

*Village of Castleton-an-Hudson, New York*

# **COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

Submitted to the Village Board of Trustees  
for Public Hearing and Final Consideration

March 2005

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## INTRODUCTION

### WHAT IS THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

The **Castleton-on-Hudson Comprehensive Plan** is a written document that serves as a roadmap for the future of Castleton. The Plan identifies and establishes the goals, objectives, principles, policies, standards, and strategies for the future growth and development of the Village of Castleton-on-Hudson for the next ten years.

New York State statute (Village Law, Section 7-722) authorizes the preparation of a comprehensive plan and generally proscribes the plan format and content, as well as the process of formal adoption of a plan. In Castleton, the Village Board of Trustees acted in 2000 to appoint a committee of qualified and interested citizen volunteers to draft the comprehensive plan. The Comprehensive Planning Committee worked diligently for more than four years to complete the task. As a result, the Castleton-on-Hudson Comprehensive Plan is a fact-based plan formulated from extensive observation, committee discussion, and public participation.

The central focal point of this plan is the improvement of the **quality of life** for all Village residents. The **Mission Statement**, adopted by the Comprehensive-Planning Committee early in the planning process, reads:

#### **Village of Castleton-on-Hudson Comprehensive Plan**

##### ***Mission Statement***

**To enhance the residential, historical, commercial, and recreational features while preserving the unique character of the riverfront village of Castleton -on-Hudson.**

The Comprehensive Planning Committee also prepared a list of **Goals and Objectives** that form the basis for the chapters of the Castleton-on-Hudson Plan. These goals and objectives were aired at a public meeting and posted on the Village website ([www.castleton-on-hudson.org/ComprehensivePlan.shtml](http://www.castleton-on-hudson.org/ComprehensivePlan.shtml)) and formally accepted by the Village Board of Trustees. The chapters of this Plan are based on these goals statements. Each chapter includes a narrative that discusses each goals and objectives statement and then provides an analysis and recommendations. Some of the goals and objectives are readily achievable, and some will require further planning and a combined strategy for implementation. Some recommendations will require the support of outside resources including State agencies and other governmental bodies and funding sources.

Many facets of this "new" Castleton-on-Hudson Comprehensive Plan are not new. The Committee has reviewed and included many elements of several previously prepared plans that date back over thirty years.<sup>1</sup> These planning documents raised issues that continue to be relevant as much today as they were thirty years ago. The 2005 Castleton-on-Hudson Comprehensive Plan is designed to be a practical document that provides a clear action agenda to accomplish the shared goals of Village residents. The intent of Village officials in empowering the development of the Comprehensive Plan is to garner support, interest and enthusiasm, create public awareness, and create the momentum necessary to accomplish the goals and objectives. The Plan is offered as a legal vehicle to make Castleton a better place to live, work, raise children, retire, and enjoy the many quality of life features of our community.

The fundamental assumption of any planning process is that outside forces are at work, bringing change - - both good and bad - - to the Village. It is of critical importance that the Village plans to address these issues in an effective and efficient manner. The Comprehensive Plan will assist current and future Village administrations to direct the course of the Village over the next ten years. By applying the principles of this Plan, quality change will occur in Castleton, and strengthen the unique and historical character of our community, a character that is still with us and resides within the diversity of the individual residents.

The Village of Castleton is in a unique position, both geographically and in time: The Hudson River and the Hudson Valley are both undergoing revitalization and recognition of the historical significance, recreation potential, and the beautiful natural environment found along the River's course. The River's and Castleton's histories are permanently linked. The potential for Castleton to reap the benefits of this revitalization is very real - - however, the moment must be seized. Through a cooperative community planning process and continued community support, action and awareness of the goals and objectives, this plan will be adopted, implemented, achieved, and realized - - all to the enrichment of life for every citizen in Castleton-on-Hudson, as well as our surrounding neighbors.

#### **Members of the Comprehensive Planning Committee**

Charles Axtmann	Joyce Axtmann	Corby Holliday
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<sup>1</sup> Raymond, Parish & Pine, Inc. *CASTLETON DEVELOPMENT PLAN- Objectives and Policies/or Future Development, 1971.*

## HISTORY & GEOGRAPHY

*History is more or less bunk. It's tradition. We don't want tradition. We want to live in the present and the only history that is worth a tinker's damn is the history we make today.*  
*Henry Ford (1863-1947)*

A highly detailed account of Castleton's history is readily available from many sources, many of them compiled for public access at the Schodack-Castleton Public Library. In a more vibrant oral record of Castleton's history, senior residents share memories and can easily reminisce on what Castleton once was. The sad truth is that this early grandeur has not been seen for many years. However, it is good to note that Village residents remember and appreciate the quality of life that once existed. These memories will become the foundation for a new vision, and help to stimulate the genesis for change. The image of a vital, productive community will help to generate the support and enthusiasm that will recover some of that once fine experience that was Castleton.

Times have changed, and we cannot bring back Castleton's early days as a burgeoning port-call for the Town of Schodack. In the past 100 years, Castleton was the centrally located point for shipping produce, hay, bricks, and ice to New York City, providing dockage for dayliners, a stop on the Eastshore train line. Castleton was a self-contained, self-supporting community with multiple grocery stores, pharmacies, and other necessary businesses that supported the everyday lives of the residents. Manufacturing was alive and well in Castleton and our citizens walked to work at the Piano Action Factory, Anti-Corrosive Metals, several brickworks, and later the Fort Orange paper mill and Hamilton Printing. In spite of its relatively small population, Castleton's isolation from Albany and Rensselaer produced an amazing variety of merchants, manufacturers, and tradesmen with the attendant civic organizations and churches. Castleton was rich in self-sufficiency and self-reliance.

Castleton reached its role as a regional trading and transport center around 1900 as the local farms found other market centers via improved transportation routes. Manufacturing survived into the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Electricity and refrigeration drove out the ice business. The Piano Action Factory went out of business in 1928 and Anti-Corrosive Metals slowly lost ground following the boom of World War II and closed shop in the early 1960s. Only the paper mill survived those times, and now that is closed. Hamilton Printing exists today and continues to be a welcome employer of Village residents.

The Village's character and that of the Main Street business district began to show decay and decline in the early 1950s and 1960s. The automobile and easy access to Albany and East Greenbush, suburban development and the attendant shopping centers all contributed to bring about the demise of Castleton's once complete and self-contained Main Street business district. The Main Street no

longer functioned as a place to do business. Buildings were transformed slowly into other uses, some of which further contributed to the steady decline. Castleton's predominant role has become that of a bedroom community and a starter home resource with little left but a vestigial culture of small town life.

## **CASTLETON GEOGRAPHY**

Castleton is unique in its natural characteristics. The topography of the community and its environs has always isolated Castleton, and to this day keeps the community somewhat immune to the creeping encroachment of the suburban environment. This suburbanization will continue to occur from the east; however, Castleton will remain landlocked on the north and south by virtue of the streams, gullies, river, and wetlands. With the magnificent Hudson River as our front door, the isolated and independent character of the village continues to exist. The wooded gullies that once caused village development to proceed eastward and upward dominate and project into what should be a fairly dense urban scene. These gullies give the village rural texture and contact with nature. The rest of the village has several areas of great open space and with the mature trees the village assumes a pastoral air.

What are the planning implications of this topographical profile? Coupled with the smallness and isolation is the fact that the village is extremely close to intense urban areas. Within minutes, it is easy to travel down Route 9J and be at work in downtown Albany and other Capital District locations. There is value to Castleton's isolation and to it being a bedroom community. There is *great* value in a "small town way of life" and these values must be preserved and enhanced. We must draw on the lessons learned from history and develop our waterfront heritage and preserve the remnants of our Main Street Historic District. We must deal with modern life issues and draft effective local laws to prevent further decay, deterioration, and exploitation. We must develop good, effective design standards to preserve the architectural character of the village that remains.

The Comprehensive Plan will describe and suggest ways to accomplish the adopted Goals and Objectives. Our own history in Castleton has demonstrated the truism that *change is a/ways ongoing and to do nothing invites negative change*. The results of past inaction are readily visible as we drive down Main Street. It begs the question: How will we prevent further deterioration and revitalize our village?

## NATURAL RESOURCES

### GOALS & OBJECTIVES

**To conserve, protect, and enhance our important natural resources, such as wetlands, ravines, and steep slopes, woodlands, riverfront, and wildlife habitats.**

- Encourage site design that protects existing terrain, preserves significant vegetation, and incorporates native trees and shrubbery.
- Preserve and enhance the view of the waterfront from the Village and the river.
- Pursue opportunities for Village residents and visitors to observe and preserve river wildlife, such as eagles, waterfowl, fish, etc., in their coastal habitat.

Castleton's unique character is dramatically shaped by its surroundings and natural areas. There are large areas of wooded open space sandwiched between uphill streets and other areas of wild and tangled growth - - all a produce of hills and ravines that make up the Village proper. Adjacent woodlands, streams, and ravines wrap the Village in a rural, wooded, and natural character not usually found in such a predominately urban setting. These spaces give rise to and support a variety of wildlife and birds that are seen daily. Our riverfront complements the picture and further shapes positively the Village's natural setting. To complete the picture, one has to only walk down streets, lined with mature trees, some over a century old. These natural resources contribute greatly to the quality of life we enjoy in Castleton.

This natural resource and the resultant quality *must be preserved and enhanced*. This Plan recommends several actions aimed at revising and strengthening current local laws and incentives concerning steep slopes:

1. Cease all dumping of trash and filling of ravines.
2. Create a review and permit process that will allow selective filling.
3. Begin a program to clear trash and debris from ravines, gullies, and wooded hillside properties.
4. Encourage property owners to thin brush from vacant lands bordering Village streets.

5. Begin a program of replanting these areas with indigenous ornamentals, ground covers, and shrubs that will provide cover in addition to fruits and seeds for birds.
6. Trim and prune all major trees and remove and/or chip all fallen and dead trees and debris.
7. Create a park-like setting when viewed from the street. Encourage landowners and local civic groups to adopt and groom these areas.
8. Create a trail system through the ravines that will connect the lower Village with the upper Village.
9. Create resting and bird-watching areas by installing benches. Adopt a new tree preservation program regulating the removal of major trees on private and public property. Establish a system to regulate the removal, with the intent being the preservation of a valuable natural resource.
10. Design a landscape plan and plant new trees, flowers, and shrubbery along the North Main Street-Route 9J right-of-way.
11. Require that trees be planted in conjunction with any development of vacant or partially occupied lands.
12. Develop standards for the protection, trimming, and pruning of trees during construction and/or power line maintenance activities to prevent unprofessional or careless overtrimming.
13. Protect existing trees and plant new ones when old and decayed trees are removed along Village streets.
14. Work with civic groups to establish an annual Arbor Day event.
15. Establish a walking link to the Schodack Island State Park. Create bird-watching areas along the route.
16. Design and construct details that control and filter storm water before discharge to the Hudson River. Construct silt entrapment details in ravines and gullies and along other areas of erosion or areas subject to erosion.
17. Continue to pursue revitalization of the Village's riverfront. Continue to pursue waterfront access for all residents.

18. Remove deteriorated buildings from Main Street to create landscaped parking areas and open views to the Hudson River.
19. Remove trash and debris from behind Main Street buildings and the railroad. Repair and paint the river-facing sides of these buildings to improve the river view of Castleton. Encourage the railroad authorities to remove trash trees, brush, and other debris from the right-of-way.
- 20; Enhance opportunities for residents and visitors to view the Hudson River.
21. As part of the site review function of the Planning Board, establish an environmental review process to assess and analyze the various proposed projects and activities that might impact the Village's natural and scenic resources.
22. Identify sensitive areas within the Village and develop a written program and/or written materials for the use of residents and developers. This material will outline the various natural resources in the Village and establish their sensitivities and location.

## HISTORIC & CULTURAL RESOURCES

### GOALS & OBJECTIVES

**To promote the historic and cultural heritage of the Village by preserving and adaptively reusing significant historical structures, preserving historical documents, artifacts and records, and making those items available for public view.**

- Promote the preservation, adaptive reuse, maintenance, and enhancement of historic properties and the Historic District.
- Develop and promote community programs to teach historic preservation and build awareness of the Village's cultural and historic resources.
- Utilize fully the services of the New York State Historic Preservation Office to evaluate and mitigate proposed impacts on historic properties.
- Adopt design standards to ensure that new construction and rehabilitation of major exterior alterations of historic properties will be compatible with the nineteenth century character of the Village.
- Develop and promote interpretive programs to demonstrate the Village's culture and history.
- Complete an inventory of the Village's historic structures and sites.

Castleton's architectural heritage on Main Street is not well-preserved. Fire and floods in the Village contributed to this and recent adulterations, demolitions, and neglect have taken a toll over time. Certain incompatible businesses have been allowed to persist in their operations, leading to a Main Street that no longer reflects the true nature of Castleton. However, there is a vestige of what Castleton once was lurking behind what appears to be a run-down area. This plan seeks to draw on that remaining vestige to preserve what is left and use the existing historic context to structure a foundation for change. The character is there and we must draw it out for the construction of new buildings and the preservation, repair, and rehabilitation of the old.

While the emphasis is on the main business district, other areas of the Village contain well-preserved homes that lend graciousness and character to the neighborhoods. The following recommendations seek to establish guidelines and methods for preserving the character found in these homes as well as the Main Street Historic District.

The revitalization of Main Street will add quality to all of our citizens' lives, bring a new prosperity to the Village and increase the values of property in other areas of the community. This Plan recommends the following:

1. Develop and adopt, as a local law, a set of design standards for constructing new buildings in Castleton's Historic District.
2. Develop and adopt a set of guidelines and rules for the restoration and rehabilitation of facades in Castleton's Historic District.
3. Develop and adopt a set of non-binding guidelines setting preservation and design standards for the repair and rehabilitation of historic homes within the Village.
4. Work with the New York State Education Department and the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation to evaluate and inventory the Village's historic buildings.
5. Continue to improve the maintenance and safety of older rental and other buildings through consistent building code enforcement.
6. Promote the current Castleton Historic District and develop guidelines consistent with meeting eligibility to secure grants and funding.
7. Develop and adopt standards for signage located in the Castleton Historic District.
8. Research and inventory the Village's historic photographs. Work in conjunction with the Schodack/Castleton Public Library to create a central repository for historic photographs. Create a collection of physical artifacts from the Village's past and centralize this collection.
9. Create an awareness of history by erecting interpretive panels at various key areas of the Village. Develop a walking history trail in conjunction with the interpretation.

## PARKS & RECREATION

### . GOALS & OBJECTIVES

**To provide and maintain, through the use of parks, trails, greenways, and facilities, a variety of recreational opportunities and public access to riverfront, ravines, woodlands, and streams.**

- Develop a community center with a positive and meaningful youth program.
- Develop programs that contribute to community identity and common ideals.
- Maintain, upgrade, and enhance existing recreational facilities and parkland.
- Encourage a balance of private and public investments/efforts in the development of opportunities for riverfront recreational use.

Castleton, by its natural topography, has the potential for development of a variety of parks and park-related uses. The open space and mature trees give the Village a park-like setting that can be enhanced and enriched with a directed effort and resultant social and economic benefits. Opening up **direct access to the Hudson River** for pedestrians, creating direct links from the Village, and creating dockage and boating facilities will, in itself, create a tremendous recreational outlet for the Village and surrounding communities.

The Cheney Piano Factory property and the Brickyard property have been deeded over the Village for use as parkland. Both of these areas are underutilized and undeveloped, with the exception of the space for the Castleton Firehouse. The Brickyard is at the trailhead of a countywide trail system that can link into the Schodack Island State Park and the Hudson River Valley Greenway. The potential is there for development of outstanding recreational venues, some of which can bring substantial visitors and revenue to the Village.

This plan recommends the following:

1. Develop a plan to accommodate the facility needs of recreational, civic, or social activities such as (but not limited to) the Boys and Girls Club, Castleton Kids, CYO Basketball, etc.
2. Develop a design plan for the recreational use of the Brickyard. This plan may include parking areas, landscaping, restrooms, permanent ice skating facilities, cross-country ski trails, trail systems linking the Village to the

area, stream conservation and streamside trails, warming hut, court games, natural history education kiosk, picnic and camp pavilion.

3. Continue to work with State agencies to provide access to, and fund the construction of, a mini park on the former Marine Sales property at the base of Scott Avenue.
4. In conjunction with the above mini park, design and construct a landscaped parking area, playground, and sitting area on the northwest corner of Scott Avenue and North Main Street.
5. Design landscaping for the tract of land between Route 9J and the railway fence on North Main Street.
6. Perform a study and develop a design plan for the use of parkland surrounding the firehouse. Study new routes of circulation and install new roadways. Provide additional landscaped areas and plant more trees and ornamental shrubbery for bird cover. Provide a walkway linking Main Street to the parkland. Develop a multi-age play area and various court game areas. Install picnic tables and benches for sitting.
7. **In** all park areas, develop and install interpretive and educational signage to highlight unique natural features, historical settings, etc.
8. Explore opportunities to develop marine-related uses of the waterfront and develop public/private partnerships to operate these facilities.
9. Work with the Hudson River Valley Greenway, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, & Historic Preservation, Town of Schodack, and Rensselaer County to develop linking trail systems. Link these trail systems with the proposed Village trail systems.

## ECONOMY

### GOALS & OBJECTIVES

**To promote and revitalize the downtown business and waterfront area by encouraging the growth of small businesses that will enhance the quality of life of Village residents and attract visitors.**

- Encourage river-oriented commercial and recreational activities consistent with sound environmental practices.
- Enforce existing zoning regulations to ensure intended visual, historic, and functional use of land.
- Encourage the development of small businesses that are compatible with the needs of Village residents and visitors.
- Promote the development of a downtown property owners association.
- Appoint a business development council to attract new business to the central Main Street business district that is compatible with the precepts of the Comprehensive Plan.
- Promote and create incentives for adaptive reuse of unused and underutilized property to attract compatible businesses.

Time has brought dramatic change to the Village marketplace. We can no longer hope that we will see the vibrant and self-contained Main Street that once existed here. We do, however, have the potential and the infrastructure to revitalize the Castleton economy and secure new businesses that will provide services and enhance the quality of life for all Village residents.

One of Castleton's greatest assets is that we retain the culture and values of small town life while enjoying proximity to an intense urban environment. Our natural history and topography isolate the Village like no other municipality in the region. Castleton is a river town and a river port with a deep sense of history and place in the Town of Schodack and the County of Rensselaer. Castleton has become the locus of the perfect *starter home* and a *bedroom community*.

The goal is to both preserve our small town ambiance and also to go forward and enhance that ambiance. We seek to attract businesses that will provide the necessary services central to family and personal needs and desires as they now exist in the Village. We need to promote and provide to those businesses a clear willingness to work for success, and an active market that will sustain and support them. We need to supply those businesses with space to conduct their *affairs*, and adequate parking and circulation in order for them to become stable

and successful. We need to develop and provide to these businesses design guidelines, codes, and regulations that set careful standards that are fair and reasonable and at the same time preserve the quality and ambiance that is Castleton.

It is the responsibility of the Village to develop comprehensive, clear, and understandable local laws that are enforced in a fair and consistent manner. Prospective business owners must be made aware that the Village is proactive on their behalf, but at the same time will hold to needed standards in the quest for quality of life. We must establish a culture, a sense of place for the Village that the businesses can identify with - a sense of place that will attract and retain customers for these businesses. We need to bring back a sense of pride and market this sense to secure quality businesses.

It is most important that the Village make it a priority to develop and coordinate the waterfront revitalization plan and the business plan in order to provide necessary services for the increasing canoe, kayaking, and boating demographic. The Hudson River is a developing highway for bringing customers to the Village. We must present a quality appearance from both the River and the land view. We must clearly value the importance of being sited on the enormous resource that is the Hudson River.

We face a challenge to revitalize a deteriorated Main Street that has seen its storefronts taken over by low income apartments. We need to recover the use of these storefronts and encourage development that will restore and preserve the spaces within these once thriving places of business.

This Plan recommends the following action:

1. Develop and market the Village's positive aspects and future potential.
2. Encourage business development by being proactive and developing fair, consistent, and understandable local laws, codes, regulations, and design guidelines.
3. Market Main Street as the business district, including businesses such as mini-grocery stores, restaurants, antique shops, craft shops, small repair shops, florist shops, specialty food retailers, and mini-mart gas stations.
4. Maintain the historic ambiance of Main Street by providing fair and reasonable, but quality, design standards.
5. Create a safe crime-free environment.

6. Create a Business Development Council to procure important parcels of property for further planned development and work with businesses and developers.
7. Encourage development and rehabilitation of Main Street apartments to attract a more diverse population.
8. Plan and develop affordable housing adjacent to the Main Street business district to provide a constant customer base for business.
9. Create more off-street parking and limited time parking on Main Street and adjacent areas to provide for resident and customer parking.
10. Establish commercial corners (zones) at the north end of Main Street for future business development.
11. Working with the New York State Department of Transportation, provide for traffic control devices and details to slow down traffic in the Main Street business district.
12. Plan for construction of a Village square on Main Street to form a focal point for the Village and to set a theme for revitalization.
13. Create additional satellite parking areas and link these areas to Main Street by means of walkways, pathways, and stairs.
14. Begin a dialogue with existing incompatible businesses to purchase and secure important commercial corners for redevelopment. Work with these businesses to find and relocate to compatible areas within the Village.

## HOUSING

### GOALS & OBJECTIVES

**To provide a broad range of housing options for all economic groups, ages, and families.**

- Ensure that the conversion of single-family homes to multifamily apartments is compatible with the character of the neighborhood.
- Actively market the Village housing stock.
- Encourage the restoration and protection of existing structures to maintain the historic character of the Village.
- Explore alternative options for low-income housing that provide a quality and safe environment for families.

Housing would appear to be a non-issue in Castleton. In traveling the tree-lined streets, we see neat rows of period homes constructed predominately from the late 1800s to the early 1950s. Very little new construction occurred past that period and Castleton, for the most part, is landlocked and built out. There is very little remaining "buildable" space within Village boundaries. Hence, Castleton does not share some the land use problems associated with many adjacent areas. Individual home ownership comprises most of the housing stock, and this fact speaks to the pride and care given to most Village homes. However, this does not mean that Castleton is without housing problems.

The proliferation of low-income rentals on Main Street and select areas of the upper Village area has had a dramatic social and economic impact on the quality of life in the Village and on the value of real estate in general. Conversion of storefronts into small, poorly constructed and maintained dwelling units has resulted in the delineation of two distinct areas of the Village: "Main Street" and the "Upper Village." These distinct areas produce a societal division that is increasingly evident. The substandard housing conversions and their low rent produce an unfortunate social dynamic and increases in crime for a Village that once was blessed with a feeling of total freedom and security. Without intervention, it is likely that property values will continue to decline, producing a further supply of inexpensive housing that will be converted into multiple low-rent dwelling units. It is a prime concept of this Plan **to develop adequate housing in the Village to accommodate a variety of families and incomes.**

One of the prime foundations for a successful revitalization of Main Street will be the construction of a variety of dwelling units for all income levels. Redevelopment of Main Street buildings into prime apartment spaces and storefronts is key. Through conversion and new construction, we need to provide

housing for lower income individuals as they are displaced by revitalization. Redevelopment of current space will not alone correct this problem.

Through this plan, efforts will be directed to the recovery of Main Street commercial corners by displacing or relocating incompatible businesses and providing incentives to bring in new businesses that are compatible with the Castleton lifestyle. Creation of low-income apartments must be done in concert with this effort. We need to increase the population density in the Main Street area through the development of low to mid-income housing. This housing will attract a variety of individuals and income levels that will provide the support of the necessary Main Street service businesses attracted through the Main Street revitalization effort.

This Plan recommends the following action:

- 1.. Enforce existing building codes, rules, regulations, and local laws to the fullest extent in a fair and consistent manner. Train knowledgeable officials, and maintain and communicate data expeditiously to prospective businesses and developers.
2. Work with all interested parties to develop quality housing that is safe, attractive, and consistent with the Village's architectural heritage.
3. Initiate a Village policy to help market Main Street property as it becomes available.
4. Appoint a public housing authority to seek grants and develop public housing and/or senior housing.
5. Continue to enforce provisions of the zoning ordinance which limit the conversion of single family homes to multiple family dwellings.

## **PUBLIC & COMMUNITY SERVICES**

### **GOALS & OBJECTIVES**

**To provide adequate municipal services and facilities to meet the needs of all Village residents in an efficient and cost-effective manner.**

- Facilitate the provision of social and community services by private and not-for-profit organizations.
- Encourage the collaboration in planning for use of community facilities, including accommodate increasing demand without compromising Village access to services.
- Preserve the elementary school as an integral part of the Village community.
- iii Provide new facilities or adoptively rehabilitate existing facilities so that services are contained in the community to strengthen community identity.
- Encourage volunteerism for the Fire Department, Rescue Squad, and other community organizations.
- Continue to develop new and enhance existing services for children and the elderly.
- Bring local stormwater management requirements up to standards.
- Provide unbiased and consistent enforcement of Village zoning ordinances.
- Continue to improve the appearance of municipal buildings and grounds.
- iii Pursue efforts to bury public and private utility lines throughout the Village to enhance safety and appearance.

The Village of Castleton-an-Hudson has a longstanding tradition of volunteerism. A well-equipped Fire Department and Rescue Squad have been at the ready and performing their important duties for many years. The Village has also supported Castleton Kids, an after-school and summer camp program that provides quality support for the community's working parents. The Castleton Boys and Girls Club is providing positive services for Village youth, meaningful in the context of current social conditions. The Schodack/Castleton Library also provides a treasured resource for all Village demographic groups. The Village also maintains its own Public Works Department that, while small, works hard to maintain the Village

infrastructure. All of these important services add greatly to the quality of life for Village residents.

The objectives outlined in this chapter of the Comprehensive Plan are complex and challenging. The achievement of these Goals & Objectives will require a high degree of detailed planning and interaction with other governmental and social entities. The chapter is divided into subchapters to better address the issues and to clearly state the desired actions and recommendations.

### **CASTLETON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

As the Schodack Central School District Board of Education may well consider the construction of a new elementary school building in the future, the well-planned adaptive reuse of the existing building becomes a critical planning issue for the Village residents. Castleton Elementary School, once the school building for grades K-12, has been central to Village life since its construction in 1922. This solid gothic crenellated structure and its grounds continue to be a focal area within the Village and helps maintain a cohesive neighborhood environment. The future use of this building and surrounding grounds is central to maintaining the character of the Village and the adjacent neighborhood.

This plan strongly recommends the following actions with regard to the adaptive reuse of the Castleton Elementary School:

1. Form a special commission to study and recommend the adaptive reuse of this facility and the surrounding grounds. Include county, town, and village representation on the commission.
2. Study the potential for developing a not-for-profit entity to own and maintain the facility under guidelines established by the special commission.
3. Enhance and develop the open space facing Campbell Avenue to provide mini-soccer fields, court game areas and other play areas.
4. Consider developing angled parking spaces on the west side of Campbell Avenue and the east side of Ransom Avenue by making each street one-way.
5. Plan the adaptive use of the building to contain spaces for relevant services such as: Castleton Kids, Castleton Boys and Girls Club, library services, early childhood services such as preschool or prekindergarten, Village administrative offices, Town of Schodack administrative offices, satellite Rensselaer County offices, Police

station, community center, satellite health center, and professional office space for doctors, dentists, and attorneys, etc.

## **ENHANCED PROGRAMS FOR FAMILIES**

The needs for new and enhanced programs will grow as the demographics in the Village change. Young families are moving into the Village as the starter home market is alive and well. Housing bargains are created by the now deteriorated condition of Main Street but will still be viable and within the reach of first time homebuyers following the revitalization of Main Street. We need to plan now for this changing demographic.

This Plan recommends the following:

1. Coordinate and plan for the expansion of existing child care programs to support the needs of Village families.
2. In order to enhance program capacity and educational opportunities, establish appropriate space for the above programs.

## **ENHANCED PUBLIC SAFETY**

Recent years have brought community attention and demands for a higher level of police support to address the increasing social issues associated with a deteriorating business district. It is clear that the quality of life in the Village must and can be maintained by good policy and policing coupled with support and vigilance of residents. In 2003, a study was conducted by a group of residents appointed by the Mayor to evaluate the need for more comprehensive police protection. The study concluded that the re-creation of a Village police force was too costly for Village residents. In addition, Village residents were already protected by the Town of Schodack Police Force.

This Plan recommends the following:

1. Reestablish an active "Neighborhood Watch" program by soliciting resident support.
2. Ensure the Village Board of Trustees maintain close and constant communication with the Town of Schodack Police Force in order to provide the level of protection needed in our Village.

## **ENHANCED VILLAGE APPEARANCE & INFRASTRUCTURE**

Some Village buildings and visible infrastructure are in a state of slow deterioration and in need of repair and rehabilitation. Certain Village facilities tend to detract from the neighborhood character. (The water and sewer systems will be described and commented upon in the following chapters).

The small Public Works Department works hard to maintain the aging infrastructure, but time and use are taking their toll. The funds devoted to public works, while a substantial part of the Village budget, but have not been enough to fully keep pace with the needs.

This Plan recommends the following:

1. Develop a consistent program of infrastructure repair and rehabilitation as part of the daily function of the Public Works Department. As a budget line item, establish a repair and rehabilitation account for visible and non-visible infrastructure.
2. Staff the Public Works Department accordingly to properly provide staff to perform repair and rehabilitation projects in a consistent and planned manner.
3. Demolish existing uninhabitable Village buildings when it has been determined by the Historic Review Board that salvage is not possible.
4. Establish signage standards. Keep existing signage in good repair and replace deteriorated signage.
5. Plan and construct a new Public Works Building/Center and plan for the adaptive reuse of the Public Works Building on Van Buren Avenue. Plan an adaptive reuse of the old Public Works Building on First Street.
6. Obtain professional design services to prepare a comprehensive storm water survey and subsequent written report. Establish design criteria and proceed to design and construct a new storm water system. Treat storm water by channeling this water through artificial tidal wetlands prior to discharge into the Hudson River.

## **VOLUNTEER SERVICES**

The volunteer spirit remains a source of pride and part of the Castleton culture to this day. The Village character contributes to this spirit as residents interact and support one another. While this may be viewed as "small town," the effect is that neighbors know and depend upon each-other. This is an invaluable resource, in short supply in today's modern world.

This Plan clearly recognizes this resource and recommends the following:

1. Continue the strong support of our Fire Department and the Rescue Squad.
2. Establish Village awards and recognition days for volunteer effort.

## **WATER SUPPLY & SEWER**

### **GOALS & OBJECTIVES**

**To recognize that the Village's water and sewer systems are assets that should be utilized to the maximum to enhance the quality of life and natural resources of the area.**

#### **Water Capacity**

- Explore the potential of working with the Town of Schodack to develop new sources of water supply and distribution.
  - Upgrade the existing water distribution system to improve pressure and flow, and reduce turbidity.
- Work with the Town of Schodack to develop wellhead and aquifer protection programs.
- Explore the feasibility of treating water to improve quality.

#### **Sewer Capacity**

- Assure adequate sewage disposal to meet existing and future needs within the Village and appropriate areas.
- Explore the potential for improving the system plant capacity to reduce the per unit cost of sewer service.

The Village's water supply system and wastewater treatment facility together form key planning issues that must be carefully considered, discussed, planned and implemented. These systems will also play an important part in the development and expansion of the surrounding Town of Schodack. Questions and issues surrounding aquifer protection, water quality, and treatment are on the minds of all citizens these days as well as a topic of concern for regulating agencies.

The Village's water supply system, originally constructed in the latter part of the nineteenth century, is today still composed of parts and pieces of this early system. Originally the system drew its water from surface sources. The current source is a series of deep wells that were either purchased or developed in lieu of constructing a costly treatment plant that would use the surface sources. The well sources currently supply approximately 200,000 gallons per day to serve a population of 2,000. The water supplied from the current system is hard and causes the resultant problems with scale, deposits, and corrosion to home plumbing and heating systems.

The Village water and sewer systems are viewed in the Comprehensive Plan as valuable commodities. We have water and sewer capacity to sell in the form of expansion of services and increases in customer base and usage. By working in partnership with the Town of Schodack, the Village is in a better position to be awarded grants for expansions, renovations, and improvements.

Village residents will benefit from decreased taxes as the burden of total upkeep for the systems is spread throughout the surrounding area. The surrounding community will benefit by having the ability to grow and develop a larger tax base as good water and sewer systems attract both new residents and businesses. This is a win-win situation and the Village can no longer afford a policy of isolation.

With regard to the **Water Supply System**, this Plan recommends the following actions:

1. As part of the Village budget, create a yearly capital line item for waterline replacement and/or expansion. Develop a staged replacement plan for existing waterlines and valves, including estimates of cost for replacement.
2. Establish a plan to replace existing old waterlines prior to resurfacing Village streets.
3. Open a dialogue with the Town of Schodack to develop and expand the existing water system. Create a deeper customer base and cost share accordingly to reduce the burden now imposed on Village residents and some Town residents. The Village should retain ownership of the water and sewer systems because this is a valuable asset.
4. Explore the establishment of new water districts and anticipate future growth within those districts.
5. Explore new water sources and treatment options;

With regard to the existing **Sewage/Wastewater Treatment System**, this plan recommends the following actions:

1. Investigate the capacity for expansion of the waste treatment plant and an extension of the system into new sewer districts.
2. Investigate new technologies for upgrading the existing plant so that the Hudson River receives a more cleansed effluent (possible tertiary treatment).

3. Establish a budget line item for yearly repairs and upgrades to the wastewater treatment system.

## TRANSPORTATION

### GOALS & OBJECTIVES

**To provide and promote a variety of modes of safe and reliable transportation for all residents of the community.**

- Provide and maintain curbing and sidewalks on primary streets.
- Regularly maintain Village road surfaces.
- Encourage enforcement of local speed limits.
- Pursue efforts with the New York State Department of Transportation to restrict speed near the Castleton Elementary School.
- Continue efforts with the New York State Department of Transportation to create safe railroad crossings for pedestrians and vehicles.
- Pursue efforts with the Capital District Transportation Authority and other appropriate agencies to improve public transportation to meet the needs of Village residents.
- Conduct a comprehensive study of Village parking needs for the purpose of assuring adequate parking for residents.

A realization of the goals and objectives set forth in this chapter will require that State, county, and town forces act **in** concert for the mutual benefit of all residents. Transportation is one of the major issues facing planners and is the product of the automobile age in which we live. One can safely predict that in ten years the Village will have more cars as youths replace senior citizens. These seniors will also need forms of transportation to enrich the quality of the retirement years so deservedly earned.

This Plan recognizes this trend and recommends the following actions:

1. Make Castleton a walking village by instituting a consistent and budgeted program to repair and/or install new sidewalks complete with ADA curb cuts. Isolate the walking residents from traffic by the installation of appropriate curb heights. Link sidewalks with proposed trail systems. Install sidewalk resting and viewing areas complete with purchased landscape furnishings.
2. Develop a prioritized plan to replace sidewalks. Concentrate on key areas of circulation. Install stop signs and crosswalk delineation at key areas.

3. Begin a program to create consistent intersection alignment and turning radii on Village streets. Establish sight distance by the elimination of shrubbery and other barriers. Delineate stop lines.
4. Work with State and county transportation authorities to establish a more comprehensive public transportation plan for the Village and surrounding area. Increase the diversity of transportation by creating a shuttle bus service, a shopping day bus service, and a medical transportation service.
5. Establish a program with the Castleton Boat Club to provide for more dockage for transient boaters.
6. Develop a consistent budgeted capital program to maintain and repair Village streets. Pursue grants to finance street and infrastructure repair and replacement.
7. Conduct a study to recommend various improvements to traffic control and safety.
8. Work with the New York State Department of Transportation to construct safe pedestrian and vehicular crossings at Green Avenue and Scott Avenue. Construct a full highway bridge across the railroad tracks at Hamilton Printing and the Village's sewer plant.
9. Encourage law enforcement cooperation from county, State, and town police forces to regularly and consistently enforce speed limits on Main Street and throughout the Village.
10. Work with the New York State Department of Transportation to designate Scott Avenue as a "school zone" with a blinking caution light to slow traffic to safe levels.
11. Consider the construction of a signaled and landscaped traffic circle that will accomplish traffic "calming" and create a Village square.
12. Create a Village-wide parking plan to create new parking spaces and improve existing parking spaces. Develop special parking space details and designs that support the special roadside conditions such as those found on Green Avenue.
13. Establish a volunteer committee to aid in the transportation of the elderly and those in need.

## REGIONAL PLANNING

### GOALS & OBJECTIVES

**To develop a close coordinated working plan with the town and the county to assure that area growth is beneficial to the entire region.**

- Capitalize on the existing water and sewer systems to provide a source of revenue for the Village. Energize the growth of the town and provide opportunities for homeowners outside the Village to avoid costly well water systems and expensive on-site sewer systems.
- Consider annexation as an opportunity to provide commercial and residential growth to enlarge the tax base for both the Village and the town.
- Develop lines of communication with towns in Albany County as well as the Town of Schodack to assure development will have a positive impact on both sides of the Hudson River.
- Work closely with representatives from the New York State Office of Parks and Recreation to assure that the operation of Schodack Island State Park will enhance the quality of life in the Village.

The Goals and Objectives of this chapter do not require explanation or a definite action plan. The Village of Castleton can no longer afford to exist as a singular entity. Global and regional forces have shaped and changed the way we do business and live our lives. This Plan is about the future of those lives and, more importantly, the quality of those lives. It is extremely important for the Village to recognize that coordinated planning with surrounding communities, the county and the State, is not only beneficial but is mandated as part of the Comprehensive Planning process. Other chapters of this plan have pointed out specific directions for regional planning and cooperation.

This Plan recommends the following actions at a minimum:

1. Appoint a Planning Liaison to work with the State, county, and town planning entities.
2. Formally explore and report on possibilities for shared services with surrounding communities.
3. Interact with surrounding communities to explore and develop various joint grants for funding cooperative and linking projects.
4. Work jointly with the town to establish permanent waterfront access and boat, canoe, and kayak launching sites. View the waterfront as the town and the Village's waterfront. Prepare joint grants to develop the waterfront.

5. Work jointly with the town to prepare a new Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan (LWRP).
6. Work jointly with the town to create additional public transportation routes and senior citizen transportation.
7. Work jointly with the town to explore the reuse of the existing Castleton Elementary School, should it become available.
8. Work jointly with the county and the town to establish and link bike and hiking trail systems.