current zoning standards (ten (10) lots are precisely two (2) acres). Also, a substantial number of larger vacant parcels are classified as rural vacant land by the assessment process (and thus are not counted as residential land).

3. Current Land Use Regulations

a. Zoning Law

The Town of Walton Zoning Law was adopted in 1991, amended in 1997 and 1999, and is currently under review by the Town Planning Board and Town Board.

There are three zoning district under the Zoning Law, Rural II, Rural V, and Industrial. The only land outside the Village that is zoned Industrial is the Walton Industrial Park, approximately 16 acres served by village water and sewer service on South River Road just south of the Village boundary. Developed by the Delaware County Industrial Development Agency, five Industrial Park parcels have been transferred to other owners – National Supa-Flu Systems Inc., Mirabito Sons Inc., Day Builders Inc., Delaware Opportunities (for Head Start use), and Sports Equipment Specialists, Inc. – and two parcels totaling approximately six point five (6.5) acres remain.

The remaining two (2) districts, Rural II (R-2) and Rural V (R-5) are similar in all respects except that R-2 has a two (2) acre lot size and 200 foot frontage minimum, and the R-5 has a five (5) acre lot size and 300 foot frontage minimum. The location of the two (2) districts is defined entirely by distance from roads: R-2 includes all land within 1000 feet of the centerline of a state or county road or within 500 feet of the centerline of any town road and with direct frontage and direct access to the road; in addition, maximum lot depth to width ratio in R-2 is eight to one (8:1). All other lands are in the R-5 district. Agricultural, forest and wildlife management uses and non-commercial residential uses are permitted by right throughout the Town, and other uses are allowed by Special Permit, most in the R-2 and fewer in the R-5.

With the 200 foot minimum frontage requirement, the eight to one (8:1) depth to width ratio in R-2 has little meaning. Such ratios are generally intended to prevent long and slender lots (sometimes called spaghetti lots or bacon strip lots), each barely exceeding five (5) acres in order to stay below the threshold for a New York State realty subdivision permit. It would take a parcel of approximately seven point five (7.5) acres to exceed the eight to one (8:1) ratio with a 200 foot frontage; a five point one (5.1) acre lot with a 200 foot frontage would be approximately 1100 feet deep, a five point five (5.5) ratio. Thus, in application, the 200 foot minimum frontage with the two (2) acre minimum lot requirement eliminates the need for the ratio standard. It also may have unintended consequences; a 50 acre parcel with 400 foot frontage would have a width to depth ratio of 13.6, making it illegal under the zoning law as written. This is probably not the intent of the law.

The overall effect of the zoning law is to encourage development, both residential and commercial, to locate along road frontage throughout the Town. In fact, most commercial and industrial uses are permitted by Special Permit in the R-2 district (along roads) but not in the R-5. While the declared purpose of the R-2 district is “...to allow for a variety of mixed uses that, when and if developed, still would maintain the rural character of the area” [Section 404, B)], encouraging all development to be located immediately along the road frontage on wide lots will have the opposite effect. Although Walton is clearly not in imminent danger of heavy development, this pattern of zoning is the same recipe for strip development and sprawl that has resulted in some of the less desirable development patterns of suburbia in (now) more urban areas.

b. Subdivision Law.

The Town of Walton Subdivision Regulation was enacted in 1986 and has remained unchanged since.

The subdivision regulation establishes three (3) levels of subdivision as follows: a simple division, a minor subdivision, and a major subdivision. A simple division divides a parcel into not more than three (3) lots, all of which have at least 200 feet frontage on a public road; once classified as a simple division by the Planning Board, no further hearings, review, or approval are required. A minor subdivision contains up to six (6) lots, fronts on a public road, and does not require improvement or extension of public roads or facilities; a minor subdivision can be reviewed and approved in a simplified version of the full subdivision approval process, although a public hearing is still required. A major subdivision results in seven or more lots and/or requires creation or extension of public facilities or improvements; a major subdivision requires a public hearing and preliminary and final plat approval by the Town Planning Board.

1) Serial subdivision

There is no provision in the subdivision regulation that prohibits serial subdivision of the same real property. According to the subdivision law, a parcel could be divided, and then the resulting parcels could subsequently be subdivided again. Given the simple division option, this may allow the development of multiple residential lots along road frontage, apparently without limit.

Although Town policy as practiced by the Planning Board prohibits serial subdivisions, without that policy written into the subdivision law, it may not withstand legal challenge without a formal policy and written standards. A generalized prohibition policy also leaves a series of questions unanswered, as follows:

- Ø For what period of time is subsequent subdivision prohibited?
- Ø Does the prohibition apply to all subdivided properties, regardless of the size of resulting lots?
- Ø Does the prohibition apply to all categories of the first subdivision approval?
- Ø Does the prohibition apply to all categories of the subsequent subdivision application?

2) Cluster or Open Space Development

There is also no consideration in the subdivision regulation of the possibility of cluster development, either as a mandatory or optional (with or without incentive) development pattern.

Thus, taking the policies written into the zoning law and subdivision regulation together, the overall land use policy of the Town of Walton seems to encourage strip development along roads throughout the Town for both residential and commercial development. This is inconsistent with the stated zoning purpose of preserving the rural character of the Town.

E. Local Economy

The economy of the Town of Walton, as distinct from the Village, consists primarily of a combination of residential living, both full- and part-time, and the classically rural activities of farming, logging, and quarrying. Commercial and industrial employers located within the Village boundaries contribute to the Town economy, but such establishments located in the Town-outside-Village are few.

1. Commercial and Industrial Land Use

According to Delaware County assessment records, 21 parcels are classified as commercial or industrial land uses. Of these, six (6) are mobile home parks and thus essentially residential in nature. Six (6) more are dedicated to warehousing and/or distribution of fuel or other goods. Three (3) are auto-based business (gas station or auto services), leaving one (1) diner, one (1) non-auto

dealership, and three (3) multi-purpose buildings. One (1) parcel is classified as manufacturing. Thus, there are very few parcels (less than one percent (1%) of the total parcels) classified as commercial or industrial in the Town-outside-Village. Clearly, the commercial and industrial sectors of the local economy are located within the Village limits.

2. Agriculture

Of 2,004 parcels in the Town of Walton, 102 parcels are in productive agricultural use, according to assessment records (as reviewed by the Cooperative Extension office in Hamden), representing 10,852 acres or approximately 18% of the total area of the Town.

Table 7: Increase in Total Real estate Parcels indicates the distribution of agricultural activity in the Town (see Map 10; also refer to Map 1, Map 2).

Table 9: Distribution of Agricultural Activities by Parcel and Acreage

Town of Walton, NY		
	No. of Parcels	Acres
105 Agricultural Vacant Land (productive, mostly pasture)	13	496
112 Dairy	35	4719
113 Cattle, Calves, Hogs	9	1214
115 Honey & Beeswax	2	218
116 Other Livestock (donkeys, goats)	4	445
117 Horse Farms (includes boarding)	2	245
120 Field Crops	35	3634
130/150 Orchards/Truck Crops	2	17

Review of the source data suggests difficulties in describing agricultural activity in the Town based on assessment records, even with review and correction by Cooperative Extension staff. Unless gross annual farm income is greater than \$10,000, most programs that assemble data do not consider the activity a farm, and alternative agriculture that supplements traditional farm production may go unnoticed. The Watershed Agricultural Council (WAC) Small Farms Program is the exception; they define “small farm” as a farm with annual income from agricultural production between \$1,000 and \$10,000.

Some indication of the level of small farm activity is suggested by information from the Watershed Agriculture Council (WAC), presented in Table 10: Small Farms in the Town of Walton and Delaware County below:

**Table 10: Small Farms* in the Town of Walton
and Delaware County, NY, 2002**

Town of	NYC Watershed
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	<u>Walton</u>	<u>in Delaware County</u>
Small Farms, Total Number	44	
	144	
Small Farms, Total Acreage	2,765	12,746
Total Dairy Cows on Small Farms	46	167
Total Beef Cattle on Small Farms	271	596
Total Horses on Small Farms	110	372
Total Small Livestock on Small Farms	545	1,050

* Annual gross agricultural income between \$1,000 and \$10,000

Source: Watershed Agricultural Council, August 7, 2002

This data includes only farms enrolled in the WAC Small Farm Program. It is not possible to determine to what extent some may duplicate parcels classified as agricultural in the assessment records or what proportion of all small farms are signed up for this program. Further, the WAC data does not distinguish between traditional farming and so-called alternative agriculture. Clearly, however, there is substantial small farm activity in the Town of Walton, some of which is certainly alternative agriculture.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that a number of local persons are engaged in small alternative agriculture activities of one form or another, yet little such activity emerges from assessment data, and even the WAC data does not track it independently.

For example, listed in single ownership are five (5) parcels with a total of just over 40 acres. One (1) parcel (16 acres) is classified as a horse farm, two (2) parcels (18 acres) are classified as mobile homes, and two (2) parcels (6 acres) are classified as rural vacant land less than ten (10) acres. Advertising describes a commercial shop (antiques and gifts), a petting zoo with a baby camel, kangaroo, emus, llamas, sheep and goats, and a carriage museum. Thus, a viable agri-tourism enterprise appears in the data as partly horse farm, partly residential, and the rest vacant land. Alternative agricultural activities are often either supplemental to traditional mainstream farming or supplemental to off-the-farm employment or are small sidelines intended to be expanded into larger enterprises. They may not appear in the formal data.



The available data includes traditional categories of farming, but much apparently remains hidden. For this reason, the Town may want to commit the necessary resources to identify and quantify these alternative forms of rural development – profit making small endeavors, alternative activities (grass fed beef, pasture poultry, organic vegetables and meats, herb and flower operations, exotics, agri-tourism, farm bed-and-breakfasts, etc) in order to determine assistance that can be provided by the Town to encourage and support these emerging economic activities.

3. Bluestone Quarrying

The quarrying of bluestone is an important component of the local economy and another component that is difficult to quantify. It is not surprising that neither mining nor quarrying appears on the Delaware County assessment records; most bluestone quarries are small, operated by independent quarrymen, and provide supplemental income to the property owner on a lease-for-share basis. Once quarried from the hills of Delaware County, bluestone is transported and sold to various stone yards and dealers, where the stone is cut, finished, sold and shipped for use in construction and landscaping.

According to the Delaware County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan (DCAFPP):

“Commercial quality bluestone is found only in south-central New York and northeast Pennsylvania and cannot be found in commercially anywhere else in the United States or Canada ... Most quarries (over 85%) are less than three acres of affected land and are operated by one to four (1-4) people.”

(DCAFPP, page 32).

The DCAFPP goes on to say that the following was the economic impact of the bluestone industry in Delaware County for the year 1997:

**Table 11: Estimated Annual Economic Impact (1997)
of the Bluestone Industry, Delaware County, NY**

Bluestone Sales	\$40 million
Direct Jobs	200 people
Wages for Direct Jobs	\$6.4 million
Independent Quarrymen	400 people
Stone Sold by Independents	\$11 million

DCAFPP, page 31

According to Gerard Kamp, bluestone dealer (Indian Country, Inc., Deposit, NY) and President of the New York State Bluestone Association, annual sales of bluestone are estimated at \$60 million, and most of it is quarried in southern Delaware County, including Walton. The NYS Bluestone Association, formed in 1998, currently has 120 members, of which 94 are independent quarrymen, six (6) are dealers and 20 are associate members (banks, fuel dealers, and suppliers). Given the independent nature of both the quarrymen and the activity itself, these numbers reinforce the sense of the importance of bluestone to the local economy.

The income from the quarry lease-by-share arrangements is often crucial to farmers who own the land on which quarries are located. According to one farmer, "Our cut is only ten percent (10%), but it provides about a third of the income of the farm" (*The Daily Star*, Oneonta, October 27, 2000).

Although it is impossible to determine the impact of the bluestone industry specifically on the Town of Walton separately from its impact on other towns in Delaware County, it is clearly a very important component of the local economy.

4. Forest Products and Logging

Forest lands are significant to the local economy. Potential direct impacts include production of timber and agri-forestry products such as maple syrup, herbs, Christmas trees, wood products and byproducts, and recreational lease payments, such as hunting rights. More indirect impacts include environmental aesthetics, wildlife habitat, water and soil protection, and the contribution to the rural character of the town so valued by its residents.

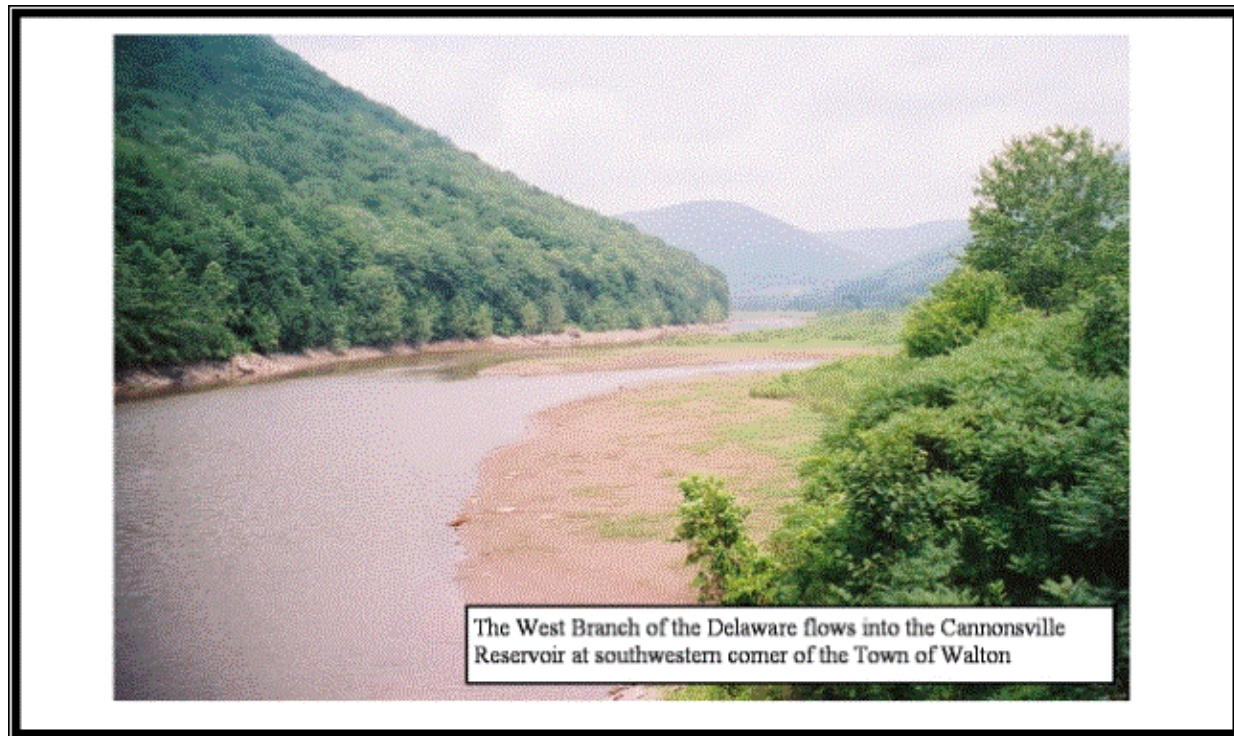


According to the DCAFPP, Delaware County generates approximately seven (7) million dollars in timber sales each year from an estimated 669,000 acres of forest land. It is not possible to determine the value of timber production in Walton with accuracy, but a reasonable estimate can be

based on the figures for the county. Conservatively, approximately 50% of the land area in the Town of Walton is forested (see Map 8, Map 9). Assuming the same rate of timber sales per acre of forest land for the town as for the county, these figures would suggest timber sales in the Town of Walton at the general level of approximately \$360,000 per year.

F. The Town of Walton within the New York City Watershed

hensive plan, while recognizing and incorporating the presence of NYC as a factor to be considered, is intended as a plan by and for the local community, with the City but one portion of the context within which the affairs of the Town must be conducted. Recognition of NYC as an actor on the local scene is no more than being realistic about the conditions which the community must consider. Good planning includes such realism.



ty and its water supply system should be considered in planning for the Town's future. Almost the entire Town of Walton is located within the watershed of the Delaware River and the Cannonsville Reservoir of the city water supply system.

In 1997, the Coalition of Watershed Towns entered into the New York City Watershed Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to protect the quality of the New York City drinking water supply system. The regulations and program descriptions are available via the New York City website (www.nyc.gov; select as the agency, "Environmental Protection - DEP," then search).

Two areas of the MOA may be of interest in the current discussion, the Watershed Regulations and the Land Acquisition Program.

1. NYC Watershed Regulations

ty regulations and policies are factors in planning decisions for the Town and cannot be ignored. The Watershed regulations, the permit requirements which apply to all future construction and development in the Watershed will affect both public and private decisions for the foreseeable future. Within its geographic area of regulatory jurisdiction, which includes the entire Town of Walton, NYC regulations establish a series of requirements, standards, setbacks, prohibitions and NYC permits and inspections associated with almost any new development.

2. Land Acquisition Program

Under the MOA, NYCDEP has committed \$250 million for the purchase of land and conservation easements in the Catskill and Delaware Watersheds, the area which includes the Town of Walton (see MOA, Article II, paragraphs 54 – 75, page 8 ff and attachments referenced there). All purchases must be with a willing seller at fair market value; that is, no condemnation under eminent domain law is allowed. Priority Areas are established based on “Natural Features Criteria.” The southwestern portion of the Town of Walton is in Priority Area 1B (Sub-Basins within 60 Day Travel Time) due to its proximity to the Cannonsville Reservoir. The entire rest of the Town is either in Priority 2 (Other Sub-Basins within Terminal Reservoir Basins) or Priority 3 (Sub-Basins with Identified Water Quality Problems).

On the surface, it would appear likely that New York City would pursue acquisition of land or conservation easements in the Town of Walton. In practice to date, however, the City has shown little interest in the Town of Walton since the inception of the program.

From the MOA:

“The City will submit copies of its acquisition reports ... to the Watershed Protection and Partnership Council. Such reports will include ... address; description of property, including any easement; county and town where property is located; tax map number; acreage; closing date; and map of the property. The acquisition report shall also contain cumulative totals of acreage solicited and acreage acquired identified by Town and Priority Area.”

MOA, Article II, paragraph #85, page 22.

According to acquisition reports filed with the Watershed Protection and Partnership Council (WPPC) through April, 2002, the City has acquired 4,984 acres in Delaware County. Although the City has owned 1,981 acres immediately adjacent to the Cannonsville Reservoir in the Town of Walton for some time prior to the MOA, the acquisition reports indicate no purchases of land or conservation easements in the Town of Walton as of November, 2002 under the MOA Land Acquisition Program since its inception (William Harding, Director, WPPC, telephone, Nov. 4, 2002).

According to the MOA:

“Historic recreational uses ... will be allowed to continue on newly acquired fee property, subject to rules and regulations adopted, or permits issued, by NYCDEP... the following recreational uses are more likely to be allowed ... fishing, (including fishing by boats) under regulation; hiking, especially where parcels intersect state trails; snowshoeing; cross country skiing; bird watching; educational programs, nature study, and interpretation; and hunting (only in certain areas under certain conditions). The following are not likely to be allowed ... boating (other than for permitted fishing by boat); snowmobiling; camping; motorcycling; mountain bicycling; and horseback riding.”

MOA, Paragraph 72, p. 15

Although it is important that the Town recognize the constellation of permits and regulations to which residents and visitors will be subject in order to use City lands for recreational purposes if and when purchased, City ownership would result in large parcels of land becoming permanently removed from development, with the City continuing to pay taxes on the land purchased. It is likely that land purchased outright would be available to the public for outdoor recreation purposes.

Acquisition of conservation easements by the City would have somewhat different impacts; the land would remain undeveloped, but the private owner would control access for recreational purposes. Under the MOA, the City must enter into a Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) agreement prior to acquisition of the conservation easement which is the equivalent of payment to the various taxing jurisdictions an amount essentially equivalent to the lost tax revenue.

Some might view the possible acquisition of land or conservation easements by New York City as an

opportunity to have a portion of the Town protected from subdivision or development, while still being available (perhaps more available) for outdoor recreational activities; others see it as a major threat to the future economic vitality of the region.

II. Goals, Objectives and Action

A. General Observation

Both responses to the survey tabulated by the Delaware County Planning Department and the input received in the public participation workshop indicate that residents of the Town of Walton generally do not distinguish between the Town and the Village. Rather they view the Village as the community commercial and service center (their downtown, so to speak) and the Town as the open space, the rural residential area, the hinterlands that support and feed into the Village and its commercial and employment activity. This was evident in the survey comments, for example reference is made to “our economic decline” in which reference is made to Delaware Street vacancies or loss of manufacturing employment within the Village. This accounts for an apparent inconsistency -- a strong attachment to and concern with the protection of views, open space, hunting and fishing opportunities and other amenities of rural life while simultaneously and very strongly expressing support for economic development to create needed employment.

The message expressed is that the community – Town and Village combined – needs economic development and job creation, but such development activity should be located only in and immediately surrounding the Village of Walton. In the more outlying areas, public policy should support agricultural activity (both traditional and alternative), properly managed forestry and logging, continued bluestone production, and continued rural residential development (both primary and second homes). Public policy decisions should be considered in the context of this set of general preferences as expressed by the participating members of the Walton community. The Town should consider the following steps in order to encourage appropriate development within its boundaries while protecting and enhancing the rural ambience and open space so valued by its residents.

B. Land Use

Goal: Preserve the Rural, Scenic and Natural Resources of the Community

1. Review and Revise the Town’s Zoning Law

Zoning was originally intended to separate incompatible land uses. Over time, however, the separation of land uses has led to sprawl in many areas. Within the past twenty years, however, zoning laws have been updated with a host of techniques that allow mixing of land uses, clustering within subdivisions to maintain open space, and the establishment of overlay zones to protect important natural features.

The Town’s zoning law has not been updated and / or amended since April of 1999 and is in need of revision to reflect changes in state legislation and current land use realities. Several areas that should be addressed include: definitions, zoning districts, minimum lot size requirements, permitted uses, special permitted uses, open space development, average density, density standards and performance standards, just to name a few. The Planning Board can work with the Delaware County Planning Department or a private consultant to make

revisions to the law which can then be adopted by the Town Board. The Town could seek grant money through the NYS Department of State's Master Planning and Zoning Incentive Awards Program to assist in the development of a new law.

2. Review and Revise the Town's Subdivision Regulations

The Town's subdivision regulations have not been updated since their adoption in March of 1986 and are in need of revision to reflect changes in NYS legislation and land use trends. Several areas that should be addressed include: definitions, simple subdivisions, boundary line adjustments, driveway access standards, the fee structure, options for conservation subdivisions, stormwater requirements and open space development, just to name a few. The Planning Board could work with the Delaware County Planning Department or a private consultant to make revisions to the Town's regulations which can then be adopted by the Town Board. The Town could seek grant money through the NYS Department of State's Master Planning and Zoning Incentive Awards Program to assist in the development of a new law.

3. Establish Critical Environmental Areas within the Town

The Town should consider adopting critical environmental areas (CEAs) as they are described by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to better protect the area's natural resources, i.e. water resources. Development is not entirely prohibited within these critical environmental areas; rather, such delineation indicates that the Planning Board must look even harder at applications falling within these districts during the environmental review process. According to the DEC's website:

Local agencies may designate specific geographic areas within their boundaries as "Critical Environmental Areas" (CEAs). To be designated as a CEA, an area must have an exceptional or unique character with respect to one or more of the following:

- a benefit or threat to human health;
- a natural setting (e.g., fish and wildlife habitat, forest and vegetation, open space and areas of important aesthetic or scenic quality);
- agricultural, social, cultural, historic, archaeological, recreational, or educational values; or
- an inherent ecological, geological or hydrological sensitivity to change that may be adversely affected by any change.

Following designation, the potential impact of any Type I or Unlisted Action on the environmental characteristics of the CEA is a relevant area of environmental concern and must be evaluated in the determination of significance prepared pursuant to Section 617.7 of State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR).

The Town Board, in concert with the County Planning Department, would work with the Town Planning Board and the NYS DEC to designate critical environmental areas within the Town.

4. Consider Other Land Use Regulations

Wind towers offer a clean, efficient and increasingly cost-effective means of producing electricity, both on individual parcels and at large wind farms. As this technology becomes more widely adopted, Walton's residents may discover that there are potentially negative impacts to wind tower placement. The Town should consider adopting a local law for wind towers to ensure that their siting is not negative to the health and safety of the public and local property owners. The Town Planning Board will work with the County Planning Department to further evaluate the need for such a law and then work to prepare a draft local law using guidance from the NYS Department of State (DOS). The Town Board could then adopt the local law if it saw fit. The same could be said for cell towers and a local cell tower law.

Land Use	Responsible Parties	Timeline	How-To/Funding Sources
Revise Zoning Law	Town & Planning Boards, County Planning	2006-2007	Dept. of State
Revise Subdivision Regulations	Town & Planning Boards, County Planning	2008-2010	Dept. of State
Establish critical environmental areas	Town & Planning Boards, County Planning	2006-2010	Dept. of Environmental Conservation
Consider other land use regulations	Town & Planning Boards, County Planning	From 2006 on	Dept. of State

C. Infrastructure

Investigate Improvements to the Community Infrastructure

Develop a Highway Management Plan

Expenditures on the +/- 99 miles of Town roads in Walton make up by far the largest portion of the Town's annual budget. To minimize these costs, Walton should develop a Highway Management Plan (HMP). The elements within this plan would allow better management of road expenditures and improve the quality of the water in local watersheds. The HMP process will involve the County Planning Department, the County and Town Department of Public Works and the Walton Highway Supervisor. The following is a brief outline of the HMP process:

a. All roads and stormwater structures within the Town are inventoried and mapped using Global Positioning System (GPS) and Geographic Information System (GIS) tools to include location, surrounding land uses, and adjacent watercourses.

b. The condition of the road and accompanying structures is also assessed and evaluated using the following standards:

- Driving surface - Delaware County Pavement Management/Cornell Local Roads process.
- Stormwater conveyance – Upper Susquehanna Coalition (USC) ratings for ditches and County Department of Public Works (DPW) ratings for basins and culverts.
- Sight distance, signage and intersections - NYS Department of Transportation (DOT) standards.

c. The HMP is drafted and incorporates comprehensive plan elements for a 10 year plan for local infrastructure including:

- A prioritized list of roads to be remediated and recommendations as to how to best address any substandard conditions.
- Recommendations for appropriate stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPs) for individual sites.

Develop draft budget for implementing BMPs and addressing priority areas.

ovement of procedures for roadside maintenance.

Infrastructure	Responsible Parties	Timeline	How-To/Funding Sources
Develop a Highway Management Plan	Town Board & Highway Dept., County Public Works & County Planning	From 2006 on	Department of State (DOS) and Catskill Watershed Corporation (CWC)

D. Local Economy

reserve the Existing Economic Resources of the Community

1. Encourage Organic Agriculture in the Town

Organic farming is a growth industry. For a variety of reasons, people are becoming more aware of where and how their food is produced and as a result many are turning to food that was produced locally and organically to make certain that it is safe to eat. Local farms in Walton could help meet this growing demand by producing more products organically. Tying this production in with the regional marketing ideas from the Delaware County Farmland Protection Plan would make sense. Organic farms could be recognized by the Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFA) and could also sell shares locally in Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operations.

2. Encourage Alternative Agriculture in the Town

Alternative agriculture (niche farming) is a growing industry within the Town and should be promoted in quite the same way as organic agriculture and dairy farming. Alternative agriculture is usually done on a much smaller scale than traditional farming; however, it doesn't have to be and it can be very profitable too. A couple examples of alternative agriculture are orchards, growing flowers, maple syrup producing, Christmas tree farming, etc.

3. Support Development of Small and Home-based Businesses

The Town can cost-effectively support the development of small businesses in several ways. First, a directory of local producers could be established that is similar to a 'yellow pages'. Including business contact information, what products are offered, etc., will allow easy local and regional distribution of this information. The same information could be included on the Village's and Town's websites. Make the necessary infrastructure available, i.e. cell towers and high speed internet.

4. Encourage Second Homeowners to Relocate Businesses to Walton

While many second homeowners are looking toward Walton to vacation or retire, some may be interested in relocating a business, or a portion thereof, in the Town. These businesses could eventually create new jobs with the right product or service directed at local and regional markets. On the other hand, the availability of high-speed Internet connections could allow a small publisher or software developer to relocate to Walton, and communicate and work electronically. Given Walton's proximity to eastern markets and continued decentralization of new-economy jobs, such business relocation is a possibility.

5. Encourage Second Home Ownership

One potential avenue to economic development is further second home ownership. Second home owners, whether "weekenders" or seasonal residents, tend to provide more tax revenue relative to service costs (particularly in relation to school district costs) than permanent residents. They also "import" their incomes, as

do commuters; that is, they earn income elsewhere and spend at least a portion of that income in the local economy.

Second home owners offer at least two routes to local economic development. First, the greater that their wants and needs are met within the local economy, the greater is the portion of their income from elsewhere that is “imported” into the local economy. If they stay longer or come more often, their impact on the local economy increases. To expand this element, second home owners should be asked about their needs: Can they buy gas locally on Sunday night as they leave for home? Can they easily arrange for snow plowing and other home maintenance services? Are there goods or services that they need or want that may differ from those identified by full-time residents? It may be necessary to investigate and/or pursue improvement of internet service and high-tech communications infrastructure within the Town and particularly from the Town to outside areas. The Town should consult with current part-time residents as to their perceived need for high tech services and treat their needs as important input to the issue. That is, are communication systems adequate so that a “weekender” could work from Walton for part of the week, using computer and internet services?

In short, what are the unique needs of the part-time residents, and how can the local economy meet those needs? To the extent that those needs are better met, visits will be extended and the local economy will benefit.

Second, additional second home owners could be recruited. Again, contact with existing homeowners, both full- and part-time, may be helpful. Do they know of people who might be interested in Walton? The Town might assist in developing promotions that encourage current residents to bring guests to the area, to get to know Walton, to see what current residents love. Local businesses – realtors, restaurants, recreational facilities – should be enlisted in the program. Current owners of second homes could be surveyed on their perceptions of the community and on what services and activities would make it more attractive for them and others as a destination and/ or second home location. Based on such information, the Town could develop a program of actively attracting persons interested in second homes in the area.

In short, Walton should be marketed as an ideal place to have a second home, and current residents, both full- and part-time, should be enlisted in the effort.

6. Continue to Support Well-managed Forestry and Logging

Forest land covers a major portion of the Town. Of 2004 total parcels with total acreage of 58,803 acres in the Town, 99 parcels with a total of 13,059 acres are identified in assessment records as Wild, Forested, Conservation Lands, or Public Parks. Removing five (5) state-owned parcels with a total of 2,947 acres (2,398 acres at Bear Spring Mountain) and one New York City parcel of 1,981 acres leaves 93 parcels of 8,131 acres of privately-owned forest land in the Town. Many additional properties are classified in other categories that are at least in part managed forest lands. In addition, aerial photography by the Environmental Protection Agency (provided through Delaware County Planning; see Map 8, Map 9) suggests that approximately 50% of the land area of the Town is forested. Properly managed, this is a sustainable resource that can provide long-term employment to a number of local small business owners and their workers, particularly when forest areas in surrounding towns and counties are taken into account, while simultaneously maintaining the open space and rural vistas desired by community residents and providing supplemental income to landowners. This resource can also provide important supplemental income to agricultural families. It can and does also support various forms of outdoor recreation: hunting, fishing, hiking, cross country skiing, snowmobiling and so forth.

According to the DCAFPP (“Delaware County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan,” December, 2000), 80% of county farmers and 62% of residents have woodlands on their properties, but only 33% have forest management plans, although both groups indicate interest in developing such plans. Between Cornell Cooperative Extension, the Watershed Agriculture Council, and the NYSDEC, most property owners can receive appropriate assistance to prepare a forest management plan.

*“Timber harvesting tends to be conducted informally, without planning,
to satisfy a need for immediate funds rather than as part of a long-term,*

planned program. Using the traditional practice of diameter-limit cutting, where all trees larger than a selected diameter are harvested, further reduces the viability of timber as a source of long-term stable income. Thus, the use of the farm forest as a short-term money maker greatly reduces the potential of that forest land, the long-term viability of the farm and the protection of wildlife habitat and the environment.”

DCAFPP, page 30

Although the Town has neither the expertise nor the financial resources to undertake a forestry program, it could act as an information clearinghouse to encourage property owners, both farmers and others, to make use of the available programs to develop forest management programs and utilize this renewal resource. Also, the Town should encourage implementation of the recommendations offered in the DCAFPP at the county level: inventory and evaluation of forest resources, and educational programs on forest management planning and the positive impacts of best management practices. This will lead to more properly managed forests, improved logging practices, and the protection of the forest resources as a sustainable source of rural income.

7. Continue to Support Bluestone Production

Although assessment records do not indicate bluestone quarries or bluestone production (no properties are assessed as mining/quarrying), other evidence indicates that bluestone quarries are an important component of the local economy. As a unique resource, this activity should be supported and encouraged -- it serves as a source of “foreign exchange” as the material quarried in Walton is exported to other towns and counties for sale, and the resulting revenues return to Walton. Also, because of the small size of such operations, they are generally environmentally benign.

Legislation that currently awaits only gubernatorial signature would ease restrictions on exploration for bluestone. Currently, a NYSDEC permit is required to move 1000 tons or 750 cubic yards or more of material (including topsoil, tree stumps, overburden) in any 12 month period, even in the process of prospecting for potential bluestone deposits and even if no material is removed from the site. The pending legislation would allow NYSDEC authorization for the moving of overburden on a site not larger than one acre over a period not to exceed one year for exploration purposes, provided no overburden and no more than 500 tons of bluestone is removed from the site. According to the NYS Bluestone Association, this legislation is crucial to the future of bluestone quarrying in southern New York, including Walton. As the request for authorization for such activity must include “a statement that such mining activities conform to local zoning,” the 1999 amendment to the zoning law that makes bluestone quarrying permitted in all districts will be helpful to local quarrymen in procuring the necessary permits to proceed with their activities.

However, the Town may want to consider establishing different standards for consolidated mining (such as production of crushed limestone for construction purposes) as opposed to the production of bluestone. Such mineral extraction activities are far larger in size and scale and generate much heavier truck traffic. Mining activity can be regulated as a land use by local zoning, including designation of areas within which it is permitted (including total prohibition in part of or an entire jurisdiction), but regulation of the activity of mining (as opposed to its location as a land use) has been pre-empted by New York State, NYSDEC in particular, under the Mined Land Reclamation Act (MLRA). It should be noted that the various conditions that can be attached to Special Permits according to the zoning law are generally related to the operational aspects of the use specially permitted, and thus probably cannot be attached to a mining permit subject to the MLRA. In considering the issue, due consideration should be given to other smaller operations already existing (e.g., sand, gravel, and shale banks) and where future such activities should be permitted or prohibited. The Town has already amended the zoning law to support the continued vitality of the local bluestone industry; it should consider carefully the implications of other forms of mineral extraction, their varying implications for the future of Town development and the environment, and whether it is appropriate to limit the areas where the various mining activities could occur, based on the relative scale and impact of each type of operation.

Local Economy	Responsible Parties	Timeline	How-To/Funding Sources
Encourage organic agriculture in the Town	Town Board, County Planning Department	Ongoing	NYS Department of Ag & Markets
Encourage alternative agriculture in the Town	Town Board, County Planning Department	Ongoing	NYS Department of Ag & Markets, Northeast Organic Farming Association, NY Farm Link
Support continued development of small and home-based businesses	Town Board, County Planning Department	Ongoing	County Economic Development, Chambers of Commerce
Encourage second homeowners to relocate businesses to Walton	Town Board, County Planning Department	Ongoing	County Economic Development, Chambers of Commerce
Encourage Second Home Ownership	Town Board	Ongoing	Local Realtors, Internet
Continue to support well-managed forestry and logging	Town Board	Ongoing	County Economic Development, Chambers of Commerce
Continue to support bluestone production	Town Board	Ongoing	County Economic Development, Chambers of Commerce

E. Watersheds

Goal: Ensure the Town of Walton is Prepared for Future Challenges in the New York City Watershed

1. Support the Delaware County Action Plan (DCAP) by keeping abreast of the actions of regional bodies that address watershed issues and programs that affect the Town of Walton.

DCAP programs were developed to enable the residents of Delaware County to better cope with New York City's watershed regulations. These programs are efficient and cost-effective and provide the dual benefits of better water quality and cost savings for the Town. When grievances arise between localities and watershed regulators, the regional watershed bodies like the Coalition of Watershed Towns are Walton's most important tools to address these issues. While it is not critical to be involved in all the activities of these groups, Town officials must stay current with who these groups are and what they can do for aggrieved residents of Walton.

Watersheds	Responsible Parties	Timeline	How-To/Funding Sources
Support the Delaware County Action Plan (DCAP) and maintain awareness of regional watershed groups	Town & Planning Boards, County Planning	Ongoing	County Watershed Affairs

F. Recreation

Goal: Clearly Identify Recreational Activities and Promote them to Benefit all Potential Participants

1. Inventory Recreational Opportunities in the Community Including Snowmobile Trails, and Hunting and Fishing Areas

A simple inventory of recreational opportunities could be posted on the Village's and Town's websites and could lead to increased tourism.

Recreation	Responsible Parties	Timeline	How-To/Funding Sources
Clearly identify recreational activities and promote them to benefit all potential participants	Town & Planning Boards, County Planning Department, Chambers of Commerce, volunteers	Starting in 2006	Consultant

G. Education and Outreach

Goal: Enhance Code Enforcement in Walton

Code enforcement is one of the most important tools available to preserve the character of Walton while simultaneously ensuring that the health and safety of the public are maintained. Buildings or sites that are hastily constructed out of shoddy materials often look unappealing and can also be unsafe. The code enforcement officer is the first line of defense in this process.

The Town should review its current policies regarding the CEO position and consider: new requirements for permit reporting, regular Town and Planning Board meeting attendance, offer increased funding for the position to maintain continuing educational requirements, etc.

In fact, the Town Board should consider updating Walton's building inspector/code enforcement officer enabling legislation.

Goal: Improve the Town's Website

Besides local newspapers, one of the most effective tools for education and outreach to the public is the Internet. Cities and towns across the country have established a web presence in the past few years to inform residents on numerous topics of local interest. The beauty of the Internet is that it makes information available 24 hours a day, seven (7) days a week. Also, it is immediately available to people living elsewhere who have interests in Walton including second homeowners and seasonal residents.

The Town Board and Planning Board will have the greatest level of responsibility in implementing the website idea. County Planning can offer assistance in finding grants to make the website a reality, probably through the use of a web design consultant.

Education and Outreach	Responsible Parties	Timeline	How-To/Funding Sources
Enhance code enforcement in Walton	Town Board, County Planning, Code Enforcement Officer	Starting in 2006	Department of State (DOS)
Improve the Town's website	Town & Planning Boards, County Planning, Town Clerk	Starting in 2005	DOS, O'Connor Foundation, web consultant

H. Partner with the Village of Walton

Goal: Share Efforts with the Village of Walton

Residents of the Town of Walton have indicated that economic growth is needed, primarily as a mechanism to increase local employment opportunities. Survey comments indicate both the recognition that the Village is the commercial center of the Town and the very real feeling that the Village is in need of redevelopment, particularly due to the businesses lost during and since the major flood of 1996.

The Village of Walton recently completed a Comprehensive Land Use Plan. Among its recommendations are a series of goals and objectives which call for shared participation of the Town and Village. The following are notable areas of Village effort in which the role of the Town may be crucial:

- Ø “Objective: Establish Visual Continuity” by “beginning design treatment outside the Village along roadways – intensify amenities as one approaches/enters the Village.” (page 10)
- Ø “Goal: Maintain and strengthen the economy’s agricultural sector.” (page 21)
- Ø “Goal: Encourage home-based enterprises.” (page 22)
- Ø “Objective: Identify those areas where the Village and Town governments can consolidate efforts.” (page 26)
- Ø “Goal: Meet the needs of the area’s growing senior population.” (page 30)
 - “Objective: Pursue the development of an assisted living facility and adult day care center.” (page 30)
- Ø “Goal: Develop recreational activities and programs.” (page 32)
 - “Objective: Develop a network of multi-use recreational trails.” (page 31)
 - “Objective: Establish fishing access and canoe/boat access points along the river.” (page 32)
 - “Objective: Pursue the development of a golf course.” (page 32)

More generally, the Town must recognize the extent to which its interests are shared with those of the Village. Village efforts to revitalize the local economy, both the commercial activity in the downtown area and employment activity in value-added industries in the Village, are essential to the overall economic health of the Town as a whole. A number of more general efforts are found in the Village Plan, particularly those related to marketing the area and its attractions to outsiders. The Town should make every effort to be an active participant with the Village in these efforts, including participation in the necessary costs to be incurred.



III. Appendix

A. Public Participation Meetings

1. Public Participation Workshop, October 15, 2001

Generally, planning efforts are hampered by limited opportunities for public input. Public meetings and workshops are very helpful, particularly as they provide participants with an opportunity for interaction and the exchange of ideas, both with decision makers and planning professionals. Public participation workshops of various sorts are the most common mechanism for eliciting public attitudes and positions on planning issues. However, low attendance often limits the input from such efforts, and those who do attend are likely to be those who are already most attentive to planning issues.

Prior to preparation of the first draft of this Comprehensive Plan, input on planning issues was elicited through one public participation workshop. Nineteen persons participated in this event, at which a structured discussion of the future development of the Town was conducted. Approximately half of the participants were elected or appointed public officials of the Town.

After introductions, the participants were divided into four small work groups. Each small group was asked to consider a series of planning and community issues, after which each group reported back to the re-assembled participants. After general discussion, group responses were assembled into a single list.

The first such task was the development of a shared vision of the desired future community. The vision statement elements that emerged from the group process, organized by general topic area, were as follows:

a. The Economic Development:

- 1. Increased jobs with improvements and redevelopment along Main Street. Development and improvements of Water Street area (there were previous plans)**
- 2. Development of diverse industry, compatible with NYCDEP regulations and wastewater capacity.**
- 3. Emphasis on the agricultural sector: stable farm community to protect open space -- "The Gatekeepers," e.g., "new agriculture" opportunities -- grass-fed beef, goats, llamas, organics, etc. Viable, sustainable agriculture.**

4. Timber growth with education of landowners of the advantages; in turn, leading to the development of timber-based industries (pulp, wood products, sawmills, woodworking).
5. Quarries: reduced regulations on smaller operations.
6. Better use and promotion of existing outdoor- and land-based recreation resources: Bear Spring Mountain, NYC lands (open to the public), NYS lands.
7. Improved overnight accommodations for both business and tourist visitors.
8. Improved parking, both numbers and location.
- b. Infrastructure
 1. Infrastructure improvements: water and sewer, roads and bridges.
 2. Improved communications infrastructure (data delivery, cell phone coverage)
- c. Housing
 1. Affordable housing and land for locally-born residents.
 2. Housing improvements, across the board – quality, availability, price.
 3. Low taxes. Removal of disincentives to real property improvements.
 4. NYCDEP regulations are likely to be tougher.
- d. For senior citizens and retirees
 1. Shopping, medical services, recreation, social activities, community involvement – PLUS public safety and security.
 2. Establish continuum of care facility or facilities.
- e. Attitudes
 1. Improved self-image, decreased apathy toward community affairs.
 2. Support and encouragement for entrepreneurial efforts.
 3. Address resistance to change in the community.
- f. Preservation of historic buildings and atmosphere.

The work groups were then asked to develop a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis of the Town of Walton, from which the groups reported back the following:

- a. Strengths of the Town of Walton
 1. Strong school system
 2. Natural Beauty
 3. Abundance of natural resources – farmland, clean air, forest land, natural water storage, fish and wildlife, in turn leading to hunting- and fishing-based tourism.
 4. Proximity to major urban areas – NYC, Boston, Albany, Binghamton, Syracuse, etc.

5. Good churches
6. Good roads in Town itself.
7. Culture and history multiple activities -- fairgrounds, symphony, drama, etc.
8. The hospital
9. Labor supply with excellent values
10. Secure, low-crime environment
11. Municipal facilities – pool, park, and recreation programs (shared with Village).
12. Higher education opportunities – four colleges in close proximity (Delhi, Hartwick College and SUCO in Oneonta, SUNY Binghamton)
13. Honest, friendly, competent trades and their services
14. Beauty of built environment, particularly in the Village.
15. Ability of community to come together when needed – accident, tragedy, etc.
- b. Weaknesses
 1. Apathy – poor community attitude
 2. High cost of living relative to income levels (food, gas, housing, etc)
 3. NYCDEP regulations that some see as discriminating against watershed communities
 4. High taxes – personal, property, business
 5. High energy costs
 6. Traffic on Main Street
 7. Site of the County landfill
 8. Taxing land at “highest and best use” (i.e., development) value rather than at agricultural or timber value.
 9. Poor communications – surface and electronic
 10. School taxes on property larger than 50 acres.
 11. Lack of high paying jobs.
 12. Not enough emphasis on prevention of teen pregnancies (which in turn lead to a series of further negative impacts on those involved and the community)
 13. Lack of competition, resulting in single source suppliers.
 14. Lack of skilled labor supply.
 15. Lack of residency requirement in County for receiving welfare (factual basis questioned)
 16. Distance from major highway.

- c. Opportunities
 - 1. Proximity to NYC
 - 2. More specialized small farms
 - 3. Water resources – to sell to NYCDEP
 - 4. HUD and other federal funding opportunities
 - 5. Value-added activities based on natural resources
 - 6. Cross country ski trails
 - 7. Continued CWC funding for infrastructure improvements
 - 8. Improved community atmospheres that will attract businesses and professionals.
 - 9. Senior housing – with continuum of care
 - 10. Relax watershed restrictions
- d. Threats
 - 1. Lack of unity in the community
 - 2. Regulations – NYCDEP, NYS, federal, local
 - 3. Loss of existing businesses
 - 4. Increasing illiteracy
 - 5. Lack of money for community projects
 - 6. Possible degradation of health care facilities
 - 7. Increase in NYCDEP restrictions
 - 8. Wal-Mart impact on Walton retail
 - 9. Loss of agricultural base
 - 10. Increasing taxes
 - 11. Transfer-based economic sector
- 2. Public Comment Meeting, October, 2002

Upon completion of draft recommendations to be included in the Comprehensive Plan, a second public meeting was conducted, at which public reaction to and comments on the draft recommendations were elicited. The meeting was conducted by the Planning Board prior to a regular meeting; approximately 25 persons attended and comments or questions were offered by three of the attendees, summarized as follows:.

- a. Commenter #1: people move here for large rural lots, to get away from suburban neighbors. I don't think clustered/conservation subdivision development makes sense.

Response: the recommendation is not for mandatory clustering, but for incentives to encourage clustering. The market as perceived by the subdivider will determine whether clustered

development actually occurs.

b. Commenter #2: Is commercial development specifically prohibited in any areas, under the recommendations?

Response: A short discussion of the distinction between Euclidean zoning and performance zoning, concluding that the recommendations fall between, leaning toward performance standards rather than prohibition of specific uses by districts.

c. Commenter #3:

1) The discussion of population in the draft talks about growth over 30 years, but the numbers show a decrease in Walton during the decade of the 1990s, when the US economy generally was booming. That may be more important than the 30 year pattern; what does it mean for the future of Walton?

Response: Point taken; the Planning Board will consider it.

2) Concern expressed about definitions and distinction between part-time and seasonal residents, with the part-time residents (those who have second homes in Walton and spend a portion of most or every week here) of major importance to the local economy.

Response: The importance of that group seems to be fully expressed in the draft.

3) Acquisition of conservation easements on the part of NYC should be viewed as a zoning amendment imposed by an outside party, beyond the control or input of the Town public or political process, as they remove property from development just as completely as zoning for non-development. They are part of the NYC policy to de-populate the Catskills over time.

Response: Whether NYC hopes to depopulate the Catskills or not, the potential impact of the acquisition of both land and easements will be considered. Planning Survey, December, 2001

B. Planning Survey

Because of the limitations inherent in workshops as a public participation forum, communities often conduct planning surveys to further elicit community input, either instead of or in addition to public meetings of various sorts. However, formal surveys using valid statistical sampling techniques are simply too expensive for small communities to utilize in their planning efforts. More informal survey methodology, based on wide distribution of questionnaires to local residents with return by mail, are a very useful second choice to gather information and public attitudes on planning issues. Much like that from public participation workshops, the input from informal surveys serves as helpful brush strokes in the overall picture of community attitudes about land use issues.

An informal Planning Survey was conducted by the Town Planning Board and the Delaware County Planning Department during in the winter of 2001-2002.

Tabulation of the survey results is included in the Attachments.

1. The Respondents

A meaningful response rate is somewhat difficult to determine. According to the US Census, there were 5,953 persons and 2,338 households in the Town in 2000 (including the Village); there were 4,349 persons 18 years of age or older. Surveys were sent out to all property owners in the Town, based on the Town tax records; 888 surveys were returned for a response rate of approximately 20% of the population 18 or older, or 38% of households. As surveys could also be picked up at the Town office, multiple surveys may have been received from a single household – or even a single person. Also renter households are likely to have been underrepresented.

Approximately one-quarter of the respondents volunteered the information that they are retired as a comment to question 18; this is probably an underestimate of the proportion of retired residents among the respondents, as occupational categories did not include “retired” as a choice. As such, the retired population is apparently over-represented among those responding to the survey.

Approximately two-thirds of the respondents (68%) indicated they have resided in the Town for 15 years or longer. 80-85 respondents (9-10%) indicated they are second-home owners (Question 1, 2); yet 118 responses indicate “seasonal residence” as one use of their property (Question 7). Personal residence was indicated as a property use on 689 surveys (52% of 1326 total responses to Question 7).

2. The Responses

Close to 60% of the responses indicated that both the reason for the original decision to live in Walton and the reason for continuing to live in the Town is “born or raised here”, “close to friends or relatives”, or the “rural atmosphere.” For both questions, the single most numerous response was the “rural atmosphere.” What is least liked about the Town is the lack of cultural and recreational activities (31% of responses), followed by transportation difficulties (27% of responses); on the other hand, comments reinforced the concern about lack of jobs and shopping opportunities, particularly very strong negative feelings about grocery prices and quality. Almost half of the respondents (47%) indicate that the Town has become a less desirable place of residence since they moved here. More than 60 respondents added a written comment that, in one way or another, indicated loss of jobs as a reason that Walton is now less desirable.

The questions that deal with attitudes about planning issues and the environment are interesting and are summarized as follows:

QUESTION 8: Please indicate the importance of the following aspects of the Town’s environment:

Essentially all of the listed issues were ranked as important by respondents. Drinking water quality, air quality, stream water quality, and wildlife habitat were marked as important in overwhelming numbers (above 90%). Others related to maintaining open space – farmland, mature forests, scenic views, and open space/recreation – were identified as important by more than 80%. Stream corridors, river access, and historic buildings were named on more than two-thirds of the surveys as important. Only wetlands were identified as important by less than two-thirds of respondents, and that was important to 53% of respondents.

QUESTION 9: How important is it for the Town to review each of the following aspects of development?

More than three-fourths of respondents indicated that protection of farmlands (87%), impact in streams (87%), scenic impact (83%) and landscaping (75%) are important. All potential choices were considered important by a majority of respondents.

QUESTION 10: Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements: The Town of Walton should encourage:

More than four of five respondents agree that the Town should encourage light industrial development (89%), farming and farm-related businesses (88%), management of wildlife areas (82%), protection of stream corridors (81%), commercial development (80%), and the tourism industry (80). Fairly strong opposition emerged relative to building of shopping malls (only 53% agree; 36% disagree) and heavy industrial development (only 42% agree; 41% disagree).

QUESTION 11: How compatible do you feel each of the following forms of NEW residential/commercial development would be with the Town Walton?

The respondents clearly object to commercial junkyards (only 31% indicate compatible some places, 55% say incompatible everywhere), and less strongly to landfill operations (51% indicate compatible some places, 28% say incompatible everywhere). In general, other responses emerge as a strong argument for traditional zoning; except for single family homes on large lots (48%), other uses are indicated as compatible; everywhere

by one-fourth or less of the respondents while being identified as compatible in some places by a majority by a majority of respondents. Except for landfills and junkyards, all other uses are seen as compatible either everywhere or in some places by at least two-thirds of respondents.

QUESTION 12: How much NEED is there in the Town of Walton for the following types of consumer establishments?

Respondents perceive a need for a supermarket (82%) and a department store (84%), with adult clothing (77%) and children's clothing store (75%) close behind (both of which may be subsumed under the need for a department store). A convenience store was perceived as needed by 72% of respondents, and a home improvement center by 55%. The strong need that emerges from this question is the need for a supermarket and a department store which offers both adult and children's clothing among its wares.

QUESTION 13: How would you rate the quality of the following public and semi-public services?

Schools (54%) and Utilities (54%) received High Quality ratings by a majority of respondents, with Highway Maintenance (49%) barely missing. Only Overall Code Enforcement (12%) and Recreational Facilities (21%) were rated as Poor Quality by more than 10% of respondents. Fair Quality ratings were assigned by 40% to 60% of respondents to all services. This pattern suggests that services are generally adequate, there are no major problem areas, but all are perceived as perhaps needing some improvement, or, alternatively, that public services are neither so good nor so bad as to elicit much attention by the respondent community. Only recreational facilities may need some attention, based on this response pattern.

Question 17A: Of your children that do NOT plan to stay in Walton, or return, what are their reasons?

Approximately 80% of respondents indicated that the lack of employment opportunities would be the reason. This response was so overwhelming that the second most frequent response was some variant of No Response ("have no children," "children too young," "N/A").

Question 17B: Of your children that WILL STAY, OR RETURN after college/military/other, what are their reasons?

Many respondents volunteered that their children will not stay or return to Walton; others indicated the reason for staying would be family relationships.

Open Comments

The opportunity to offer unstructured comments (Question 24) was accepted by approximately half of the respondents. Because such comments are not guided by pre-selected categories or topics, they offer insight into respondent's views, some clues as to the strength of feelings on various issues, and hints at the relationships between views on different topics. They are also difficult to analyze because of the originality of language.

About one-third of respondents volunteered views on the recently proposed maximum security youth facility, a topic not otherwise raised in the survey. Of those raising the issue, approximately sixty percent (60%) oppose the facility versus forty percent (40%) who supported it. Support was expressed entirely in the context of needed employment; opposition was evenly divided between the social problems anticipated if the facility is built and impacts on the natural beauty and serenity of the area. These opinions were expressed with various levels of strength.

The largest number of comments were directed to the need for jobs in the area (80); including employment opportunities so young people will not need to leave the area to find work (20). A number of comments identified low wage levels as a problem, along with jobs as such. Many (32) commented on the deterioration of the Delaware Street commercial area – vacant storefronts, loss of businesses, general appearance – or the need for development of the Water Street area including the former Armory building. The largest single development preference expressed (with 40 comments) was for tourism – some comments calling for specific developments (a conference center, more hiking trails, a golf course, miniature golf, events that will attract outsiders spread throughout the year), general development of the outdoor recreation opportunities (15

comments), and marketing of the area and its recreational opportunities. Many (16) specifically mentioned outdoor recreation opportunities. Many (12) want development of light (but not heavy) industry.

The lack of shopping opportunities also elicited many comments. Twenty-five comments indicated the need for a supermarket, with complaints about high prices and limited selection attributed to the lack of competition. More than thirty comments were related to the lack of shopping opportunities for non-food items, clothing being the leading problem. Ten other shopping comments were more general – high prices, “have to go elsewhere to buy anything,” lack of choice.

Complaint comments included the category of property maintenance and general appearance (junkyards, junky yards, property maintenance) and local taxes (too high, unfair to part-time residents, increase with improvements). The lack of activities was also cited, with 15 references to the need for youth activities and 10 interpreted as calling for more adult activities (good restaurant, “night life,” nothing to do”). Poor road maintenance was mentioned by five respondents.

Affordable housing and public transportation for seniors was also identified as a problem, as well as public transportation more generally.

Four respondents commented negatively on the relationship to New York City relative to the watershed regulations. Most disturbing, twelve written comments can only be interpreted as strong anti-newcomer sentiments, while six appear as anti-local comments by recent arrivals to the area. This sentiment of mutual animosity was evident in every question where the opportunity to comment was available.

