

**Town of Durham**

**Comprehensive Plan**

**Adopted April 1, 2008**

Prepared by the Town of Durham  
Comprehensive Plan Committee

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## **I. PURPOSE AND AUTHORITY.**

The New York State Legislature, recognizing that local governments make significant decisions and actions that affect the immediate and long-range protection, enhancement, growth, and development of the State and its communities, granted town government the authority and responsibility to undertake town Comprehensive Planning and to regulate land use for the purpose of protecting the public health, safety and general welfare of its citizens.

The Town Board agreed to develop a comprehensive plan to guide future development in Durham in 2004. The Town subsequently engaged a consultant to assist in the preparation of the plan. With the help of the consultant, the Town carried out a planning process according to New York State Town Law 272-a and involved the public in a variety of ways. The Town Board subsequently appointed a special committee to finish the preparation of the Comprehensive Plan. The public participated and provided input to the development and approval of this plan through public workshops, focus groups, a survey, and discussions at Town Board meetings.

In preparing this Plan, the Town of Durham has (1) considered and addressed the diversity of resources and conditions which exist within the Town, and (2) engaged its citizens in the development and approval of the plan.

The purpose of this Plan is to:

- Promote the health, safety and general welfare of the people of the Town,
- Give due consideration to the needs of the people of the region in which the Town is a part,
- Foster cooperation among governmental agencies planning and implementing capital projects and municipalities that may be directly affected by those projects,
- Provide Durham's elected leadership and decision making bodies with a framework for guiding the physical and economic development of the Town of Durham while at the same time maintaining Durham's rural character, and protecting its intrinsic natural, scenic, historic and cultural qualities.

Following the adoption of this Plan, all Town land use regulations must be in accordance with this Comprehensive Plan, and all plans for capital projects of another governmental agency on land included in the Town Comprehensive Plan shall take such plan into consideration. As per New York State Town Law 272-a, this Plan shall be reviewed and updated if necessary, every five to seven years.

## **II. DESCRIPTION OF THE TOWN OF DURHAM**

The Town of Durham is located in the northwest corner of Greene County, New York about twenty-four miles northwest of the Village of Catskill and about thirty miles southwest of Albany, the State Capital. The Town is bordered by the Albany County towns of Rensselaerville and Westerlo to the north, the Town of Cairo to the south (with whom it shares the Cairo-Durham School District), the Town of Greenville to the east, and the Town of Windham to the west. The Town's 49 square miles (33,000 acres) slope from the northernmost escarpment of the Catskill Mountains to a plain that gently rolls north to Albany and east to the Hudson River Valley.

The Town of Durham is part of the geographic area loosely defined as the Mid-Hudson Valley, and is located entirely within the Hudson River watershed. The Town of Durham is designated as a Hudson River Valley Greenway community, and is also located within boundaries of the New York State Hudson River Estuary program. First permanently settled in 1784, the Town, according to the US Census (2000), now has a population of 2,592 persons. The 2006 Census estimate is 2,724, a further gain of 132 persons that now gives Durham a total population that passes an earlier population peak in 1850. Durham has a mix of permanent and seasonal housing, with 63.7% of the 1,642 housing units occupied permanently, and 454 being classified for seasonal or recreational use. Just over 30% of the households have a child under 18, and slightly more have a person over 65 in the household.

The character of the Town remains a rural and pastoral community. In the upper elevations, second growth forest has reclaimed the mountaintops where agriculture is impractical. Lower down, abandoned fields alternate with plantings of corn, wheat and hay, second growth forests, and thick brush.

There are four hamlets within the Town of Durham: Durham, East Durham, Cornwallville, and Oak Hill. The hamlets are fundamentally rural in nature and their qualities reflect that of the surrounding countryside, serving as limited centers of commerce and activity. East Durham is the traditional center of commerce and tourism in the Town. Oak Hill is designated as one of 11 "Historic Hamlets of New York" and is currently undergoing revitalization and business development. Durham and Cornwallville, which have horse farms and especially scenic views, have become a particular magnet for "weekenders" and summer residents.

The Town recently completed a study of the East Durham Main Street area, and has been actively seeking State and federal support for the installation of sidewalks in East Durham to improve both the safety along State Route 145 and the commercial viability of the hamlet. The Town does not have a full-service grocery or department store, and manufacturing uses no longer occur in hamlet areas either.

The Town possesses important scenic, cultural, historic, natural, and recreational qualities. Continued sprawl and other development are pressures may threaten some of

our natural resources and open spaces if not monitored and focused. The State of New York and the federal government have both recognized the Town of Durham's cultural, historic and scenic qualities. In 1989, the Town enacted Local Law No. 1 to "protect and enhance the landmarks and historic districts which represent distinctive elements of Durham's historic, architectural, and cultural heritage" and to "enhance Durham's attractiveness to visitors." Following the enactment of this local law and meeting the requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act, New York State designated The Town of Durham as a *Certified Local Government*. In 1991, the State of New York designated twenty-two miles of road in the Town of Durham as New York State Scenic Roads, partly in response to the County attempting to site a landfill in the area.

At the time of this designation, Durham represented the most mileage in a Town ever so designated. In 2006, recognizing the importance of the Town's scenic resources, the National Scenic Byways program, awarded the Durham Valley Scenic Byway a major grant to develop a corridor management plan. The same year, the New York State Department of Transportation, through the Transportation Enhancement Program, awarded the Town and the Durham Valley Land Trust a major grant to purchase a conservation easement protecting a historically important farm with a critical scenic viewshed in the Town of Durham. Later in 2006, the New York State Quality Communities program awarded the Town a grant to develop an agricultural economic development and open space plan.

The Town of Durham has been a farming community for more than 200 years. The agricultural landscape is a critical component of the Town's unequalled natural and scenic character. Farming, tourism and related support businesses are key to maintaining community character. The farms in the Town of Durham are largely small and family owned. Dairy farming once was central to the local farming activities. The growth in tourism in Durham was initially spurred by farmers taking in boarders during the summer to help pay the bills on the land, and recent agri-tourism businesses such as Hull-O Farms modernize that tradition for a 21<sup>st</sup> Century audience.

The Town of Durham is similar to many other small, rural towns in the Hudson Valley and Catskill Mountain region of New York State where farming is a tradition. These towns share a rural heritage, and are facing similar threats. Durham's planning process clearly identified that people feel the Town of Durham's very identity is threatened by the loss of the economic viability of agriculture and tourism, outside development pressures driven by growth in the Hudson Valley, and the expansion of second home developments.

### **III. ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE TOWN OF DURHAM**

Durham's strength is in its people and in the Town's exceptional qualities: scenic, cultural, historic, natural, and recreational resources.

The Town of Durham is a community whose very identity is threatened by the loss of the economic viability of agriculture and tourism, and by development pressures that threaten the Town's natural resources and open spaces. The traditional economic base dependent on farming and tourism has significantly eroded. Agriculture is severely threatened as a viable economic activity in the Town of Durham, and the Town's open space is under increasing developmental pressures. With farming now a marginally viable economic activity, there has been a decline in related commercial enterprise and tourist oriented businesses has accompanied this decline. As a result, there has been a loss of jobs and people to larger metropolitan areas and other areas of the County.

The Town's exceptional scenic, natural, historic and cultural qualities are important to the Town's future. These qualities are what bring people to Durham to live, to work and to visit. Opportunities exist to adopt innovative agricultural, market, and land use strategies to create a sustainable and vigorous farming economy in the Town of Durham. Regionally there is an increased demand for organic and locally produced agricultural products. Keeping farmland productive will help maintain open space, and preserve the pastoral nature of the community. Linking agricultural economic development and open space preservation will decrease the overall cost of open space preservation. Preserving the Town's intrinsic qualities will continue to attract new visitors and this is an opportunity to revive the tourism related economy. Growth of high tech industry in the region also offers an opportunity for local economic development that would minimally impact the rural nature of the Town.

#### **IV. VISION, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES**

##### **A. Vision:**

Based on public input, a vision statement for the Town has been prepared. Citizen input from the survey, community workshops, and focus groups contributed to the direction and tone of this vision statement. This vision statement reflects what Durham in the future will be – it should be considered as the “end-product” of all the planning efforts in Town. The goals, objectives, and strategies that are presented in later sections of this Comprehensive Plan detail how this vision will be accomplished in Durham.

##### **Vision Statement**

Durham offers the best in small town living. The Town of Durham offers a high quality of life for its residents that result, in part, from the long-term preservation of Durham's culture, character and uniqueness. Key features of our Town include quality public services, safe roadways, well-maintained properties and structures, friendly neighbors, a strong sense of community, excellent civic participation, and a commitment to personal freedoms that residents and visitors find attractive and welcoming.

Our scenic beauty and rural character, defined by the forests, streams, open spaces, active farms, mountains, greenways and other natural places that make up our

landscape are maintained and public access provided where appropriate. Our historic character has not only been preserved, but contributes to our thriving economy. Access to our streams allows the public to appreciate this beauty and character. We celebrate all these features because they contribute to the identity of our Town and community.

Durham is a business-friendly community. Businesses exist that support both local needs and those of visitors. The hamlets of Oak Hill and E. Durham play primary roles as the business centers in Durham and have appropriate technology and amenities to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Durham capitalizes on our rural and historic character to improve and develop tourism. Our economy offers many quality employment opportunities especially for our youth and young families, and businesses can be effectively maintained from generation to generation.

Durham offers many outstanding active and passive recreational activities for youth, families, and senior citizens. We have access to public lands, our scenic creeks and roads, forested areas, and other natural places, and these assets are linked with our hamlets by a connection of greenways throughout the Town.

Durham is a livable community that supports its senior citizens through appropriate housing and transportation opportunities. New development is sensitive to its rural surroundings and supports the open space, view sheds, or rural and historic character of the community.

## **B. Goals:**

Reflecting this vision, the strategic goals of the Comprehensive Plan are as follows:

1. Preserve, protect and enhance the Town of Durham's
  - a. pastoral, rural character,
  - b. open spaces,
  - c. natural beauty, scenic views, and landscapes,
  - d. historic character, structures and landscapes,
  - e. environmental quality,
  - f. water resources, and
  - g. natural habitat and biodiversity.
2. Promote economic development that benefits the Town and its citizens in balance with the pastoral, rural character of the community and its hamlets.
3. Promote improvement and economic development of the Town's hamlets in a manner that maintains their qualities as rural hamlets.
4. Maintain an effective local government that fosters a sense of community and civic participation. Strengthen communication between local government officials, their agencies, and the public.

5. Establish a town community center that will offer a broad range of services and activities for all ages, with emphasis on programs for youth and seniors.
6. Promote opportunities for recreational activities.

### **C. Objectives:**

The results of the planning survey distributed to the Town's residents, along with information gathered from Town meetings documented general agreement on the critical importance of agriculture and natural resources to the future of the Town and the well being of its residents. Residents of the Town of Durham consistently voiced the critical and fundamental importance of the Town's rural and agricultural character to the very nature and value of the Town itself. For many, it is the reason they have chosen to live or continue to live here. The Town is committed to remaining a rural community and preserving its open spaces. The Town recognizes the critical importance of farming, not just farmland preservation, to the quality of life for all the residents of the Town.

It is the objective of this plan to:

- (1) Preserve the Town's rural nature by protecting the agricultural landscape, open space, natural and scenic resources, and headwater streams, by promoting agricultural economic development, and by preserving the rural nature of the hamlets.
- (2) Promote compatible economic development including that of agriculture and tourism, and to attract small high tech industry or workers to the Town by developing telecommunication and broadband internet infrastructure.

## **V. REGIONAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Several County-wide, regional plans, and programs exist that effect the Town of Durham. These include:

**A. Greene County Economic Development Plan:** Greene County recently adopted and published an economic development plan. The plan includes Durham in the county's "valley and mountains region" and describes "a strategy of preservation, smaller scale business recruitment and tourism development" for these regions. It also notes that "As the County proceeds, it is imperative that the concepts of smart growth, with emphasis on protecting environmentally sensitive property, preserving open space and maintaining community and historic character are at the forefront of any planning and development effort." The county plan recognizes the contribution that Durham makes to the county's agricultural economy and identity: "The Town of Durham has been noted as one of the

best of the agricultural regions. Today, the main agricultural industries include raising hay, and dairying.” The plan then goes on to cite the following development principles which are also relevant to helping Durham meet its goals and objectives:

- ***Encourage more densely populated development and infill projects*** within existing hamlets and urban areas where infrastructure can support growth. Lower density development should be encouraged in the outlying rural areas to preserve the rural character.

- ***Avoid inappropriate development.*** Development in rural areas should protect rural character. Scenic resources should be protected through the development of appropriate development regulation tools. A variety of low-impact uses, including home occupations, should be permitted and encouraged, subject to design and performance standards.

And the following Greenway “Smart Growth” Guidelines

- ***Rural development should fit into its natural surroundings,*** rather than be superimposed as a dominant element in the countryside.

- ***Build new housing in the countryside off side roads or shared drives,*** screened from the public view, rather than lining rural roads with house lots or commercial uses.

- ***Conserve special site features and rural qualities*** through a creative combination of on-site and shared utility systems.

- ***Create farm conservation and development plans*** that allow future home sites to co-exist with active farmland, conserve the best agricultural soils, and discourage roadside sprawl.

- ***Focus development in community-identified growth areas,*** both infill re-development sites and land in and immediately around existing or proposed centers, rather than encouraging most new construction on outlying greenfields or farmland.

- ***Plan for pedestrians as a top priority*** in all villages and town centers, creating a safe and attractive network of sidewalks and crossings.

- ***Insist on new construction that is compatible with the existing community context*** and nearby distinctive or historic buildings, while adding interest and variety to the streetscape.

- ***Stop the spread of strip commercial zones lining our roadways*** and begin to reclaim the strip into more contained sub-centers with shared driveways and parking, higher quality landscaping and architecture, and a mix of adjacent uses.

- ***Tame traffic congestion with a three-prong approach:*** strictly limit access driveways along major roads, disperse vehicles on interconnected secondary street systems, and mix land uses closer together to encourage alternatives to the automobile.
- ***Identify and preserve significant wildlife habitats and connected vegetative corridors,*** as large and continuous as possible, in the development process.
- ***Retain and incorporate natural vegetation as buffers*** between developed or farmed areas and rivers, streams and creeks.
- ***Treat roads and streets as our most important public open space system*** and the most visible opportunity to create a network of scenic greenways.
- ***Designate wellhead protection areas*** and adopt measures against potential sources of aquifer contamination to ensure long-term sources of clean drinking water.
- ***Make landscaping on every site plan part of the larger open space system,*** incorporating natural features of the site, using native plants wherever possible, and connecting the greenery patterns on adjacent parcels.
- ***Integrate signs into their site*** by using building signs as accessory elements within high quality architecture and embedding any freestanding signs into the overall landscaping.
- ***Treat parking lots as an accessory use,*** with parking lots to the side and rear of buildings and featuring quality landscaping and architecture along the frontage, not views of asphalt.
- ***Make street and commercial lighting distinctive and human-scale*** in central places, while preventing excessive glare or wasted light into the night sky.
- ***Plant continuous rows of street trees*** between the roadway and sidewalk in developed areas, as well as trees along rural roads to create green corridors through the countryside. Agriculture and Forest Uses Agricultural land is a valuable and declining resource in Greene County. Active farming of viable agricultural parcels should be considered a priority and prime agricultural lands should be conserved to the maximum extent practicable.

**B. Greene County Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Plan:**

The *Agricultural Development and Farmland Protection Plan* was produced in 2002 and offers a variety of options for sustaining the industry. The plan first presents an inventory and overview of the agricultural sector in Greene County, identifying its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Among the opportunities cited is that the County’s “unique landscape and attractions make it a prime location for small-scale agricultural entrepreneurs and niche businesses trading off its Catskill and Hudson Valley images.” Given the importance of farming to the local economy, the environment, and the preservation of Greene County’s rural character, efforts to encourage local agriculture require the use of a variety of land use and economic development tools. The plan

proposes a variety of regulatory measures, including the expansion of the Right to Farm Law, the adoption of a Right to Forestry Law under New York State Real Property Law Section 480(a), and the adoption of Agricultural Zoning Districts under NYS Agriculture and Markets Law Article 25AA. It recommends the dedication of existing or new agricultural industrial park sites to encourage food processing and other operations that use regional farm products, noting opportunities for local grocers to directly market their produce to such operations. The plan also suggests improving training and education opportunities on various topics such as managing farm labor, value-added processing, and programs designed to attract new farmers.

**C. Hudson Valley Greenway:** The Hudson River Valley Greenway is an innovative State-sponsored program created to facilitate the development of a voluntary regional strategy for preserving scenic, natural, historic, cultural and recreational resources while encouraging compatible economic development and maintaining the tradition of home rule for land use decision-making.

Through voluntary participation in the Greenway community planning program, communities in thirteen counties in the Hudson River Valley can receive technical assistance and funding for local land use planning projects that incorporate the goals of the Greenway program. The Greenway supports local and regional planning efforts that address natural and cultural resource protection; economic development, including tourism, agriculture and the redevelopment of our urban areas and commercial waterfronts; public access; regional planning; and heritage and environmental education.

The Greenway's planning program provides assistance for planning projects and encourages communities to work with their neighbors to address issues that reach beyond their borders. The Greenway community planning program is a "bottom-up" approach to community planning and regional cooperation that actively engages citizens in the planning process. Through this participatory planning approach, the Greenway helps communities plan for future growth while preserving those qualities that make the Hudson River Valley a special place to live.

**D. Hudson River Estuary Program:** The Hudson River Estuary Program is a unique regional partnership designed to protect, conserve, restore, and enhance the estuary. The Hudson's productivity and diversity of natural resources sustain a wide array of present and future human benefits. It is a nursery for valuable food and game fish, a water supply, a boater's playground, a landscape of inspiring beauty, a shipping route, and more. Its management calls for a cooperative effort of broad scope, coordinating public input with the expertise of professionals throughout New York State's Department of Environmental Conservation [DEC] and other agencies. The DEC serves as program manager in collaboration with other State and local governments and agencies.

The program was established in 1987 in response to passage of the Hudson River Estuary Management Act, Section 11-0306 of the Environmental Conservation Law. The law directed the DEC to develop a management program for the Hudson River Estuarine District. The Estuary Program is not a regulatory program but promotes river monitoring

and study, wildlife and plant inventory and assessment, education and interpretation, financial and technical support, land acquisition, waterfront revitalization, public access, pollution control, and recreational development

## VI. CURRENT CONDITIONS IN THE TOWN OF DURHAM

### A. Land use

Residential land uses take place on 1,424 parcels and 13,393 acres of land in Durham, or about 44.2% of the entire land mass. Single family dwellings make up about 12% of all land uses in Durham (about 3500 acres of land on 865 parcels). The number of houses and parcels needed in Durham is growing due to three factors: a population that is growing at approximately 1% per year, continued declines in household size that require more housing units in order to house the same number of persons, and continued construction and development of seasonal residences. The number of households in Durham increased a total of 29.5% between 1980 and 2000 (808 to 1046 households, respectively) and increased about 20% during the decade of the 1990's.

According to the US Census, the Town of Durham had a total population in the year 2000 of 2,592 persons reflecting a continuation of the strong population growth that the Town has enjoyed since the diversification of the economy and improvements in transportation in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The Town's population increased from 1,313 to 1,651 from 1960 to 1970, and then increased dramatically to 2,283 by 1980. Population again increased slightly to 2,324 between 1980 and 1990. Between 1990 and 2000, the population increased 11.5% to 2,592 people, and the 2006 US Census estimate for Durham shows the population at 2,724, the highest in the Town's history. This should be considered a large increase compared to about a 7.2% increase countywide.

The following table illustrates the different land uses in Town. These data come from the Town Assessor and the Greene County Department of Real Property.

<b>Property Class</b>	<b>Number of Parcels</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Percent of Town Area</b>
Agricultural	49	4,727.1	15.6 %
Residential	1,424	13,393.9	44.2%
Commercial	79	726.0	2.4%
Industrial	12	91.6	0.3%
Recreation and Entertainment	5	52.4	0.2%
Community Services	29	643.9	2.1%
Public Services	2	0.4	0.0%
Wild, Forested, Conservation Lands and Public Parks	21	1,161.4	3.8%

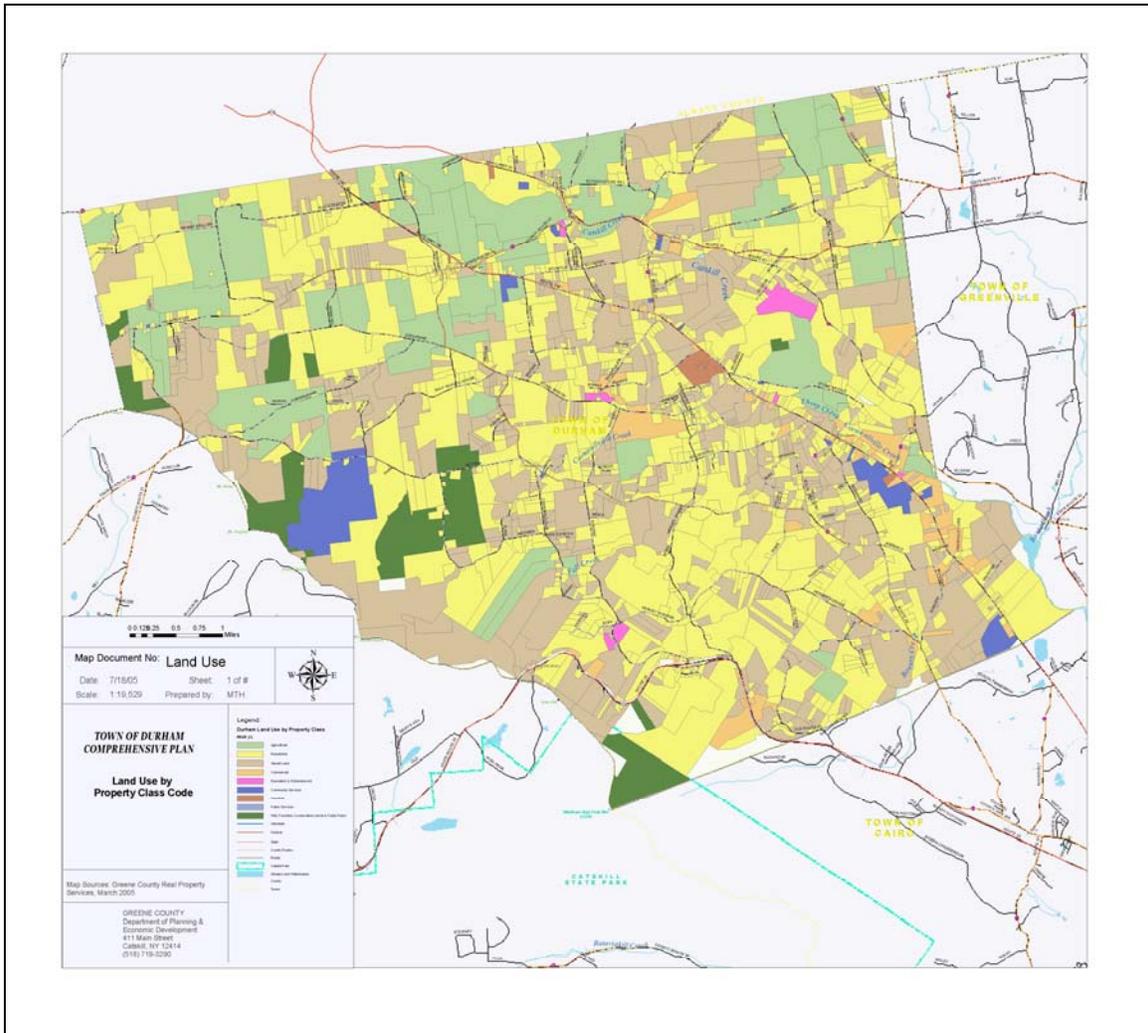
<b>Property Class</b>	<b>Number of Parcels</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Percent of Town Area</b>
Vacant Land	733	9,495.0	31.3%
Unknown	31	303.6	0.9%
<b>Total</b>	2,385	30,291.7	

Residential lands are the most prevalent land use in Durham. About 44% of the Town is considered residential. The density of residential land uses averages out to one single family residence per 4.1 acres of land. Over 6400 acres of land are classified as rural estates and make up 21% of the Town’s land base, but are contained in only 153 parcels or about 42 acres per parcel. There are 207 parcels classified as having mobile homes and 103 additional parcels as being seasonal in nature. About 4.8% of the Town’s residential parcels are considered multi-family uses.

Land classified as “vacant”, with 31% or about 9500 acres of land, is the second largest land use category. Agriculture is the third most prevalent land use in Town, with about 4700 acres of land devoted to it. About 2.4% of the Town area is used for commercial purposes. Lodging uses are the predominant commercial land use in Town. There are 28 parcels on 572 acres of land in lodging. Most other commercial land uses take up less than 1% of the Town’s land base. About 2% of the Town’s land base is used for community services such as churches, recreational areas, educational areas, cemeteries, and government uses. In total, 643 acres are classified as community service uses. Churches and cemeteries are the most prevalent community service land use.

Trends in new land uses can be seen by examining building permits issued in Durham over time. As shown below, the number of building permits issued for new homes per year in the Town of Durham has greatly increased between 1995 and 2004. The Towns of Cairo and Cossackie had higher increases in the number of housing units than did the Town of Durham, although Durham did have a higher increase during the decade of the 1990’s than did Greene County. As shown below, the number of building permits issued for new homes per year in the Town of Durham has greatly increased between 1995 and 2004.

<b><i>Year</i></b>	<b><i>Number of permits granted</i></b>
1995	12
1996	13
1997	12
1998	14
1999	12
2000	20
2001	6
2002	17
2003	32
2004	36



**Map 1: Land Use in Durham (based on Tax Parcel Identification)**

## **B. Agriculture, Environmental, Historic and Cultural resources**

**1. Agriculture:** The Town of Durham retains its rural, pastoral character. Alan Gussow, an acknowledged expert on setting criteria for assessment of scenic resources, visited the Durham Valley in 1973 and again in 1990. In his 1973 assessment of the Durham Valley, he concluded that it was “an area of unusual natural and scenic beauty.”

*“...the preservation of this pastoral valley [Durham Valley] permits the public to experience themselves something of their cultural heritage. . . A pastoral valley such as we have here in Durham is an increasingly rare landscape example. School children seeing this Valley as it exists today will learn in ways that text books cannot convey what it was like to live and work with the land in times past. Yet, this is not a museum diorama. This is a living landscape which can never be recreated and which can still instill in the visitor an appreciation for his American heritage.” [Testimony before the Federal Power Commission in 1973]*

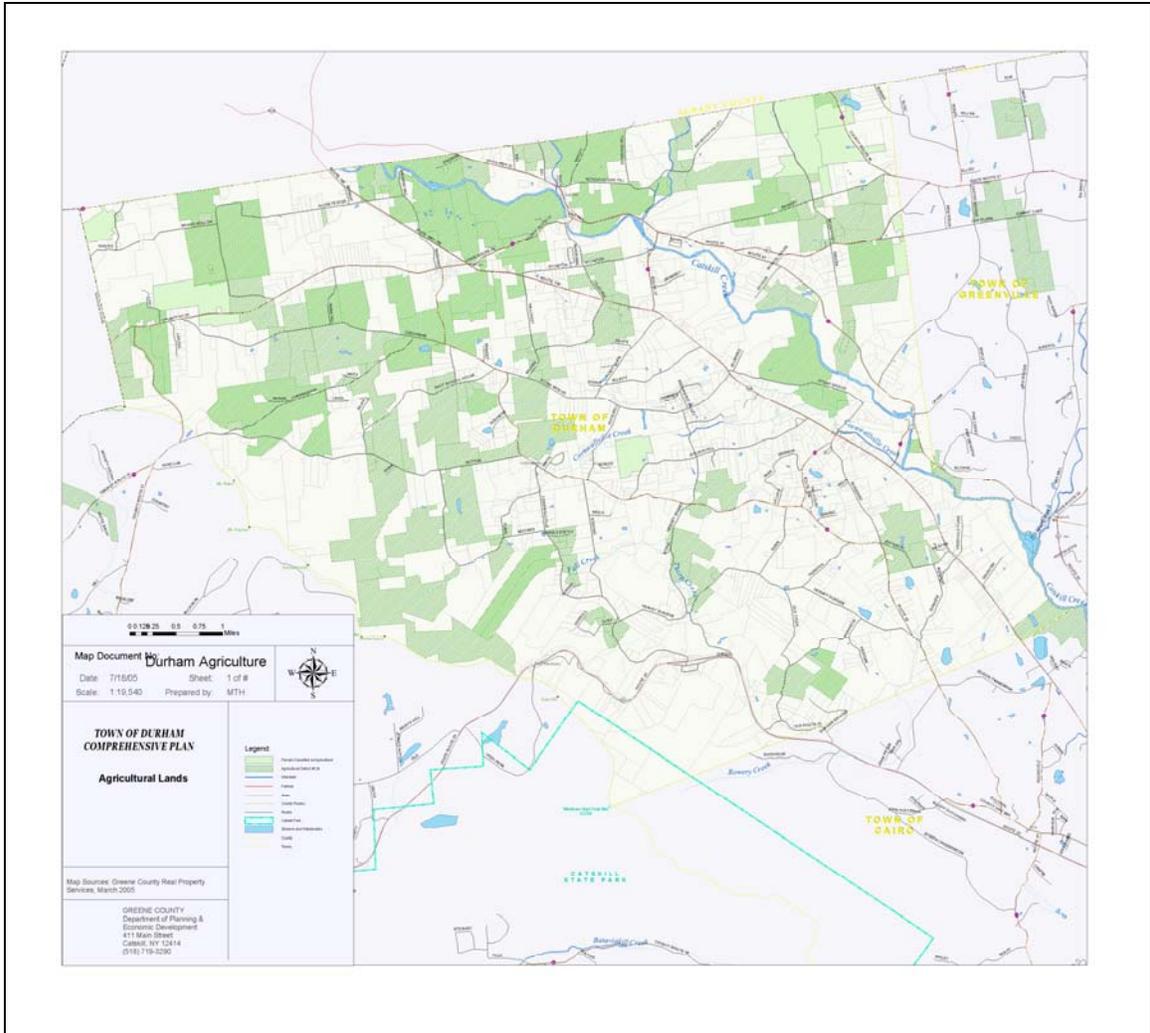
Following his return visit in 1990, he wrote that the natural beauty of the Durham Valley continued to reflect “the harmonious ways in which the man-made elements – the farm buildings and related structures blend with the present lively agricultural landscape of the area . . . [and] that we must recognize the need for the preservation of representative natural landscapes and I would regard the Durham Valley as an excellent example of the pastoral landscape at its best.” A number of large farms continue to operate in the Town and hold a significant portion of the Town’s total acreage (about 15%).

Farming encompassed the entire Town from the lowest bottom land along the Catskill Creek to the foothills of the Catskill Mountain range. By 1845, only sixty years after the principal settlement had begun, over 27,333 acres of land were improved for agriculture - - about 88% of the total acreage in the Town. In 1875, the farms tended to be fairly large, typically over fifty acres, with almost half ranging in size from 100 to 500 acres. In 1875, there were 304 farms and 533 families living in 494 inhabited households. If it can be presumed that, for the most part, each farm had one household, then these statistics indicate that about sixty percent of the families in Durham lived on farms.

Nineteenth century farms in Durham raised a mix of cash crops and livestock. The predominant agricultural endeavors in the Town were wool and apples. Neither commodity required extensive barns, so both were relatively easy to undertake. Sheep could be grazed on the hillsides and other untillable lands, thus making use of the upland areas of the township. The farms were spread out with smaller sized barns for subsistence living. The barns provided limited space to house a small number of livestock such as the family cow, a few pigs, or the working horses, as well as to provide hay storage. Dairy cows, unlike sheep, needed a high protein diet of grains such as corn, wheat, and rye to provide ample quantities of milk; therefore, the dairy farms tended to be located in the valleys with the better lands. They utilized larger barn structures where the cows were attended to and fed.

In the early twentieth century the milk industry flourished throughout the Hudson Valley with railroads promoting dairy operations to the farmers and then transporting milk to the urban centers.

The last 25 years saw a sharp decline in the number of active farms. Dairy farming in many places in New York State has become a marginally viable economic activity. Today, there are only 49 parcels in Durham classified as Agricultural uses with a total area of 4,727 acres. Properties with livestock uses make up the largest type of agricultural land use, followed by vacant land. Some of that vacant land may be used for pastures however. Some lands used for livestock also include crop lands. These farms remain within the boundaries of a New York State designated agricultural district.



**Map 2: Farmed Parcels of Land and those Included in a NYS Certified Agricultural District**

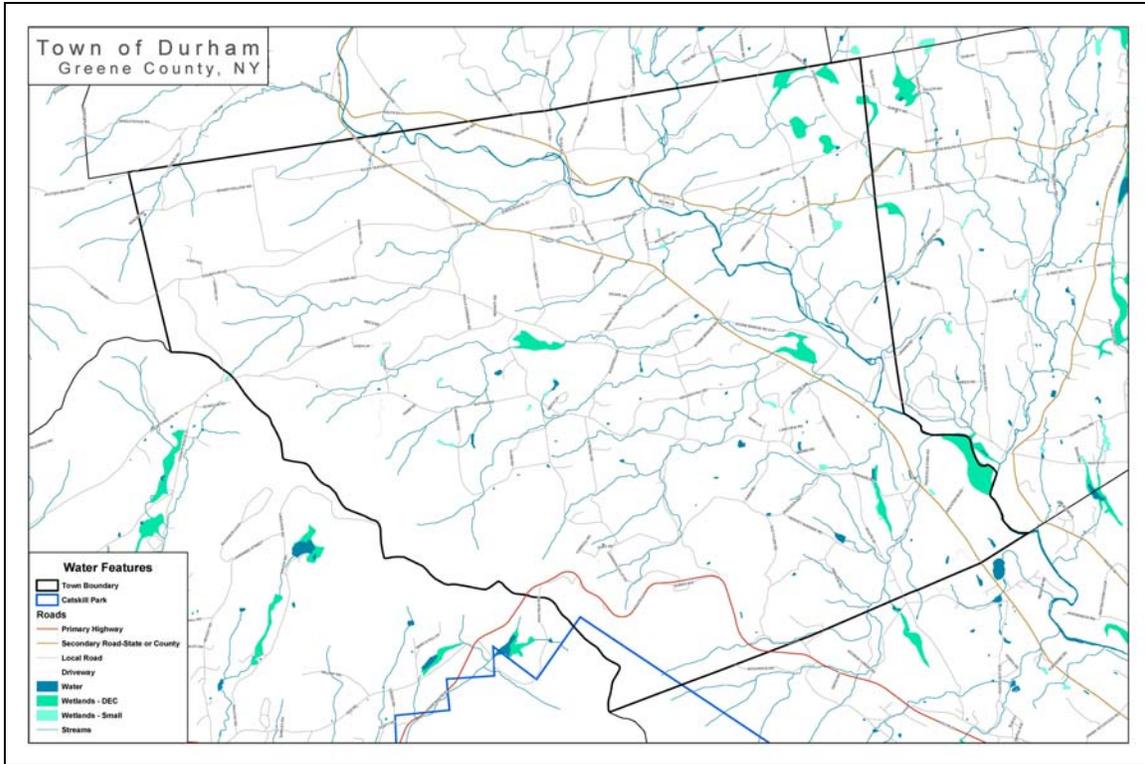
## 2. Environmental Resources

**a. Scenic Resources:** The Town of Durham includes 23 miles of New York State designated scenic roads. From roadside elevations, the unobstructed view from the Town's scenic roads extend east over the Hudson River Valley to Massachusetts, Vermont, Connecticut, and New Hampshire and north to the Adirondacks. Looking southeast is a panoramic view of the Northern face of the Catskills stretching from the summit of nearby Mount Piscah along Ginseng ridge, past Windham High Peak to the far eastern edge of the northern escarpment extending over the Hudson River Valley to the Berkshires, Vermont, Connecticut, and New Hampshire and north to the Adirondacks. Thomas Jorling, then the DEC Commissioner, in his New York State scenic road designation letter commented on the "extraordinary scenic quality" of the roads. The continued development of rural estates and "weekend homes" by seasonal

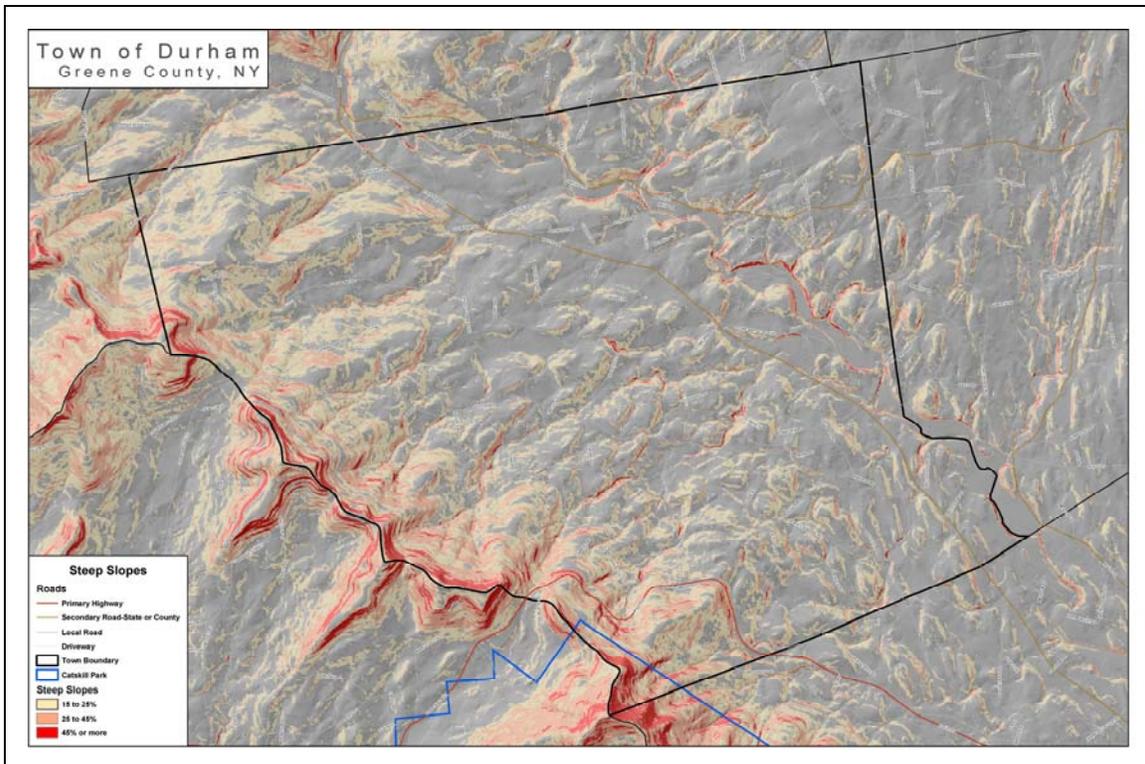
residents, largely from downstate New York and New Jersey, is a threat to this scenic resource.

***b. Streams and Wetlands:*** The Town of Durham contributes 33,000 acres and a little more than 100 miles of classified stream to the Hudson River watershed. The Town's headwater streams play a critical role in maintaining the health and condition of the downstream Hudson River Estuary. The Catskill Creek, one of 65 tributaries of the Hudson River entering the estuary south of the Troy dam, flows through the Town of Durham and is the Town's principal waterway. While in Durham, the Catskill drops a total of about 600 feet over a course of about eleven miles. In the Town of Durham the Catskill Creek is a coldwater stream with whitewater areas, which is relatively uncommon in the Hudson Valley region. There are several important tributaries to the Catskill Creek, including; Thorp Creek, the easterly running Cornwallville Creek, Fall Creek which flows northeasterly between Cornwallville and Hervey Street, the northeasterly flowing Bowery Creek, Tenmile (or Saybrook) Creek runs due south, Durham Creek flows northeasterly to the Catskill from its source on Mt. Pisgah, and the south flowing Squirmer Valley Creek (historically Kelsey Creek). Historically important, these ever-flowing streams were an important stimulus to the Town's early settlement in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. Numerous mills for working wood, grain and iron were located along the stream banks prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century and were responsible for much of the Town's prosperity.

Approximately 1,160 acres of freshwater wetlands have been identified in the Town of Durham. Those over 12.4 acres are regulated by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. Numerous smaller wetlands exist as mapped by the National Wetlands Inventory, and may be regulated by the federal Army Corps of Engineers. Wetland maps indicate that these wetlands are fairly evenly distributed throughout the Town but almost all lie along a stream, making them important for flood control.



**Map 3: Water Features (Streams, Wetlands, Lakes)**

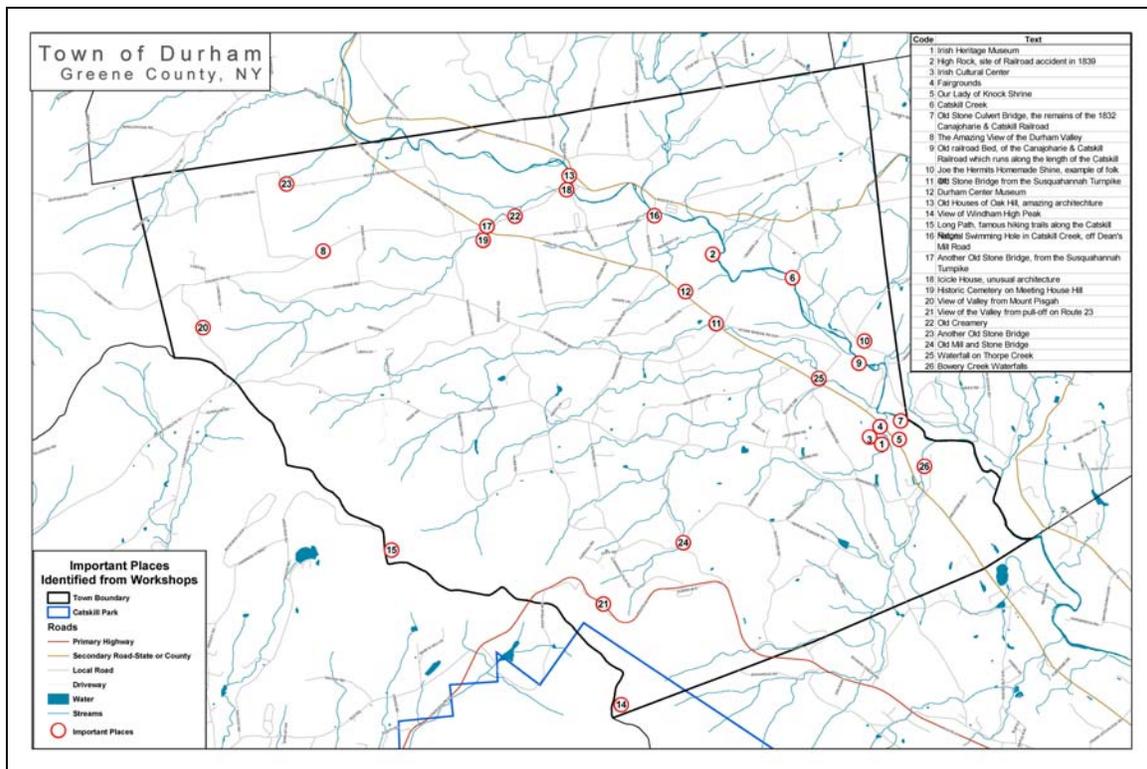


**Map 4: Steep Slopes**

*c. Habitat:* The Town encompasses important wildlife habitat including that of many hawks, deer, wild turkey, bear, bobcat, coyotes and other small animals common to the Northern Catskills. In addition, a biologic assessment of byway corridor habitat and a preliminary plant and fish survey, conducted by Hudsonia in 1990, documented 13 plant species, 7 butterfly species, and 14 species of fish, turtle salamanders, and birds as regionally rare or of heritage designation.

**3. Historic and Cultural Resources:** The Valley was first permanently settled in 1784 by families from Durham, Connecticut. The principal draw to the Durham environs was the water power available from the swiftly falling streams as well as the availability of hemlock trees for timber, construction and tanning. The rolling landscape of the upland township offered reasonably fertile land that was heavily farmed in the nineteenth century, but which is not particularly well suited to modern agricultural pursuits except for certain niche agricultural products. The development of the township came with small villages centered at first around the small industrial communities of Oak Hill and Durham. Settlement and expansion came quickly and by the year 1825, the population had peaked to a level that has not been matched until the present day. The post-Revolutionary war settlement and growth of the Durham Valley represents a unique period of American history illustrated by the homes, farms and cemeteries located within the Byway corridor.

In 1989, the Town enacted Local Law No. 1 to “protect and enhance the landmarks and historic districts which represent distinctive elements of Durham’s historic, architectural, and cultural heritage” and to “enhance Durham’s attractiveness to visitors.” Following the enactment of this law and meeting the requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act, New York State designated The Town of Durham as a *Certified Local Government*. The Town has an active Historic Preservation Commission, and a designated historic district in Cornwallville.



**Map 4: Important Places, Including Historic Sites Identified by Durham Citizens**

The hamlets within the valley – the hamlets of Durham and Cornwallville – are remarkable if not unique within New York State in that they present virtually intact sets of 19th Century vernacular village architecture. There are only a few modern intrusions in Durham, while the firehouse in Cornwallville is the only structure younger than 60 years old. The Town of Durham in 1989 enacted a historic preservation law establishing the Town of Durham Historic Preservation Commission, which subsequently designated the Cornwallville Historic District. The Historic Commission completed a historic resources reconnaissance survey in 1997.

The areas outside the hamlets are largely open space and rural estates. A comparison with the town map in the 1867 Beer's County Atlas reveals that most of the older structures still remain. The hamlets and surrounding roads present a catalogue of 19th C. vernacular architecture: Federal style will alternate with Greek Revival and Colonial. Nine of these structures have been deemed eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, along with a cemetery and a one room school house within the Byway corridor.

The Susquehanna Turnpike was first listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974, the first road ever given such designation. The Susquehanna Turnpike was one of the first turnpikes authorized by the State of New York; legislation enabling its creation was passed on April 1, 1800, and the first section was ready to be opened August 20, 1801. Soon after its opening, the turnpike was serviced by a weekly stage route. The overland stage took three full days to make the passage from Catskill to Unadilla and

initially charged ten cents a mile. The Turnpike played a key role in the early westward expansion of the Nation, and was the longest continuously operated toll road in the country, the eastern section in continual operation until 1901.

Durham has a rich history of diverse and prosperous endeavors. The most notable were the high-profile iron works at Oak Hill. However, from the first settlement the principal industry in Durham has been farming. Other enterprises such as milling, iron works, tanning, retail stores, and boarding houses all flourished in their time, but none dominated the local economy for so long a period and to such a degree as has agriculture. The industrial period in Durham lasted through most of the nineteenth century. In the wake of the Town's rapid settlement after the Revolutionary War, an array of grist and saw mills developed in Durham to supply the basic needs of the population. These mills, for the most part, were custom mills; that is, they ran small amounts of materials on a customized basis for their local clientele. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the introduction of preservatives, grocery stores and cheap bulk transportation from the grain centers of the mid-west led to the gradual decline of the local grist mills; the advanced transportation network of the railroads also undermined the need for the local sawmills. Durham endured a substantial population decline during the Industrial Age, as workers were attracted to larger population centers where they could earn higher incomes.

Tanning was also a large and early industry in the upland areas in Durham and throughout the Catskills. During the 1830's and 40's, Greene County tanned more leather than did the rest of the state combined. The tanners used the acid-containing hemlock tree bark to cure hides for leather. At first, the bark and wood used in tanning was secondary to the lumber industry. However, by the middle of the nineteenth century the tanning industry had become quite extensive. Trees were cut, often in excess of what could be run through the saw mills, simply for their acid bark. Some of the excess from this process was used to pave the early plank roads that crisscrossed the area as well as barn construction as whole logs. The industry slowly faded through the middle years of the nineteenth century from five operations in 1835 to one in 1855. By about 1875, the last tannery in Durham, run by a Wellington Peck, had shut down.

The foundries, four of which were located in Oak Hill, were among Durham Town's most prominent enterprises. The most famous of these was the Cheritree Foundry. This factory began in 1833 as the Oak Hill Malleable Iron Company. The company was developed by Cambell and Scofield to make the "Dutcher Plow No.2" which they had introduced. In 1844, Sheldon Cheritree of Middleburgh, Schoharie County bought and expanded the operation. The factory burned to the ground in 1865, but was soon rebuilt as the Empire Foundry and continued operations until about 1900. The factory was famous for the "Climax" brand plows and other hardware. In addition to the Cheritree factory, there was a lesser known iron works at Oak Hill that was started by a Mr. Kimball at the former tannery site of Tremain and Dryer. That building was close to the Cheritree works and was also lost in the 1865 fire. Besides the well known and often cited industries, there were a large number of secondary manufacturers and other home industries were common in a rural culture.

Properties Listed on a Historic Register include:

PROPERTY	DATE	LOCATION	REGISTERS		
			Local	County	State / National
Charles Pierce House	c 1840	7846 Rt 81, Oak Hill			X
Chittendon-Atkinson-Swanson Home	c.1795	Susquehanna Tpk Durham		X	
Cutting Bagley House	c.1802	Cornwallville Rd	X	X	
Deer Watch Inn	c.1800	Dean's Mill Road		X	
Dutch Colonial A.T. House	c 1787	7855 Rt 81, Oak Hill			X
Ford's Store	c 1870	7811 Rt 81, Oak Hill Cochrane Rd			X
Grove Cottage	c.1830	Durham		X	
Hull-Cowles-Bright House	c.1867	Mansard Ave		X	
Ken Dean Home	1826 c 1790,	Rt 81, Oak Hill	X		
L.E. Cleveland House	1840	7818 Rt 81, Oak Hill			X
Lyman Tremain Opera House	1895	7771 Rt 81, Oak Hill		X	
Makely Farm	c.1810	Makely Rd		X	
Oak Hill United Methodist Church	1859	Rt 81, Oak Hill		X	X
Osborne House	c 1850	7872 Rt 81, Oak Hill Cornwallville Rd.Rt 20		X	X
Parks House	1806	Cornwallville		X	
Phineas Tyler House	c.1795	Cornwallville Rd	X	X	
Redbrick	c 1830	Stonebridge Rd	X	X	
St. Paul's Lutheran Church	1834	Oak Hill Rd. @ Rt 81, Oak Hill		X	X
4 Stone Arch Bridges	1800- 1896	Throughout the Town of Durham	X	X	
7 Stone Arch Bridges	1886- 1896	Throughout the Town of Durham	X	X	X
Susquehanna Tpk	1800	Rt 145 CR 22,20 Durham			X
The Parsonage	c 1815	7898 Rt 81, Oak Hill	X	X	X
Tremain House	c 1854	7729 Rt 81, Oak Hill	X	X	
Tripp House & Store Complex	c 1832, 1888	7890-92 Rt 81, Oak Hill	X	X	X
W.F. DeWitt Hotel	c 1865	7803 Rt 81, Oak Hill			X
Weldon House		Rt 145, East Durham			X
Whittlesey-Reynolds	c.1820	Susquehanna Tpk/Rt 22		X	

## **C. Population, demographic, and socio-economic characteristics**

### **1. Population Characteristics**

According to the US Census, the Town of Durham had a total year 2000 population of 2,592 persons, and the 2006 Census estimate for the Town is 2,724. This is an increase of 5.1% which is larger than the County's increase of 3.5% in the same time period. The Town's population increased from 1,313 to 1,651 from 1960 to 1970, and then increased dramatically to 2,283 by 1980. Population again increased slightly to 2,324 between 1980 and 1990. Between 1990 and 2000, the population increased 11.5% to 2,592 people. This is a larger increase compared to a 7.2% increase county-wide between the same time period. Durham is experiencing sustained growth that is above the State average (and roughly equal to the national average) for the first time since the early 1800's.

Durham's median age of its population is somewhat higher than that of the County as a whole. In 2000, the median age in Durham was 42.5 (as compared to 39.1 years for the County and 35.3 years for the nation as a whole), up from 35.3 (33.6 for the County) in 1980. Overall, people aged 15 -34 (510 persons) have decreased in number from the 1990 census. The population aged 35 to 64 (1,125 person) years and older has increased, with the largest group being 45-54 year old persons of the "Baby Boom" generation. Approximately, seventeen percent (17%) of the Town's population is over 65 years of age which is significantly higher than the national average of 12.4%. The percentage of persons under 5 years of age is 5.1%, well below the national average of 6.8%.

The Town has 2,550 (98.4%) white persons, and only 23 persons that claimed other races in the 2000 Census. As might be expected, Irish ancestry was the largest single group, claimed by 788 persons (30.4%), with significant groups of German (16.8%) and Italian (11.0%). 11.3% claimed American ancestry, and 6% claimed Polish ancestry. Just under 90% of Durham residents were born in the United States, and 76% were born in New York State.

### **2. Households**

The number of households in Durham increased approximately about 30% (808 in 1980 and 1,046 households in 2000) with the largest increase occurring between 1990 and 2000. The average household size decreased from 2.83 to 2.44 persons between 1980 and the year 2000. This is, approximately in line with the County average of 2.42 but lower than the national average of 2.59.

The median household income in 2000 was \$34,282 and the per capita income was \$18,705. Both figures are slightly below the Greene County average and significantly below the New York State average. A total of 294 residents (11.5%) of the Town were living below the poverty level in 2000, similar with County and national averages, though

the percentage of children in poverty (8.7%) and seniors (7.0%) is well below the County average.

### **3. Education and Employment**

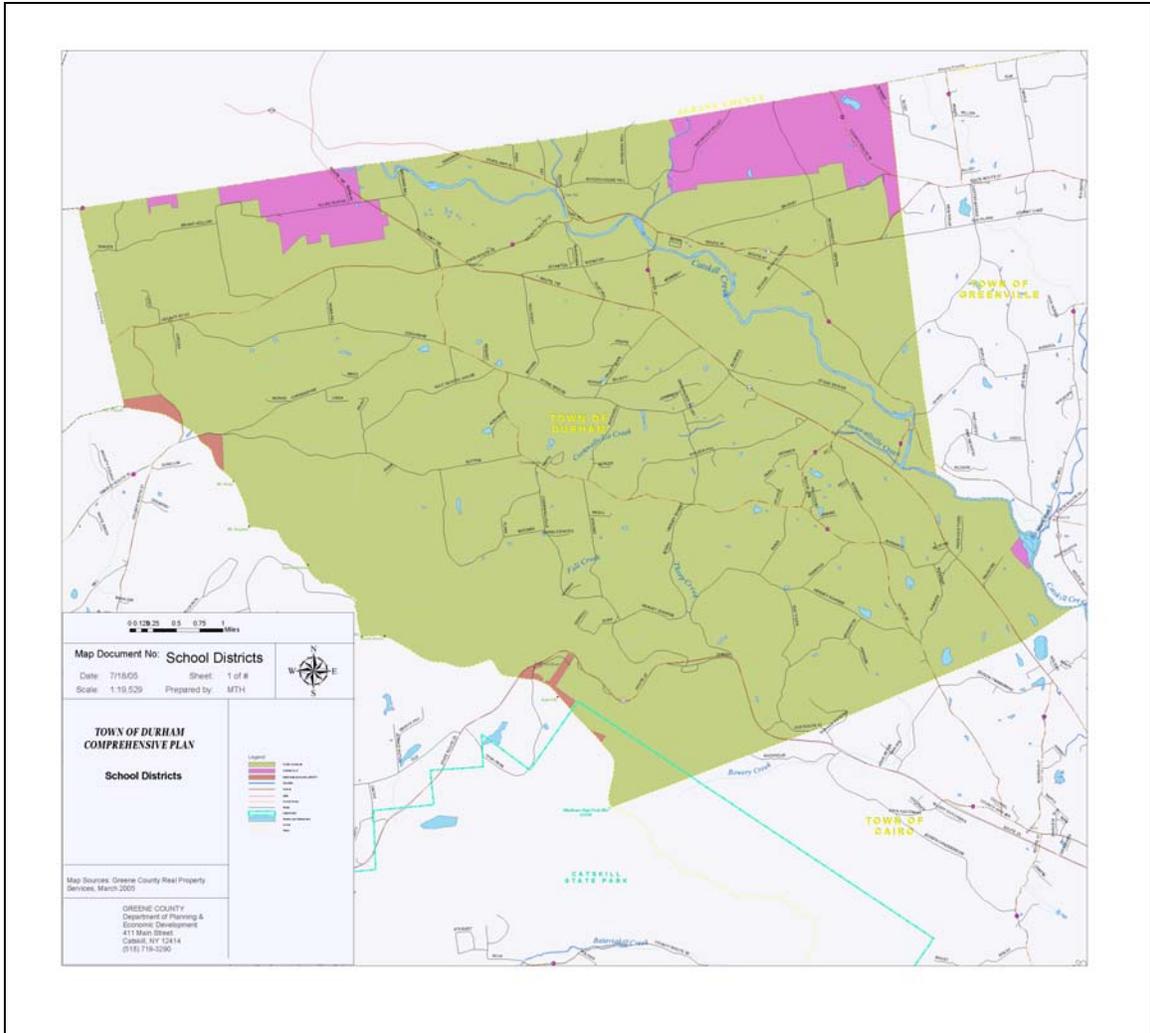
According to the 2000 census, of 1859 Durham residents aged 25 and over, 96 (6%) did not complete 9<sup>th</sup> grade, 290 (16%) attended 9<sup>th</sup> –12<sup>th</sup> grade, 660 (36%) completed their high school diploma or GED, 334 (18%) attended some college, 141 (7.6%) have associate's degree, 180 (9.7%) have bachelor's degrees, 655 (35%) completed some college, and 154 (8%) have a graduate or higher degree. The percentage of high school graduates is roughly equal to the national average, but the percentage of people with college degrees is below the national average.

The Cairo- Durham School District serves most of the Town and a portion of northern Durham lies within the Greenville Central School District. Cairo-Durham has two elementary schools, the Cairo-Durham Middle School (6-8) and the Cairo-Durham High School (9-12). The Durham Elementary School had a total student enrollment in 2003-2004 of 186 with 14 teachers, the Cairo Elementary School had a student population of 566 with 30 teachers, the Middle School had a total student enrollment of 466 students with 37 teachers, and the High School had a total enrollment of 595 with 42 teachers for a total District-wide enrollment of 1,813 students. That results in a 14.7 student to teacher ratio.

The Durham Elementary School has experienced several years of declining enrollments. The Cairo Middle School enrollment has remained steady, and the High School enrollment has increased steadily over the past 4 years.

In the Cairo-Durham School District, there is an expenditure per student of \$6,044. In comparison, overall in New York State, public schools total expenditure per student was \$5,679. Both the middle and high schools indicated that school buildings are not near capacity and there are no plans for expansion of facilities in the near future. The High School is open to shared use of facilities with the community.

Greenville Central School District has 3 schools: Scott M. Ellis Elementary School, which had a 2003-2004 enrollment of 565 students in grades Kindergarten thru 5 with 51 teachers; Greenville Middle School, which had an enrollment of 369 students in grades 6 thru 8 with 24 teachers; and the Greenville High School, had an enrollment of 442 students in grades 9 thru 12 with 30 teachers. The overall student-teacher ratio is 13.1 students per teacher.



**Map 6: School Districts**

Durham had 1,055 employed persons 16 years and older as of 2000, with 57.5% of the Town's population 16 and older in the labor force. This compares to 63.9% in the labor force for the US as a whole. Primary occupations listed by the Census were management, professional and related occupations (335, or 31.8%), sales and related occupations (250, or 23.7%), and production, transportation and material moving occupations (187, or 17.7%). The prevalence of these occupations likely reflects the availability of white-collar jobs in the Albany area, as well as significant manufacturing employment located in Greene County and southern Albany County. In 2000, 61% of those employed reported working in Greene County. Construction, extraction and maintenance occupations (115 or 10.9%) are also higher than average, which is not surprising in a rural community and likely reflects local workers. Farming, fishing and forestry occupations had 11 workers in 2000.

For comparison, specific demographic characteristics of the Town of Durham were compared with the Towns of Cairo and Coxsackie and with Greene County as a whole. All three towns had a population increase from 1990 to 2000, and the county overall had

a decrease in population as well. The percent of Durham's population that is over 65 years is about the same as that of Greene County and the Town of Cairo, and is about double that of the Town of Coxsackie. Household incomes in Durham are similar to that of the Town of Cairo but are about \$2,000 to \$3,000 lower than the figure for the county and for the Town of Coxsackie. The Town of Durham has a poverty rate similar to that of the Town of Cairo and of Greene County overall. The poverty rate in Durham is higher than that in the Town of Coxsackie.

#### **4. Housing**

Durham has a mix of owner-occupied housing, along with a substantial number of seasonal and vacation homes. Units often transfer from seasonal use to permanent residences and back again based on economic conditions and other market factors. Durham does not have significant "enclaves" of seasonal residences like several other Greene County towns do. The 2000 Census reported a median housing value of \$94,100, which is badly outdated due to the run-up in housing prices in the Hudson Valley and the County. A doubling of the 2000 value is realistic given the County's surge of 122% in the same time period.

Just over three-quarters of the housing units in Durham (1,235, or 75.2%) are single-unit detached homes, laid out on rural lots that reflect the Town's lack of water and sewer infrastructure. Most of the remaining units (293, or 17.8%) are mobile homes, and there are small percentage of duplexes, "granny flats" and multi-family properties. The Town has one long-established mobile home park: Country Estates West on Route 81 near Oak Hill. Most of the remainder of the mobile homes are in small subdivisions and scattered sites.

Durham also has a mix of housing types, with the largest concentration of housing (29.3%) being structures built before 1939. Just under half of the housing units in Durham (49.4%) have been built since 1970, largely reflecting the substantial increase in both population and "seasonal use properties. Approximately half the houses in Durham either have five or six rooms, and the majority (73%) is heated with fuel oil.

In 2000, 2/3<sup>rd</sup> (66.7%) of the people in Durham lived in the same house that they lived in 1995, a lower than expected number that shows the substantial interest and in-migration into the community. Of the 810 that moved into Durham between the years 1995-2000, 337 were from Greene County and 473 (19.2% of total property owners) were from elsewhere, primarily other counties in New York State.

Durham's gross monthly rent is similar to that figure for the Town of Cairo, lower than the rent in the Town of Coxsackie but higher than rental rates in Greene County. The median value of a home in Durham is similar to the home values in the Towns of Cairo and Coxsackie and to the figure for Greene County. The vacant housing figure for Durham is slightly higher than that figure for Greene County. Durham has a higher percentage of vacant housing than both the Town of Cairo and the Town of Coxsackie.

## 5. Housing Affordability

There are several ways to determine if housing is generally affordable in a community. One method is to determine the “rental index”. This index shows the maximum gross rent a given household can afford. Affordable rental housing is generally considered to be no more than 30% of a household’s monthly income. The average monthly rental rate in Durham is \$468. The median household income is \$34,643. This is about \$2,887 of income per month. Thirty percent of this is \$866, which means that the average household could afford \$866 per month in rent. This figure is higher than the average monthly rent. Thus, rentals appear to be affordable for the family with a median income in Durham.

Another method to determine affordability is to look at the ratio between the median value of a single-family house and median household income. Nationally, a ratio of 2 or less is considered to be affordable. The affordability ratio for Durham is \$91,300 (median value of homes) divided by \$34,643 (median household income), or 2.6. This figure is quite above the desired ratio of two, and indicates that some families would spend more than twice their annual income on a home. These figures indicate that there are issues related to affordability of homes in Durham.

Finally, the purchase price multiplier also gives an indication of affordability. This looks at the maximum mortgage approval amount likely to be given to potential homebuyers. This is usually about 2.25 times annual income. The figure below shows this multiplier plus a 10% down payment. This is the amount of money that would be able to be afforded for a mortgage by the median household.

$$2.25 \times \$34,643 = \$77,946.75$$
$$\$77,946.75 \times 10\% \text{ down} = \$85,741.43$$

Thus, median households would be able to afford an \$85,741.43 dollar house. However, the median value of a house in the area is \$91,300. This would indicate that a household with an income at or above the median income would likely be able to afford a home, but that those below that level would not.

About 51% or 538 households in Durham (using 2000 Census Data) earned less than the median income of \$34, 643. A closer look at the age of householders by household income shows that a substantial number of households in all age categories would have difficulty affording the average priced house. For example, about 78% of all households under the age of 25 years earn less than the median income. For income < \$34,643, the age breakdown is as follows:

Age	Number of Households	Percent of all households in age category with income < median
< 25 years	18	78%
25 to 34 years	55	47%

Age	Number of Households	Percent of all households in age category with income < median
35 to 44 years	59	29%
45 to 54 years	134	59%
55 to 64 years	93	45%
65 to 74 years	76	51%
75 years and over	84	69%

## VII. INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC SERVICES

### A. Location and Types of Transportation Facilities

1. Interstate Highway System: The New York State Thruway (I-87) is located ~ 8 miles to the east of the Town of Durham, and Interstate 88 ~30 miles to the west.
2. Air Service: The nearest major airports are in Albany (~ 40 miles to the North), and Newburgh (74 miles to the South).
3. Railroads: Amtrak provides scheduled passenger rail service from its station in Hudson (~25 miles to the East). Conrail provides regional and national freight service from the Selkirk Rail Yard located to the northeast.
4. Greene County provides limited local bus transportation and maintains 22.7 miles of County road in the Town of Durham.

Roads in the Town of Durham include 77 miles of road maintained by the Town highway department, 21.1 miles of State road including New York State routes 81, 23, and 145, and 22.7 miles of County road. The Town of Durham Highway Maintenance Department has 8 full-time employees with a budget of \$936,000. The main garage and offices were built in 1973, and the building is 50x130 ft. in size. The salt building, built in 1990 measures 80x50 ft. The pole barn measures 120x52 ft., and was built in 1985. Paved roads comprise 35.88 miles, oil & stone comprise 23.35 miles, and there are 17.75 miles of dirt roads in Town.

Between 1989 and 2004, there have been small to moderate increases in traffic volumes along State routes in Durham. Route 81 from the county line to Route 67 saw about a 5% increase in traffic volumes between 1989 and 2003 overall. A closer look at the traffic volumes show that most of the state roads showed decreased traffic volumes in the mid-1990's compared to the early 1990's. Compared to other areas, the traffic volume increases are quite moderate. A look at the two most recent traffic counts shows the following:

- a. Route 81 traffic volume increased almost 15% from the county line to Route 67.
- b. Route 81 traffic volume increased almost 4% from the Junction of Route 145 to the Green County line.

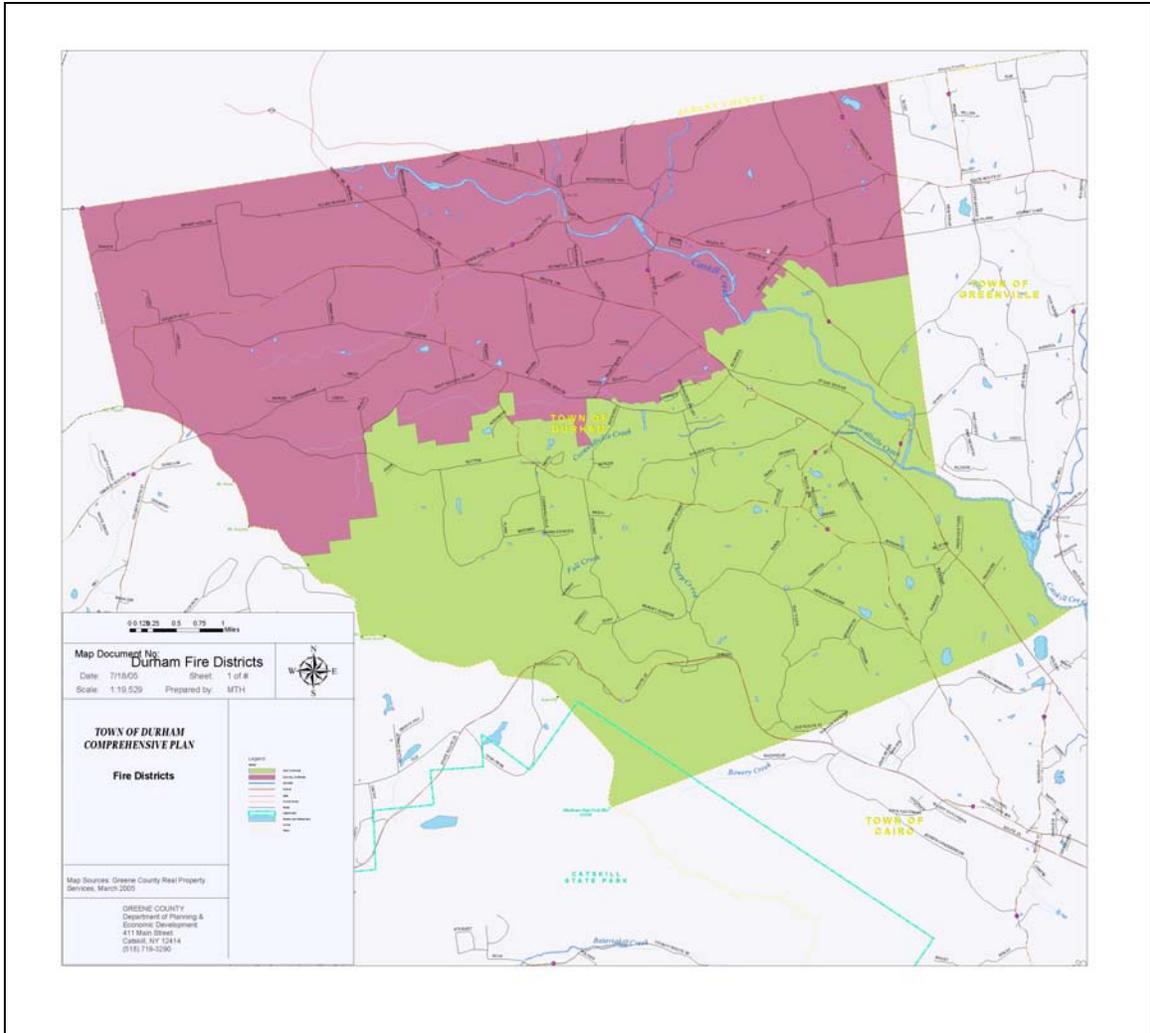
- c. Route 145 traffic volume increased almost 4% from CR 67A to the Albany County line.
- d. Route 145 traffic volume increased almost 4% from CR 31 to CR 67A.
- e. Route 23 traffic volume increased about 58% from CR 31 to Route 296

Limited on-street parking is available in the hamlets of East Durham, Oak Hill, and Durham.

## **B. Local Government, Emergency Services, and Utilities**

**1. Government and Administration:** An elected four member Town board together with a part-time elected supervisor governs the Town of Durham. The Board members serve four-year terms, and the Supervisor a two-year term, a fairly common organizational structure among Towns in New York State. The Town has a long and viable tradition of open government and community participation largely through attendance at Town meetings, held on the first and third Tuesday of each month. The Board also acts as the Town's Planning Board. Administrative resources consist of an elected Town Clerk, Tax Collector, and Highway Superintendent together with an appointed Town Assessor, Code Enforcement Officer, Building Inspector, and two Deputy Town Clerks.

**2. Emergency Services:** A local Town police force, two volunteer fire departments, and a volunteer rescue provide emergency services in the Town of Durham. The police force consists of 5 part-time officers providing continuous coverage and regular patrols, and is assisted by the Greene County Sheriff and New York State police, as needed. The Town established an emergency preparedness committee in 2002, and adopted an Emergency Preparedness Plan in March, 2003. Fire and ambulance services are provided by the Town of Durham Ambulance Squad, the Oak-Hill Durham Volunteer Fire Company, and the East Durham Volunteer Fire Company. All services work together through the mutual aid system with each other and when needed, surrounding towns.



**Map 7: Fire Districts**

**3. Water, Sewer, and Solid Waste:** There are no public water or sewer systems in the Town of Durham. A portion of the Town has an unconsolidated aquifer primarily consisting of sand and gravel with yields of generally less than 10 gallons per minute. Another portion of the Town has a potential principal aquifer that yields between 10 and 100 gallons per minute. Private haulers provide solid waste and trash disposal. The Town maintains a recycling center.

**4. Telecommunication and Utilities:** Verizon provides basic land line voice telephone service. Access to cable is limited to high density residential areas on major transportation corridors. Central Hudson provides electricity to the Town. Mid-Hudson Cable provides 48 miles of cable with high speed internet capacity serving 1,178 homes. Cellular phone coverage is spotty. Access to broadband internet services is limited, with fixed wireless and cable broadband service available to limited areas of the community. Satellite internet services are available.

## **C. Cultural and Recreational Facilities**

**1. Cultural Facilities:** The Durham Museum is located on State Route 145 in Durham Center. It is a general museum with an emphasis on local interest and the folk arts. The beneficiary of decades- long traditions of donations, the Durham Center Museum is filled with an array of artifacts and memorabilia including an old schoolhouse filled with plates and kitchenware. In addition to these carefully identified items, there is a genealogical research library, which is heavily used, located on the premises. The museum is state mandated and the research library, the mainstay of the facility, attracts users from well beyond the borders of Greene County. There are approximately 600 patrons a year, more if e-mail users are included in this figure. The museum is self-supporting through the use of fundraisers. More space is desired to display items for which there are presently no room to present to the public.

The Michael J. Quill Irish Cultural and Sports Centre is located on 120 acres of land on State Route 145 in East Durham. Located on the grounds of the Centre is the Irish American Heritage Museum and offers May through October exhibits and an Irish research library. The Cultural Centre draws visitors from New York City, Boston, and Syracuse and during Irish Arts Week, from all over the world. There is an in-house appointed volunteer board that runs the Centre. Activities include festivals, the Irish Arts Week, Feis (Riverdance) competitions and the Greene County Fair. It is envisioned that in the future a living, historical Irish Village will attract 100,000 to 200,000 persons per year.

The residents of Durham and visitors to East Durham have financed the building of our Lady of Knock Shrine. Many tourists visit it when they come to East Durham. The original church, St. Mary's (which is over 125 years old) is now used for religious instruction classes and other related activities.

**2. Recreation Facilities and Parkland:** The Town owns and operates Brandow Park which is located in the hamlet of Oak Hill, at the corner of Clay Hill Road and County Route 22. This park has a baseball field, play area, basketball court, tennis court, bathrooms and a sheltered picnic area, and is used by the Durham Little League and the Town of Durham Summer Recreation Program. Brandow Park has no room for expansion. The Town of Durham and the Cairo-Durham Central School District share in the maintenance of the playing fields at Kellegher Memorial Park which is leased from the Irish Cultural Center. The park has a baseball field and a soccer field and the area next to it is utilized by the Durham Task Force's Christmas in Durham celebration and is the ending point for community parades. It does not have much room for expansion.

There are two access points to Catskill Creek, but very limited public opportunities to use the creek otherwise. There is a creek access adjacent to the Durham Town Hall that is routinely used for fishing and swimming. Cars parked along County Route 27 to use this point can be a hazard during the summer, but it is a well-known and loved spot by residents and tourists. There is also an access point In Oak Hill. The Catskill Creek is stocked with trout annually by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation.

The Long Path traverses the upper reaches of the Township. There is abundant opportunity for hunting, fishing, and hiking.

Although extensive areas of public space exist in surrounding towns as State forests and Catskill Park, less than 1% of the land base in the Town of Durham is publicly accessible open space. Opportunities for hunting, fishing and hiking are limited in Durham outside of private lands, and expansion of these opportunities would benefit permanent and seasonal residents as well as tourists. Future planning should consider and maximize the recreational opportunities associated with preserved open space. Increasing access to privately preserved open space and public lands can increase hunting and fishing opportunities and is a benefit that would not only potentially create revenue to maintain and expand the resource through access fees, but also benefit the local tourism industry.

Other commercial recreation and tourist oriented businesses exist in Durham, including the Zoom Flume Water Park.

## **VIII. ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES IN DURHAM**

### **A. Tourism**

Fueled by Durham's natural and scenic beauty, tourism began in Durham prior to the Civil War. In Durham, East Windham was a popular spot and was host to at least four large and successful boarding houses. The Summit House in East Windham was the grandest and largest for its day. The hotel was built in 1848 by Barney Butts, and by the mid-1880's, could accommodate ninety guests. The lower lying areas of Durham tended to have smaller establishments. The taking in of boarders was a widespread practice by the mid - 19th century. Many farmers supplemented their income by opening extra rooms to guests. Typically, a family would give their best rooms, often their own bedroom, to the boarders.

Tourism is still present in the Town, but it has changed dramatically from its nineteenth century roots. In 1884, J.G. Borthwick mentions, almost as an aside, that "... East Durham is a charming place for boarders; bright clean and new. Some of the city people own and occupy houses there." As the times changed so did the manner in which guests were housed. By the mid-twentieth century, bungalow colonies, often developed in conjunction with the smaller boarding houses, had become an important facet of the industry. Over time, East Durham has grown as the current center for the Town's tourism and second homes; East Windham, and its boarding houses have, for the most part, been forgotten. Through much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, tourism generated a new prosperity in the Town of Durham. New homes and businesses were built on the impetus of this economic factor. Additionally, second homes were being built for the first time. Tourists, who had come to like the area, began to buy and restore existing homes and to have new ones built in the contemporary fashion. Today, there are 28 parcels on 572 acres of land in lodging,

and include three resorts, one bed and breakfast, and one agriculturally related bed and breakfast.

The primary economic activity in the Town of Durham is tourism, and the engine of this economy is East Durham, the Town's business center. East Durham is situated prominently on the Town's main thoroughfare, Route 145. As the eastern gateway to the Town, it welcomes tourists and travelers as they approach from the major population centers of the New York City metropolitan area to the southeast. East Durham has a variety of tourist related accommodations including resorts, hotels, motels, lodges, bed and breakfast inns, and restaurants.

Central to the hamlet is the Michel J. Quill Irish Cultural and Sports Centre which includes a modern festival pavilion. The largest annual event in Town is the Irish Festival which takes place every Memorial Day Weekend at the pavilion. Featured are major folk and rock bands from throughout the United States, and many other performers. Attendance at the two-day event is measured in the thousands. Beginning in 2006, East Durham also has a growing farmer's and craft market (the East Durham Market) every weekend at the pavilion. Nearby the festival pavilion are the Donegal Cottage (a reconstruction of a traditional Irish farm house) and the Irish-American Heritage Museum.

East Durham also hosts the Catskills Irish Arts Week every July. The best teachers and students of Irish culture, particularly musicians, travel to East Durham from throughout the world to attend the classes and perform together evenings at the local pubs. East Durham is also the site of the annual Catskill Mountain Thunder Motorcycle Festival at the Blackthorne Resort. In addition to special events, live music and dancing opportunities are to be found daily in the summer at the various resorts.

Other tourist attractions in Durham include the Zoom Flume Water Park, and the Hull-O Farm, which is a family agri-tourism farm. The Scenic Byways in the Town, the Durham Museum, and antiques and restaurants in Oak Hill are other tourist draws.

Also of great importance to the Town's tourist economy are Windham Mountain (a major ski resort in the neighboring Town of Windham), and the established hiking trails such as the Long Path and the Escarpment Trail in and around the Catskill Park. These trails are popular destinations for eco-tourists visiting for the day or weekend from the nearby population centers.

The economy of the Town has also grown significantly in recent years due to an increased number of "weekenders" owning second homes, especially surrounding the Scenic Byways area on the mountainsides. Some of the "weekenders" work in the Town part-time, connected to their offices by modern technology. While these second homes are an important driving force for the local economy, they also pose a threat to the Town's natural resources.

## B. Industries

There are two significant manufacturing companies in the Town: Stiefel Labs, a pharmaceutical firm; and American Trim, a textile manufacturer. Stiefel is one of the largest employers in Greene County. See Map 1 for location of commercial land uses in Durham.

Industrial land use, accounts for 0.3% of the acreage in the Town. This amounts to 91 acres divided between 12 parcels. The number of retail businesses has declined, and there are only a few remaining restaurants. According to land use, lodging uses remain the predominant commercial land use in Town. Most other commercial land uses take up less than 1% of the Town's land base. About 2.4% of the Town area is used for commercial purposes.

Commercial Sub-Class	Number of Parcels	Acres	Percent of Town Area
Lodging	28	572.6	1.9%
Multipurpose	31	87.8	0.3%
Auto	6	29.2	0.1%
Storage and Distribution	4	20.6	0.1%
Dining	7	11.6	0.0%
Bank	1	2.3	0.0%
Parking	1	1.3	0.0%
Bar	1	0.7	0.0%
Commercial Total	79	726.1	2.4%

Commercial building permits issued in the Town of Durham over the past few years were as follows:

Company	Number of Permits	Years Granted
Stiefel Lab Inc.	4	2000, 2002, 2002, 2004
Cidega Inc.	3	1997, 1999, 2004
Twins Restoration	1	2004

Stiefel Research Institute, a home-grown success story in the dermatological field, employs about 250 people in Oak Hill. CIDEGA/American Trim, a leader in the production of fabric trim pieces for recreational vehicles, has about 60 employees in Oak Hill, and came to the community because a former seasonal resident wanted his business to be close to him. While large-scale attraction of business is extremely unlikely in the future, the success stories in Durham point the way for continued growth through small-scale entrepreneurship and working with well-connected weekenders to bring businesses to the Town.

The Town hosted Becker Electronics; a significant manufacturer of stereo equipment, for many years before the company went bankrupt, leaving a Superfund site in its wake. The

site has been cleaned up, and is now owned by the Irish Cultural Center. Still largely vacant, the site is likely not going to be part of the proposed Irish Village, and may return to industrial and commercial use.

Zoom Flume offers significant seasonal employment opportunities. Borwegan Trucking, B&G plumbing, Gilboa Drilling, and the Town's highway department are smaller but significant sources of employment in Durham. There are also a number of small businesses related to the building trades.

There are only a few retail commercial enterprises remaining in the Town: The Milk Run sells both gasoline and diesel fuel and operates a convenience store and grill. Lawyers is a small general store situated in the Hamlet of East Durham. Dean's Mills is a grain and feed store. Lounsbury's sells appliances. There are five restaurants in the Town of Durham, two each in Oak Hill and East Durham, and one on Route 23.

The Town lacks adequate modern telecommunication infrastructure and access to broadband internet services is limited.

### **C. Agriculture**

In addition to those discussed above, there also remain a few significant agricultural establishments in the Town, including an elk farm and several horse farms, which tie the Town's economy to its pastoral history.

## **IX. THE HAMLETS AND THE EAST DURHAM MAIN STREET PROJECT**

The hamlets of Cornwallville and Durham are principally residential and without commercial enterprises. The historic hamlet of Oak Hill, with a number of structures listed on the NY State register of historic places, is home to a number of antique shops and art galleries. During the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, East Durham was the Town's most commercially active hamlet. East Durham still has many of its shops and commercial establishments.

In 2006, the Town engaged a consultant to prepare a proposal for the revitalization of East Durham's main street for which the Town continues to seek funding. See Appendix A for full details on this study.

## **X. PUBLIC INPUT**

**A. Methods:** The public participated and provided input to the development and approval of this Plan through public workshops, focus groups, a survey, and discussions at Town Board meetings.

The first public input opportunity was a planning workshop held on August 18, 2005. Approximately 120 people were in attendance. At this workshop, participants were asked to identify positive and negative features about the Town as well as offer insight into the desired vision that residents have for the future of Durham. The purpose of the workshop was ultimately to identify strengths, weaknesses, and issues facing Durham.

In the summer of 2005, the Town mailed a planning related survey, developed by the Town's planning consultant, to all resident's and land owners in the Township. The Town utilized both tax roles and voter registration lists to maximize the reach of the survey. In addition, the survey was publicized locally and copies of the survey were available at the Town Hall. The response rate was about 35% (573/1752 surveys mailed), which is excellent for this kind of survey.

In October 2005, the Town held six different focus groups to explore in more depth some of the issues raised at the first planning workshop as well as issues specific to Durham's hamlets, agriculture, open space, and business development and tourism. Approximately 15 people attended each of the six sessions. Each focus group was facilitated by the Town's planning consultant.

Subsequent meetings included one at the Knights of Columbus Hall where the vision and goals were presented and discussed with about 35 people and a meeting with the Town Board in November, 2006 to discuss recommended strategies and actions to address issues identified during the planning process.

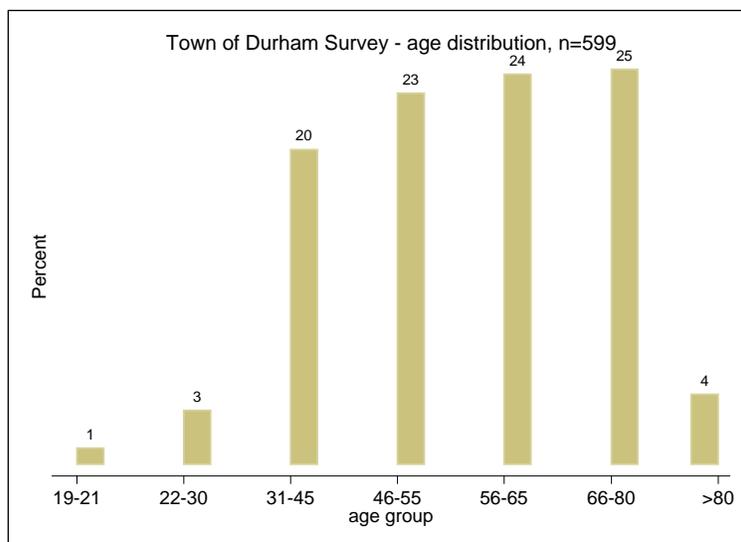
**B. Results of the August 2005 Workshop:** At this workshop, participants were asked to identify positive and negative features about the Town as well as offer insight into the desired vision that residents have for the future of Durham. Participants were in agreement on and passionate about the vital importance of the Town of Durham’s rural character, scenic views and natural qualities. These include the beautiful pastoral landscape, the scenic views of and from the mountains, the Catskill Creek and its tributaries, and wildlife habitats. Participants expressed a strong sense and appreciation of the Town’s history and historical resources.

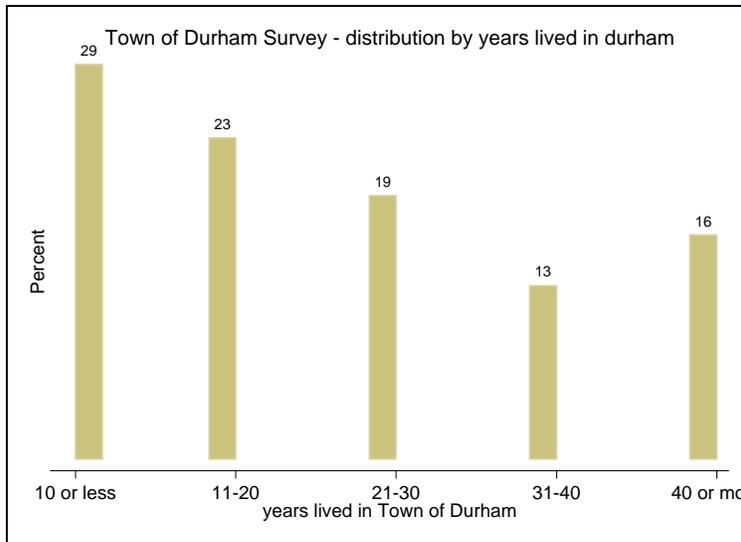
Participants appreciated the current quality of Town services: police, fire, ambulance and highway. Many of the concerns raised by participants related to the economic decline of the area, long commutes for employment, changes in sense of community, and a decline in the aesthetic character of Durham related to inadequate property maintenance. People were concerned about the loss of agriculture as a viable economic activity, the lack of businesses to serve a growing population, and lack of infrastructure needed to support new businesses and residents. Property maintenance and community character was a significant issue. Concerns were raised about poor yard and structure upkeep, and a lack of inviting commercial streetscapes in East Durham. There were also concerns raised about lack of services and activities for children and senior citizens, and traffic/speeding along many roads through Durham, particularly the State highways.

Participants were asked what they wanted Durham to be like in the future. Over 30 different qualities were identified. Sentiments that repeatedly came up include the desire for Durham to be a safe place, aesthetically pleasing with the rural, environmental and historic character preserved, active farms, many small businesses that provide good jobs and a vital economy, open spaces, and a quality place to live and raise families.

**C. Results of the Survey:**

The majority of respondents considered their home in Durham their primary residence (92%), had a median age of 55 years (respondents were from age 19 and up), and had lived here for more than 10 years (70%).





**Quality of Life and Town Services:** The majority of respondents (72%) rated the quality of life in Durham as “good” (56%) or “excellent” (16%). Forty-five respondents rated it “poor” (7.6%). While few people were not satisfied with fire protection (2%) and ambulance services (2%), a significant number of respondents were not satisfied with the Town board (18%), code enforcement/building inspection (30%), and the Board of assessors (32%). Only a majority of respondents were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with the Board of Assessment, Code Enforcement/Building Inspector, the Reading Room, and Senior Services.

**Development:** When asked how people would like to see the Town population change, 49% said increase somewhat and 38% said remain the same. The majority of respondents expressed concern regarding development (64%), and indicated that zoning was important (36%) or very important (34%). The majority of respondents (~80%) indicated that it was important (30%) or very important (50%) for the Town to review the impact of new development on the environmental and natural resources of the Town with air quality (91.7%) being the highest, and historic character the lowest (78.2%). Even at 78% however, there was strong support for historic review.

About one-sixth of residents (16.5%) reported operating a home-based business. While more common in rural areas, this is a high percentage that shows the strong level of entrepreneurship in the Town. Just over half of the home-based businesses are primary occupations (53.6%), while the remainder is supplemental businesses for the owners. The expansion of business services such as broadband internet to more traditionally residential areas would likely assist these people in developing more locally-generated income.

Just under half of the people surveyed indicated a concern about the level of development in the Town, which is a significant number given the relatively moderate pace of growth. It is clear from the survey that concerns about development pressures are on the mind of Town residents, and this concern likely will continue. A majority (62.7%) felt houses in

Durham were “somewhat affordable,” while approximately 14% thought they were “very affordable,” and 16% thought “not affordable.”

Use of Public Funds for Additional Services and Activities: There was significant support in using new Town tax dollars alone to add to the police force (33.9%). Other areas of interest, though all with between 10 and 20%, were additional senior services (18.8%), public water and sewer (16.2%), protecting sensitive environmental sites (16%), providing affordable housing for senior citizens (14.8%), protecting scenic landscapes (13.5%), and protecting historic buildings and sites (11.9%).

When asked about using Town and other public or private funds, a few new initiatives received majority support or close to it. Funding additional local police (64.7%) was the greatest interest, followed by protecting sensitive environmental sites (54.3%), providing additional senior services (54.1%), protecting scenic landscapes (50.2%) and helping provide affordable housing to senior citizens (50.0%). The survey results show an interest in supporting long-term residents of the Town, as well as maintaining its scenic landscape and environmental quality.

A majority of residents only said no to one initiative: helping provide affordable housing to renters (57.2%). Providing public water and sewer (46.1%) and helping provide affordable housing for first-time home buyers (44.9%) also received considerable opposition from the survey respondents.

Respondents indicated that they would be in favor of using tax dollars or other funds (private / grants) to preserve and protect: open space (80%); farmland (83%); historic buildings and sites (84%), scenic landscapes (85%), and sensitive environmental sites (86%). About half the respondents favored using a mix of local tax dollars and other funds, and half the use of other funds only.

Important Attributes or Actions: Respondents were asked to indicate the importance of 36 different attributes or actions to the respondents and their families. Attributes or actions considered “very important” or “important” by 80% or more of the surveyed population is the following:

<u>Attribute / Action</u>	<u>Important/Very Important</u>
Low crime rate	95.7%
Well water quality	95.5%
Well water quantity	94.6%
Low crime rate	95%
Litter control	93.3%
Locally/owned operated businesses	89.1%
Streams, ponds, wetlands	89.0%
Scenic views and landscapes	85.9%
Youth activities	85.8%
Open spaces	85.7%
Sensitive environmental sites protected	85.1%

Forestland/wildlife habitats	83.6%
Opportunities for community involvement	83.6%
Historical sites, structures, cemeteries	82.1%
Town Park	82.0%
Services for senior citizens	80.6%

Actions given less than 50% “very important” or “important” by the survey were the following:

The least important actions were:

<b><u>Attribute / Action</u></b>	<b><u>Important/Very Important</u></b>
More residential density	31.82%
Provide water and sewer services	39.140%
Not paving existing dirt roads	40.5%
Affordable housing for renters	42.1%
Paving existing dirt roads	45.3%

The remainder of the attributes received majority support, but less than the overwhelming 80% support that would indicate strong interest.

Important Services or Functions: Respondents were asked to rank the importance of further developing 38 different services or / functions in the Town. Several new or expanded ventures received majority support “very interested,” which are listed below:

<b>Service/Function</b>	<b>Very Important (Percent)</b>
Alternative Subdivision Designs	63.1
Retail Stores	60.9
Activities for teens (teen center)	57.9
Restaurants – no drive-through	55.1
Community Center	53.4
Activities for Senior Citizens	51.9
Cultural Activities (music, theatre)	50.2
Public recreation and parks	50.0

The positive rankings represent a strong interest in new commercial activities and restaurants, combined with substantial support for new recreational opportunities for a variety of age groups to enjoy to combat the “there’s nothing to do here” syndrome.

Services or functions that were “opposed” or “strongly opposed” by 30% or more of the population were the following:

<b>Service/Function</b>	<b>Very Important (Percent)</b>
Mobile homes anywhere (scattered-site)	54.7
Apartment buildings	45.5
Subsidized housing	43.7
Group homes	43.7
Condominiums/town houses	39.8
Restaurants with drive-through	36.6
Duplex residences	32.6
Mobile homes in parks	30.2

The survey shows substantial opposition to multi-family or other “high-density” housing, except for senior citizens. Given the citizen’s interest in maintaining open space, agriculture and scenic resources, and its tepid interest in public water and sewer, it will be a significant challenge for the Town to accommodate the growth that is likely in the Town while balancing the diverse, and sometimes contradictory, interests and desires of its residents.

**D. Results of the Focus Groups:** In October 2005, the Town held six different focus groups to explore in more depth some of the issues raised at the first planning workshop as well as issues specific to Durham’s hamlets, agriculture, open space, and business development and tourism. Approximately 12 people attended each of the six sessions (a total of 68). Each focus group was facilitated by the Town’s planning consultant.

Each of the hamlet focus groups - Durham, East Durham, Oak Hill, and Cornwallville - identified and stressed the importance of the hamlet’s rural nature and historic qualities. Durham is situated at a key point on the historically important Susquehanna Turnpike and retains many of its historic buildings though it is no longer a center of commerce. However many of those buildings are in a state of disrepair. The hamlet of Oak Hill was the first major pre-revolutionary war settlement in the Town of Durham. Local residents have in the past few years restored a number of its important historic buildings which are now listed on the National Register and the Town established the Oak Hill Historic District and there is a cluster of antique shops developing in the hamlet which is designated as one of the “11 Historic Hamlets in New York.” There are important historic buildings in urgent need of repair and restoration. Cornwallville retains its pastoral character as a residential hamlet with many historic buildings while seeing a transition to more seasonal and downstate New York-based ownership. The Town created the Cornwallville historic district in 1987. East Durham has long been the center of the Town’s tourism and commercial economy, and also has historic structures related to it’s location on the Susquehanna Turnpike. Sidewalks and improving East Durham to enhance its economic viability have been recent issues in East Durham, addressed in part through the 2006 Town study of the East Durham Main Street conducted by Fraser Associates.

The focus groups further identified a lack of a common vision, fear of gentrification, loss of affordable housing and the inability of children growing up in the Town to be able to

stay due to high housing costs, loss of the rural and natural qualities and open space through scattered and uncontrolled development, and loss of historic resources through neglect as important concerns. They stressed the need for economic development that could exist in harmony with the rural nature of the community in an appropriate scale for the available workforce and infrastructure.

The Agriculture and Open Space focus group stressed the importance of agriculture and farms for their contribution to the Town's intrinsic qualities and values as a rural township and the protection of important open spaces and scenic views. Historically and until recently dairy farming has been the major farming activity in the Town of Durham. Reflecting its loss of economic viability, the Town has seen a dramatic decline in the number of active dairy farms while more value-added forms of agriculture, such as horse farms and agri-tourism have shown signs of strength. More and more farmland is being developed or at risk of development. Participants cited the need for a local farmer's market, and other actions that would support local agriculture such as working to improve support services needed for agricultural operations. Suggestions from participants included establishing a local dairy, transition farms to agri-tourism ventures, more horse farming and non-traditional agricultural enterprises. Farmers perceived zoning as a threat rather than a resource.

Participants valued the open space and pastoral nature of the Town, but indicated a need for more public access, walking trails, and hiking areas particularly on already-preserved land, and to address the associated problems (noise and nuisance) associated with motorized off road recreational vehicles snowmobiles and all-terrain vehicles, and sharing the trails among all these kinds of uses.

Focus Group on Business and Tourism: Durham continues to have a significant amount of tourism attractions and lodging facilities, though it is clear that many of these facilities are facing economic pressure from more distant and glamorous locations. Like the Hamlets, the strength of business and tourism are based on the rural character of the Town, and its natural and historic attributes. Current tourism resources include the Michael J. Quill Irish Cultural and Sports Centre, Zoom Flume Water Park, the Irish-American Heritage Museum, the Durham Center Museum, and the state-designated scenic roads. The scenic roads and land-trust preserved open space are an untapped resource for tourism-related enterprises, and eco-tourism activities have been more popular and common in recent years, particularly among upscale tourists.

Participants indicated a need for better promotional and marketing of existing tourism opportunities and businesses; and noted that many of the tourist facilities are out-of-date and poorly maintained. Improvements in directional signage and visitor's amenities were also cited as important, and supportive of the considerable second-home market as well as tourists.

While opportunities for large-scale industrial and commercial development in Durham are limited due to topography, transportation and infrastructure, there are significant opportunities for small-scale entrepreneurship and adaptive re-use of buildings in the

Town. Old, underutilized barns; the Becker Electronics complex in East Durham, and some of the large number of vacant and underutilized buildings (many formerly commercial) in the Town are all candidates for re-use, and Town policy should be focused toward their adaptive re-use whenever possible. Encouraging residents interested in business development to access and use Greene County economic development programs should also be a priority.

Durham has one bank located in Oak Hill. Ensuring that this financial institution remains in Durham and has a legitimate local presence is important to the community and its businesses.

The group noted the importance of telecommunications and broadband access to future economic development and use by residents and emergency personnel.

**E. Results of the Knights of Columbus Hall Meeting:** The Town's consultant presented the draft plan, and an initial vision and goals statement at a special meeting held on May 20, 2006. Thirty-two people attended the meeting. Participants suggested that the plan needed to include a description of the planning process and purpose of a Comprehensive Plan, more information on town government, a description of the local police department, a summary of the survey, and that the previous Town Comprehensive Plan be reviewed. Participants also noted the importance of low income housing, access to natural resources, and improving the quality of our schools.

**F. Town Board Meeting on Recommendations and Formation of a Comprehensive Plan Committee:** In the fall of 2006, the Town's consultant presented draft recommendations for consideration by the Town Board. The Town Board subsequently met and re-drafted the recommendations. The original and re-drafted recommendations were presented at a public meeting attended by 20 people including the Town Board and Supervisor on October 18, 2006. Participants questioned the differences between the draft plan recommendations presented and the consultants' recommendations. Participants recognized the need for a committee representing the community to review the recommendations. The Town Board (November 2006) appointed a committee in accordance with New York State law to oversee the completion of the Town plan. The Committee met between December of 2006 through November of 2007 to review and complete a draft Plan for the Town Board.

## **XI. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

The Town of Durham has had farming and agricultural uses in the community for more than 200 years ever since its' founding. The agricultural landscape is a critical component of the Town's unequaled natural and scenic resources, and while agricultural production is a small part of the current economy in Durham with only 11 full-time employees reported in the business, it is an important source of quality of life for all of its residents, whether they actively farm, buy produce or merely enjoy the rural views. The Town's headwater streams play a critical role in maintaining the health and condition of the downstream Hudson River Estuary. The Town is committed to remaining a rural community and preserving its open spaces while supporting economic uses for all of its land.

The results of the planning survey distributed to the Town's residents, and information gathered from Town meetings, documented general agreement on the critical importance of agriculture and natural resources to the future of the Town and the well being of its residents. The Town's residents also place a high value on support for senior citizens and youth in our communities, with strong support for a community center, cultural institutions and the availability of preserved land for hiking, walking and other outdoor recreation activities. The ability to "stay and play" has been an increasingly important component of economic development in Greene County, as well as towns like Durham that can offer a high rural quality of life.

Residents of the Town of Durham consistently voiced the critical and fundamental importance of the Town's rural and agricultural character to the very nature and value of the Town itself. For many it is the reason they have chosen to live or continue to live here, and separates Durham from other Mountaintop towns that do not have any significant agricultural uses. A principle for future development is that it must be consistent with and at worst not disrupt the rural, agricultural character of the Town or its hamlets. Maintaining open space with a steadily rising population and strong opposition to high-density housing and public infrastructure provision will be a major challenge for the Town in the coming years.

The traditional local economic base dependent on farming and tourism has significantly eroded, but population growth at approximately the national average continues. One result is longer than average commutes to work, with about 1/3 of the labor force commuting to the Albany and Kingston metropolitan areas for employment. A majority of the workers in Durham are in management, professional or sales-related occupations, and a strong percentage work in construction and building, which despite the unwinding of the national "subprime" housing bubble, will continue to be a major industry in the Town for the foreseeable future.

Agriculture and tourism continue to be important economic opportunities for the Town of Durham, and are increasingly becoming linked together through agri-tourism, "scenic tourism" and the growth and development of organic foods, farmer's markets and other avenues for direct purchase of food and agricultural products. The Town's exceptional

scenic, historic and cultural qualities are central to continued tourism opportunity in the Town of Durham, and their careful and forward-looking use will allow them to be a resource enjoyed by generations to come. Regionally there is an increased demand for organic and locally produced agricultural products, and the Hudson Valley has been active in the branding of food grown within the region for export. Keeping farmland productive will help maintain open space, and preserve the pastoral nature of the community. In an area where increasingly “jobs follow people,” having unique amenities is increasingly important to attracting people, who often can bring their work with them (provided appropriate telecommunications and internet capabilities exist.)

Given the Town’s extremely small wholesale and retail trade sector, opportunities likely exist to establish stores in local hamlets that market local produce, crafts, quilts and other rural items. Local festivals, the new East Durham Market and local resort venues offer opportunities for entrepreneurs to reach a larger market for their products, as does the large farmer’s market at Empire State Plaza.

Growth of high tech industry in the region also offers an opportunity for local economic development that would minimally impact the rural nature of the Town, and it is important that the youth of Durham be able to effectively compete for this type of work in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. To attract small high tech industry or workers to the Town, the Town must encourage the development the required telecommunication and broad band internet infrastructure, working with private-sector providers in an aggressive and forward-thinking manner.

## **XII. PRINCIPLES FOR FUTURE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT**

This plan bases the following set of principles to guide future development on its assessment of the diversity of resources and conditions of the Town, as well as the needs and views of its citizens. An overriding principle for future development is that development must be consistent with the rural, agricultural character of the Town and its hamlets.

1. The Town of Durham is a rural community with a large tourism industry and considerable agricultural land use. Its rural hamlets support local commerce.
2. Continue appropriate land uses consistent with rural towns. Farming is a key to maintaining community character and the local economic base.
3. The Town’s scenic, natural and historic resources are of critical importance to the well being of the community and its citizens, and will likely be important factors in the continued growth and development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Creation of appropriate-scaled business, and appropriate spaces to house new businesses and

people, will be a major challenge for the Town in the coming years as growth continues.

4. The well-being of the Town's young people and seniors are of particular importance, and providing appropriate education and services to encourage people to stay in Durham throughout their life cycle is critically important to the continued health and vitality of the Town and its people.
5. New economic activity and development should be compatible with the rural nature of the Town and its hamlets; and occur in a manner harmonious to the conservation and wise use of its natural, scenic and historic resources.

Reflecting these principles, the strategic goals of the Comprehensive Plan can be achieved through the implementation of the following recommendations:

### **XIII. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The purpose of a comprehensive plan is to provide information that answers basic questions about a municipality: 1) what are the current conditions and trends in Town; 2) what is the existing character of the Town; 3) what are the concerns and issues of the public, 4) what does the community want for the future; and 5) what can the community do to attain its desired future. This section addresses ways the Town can reach its vision and goals.

The following section presents many ideas generated by the Town Board, Durham Community Planners, the Comprehensive Plan Committee, the general public (from ideas generated at the workshop and focus groups), and the Town's consultant. These suggestions include programs, policies, and projects that if implemented, could help Durham reach its future goals.

It is important to note that these recommendations are suggestions. They are not a set of laws, but a set of ideas that the Town Board could carry out over time. Some may be more easily accomplished than others and some require more time, funding, or leadership than others.

Should the Town decide in the future to put some of these ideas to work in the form of amended or new local laws, the required local law adoption process would have to be followed. This would include public hearings, environmental review, and county review.

#### **Recommendations Related to Preservation and Enhancement of Agriculture**

1. Promote ways to engage, educate, and recognize landowners on an ongoing basis to reinforce their understanding of and commitment to their role in the local farming community.

2. Encourage farmers to serve on the County Industrial Development Agency, and any local economic development committee, as well as on various town boards and committees.
3. Create mechanisms such as enhancing a Town website to help interested farmers who wish to sell their land to find buyers interested in continuing agricultural land uses.
4. Recognizing that current New York State Agriculture and Markets Law must be followed when the Town considers a subdivision or site plan application, Durham should take steps such as reviewing policies and making amendments to local laws where necessary to insure compliance with relevant Ag and Market laws.
5. Greene County has a Right-To-Farm law already in effect. The Town of Durham should be familiar with this law. Durham could adopt and pass a local Right-to-Farm law to ensure that farms are further protected from nuisance complaints brought by non-farmers if needed.
6. Work cooperatively with Greene County to promote the economic viability of farm operations in Durham and to accomplish relevant suggestions from the Greene County Agricultural Development and Farmland Protection Plan.
7. Recognize that agriculture is an important part of the Town's character and environment. Consider policies that support preservation of agriculture and farmlands in Town.
8. Agricultural activities should remain as a land use permitted "as-of-right". Future regulations should not restrict seasonal farm businesses such as pick-your-own operations. Should land use regulations ever be implemented it should ensure that farm stands, related farm-businesses, home occupations on farms, and ag-tourism uses are also permitted and allowed.

### **Recommendations Related to Rural Character and the Preservation of Open Spaces, Scenic Views, and the Environment**

1. Evaluate the adequacy of the Town's site plan review and subdivision laws in accordance with this Comprehensive Plan and in consideration of the Greenway Principles.
2. Consider adding in a voluntary use of conservation subdivision and cluster layout designs to more effectively use this technique to preserve open space, agriculture, and environmental features. Expand the existing clustering section in the Subdivision Law to also allow for use of conservation designs of new developments.
3. Explore innovative ways of encouraging conservation and clustered subdivisions and other development patterns to protect open space, agriculture, and environmental features.

4. Create and implement an open space assessment and strategic plan.

### **Recommendations Related to Business Expansion and Economic Development**

1. Promote and facilitate economic development in the Town, specifically addressing tourism, agriculture, professional service providers and high technology businesses. Create or appoint an entity to spearhead economic revitalization and funding needs in the Town of Durham.
2. Retain and expand businesses already located in Durham. Enhance the physical appearance of East Durham by implementing the recommendations in the East Durham Main Street Project. Invest in the hamlets of the Town of Durham. Consider initiating a formal Main Street Program as an economic development model for the Hamlet. (See [www.mainstreet.org](http://www.mainstreet.org) to see details on the successful Main Street Model developed by the National Historic Trust).
3. Explore creation of a Main Street Business Improvement District in the Town's hamlets to provide long-term funding for improvements.
4. Develop an economic program based on Durham's natural resources. To meet the Town's economic development goals, Durham should take advantage of its unique character, history, environment, and cultural heritage as well as its streams, trout fishing, hunting opportunities, scenic views, and hiking opportunities to expand a natural resource based tourism base. Work closely with Greene County as the County works to implement the county-wide economic development plan as it relates to these resources.
5. Identify and obtain grants, partnerships and other opportunities to strengthen the local agricultural economy and promote other desired businesses. Work with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Greene County, Greene County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board, Greene County Department of Planning & Economic Development and Greene County Tourism.
6. Work with local tourism businesses to modernize and secure the Town's place in the regional economy. Work to assist existing and new businesses set up programs, services, products, hours, and amenities that meet the needs of modern-day travelers. Continue to support and promote a variety of local cultural and recreational events in the Town.
7. Investigate opportunities with private wireless/internet providers to expand municipal telecommunications and utility infrastructure, such as DSL, high speed internet, and/or cable access connections.

8. Create a Town web site for the promotion of existing and forthcoming programs, development initiatives and community events. Be sure to provide links to Chamber of Commerce, Greene County and school district websites.
9. Enhance the community gateways with “welcome” signs that set the tone and theme for Durham. These should have landscaping, lighting, and thematic signage.
10. Enforce existing local junk laws to remove or at least effectively screen junk from view.
11. Enforce property maintenance laws.
  - a. Review all local laws and ensure that enforcement sections provide adequate authority and clarity of rules and procedures for enforcement activities.
  - b. Review fees and fines to make sure that they are appropriate.
12. Should the need ever arise in the future, evaluate all efficient and alternative options and technologies for dealing with wastewater in the Town of Durham.
13. Encourage home businesses in Durham.

### **Recommendations Related to Preservation of Historic Character, Structures, and Landscapes**

1. Long-term, consider means to promote preservation of historic structures through grants and other programs that are promoted by the state and other organizations that might become available for use by the Town. These may include establishing local incentives, recognition programs, or obtaining grants for restoration loan funds.
2. Elevate the role of historical character and preservation of historic structures in the site plan review and subdivision processes. Add standards and guidelines so that the Town can include historic character as an important consideration during the review process.
3. Initiate a program to address distressed historic buildings within the Town. Seek funding mechanisms to help property owners refurbish and renovate historic structures. This program could include tax incentives as well.
4. Encourage community activities that promote historic preservation such as annual awards for home improvement, house tours, etc.).
5. Enhance public education programs related to Durham’s history and historic areas.

6. Ensure that whenever an environmental review is conducted for a project as required under New York State SEQRLaw, that impacts on historic resources be evaluated and mitigated.
7. Develop a GIS-based map showing historic and cultural places in the Town and make this map available to a wide audience in the town, the Building Inspector and the Town Board so that they can become aware of the location of historic sites that may be impacted by a proposed project.
8. Sponsor an oral history program where those who are knowledgeable about the town's history, places, stories, items, etc. come together to discuss it and the conversation is recorded permanently as a permanent archive. This might be a joint program between the Town, the Durham Historic Preservation Commission, school or Reading Room.

### **Recommendations Related to Community, Recreation, and Public Services**

1. Work with landowners on a voluntary basis, DEC, and other local organizations to gain easements for trails to historic and natural resources.
2. Consider innovative ways to create new partnerships between private landowners and the Town for recreational use.
3. Encourage the community to attend Town Board meetings and visit the Town website. Find ways to take full advantage of web-based communication.
4. Continue to support the Town Board sponsored recreation committee. The role of this committee would be to identify existing and future recreational needs and develop a strategic plan to enhance recreational opportunities.
5. Consider a Town Board sponsored, voluntary Conservation Advisory Council. Their role could be as advisors to the Town Board as they conduct site plan reviews and subdivision approvals.
6. Encourage and support youth programs in the Town of Durham.