

# Amenia Hamlet Plan

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Dodson Associates, Ltd.  
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## Summary

The future of Amenia's hamlet will be bright if it can preserve and enhance its primary assets: its beautiful rural landscape, its historic hamlets and its diverse economic base. These are the engines that will most likely drive Amenia's future economy and bring prosperity and an improved quality of life for all residents. If the uniqueness and character of these assets is protected and encouraged to flourish, Amenia will prosper and the quality of life of its residents will continue to grow. But if Amenia is allowed to go down the easy path of suburban sprawl taken by many typical American rural communities, the town could lose the very assets that could be the underpinning a flourishing future local economy. Good planning for Amenia's future makes good economic sense...it is the smart way to grow.

Amenia's innovative new comprehensive plan and zoning regulations provide a solid foundation for this future growth, but questions and conflicts have arisen concerning the feasibility, fairness and viability of specific aspects of these policies and regulations. That is why the town decided to undertake this exercise in order to explore how the spirit of the comprehensive plan and new zoning regulations could be flexibly applied in specific locations in an attempt to stimulate dialog and to hopefully begin reconciling conflicting positions.

The result is a set of hypothetical physical plans showing three ways that future development and conservation could play out in the hamlet and surrounding area. It follows principles that most people in Amenia appear to support: protecting the character and vitality of the hamlet, enhancing the hamlet's economy and business environment, reducing highway strip development and suburban sprawl, reducing congestion and calming traffic and providing basic infrastructure for the hamlet. The plans also tackle areas of controversy: the specific location and design of service and repair businesses along major highways, the future expansion of highway type businesses both within and outside the hamlet, the expansion of existing commercial facilities, the desirability of additional multi-family housing and the layout of currently proposed residential development projects.

Many, but not all of these problems and conflicts can be addressed by using creative planning and site design within the overall spirit and intent of the comprehensive plan and zoning regulations. Careful planning, efficient use of space and design that reflects the community's traditions can help many proposals fit into the hamlet and surrounding area in a way that enhances its character, economic vitality and historic features. It is a matter of planning these projects thoughtfully and avoiding the easy but harmful stock solutions that are typically used in contemporary suburban development. In the case of the few situations where careful planning and design cannot solve conflicts between a landowner's plans and the community's goals, difficult decisions must be made. Amenia must decide between what is right for the individual and what is right for the community. Not an easy choice. If the community can work together, the long term benefits of good planning can ensure a happy and prosperous future for all.



## **Introduction**

Dodson Associates, Ltd has assisted the Town of Amenia in the development of a Traditional Neighborhood Development Concept Plan for the Hamlet of Amenia and the Route 22 corridor in the vicinity of the Hamlet. Dodson Associates, Ltd. worked closely with Town officials and departments, the Town's planning consultant Joel Russell and concerned citizens, businesses and stakeholder groups in the Hamlet and the larger community. The work was based on past or on-going studies for the Hamlet including the 2007 Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Law, the Hudsonia Report and other relevant studies, reports and workshop minutes.

The Plan was based on the principles of traditional neighborhood development as described in the town's ground-breaking new comprehensive plan and zoning regulations developed by consultant Joel Russell. These documents provide a visionary and realistic framework for the future development of the hamlet and surrounding area. Dodson Associates' planning process included a design workshop or "charrette" to involve all concerned stakeholders in an interactive process to develop specific planning and design proposals for the Hamlet and Route 22 corridor. Issues addressed through the charrette and plan include traffic, parking, visual gateways, open space preservation, pedestrian amenities, walkability, placement and design of new structures, enhancement of the existing hamlet and the possible creation of one or more new centers, infrastructure including sewage treatment, streetscapes, planting, environmental issues, recreation and creation of a strong sense of place. Recommendations for infrastructure and capital improvements necessary to implement the plan have also been made. The plan includes a description of the results of the charrette, plans, drawings and text describing the recommendations of the Concept Plan, design guidelines for the Hamlet and several aerial perspective drawings showing existing conditions, development permitted under the newly adopted zoning, and recommended development for the Hamlet and Route 22 corridor based upon the recommended Concept Plan.

## **Research, Data Collection and Interviews**

Harry Dodson and Keith Zaltzberg attended a kick-off meeting in early September with town officials and concerned citizens to refine the approach, organization and schedule for the project. They also reviewed past reports, studies, documents, maps, surveys, Geographic Information System (GIS) data and other available information on the town and the hamlet including the 2007 Zoning and Comprehensive Plan, past reports and studies, GIS data, environmental information, surveys, photographs and other relevant material. Discussions at the kick-off meeting focused on existing conditions, public participation, and the determination of the study area for the project. The study area selected focused on the hamlet and extended roughly from Folan Road in the north, Mygatt Road in the east, Prospect Avenue in the south and Lake Amenia Road in the west.

Dodson Associates created a base map of the study area using available GIS data, surveys and air photos. They also researched regulatory, environmental, traffic and infrastructure

issues relating to the hamlet. In follow-up phone conversations they also discussed the project with town officials and other consultants currently or previously involved with the project such as Joel Russell.

Harry Dodson and Keith Zaltzberg then spent two days in Amenia to become fully familiar with the town and to meet with Amenia residents, officials, business owners and interest group members. Over 35 interviews were held in the town offices over the course of the two days. Additional phone interviews were conducted with individuals who were unable to attend the town office interviews.

## Site Analysis

The diverse and relatively unspoiled natural setting that makes Amenia such an attractive place needs to be at the foundation of future planning and development. Wetlands, a high water table, flood zones, steep slopes, bedrock, rare species as well scenery, historic features and rural character need to be taken into account when planning the future of the hamlet.

But strictly avoiding impacting every environmental feature or physical constraint in the hamlet would have the unintended result of causing sprawl: development would be pushed out of environmentally constrained existing centers and into scattered rural locations throughout the town that happen to have low environmental and cultural limitations. On the other hand, concentrating future development in the hamlet - even at the expense of some localised environmental impacts - will help prevent sprawl which would have a much greater long-term impact on the town's greater environment. From this perspective it makes sense to adapt to physical and environmental constraints in areas such as the hamlet where future development makes sense for a wide range of reasons.



**Physical Constraints:** Steep slopes, shallow depth to bedrock, a high water table and other non-environmentally regulated physical constraints limit but do not necessarily prevent future development. Places like the hamlet and surrounding area that make sense to develop for so many other good reasons should not be written off because they can be challenging to build in. Many of the physically constrained sites in the hamlet can still be developed if careful, environmentally sound measures are taken to deal with high

water tables, steep slopes, ledge, flood zones and other challenges. The extra expense of dealing with moderate site constraints in the hamlet can be offset by the higher long term value of redeveloping an historic, walkable, dynamic center. The attached Physical Constraints map shows that challenging building conditions typically follow Amenia's ridgelines and water courses, leaving linear bands of more readily developable land in-between. This has shaped the hamlet in the past and will continue to do so in the future.

**Environmental Factors:** Both regulated and non-regulated environmental factors need to be taken into consideration in planning the future of the hamlet. Principally regulated factors include wetlands, rare species habitat, surface water, flood zones and ground water. Non-regulated factors, many of them documented in Hudsonia, Ltd.'s *Significant Habitats in the Town of Amenia*, include upland environments such as forests, shrublands, meadows, ravines, orchards and cultivated land. Wetlands are located along the hamlet's streams and in low-lying areas in eastern and southern sections. While small



amounts of wetland can be altered if replicated elsewhere in the area, the majority of the hamlet's wetlands are off limits to future development. Rare species habitats often occur in conjunction with wetlands and are a factor limiting future development in the area east of Freshtown Plaza and along portions of the hamlet's watercourses. Flood zones are regulated by the State of New York and the federal Army Corps of Engineers. Development in certain flood zones is allowed if structures are elevated above the 100-year flood level. Compensatory storage needs to be created to replace portions of the flood zone that are filled by development. Surface waters are generally off limits to most types of development and the purity and quantity of ground waters are protected by environmental and health regulations. Regulations allow acceptable measures for dealing with high water tables, seasonal flooding in areas otherwise suitable for development.

**Cultural Factors:** Amenia's unique historic buildings, scenic landscapes, small town character and farming traditions are more difficult to quantify but nevertheless vital to the well-being of the community. Not only are Amenia's historic structures unique but the pattern which they form on the land and along the streets contributes to the overall historic character of the hamlet. This pattern can be preserved and reinforced if future development recognizes that the hamlet's historic development patterns offer a valuable template for future growth. Scenic landscape features include steep, wooded hills, farmland, historic buildings and neighborhoods, ponds and streams and scenic roads. The blend of natural features with cultivated land and traditional buildings create Amenia's well-known scenic character. Future development can protect and enhance the town's



scenery if it is carefully sited and designed to avoid damaging sensitive scenic features while reinforcing the Amenia's traditional development patterns and building styles.

Amenia's small town character derives from its people as well as its buildings and landscapes. From a largely agricultural past, the town has evolved a diverse rural economy based on commerce, tourism, services and both public and private educational facilities and institutions. Differences in backgrounds, interests, income levels and points of view are accepted and even celebrated as an essential part of life in a small community where most people know and respect each other. Rapid growth, sprawl, gentrification and could change Amenia from the special place it is today into a generic, up-scale, sprawling anywhere USA sort of place. That doesn't have to happen.

## **Community Workshop**

Dodson Associates, Ltd. organized and conducted a one-day workshop on the future of the hamlet attended by over sixty residents, property owners, town officials, business owners and concerned citizens. At the outset of the workshop, Harry Dodson presented examples of successful conservation and development from other communities across the country. (These examples are described in Appendix 2). After a general presentation on the project, workshop participants divided into six groups to develop ideas and models of their vision for the future of the hamlet and surrounding areas.

Each group was provided with a detailed photographic base map of the study area as well as scale model components of various types of development and conservation including single and multi-family homes, retail space, multi-use and commercial buildings, pedestrian systems, roadways, and parks. Groups first discussed general strategies and goals, then began exploring detailed planning options using the model components. After several hours of work, each group created a model showing its recommendations for various types of future development as well as for preservation of historic, environmental and open space resources. A spokesperson for each group presented the results to a reconvened meeting of all participants. Similarities and discrepancies between each group's results were discussed and options for reconciling differences were reviewed.

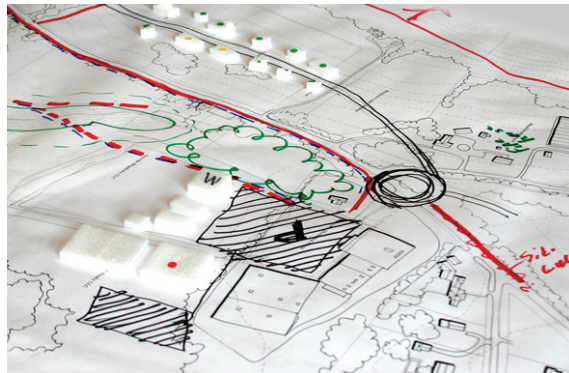


## Red Group (Ellie Casson):

The red group proposed major conservation areas as well as new development within the hamlet as well as in the vicinity of the Route 22/Cascade Road intersection. They proposed a network of secondary ("B") roads including a new, primarily residential road from Four Brothers to Cascade Road, connecting with Route 22 via a Roundabout intersection. A new mixed-use street paralleling South Street would connect East Main Street and Lavelle Road. Major parks and conservation areas were proposed around Brickyard Pond and north of East Main Street. Sidewalks and pedestrian paths would connect the hamlet with the Fresh-town Plaza area to the north. Freshtown Plaza would be expanded with mixed-use and commercial development compatible with the existing stores. Green gateways consisting of open space and woodlands would form the northern and southern entrances to the hamlet along Route 22.



*Hamlet: New Sidewalks, Infrastructure, Infill*



*Freshtown: Highway Commercial Expansion*

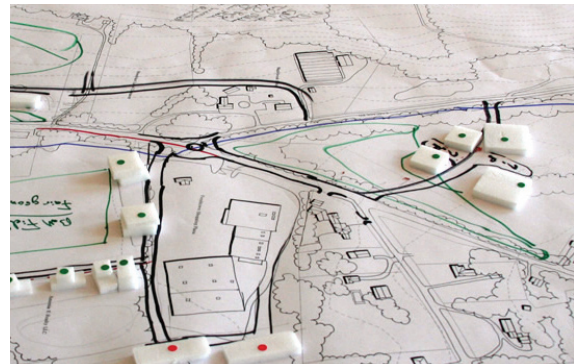




## **Yellow Group** (Mark Doyle):



*Hamlet: New Mixed Use Street, New Residential Street*



*Freshtown: Mixed Use Commercial Expansion, Residential*

The yellow group recommended development within the hamlet as well as to the south and north of the hamlet with major conservation and recreation areas and traffic improvements. Their plan included a traditional mixed-use commercial area off of West Main Street in the vicinity of the lumberyard forming a western gateway to the hamlet. The area around the Four Brothers Restaurant was also proposed for substantial mixed-use infill development. The yellow group proposed the construction of short new B roads serving a new mixed-use neighborhood west of Brickyard Pond as originally recommended by Lewis Mumford, as well as to the north of Four Brothers and in the vicinity of Cascade Road. At Freshtown Plaza they recommended residential and mixed-use commercial development as well as recreational fields. The area between Cascade Road and Route 22 was recommended for open space residential development. Roundabouts and traffic calming on Routes 22 and 341 were also recommended.



## Green Group (Jerry Thompson)

The green group closely followed the new zoning regulations and comprehensive plan, recommending infill development in the village, including a new road, originally recommended by Lewis Mumford, creating a mixed-use neighborhood linking East Main Street and Lavelle Road. Residential and small scale commercial hamlet infill development was also recommended for Mechanic Street, the area around the elementary school and along Main Street at the Brookside and along South Street. Residential development, incorporating affordable housing was recommended in the vicinity of Freshtown Plaza. Existing undeveloped parcels in the vicinity of Cascade Road and along Route 22 were proposed for suburban residential and hamlet residential development, as recommended in the comprehensive plan. The green group discouraged larger scale commercial development, especially along the major highways at the outskirts of the hamlet.



*Hamlet: New Mixed Use Street, Sidewalks, Infill*



*Freshtown: Residential, Affordable Housing*





## Light Blue Group (Darlene Riemer):



*Hamlet: New Mixed Use Street, Brickyard Pond Park*



*Freshtown: Mixed Use Commercial/Residential*

The light blue group emphasized historic preservation and redevelopment of the hamlet's existing buildings and landscapes. Restoration and redevelopment along Main Street would be facilitated by expanded parking lots and access roads located behind the existing buildings. This would create a new town park and green gateway for the southern entrance to the hamlet. The group also emphasized the creation of an extensive pedestrian trail and sidewalk network and the planting of new street trees. A new park would be created around Brickyard Pond and Lewis Mumford's proposed mixed-use street would be created parallel to South Street. A new road would link the hamlet with the Freshtown Plaza area where a new mixed-use commercial/residential neighborhood would be created. A new, primarily residential B Road would extend from Four Brothers to Cascade Road. The undeveloped land between Cascade Road and Route 22 would be developed as an open space residential community.

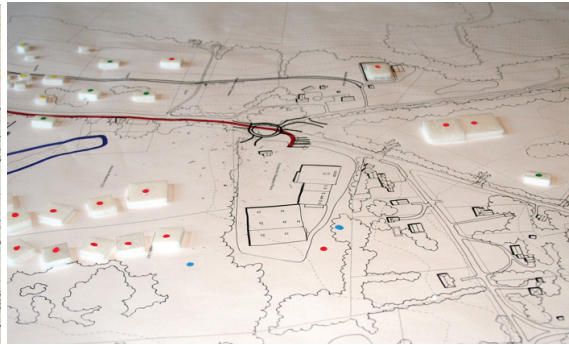


## Dark Blue Group (Rudy Eschbach)

The Dark Blue Group recommended the restoration and infill of the hamlet as well as significant redevelopment of the Cascade Road/Freshtown Plaza area. They called for the reconstruction of sidewalks, new trails and traffic improvements in the hamlet as well as new residential, mixed-use and commercial development in select locations. New roads would link East Main Street in the hamlet with the Freshtown Plaza area and Four Brothers with Cascade Road. Major new commercial development for highway commercial businesses such as a drygoods store would be built in the vicinity of the Plaza as well as between Cascade Road and Route 22. A new roundabout was proposed for the relocated intersection of Cascade Road and Route 22 to facilitate access by emergency vehicles from the relocated fire station and to calm traffic along this busy highway. Office, mixed-use and service/repair businesses would be located along Route 22. The town offices would be moved into the existing elementary school which would be relocated to the existing central school facility north of town.



*Hamlet: Sidewalks, Traffic Improvements, Mixed Infill*



*Freshtown: Highway Commercial, Office, Service/Repair*



## Areas of Agreement:

All the workshop participants reconvened to discuss common themes amongst the six groups. Surprisingly there were many areas of agreement including a desire to:

- Avoid commercial strip development outside of the hamlet and study area, as recommended by the new comprehensive plan and zoning regulations.
- Redevelop appropriate areas within the hamlet, including the Four Brothers area, Mumford Avenue, the lumberyard area and selected infill sites.
- Renovate historic structures and appropriate older buildings in the hamlet.



- Enhance and expand parks in the hamlet.
- Plant street trees and enhance the hamlet's public streetscapes and landscapes.
- Implement traffic calming to improve traffic flows and to slow traffic through the hamlet.
- Build an extensive new sidewalk and trail system in the hamlet connecting to outlying areas, especially between the hamlet and Freshtown Plaza.
- Improve the hamlet's public infrastructure, including easily accessible and well designed public parking that fits in with the historic character of the hamlet.
- Build a new wastewater treatment plant to serve the hamlet, possibly in conjunction with adjacent new development projects.
- Ensure that the hamlets' everyday shopping needs are met by adequate sized stores in appropriate locations. Avoid a hamlet served only by boutiques.
- Protect the environment of the hamlet and surrounding areas.



- Build secondary “B” roads where appropriate to extend the hamlet’s traditional street grid to create new neighborhoods for residential and mixed-use development.
- Improve the pedestrian character and amenities of the hamlet’s streets including improved lighting, benches, paving, street trees, cross walks, store fronts and other features that create an attractive and pedestrian/shopper-friendly environment.
- Avoid gentrification of the hamlet, ensure that the mix of new and renovated housing in the hamlet includes an adequate supply of well-built homes within the range of young families, retirees, the elderly and average working people.
- Improve the character and prosperity of the hamlet using successful models from other parts of the region such as Rhinebeck, Millerton and Great Barrington.

### **Areas of Disagreement:**

There were far fewer areas of disagreement but those that exist are significant and reflect deeper differences of opinion within the community. They relate to differing visions of the hamlet’s economic future, differing concepts of appropriate landuse and differing views of private property rights. Differences discussed by the group include:



- Whether to allow service/repair facilities outside of the hamlet mixed-use zone on Route 22 and other highways.
- Whether to allow new, larger scale highway commercial outside the hamlet along Route 22 and other highways.
- Whether to move the elementary school and what to do with the building and site.
- Whether or not the new comprehensive plan and zoning regulations should be implemented as currently written or whether they should be revised to allow landowners more flexibility to develop their property as they wish.

## **Preliminary Site Plans**

The workshop provided the consultants with plenty of material with which to develop preliminary planning concepts for the hamlet and surrounding area. Notes, plans, drawings and photographs of the workshop models were analyzed by Dodson Associates, Ltd. and served as the basis for a series of preliminary site plans outlining future options for the hamlet. The preliminary site plans explored various options developed during the charrette for the types and location of conservation areas and environmentally sensitive zones as well as possible locations and layouts for future development compatible with the hamlet and the town's economy. Future development options included single family residential, multi-family residential, mixed-use development, neighborhood commercial, larger scale commercial, service/repair, industrial and office. Recommendations for the layout of neighborhoods, streets, parks, plazas, environmental restoration areas and urban stormwater management features were also developed. The specific types and amounts of future conservation and development were listed in the title block of each plan.

The preliminary site plans attempted to present the range of future conservation and for the hamlet. All three plans proposed a range of future development options including significant open space and environmental conservation as well as a range of future development types including single family residential, multi-family residential, mixed-use, commercial, office and service/repair/light industrial. Option #1 focused development primarily within the hamlet itself with minimal development outside existing developed areas. Option #2 continued to proposed compatible redevelopment of existing centers with the creation of new development nodes adjacent to the Freshtown Plaza. Option #3 proposed higher levels of future development both within and adjacent to the hamlet. All three options assumed the construction of a municipal wastewater treatment plant servicing the hamlet, general adherence to the overall goals of the comprehensive plan and desirability of calming traffic on Routes 22 and 343.

The following is a statistical breakdown of the three concept plan options:

### **Site Plan Option #1:**

Site Plan Option #1 is the more cautious of the three options, recommending preservation and mixed use redevelopment of the hamlet and adjacent neighborhoods as well as moderate, primarily residential development in the Freshtown/Cascade Road area. As recommended by many of the workshop groups, a new road: "Mumford Avenue" is proposed linking East Main Street with Lavelle Road. This new mixed use neighborhood would include a mix of retail, commercial, office and residential uses in a hamlet center style layout. The Four Brothers site would see new development of downtown retail and commercial uses with residential located in upper floors, creating a dynamic new walkable shopping area with plenty of parking in lots located to the rear. A new development area for highway commercial type uses is located in the vicinity of the existing building supply store on Route 44. A southern gateway to the hamlet is created by expanding and renovating existing businesses on South Main Street and Broadway Avenue. Individual

sites within the hamlet can be infilled with new residential or small scale commercial buildings while preserving the historic character of the center. New parking lots located to the rear of existing and proposed buildings will greatly increase parking capacity without damaging the hamlet's character. Extensive areas of parks and conservation land ensure that sensitive environmental features will be preserved as an integral part of the plan. New open space residential neighborhoods can be located in and adjacent to the hamlet on several parcels, some of which have current development proposals pending. Compact layout of these residential projects will enhance their character, walkability and compatability with the historic character of the hamlet while preserving extensive areas of surrounding open space.



**Concept Plan Option #1** (Detail viewing north): New residential street (A), New Mixed Use Shopping District (B), Protected Open Space (C), Traffic Calming on Major Roads (D), New Parking Lots Located Behind Existing and New Buildings (E), Roundabout, pedestrian amenities at main hamlet intersection (F), Expand existing retail (G).

A new road linking Four Brothers with Route 22 will create a new residential neighborhood with a mix of single and multi-family homes designed to fit in with the traditional character of the hamlet. Similar development south of Freshtown Plaza and at the intersection of Cascade Road and Route 22 will increase the town's housing stock while preserving extensive areas of open space as recommended in the new zoning law. Some retail, commercial and service/repair development can occur in carefully sited locations as part of the new development in the north end of the study area.

Traffic calming measures on Routes 22, 44 and 343 including roundabouts, curb extensions, signage, street tree plantings and pedestrian islands will help ensure that traffic is slowed to hamlet center speeds while encouraging more efficient flows of traffic through the hamlet at civilized speeds and noise levels. Extensive new sidewalks, trails, paths and boardwalks will also improve the hamlet's walkability and create connections to Fresh-town and the protected natural areas adjacent to the hamlet.

Site Plan Option #1 will accommodate a significant amount of new residential, commercial, retail and other mixed use types of development while preserving extensive areas



of protected open space. These areas can accommodate significantly more development than the current market could accommodate into the foreseeable future - most of it within the hamlet and the Freshtown area. The following table breaks the new development down by category:

New Mixed-use/Retail/Commercial	
Total Building Footprint Area:	
Mixed-use	197,000 s.f.
Retail/Commercial	108,000 s.f.
Service/Repair/Light Industry	24,000 s.f.
Total	329,000 s.f.
New Residential Units:	
245 Single Family Homes	
38 Multi-Family Buildings (152 units)	



**Concept Plan Option #1** (Detail viewing north)): New mixed use street, “Mumford Avenue” with ground floor retail and upper story office and residential with new parking screened behind the buildings (A). New infill development on Main, Mechanic and other hamlet streets reflects the historic character of the hamlet (B). Extensive conservation lands (C). Traffic calming and pedestrian amenities in hamlet center (D). Southern gateway: mixed use cluster (E).



## Site Plan Option #2:

Site Plan Option #2 is similar to Option #1 in conservation land, traffic calming, hamlet infill and residential development but adds an additional 150,000 square feet of mixed use, commercial and retail development in select locations. This additional commercial square footage is located primarily at a new mixed use commercial/retail neighborhood in the vicinity of the existing building supply store on Route 44. This neighborhood would feature a mix of highway commercial type uses such as a dry goods store and smaller, multi-story mixed use development with retail/commercial uses on the ground floors and office or residential uses on upper floors. Additional smaller scale, multi-storey mixed use development could also occur along Mumford Avenue, Mechanic Street, on suitable individual lots in the hamlet as well as at Freshtown Plaza.

Freshtown could expand towards Route 22, creating a welcoming northern gateway to the hamlet. This small cluster of mixed use buildings on Route 22 could include a mix of stores, restaurants and a carefully designed auto service/repair facility on the Gregory lot. If the auto service/repair facility is well designed to fit in with the character of the area and has parking and service lots located out of site in the rear, it could better blend in with the character of this northern gateway to the hamlet. Grouping the service/repair facility with other nearby buildings in a small cluster and including extensive pedestrian amenities, street trees and compatible architecture will help the facility fit in. Moving the proposed facility to the northern corner of the lot will also reduce grading requirements. Alternatively, future service, repair, storage and light industrial uses could be located on a new service street behind (east of) Freshtown Plaza.



**Concept Plan Option #2** (Detail viewing north): Renovate, expand existing retail based on design guidelines (A). New mixed-use commercial/retail shopping district (B). Highway commercial businesses redesigned to fit hamlet character (C). Parking screened and landscaped (D). Attractive new streetscape creates "Western Gateway" (E). Conservation land and parks (F). Stormwater management, stream corridor preservation integrated within site (G).





**Concept Plan Option #2** (Detail viewing south): Renovate, expand existing retail based on design guidelines (A). Small mixed-use commercial/retail cluster including service/repair shop (B). Preserved open space (C) created by adjacent open space development (D). Single/multi-family residential with affordable & elderly (E). Attractive new streetscape creates "Northern Gateway (F)". Conservation land and parks with pedestrian link to hamlet (G). Roundabout at relocated Cascade/22 intersection, street trees, on-street parking calm traffic entering hamlet (H).

#### New Mixed-use/Retail/Commercial

##### Total Building Footprint Area

Mixed-use	221,300 s.f.
Retail/Commercial	164,000 s.f.
Service/Repair/Light Industry	37,000 s.f.
Total	422,300 s.f.

#### New Residential Units

244 Single Family Homes
37 Multi-Family Buildings (148 units)



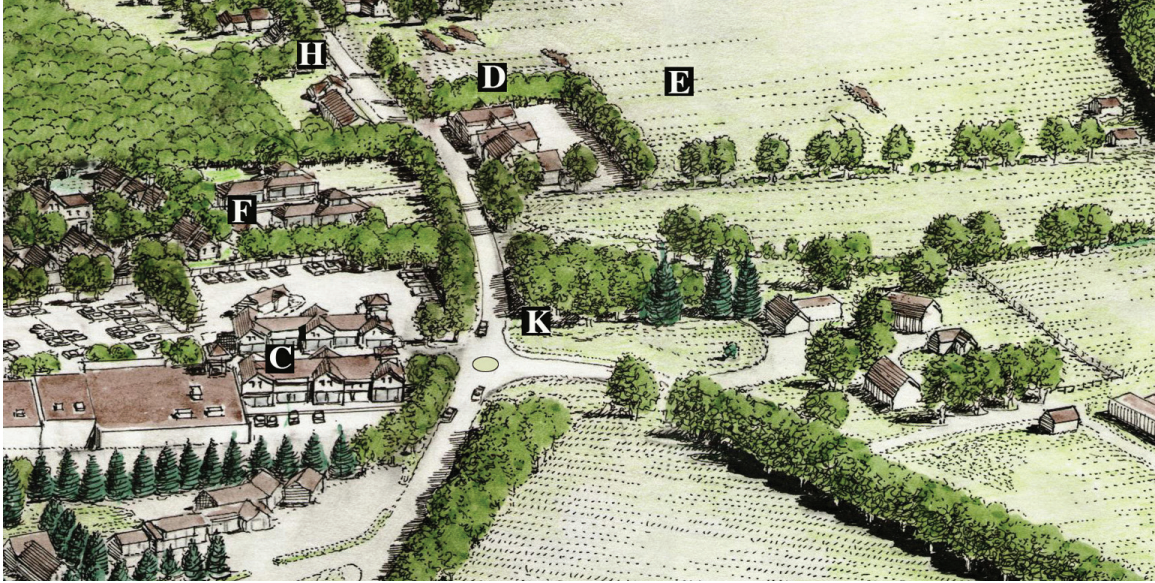
### Site Plan Option #3:

Site Plan Option #3 is similar to Option #1 in conservation land, traffic calming, hamlet infill and residential development but adds an additional 250,000 square feet of mixed use, commercial and retail development in select locations. This additional commercial square footage is located primarily at a new mixed use commercial/retail neighborhood in the vicinity of the existing building supply store on Route 44 as shown in Option #2 as well as at an expanded mixed use cluster the intersection of Cascade Road and Route 22. The new Route 44 neighborhood differs from Option #2 in that it includes several stores with much larger footprints. These footprints would appeal to major store chains seeking a “big box” type of facility. In addition to these large stores, the Route 44 neighborhood would feature a mix of highway commercial type uses such as a dry goods store and smaller, multi-story mixed use development with retail/commercial uses on the ground floors and office or residential uses on upper floors. Additional smaller scale, multi-story mixed use development could also occur along Mumford Avenue, Mechanic Street, on suitable individual lots in the hamlet as well as at Freshtown Plaza.



- Key:**
- A. New Open Space Residential Neighborhood
  - B. Conservation Lands Associated with Open Space Development/Density Transfers
  - C. Expansion of Existing Commercial
  - D. Carefully Sited and Designed Commercial/Service Cluster
  - E. Preserved Open Space Associated with Commercial Cluster
  - F. Mixed Use Retail/Commercial/Office/Residential
  - G. Residential: Single Family, Multi-Family Affordable Housing
  - H. Sidewalks, Trails, Boardwalks Linking Freshtown to Hamlet
  - I. Conservation Land
  - J. Future Town Garage?
  - K. Traffic Calming: Roundabout, Pedestrian Crossings, On-Street Parking, Street Trees
  - L. Hamlet Center Historic Rehab and Compatible Infill Development
  - M. Relocated Cascade Road/Route 22 Intersection





**Concept Plan Option #3** (Detail viewing south): Detailed view of “northern gateway”: Mixed use retail center featuring traffic calming on Route 22, a new roundabout, relocation of Cascade Road/Route 22 intersection, new mixed use buildings located close to streets to create hamlet character, sense of entering a walkable community surrounded by preserved open space and environmental areas. Sidewalks, trails and parking screened to the rear of buildings.

Option #3 features an expanded mixed use commercial/retail node at the relocated intersection of Route 22 and Cascade Road. A grouping of retail, restaurant and commercial buildings forming a “northern gateway” to the hamlet. A carefully designed and sited service/repair shop can be a part of the mix. If the auto service/repair facility is well designed to fit in with the character of the area and has parking and service lots located out of site in the rear, it could better blend in with the character of this northern gateway to the hamlet.

Grouping the service/repair facility with other nearby buildings in a small cluster and including extensive pedestrian amenities, street trees and compatible architecture will help the facility fit in. Moving the proposed facility to the northern corner of the lot will also reduce grading requirements. Alternatively, future service, repair, storage and light industrial uses could be located on a new service street behind (east of) Freshtown Plaza. Option #3 features an additional 50,000 square feet of mixed use commercial/retail in this area over the amount shown in Option #2.

#### New Mixed-use/Retail/Commercial

##### Total Building Footprint Area

Mixed-use	272,000 s.f.
Retail/Commercial	251,000 s.f.
Service/Repair/Light Industry	37,000 s.f.
Total	560,000 s.f.

#### New Residential Units

245 Single Family Homes
38 Multi-Family Buildings (152 units)



## Site Plan Option #4:

Site Plan Option #4 creates a larger mixed use cluster at the northern entrance to the hamlet. A new mixed use retail/residential cluster on the southern end of the Perotti parcel creates the fourth corner of a new group of buildings forming the entrance to the hamlet. The tight spacing of new buildings close to the roads announces that a densely settled area is beginning. A new roundabout at the Route 22/Cascade Road intersection and the presence of buildings and street trees along the road slows traffic to hamlet speeds. This intersection has been located several hundred yards to the north to coincide with the entrance to Freshtown. The B road extending north from the village joins Route 22 here, creating an efficient 4-way intersection. Preserved farmland, woodlands and wetlands create a strong greenbelt around the new center, continuing Amenia's tradition of densely developed centers surrounded by open space. The Perotti parcel, in addition to the mixed use retail/office/residential cluster at the southern end also includes open space residential development along the property's eastern side, leaving a significant portion of the existing fields and forests intact and providing a large buffer for Cascade Brook.



- Key:**
- A. New Open Space Residential Neighborhood
  - B. Conservation Lands Associated with Open Space Development/Density Transfers
  - C. Expansion of Existing Commercial
  - D. Carefully Sited and Designed Commercial/Service Cluster
  - E. Preserved Open Space Associated with Commercial Cluster
  - F. Mixed Use Retail/Commercial/Office/Residential
  - G. Residential: Single Family, Multi-Family Affordable Housing
  - H. Sidewalks, Trails, Boardwalks Linking Freshtown to Hamlet
  - I. Conservation Land
  - J. Future Town Garage?
  - K. Traffic Calming: Roundabout, Pedestrian Crossings, On-Street Parking, Street Trees
  - L. Hamlet Center Historic Rehab and Compatible Infill Development
  - M. Relocated Cascade Road/Route 22 Intersection





**Concept Plan Option #3** (Detail viewing south): Detailed view of “northern gateway”: Mixed use retail center featuring traffic calming on Route 22, a new roundabout, relocation of Cascade Road/Route 22 intersection, new mixed use buildings located close to streets to create hamlet character, sense of entering a walkable community surrounded by preserved open space and environmental areas. Sidewalks, trails and parking screened to the rear of buildings.

Option #4 features completion of an expanded mixed use commercial/retail node at the relocated intersection of Route 22 and Cascade Road. A grouping of retail, restaurant and commercial buildings forming a “northern gateway” to the hamlet. A carefully designed and sited service/repair shop can be a part of the mix. If the auto service/repair facility is well designed to fit in with the character of the area and has parking and service lots located out of site in the rear, it could better blend in with the character of this northern gateway to the hamlet.

Grouping the service/repair facility with other nearby buildings in a small cluster and including extensive pedestrian amenities, street trees and compatible architecture will help the facility fit in. Moving the proposed facility to the northern corner of the lot will also reduce grading requirements. Alternatively, future service, repair, storage and light industrial uses could be located on a new service street behind (east of) Freshtown Plaza. Option #3 features an additional 50,000 square feet of mixed use commercial/retail in this area over the amount shown in Option #2.

#### New Mixed-use/Retail/Commercial

##### Total Building Footprint Area

Mixed-use	300,000 s.f.
Retail/Commercial	251,000 s.f.
Service/Repair/Light Industry	37,000 s.f.
Total	589,000 s.f.

#### New Residential Units

- 235 Single Family Homes
- 35 Multi-Family Buildings (142 units)

## Consultant's Recommended Option

What would Lewis Mumford do? The visionary planner whose writing and ideas have grown in stature over the decades, was right to oppose the construction of the Freshtown Plaza in the 1960's. Implementation of his "Mumford Avenue" plan for the hamlet would have avoided Amenia's first step towards suburban sprawl and commercial highway strip development. If he were alive today, America's greatest planning theorist would have undoubtedly recommended Option #1 - we could almost call this the "Mumford Plan."

Dodson Associates recommends that the town adopt Option #1 for the hamlet and surrounding area. Option #1 most closely adheres to the town's new comprehensive plan and zoning laws which have created a visionary and realistic strategy for managing future growth. Option #1 allows for significant growth within the hamlet and immediately surrounding areas: almost 200,000 square feet of mixed use development, over 100,000 square feet of commercial development and almost 400 units of new single and multi-family housing. This amount of development has been shown to be realistic within the hamlet and immediately surrounding lands if the town implements a municipal wastewater treatment plant and adopts the design guidelines attached to this report.

Options 2, 3 and 4 deviate in increasing degrees from the town's current land use and zoning policies. Making exceptions to policies to suit individual applicants is not sound planning and would undermine the carefully crafted plans previously developed by the town. Planning is about what is best in the long term for the community. Individual property rights need to be respected, but allowing business-as-usual uncontrolled development in Amenia will quickly lead to the decline of the town's character, environment and ultimately - its future economic prosperity. One only has to look at communities further south to see Amenia's future if a laissez-faire approach to land use is adopted.



*If a majority of future growth occurs in Amenia's existing centers, as proposed in the new Zoning Law and in Plan Option #1, the town's exceptional countryside can also be preserved. A dynamic, walkable, historic hamlet surrounded by a beautiful, well-preserved, rural landscape is the town's best bet for a high future quality of life and prosperity.*



The following principles and conclusions evolved from the concept planning process:

**Plenty of Space in the Hamlet for New Development:** The striking conclusion that emerges from all three plans is that there is room for significant growth within and adjacent to the hamlet: up to a half million square feet of commercial and mixed use growth and over 400 units of single and multi-family housing. This large amount of growth is not necessarily desirable nor is it realistic in the current market, but the space exists for well planned hamlet growth in the future. If the town invests in infrastructure and insists on efficient, compact, pedestrian oriented development, there is plenty of available space within the hamlet not only for smaller infill construction but for larger mixed-use, office and even certain types of highway commercial uses such as a dry goods store. Option #1 identifies 329,000 s.f. of potential commercial, mixed-use, service, repair, light industry and other uses in or adjacent to the hamlet center. Option #3 increases this amount to 510,000 s.f. - far more than the current market could absorb but striking in the amount of potential commercial development footage available in the hamlet. The concept plans also identify sites for between 300 and 400 new single and multi-family housing units in and adjacent to the hamlet. If a wastewater treatment plant can be built soon, there is



*New mixed use commercial/retail neighborhood makes efficient use of limited space, creates attractive walkable community*

no need to build new commercial facilities in Amenia's countryside or along its outlying roadways because the space exists for new commercial development in the hamlet center and nearby areas. Typical suburban sprawl layouts for new development are notoriously inefficient and will not work in the hamlet. They also produce unattractive, automobile-oriented development that diminishes property values in the long run. Compact layouts for buildings, parking areas, streets and shopping areas will produce much

higher long term value and create much more attractive and efficient development in the hamlet's more constricted building sites. Standard engineering principles for laying out new development should be thrown away in favor of the well designed, highly efficient layouts typically used in highly successful downtown settings in attractive American and European towns.

**Good Planning Makes Economic Sense:** Many participants emphasized that Amenia's economy needs to grow to ensure a prosperous future for long term residents and newcomers alike. Businesses and stores that cater to the everyday needs of the town: dry goods, building supplies, food, pharmacies need to continue to be a part of the town's economic future. Allowing high end boutiques, expensive residential real estate and tourism to dominate the hamlet would change its historical character and make it difficult

for many residents to afford to continue living in town. A middle course needs to be navigated that finds a way to adapt highway commercial businesses and a diverse range of employers to build in Amenia in a way that meets their practical needs while respecting the character of the hamlet. This is an approach that makes the best economic sense because it capitalizes on the town's greatest assets. After many interviews and meetings it be-

came clear to the consultants that Amenia does not want to become a typical suburb with sprawl and strip commercial development. Nor do a majority of town residents want to become an exclusive second home tourist resort where many former residents and their children can no longer afford to live. Amenia wants to avoid these pitfalls by following a smart future that blends growth with the protection and enhancement of the town's unique character and resources. This approach takes more forethought and difficult up front work, but it is the key to the town's long term prosperity.



*Hamlets with well preserved historic character, walkable streets, shops, attractive homes and apartments, street trees and a diverse local economy are among the most financially successful places in America.*

**Historic Preservation Is Important:** One of the hamlet's greatest assets is its historic character as expressed in its buildings, landscapes, trees, parks, streets and the relatively well preserved small town character. But this character is continually being eroded and needs to be preserved and reinforced as the hamlet grows. It can either grow in a way that continues to erode its character or it can grow in a manner that builds on the great



*Well historic buildings and streets are irreplaceable and can provide the foundation of a community's economy and quality of life.*

assets and strengths created by past generations. The hamlet's historic character should be a model for future development. Existing historic buildings should be preserved and renovated whenever possible. Historic landscapes, gardens and parks should be protected and well maintained. The past character of the hamlet as shown in historic photographs and etchings should be recaptured by replanting lost street trees, rebuilding new buildings in place of lost old ones and recapturing the peaceful pedestrian character of the town from the assaults of the automobile and the truck. New streets



can be laid out to reflect the grid pattern of the hamlet's historic streets. New buildings can line these streets, creating a dynamic and friendly streetscape revealed in historic photos. New architecture can be sensitive to its historic context without exactly reproducing historic styles. The lush historic landscapes of mature street trees, well maintained picket fences, well tended monuments and gardens can be restored. The story of the hamlet's history can be told in interpretive exhibits and signs. The fact that one of the nation's foremost city planners, Lewis Mumford, lived in Amenia is an interesting story and bodes well for the future of preservation in the hamlet.

**Wastewater Treatment is Vital to the Future of both the Hamlet and the Town:**

Very little growth will occur in the hamlet unless a municipal wastewater treatment plant is built soon. In fact, the hamlet will continue to decline since many of the structures there may not meet strict interpretations of current health codes without adequate sewage treatment. Without wastewater treatment, new development will be forced to occur outside of the hamlet in farmland, forests and along the town's rural highways. Teaming up with the developers of Silo Ridge or another private entity offers a promising way to achieve wastewater treatment at the lowest cost to the town. State of the art tertiary wastewater treatment will also greatly improve the environmental quality of the hamlet and surrounding water bodies. Wastewater that is currently ineffectively treated in ageing on-site septic systems will be thoroughly treated in a modern facility, improving ground and surface water quality.



*Current, not to mention future hamlet center densities are not sustainable without modern wastewater treatment facility*

**Attractive Walkable Centers Surrounded by Farmland and Open Space:** A major theme of all three concept plans is the preservation of Amenia's traditional pattern of development: compact and dynamic centers surrounded by farmland, forests and open space. This is what makes Amenia special today and it should be a major guiding principle for future development.



*Waterford, Virginia*

Whenever possible, new development should take place in a compact layout within existing centers or in new clusters appropriately located to avoid impacting the town's vistas, farmland and open spaces. All three concept plans use this approach by steering new



development into the hamlet or into exiting development areas such as Freshtown Plazas. The layout of this new development is very compact and efficient, allowing large areas of open fields, forests, farmland and natural areas to be preserved. The compact development also creates walkable, friendly, efficient neighborhoods where the car no longer reigns supreme. The accessibility, beauty and richness of the protected countryside enhances the quality of life of hamlet residents, greatly enhancing property values. The desirability of living and working in a beautiful rural hamlet that has not been overrun and spoiled by suburban sprawl will also draw new investment, new businesses and new residents who will join long-time residents in a newly prosperous community centered on rural quality of life.

### Case Studies:

A number of properties with current or pending development proposals - some of them controversial - were studied in order to develop hypothetical solutions. The new comprehensive plan and zoning regulations served as a guide but not a specific template for these solutions. Each hypothetical solution attempts to balance the rights of the landowner with the interests of the community and the environment using creative site planning and design as a way to resolve differences. In many cases, the careful location and design of new development can help resolve conflicts. How a project is sited and designed can be as or more important than the project's use. The overall principles of the comprehensive plan and new zoning regulations are excellent and should be followed but certain conflicts over the interpretation or implementation of these documents can often be resolved through design. In some cases design cannot overcome underlying problems relating to landuse conflicts, environmental impacts, traffic concerns and fundamental inconsistencies with Amenia's new comprehensive plan and zoning regulations.

**Gregory Property:** Jack and Linda Gregory's proposal to build an auto repair facility on Route 22 near the Freshtown Plaza does not easily fit in with the new zoning regulations, but resolving this highly contentious issue is vital to the ongoing success and evolution of the comprehensive plan. A compromise solution can be proposed that respects the spirit of the plan, addresses neighborhood concerns and allows the owners to move ahead with their project under



*An autobody repair shop in the Hudson Valley fits in with the character of a traditional hamlet.*

very specific conditions. The proposed project could fit in with the spirit of the comprehensive plan if it is relocated and redesigned within the Gregory's lot, as shown on Concept Plan Options #2 and #3. Moving the proposed facility northwards to create a small mixed-use cluster of buildings will preserve open space to the south and will relate to the commercial cluster of development in the Freshtown area. The undeveloped portions of

the lot could be permanently protected as open space through a deed restriction held by the town or by a land conservation organization. If the siting and design of the new facility reflects traditional local building styles and reduces the apparent mass of the building as shown in the attached photograph, the project would blend in better with its surroundings. Siting the building close to the street and locating parking, storage and loading at the back of the building will also reduce noise and visual impacts. Carefully designed signage and night lighting will also enhance the project and respect the surrounding neighborhood. Building construction can be efficient metal frame with careful selection of materials for the front and sides to reflect local traditions. The large mass of a typical metal frame building can be reduced by accommodating the same square footage in several smaller, connected structures. Sidewalks, street trees, low fences and landscaping along the front and sides will create a friendly, pedestrian oriented public face for the complex. It is important to remember that the Gregory's have the right under current regulations to develop most of their lot at hamlet residential densities which would have much greater visual and environmental impacts than a single, well designed structure surrounded by protected open space.

**Syms Property:** Richard and Eve Syms propose to develop single family homes on two large lots on Depot Hill Road at the southern edge of the hamlet. Plans for 19 lots on the eastern parcel are currently under review by the planning board. The Syms also plan to develop the western parcel in the near future. A single open space development plan for



*A new residential development in Orange County, New York features quality homes on small lots along traditional streets*

both parcels is suggested as part of this study. The open space development plan would preserve scenic open space, enhance the character of the hamlet and ensure the Syms full value for their property. Up to 50 residences could be arranged on an efficient street grid that reflects the traditional pattern of development in the historic village. This compact layout using 10,000 square foot lots creates a highly attractive new neighborhood of quality homes while preserving over 50 acres of farmland, wetland and scenic hillside as protected open space.

This approach depends on either a municipal or private package wastewater treatment plant. It also will require the Syms to modify their current layout for the project which would hopefully receive an expedited review process considering the benefits of the revised plan to the town (enhanced development character, large amount of protected open space, new municipal water tank, etc.). Finding a practical solution that benefits both the landowner and the community will benefit everyone in this case and will fit in with the spirit of the comprehensive plan and zoning regulations. It is important to remember that under current regulations the Syms have the right to develop residential units on all

buildable portions of their two large lots. It is in the community's best long term interest to work with the Syms to ensure that the project protects valuable open space, fits in with the character of the hamlet and creates an attractive and highly marketable new neighborhood. Examples of similar residential project from Warwick Grove, New York (Orange County) are attached to the plan.

**Mumford Avenue:** Lewis Mumford, one of the most famous and respected urban planners in American history and a resident of Amenia, suggested that a new hamlet street be created east of and parallel to South Street (Route 22) in the hamlet center. This was a good idea in the 1960's and it's still a good idea today. A new mixed-use street in this location would provide more areas in the hamlet center for parking, commercial, retail, office and residential uses. Mumford Avenue should be laid out and developed as a traditional neighborhood development with mixed-use buildings located close to wide sidewalks and a tree-lined street with parking lots located to the rear of the buildings. Opportunities for possible expansion of church facilities also may exist at the southern end of Mumford Avenue. Extensive new surface parking lots can be located behind buildings where they will be unobtrusive yet convenient. Examples of similar new streets are pictured on the plan and include Mashpee Commons on Cape Cod and Seaside and Mizner Park in Florida. A buffer will need to be created between Mumford Avenue and the Brickyard Pond area.



*A new mixed use retail/office/residential development creates an attractive, walkable street lined with street level stores and restaurants and upper story offices and apartments.*

**Four Brothers:** The Four Brothers site offers many opportunities for hamlet center redevelopment. A previous concept plan by county planners effectively demonstrated this potential by recommending the addition of new buildings, parking areas and plazas.



*The Four Brothers area could become a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly shopping, strolling and dining district with offices and residences on the upper floors of new buildings and ample parking in the back.*

New buildings built close to North Street (Route 22) could recapture the downtown character that was lost when the old hotel that formerly occupied this site burned down. Rearrangement of parking behind the new buildings and the existing restaurant could actually expand parking opportunities. A dynamic new pedestrian shopping area could be created with the existing Four Brothers restaurant at its core. Opportunities for residential development also exist if a new side road is built west of and parallel to Route 22. A mix of single family and multi-family



residences could be built along this new “B” road which would connect with Route 22 in the vicinity of Freshtown Plaza.

**Mechanic Street:** Plenty of good infill development sites exist along Mechanic Street as shown on the development concept plans. New residential or mixed-use buildings could be located on the many empty or half-empty lots that exist along this partially developed street. Infilling the many gap sites on Mechanic Street would improve the character of the street by creating a consistent architectural edge along the street, move parking out of sight to the rear of buildings and by creating a varied and active mix of hamlet center uses. Nearby wetlands need to be factored into the equation while noting that this hamlet center location should be the focus of redevelopment.



*A new office building on a small infill site in a hamlet center. Ample parking is located behind the building*

**Freshtown Plaza:** The area adjacent to this existing shopping center offers potential for mixed-use development including single family and multi-family housing in a tightly clustered village layout. Ground floor shops and restaurants could provide local services and a portion of the project could include elderly and/or affordable housing. The plaza



*Multi-family housing (fourplex) - part of a new development of single and multi-family homes with adjacent retail/commercial uses.*

itself could expand toward Route 22, creating a new architectural edge along the street, hiding existing parking and creating a new, welcoming gateway to the hamlet. Service, repair, storage and light industrial uses could take place on vacant land behind (east) of the existing plaza buildings. Larger commercial uses are also possible though the market for these activities in Amenia is uncertain at the moment. Significant environmental constraints in the eastern and southern portions of the area limit the development potential

to sites adjacent to the existing plaza. A pedestrian link to the hamlet center should be considered along with sidewalks extending south along Route 22.

**Brookside:** These existing commercial buildings on Route 343 in the eastern portion of the hamlet provide an opportunity for the infill of existing built and buildable sites in the hamlet center. Existing commercial sites such as these should be reused before undeveloped greenfield sites in the countryside are developed. Redevelopment of the Brookside area could feature new buildings or building additions forming a new architectural edge closer to East Main Street with parking located in the rear. Redevelopment

of this or any other hamlet site this will probably not happen unless the hamlet quickly develops a wastewater treatment system. A high water table and nearby wetlands in the Brookside area also need to be addressed but is not an insurmountable obstacle. The Brookside site is an example of a hamlet site where infill of existing usable commercial space needs to take precedence over perceived environmental limitations.



*An auto repair facility that fits in well with the character of a traditional town center.*

**Route 44:** The area behind the former Dils building supply store is one of several sites within or immediately adjacent to the hamlet that could be suitable for the development of a mixed-use commercial neighborhood that includes larger facilities such as a dry goods store catering to everyday needs of Amenia residents. These “highway commercial” type businesses could be redesigned to fit into these more urban locations while still maintaining their economic viability. The area behind and to the southwest of the existing Dils lumberyard should be investigated for its potential as a mixed-use commercial neighborhood including a blend



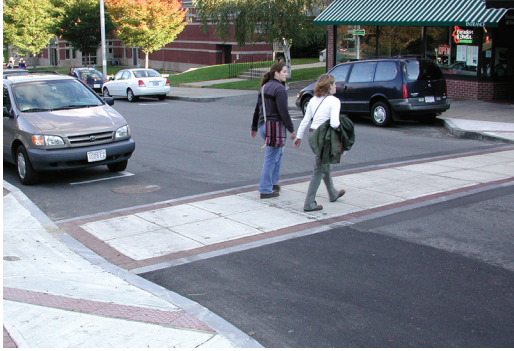
*New highway commercial complex adapted to fit into a traditional hamlet center. Large parking lots in rear of pedestrian-friendly streetscape.*

of larger stores with ample parking, mixed-use buildings with commercial/retail below and office/residential above and other services such as restaurants, theatres, galleries and other retail attractions. As is true in most places in the hamlet, environmental and wetlands issues will need to be dealt with on this site. But large, relatively flat upland areas and its proximity to the center of the hamlet and to a major highway make it a site

worth considering as an area of future commercial expansion.

**Traffic Calming:** A number of measures should be taken to calm traffic on the hamlet's major roads while moving traffic more efficiently. The mantra for improving traffic flows and reducing speeding and congestion should be: “slow and steady”. If traffic is forced to slow down as it enters the outskirts of the hamlet, speeding, noise and pedestrian/vehicle conflicts will be reduced. This can be accomplished through a number of physical changes to the roadway and to intersections described below. As vehicles slow down, they should also be allowed to move continuously - stopping of course for pedestrians. This can be accomplished by replacing stoplights and stop signs with roundabouts - small circles that favor slow, continuous traffic flows. Roundabouts could be installed at the Route 22/343 intersection and at a realigned Cascade Road/Route 22





*Well-marked pedestrian crossings, curb extensions, on-street parking, roundabouts create safer, more walkable centers with lower traffic speeds.*

intersection. Other physical changes could include adding dividers and traffic splitters at the outskirts of the village, reducing the apparent or actual width of the highways, encouraging on-street parking, adding visual elements to the side of the highways such as street trees, street lights, buildings and other visual obstacles that inhibit speeding and create a downtown, pedestrian atmosphere. Numerous clear, raised, textured and lit pedestrian crosswalks will also give priority to pedestrians in the hamlet center. Narrow turning radii and curb extensions

at intersections will create safer street crossings for pedestrians. Even with these new pedestrian-friendly features, traffic will flow more effectively through the hamlet due to the elimination of lengthy time and fuel-consuming stops at stop lights and stop signs.

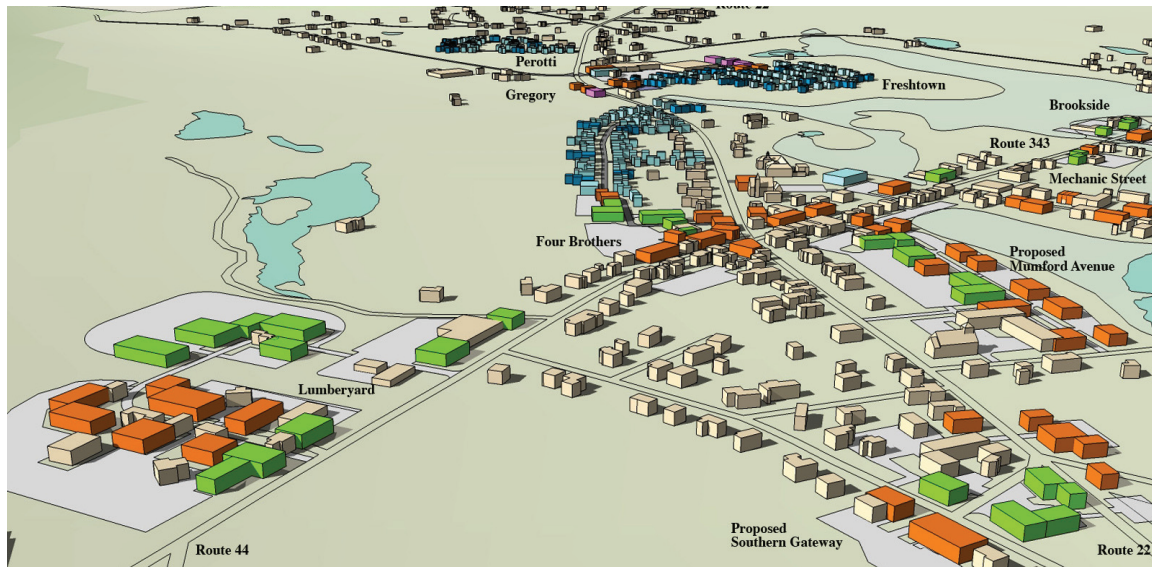
**Perotti Property:** Both the comprehensive plan and the new zoning regulations are very clear that new commercial development should occur in or adjacent to the hamlet. This study has shown that feasible locations for larger highway commercial type development do exist in or adjacent to the hamlet. The Perotti parcel is one of the furthest development sites from the hamlet center. Developing this parcel for highway commercial uses would be stretching the comprehensive plan and new zoning regulations to the point that they could become irrelevant. Future property owners up and down Route 22 and 341 could easily point to the commercial development of the Perotti parcel as a precedent for commercial roadside development of their lands, leading to possible commercial strip development of rural portions of the highways. The fact that the Freshtown Plaza is near the Perotti parcel is not a convincing precedent because, as popular as it is, Freshtown is not a model for the type of development Amenia wants along its major highways in the future. The Perotti parcel is well suited to the type of open space development specified in the new zoning regulations. Combining compact housing with protected open space could maximize the value and marketability of a well designed residential development project. The current slump in the housing market notwithstanding, residential use of this property may be the highest and best use of the site, given the uncertain demand for large scale commercial development in an area with Amenia's current demographics.



*New Open space development community (top photo) with neighborhood retail (bottom photo)*

## Computer Models and Aerial Perspective Drawings

In order to describe the future development options in a clear and concise manner, Dodson Associates, Ltd. produced computerized three dimensional models as well as hand-drawn aerial perspective drawings of the future conservation and development scenarios. Three dimensional computer models were produced showing each of the three future site plan options. The models showed aerial views of the options from a variety of locations. Views of the model were color coded to show the various types of future conservation and development. Selected final views of the models were then used as the basis for pen-and-ink, hand-drawn aerial views of the plans showing recommended elements in greater detail and realism. The aerial perspective drawings illustrate this report.



*Computer model aerial view of proposed Concept Plan #3 looking north. See caption below for color key.*



*Computer model aerial view of proposed Concept Plan #3 looking south. Tan buildings are existing, light blue are proposed single family residential, dark blue are proposed multi-family residential, orange are proposed mixed-use, green are proposed commercial/retail, pink are proposed service/repair.*



## Presentation of Draft Concept Plans

Harry Dodson presented the preliminary concept plans and computer models at a meeting of the Amenia Town Board in early December, 2007. Comments were made by town officials as well as by citizens in attendance at the meeting. Adjustments were then made to the plans based on the comments. The consensus of the meeting was that all three preliminary site planning options should be included in the final report.



## Design Guidelines

Design guidelines are a set of standards that inform and harmonize the aesthetics and physical relationships within a town or region. The development of building locations, height, scale, detailing and relationship to streets as well as public spaces, plazas, landscapes, pedestrian amenities, streetscapes and streets are coordinated so that each project helps to foster the success of the whole town.

In Amenia, design guidelines translated from the results of the charrette, site plan, and simulations, will specify the form that future development should take in order to foster a dynamic, attractive and functional mixed-use transit-oriented district. The final project report will incorporate the design guidelines, a summary of the planning process, reductions of the site plans, computer model and aerial perspective drawings and will also include a summary of the charrette findings.

The following design guideline principles guided the development of the concept plans. The guidelines evolved from the public participation process, the interviews, the workshop as well as from the consultant's experience over the years working in similar communities around the country.



**Development Patterns:** Encourage redevelopment in and adjacent to existing centers. Discourage development of farmland, forestlands, environmentally sensitive areas (see Hudsonia Report), and areas outside of existing or proposed centers. Promote open space development and the conservation of large blocks of open space in order to enhance the character of the town and bolster the town's property values and economy. Mix development types as has traditionally occurred in the hamlet to ensure diversity and an adequate supply of affordable housing.

**Siting of Buildings:** Locate new buildings to reflect the historic patterns of development in the town: in compact patterns along street grids and grouped in suitable locations surrounded by protected open space. This will reduce environmental impacts, improve walkability, enhance the character of the hamlet and boost long term property values. Site new buildings close to roads to increase efficiency, enhance the character of the street and to create a welcoming and safe town atmosphere. Avoid siting new buildings on long driveways in the middle of farm fields, undeveloped woodlands and environmentally sensitive areas.

**Building Height and Scale:** Encourage variety within a pattern of overall consistency. A variety of building heights and sizes within the parameters spelled out in the zoning regulations will ensure that new buildings in the hamlet avoid monotony and repetition while fitting in the scale of existing historic structures. Avoid monotonous repetition of buildings while also avoiding height and scale extremes. What makes the architecture of the historic hamlet appealing is that the buildings are unique and varied but respect the overall height and scale ranges of a traditional town center.

**Building Styles and Proportions:** Amenia hamlet has a range of historic building styles. New development should respect but not necessarily imitate these historic styles. Carefully designed contemporary development may also fit in with the character of the town if it relates well to the existing historic patterns and styles. Architectural style is less important than the compatible relationship of new buildings to their surroundings. The use of materials, proportions, details and fenestration that respect the town's traditions while avoiding exact duplication of styles is recommended.

**Setbacks and Streets:** Buildings in Amenia have traditionally been located close to the street for both practical and aesthetic reasons. Streets lined with buildings, picket fences, sidewalks and street trees create the friendly, pedestrian character of a hamlet and encourage walking, visiting and the mutual support that has traditionally made villages and hamlets work so well. Amenia should consider maximum rather than minimum building setbacks in the hamlet to ensure that future construction continues to reinforce the strong edge of buildings along its streets. This approach still works well today as home buyers look for safe, friendly, walkable, attractive neighborhoods with a range of services and amenities within a short distance. Today's busy, traffic clogged highways can make walkable neighborhoods challenging to live in, however. Calming traffic and locating mixed-use buildings on the busiest streets offers one solution to this problem.

**Public Spaces, Plazas:** Existing public gathering places should be protected and new development should be required to incorporate public spaces in designs for both residential and commercial development. Public spaces work best if they are centrally located, feature numerous pedestrian amenities and are located away from heavy vehicular traffic near restaurants, stores, trailheads and other gathering spots. Public spaces could feature interpretive exhibits about Amenia's history and environment. Shade trees, benches, monuments and other pedestrian features will enhance the spaces.

**Lighting:** Public spaces and streets should be well lit with light fixtures that are shielded to avoid glare and light pollution. The hamlet might also want to consider a night lighting ordinance that requires lights on private property to be shielded to avoid light pollution and to enhance the safety and character of the night environment. Properly designed, shielded night lighting creates a friendly, inviting atmosphere that encourages walking, shopping and strolling in a safe and friendly nighttime setting. Glaring, excessively bright lights and spotlights create a harsh, intimidating night environment that diminishes the appeal and vitality of downtowns.

**Landscapes:** Hamlet center public landscapes should focus on large, durable street trees planted in spacious planting belts or tree pits that ensure their long-term viability. Private landscapes in the village can feature both shade and ornamental trees as well as lawns and ornamental shrubs and grasses protected from heavily traveled public areas by friendly, low picket fences, hedges and other defining features. Residential landscapes outside the hamlet center can continue Amenia's tradition of friendly, welcoming lawns, shrub beds and shade trees with paths and walkways. Development at the edges of the hamlet or in more rural areas can blend in with the surrounding farm and forest land by using native plants and landscape designs that respect the areas' rural character.

**Parking:** The hamlet should encourage on-street parking in most commercial as well as residential areas. On street parking makes efficient use of existing paved areas, serves as an important traffic calming technique by reducing vehicular speeds, buffers pedestrians on sidewalks from traffic, creates a dynamic and "lived in" feeling in town centers and helps address parking shortages. New parking lots should be located behind or to the side of new or existing buildings and be designed to incorporate the latest stormwater management tools such as bio-retention areas, vegetated swales, rain gardens and similar features. Parking lot medians should be designed as vegetated swales that catch and store rainwater, allowing it to slowly infiltrate into the ground. Extensive plantings of street trees should be required in new parking lots. Amenia hamlet is currently too small to make parking garages economically feasible but as the hamlet grows in the future, this option may be considered as a means of increasing parking capacity with fewer visual and environmental impacts than surface parking.

**Conservation and Open Space:** The Hudsonia Report provides an excellent foundation for a future protected open space network for Amenia serviced by accessible trails, wildlife observation areas, interpretive signage and areas for nature study and research projects. Conservation and open space preserves should be protected by permanent con-



servation easements or by outright ownership by public or private conservation groups. Conservation areas should be interconnected to protect wildlife corridors and to sustain connections between ecological, botanical, wetlands, migratory and hydraulic zones. Conservation areas and open space should also, to the greatest extent possible, be extensive and unbroken by intervening development, forming contiguous districts. Conservation areas should be accessible to the public via trail systems, handicapped accessible whenever feasible.

**Trails, Paths, Sidewalks:** The hamlet should be as walkable as possible with extensive connections between public spaces, streets, conservations areas, parks and private businesses and institutions. Interconnections are vital: walkways should connect people with a variety of destinations. The town should work with non-profits and private land-owners and businesses to create an interconnected network of pedestrian links with easements and rights of way across private land, when acceptable. Surfaces should be paved or firm gravel with boardwalks over wetlands and water bodies when necessary. Trails and sidewalks should link the Freshtown Area with the Hamlet. A hiking trail network can extend into the surrounding hills and countryside.

**Historic Preservation:** Whenever possible, historic and older structures should be rehabilitated and integrated within the hamlet's future development. Historic structures, landscapes and character are irreplaceable and add significant value to future projects. Restoration of historic structures should be sensitive to their unique attributes, using appropriate materials for renovations. New development adjacent to historic structures and landscapes should be compatible with their character. The overall historic patterns of the hamlet should be incorporated in future development so that new growth fits with the old.

**Infill Development:** Many locations suitable for new buildings and other uses exist within and adjacent to the hamlet. These locations, when appropriate should be given priority for new infill development compatible with the character of the hamlet. Infilling within the hamlet is greatly preferable to developing "greenfield" sites in more rural parts of the town. Infill development requires more careful planning and design to deal with site and spacial constraints as well as the concerns of neighbors. But its long term value to the hamlet and town is much greater than suburban sprawl. Hamlet infrastructure - especially wastewater treatment - is vital to the success of infill development in the hamlet.

**Mixed-use Development:** Mixed -use development usually consists of multi-story buildings with retail or commercial uses on the ground floors and office or residential on upper floors. To be successful both in from a financial as well as a functional and aesthetic standpoint, mixed-use development should occur close to pedestrian-friendly streets in densities that are sufficient to create vitality and dynamic interaction between uses. Mixed-use development can occur on small or larger scales and is based on the principle that many uses formerly seen as conflicting can actually coexist and complement one another. Walkability is key so mixed use developments should make efficient use of smaller spaces and contain ample sidewalks, squares and other public spaces. Ample parking should be provided - preferably behind buildings on the street - with a

plan for the efficient and fair management of the parking requirements of the various mixed uses.

**Commercial Development:** Highway commercial type uses can be adapted to fit in with the tighter spaces and character of historic hamlets if they are carefully located and designed. Typically located at the edge of existing hamlets, these larger commercial buildings and their required parking can fit in well if they locate parking lots to the rear of buildings and create an attractive, pedestrian-friendly streetscape along existing and new streets. The mass of new commercial buildings can be reduced by breaking large monolithic “big box” structures into groups of smaller boxes with human scale facades. Extensive street trees and green stormwater infiltration systems in parking lots can further soften the hard edges of large stores. Smaller scale commercial development can be located on smaller sites and should typically be located close to existing streets with parking located in the rear. Friendly and inviting facades along streets with windows and doors will encourage shopping and create a friendly, dynamic environment.

**Pedestrian Amenities:** Successful pedestrian environments consist of attractive and pleasant open spaces surrounded by stores, businesses, and restaurants as well as nearby housing and offices. Enough density and activity needs to exist to enliven the spaces. Car traffic and noise needs to be subdued to avoid overwhelming the character of the pedestrian areas. Shade provided by street trees, awnings and umbrellas is important during hot summer months. Lots of pleasant places to sit: benches, seating walls and planters are important. High levels of pedestrian activity associated with stores, restaurants and offices create a dynamic pedestrian environment that discourages loitering and vagrancy in public spaces. Varied outdoor spaces with many places to sit, people watch, eat, read and talk that are protected from the hot sun, cold winds and traffic noise are preferable to blank, empty, noisy paved areas. Public art, fountains, flower boxes, planters and monuments enliven public spaces and create interest and variety.

**Streetscapes and Streets:** Old photos of the hamlet show a lively, pedestrian-friendly street lined with large shade trees and attractive buildings. This setting has changed as a result of the automobile but many elements of Amenia’s attractive historic streets can be reclaimed through future improvements. Attractive new buildings can be built on empty gap sites and parking lots to restore the edge of buildings along the streets. Street trees can be planted to recreate the over arching canopy of shade that once lined the hamlet’s streets. Widened sidewalks, curb extensions at intersections and the use of attractive and durable materials for walkways, plazas and pedestrian crossings will also enhance the hamlet’s character. Signage appropriate to an historic center, not state highway department standard issue signage will also create a more functional and attractive hamlet environment. Pedestrian and historic preservation improvements along the hamlet’s streets can be achieved without overly restricting vehicular traffic if many of the measures discussed in the traffic calming section below are implemented. This will create a safer and more pleasant hamlet.

**Traffic Calming:** The goal of traffic calming measures should be to slow traffic - espe-

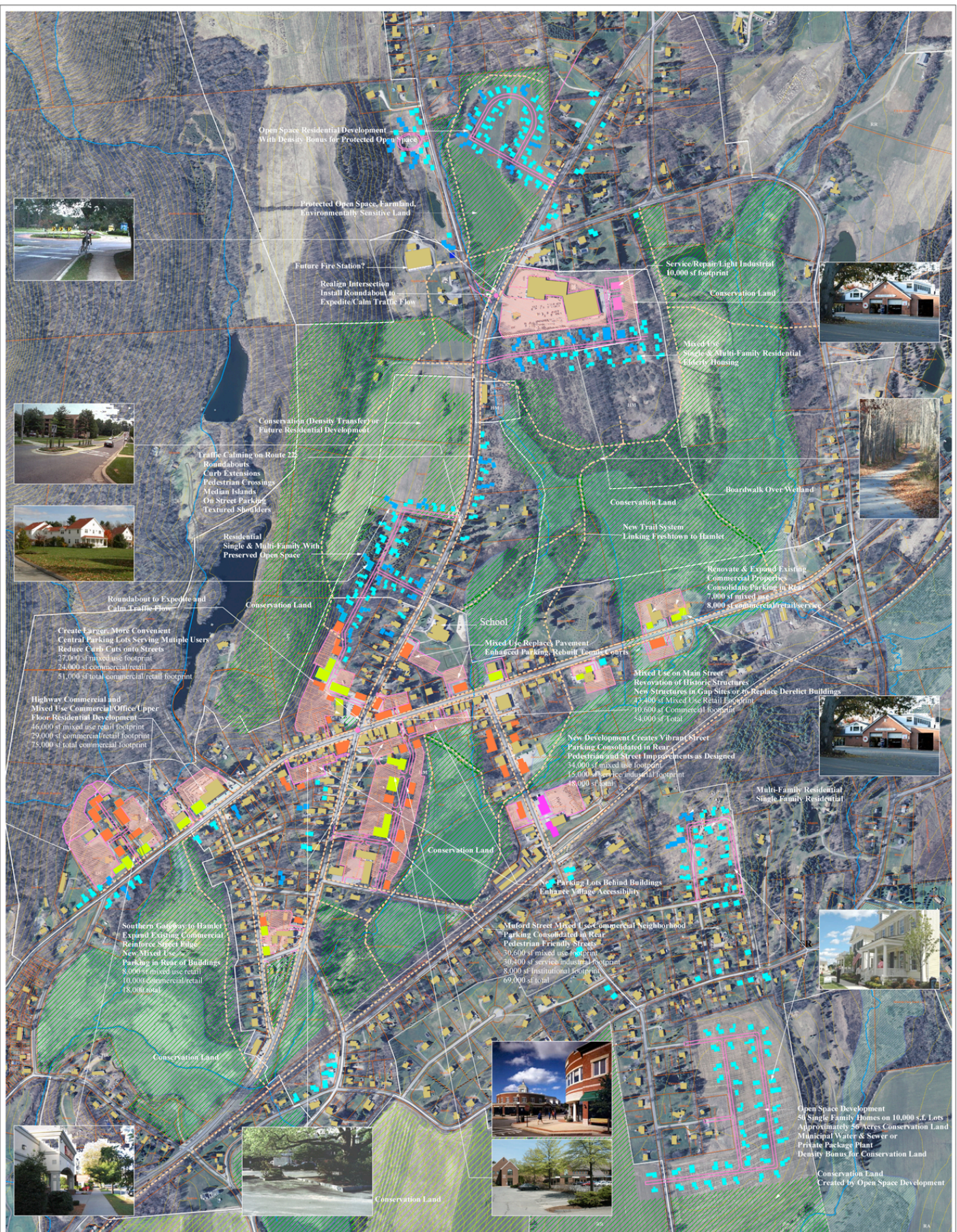


cially through traffic - while encouraging more continuous rates of vehicular flow. This can be done by creating impediments to high speeds and eliminating inefficient elements such as stop lights that inhibit smooth traffic flows. Roundabouts can be located at major highway intersections (Freshtown/Cascade Road, Main Hamlet Intersection, southern and western gateways). Roundabouts at the outer edges of the hamlet will warn drivers that they are entering a populated area where slower speeds are required. Numerous, highly visible, textured pedestrian crossings, wider sidewalks, street trees and other elements will enhance the hamlet's walkability while reducing the perceived width and openness of the street as seen by drivers. Curb extensions, raised roadway dividers as well as attractive street side and median monuments, planters, bollards, benches, fountains and other public art will enhance the character of the hamlet while creating perceived obstacles that slow traffic to manageable hamlet center speeds and noise levels.

On-street parking is a vital traffic calming tool. Cars parked parallel on streets have been proven to slow traffic and insulate pedestrians from moving cars. On-street parking also makes the most efficient use of available paved surfaces that are otherwise often empty - inviting speeding. These visual obstacles will serve as warning signs to slow traffic and alert drivers to the greater restrictions of in-town driving. On the other hand, roundabouts and other traffic calming measures have been proven to increase vehicular travel efficiency by creating more continuous traffic flows and eliminating frustrating waits at stop lights. Careful design of traffic calming devices is important for safety, efficiency and to ensure that they blend in with the hamlet's historic visual character.

## **Maps, Plans and Perspectives**





## Amenia Hamlet Traditional Neighborhood Concept Plan

Amenia, New York

### Concept Plan #1: Hamlet Oriented

December 6, 2007



Prepared For: Town of Amenia, New York  
Prepared By: Dodson Associates, Ltd. Landscape Architects and Planners

#### Key:

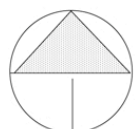
- Existing Structures
- Single Family Residential
- Multi-Family Residential
- Mixed Use: Commercial/Office/Residential
- Service/Repair/Light Industry
- Commercial/Retail
- Institutional
- Parking Lots
- Conservation Land
- Protected Farmland

#### New Mixed Use/Retail/Commercial Total Building Footprint Area

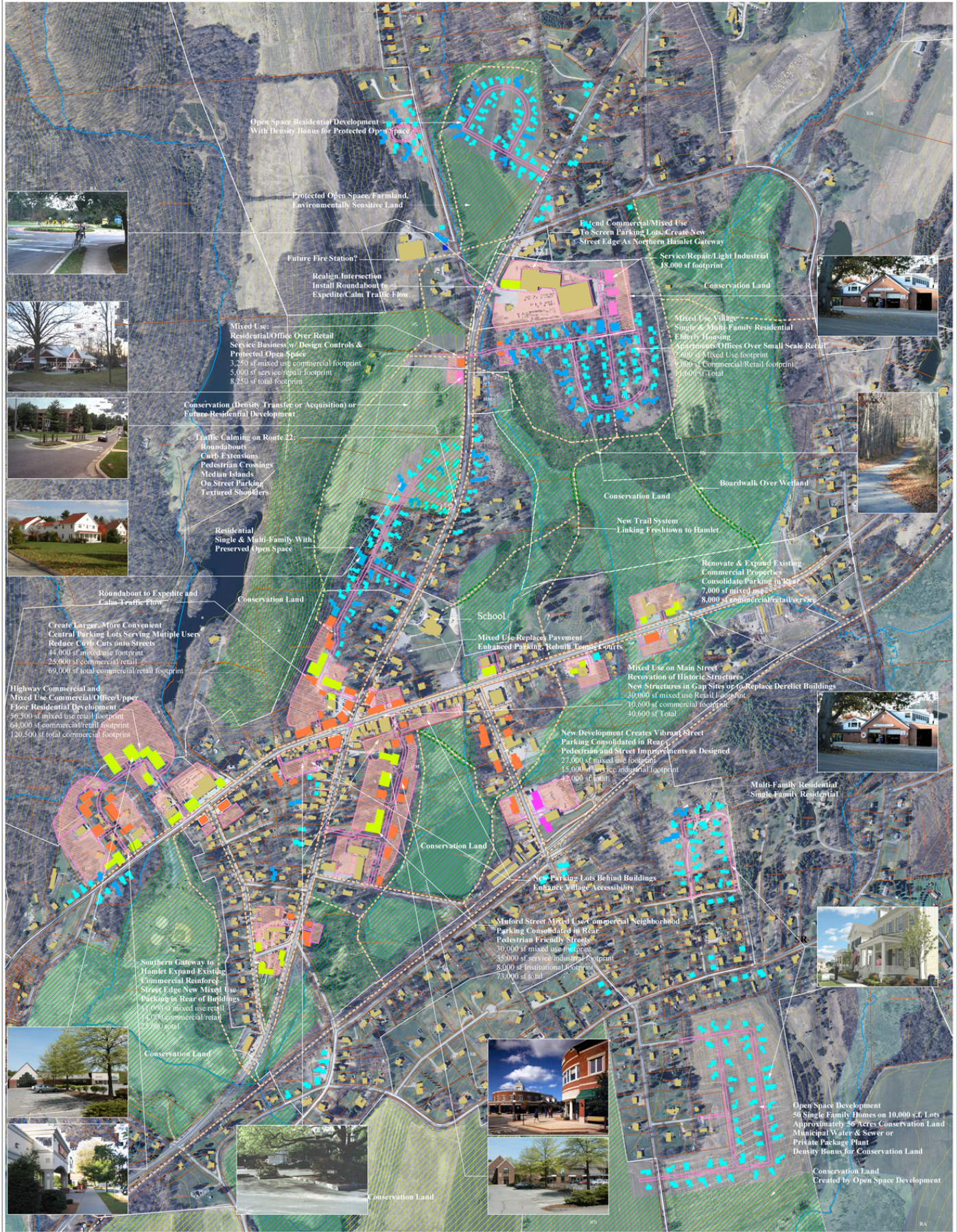
Mixed Use	188,000 s.f.
Retail/Commercial	108,000 s.f.
Service/Repair/Light Industry	24,000 s.f.
<b>Total</b>	<b>320,000 s.f.</b>

#### New Residential

245 Single Family Homes
38 Multi-Family Buildings (152 units)







# Amenia Hamlet Traditional Neighborhood Concept Plan

Amenia, New York

## Concept Plan #2

December 6, 2007

Prepared For: Town of Amenia, New York

Prepared By: Dodson Associates, Ltd. Landscape Architects and Planners

### Key:

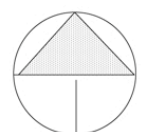
- Existing Structures
- Single Family Residential
- Multi-Family Residential
- Mixed Use: Commercial/Office/Residential
- Service/Repair/Light Industry
- Commercial/Retail
- Institutional
- Parking Lots
- Conservation Land
- Protected Farmland

### New Mixed Use/Retail/Commercial Total Building Footprint Area

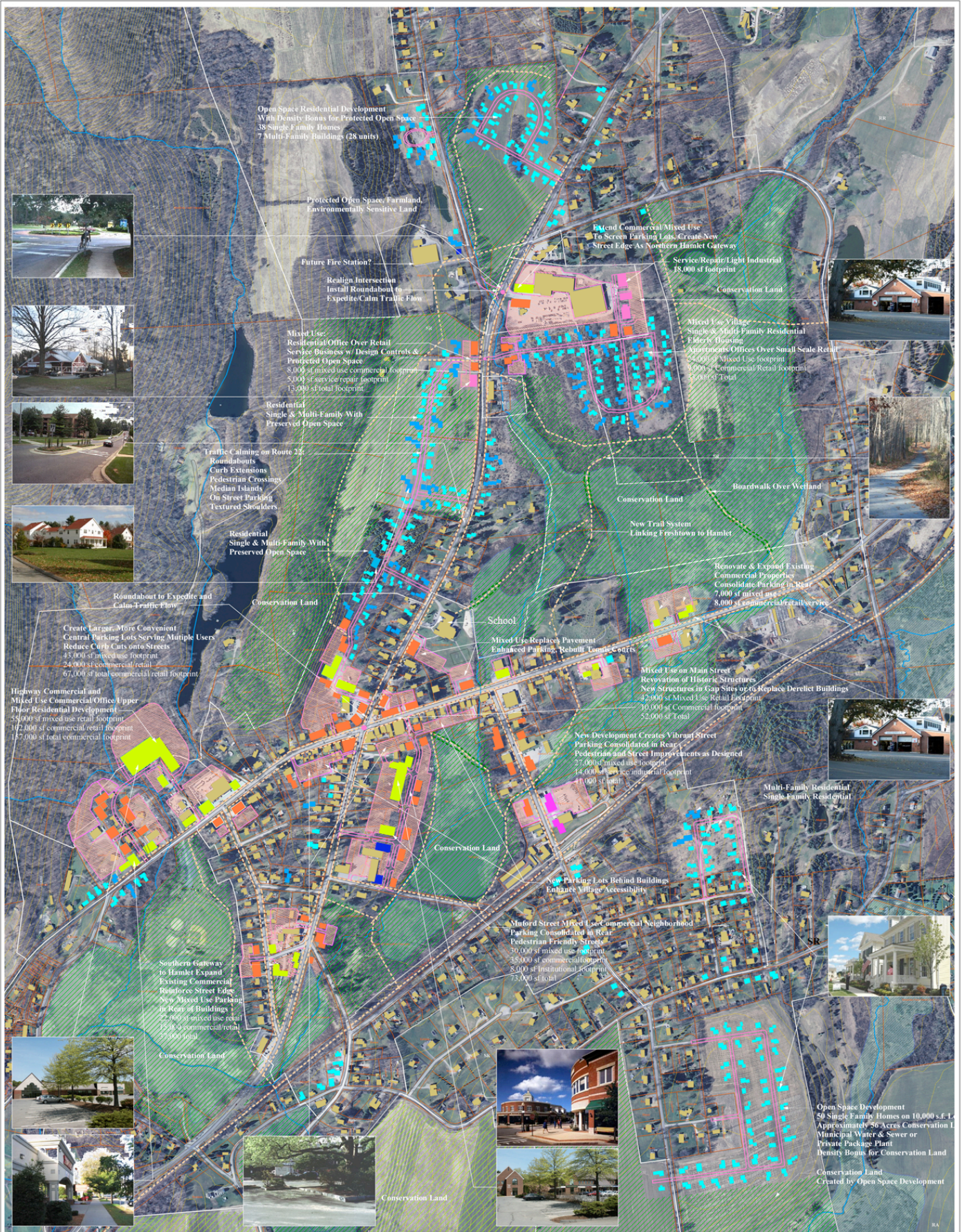
Mixed Use	211,300 s.f.
Retail/Commercial	164,000 s.f.
Service/Repair/Light Industry	37,000 s.f.
<b>Total</b>	<b>412,300 s.f.</b>

### New Residential

245 Single Family Homes  
38 Multi-Family Buildings (152 units)







## Amenia Hamlet Traditional Neighborhood Concept Plan

Amenia, New York

### Concept Plan Option #3

December 6, 2007

0' 300' 600' 1000'

Prepared For: Town of Amenia, New York  
Prepared By: Dodson Associates, Ltd. Landscape Architects and Planners

#### Key:

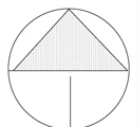
- Existing Structures
- Single Family Residential
- Multi-Family Residential
- Mixed Use: Commercial/Office/Residential
- Service/Repair/Light Industry
- Commercial/Retail
- Institutional
- Parking Lots
- Conservation Land
- Protected Farmland

#### New Mixed Use/Retail/Commercial Total Building Footprint Area

Mixed Use	260,000 s.f.
Retail/Commercial	201,000 s.f.
Service/Repair/Light Industry	37,000 s.f.
<b>Total</b>	<b>498,000 s.f.</b>

#### New Residential

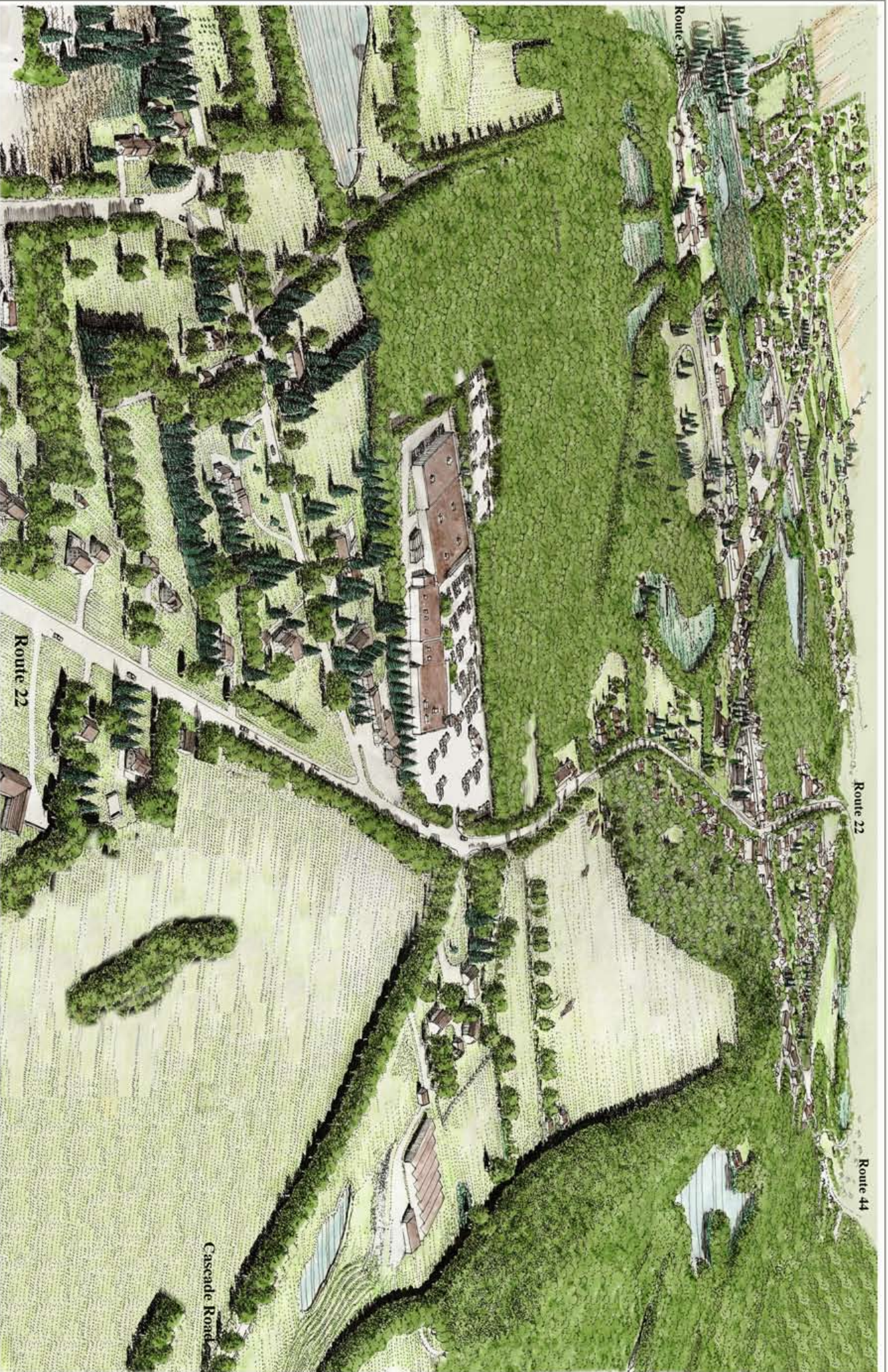
245 Single Family Homes  
38 Multi-Family Buildings (152 units)











# Amenia Hamlet Concept Plan

## Existing Conditions

Aerial View Looking South





## Amenia Hamlet Concept Plan

### Future Scenario (Concept Plan #3)

#### Aerial View Looking North

*Combining Extensive Future Growth With Preservation of Open Space, Environmental Resources and Traditional Hamlet Character.*

February 22, 2008

Prepared For: Town of Amenia

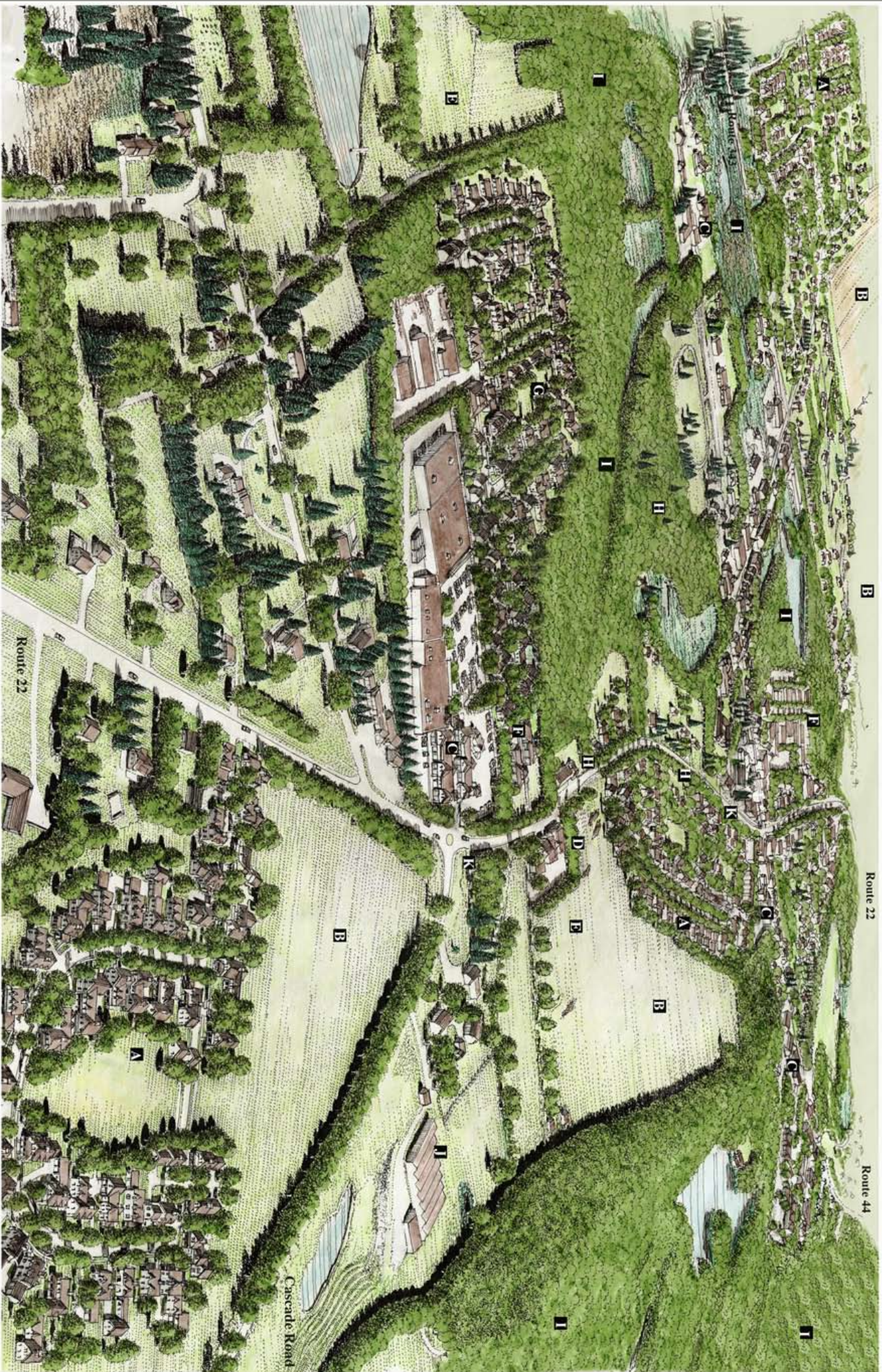
Prepared By: Dodson Associates, Ltd.

#### Key:

- A. New Mixed Use Retail/Commercial Center including Highway Commercial Stores
- B. Western Gateway to the Hamlet
- C. Historic Preservation as well as New Infill Development in the Hamlet
- D. Traffic Calming on Major Highways: Roundabouts, Pedestrian Amenities
- E. Conservation Land: Extensive Protected Areas With Trails, Boardwalks
- F. New Mixed Use Shopping District at Four Brothers

- G. New Residential Street Linking Four Brothers to Freshtown
- H. New Mixed Use Street: "Munford Avenue"
- I. Expanded, Renovated Commercial/Retail Southern Gateway to the Hamlet
- J. Merchant Street, Brookside Add New Infill Buildings That Fit the Character of the Hamlet
- K. Freshtown Area: New Mixed Use Development with a Mix of Residential, Affordable Housing, Small Scale Retail, Office and Service/Repair





# Amenia Hamlet Concept Plan

## Future Scenario (Concept Plan #3)

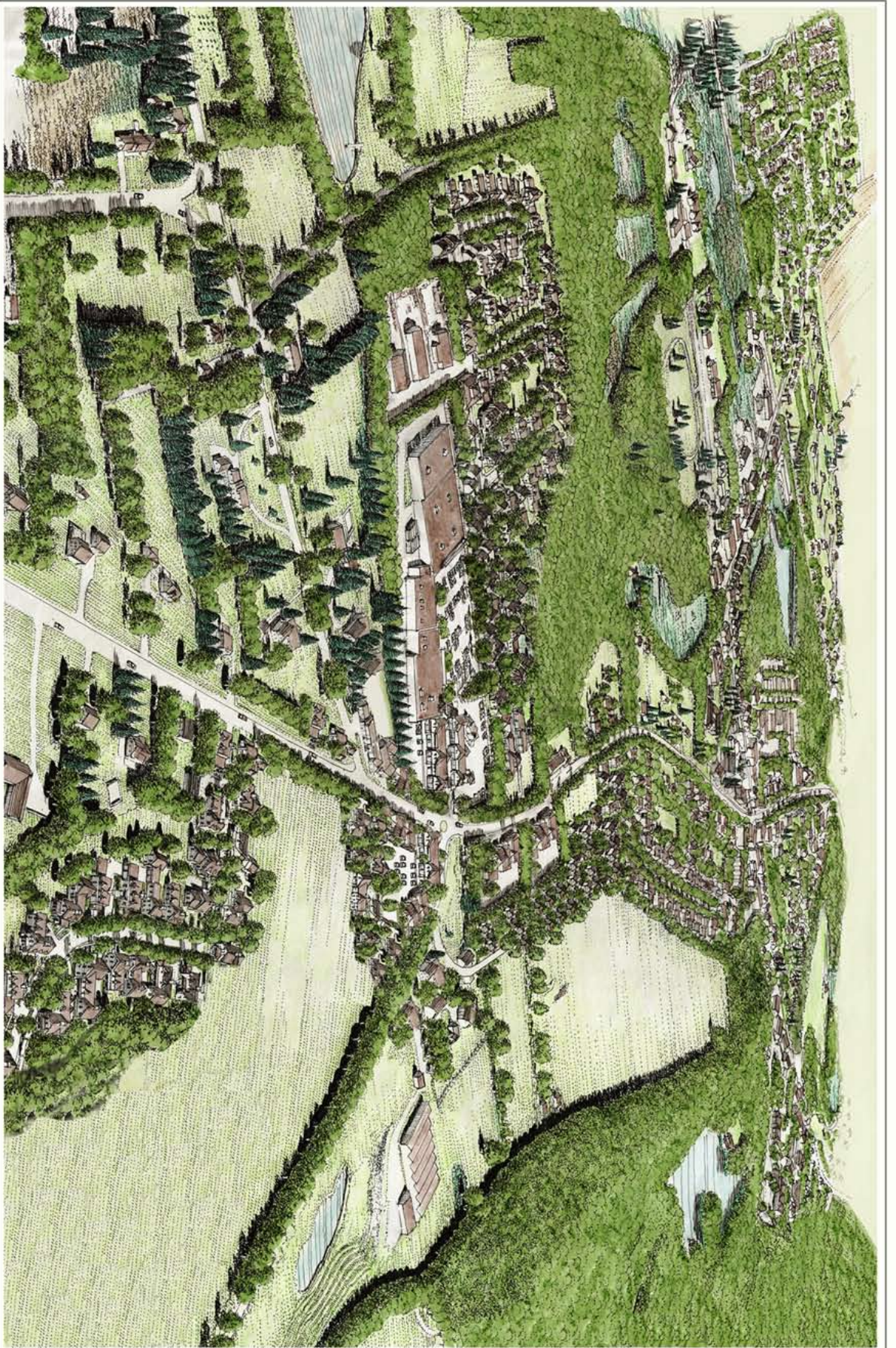
### Aerial View Looking South

Combining Extensive Future Growth With Preservation of Open Space, Environmental Resources and Traditional Hamlet Character.

#### Key:

- A. New Open Space Residential Neighborhood
- B. Conservation Land Associated with Open Space Development/Density Transfers
- C. Expansion of Existing Commercial
- D. Carefully Sited and Designed Commercial/Service Cluster
- E. Preserved Open Space Associated with Commercial Cluster
- F. Mixed Use Retail/Commercial/Office/Residential
- G. Residential: Single Family, Multi-Family Affordable Housing
- H. Sidewalks, Trails, Boardwalks Linking Freshtown to Hamlet
- I. Conservation Land
- J. Future Town Center?
- K. Traffic Calming: Roundabout, Pedestrian Crossings, On-Street Parking, Street Trees
- L. Hamlet Center Historic Rehab and Compatible Infill Development
- M. Relocated Cascade Road/Route 22 Intersection





# Amenia Hamlet Concept Plan

## Future Scenario (Concept Plan #4)

### Aerial View Looking South

Combining Even More Extensive Future Growth With Preservation of Open Space, Environmental Resources and Traditional Hamlet Centers

February 22, 2008

Prepared For: Town of Amenia

Prepared By: Dodson Associates, Ltd.

#### Key:

- A. New Open Space Residential Neighborhood
- B. Conservation Lands Associated with Open Space Development/Density Transfers
- C. Expansion of Existing Commercial
- D. Carefully Sited and Designed Commercial/Service Cluster
- E. Preserved Open Space Associated with Commercial Cluster
- F. Mixed Use Retail/Commercial/Office/Residential

- G. Residential: Single Family, Multi-Family Affordable Housing
- H. Sidewalks, Trails, Boardwalks Linking Freshtown to Hamlet
- I. Conservation Land
- J. Future Town Garage?
- K. Traffic Calming: Roundabout, Pedestrian Crossings, On-Street Parking, Street Tree
- L. Hamlet Center Historic Rehab and Compatible Infill Development
- M. Relocated Cascade Road/Route 22 Intersection



## **Appendix 1**

### **Notes from Interviews and Meetings**

The following notes describe the interviews held by Harry Dodson and Keith Zaltzberg of Dodson Associates, Ltd. on October 1 and 2, 2007 in Amenia.

#### **October 1st**

Betty Rooney  
Jerry Thompson  
Tom Werner  
Janet Reagon & Mark Doyle  
Steve Perotti  
Mark Doyle  
Arlene Iuliano  
Bill Carroll  
Jack Gregory  
Sharon Kroeger  
Darlene Riemer  
Alician Hale  
Gina Mignola  
Wayne Euvrard  
Nina Peek

#### **October 2nd**

George Fenn, Jr.  
Maureen Rooney  
Ann Sanford  
Tony Robuselli  
Bob Meade  
Charlotte Murphy  
Richard Syms & Eve Syms, Michael Sirignano (lawyer)  
Donna Durbridge  
Patrick Nelligan  
Stanley Avey

#### **Betty Rooney- Affordable Housing Committee Chairperson**

Concerned about effects on current residents and working class folks of 2nd home, luxury developments in the area. Believes this pattern of development will preclude working class families from affording decent housing.

She would like to see more affordable housing located in town, possibly on the lots adjacent to the Freshtown plaza. According to Betty, the Katz Brothers (the owners of

Freshtown and some of this land) are interested in locating 12 units of affordable housing there.

Future development in Hamlet is limited by the lack of a sewage system.

Concerned that expansion of commercial development along the Rt. 22 would result in an undesirable sprawl pattern like the Rt. 7 corridor in New Milford.

Efforts should be focused on attracting small businesses to the hamlet because the town can't support big box stores

Betty mentioned the historic loss of jobs at the Wassaic State Hospital and stated that local citizens are concerned that this facility is becoming a prison housing sexual predators.

**Jerry Thompson** - Amenia Resident of 27 years, lives near Perotti Parcel. Submitted written statement. "The town is intact enough that we can save it...a proposal that is a third way will help the town"

#1 Concern: Possibility that Rt. 22 could become a conduit for sprawl like towns south of Amenia have experienced (Rt. 9 in Poughkeepsie is NOT the model to emulate). This is of particular concern because Amenia doesn't have an alternate Main Street in addition to Rt. 22.

He sees "B-Road" development along Rt. 22 as "pie-in-the-sky" Jerry is unconvinced by the argument that expansive commercial development along this corridor will lower the private property tax burden in a meaningful way, and he thinks that the coming of "big box" style development will destroy the existing character of the town. Believes that Freshtown was the death-blow to the Main St. businesses.

Would prefer to see development efforts focused on the existing Hamlet center with the goal of a vibrant mixed-use district.

Ideally, the stock of existing buildings on Main St. could be rehabilitated. He cited the Riemer House as a good example of this type of re-use (house contains various professional offices, only has one curb cut, and is in an attractive historic building)

However, any business development will require the installation of a waste treatment system and better parking options.

**Tom Werner** - Amenia Resident of 35 years. Representative of Save Amenia  
"We need growth with some commercial to alleviate the tax burden"

Sees a great need for commercial development in Amenia because "there is only a women's dress shop in the Freshtown plaza". He would rather do business in town rather than drive.



Tom would like to see development of commercial and light industrial properties both north and south of the Hamlet along Rt. 22, especially to attract another grocery store and a dry goods store.

He envisions the development of a one-way “B-Road” complex near the intersection Cascade Rd and Rt. 22 (on the west side of 22). Proposed that existing and future traffic problems could be alleviated through the installation of a traffic circle at this intersection.

However, he wouldn’t like to see all business leave downtown and stated that if the Post Office were to be moved out of the Hamlet center, the town would die.

Also, redevelopment and new development along Rt. 22 and 44 should fit the architectural character of the town and keep buildings on the road while providing for adequate parking. Not like Dover

Tom stated that parking is badly needed in the downtown area and that some of the defunct houses in the Hamlet could be torn down to make way for off-street parking. This would be preferable to on-street parking.

He is concerned about the cost (\$4,000,000) to the entire population of Amenia to put in a sewer system that will serve so few in the town.

Believes that the Section 8 housing along Rt. 44 is a problem for the town, and an impediment to the rejuvenation of the Hamlet.

**Janet Reagon & Mark Doyle-** Concerned that the new zoning isn’t well understood. Feel that “Mixed-Use” Zone use needs more definition for Amenia. Would like to see what other towns have done.

New commercial development, regardless of location should be phased in. Who is going to occupy these spaces?

There are several existing commercial opportunities in Amenia...the Brookside Restaurant and the Electric Building on lower Powder House Rd.

Discussion of the workshop format

**Steve Perotti & Cheryl Morris** (landscape designer for Steve): Steve is a life-time resident of Amenia and a landowner. Cheryl has drawn up a plan on behalf of Steve illustrating the development proposed for the Perotti parcel across from the Freshtown Plaza.

Without development, Amenia will become/is a bedroom community like Darien, CT.

He stated that commercial business is the key to keeping property taxes reasonable for the

private landowner.

Steve is unhappy about the status of his parcel under the new zoning passed in July, 2007. His parcel was designated Rural Residential, but he would have preferred to be designated Hamlet Mixed-use or Hamlet Commercial.

He would like to do something “interesting” on his property, proposes a mixed-use development including a small department store “like Ames”, other various small commercial/retail buildings, a senior center, housing, or professional space.

Proposes to build this complex with low visual and environmental impacts (cites the Hanaford in Lagrangeville as a model).

Believes the intersection of Cascade Rd. and Rt. 22 must be redesigned regardless of what happens here to address dangerous conditions generated by the current configuration of Cascade Rd, the entrance of the Freshtown Plaza, and the high traffic volumes, especially the tractor-trailer traffic. (Stated that there have been 6 roll-overs in the past year).

Also believes that the stream on his property is misclassified as a perennial stream, and is actually intermittent.

**Mark Doyle** - works with town in various capacities, GIS, agriculture, environmental “the Dutchess County Economic Development Council was consulted and they found there to be a glut of existing commercial space in Amenia”

He wonders, if commercial development is allowed along Rt. 22 north, where to draw the line for that “growth”. How do you stop sprawl if develop occurs

Believes that the Comprehensive Plan isn’t well understood in town and that certain terms like in-fill require definition in the context of Amenia. Infill could take place in the Hamlet center using small/short street extensions, by making higher-use of under-utilized sites. Cites the plan for the Four Brother Pizza Plaza drawn by John Clarke, the Dutchess County Planner.

If Hamlet is to become more dense, than more recreation facilities (i.e. soccer fields) are needed. Perhaps a soccer field could be put in south of Freshtown.

Athletic fields could be used as wetland buffers if other development (like more department stores) were to occur there.

**Arlene Iuliano** - Masterplan Committee 1991, neighbor to Perotti’s land.

Believes that the Rail Trail is the new heart of town, like the train line used to be.

Asks is the town really “walk able” if it spreads out over a mile (up to Freshtown).



Would like to see a walk way to Freshtown that is safe

Asks if a round about is a viable option to calm traffic through town and make the Fresh-town/Cascade/Rt. 22 intersection safer.

**Bill Carroll** - Life time resident. Remembers the vitality of Main St during the 1950's.

The weekenders and post-911 arrival to Amenia are driving up property costs.

Would like to see new commercial development on Rt. 22N in order to alleviate the tax burden and provide services/ shopping locally. Describes a need for another grocery store.

Concerned about the safety of the Freshtown/Cascade/Rt. 22 intersection. Suggested reconfiguring the intersection, especially if the fire dept. moves to cascade road, perhaps a round-about

Doesn't want to see Amenia become like Rt. 9 in Poughkeepsie.

Is in favor of the Silo Ridge hotel, but doesn't like the proposal for the Condos

Suggested tearing down the "run-down" buildings west of Four Brothers Pizza and redeveloping that whole corner as a shopping plaza with architecture appropriate to the down town.

Observed that the "Brookside" receives lots of flood water.

Believes that the Hamlet needs sewer system in order to thrive and grow.

**Jack Gregory** - Resident, Property owner on west-side of Rt. 22 across from Freshtown  
Believes that if you add more highway commercial businesses along Rt. 22 N, on both sides of road, the town would attract more people who will spend money in town.

Would like to see Rt 22 N developed on both sides from Freshtown Plaza and Perotti parcel back to Hamlet center.

Thinks the "B" roads coming off of a realigned Cascade Rd would be a safe and aesthetically appealing configuration for highway commercial development

Cite the Wal-Mart in Hilton Head, NC as positive example of how big box retailers can "fit in" to a community.

Would like to construct a 12-bay garage on his property that has the architectural characteristics of a barn

Concerned that the new 10 acre zoning within the Rural Residential District will drive “regular” folks out, and a lack of commercial development along Rt. 22 will give the coming generations of people with nowhere to work

Doesn’t believe that new business will generate more traffic

**Sharon Kroeger** - Member of Wassaic and Amenia (or maybe Sharon) Chambers of Commerce. Owns the Wassaic General Store.

Described the historic connections between the centers/hamlets of the “Oblong Valley” (Amenia, Leedsville, Sharon, Amenia Union, South Amenia, and Wassaic) and some of the historic sites in the valley (her store, the synagogue in Amenia, Mumford’s home, the Delavern Inn).

Stated that the Four Brother’s Pizza Site hosts a large Agricultural Auction each year that attracts 600 people or more.

If redevelopment were to occur on this site, she would like to see the capacity to host this event maintained.

Believes that Brick Yard Pond would be a great public asset given its central location and proximity to the rail trail.

**Alison Hale** - Member of the Waste Water Committee and Affordable Housing Committee

Hamlet needs waste water treatment plant to treat the estimated 160,000 ga/day from 300-400 households especially if development/ redevelopment is to occur.

This has been an identified need for decades.

There is some deliberation needed to decide on the coverage of the proposed sewer district, perhaps will cover the same area as the water district, perhaps more inclusive.

Hamlet is currently considering an offer from developer of Silo Ridge: if the proposed 600+ unit development is approved, the developer would build extra capacity in the wastewater treatment system to accommodate the hamlet’s treatment needs.

**Gina Mignola** - Planning Board Committee Member. Submitted written statement The new HR and HM zoning districts allow for a big increase in clustered, multifamily housing in the areas north of the Hamlet center.

Concerned that this will become ghettoized, low-quality housing for low and middle income families, and that this great increase in low/middle income families will be a drain



on the resources of the town. This new influx of people requiring services will require the town to field more police, create a paid fire department.

Gina is concerned that large clusters of low income people don't attract business, so the house should be sprinkled throughout "regular" proposed developments.

The influx of ghettoized low-income housing will be exacerbated by the demand for service workers that the new resort and upscale developments slated for Amenia will generate. Furthermore, these new resort workers may displace the current working class population.

Therefore, Gina would like to see the size of the HR and HM districts reduced for a "trial period" so that the people of the town can see how these districts develop, and then expand them if they like the results.

**Wayne Euvrard** - Town Councilor (currently Town Supervisor), long-time resident

Largely agrees with Gina Mignola on issues related to the size, location, and potential effects of the new HR and HM zoning districts.

Wayne is also concerned about effect of the new zoning on the future of commercial development in the Hamlet. He sees the opportunities for highway commercial and light industrial too constrained by the changes. He would like to see much of the Rt. 22 N corridor rezoned to accommodate these uses.

Amenia needs a car wash, a movie theater, etc.

Has questions about the definition of affordable house, what is it, who is it for (economic strata), and where should it go. States that a pedestrian connection to Freshtown is needed.

**Nina Peek** - Professional Planner, new resident

There are several major developments proposed for the area around Hamlet including Silo Ridge and Depot Hill. These are projected to be built out in the next 5-10 years.

She is concerned that the developers have underestimated the impact the influx of new residents will have on the traffic flows, public transportation, and other infrastructure.

Additionally she is concerned about the quality of the EIS submitted by the developers of the Depot Hill Project.

Both of these developments fall within the Scenic Overlay District and are within the viewshed of Delavern Hill from Rt. 44 E. This view is one of the major assets of the town and will be adversely affected by these projects.

Commercial development within the hamlet should occur on a small scale to fill in the “missing teeth” and vacant store fronts in the historic center.

The hamlet also could use a “great place to park bikes” in order to serve folks using the rail trail.

Larger-scale commercial development, i.e. big box stores, should be kept to the south of the Hamlet, between Amenia and Wassaic.

Concerned that the population of the hamlet couldn’t reasonably support larger-scale commercial development which require a regional draw. Also, there several big box developments proposed or existing in the local region including Wingdale and Dover.

Believes that any problems with absentee landlords and affordable housing in the hamlet could be addressed by passing a Landlord Registration Law such as they have in Mt. Kisko. These are enforced by the building inspector - fines levied against violators.

**Patrick Nelligan** - Hamlet resident, owner of Brickyard Pond property. Currently involved in a law suit against the town regarding the new town well at Brickyard Pond.

Opposed to the drilling of a new well by the town adjacent to Brickyard Pond. Feels that the well was drilled to benefit a development planned on Depot Hill Road. Concerned about the well’s effect on ground and surface waters.

His highest priority is the continued preservation of Brickyard Pond as a natural environment. Wildlife habitat must be protected in any future plans for the hamlet. Does not want the pond turned into a public park with high levels of use.

### **Notes from Meetings with Town Board**

Meeting with Town Board on September 11, 2007

#### **Waste Water Treatment Plant/ System**

- NY Department of health concerned about existing conditions
- “This has been an identified need in Amenia for at least forty years”- Janet Reagon
- Explore where sewer lines should go and consider plan for an expansion of the water district, including the expansion to Depot Hill
- Board members (Reagon, Roger Russell) would like DA to do this

#### **Traffic/ Pedestrian issues**

- Truck traffic through Hamlet area is a problem on Rt. 22 with “tractor trailers treating the road like a highway”



- Need for sidewalk or other safe pedestrian/ bicycle route to the Freshtown Shopping Center north of Hamlet. Possible routes suggested by community/board: sidewalk/ bike lanes along Rt. 22. Boardwalk or other crossing through the wetland between center of Hamlet on Rt. 343 and the shopping center.
- Is it legal to bike on side walks in NY state, what width
- Dangerous turning lane on Rt. 22 into/out of Freshtown Plaza

#### Issues of Town Character, Design, and Other Concerns

- Create town “for everyday people” with a sense of community rather than a “weekend” town (Victoria Perotti).
- Dry goods store, auto parts store needed
- Balanced development including both “modern highway businesses” and hamlet revitalization
- “need more than 20 acres for commercial development” in Amenia for Highway businesses (Wayne Euvrard)
- Inviting streetscape with trees, wide sidewalks, more small retail
- Slower through traffic speed, “road is too wide”
- Easy parking, opportunities for shared parking
- Bike lanes connecting to Rail Trail helping to funnel visitors into Hamlet Area
- Parking and services for Rail Trail users  
i.e. bike shops/ signage for shops... what about water, air
- Possible infill of Hamlet with secondary roads
- Possible diversion of local traffic to new secondary streets and new business locations
- Mechanic street improvement (what does this mean?)

- Gateways:
- Entrance of the Hamlet-
  - Mygatt Road from east on Rt. 343
  - Maple Brook School from north on Rt. 22
  - Immaculate Conception Church (where is this)
  - Where the “Welcome” signs are (where are these)

#### **Also contacted:**

Michael Klemens, ecological consultant

John Clarke, Dutchess County planner

Dan Katz, owner of Freshtown Plaza

Serge Madikians, owner of Serevan restaurant

Mike Haggerty, consulting planner

Gail Hermosilla, town clerk

Joel Russell, planning and zoning consultant

**Documents Referenced:**

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## Amenia Hamlet Concept Plan

### Future Scenario (Concept Plan #3)

Aerial View Looking South

*Combining Extensive Future Growth With Preservation of Open Space, Environmental Resources and Traditional Hamlet Character.*

**Key:**

- A. New Open Space Residential Neighborhood
- B. Conservation Lands Associated with Open Space Development/Density Transfers
- C. Expansion of Existing Commercial
- D. Carefully Sited and Designed Commercial/Service Cluster
- E. Preserved Open Space Associated with Commercial Cluster
- F. Mixed Use Retail/Commercial/Office/Residential

- G. Residential: Single Family, Multi-Family Affordable Housing
- H. Sidewalks, Trails, Boardwalks Linking Freshtown to Hamlet
- I. Conservation Land
- J. Future Town Garage?
- K. Traffic Calming: Roundabout, Pedestrian Crossings, On-Street Parking, Street Trees
- L. Hamlet Center Historic Rehab and Compatible Infill Development
- M. Relocated Cascade Road/Route 22 Intersection