

TOWN OF CAMBRIDGE

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Final Draft

July 2008

Prepared by the

CAMBRIDGE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TEAM

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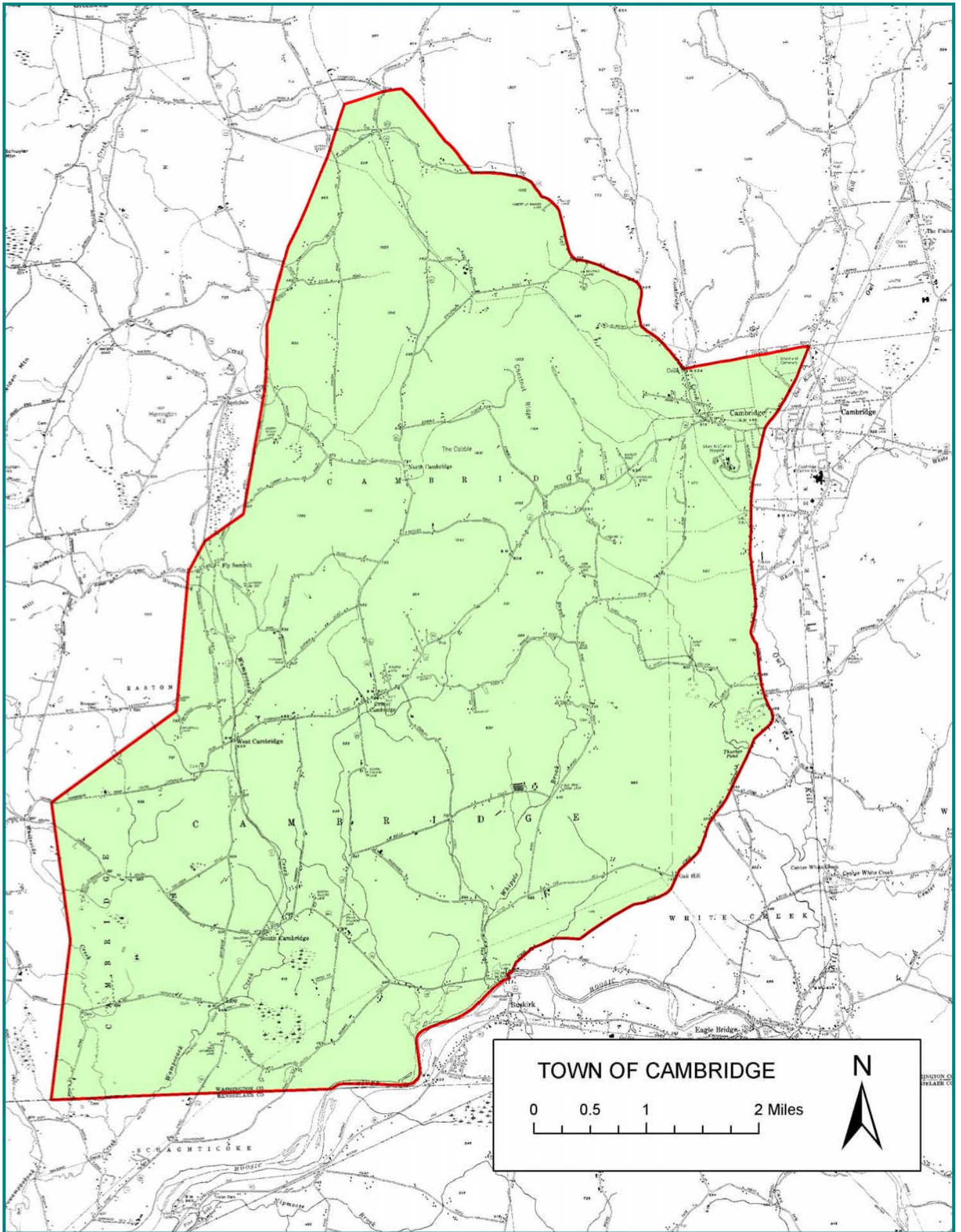
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SUMMARY

In 2004, the Cambridge Town Board asked an all-volunteer team to write the first-ever Comprehensive Plan to guide land use within the Town. The need for this Plan has been driven by increasing rates of development, especially by the growing high technology industry in and around the Capital District. Although the overall population of the State is flat, the population around Albany and surrounding counties has been increasing. The increasing population has increased the demand for development, especially for housing. This Plan, once adopted and implemented by the Town Board, will provide direction to the Planning Board. It will give the people of the Town a voice in how future development unfolds.

The Comprehensive Plan Team has worked to prepare a Draft Plan that reflects the desires and concerns of the townspeople. The Team has been guided by what they learned by speaking with and listening to residents in numerous settings. A mail survey, conducted in 2005, has provided a wealth of information about opinions throughout the Town on a wide variety of topics. The Team has relied heavily upon the Survey results.

The Plan discusses existing conditions and the opinions of the residents and then recommends a set of actions. These recommendations reflect several important findings. First, most residents like Cambridge the way it is. They value the rural character: a landscape dominated by active farms, sparsely dotted with residences, many of which are older buildings of traditional Federalist or Greek Revival architecture. Residents value quiet, low traffic, and open spaces. Many enjoy the freedom to conduct small businesses from their homes. Significantly, many of these businesses are “creative/cultural” - artists, writers, musicians and the like who have settled in Cambridge because of its special beauty. Our residents prefer limited government and are concerned about protecting their property rights, especially the ability to realize a return on their investments should they need to sell their lands. Taken together, the Plan’s recommendations are intended to keep the Town looking the way it does while allowing for some growth.

Several of the recommendations are regulatory in nature. For a number of reasons, the Team does not recommend zoning. Instead, the most important recommendation in this Plan involves the subdivision of land. We recommend that the existing subdivision regulations be expanded to limit the density of future development and incorporate the principles of “*conservation planning*” and “*suitability for agriculture*”. The *Public Review Draft* presented a single proposal for how density could be limited through the subdivision regulations; this *Final Draft* offers additional alternatives developed in response to public comments. The critical elements of any effective alternative should include: effective protection of land suitable for farming, land use densities roughly comparable to existing densities, provisions for landowners to sell their lands at reasonable profits, and regulatory flexibility.

Another very important recommendation is to give the Planning Board “site plan review” authority. This authority would enable the Town to play a role when land is developed for a new and different use but no land is subdivided. This is especially important for large commercial projects.

The Team also recommends that some land uses be banned altogether. Certain activities would so disrupt the Town's rural character and residents' enjoyment that they are simply incompatible. We have recommended that the Town prohibit: private landfills and salvage yards. Towers for cellular telephones should not be banned but should be regulated.

Several of the recommendations are non-regulatory information campaigns. By a variety of ways, information would be disseminated to accomplish a variety of objectives. Protection of the night sky could be encouraged by distributing technical information about "smart lighting" techniques. Preservation of historic architecture could be encouraged through a voluntary designation program for older buildings or by State grants programs. The development of trail systems for hiking or biking or horseback riding could be encouraged by providing volunteers with information about other State grants programs.

Agriculture should be given special attention. The land use regulations mentioned above are intended to ensure that sufficient arable land remains available to farmers. The Town already has most of the important pieces in place: agricultural districts, property tax exemptions, Right-to-Farm protection, access to federal farm support programs, a county agricultural plan, etc. "Alternative agriculture", which could represent the future of farming in the Town, could benefit from better access to information, perhaps by creating some local networking organization. Cornell Cooperative Extension and the local schools could serve in this regard. Farmers and other large landowners should also be given information about land trusts to enjoy numerous economic benefits while retaining ownership and agricultural use of the land.

The Plan recommends that Town services not be expanded. Cambridge should remain without streetlights or curbs or traffic lights. No new roads should be built and gravel roads should remain unpaved. Sewer and water should remain the responsibility of individual landowners. One utility is very important to the economic future of the Town. High speed and reliable access to the Internet is not currently available to all and yet many home-businesses serve their customers via the Internet. The Plan recommends that the Town give Internet access a high priority, whether through contracts with local cable and telephone service providers or through the New York "universal broadband initiative."

The *Public Review Draft* of this *Plan* was offered for public comment. The Team then considered the concerns of the residents and incorporated several changes into this *Final Draft* which will be presented to the Town Board for their consideration. The Board can accept all or just parts of the recommendations. Either way, the Town Board will then have to act to implement each recommendation, including the development and ultimate adoption of regulations.

The Team urges all residents to participate actively in shaping the future of the Town of Cambridge. The many recommended actions described in this document (and summarized in Table 4 on page 64) represent opportunities to become involved. Please consider contributing to these efforts on behalf of your community.

* * *

Part I - Overview

Preparing this comprehensive plan has been made relatively easy because most residents agree on fundamental issues. They like Cambridge the way it is and they want to keep its rural character; they want farming to remain the dominant force on the landscape. There is also strong sentiment that the Town should take an active role in shaping future development. The task has been more challenging, though, when deciding how best to achieve the desired outcomes. This document represents the Comprehensive Plan Team's best efforts to help the Town make decisions about its future. It provides much information and analysis and also makes numerous recommendations to the Town Board. It remains for the Board to embrace - and ultimately implement - those recommendations it supports.

Rural Character

Throughout this Plan - and throughout the planning process - the term "rural character" is encountered repeatedly. In Cambridge, this term reflects both a landscape and a lifestyle that share several common features. The landscape itself is dominated by farming. Farm fields and farm buildings are the most obvious features. Other buildings, especially residences, are scattered in low densities among the farms or, as in South Cambridge, Center Cambridge and Coila, are gathered together in hamlets. There are few purely residential subdivisions and they are low in density and modest in size. There are very few commercial buildings. The road network is sparse, with gravel surfaces still common. Traffic is light and there are no traffic signals outside of the Village. There are almost no streetlights or curbs. Water supplies and septic systems are the responsibility of individual landowners. Rural recreation that requires open space is common: hunting, nature study, hiking, horseback riding, cycling and snowmobiling, for example.

Property Taxes

The survey conducted by the Team found high property taxes to be a significant concern. During the time the Team has been preparing this *Plan*, the Town undertook two initiatives related to taxes. First, they decided to hire a "sole assessor" to ensure consistency. They also completed a reassessment of all lands in the Town; this has been accomplished through a private contractor.

There is no connection between the assessment and taxation of real property and the Comprehensive Plan. Property values are driven by market forces and tax rates are driven by the costs of Town, County and School District services.

It is difficult to predict precisely how land use policies might affect property values. Experience elsewhere, though, shows that residential development tends to increase the demand for public services while rural land uses, such as farming, tend to keep demand for public services low.

Vision of the Future

A vision statement is a description of the future that most residents want. The individual statements have been well-supported by the Survey results and other forms of community input. The

recommendations in this *Plan* support this vision.

1. Driving through the Town of Cambridge remains an exceptional experience. The landscape is dominated by working farms. The character of the land continues to attract people from all walks of life.
2. The community appreciates the beauty of the natural landscape as well as the traditional architecture. Threats to the character of the Cambridge landscape are minimal because Cambridge residents embrace a land ethic where individual rights are balanced against everyone's obligations to the community and to the natural environment.
3. Agriculture is sustainable both economically and environmentally. Farmers sell their lands to other farmers; non-farmers lease their lands to local farmers at fair prices.
4. Anyone can open a home business but would do so with consideration for their neighbors with respect to sights, sounds, traffic.
5. New residential development minimizes the loss of open space and is sensitive to viewscapes. New commercial development occurs in or near our villages. New industrial development occurs in areas where it would be socially and environmentally compatible. New development occurs as redevelopment wherever practicable (using brownfields instead of greenfields).
6. Natural resources continue to be enjoyed for their own sake but are also actively used for recreational and commercial purposes. Logging and gravel mining continue at a modest scale. Everyone can enjoy the night sky. Street lighting is limited to villages. Design of exterior lighting considers impacts on both neighbors and the environment. Surface waters are free from sediments, nutrients and chemical pollutants.
7. Both the landscape and social customs enable the continuing of outdoor recreation, including hunting, fishing and trapping. Landowners give permission to others to use their lands for these purposes.
8. The community accepts that having to drive to or near the villages for most services is a fair price to pay for maintaining the rural character of the landscape. On their way, drivers do not have to contend with traffic or traffic signals.
9. Residents purposefully spend their dollars at local businesses because they understand that Cambridge needs to be nourished economically and that local expenditures are investments in the future of the community. Most businesses are owned and operated by local residents.
10. Any regulation needed to achieve the community's vision reflects the highest principles of good government.

Part II - The Planning Process

Introduction

In the winter of 2004, the Cambridge Town Board decided to embark on the process of writing a comprehensive plan to guide future development in the Town. At that time, the Village of Cambridge was completing its own Comprehensive Plan. Town Supervisor Trinkle solicited volunteers through both personal contacts and appeals in local newspapers. In response, 18 Cambridge residents attended the “kick off” meeting in February of that year. Since that time, the group has changed in size and makeup, but has accomplished much of the work needed to assemble this document.

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A “comprehensive plan” is described in Section 272a of Article 16 (Zoning and Planning) of the New York State Town Law. The law envisions that any town in New York with a planning board will also be guided by a comprehensive plan. Although Cambridge created a Planning Board in 1988, it does not yet have a comprehensive plan.

The definition in the law reads, in part, as follows:

“‘town comprehensive plan’ means the materials...that identify the goals, objectives, principles, guidelines, policies, standards, devices and instruments for the immediate and long-range protection, enhancement, growth and development of the town located outside the limits of any incorporated village or city.”

Other especially important goals include:

“The town comprehensive plan is a means to promote the health, safety and general welfare of the people of the town and to give due consideration to the needs of the people of the region of which the town is a part.”

and:

“The comprehensive plan fosters cooperation among governmental agencies planning and implementing capital projects and municipalities that may be directly affected thereby.”

The comprehensive plan should provide guidance to the Planning Board but can also identify other actions the Town could take to help shape its future.

Perhaps most important is that Cambridge is a farming community. The Zoning and Planning Law recognizes the need in towns like Cambridge to consider the needs of agriculture throughout the comprehensive plan process:

“...A newly adopted or amended town comprehensive plan shall take into consideration applicable county agricultural and farmland protection plans as created under article twenty-five-AAA of the agriculture and markets law....”

Another benefit of a comprehensive plan is that it will make Cambridge eligible for grants. Many granting programs require that applicants have a comprehensive plan in place.

Finally, it should be noted that this Plan does not apply to the Village of Cambridge. We recognize the need to coordinate our plans with those of the Village - and with nearby towns - but we concerned ourselves only with the portion of the Town outside of the Village.

The Comprehensive Plan Team

The Comprehensive Plan Team was constituted as a “special board” by resolution of the Cambridge Town Board. The Team has been advised by Ms. Catherine Hamlin of Washington County Planning. Town Board Member Frank Ziehm has served as the liaison to the Town Board and Village Trustee Mike Wyatt has served as liaison to the Village. The Town provided a budget to support the work of the Team. Most of the expenses involved printing and mailing.

In 2006, the Town received a grant from the New York State Department of State. The Town joined with the Town of White Creek and the Village of Cambridge in the Public Planning and Visioning Project for the Greater Cambridge Valley Region. The three municipalities then contracted with the Chazen Companies to assist in accomplishing the various components of the project. The Chazen Companies’ Mike Welti is assisting the Town of Cambridge in completing its Comprehensive Plan.

By and large, the Team has met once or twice each month since March of 2004. Most meetings were held at the Cambridge Town Hall from 7:30 until 9:00 PM and were open to the public. Subcommittees convened additional meetings - usually in members’ homes - as needed.

The job of preparing a comprehensive plan involves three principal components. In its simplest terms, the Team had to:

- 1) describe the existing conditions in Cambridge;
- 2) find out what Cambridge residents want and expect for the future; and
- 3) make recommendations to the Town Board on how those expectations can best be met.

The first task involved collecting information from a wide variety of sources, especially publicly-accessible databases such as U. S. Census, USDA Soil Survey, and tax map. In some cases, such as natural resources, historic resources, and housing, personal observation and professional experience were used. Some of the complete “raw” information is attached in appendices.

The second task involved communicating with as many Cambridge residents as was practical. In fact, the Zoning and Planning Section notes “...The participation of citizens in an open, responsible and flexible planning process is essential to the designing of the optimum town comprehensive

plan...” The Team did this by attending meetings of existing groups and also convening our own events. We also solicited input and gave progress reports via local weekly newspapers. In each case, our purpose was to learn about residents concerns, hopes and preferences for the future of the Town. Most important, we mailed an in-depth questionnaire to every landowner in the Town (including the Cambridge part of the Village). The results of this survey played a major role in guiding this report. The complete survey and a summary of its findings are attached as appendices as are notes from some of the larger public meetings.

The third task involved exploring many possible solutions and then making a judgment as to which would be both effective and likely to be embraced by both the Town Board and the people of Cambridge. Supporting information for many of the recommendations is attached as appendices.

How to read the Plan

The Team has tried to make this *Plan* easily readable. First, we have tried to keep the language and style simple and to avoid technical jargon if we could. We tried to make the body of it brief and succinct, with details placed in appendices as much as possible. We have also tried to make each chapter self-contained. For example, if one wants to know about housing, all three parts - the existing conditions, the residents’ expectations, and the Team’s recommendations - are all contained within the Population & Housing chapter. We have repeated the recommendations in the final chapter (*Implementation*) because many readers will want to “cut to the chase.” Of course, any recommendation cannot be fully understood without knowing the context provided by each chapter.

The recommendations will reflect five different approaches: information campaigns; volunteer efforts; financial incentives; infrastructure development; and regulation.

Guiding Principles

The Team, in developing this *Draft Plan* and its recommendation, has been guided by the following principles:

1. Be effective.
2. Reflect the desires of the people of Cambridge.
3. Minimize government services.
4. Minimize government costs.
5. Minimize regulation.
6. Maximize voluntary efforts.
7. Maximize information sharing.

8. Strive for simple solutions.
9. Use market forces wherever possible.
10. Accommodate landowners' needs for a fair return on their real property investments
11. Accommodate landowners' desires to bequeath building lots to their children.

* * *

Part III - Town History

When the Town of Cambridge celebrated its 200th anniversary in July 1988, Governor Cuomo noted “the vital role [it] played in shaping the rich history of our great State and Nation”. The Town of Cambridge was in the midst of momentous events in the 18th century that led to the formation of the United States. Since then it has come to be a prototype for rural America.

It is awkward to consider the history of the Town based only on its present political boundaries because philosophically and geographically it is indistinguishable from its contiguous neighbors, with two of whom indeed it was one town until 1816. Its jurisdiction today includes the westernmost portion of the Village of Cambridge, but otherwise it has no concentration either of residences or businesses that could be called a Town center. Its character remains as it has from its start: predominantly agricultural, highly individualistic and inventive

The Town has always been near and easily accessible to many institutions and places well-known in the area, but almost none of them has been or is in the Town, with the notable exception of Mary McClellan Hospital (founded in 1917 and closed in 2003). All of the following examples of this are or were located in the White Creek portion of the Village of Cambridge:

The Washington County Post (until its demise in 1988, after 200 years, the longest running weekly newspaper in the United States); several old and architecturally impressive church structures; J. B. Rice Seed Company (the second largest seed company in the country at the turn of the 20th century); the Cambridge Hotel (opened in 1885 and the home of “pie a la mode”); Hubbard Hall (opened in 1878 and the only surviving opera house in Washington County); the railroad (extended to Cambridge Village in 1852 and, as elsewhere, the greatest homogenizing influence in the area); the Old Popcorn Wagon (a gas-fired fixture in the Village for almost 70 years until 1995); and the Great Cambridge Fair (moved to the Town from Lauderdale in 1890 and re-opened as the Cambridge Fair in 1891, then moved just after WWII to its present location as the Washington County Fair).

The relative isolation imposed by political boundaries obliges that the history of the Town focus more on the factors shaping its founding and evolution rather than on more current developments.

Early History

Abundant traces of human occupation in the immediate area have been dated from 4,000 to 5,000 years ago. Five significant burial mounds lie in a line from Salem south to western Connecticut and many man-made “calendar sites” marking seasonal change have been discovered. While mostly outside the Town, this evidence is undoubtedly the work of the same Native Americans, primarily Mahican, who lived on and passed through what is now the Town. The earliest settlements of Europeans in the area date from the late 1600’s, and by 1800 almost all indigenous peoples had been forced from their homelands.

Political History

What are now the Towns of Cambridge, Jackson and White Creek were enacted as a District within Albany County in 1772. These lands comprised 4,000 acres from the Hoosick Patent, granted in 1688, and the balance from the Cambridge Patent, granted in 1761 “on condition that immediate settlements be made”. (The Cambridge patent covered 31,500 acres north of the Hoosick Patent; the west line of the Cambridge Patent was the east line of the present Town of Easton and the Batten Kill was the northern boundary of the Patent. Easton was part of the Saratoga Patent and Greenwich was part of Argyle, until 1803, in the Argyle Patent.) As inducement to settle the Cambridge Patent area, 100 acres were given to each of the first 30 families who would become actual settlers there. As it happened, most of the beneficiaries of this inducement migrated north from Connecticut. In 1788, this “district” became the independent Town of Cambridge.

In 1790, delegations from the Towns of Cambridge and Easton petitioned the state legislature for inclusion in the proposed new county of Rensselaer. The State Assembly authorized such an alignment, but it was defeated in the State Senate due primarily to the influence of General John Williams of Salem. In 1791, the Town became part of Washington County. (When established in 1772, it was named Charlotte County after the wife of King George III, but the name was changed to Washington in 1784.) As a result, the southern boundary of the county moved from the Batten Kill River to the Hoosic River.

By act of the state legislature in 1815 and effective April 1, 1816, the Towns of White Creek and Jackson were split from the Town, which has maintained its present configuration since then. At the time, in words any governor could embrace, the Town was described as part of “the famous Cambridge valley, whose fertility and beauty is known world-wide”. (The Village of Cambridge, incorporating a part of the Towns of Cambridge and White Creek, was created in 1866.).

Transportation and Industry

Its location makes the Cambridge Valley a natural corridor for travel from Albany/Troy north to Vermont, and between Bennington, Vermont and northwest towards Saratoga and the Adirondacks. As a consequence, the Valley became a focal point for the first major north-south road - the Turnpike - and later the railroad, both of which focused on what is now the Village of Cambridge. Nonetheless, these major thoroughfares greatly affected activities in the Town.

In the 1770's, the Turnpike was a marked path, difficult to negotiate in most places except single file. This was the condition the British forces (primarily German mercenaries) encountered when they passed through Cambridge from Fort Edward in mid-August-1777, heading for the ammunition stores at what is now the Bennington Monument. (In early summer 1777, alarmed by the arrival in what is now Whitehall of the British moving south from Canada, a company of militia was organized in Cambridge.) Men from the Town, notably John Weir, whose house still stands on King Road, left to join the American forces for what became known as the Battle of Bennington (which, of course, actually occurred in Walloomsac, NY). The British forces took the same Turnpike route in retreat. Two buildings from that period on South Turnpike are still residences today, namely, the Wheel House and the Caleb Wright House.

In 1791, Thomas Jefferson accompanied by James Madison stayed at an inn (the Checkered House, long since destroyed by fire) on the south turnpike, passing from Saratoga to Bennington as part of a tour of Revolutionary War battlefields. In 1799, the Northern Turnpike Co. was incorporated, running stagecoaches between Lansingburgh (in Rensselaer County) and Burlington, Vermont. The Turnpike was an important formative factor for the region until the arrival of the Troy and Rutland Railroad, which reached the Village in 1852, sounded its death knell. This “main line”, with its capacity for large hauling, encouraged agricultural growth and small industry throughout the Cambridge Valley, most tied to waterpower. Industry in the Town was fairly rudimentary, such as the making of lime and charcoal, a sawmill, and a flax mill, with the exception of a factory situated behind what is now the West Village Market that manufactured sash and blinds from 1860 to 1900. The only industry of note in the Town today is a high-tech operation, Cambridge Valley Machining, in Coila.

A rail line through the Town, the Greenwich-Johnsonville Railroad, was completed in 1870 running along the current County Route 74. It was a commuter line carrying laborers to Johnsonville, where they changed for connections to factories in Troy and Hoosick Falls. It also carried goods—dairy products, potatoes, flax, grains, poultry and fruit--and regular passengers, with three passenger trains and at least one freight train daily. It had stations at Easton, Archdale, Vly Summit, West Cambridge, South Cambridge and Lee’s Crossing. Each stop had a school and/or a post office nearby. Although the tracks of this rail line were taken up in 1932, County Route 74 remains locally known as the Railroad Bed.

The current Buskirk Covered Bridge, connecting Rensselaer County to the Town, was built in 1849 and its revitalization completed in 2007; it is the only remaining covered bridge over the Hoosic River. As elsewhere, the advent of the automobile affected the Town, but no major roads existing there today were built in response to auto traffic. The first garage in the Cambridge Valley was established in 1922 in Coila. (The hamlet which is today known as Coila was first established in the very early 19th century by locals wanting to get away from the hustle and bustle of the Turnpike.) At the time the garage was described as “the largest public service station north of Albany”. The Coila Garage still operates, but no longer sells gasoline.

Hamlets, Churches and Schools

Notwithstanding the several stops along the Greenwich-Johnsonville Railroad, the two main hamlets in the Town were North Cambridge and South Cambridge. The former was settled in the early 1800’s, with commercial activity centered near the intersection of North Road (once Farm-to-Market Road) and what is now Stump Church Road. Besides the requisite school and post office were a small store, a flax mill, a blacksmith forge, a cider house and a slaughterhouse.

The hamlet of South Cambridge was founded as Quakerhood, and later until the 1880’s was known as Allensboro. Located on the present County Route 74, it was less extensive commercially than North Cambridge, but did have a school and a Grange. It grew with the advent of the railroad and ultimately also had a blacksmith shop, a store, a post office and a church.

By the middle of the 19th century, there were at least eight one-room schoolhouses scattered throughout the Town. In 1800 a school for the instruction of “the common and higher branches of an English education” opened on Academy Street. At the same time, subscription began for funds to establish “an academy.” Ultimately \$2,300 was raised, and the Cambridge Washington Academy opened at the corner of Academy and Main Streets in 1815 with 51 “scholars”. Soon thereafter it was “approved” by the Regents of the University of the State of New York. Although it prospered initially, it suffered throughout from a lack of funds. In 1873 the academy was dissolved and its building leased to the public school district until 1890. The building was razed in 1922.

Religious roots among the population of the Cambridge Valley have been strong and multi-faceted from the beginning. The first service of the Whiteside congregation was held in 1764, though the original building was not erected until 1800. The first church formally organized locally was the United Presbyterian Congregation of Cambridge, in 1769. The first religious building was First Church, whose construction began in 1775 at a site just south of the Village on the Turnpike, and was completed in 1783 after delay due to the Revolutionary War.

The United Presbyterian Church of Coila was organized in 1786, and its impressive brick building dates from 1834; built at a cost of \$10,000, it was said to be the most expensive building of its kind north of Albany at that time. Other significant churches in the Town are the North Cambridge Methodist Stump Church, founded in 1838, and the South Cambridge United Methodist Church built in 1868.

* * *

Part IV - The Plan

NATURAL RESOURCES

A. EXISTING CONDITIONS

Setting

The Town of Cambridge is located in southern Washington County, in northeastern New York State. Its 22,657 acres (35.4 square miles) are bounded on the west by the Town of Easton, on the north by the Town of Jackson, on the east by the Town of White Creek and by the Rensselaer County Towns of Schaghticoke to the southwest and Hoosick to the southeast. The Hoosic River forms about half of the Town's southern boundary. The Town is generally equidistant from three major population centers: Saratoga and Glens Falls to the northwest; the Capital District (Albany, Schenectady and Troy) to the southwest; and Bennington, Vermont, to the southeast.

Climate & Weather

Cambridge is east of the Hudson River and about 10 miles west of the New York-Vermont border. Its rolling hills are nestled at the intersection of three physiographic provinces: the Adirondack Mountains to the northwest; the Taconic Uplands to the east; and the Hudson Lowlands to the south and west.

The climate is humid-continental and most weather patterns move from west to east. The moisture from the Atlantic Ocean plays a secondary role in the Cambridge weather. About 40 inches of precipitation fall in most years; this precipitation is fairly evenly distributed throughout the year. A total of 60 to 70 inches of snow accumulates on the ground in most years, usually from late-November through late-March. Winters are long and cold. Low-lying areas may enjoy a 170-day growing season but higher elevations may have only 120 days between killing frosts.

The sun shines about 40 percent of the time in November and December and about 60 to 65 percent during the summer. Winds can be severe during storms, especially warm season thunderstorms, but tornadoes are very rare, as are the damaging effects of tropical hurricanes. Average wind speeds are low and the potential for the generation of wind power is low.

Air quality is generally good. Spreading of liquid manure on fields can create local ammonia odors for short periods of time. It is an essential part of dairy farming with current technologies. Another source of local air quality impairments is the uncontrolled burning of household or farm goods. Generally, open burning of brush, leaves, unpainted and untreated lumber is relatively safe. However, burning of materials like household garbage and painted and treated lumber can pose serious threats to human health.

Light pollution is generally low. Residents outside of the Village generally enjoy an unspoiled view of stars, meteor showers and the like.

Geology & Topography

The Cambridge landscape is one of gently rolling hills intersected by small streams of relatively low gradients. The highest elevation in the Town is known as The Cobble, the summit of which is 1441 feet above sea level. The lowest naturally-occurring elevation in the Town is found along the Hoosic River, which is about 340 feet above sea level.

This landscape has been formed by a combination of ancient mountain-building processes and more recent glaciation. Drumlins are common throughout the Town. They are glacial deposits of gravel and frequently run in a north-to-south orientation.

Soils

The soils are generally young. The glaciers left a mix of sands, gravels, silts and clays to cover most of the bedrock about 10 to 15 thousand years ago. The outcrops of bedrock reveal the slates, shales and limestones folded back upon themselves. Most of Cambridge is dominated by the Nassau-Bernardston and Bernardston-Nassau associations. The Bernardston and Scriba soils are among the best farming soils and were deposited as glacial till. The Hoosic and Otisville soils that provide numerous sand and gravel pits were formed in outwash deltas from glacial lakes.

Groundwater

Groundwater exists either within saturated surficial deposits or within fissures in the bedrock. These formations yield modest supplies. All residences, farms and businesses rely upon private water sources, either springs or drilled wells. The typical well is drilled down about 150 feet into bedrock. Such wells provide about 10 gallons per minute, which is adequate for most needs. The water from these wells is moderately hard, with local concentrations of iron, hydrogen sulfide and other minerals. Information from the U. S. Geological Survey suggests that the greatest potential for groundwater in Cambridge would be south of Center Cambridge Road. Saturated layers of sand and gravel, though generally less than 10 feet thick, would provide reliable yields. When adjacent to streams, such aquifers could yield more than 100 gallons per minute.

Surface Waters

Most of the surface waters in the Town are small brooks. Brooks such as Whiteside Creek, Wampecack Creek, Hall Brook, Pencil Brook and Whipple Brook drain the southern two-thirds of the Town into the Hoosic River. The northern third of the Town drains into the Batten Kill. The Hoosic and the Batten Kill flow generally west into the Hudson River.

Most of the small tributaries are subject to the Stream Protection Law (Article 15 of the NYS Environmental Conservation Law), which prohibits any disturbance to the bed or banks of a stream without a permit. Although some portions of these streams are healthy and can support trout reproduction, other portions are subject to pollution from roadways and from agriculture and are degraded. Sediments (topsoil and road sand), organic pollutants (manure and other fertilizers),

pesticides and road salt are common pollutants. Whipple Brook has been identified in the New York Nonpoint Assessment Report as being impaired by chicken manure; this has been corrected in recent years. There are no known sources of industrial pollutants in the tributaries but the Hoosic River is contaminated with PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls, a now-banned but widely-used industrial oil). As a result, the New York State Department of Health issues an annual health advisory against the consumption of any fish taken from the Hoosic.

There are numerous wetlands throughout the Town, most of which are associated with stream systems. Wetland types include swamps, shrub swamps, sedge meadows and emergent marshes. Beaver activity frequently alters the water regimes in these wetlands. The Freshwater Wetlands Law (Article 24 of the NYS Environmental Conservation Law) depicts regulated wetlands on its official maps. Development activities are prohibited within 100 feet of these wetlands without a permit, although many agricultural activities are exempt.

There are no lakes in the Town. All of the ponds are artificially-created “farm ponds”, created for water sources (for fire protection and to water livestock), for recreational fishing, for swimming, and for aesthetics. There are many farm ponds in the Town; the largest is Thurber Pond, which is an impoundment of a small tributary to the Owl Kill.

Plants & Animals

The landscape of most of the Town is open and is dominated by agricultural lands. About two-thirds is farmland or rural residential. About one-quarter is covered with forests and about one-eighth supports wetlands or waterways. The common crops, especially alfalfa and corn, provide valuable food sources for such wildlife as white-tailed deer, wild turkeys, and waterfowl. Deer densities can be very high, comparable to the highest areas in New York. In recent years, deer management cooperatives have been formed by landowners wanting to reduce crop and forest damage as well as vehicle collisions. About one-quarter of the Town’s lands are enrolled in cooperatives that work with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to manage the deer herds on a local basis.

Goose use of farm fields is very high, too. Both Canada geese and snow geese can be locally abundant during the colder months; Canada geese also nest here. Farmlands support a wide variety of birdlife. Bluebirds, mourning doves, and goldfinches are common but grassland birds such as meadowlarks and bobolinks appear to be on the decline, probably because modern haying practices preclude their successful nesting. Coyotes, red foxes, eastern cottontails and woodchucks are common near farmlands, as are feral housecats. Farm ponds usually contain warmwater sportfish such as largemouth bass and bluegills, and maybe yellow perch or bullheads. These same ponds may provide homes for painted turtles and bullfrogs.

The forests are dominated by sugar maple and American beech. Other common hardwood trees are black cherry, American elm, white ash and pignut and shagbark hickories. The beech, elm and ash all suffer from diseases and their futures are uncertain. Red and white oaks are frequently found on drier sites. White pines are frequently mixed with hardwoods or in dense stands, especially if managed as timber. Hemlocks grow on north-facing slopes or in swamps. Black bears, moose and

bobcats are incidental in the Town but grey foxes, fisher and raccoons are widespread. Great-horned and barred owls live in most woods as do Cooper's, sharp-shinned and broadwing hawks. Pileated woodpeckers and ruffed grouse, too, reside in most Cambridge forest lands. Woodland ponds are usually fish-free and so support common toads, spotted and Jefferson's salamanders, spring peepers and wood frogs.

Wetlands are usually dominated by trees such red maples or hemlocks or shrubs such as willows, arrowwood or buttonbush. Wood ducks and mallards nest and feed in most swamps, especially when beavers impound the flow.

There are no known occurrences of rare, threatened or endangered plants or animals in Cambridge, except as occasional visitors. The New York Natural Heritage Program keeps records of rare plants, animals and natural communities. Their records denote historical occurrences of three rare plants: two varieties of a small wildflower known as bluets, and red milkweed. It is unlikely that these plants still occur in Cambridge. At least four rare migratory birds can be seen in Cambridge during the year. The Threatened (US and NYS) Bald Eagle can be found hunting for fish or waterfowl along the Hoosic River, especially during the colder months. The Threatened (NYS) Northern Harrier, also known as Marsh Hawk, is frequently seen during its spring and fall migrations; it could nest in some of the larger open fields where it hunts in search of meadow voles and other small rodents. The Threatened (NYS) Short-eared Owl uses these same fields, especially during the winter months. Finally, the Endangered (NYS) Peregrine Falcon occasionally visits Cambridge during the fall and winter. It has been seen feeding on pigeons in barnyards.

B. EXPECTATIONS

The Survey had two statements about natural resources in *Part II - Your Views*. The first (# 10) stated: "Our brooks, streams and the Hoosic River should be protected from pollution caused by stormwater runoff from farm fields and highways." The overwhelming majority of respondents agreed with this sentiment: 237 agreed, 24 had no opinion, and 14 disagreed.

The second (#11) stated: "the natural night sky is a benefit of living in a rural landscape." This statement received more agreement than any other in the Survey: 255 agreed, 13 had no opinion, and 5 disagreed.

In *Part III - Your Priorities*, "Maintaining Water Quality" received a moderate level of priority, with 67 respondents listing it among their "four most important issues facing Cambridge over the next ten years."

Part IV - Comments included a variety of thoughts about natural resources. Of the 22 comments about pollution, several expressed a desire to protect surface waters from pollution caused by farming activities. Burning barrels and the like were identified as a threat to air quality, as was the use of liquid manure by farmers. Manure and salt on roads were identified as problems. Other comments recognized the rights of farmers but only within the confines of existing laws.

The natural night sky received 9 comments in *Part IV*. All but one placed a strong value on a night

sky free of light pollution; several recommended ways to minimize light pollution through “smart lighting”.

Numerous tools are available to prevent and reduce pollution of our streams while meeting the needs of residences, farms and highway safety. This can be accomplished through a combination of existing incentive and regulatory approaches. There are several components:

Federal subsidy programs - The single most effective action would be to establish and maintain buffers between all streams and active cultivation. The U. S. Department of Agriculture offers a variety of programs that are aimed at controlling non-point source pollution. For example, these programs subsidize efforts of farmers to plant naturally-vegetated filter strips. The filter strips trap silts and organic matter that flows off fields before they can reach surface waters. Such programs are administered by the local office of the Natural Resource Conservation Service in Greenwich. Other programs pay farmers to convert low-productivity acreage to naturally-vegetated habitats. These efforts benefit both wildlife and water quality. The U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service administers similar programs through their Cortland office. Most important, farmers can work with these agencies to prepare comprehensive pollution management plans for their entire farm operations. Some Cambridge farmers employ these programs and practices already.

Land Use Regulations - Site Plan Review authority and subdivision regulations are discussed in greater detail in the *Land Use* section of this *Plan*. Both provide opportunities to prevent new development from polluting surface waters. This can be accomplished primarily through the thoughtful location of clearing activities as well as through effective management of stormwater before, during and after construction. The authority and responsibility for this resides with the Planning Board.

Phase II Stormwater Regulations - Construction activities are another, albeit much smaller, source of erosion and surface water pollution. Since 2003, New York State has regulated non-point source pollution from certain construction activities. In essence, whenever construction will involve the disturbance of more than one acre of land, the landowner must first prepare a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan. These plans are reviewed by NYSDEC to ensure that they are consistent with General Permit conditions. Many towns require an approved Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan before issuing building permits. A Model Stormwater Management and Erosion Control Ordinance has been developed for adoption and use by towns.

Road Sand and Salt - The sand and salt used to ensure safe winter driving conditions can make their way into our surface waters. Problematic levels of these stormwater pollutants can be avoided through best management practices when employed by the Town, County and State highway departments.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Improve surface water quality (Rec#01 – All recommendations listed in Table 4, page 64)**

The Town Board should ensure that the Highway Department staff continue to receive training in

and employ professionally-recognized best management practices in managing sand and salt on the Town's roads.

2. **Protect the natural night sky (Rec#02)**

An effort should be made to prevent light pollution of the natural night sky while meeting the needs for exterior lighting at residences, farms and businesses. This can be accomplished through a non-regulatory, informational approach. There are two components:

First, to raise awareness, the Town should charge a team to provide information about "smart lighting" to all applicants for Building Permits. "Smart lighting" refers to widely accepted ideas about lighting technology and design that can dramatically reduce the glare and scatter of outdoor lights while still providing the illumination needed for safety and security. In many cases, it involves simple decisions about light shielding, bulb and lens technologies, and placement and orientation of fixtures. (For more information, see www.darksky.org.) A succinct handout could be developed that explains the value of the night sky, the impacts of conventional lighting, and ways to limit the impacts. This literature would accompany every Building Permit Application so that owners and builders could consider adopting "smart lighting" practices into their designs. Such practices would not be a requirement for or condition of a Building Permit. The handout could be developed by a volunteer team. The only costs to the Town would be printing costs to maintain a supply of the handout. Approximately 35 Building Permit Applications are received each year.

The second component of a successful initiative to reduce or prevent light pollution would be to encourage local vendors to offer for sale products that use "smart lighting" technology. Discussions with Alexander's, Wiley Brothers, and other building supply businesses could advise them of the Town's desire to protect the natural night sky. The businesses would decide for themselves whether to tap this potential market.

This initiative could be accomplished within 6 months within total costs to the Town of less than \$200. The Town Board should charge a small team (or individual) to develop a brochure for use in Building Permit Applications. The same team should consult with local building supply businesses to ensure that suitable lighting products are available.

* * *

CULTURAL & HISTORIC RESOURCES

A. EXISTING CONDITIONS

Historic Buildings and Structures

The Town of Cambridge has a wonderful varied history that is reflected in historic buildings and landscapes. Each residence, farmstead, cemetery, church and specialized building fit within the mosaic landscape that is the composite of those who settled here, worked the land, and left us with a legacy of architectural treasures. Grandma Moses captured the essence on canvas, but the living “picture” is far greater. These historic buildings and structures set within the surrounding landscapes provide the living record of how people built farms, cleared land, grew crops, tended woodlots, shipped milk, and cut ice in the winter and wood for more buildings. It is the tangible record of who carved out a livelihood in our Town.

In the mid 1970’s, a survey was conducted to record the 273 historic buildings (including 5 churches) in the Town which were over 50-years-old and could be eligible for listing in the State and National Registers of Historic Places. Rensselaer County shares the one property in the Town that is listed on the State and National Register of Historic Places, the Buskirk Covered Bridge. The Village of Cambridge has a district of buildings listed on the State and National Registers.

Archeological Sites

In addition to the buildings, the remains of the past are evident in archeological sites that are either prehistoric (dating prior to European contact) or historic, which include all other sites. Archeological sites comprise artifacts and features that provide information about how people adapted to the environment, how they survived, what they ate, and how they changed over time.

The prehistoric sites in Cambridge have dated as early as 8000 BC, but a lack of comprehensive archeological survey prevents us from knowing just how early or how many sites are present in the Town. Evidence includes: stone tools and debris resulting from tool production, tool maintenance or other activities; fire-cracked rock from hearths or fires; and pottery. Native Americans from the Mohawk Tribe of the Iroquois and the Mohicans have ancestral claim to our area. Land transactions show that the Mohicans held land in Washington County near the Hoosick River.

Historic archeological sites can be found around each house, industrial site or farmstead. The material left behind and the way it was discarded can inform us about the culture, diet, houses, population, trade, economics, etc. Generally, there are discard patterns around any historic building and farmstead that provides a glimpse of the individuals who built the buildings and worked the land. Changes to the family or farm can be identified in the deposits, and in many cases the archeological remains provide the only evidence of the earliest settlement and the only story we will ever know about the day-to-day lives of these people. Archeologists carefully document and study sites to shed light on the unwritten part of our history that would otherwise never be known.

Cemeteries

During the early historic development and into the 19th century, individual family cemeteries were common. Many of these are now overgrown and may even be unreported. Headstones may have fallen over or even been removed during subsequent farming activities by non-family members. There may be occasions where family cemeteries were “removed” and reburied in a public cemetery. Sometimes these old family burial grounds may be disturbed during new construction if there has not been an effort ahead of time to identify where they are located.

Cultural Activities

Cultural events and activities in the Town generally revolve around the churches and their worship, fund raising and community events. Local barbeques and church suppers provide the setting for socialization in relaxed unstructured events. The Pleasant Valley Grange and several 4-H Clubs provide an emphasis on our agricultural heritage and the future of today’s youth.

Compared to the nearby villages, cultural activities in the Town are limited and it may be that the Town residents seek these activities within the village setting or in the context of church or agricultural sponsored activities, including the County Fair.

B. EXPECTATIONS

The Survey noted that “historic sites in the Town should be protected and their enjoyment encouraged” and “owners of older houses, businesses and farm buildings should be encouraged to maintain traditional architecture”. Both statements were confirmed by the respondents of the survey. It is clear that our historic buildings are important to the community and the consensus was that maintenance should be encouraged and possibly even some level of protection. The rehabilitation of the historic Buskirk Bridge was positively endorsed, with the few complaints focused on the duration of time the bridge was closed to traffic.

The historic landscape was not directly discussed in the survey, but the landscape surrounding historic farmsteads creates the patterning of agriculture-of fields, hedgerows, woods and pastures. These repeating patterns from farm to farm provide the overall defining characteristics of the rural landscape. The top priority facing Cambridge over the next ten years was the rural character (168 responses plus another 65 responses specifically preserving historic properties). Ranking of the topics important to respondents (Table 11 of *Survey*) resulted in 255 respondents favoring the rural character and 250 for protecting historic sites. Also, 197 respondents wanted to maintain traditional architecture (historic building materials and styles).

Land use regulation, such as site plan review authority, subdivision guidelines and the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA), are discussed in greater detail in the Land Use section of this Plan. The regulatory tools provide opportunities to prevent new development from harming the Town’s historic resources. SEQRA requires that the Town consider historic buildings and archeological resources in the planning process. The SEQRA process must be satisfied when

approving actions that have the potential to impact historic properties or change the setting of historic buildings. Such actions include subdividing land, constructing or expanding roads, or siting cell towers or other utilities, etc. The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) will provide guidance to the Town regarding historic resources when requested, or the Town can use the OPRHP on-line resources www.nysparks.state.ny.us/shpo to assist with decisions regarding historic resources.

In 1975, the Town conducted a Historic Buildings/Structures Survey that identified historic buildings to determine which buildings meet the criteria for listing in the State and National Registers of Historic Places. Buildings that do not meet the eligibility criteria but which are important to the Town could have a local designation. Each of these could be recorded with the Town Clerk so that consideration is afforded to these during SEQRA review, as is required for buildings listed on the State and National Register. These buildings would also warrant consideration prior to demolition or controlled burn for possible salvage of historic materials and/or recordation.

The locations of all existing cemeteries should be documented and made available through the worldwide web (as through the Washington County website, for example). The records of the Daughters of the American Revolution should be examined for this purpose. Historic cemeteries could also be recorded with the Town Clerk. If the parcel is subdivided, the cemetery should be surveyed out (ensuring a buffer for unmarked burials) and the cemetery recorded with the deed. There is an existing need, too, for the regular cleaning and marking of each the cemetery.

The Town has two representatives on the Washington County Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. When historic preservation issues arise, these representatives can assist the Town and homeowners with obtaining a solution to the problem or question. The Council recognizes preservation efforts during an annual awards ceremony and also co-sponsors an educational lecture series. The Town Supervisor appoints new members to the Council when vacancies occur, so individuals with a historic preservation interest should consider serving on the Council. The goals of cultural groups can be combined with other needs of the community. For example, gardening clubs might enhance the landscape of roads through interaction with the Highway Department to protect important landscapes and roadside plantings. Similarly, historical groups could interact with the Planning and Town Board regarding decisions affecting historic properties.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Information & Awareness

Owners of historic structures should be made aware of the cultural significance of such buildings and of any programs or opportunities to assist in their protection or preservation.

- a. State and National Registers of Historic Places (Rec#03)* - The Town should encourage owners of historic buildings to consider having the properties listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. Groupings of historic buildings together with associated landscapes may be considered a district. National Register listing is a prestigious recognition

and does not preclude the owner from actions of his or her choosing. Properties that are listed on the National Register are provided with special consideration status during the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA).

- b. *New York State Barn Tax Credit (Rec#04)*** - The Town should encourage the use of the New York State Barn Tax Credit for the rehabilitation of historic barns. The barn must be income-producing and meet some other criteria pertaining to the “retaining the historic character”. Information may be obtained from the New York Tax and Finance or the New York State office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.
- c. *New York State Barn Grant Program (Rec#05)*** - The Town should encourage the owners of historic barns to apply for the grant through the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. A volunteer team could identify potential candidates and contact them or disseminate information about grant opportunities through tax bills, local newspapers, a Town newsletter, or the like.

2. Voluntary Activities

The following actions could be undertaken by teams of volunteers with the only costs to the Town being modest expenses for printing and mailing:

- a. *Town Designation of Historic Structures (Rec#06)*** - A voluntary program should be established to designate all houses and other buildings that contribute to the architectural character of Cambridge because their fundamental design remains in keeping with the original architecture. This would generally entail buildings constructed before 1900. Starting with the work done for the Bicentennial, a volunteer team could develop a set of criteria to be applied to candidate structures. These criteria would be less stringent than State or Federal criteria and would allow for many modern accommodations and renovations. Any structure meeting the criteria would be accorded “Historic Structure” status and would be recorded with the Town Clerk as such. Participation in such a program would be completely voluntary and owners of such properties would be not be subject to any additional land use restrictions. On the other hand, if a property were designated as historic, such designation would be subject to review and potential “de-listing” if the architecture were modified in the future.

One option to consider is that the “Historic Structure” designation could appear on tax records. This would help ensure that its value could be reflected in the free real estate market. Another option would be to supply “medallions” that could be attached to each structure. Some sort of metal casting incorporating the designation and perhaps the year of the structure could be made available at cost to owners for each building.

- b. *Cemetery Preservation (Rec#07)*** - The Town Board should solicit volunteers to inventory, mark and maintain all the historic cemeteries within the Town. Ultimately, the information should be made available on the worldwide web.

* * *

POPULATION & HOUSING

A. EXISTING CONDITIONS

Population

The first U.S. census in 1790 counted a population for Washington County of 14,042, of which the then Town of Cambridge was 4,996, including 45 slaves. In 1850, the population of the present Town of Cambridge was 2,593 (6 percent of the County population), the highest absolute level it has ever reached.

In the decades that followed, there was a steady population decline, to a low point in 1940 of only 1,434 (3 percent of the County population), a loss of 45 percent over ninety years. The Town population has increased steadily since 1940, reaching 2,152 in 2000; this was 3.5 percent of the County population, which itself reached an historic high in 2000 of 61,042. The 2000 Town population represented a density of 61 persons per square mile, comprised of 795 households and 581 families.

According to the 2000 census, Town residents are a little older than the general population in the United States, with a median age of 39.7 compared to 35.3 for the total country. People 65 years of age and older make up 14.8 percent of Town residents, compared to 12.4 percent for the country as a whole.

Town residents are better-educated than the national levels: 86 percent, have completed high school, compared to 80 percent of the total U.S. population, and 28 percent have a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 24 percent nation-wide. These are the highest education levels of any town in Washington County, and higher than those of the Towns of Saratoga and Bennington.

Median household income in the Town is above the national average and the second highest in Washington County (Town of Putnam is the highest). The 2000 census indicated that Cambridge households reported a median income of \$46,579 versus \$41,994 for the country as a whole. Cambridge's median household income also is higher than that in Saratoga and Bennington. At the same time, 5.9 percent of Town residents were recorded below the poverty line in 2000; this is half of the national level of 12 percent and the fourth lowest for all the towns in Washington County (the lowest is Town of Hartford).

Approximately 44 percent of Town residents work in the census category of "Management, Professional and related Occupations." This rate is much higher than the average for Washington County, 25 percent. It is higher than the Town of Queensbury. It is approximately the same as the City of Saratoga Springs or the Town of Malta.

A substantial percentage of the working people of Cambridge commute to work. On the 2000 census 49 percent of working adults reported that they traveled 30 minutes or more to work, 24 percent

traveled at least 45 minutes. Percentages are similar for White Creek and Greenwich. This is higher than commuting times reported in the Town of Saratoga, for example, where only 36 percent reported commuting for 30 minutes or more.

Housing

The addition of new housing units has outpaced the growth in population. Since 1970 the population of the Town has grown by 26 percent, while the number of housing units has increased by 42 percent. Once again, the last census showed a big jump in the rate of housing growth with a 17.8 percent increase. The number of houses per square mile has grown from 16.7 in 1970, to 23.4 in the year 2000.

About 83 percent of the houses are single unit houses, nearly 80 percent owner-occupied. These figures have not changed much over the past 30 years. As is true for the rest of the United States, there has been a slight reduction in the number of people living in each housing unit in Cambridge over the last 30 years.

The 2000 Census identified a total of 840 housing units in the Town of Cambridge; 755 (89.9 percent) of these were occupied. About two-thirds (496) were occupied by their owners; one-third were occupied by renters. Similarly, about two-thirds (62.8 percent) of residents occupied the same house in 2000 as they did in 1995. Of the 752 residents who moved to Cambridge during that 5-year period, 314 came from elsewhere in Washington County, 260 came from elsewhere in New York State, and 178 came from a different state.

Table 1. Historic Cambridge Population

Year	Town of Cambridge	Washington County
1850	2,593	44,750
1860	2,419	45,904
1870	2,589	49,568
1880	2,324	47,871
1890	2,162	45,690
1900	1,878	45,624
1910	1,694	47,778
1920	1,620	44,888
1930	1,677	46,482
1940	1,434	46,726

Year	Town of Cambridge	Washington County
1950	1,567	47,144
1960	1,610	48,476
1970	1,702	52,725
1980	1,848	54,795
1990	1,938	59,330
2000	2,152	61,042

B. EXPECTATIONS

Part II of the Survey (Your Views) included three statements about housing and one about population. Statement # 18, “New development should complement the Cambridge character”, garnered strong support: 235 agreed, 24 had no opinion, and 16 disagreed. Statement # 19 dealt with senior housing: “the Town needs housing designed especially for seniors.” The response found: 143 agreed, 86 had no opinion, and 39 disagreed. Statement # 19 was: “The Town needs affordable housing.” Among respondents: 156 agreed, 70 had no opinion, and 43 disagreed. Statement # 21 asked about population growth: “Attracting more residents will help reduce my taxes.” The results: 82 agreed, 44 had no opinion, and 138 disagreed.

The topics of housing and population were not identified as priorities in Part III of the Survey. In the same vein, Part IV - Comments, found limited interest in these issues. Some felt that housing was sufficiently affordable in Cambridge currently. There were 35 comments about the relationship between population and property taxes. Most contained the idea that additional residences would drive taxes upward while additional businesses would provide some tax relief to residents.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. No action.

No clear need or demand has been identified - apart from the support for limiting future development as addressed in the Land Use section of this Plan.

* * *

AGRICULTURE

A. EXISTING CONDITIONS

Agriculture is the predominant industry in the Town. Approximately 12,680 acres, slightly more than 150 parcels, are considered farm land either because they are owned and farmed directly or because they are leased to a farm operation. Over the past decade many small cow dairies were sold or became incorporated into larger farms so that today there are about 10 large acreage-based cow dairies owning and/or renting the necessary acreage to support their operation. The ratio of cropland owned to rented acres is approximately 50:50.

Evidence of large-scale cow dairies is visible throughout the Town since significant acres of hay and corn are required to raise heifers and to produce milk. In addition soybeans, rye, barley and oats are grown for grain and straw for use on the farm, for sale locally or are shipped elsewhere. The yearly production of these crops for livestock feed and for milk production ensures a working landscape. Some pastures are set aside for limited grazing or as holding areas between feeding and/or milking on dairies, but most large herds are housed and fed in free-stall barns where mixed feed is continually available. The dominant structures for cow dairies include historic and modern barns, upright and/or trench silos and the farmhouse. The mosaic of fields, woodlots, pasture, cropland and hedges, drainages and ponds are the backdrop for the farm complex.

While not as extensive or prominent as cow dairies, numerous small beef herds are scattered throughout the Town. Generally these farming operations require more pastures than dairies since the cattle are mostly grass fed with limited or no grain being fed except perhaps during final finishing prior to slaughter. On these farms grass and hay are the predominant crops. Some farms follow *Management Intensive Grazing* (MIG) by rotating the cattle through small areas called paddocks every few days to more effectively utilize the cycle of grass growth. These farm complexes generally have smaller barns, open sheds and large round hay bales stacked under temporary cover or in rows. Again, the working of the pastures and fields keep the landscape open.

Still other agricultural enterprises go almost unnoticed only because large acreage is not required. Since an increasing number of residents are not producing their own food, there is a growing interest in purchasing foods through a direct connection to the farmer/producer who also may be growing foods without pesticides or herbicides. Small producers provide fresh food high in quality that is being marketed at the local Farmers Markets.

A local goat dairy produces specialty cheeses. Fruits, vegetables, herbs, flowers, plants, chickens, eggs, pork, goats and lamb are locally grown. Sheep and alpacas provide fiber and breeding stock. All of these products are frequently marketed beyond the Town borders. These livestock require pasture and other feeds that are generally grown on the premises or are purchased from neighboring farms or feed stores. Again, pastures are required for feed during the warmer months and barns for housing needs during the colder months.

Raising and training horses is also a part of the agricultural setting and contributes to the open land and rural character of the Town. Larger paddocks, riding rinks and stables are the predominant landscape features. Hay, straw and grain are generally purchased from other local farmers. It is the efforts of all the various farmers that provide the working landscape in Cambridge.

The New York State Agricultural Assessment Program can be considered an incentive for land to remain in agricultural even when not farmer-owned. The “ag assessment” provides partial reduction in real property taxes for eligible farmland in New York State, encouraging the leasing of land for farming, helping to keep farmland viable for farming but also providing a partial reduction in real property taxes to non-farmers with useable farmland. The Town has some small farms which contribute to the farm economy and working landscape, which are taxed at full assessment because they do not qualify for the agricultural exemption (requirement of a gross yearly farm income of \$10,000). In the event that farming was no longer feasible due to pressures such as competing land use, encroaching development, loss of rental farm land, loss of support industries or economic loss, the result would be full assessment on the affected property.

Forest management can also be viewed as a form of agriculture. A few farms grow Christmas trees and other woody nursery stock; many more landowners manage their wooded acres for marketable timber.

Finally, agriculture is a promotional tool for agritourism whereby the “farm” becomes the destination. With greater numbers of people having little on-the-farm experience, there is a need for a connection with the working landscape. More farm tours inviting public visits are occurring yearly, helping to build the local economy.

B. EXPECTATIONS

The Survey had one question specific about agriculture in *Part II-Your Views*. Question 15 stated: “Agriculture should continue to be the dominant land use.” An overwhelming response of 224 agreed, 35 had no opinion and 12 disagreed. A second question relating to the landscape (#14) stated: “I (we) like the Cambridge landscape the way it is and would not want to see the loss of its rural character.” Again, an overwhelming majority of 250 agree with the statement, while only 17 had no opinion and 7 disagreed. The interrelationship of agriculture with the rural landscape is the primary factor of support for maintaining the working agricultural landscape.

In *Part III – Your Priorities*, the first priority of the respondents was “maintaining rural character” with 168 favorable responses and “preserving active farming” with 146 selecting this as a close second priority. For respondents residing within the Village of Cambridge, only water quality had a higher priority. Rural character may be in part the spacing between houses that provides privacy from one’s neighbor, the varying vistas framed by hedges, hills or tree lined roads or just the sense of solitude or separation.

Individual comments in *Part IV – Your Comments*, included “Agriculture is what gives the area its character”, “preserving active farming key to keeping Wash. County/ Cambridge character” and

“agree but must be ‘responsible’ agriculture as dominant land use i.e. protect the environment, soil and water.” Also noted were preserving all forms of agriculture for the future and organic products.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Planning Board Actions

Existing laws, including New York State Agricultural Districts Law, New York State Environmental Quality Review, Town Right to Farm Life, support the protection of farmlands and farming activities. The recommendations described in the *Land Use* section are critical to the future of farming in the Town, especially revised subdivisions regulations and the site plan review. In implementing all of these laws and regulations, the Planning Board should incorporate the following principles:

- a. **Rec#08** - Agricultural land is a natural resource. The Planning Board should require soils maps for each subdivision or site plan review application. The Planning Board should steer development toward the least productive soils and/or away from the most productive soils.
- b. **Rec#09** - Agriculture is an important aspect of the Town’s economy. The purpose of protecting agricultural land is to sustain the agricultural industry. The Planning Board should ensure that development will minimize interference with agricultural activities.
- c. **Rec#10** - Maintaining the larger agricultural lots can prevent loss of farmland through conversion to non-farm use. The Planning Board should ensure that subdivisions minimize the fragmentation of agricultural lands.

2. Town Board Actions

- a. **Rec#11** - The Town Board should develop a plan for farmland protection. The NYS Dept. of Agriculture and Markets provides a Municipal Agriculture and Farmland Planning grant to fund this effort. By working with farmers, agricultural businesses, agencies and others supporting farmland protection, the Town could identify strategies for sustaining agriculture as the predominant and preferred land use in the Town. The resulting Plan would provide information necessary for Planning Board decisions and also help the Town plan for the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) of appropriate farmland.
- b. **Rec#12** - The Town Board should work with the Warren and Washington County Industrial Development Agency (IDA) to encourage agricultural businesses within the Town. Such programs should recruit farmers who need smaller parcels for niche or alternative agricultural products, connect young farmers to farms or retiring farmers so existing farms could be transferred to another generation, and provide incentives.
- c. **Rec#13** - The Town Board should resolve to support the purchase of development rights

from farmers and other large landowners.

- d. **Rec#14** - The Town Board should resolve to recognize the contributions of farmers through a “Celebrate Our Farms” day to thank the Town’s farmers who produce our food and provide the rural landscape we appreciate. Such a resolution should specifically promote the sale of local farm produce at the Farmers Markets and at the local grocery stores.

- e. **Rec#15** - The Town Board should meet with the local school districts (especially the Cambridge Central School Board of Education) to explore teaching agriculture as part of the school curriculum so local children have the opportunity to select a career in agricultural science or related fields.

* * *

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A. EXISTING CONDITIONS

In addition to the agricultural sector, the local economy of Cambridge includes a wide variety of enterprises.

Commercial and Industrial Base

The only truly industrial enterprise presently in the Town of Cambridge is Cambridge Valley Machining, a high tech, machine tool manufacturing operation which boasts of a non-smokestack environmental impact while serving clients from around the world, including some as notable as NASA. Another large business enterprise is an open field compost operation. The opportunity to site other large industrial facilities within the Town is limited by both the transportation infrastructure and electrical service.

Small Businesses

There are numerous small businesses scattered throughout the Town. There are two automobile repair shops and many others that can be described as “home businesses.” These include services such as welding, equipment repair, sewing, tax preparation, consulting, hairdressing, electrical installation and repair, excavating, construction, woodworking, and others. Smaller retail establishments include a florist, antique shops and a coal dealer.

Creative & Cultural Businesses

The number of creative and cultural businesses is significant, especially in light of the Town’s modest population size. These enterprises include: authors, musicians, actors, dancers, painters, sculptors, carvers, weavers, and musical instrument and furniture craftsmen.

The variety and number of these businesses begs the question: “Why here in Cambridge?” There are probably at least two reasons. First is geography. Cambridge is strategically located to patrons of arts and crafts. Almost equidistant from Saratoga Springs, Manchester, Williamstown and the Berkshires, with their museums, galleries, theaters and performing arts venues, Cambridge stands at an unintended cultural crossroads. It is also within a few hours’ drive of such international arts centers as New York City, Boston and Montreal. This circumstance puts creative entrepreneurs within reach of supportive markets.

A second reason for the prevalence of these creative endeavors is the character of the Cambridge landscape. The ambience provided by the quiet rural countryside seems to call out to those who are blessed with creative talent and provides them with inspiration.

Infrastructure

The elements of infrastructure needed to support non-agricultural businesses include: transportation, electrical power, and communications. Each of these is limited in the Town. Only one, though, could be improved without significantly altering the character of the rural landscape. In order to improve communications, high-speed access to the Internet could help to ensure the success of many of the small, home-based businesses that are so prevalent throughout the Town. This issue is discussed more thoroughly in the Utilities chapter. Improvements to cellular telephone service, too, could improve the small business climate within the Town.

B. EXPECTATIONS

The Survey showed a strong sentiment for the Town playing an active role in attracting and “steering” new businesses. There was especially strong support for home-based businesses. Four statements in Part II of the Survey related to economic development. In response to # 22., “The Town should attractively attract selected businesses to establish themselves in Cambridge,” most residents (210) agreed, 30 had no opinion, and 32 disagreed. In response to “New industrial development should occur in a part of the Town of Cambridge where it would be compatible with natural resources, surrounding uses and the viewscape,” again most (223) agreed, 20 had no opinion, and 30 disagreed. Two-hundred-eleven residents agreed that “New retail development (stores, restaurants, lodging) should occur in or near the Village of Cambridge,” 29 had no opinion, and 33 disagreed. Statement # 25, “Home-based businesses should be permitted anywhere, provided they do not cause noise, traffic or other problems for neighbors”, garnered the strongest support, with 233 agreeing, 21 with no opinion, and 22 disagreeing.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations to support economic development are addressed more thoroughly in other chapters:

1. Site Plan Review (see *Land Use* section)

Under current regulations, most businesses are exempt from regulation. Enterprises that have the potential to have significant impacts on neighbors or traffic and the like should undergo site plan review by the Planning Board.

2. Internet and Cell Phone Service (see *Utilities* section)

In order to improve communications for small businesses, a high-speed Internet access and more reliable cell phone service should be pursued.

3. Incompatible Uses (see *Land Use* section)

Major commercial or industrial operations should be limited to major transportation corridors. Because State Route 22 offers the most qualified site in the Cambridge Valley, planning for large enterprises should be coordinated with neighboring municipalities.

TRANSPORTATION

A. EXISTING CONDITIONS

Overview

The primary means of transportation in Cambridge is by private motor vehicles. The Town is served by a system of State, County and Town roads. Bus service is not currently available from the Town or Village of Cambridge. Rail service is very limited. In 2006, the Batten Kill Rambler ran seasonal tourist trips between the Villages of Cambridge and Salem; the trains do not connect to other passenger or freight lines. There are no airports within the Town but two local airstrips, in Jackson and in Hoosick, serve small, private aircraft. Albany International Airport offers service and connections to most of North America but many Cambridge residents rely on major airports in New York City/New Jersey, Boston, and even Montreal for international travel.

The Highway System

Major roads connecting the Town to other locales include State Route 22, which heads north to Salem and south to Hoosick Falls in Rensselaer County and, via, State Route 67, to North Bennington, Vermont. State Route 372 heads northwest to Greenwich and, via State Route 29, to Saratoga Springs and the Northway. There are no State roads in the southern and western portions of Cambridge but County Route 74 (aka “the railroad bed”) is a major thoroughfare, especially for Town residents traveling to the Albany-Schenectady-Troy area via State Route 40.

In recent years, the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) considered reconfiguring State Route 372 between Greenwich and Cambridge. Public outreach found a lack of support from local residents. NYSDOT has no plans, at present, to change the nature of this stretch of highway.

In general, the State highways are maintained by NYSDOT. The 28 miles of County highways are maintained by Washington County. All Town roads are maintained by the Town of Cambridge Highway Department. The 48 miles of paved highways are re-paved on an approximately 15-year cycle. The 1.9 miles of Brownell Road were paved for the first time in 2004. This was enabled by funding from a federal Multi-Mode1 grant. There are no plans to pave any of the 17 miles of existing gravel roads. The last new road constructed in Cambridge was Durfee Road in 2005. Highway Department costs are supported with funds from Town and County resident real property taxes as well as State and Federal excise and other taxes.

Other highway maintenance tasks include removing (and sanding and salting) snow, installing and replacing signs, cutting weeds and brush from shoulders and fallen trees from roadways, removing roadkills and maintaining drainage culverts and ditches. In general, stormwater runoff from all highway surfaces is directed into roadside ditches or swales. There is no treatment of the runoff

before it reaches natural brooks and creeks. Salt, sand, and vehicle pollutants such as fuel and lubricants can wind up in surface waters.

There are no traffic lights within the Town of Cambridge. The only streetlights are at the Town Garage and on Perry Lane in front of Cambridge Valley Machining. There are no sidewalks and no curbs.

Decisions to add signs or modify speed limits are governed by both County and State rules. Requests are initiated through the Town Board but must be approved by both the County and the State as well as by the Town Highway Superintendent.

Note: The Highway Department will avoid mowing shoulders at the request of individual property owners.

B. EXPECTATIONS

It is clear from the Survey that Cambridge residents are largely satisfied with the highway system and the way it is managed. The Survey had three statements specifically about transportation in *Part II - Your Views*. The first (# 26) stated: "The highway system is sufficient. No new roads should be built." The overwhelming majority of respondents agreed with this sentiment: 200 agreed, 36 had no opinion, and 35 disagreed.

The second statement (# 27) stated: "Outside of the Village, our roads should not be developed with sidewalks, curbs or streetlights." Public sentiment was even stronger: 219 agreed, 21 had no opinion, and 32 disagreed.

Statement # 28 said: "Unpaved roads in the Town should be paved." Most do not want more roads paved: 72 agreed, 66 had no opinion, and 135 disagreed.

One of the natural resources statements is relevant to transportation. Statement # 10 stated: "Our brooks, streams and the Hoosic River should be protected from pollution caused by stormwater runoff from farm fields and highways." The overwhelming majority of respondents agreed with this sentiment: 237 agreed, 24 had no opinion, and 14 disagreed.

In other parts of the Survey, transportation did not emerge as a major issue. In Part III - Your Priorities, transportation was not mentioned. Similarly, in Part IV - Comments, there were twenty remarks about transportation but no single theme dominated.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Continue the highway system and its management as is (Rec#16).

The current extent and character of the highway system should be maintained. No new roads should be built and no gravel roads should be paved; roads should have neither curbs nor streetlights.

2. Prevent pollution from road salt, sand, fuels and lubricants (Rec#17).

The Town Highway Department should explore ways to minimize pollution of surface waters from highway runoff of salt, sand, fuels and lubricants etc. Technical assistance and State and Federal grants may be available.

* * *

UTILITIES

A. EXISTING CONDITIONS

Water and Sewer

The residents of the Town of Cambridge outside the Village do not have access to a public water supply or municipal sewer system. Instead, everyone has a well or wells and maintains his or her own septic system. The current subdivisions that are being approved have wells and septic systems that are approved by the Washington County Department of Health. Many communities are actively installing or expanding these utilities, given that older septic systems may not meet the standards for protecting water quality. Increased development and surface water contamination and runoff can affect drinking water. Communities considering municipal systems can use the NYS DEC Model Sewer Use Law and then apply for state and federal grant money. The community would bear the cost of the main lines, water or sewer treatment facilities while the individual hookup would be financed by the property owner. The cost of installation and maintenance of the water and sewer systems would generally results in additional taxes.

Electrical

Electricity is provided by the National Grid Company. Individuals may select their energy source which may be different than the supplier, but the supplier will continue to deliver. This selection process enables individuals to seek alternative energy sources such as renewable wind and water power.

Natural Gas

There are no natural gas lines in the Town.

Telephone

Telephone land infrastructure is owned by Verizon, who provide a variety of calling plans for local, regional and long distance calling. Consumers are not required to use Verizon as their carrier, since other telephone companies offer services and a variety of rates depending on selected plan. Verizon will provide the billing service for all the telephone services. Currently, fiber optic lines have not been installed throughout the entire Town. Cell phones have become popular and often replace land line service.

Broadband Internet Access

Existing Conditions

A variety of technologies are available to provide Cambridge homes and businesses with high speed access to the internet. Among the fastest and most reliable is DSL (digital subscriber line). DSL

transmits digital signals over the regular copper wires of the telephone network. Currently DSL service is available only within 18,000 wire-run feet (the distance of the phone lines, not road distance) of the local Verizon Central Office. In Cambridge the local office is opposite the Post Office on Main Street. Many residents of the Town residing in, or close to, the Village currently utilizes DSL service. Unfortunately, most of the Town of Cambridge is beyond its distance limitation.

Equally reliable and potentially faster internet access through Time Warner Cable's Road Runner service is also available. However the cable network exists only in the Village of Cambridge and along the length of State Route 372. Again, most of the Town lies beyond the reach of this service as it is currently configured.

Hudson Valley Wireless, a Wireless Internet Service Provider (<http://www.hvwisp.com>), currently provides high speed wireless internet connections from its antenna on Willard Mountain, in the Town of Easton. Only a few residents of the Town of Cambridge are able to use that service because it requires a clear line-of-sight to the antenna. Hudson Valley Wireless hopes to expand its service to southern Washington County by adding additional antennas.

Some residents of the Town use satellite internet service which is available from at least two vendors, Hughesnet and Wildblue. It requires only an unobstructed view of the southern sky. This service is generally considered less versatile and less reliable than DSL or cable. It is not as fast and it is more expensive. However, it is considerably faster than dial-up service and provides a reasonable alternative for those who are willing to pay the higher cost.

All other residents must use a dial-up internet connection, which has a very limited speed and occupies the telephone line preventing its use for phone calls.

In his 2007 State of the State address Governor Spitzer, said "... access to affordable, high-speed broadband is just as important in today's economy as access to a paved road, to a telephone line or to reliable electricity." Governor Spitzer has declared it a goal of his administration to make high speed internet readily accessible across New York State. A plan to do so was announced in December of 2007.

The Warren-Washington County Industrial Development Agency recently passed a resolution that identified the lack of broadband access as an obstacle to economic development and called for initiatives to increase its availability.

The Comprehensive Plan Team agrees with these assessments of the importance of broadband service. It may be especially important for a rural town such as Cambridge. Those who operate home-based businesses and telecommuters rely on the internet. These activities bring economic benefits to the Town, but have little or no adverse impact on the rural environment. Expanded availability of broadband could encourage such low-impact economic development.

The internet is also widely used for distance learning, commerce, and access to information and media. For all of the Town's citizens it is becoming an increasingly important means of overcoming

rural isolation.

Future Possibilities

All methods of bringing high speed internet service require fairly substantial capital investment. The return on investment is highest where there is the greatest population density. Rural areas are usually at a disadvantage for this reason.

Verizon can extend the reach of its DSL service by making modifications to its lines and adding remote terminals miles from the central office. This is being done in some areas and could theoretically be done here also.

Time Warner will extend its cable lines if requested. However, those served must share in the cost of that extension. This is quite expensive and out of the reach of most homeowners.

Fixed and mobile high-speed wireless access, using frequencies that can travel longer distances, may be available from independent wireless internet service providers (WISP) as well as from cell phone companies. In more densely populated areas, cell phone providers such as Verizon, Sprint and AT&T already make home broadband service available using their cell phone systems. If cell phone networks continue to be upgraded, this service may be available to some residents of the Town of Cambridge in the future.

Other technologies for accessing high speed internet services are being developed and deployed around the country. Some of these may, in coming years, be available to the residents of Cambridge. One example is broadband over power lines (BPL), which National Grid has agreed to deploy near Syracuse, New York. This allows the electric power lines to carry high speed internet data as well as electric service.

Some rural towns have taken a pro-active approach and invited technology companies to plan and develop a community broadband network, usually using wireless technology. Most of these are privately or cooperatively owned and operated, and do not require public expenditures.

Cable Television

The Town of Cambridge has a cable television franchise with Time Warner Entertainment-Advance/Newhouse Partnership which will remain in effect until June 29, 2008. This provides Time Warner the exclusive right to construct and maintain any necessary apparatus (lines, poles, cables, towers) for the purpose of transmitting, receiving, amplifying and distributing telephone, telegraph, television, and radio signals and other videos and aural programming and communications. Under Section 622 of the Federal Cable Act, municipalities are entitled to a maximum of 5 percent gross revenues derived from the operation of the cable system for the provision of cable service. Cable generally services those areas having 35 dwelling units per linear mile. Only a small portion of the Town is currently served by cable. Areas covered by cable also have access to high speed internet and phone services. Since the majority of the Town lacks this density, conventional antennas and satellite dishes provide the desired television coverage for individual properties.

Public Lighting

Outdoor public lighting is minimal and consists of halogen street lights on power poles at the Town Hall/Town Barns and at Perry Lane. Again, various types of outdoor lighting are present on individual properties based on personal preference.

Wireless Telecommunications Facilities

In 1996 the Federal Telecommunications Act was signed into Law and encouraged new services such as wireless communication and direct broadcast satellite to compete with traditional services. The siting of wireless telecommunications facilities (cell towers) was left to state and local governments to use within the parameters of state and federal legislation. Currently there are no cell towers in the Town of Cambridge, although others exist in close proximity and still others are being proposed. Municipalities are encouraged to be proactive by planning in advance.

Outdoor Furnaces

Some Town residents have invested in outdoor furnaces that provide the ability to heat the interior of a building without transporting the wood into the building. The furnaces resemble small out buildings and are most often located toward the rear of the lot or house. Unseasoned and larger pieces of wood can be easily burned without concern for chimney fires. The short chimney however may not be adequate to transport the smoke above the existing buildings. Additionally, "green" wood can result in incomplete combustion and extensive smoke. When housing is close together, smoke drift may become a problem for adjacent neighbors. The Town, in 2007, enacted an ordinance to regulate the siting of all new outdoor furnaces.

B. EXPECTATIONS

Three statements about Utilities were presented in Part II of the Survey. In response to # 29, "All new utilities should be buried underground," a strong majority (191) agreed, 48 had no opinion, and 35 disagreed. For new telephone and cable the community felt that these should be placed underground, outside of existing pavement, if at all feasible.

A very high percent (231 agreed, 26 had no opinion and 18 disagreed) of the respondents were of the opinion that water supply and sewage disposal should continue to be the responsibility of individual homeowners (statement # 30). There were some concerns expressed about regulations that would be necessary to ensure safe health conditions.

The question related to high-tech infrastructure supported views that a large percentage of the community uses the computer and the internet, and are seeking reliable speedy access. In response to "All existing residences and businesses in the Town should have access to high-tech infrastructure (cable, broadband, cellular telephone service, etc.)", 183 agreed, 56 had no opinion and 34 disagreed. In the overall priorities, however, expanding the internet service did not rank as one of the most pressing priorities and in fact was ranked below the need for expanding outdoor recreation. Cell

towers were considered by many to be objectionable. Some individual respondents seemed to think that taxes might be affected if the high-speed service were installed. Some thought that the large number of older residents would not want the service because of the added cost, while another noted the advantage this would be for the children of the Town.

The outdoor furnaces were not considered during the survey and this has only recently been brought to the attention of the community as a possible concern.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Ensure high-speed internet availability throughout the Town (Rec#18, 19& 20).

High-speed and reliable access to the internet is a critical component to supporting home-based businesses. The Town Board should make extension of broadband availability a high priority. More specifically:

- a. **Rec#18** - The Town Board should appoint a committee of volunteers with relevant expertise to advise the Board about strategies for expanding broadband availability. Such a committee could, for example, assess the level of need for this service in the Town. It could gather information about possible solutions, funding sources, etc. We believe that there are enough interested residents that would be willing to volunteer for such a committee.
- b. **Rec#19** - The Town should work closely with the County and the State on this issue, as well as with surrounding towns. The Town should give serious consideration to any programs that either the State or County might develop to widen the availability of broadband locally.
- c. **Rec#20** - The Town should consider making expansion of the Time Warner Cable service area a goal of its negotiations when the time for franchise renewal occurs in 2008.

2. Regulate cell tower siting (Rec#21)

The Town should enact a local law to regulate cell towers to be prepared should towers be proposed within the Town. The intent would be to minimize the visual impacts of any new towers by requiring tower companies to 1) explore opportunities to locate antennae on existing tall structures, such as silos or church steeples, and 2) co-locate with other communications towers. As important, provisions for the de-commissioning and removal of cell towers should be incorporated into any siting agreements.

3. Limit public utilities (Rec#22)

The Town should not support the development or expansion of public utilities such as street lighting, water supply or sewers.

* * *

OUTDOOR RECREATION

A. EXISTING CONDITIONS

Many Cambridge residents enjoy outdoor recreation. Hiking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, horse-back riding, hunting, fishing, snowmobiling, ATV (all-terrain vehicle) use and other activities are generally non-commercial, unorganized, and occur on private lands. Typically, individuals obtain permission from landowners, usually for no charge. There are no developed facilities for these uses.

The single outdoor recreation facility in the Town is a canoe launch site on River Road; it was donated and is maintained by National Grid as part of its license to operate hydroelectric dams on the Hoosick River.

B. EXPECTATIONS

Two statements in *Part II - Your Views* dealt with outdoor activities. Statement # 36., “the Town needs a trail system for hiking, snowshoeing or cross-country skiing.” received moderate levels of support: 129 agreed, 70 had no opinion, and 72 disagreed. When asked to react to statement # 37, “The Town needs a trail system for snowmobiles and ATVs”, though, a different response was received. While 64 agreed and 62 had no opinion, 142 disagreed.

Statement # 38 dealt with team sports. “The Town needs publicly-available sports facilities (baseball, soccer, basketball, tennis).” received 110 response in agreement, 76 with no opinion, and 83 in disagreement.

In *Part III - Your Priorities*, 32 respondents indicated expanding outdoor recreational opportunities as a priority. Youth recreation and non-motorized recreational each received 2 favorable responses.

No clear demand for outdoor recreation was expressed in the *Survey*, but demand for the opportunity to hunt is widely recognized and has been commonly expressed in other settings. Hunting license sales records are organized by ZIP codes and not by town of residence. In 2005, 562 hunting licenses were sold to people in the Cambridge ZIP code area and 191 in the Buskirk ZIP code area.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Support volunteer efforts to develop trail systems (Rec#23).

The Town should support volunteer efforts for establishing trail systems. A model has been provided to the east of Cambridge by a snowmobile club that established a trail running generally north-south to tie into a larger system. Volunteers performed the tasks of designing the trail, securing permission from willing landowners, and improving the trail itself. Public grants are available for such development projects. For example, the New York State Office of Parks,

Recreation and Historic Preservation's (OPRHP's) Recreational Trails Program is a State-administered, Federal assistance program to provide and maintain recreational trails for both motorized and non-motorized recreation. For 2007, the minimum grant award was \$5,000 and the maximum grant award was \$100,000. Non-profit organizations, municipal, state and federal agencies, Indian tribal governments and other public agencies and authorities may apply for up to 80 percent of project costs.

* * *

REGIONAL NEEDS & COOPERATION

A. Existing Conditions

While preparing this Comprehensive Plan, the Team has communicated with and studied information from several neighboring towns and the Village of Cambridge. A representative from the Village has served as liaison to the Plan Team. Representatives from the Towns of White Creek and Cambridge and the Village of Cambridge have met to discuss common planning issues and concerns. A representative from the Town of Easton was invited to a met with the Team to explain Easton's comprehensive plan and sub-division regulations.

In February, 2005 three municipalities, the Town with the Village of Cambridge and the Town of White Creek, cooperated in preparing an application to the New York State Department of State's Quality Communities Program for funding to support planning efforts by all three groups and establish a regional planning process. The project, the Greater Cambridge Valley Public Planning and Visioning Project, is a collaborative municipal initiative engaging the Towns of Cambridge and White Creek and the Village of Cambridge in the development of a comprehensive, regional vision for the rural Cambridge Valley - which will direct future land-use planning, agricultural and economic development, downtown revitalization and open space protection. Additional parts of the project allow for the Town to complete its comprehensive plan, the Town of White Creek to initiate a comprehensive planning process and the Village of Cambridge to revise zoning regulations. To date, all four parts of this project are in process.

The Town of Jackson declined to participate in the Quality Communities funding application and has not participated in the Town's planning efforts or in the Greater Cambridge Valley Planning Project.

B. Expectations

It is expected that all four planning programs in the Quality Communities project will be successfully completed and that the Town will cooperate with the Town of White Creek, the Village of Cambridge and perhaps other neighboring municipalities in future regional planning initiatives and applications for funding in support of these programs.

C. Recommendations

Rec#24 - The Town should continue to support regional planning and cooperate with neighboring towns and villages to apply for funding for future regional planning initiatives. The Town should continue to encourage the Town of Jackson to participate in the Greater Cambridge Valley planning projects. The Town should participate in regional planning efforts beyond the greater Cambridge Valley to include all municipalities in southern Washington and northern Rensselaer Counties.

* * *

LAND USE

Much of the substance of the entire Comprehensive Plan is contained within this section. The overall intent is to reflect the desires of the people of the Town to keep Cambridge the way it is - lightly developed with active agriculture. The land use proposals described below:

- a. Reflect the existing development density (many 30- to 100-acre parcels).
- b. Reflect the real estate market demand.
- c. Ensure that open land will be available for agriculture (including forest management).
- d. Ensure landowners' ability to sell their lands (or development rights) for a fair profit.
- e. Ensure continued opportunities for home businesses.

A. EXISTING CONDITIONS

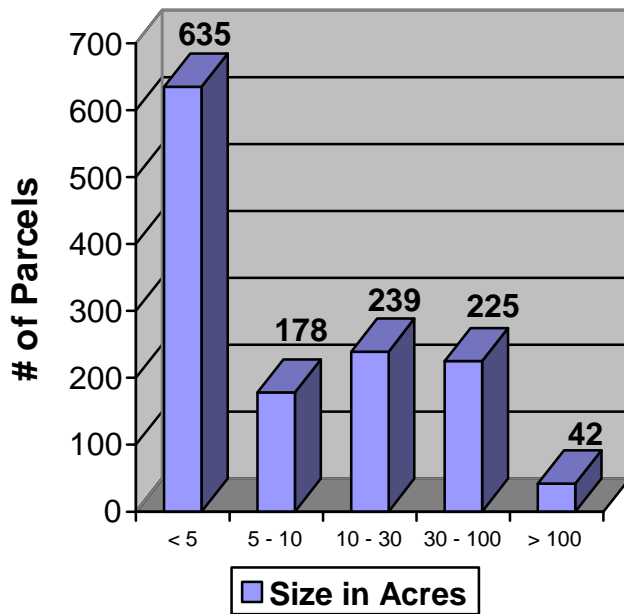
Overview

As described earlier, land use in Cambridge is rural. The landscape is dominated by farming. Farm fields and farm buildings are the most obvious features. Other buildings, especially residences, are scattered in low densities among the farms or, in Coila, South Cambridge and Center Cambridge, are clumped together in hamlets. There are few purely residential subdivisions and they are low in density and modest in size. There are very few commercial buildings. The road network is sparse.

At present, about 950 lots are developed on the 22,657 acres in the Town of Cambridge. The development includes houses, farm buildings and businesses but a few lots are used for churches and cemeteries, for utilities, and by municipal government. Of the residential properties, 187 are in the Village of Cambridge. There are about 370 undeveloped lots in the entire Town.

The distribution of lot sizes is interesting. The most abundant lots, of course, are small properties that support a single building, usually a residence. There are about 635 of these, up to 5 acres in size. However, the next most common lots are in the 10 to 30 acre size range, with about 239 in this category. They are followed by the next most common size, 30 to 100 acres; there are about 225 of these. There are very few lots large enough to support entire dairy farms. There are only 42 lots larger than 100 acres. There are 178 lots between 5 and 10 acres in size.

Figure 1: Lot Sizes (acres)



The low development density has resulted in a low demand for public services and so real property taxes are relatively low.

Agriculture

Agriculture is the dominant land use but the open space actively farmed has been diminishing in recent decades. Dairy farming is the most common type of farming at present. There are about ten self-sustaining dairy farms. Most of these own some of their lands and rent additional lands. The ratio is roughly 50:50. Other livestock farms include cattle, horses, sheep, goats, hogs, llamas and alpacas. Still other farms raise vegetables, flowers and fruits. The soils and topography most suitable for farming are in the western and southern portions of the Town. For a more complete discussion of the topic, please see the *Agriculture* chapter.

Business

There are a modest number of conventional businesses, a single factory, and a growing number of home-based businesses, especially those based on the internet. Further discussion can be found in the *Economic Development* chapter in this Plan.

The Village and Nearby Towns

Land use in the Village of Cambridge is primarily residential with many retail businesses along the major thoroughfares. Because of its location central to the Towns of Cambridge, Jackson and White Creek, many residents from these three Towns rely on the Village of Cambridge for many services. Agriculture is the dominant land use in Jackson and White Creek. Retail and light industrial

businesses have built up in recent years, especially along State Route 22 in White Creek.

Existing Regulations

The following government programs are currently available for guiding land use in Cambridge:

Town of Cambridge

Planning Board - The Planning Board was created in 1987. Its purpose is to guide development within Cambridge by reviewing applications to subdivide lands. The Planning Board reviews about seven applications each year. For example, in 2006, it reviewed eight applications to subdivide nine existing parcels into a total of 25 lots. New York State law envisions that Planning Boards be guided by a Comprehensive Plan. Thus, Cambridge has had a Planning Board for many years but has not yet provided the Board a Comprehensive Plan to guide their decisions.

Subdivision Regulations - The Town Subdivision Regulations were adopted in 1988 and revised in 1991. They provide guidance to the Planning Board (and to landowners and developers) regarding what considerations they should use when deciding if or how to grant approval for the subdivision of existing parcels. Minor subdivisions are those that would result in no more than four lots from an existing parcel and would require no new road construction. Major subdivisions are those that would result in five or more lots or would require the construction of a new road or roads.

Currently, the Washington County Planning Board is not authorized to review subdivision regulations as do many counties under General Municipal Law 239. Furthermore, the County does not have its own comprehensive or master plan and so the Town of Cambridge is not required to comply with any County goals or other considerations.

The New York State Department of Health (DOH), pursuant to NYS Public Health Law Section 1115, must approve wastewater treatment and water supply design and construction during the creation of larger subdivisions. Specifically, they must review “realty subdivisions”, which are defined as the creation of five or more lots, of five or fewer acres, in a period of three years. This is known as the “5-5-3 rule.” In such instances, DOH becomes an “involved agency” under SEQRA (see below).

There are no special considerations for subdivisions occurring in a designated agricultural district. Nevertheless, any parcel being sold in an agricultural district, or within 500 feet of an active farm within an agricultural district, must provide the prospective buyer with an agricultural disclosure statement to that effect.

Mobile Home (Trailer) Ordinance - The Town’s Mobile Home Ordinance regulates mobile homes, manufactured homes and travel trailers. Single mobile/manufactured homes require a permit from the Town. The permit addresses minimum lot size, setbacks, driveways, accessory structures, water supply, sewage, and garbage disposal. Multiple mobile homes must be located within designated trailer parks; these also require a permit. Permanently-occupied travel trailers must be sited in a permitted travel trailer park.

Right-to-Farm - The Town of Cambridge has a Right-to-Farm ordinance. The purpose of this statute is to prevent “nuisance litigation” that might be brought against farmers for bona fide farming activities. The law recognizes that, as people move to Cambridge who are not accustomed to the sights, sounds, smells and other features of farming, conflicts can arise that would cause farmers to defend accepted farming practices.

Washington County

The *Washington County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan* was prepared in 1996. One of its goals is especially pertinent:

“Protect the land base and natural resources that support agriculture by... encouraging town planning for agriculture...maintaining a rural character... [and] protecting important farmland.”

Furthermore, State planning law requires that:

“...A newly adopted or amended town comprehensive plan shall take into consideration applicable county agricultural and farmland protection plans as created under article twenty-five-AAA of the agriculture and markets law...”

State of New York

SEQRA - The State Environmental Quality Review Act (Article 8 of the Environmental Conservation Law) and its regulations (6 NYCRR Part 617) require that governments, including town governments, “...incorporate the consideration of environmental factors into the existing planning, review and decision-making processes...” SEQRA review provides a process for towns to use in meeting this obligation. Basically, they must take a “hard look” at many actions before making decisions such as granting subdivision or other land use approvals. If needed, the town must require applicants to complete a thorough environmental review through an environmental impact statement (EIS). The goal of this process is to find a way, probably by modifying an applicant’s plans, to accommodate both development needs and protection of the environment. The applicant has the burden of demonstrating that their proposal can avoid or minimize environmental harm. The SEQRA requirements are currently included in the Town of Cambridge Subdivision Regulations.

Agricultural Districts - Agricultural (“Ag”) Districts were created by New York State (Article 25-AA of Agriculture and Markets Law) to help protect farming and farmlands throughout the State. Lands identified as most valuable for farming are designated as “ag districts”. Most of the Town has been designated within Agricultural Districts.

Agricultural Assessment - Owners of land that is actively farmed can seek a reduction in real property taxes (both local and county) by way of an “ag assessment”. Lands used for agriculture are assessed at a lower rate than most other land uses. The qualification for an ag assessment is based on the income generated from a farming operation (at least \$10,000 per year and 10 acres) and is also

granted on lands leased to bona fide farms.

Forest Tax Law 480A - Owners of forest lands that contain at least 50 contiguous acres are eligible for property tax relief through the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. The lands must be managed in accordance with plans prepared for specific parcels.

Planning Grants - The Department of State frequently offers assistance to local governments to support planning efforts. Eligibility for such grants typically requires that a town have a Comprehensive Plan in place.

Federal Government

Federal Farm Bill - The United States Department of Agriculture offers a wide variety of programs to assist farmers. These are typically contained in so-called “Farm Bills” which are enacted and funded by the federal government on a regular basis. Taken together, these programs offer payments or loans to farmers to support farming activities and also to achieve conservation goals for the quality of the air, soil and water as well as for fish and wildlife.

Private

Land Trusts - Land trusts are not-for-profit entities whose mission is to conserve land uses for specific purposes. Agricultural land trusts are intended to ensure that lands of sufficient quantity and quality are available for farming purposes in perpetuity. The Agricultural Stewardship Association (ASA) is active in southern Washington County for this purpose. They achieve their purpose by acquiring rights to farmlands in ways that are advantageous to landowners, either through fees or tax benefits. At present, three farms in Cambridge have enrolled land with ASA.

Neighboring Municipalities

The approaches to land use planning vary widely among our neighboring towns and villages. The table below summarizes existing authorities in towns:

Table 2. Summary of Land Use Authorities in Washington County Towns

Town	Comprehensive Plan	Site Review	Plan	Subdivision Regulations	Zoning
Argyle	YES	no		YES	no
Cambridge	in process	no		YES	no
Dresden	APA	APA		APA	APA
Easton	YES	in process		YES	no

Town	Comprehensive Plan	Site Plan Review	Subdivision Regulations	Zoning
Fort Ann	in process	YES	YES	no
Fort Edward	YES	YES	YES	YES
Granville	no	no	YES	no
Greenwich	YES	YES	YES	in process
Hampton	no	YES	YES	no
Hartford	YES	YES	YES	no
Hebron	no	in process	YES	no
Jackson	no	no	YES	no
Kingsbury	no	YES	YES	YES
Putnam	APA	YES	YES	APA
Salem	YES	YES	YES	no
White Creek	in process	YES	YES	no
Whitehall	no	YES	YES	no

- NOTES:
1. “APA” denotes land use regulation by Adirondack Park Agency
 2. All data 2006.

B. EXPECTATIONS

The Survey had numerous statements about land use in *Part II - Your Views*. The first (# 14) stated “I like the Cambridge landscape the way it is and would not want to see the loss of its rural character.” The overwhelming majority of respondents agreed with this sentiment: 250 agreed, 17 had no opinion, and 7 disagreed.

There was similar support for the second statement, “Agriculture should continue to be the dominant land use.” Of the respondents, 224 agreed, 35 had no opinion, and 12 disagreed.

Most respondents agreed with the statement “I care how my neighbors use their lands.” A total of 219 agreed, 30 had no opinion, and 21 disagreed.

A strong majority agreed that “The Town should actively guide land use and development.” The results were: 189 agree, 37 no opinion and 43 disagree.

There were also statements about housing in Part II - Your Views. A strong majority felt that “New development should complement the Cambridge character, with 235 agree, 24 no opinion, and 16 disagree.

Two other statements about housing were less well-supported but still garnered clear majorities. “The Town needs more housing designed especially for seniors.” found 143 agreeing, 86 with no opinion, and 39 disagreeing. Results were similar for “the Town needs affordable housing.” In agreement were 156, with no opinion were 70, and in disagreement were 43 respondents.

Support for maintaining the rural landscape and open space of Cambridge was also prominent among the Priorities and Comments. The top 3 priorities among all respondents were: “maintaining rural character” with 168 “votes”; “preserving active farming” with 146 in support; and “controlling development” with 106 responses.

Numerous other respondents expressed concerns about abandoned cars and trash. There was also significant support for home businesses.

C. ALTERNATIVES

There are many ways to guide development. Below is a discussion of some of the possibilities that might be considered for the Town of Cambridge.

Easton subdivision regulations/guidance - The Town of Easton subdivision regulations and guidance are similar in many ways to conventional zoning. They divide the landscape into several different categories. Both uses and development densities are controlled within each of the categories. Most notably, in the best agricultural areas, residential development is limited to one new house per 80 acres.

Site Plan Review - Site plan review authority involves Planning Board review of new development, most typically when use changes from a non-commercial (residential, agricultural) to a commercial one. Currently, the Town is one of only four towns in the county which have no site plan review. Unless a parcel is subdivided, the Town has no means to address problems that could result from a poorly-planned commercial enterprise or a proposed inappropriate use. Surrounding towns, such as Salem and White Creek, have site plan review authority.

A primary purpose of site plan review is to avoid creating problems for neighboring properties. However, the “intent” of Salem’s law is broader: “to promote the health, safety and general welfare of the Town” and “to ensure the optimum overall conservation, protection, preservation, development, and use of the natural and man-related resources of the Town...” The “purpose” of White Creek’s site plan review is “to plan for and design commercial, multifamily and industrial development when it occurs on a single parcel of land. This is in contrast to subdivision review...” The laws of both towns provide for specified exceptions and “grandfathering” of existing use. Both specify procedures and standards to be used in application of the law.

Site plan review in Cambridge would involve many of the same considerations contained in the Town's existing Trailer Ordinance: locations of improvements, driveways, accessory structures, water supply, sewage and garbage disposal. Other considerations might include: parking and traffic flow, lighting and signs, visual screening, noise buffers, storm water management, and perhaps architectural style. One of the most important considerations, for all but the smallest lots, should be the impact on the suitability for agriculture of the site under consideration.

In a town such as Cambridge, it is critical that site plan review regulations recognize the numerous home-based businesses in the Town. In addition, farm-related businesses, including retail outlets (farm stands, Christmas trees, corn mazes, etc.), should be exempt.

Zoning - Zoning involves the designation of distinct areas within a municipality for the purpose of planning types of uses and densities of development. Planners view "use zoning" and "area zoning" as separate topics, but most zoning regulates both use and area. "Use zoning" typically involves categories such as residential, agricultural, business/commercial, industrial, etc. Rural towns commonly designate large portions of their towns as "rural residential", to reflect a mix of farms and single-family houses. The purpose is to direct uses to parts of the town where it is most desirable from the town's perspective. Zoning typically separates residential zones from commercial zones.

As currently developed, the Town of Cambridge is very homogenous. Except for the hamlets of South Cambridge, Center Cambridge and Coila, residences, home businesses and small retail businesses are scattered fairly evenly among farms and woodlands across the landscape. There are no areas within the Town that lend themselves to large-scale commercial, retail or industrial uses; most such uses in recent years have occurred in or near the Village or along Route 22 south of the Village. Only a single "use zone" - perhaps "rural/residential" - would make sense.

"Area zoning" typically involves establishing a minimum lot size within a zone. Whereas villages or hamlets might have lot sizes below 1 acre, many rural towns establish minimum lot sizes of 5, 10 or more acres. If area zoning were to be applied in the conventional manner, e.g., if a 70-acre parcel were subdivided into seven 10-acre lots, it would be very difficult to maintain farming in the Town. Most farmers require large fields with easy access by fairly large tractors and equipment; smaller lots pose practical problems to farmers. On the other hand, if minimum lot sizes are too large, landowners wishing to convey building lots to their children could be forced to use valuable acreage for this purpose - acres from which they might otherwise realize greater return on the open real estate market.

The following image depicts an existing 67-acre farm as it might be subdivided if it were subject to zoning with 5-acre minimum parcel size. The 67 acres would yield a total of 13 lots. The 12 new lots would require a new road plus at least 6 new driveways onto the existing road. In this instance, this subdivision would more than double the number of residences on the 2-mile-long road.

Figure 2. 67 Acre Parcel Subdivided into 5 acre Lots



There are many variations on zoning. “Clustering”, for example, enables individual lots to be smaller than the nominal area requirement when all of the development is concentrated in one portion of the entire parcel so that a large area of contiguous open space may be preserved. Such an approach could be used to maintain farmable land when large parcels are developed.

The Town of Greenwich and the Village of Cambridge both have zoning regulations.

Conservation Planning - Conservation planning is an approach to land use planning that gives primary importance to protecting natural resources, open spaces, and other features (like farmland) that are valued by a community while meeting the needs of the landowner. It does this by avoiding inflexible rules about lot size, roads and driveways.

Conservation planning principles can be integrated into subdivision regulations, site plan review and zoning. In most conventional subdivisions, the density of development is controlled by mandating that every house be placed on a housing lot of some minimum area. For example, a town might require that each new home be placed on a lot with a minimum size of 5 acres. An owner of 100 acres of buildable land who wishes to maximize the development value of this land would therefore divide the entire 100 acres into 20, 5-acre building lots’

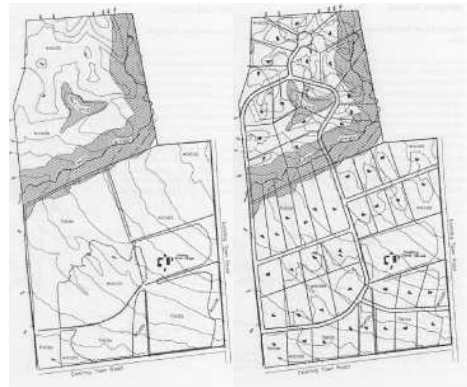


Figure 3: Example of a “Conventional Subdivision” Plan

Without changing the number of homes that could be built, the Town could instead require that the permitted density cannot exceed 1 home per 5 acres,

but the minimum lot size *can* be much smaller as conditions allow. Using the simplified example discussed above, the owner could still create no more than 20 building lots on the 100 acres;

however, the lots could vary in size as conditions and the imagination allow. By separating the issue of lot size from the issue of density, the landowner is no longer required to divide the entire original parcel into residential housing lots in order to maximize development potential and profits. Instead, the owner could achieve the maximum allowed density while creating lots of various sizes and preserving exceptional features of the landscape or preserving



Figure 4: A comparison of a conventional subdivision (left) with a conservation subdivision (right). In both cases, a total of 16 residential lots were created.

agricultural lands through creative design. This idea – separating the issue of density from the issue

of lot size – is the basic concept behind clustered subdivisions. Conservation Subdivision Design is a type of clustering that addresses the process by which a proposed subdivision is designed. The Conservation Subdivision Design approach begins with the identification of open space resources present on the site to be developed (environmentally constrained land, significant habitats, agricultural land, historic or scenic views, significant woodlots, hedgerows or stone walls, etc.). Areas that are desirable for conservation are identified (“green-lined”) and then potential development areas are identified (avoiding to the extent possible the conservation areas). Homes are then designed into the development areas of the site in a creative fashion, taking advantage of the open space amenity that will be present. Flexible lot size requirements and area and bulk standards facilitate this creativity. Identifying road and trail alignments and lot lines are the final steps in the Conservation Subdivision Design process.

The number of homes within the subdivision is usually determined by subtracting areas of severely constrained land (wetlands, regulated wetland buffers, watercourses, steep slopes, floodplains, etc.) from the gross lot area of the original parcel and dividing the remaining acreage by the allowable density in the Town (homes per acre as expressed in zoning or through some other local mechanism).

In any case, the number of homes in a conservation subdivision would be the same as the number of homes that would be possible in a conventional subdivision.

There are numerous benefits to this approach. There are environmental and viewshed benefits of allowing homes to be situated in a creative manner that is based on the specific attributes of the landscape rather than the need to conform to arbitrary standards for lot size, setbacks, or other typical restrictions. A network of conserved open lands can be created through the continued application of this process even while development occurs. These conserved lands might function as wildlife corridors or create buffers between residential areas or preserve agricultural lands. In addition, the conserved lands could provide benefits related to stormwater management. Conservation Subdivision Design allows the designer to take advantage of better soils for septic system locations and design criteria can be established to allow septic fields and well locations within the open space parcel(s).

A required open space set aside should also be established as part of any conservation subdivision regulations developed by the Town. The minimum open space set aside should ensure meaningful open space conservation, and still allow creative subdivision design. To make it easier to achieve or exceed the minimum open space set aside, and to promote housing diversity in the town, duplexes could be permitted in conservation subdivisions, in addition to detached single-family homes.

In all cases, a conservation easement must be the legally binding mechanism for ensuring that the open space set aside as part of a conservation subdivision cannot be further developed or subdivided in the future. In most cases it is recommended that a private landowner, or several landowners, in the new subdivision retain ownership of the land under easement. Private landowners are generally the best stewards of the land. For larger subdivisions, a homeowner’s association may sometimes retain ownership of the open lands. In rare cases, the town or a land trust may become the owner of the open lands.

Ridgeline Development - Residential development on the high elevations in an area can provide

dramatic views for those who occupy such homes. On the other hand, when they can be seen from great distances, such houses can conflict with the feeling of open space and rural landscape; they can be perceived as “ruining” views for others. As a result, many municipalities throughout New York and elsewhere have attempted to restrict such development through regulation. Thus far, the Plan Team has not fully explored this matter. One option would be to include consideration of views in Site Plan Review.

Incompatible Uses - Most residents appear to support a landowner’s ability to conduct a wide variety of home-based businesses on his or her land. Nevertheless, activities in nearby towns suggest that there are very likely some uses that would be viewed as incompatible to most Cambridge residents. For example, the continual loud noise associated with a commercial ATV track (Hoosick Falls) or commercial target shooting (Salem) would ruin the quiet enjoyed by most residents. Other incompatible uses identified by residents include: private landfills, salvage yards, and “big box” retail stores.

Subdivision Regulations – The existing subdivision regulations have no provision for limiting the density of development. They could be expanded using the principles of “conservation planning” to ensure that open land remains available for all types of agriculture. We believe this approach best balances the property rights of individual landowners with the desires of the community to maintain its rural character. The “farm-friendly subdivision regulations” described below are intended to maintain owners’ ability to sell their lands at a reasonable profit and/or provide building sites for family members.

The basic approach taken here is to limit the number of new lots into which an existing lot could be divided. The purpose is to 1) make sure that suitable open land remains open for farming (and for open space, hunting and hiking, etc.) and 2) make sure that the Cambridge population does not grow to a point where we all battle with traffic and pay higher property taxes to meet a demand for increases public services, such as more school capacity. Note that the *sizes* of new lots would not be prescribed; only the *number* of lots would be limited.

Each of the alternatives would allow for significant growth (from doubling to more than quadrupling) while approximately maintaining the current development density. As described above, there are currently about 950 *developed* lots in the Town’s 22,657 acres, roughly 1 developed lot on every 24 (~23.84) acres.

Original - This proposal was presented in the *Public Review Draft Plan* (December 2007). There would be two categories of existing lots: less than 100 acres and greater than 100 acres.

Smaller lots, those less than about 5 acres, do not play a significant role in agriculture. Many could not be subdivided and still safely support both wells and septic systems. For those that could be subdivided, the total number of lots would be no more than 3. (Note that this does not mean 3 additional lots. If a parcel is already developed with a single residence, 2 additional lots could be created and 2 new residences could be built.) This generally reflects the existing subdivision regulations. The Planning Board, when reviewing such applications, would consider the wells and septic systems but also driveways and natural features such as steep slopes and surface waters or

wetlands. This is how they function currently.

Lots between about 5 acres and 100 acres *can* play a significant role in the future of farming. The maximum number of lots would remain at 3. Although a minimum size would not be established, the practical need for separating wells from septic systems would dictate that the smallest lots would be about 2 acres. The way in which any existing parcel would be subdivided into 3 new lots would be decided by the landowner in consultation with the Planning Board. For example, an owner of a 60-acre lot may wish to sell all of the land for development. Because there is a strong market for large lots on which to build a single home, the owner might propose to create 3 lots of about 20 acres each. The actual configuration of the lot boundaries would reflect: lot shapes, suitability of building sites, natural landscape features, road access, traffic safety, and the ability to farm the land, among other considerations. It is especially important that the owner collaborate with the Planning Board to find a plan that would satisfy both landowner and community needs.

A different owner of 60 acres might prefer to create 2 small lots and keep the balance as one large parcel. Such an owner may want to convey the small lots to family members or to sell them on the open market. If the 2 small lots were each 2 acres in size, the remaining 56 acres would likely maintain the farm-ability of the land. The 2 small lots would be located so as not to compromise the value as farmland.

The other category of lot sizes would be those larger than 100 acres. In these cases, more than three (3) lots could be created. The number of approvable lots would be established by dividing the number of acres by 25 and then rounding to the nearest whole number. For example, a 190-acre parcel could be divided into (190 divided by 25 = 7.6) eight (8) lots. It could be seven (7) small (2-acre) lots and a single large (190 acres minus 14 acres = 176 acres) lot, eight (8) equal-size (24-acre) lots, or any other combination that makes sense for the parcel in question.

Any revised subdivision regulations should be carefully drafted so as to avoid unintended consequences. The regulations should never get in the way of common sense. The best way to do this is to craft regulatory language that clearly describes the desired outcomes but that does not prohibit very many options. The landowner and the Planning Board should be free to work creatively together to achieve mutually acceptable outcomes.

Wherever possible, subdivisions should maximize the ability to continue farming any land suitable for agriculture. An important consideration is the 10-acre minimum requirement to qualify for agricultural assessment for real property tax purposes.

The existing subdivision regulations should be revised to reflect the following principles:

- 1) maximize arable land;
- 2) avoid wetlands, surface waters, steep slopes, and ridgelines;
- 3) manage water supply, septic systems and stormwater on-site;
- 4) no new Town roads;
- 5) base lot lines, etc on common sense; and
- 6) no future subdivision of individual lots.

This initiative would require a revision to existing Town regulations and so would require legal review and assistance.

The subdivision regulations should also provide for lot consolidation (when more than one lot is combined into a single larger parcel) and boundary adjustments (when neighboring landowners agree to move the boundary without creating any new parcels).

“Original” Farm-Friendly Subdivision Regulations - Examples

The following examples illustrate just a few of the ways that the proposed “farm-friendly” subdivision regulations could be applied to:

- 1) meet the needs of the landowner;
- 2) maintain large parcels suitable for farming, and
- 3) reflect the individual characteristics of each parcel, including shape, road frontage, topography, surface waters, etc.

Figure 5: A 9-acre parcel before subdivision. As is typical of most smaller lots, there is no farming on this land.

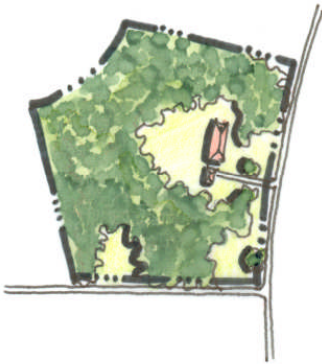


Figure 6: This shows one way that this 9-acre parcel is sub-divided into 3 lots: 2 at 2-acres and 1 at 5 acres.



Figure 7: This 60-acre parcel currently supports farming. There are many lots of this size throughout Cambridge. Such lots could be subdivided in many different ways, each of which would yield a total of 3 lots.



Figure 8: Here, the 60-acre parcel is subdivided into three 20-acre lots. Once these lots were sold and developed, most of the farmland would still be available for farming but a farmer would need to lease from three different landowners.



Figure 9: In this example, the 60-acre lot has been subdivided into 3 different-sized lots: a 5-acre, a 15-acre and a 40-acre. The farmland is still intact but a farmer would need to lease from two different landowners once these lots were sold.



Figure 10: In this approach, the 60-acre parcel was subdivided to carve two 2-acre lots out of a wooded area. Each lot could support a house with its own well and septic system. The farmland was left in a single large field controlled by a single landowner. The farmland could be owned or leased by a farmer.



Figure 11: This 180-acre parcel could be subdivided into a total of 7 lots because, for lots over 100-acres, the number of potential lots is determined by dividing the total acreage by 25. Parcels of this size are important to farming in Cambridge and should be developed in a way that still allows farming to continue.



Figure 12: In this instance, the landowner of the 180-acre parcel chose to "cluster" all of the new lots within a single field. If subdivided this way, the smaller fields would be unsuitable for farming but the other, larger fields could still be farmed.



Alternatives

The size categories and “yields” could be adjusted to favor various outcomes. For example, some feel that a single size class from 1 to 100 acres (as described in the original draft) would be unfair to larger landowners. In response to that concern, Alternative A in the table below would provide additional size classes and increases the yield for all larger lots; this alternative would permit the greatest increase in growth and development density. Alternative B also shifts the yield toward larger lots but reduces the yield on the smallest lots. Alternative C would permit no additional subdivision on lots smaller than 5 acres and is also the most conservative approach. Many other alternatives could be developed. Any effort to limit the density of development should consider the potential build-out as one measure of the possible effect on agriculture and the rural landscape.

Table 3 Some alternatives for limiting development density. NOTE: “Yield” is the total number of lots *after* subdivision; it includes and is *not* in addition to the original lot.

Alternative	Current Lot Size					TOTAL YIELD
	0-5 acres* (~ 400 lots)	5-10 acres (~ 178 lots)	10-30 acres (~239 lots)	30-100 acres (~ 225 lots)	100+ acres (~ 42 lots)	
Original	3 (800)	3 (534)	3 (717)	3 (675)	A ÷ 25 (234)	2960
Alt. A	3 (800)	4 (712)	4 (956)	5 (1125)	A ÷ 16.7 (364)	3957
Alt. B	2 (600)	3 (534)	3 (717)	4 (900)	A ÷ 20 (280)	3031
Alt. C	1 (400)	2 (356)	3 (717)	4 (900)	A ÷ 16.7 (364)	2737

* assume half of these existing lots are large enough to be subdivided

D. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Expanded Subdivision Regulations (Rec#25)

We recommend that the Town amend the existing subdivision regulations to limit the density of future development. Expanded subdivision regulations should incorporate the principles of “conservation planning” to ensure that open land remains available for all types of agriculture. At a minimum, “suitability for agriculture” should be added to the considerations the Planning Board can use when deliberating on a subdivisions application.

The *Public Review Draft* presented a single proposal for how density could be limited through the

subdivision regulations; this *Final Draft* (see “Section C. ALTERNATIVES”, page 49 above) offers additional alternatives developed in response to public comments; many more could be developed. The critical elements of any effective alternative should include: effective protection of land suitable for farming; land use densities roughly comparable to existing densities; provisions for landowners to sell their lands at reasonable profits; and regulatory flexibility.

2. Site Plan Review (Rec#26)

We recommend that the Town adopt a new law providing for site plan review authority. We further recommend that such law require site plan approval by the Planning Board for any new land use other than those specifically excepted. Such a provision would apply to single family dwellings as well as to commercial and other residential proposals. This broad authority would be similar to that in Salem’s site plan review law rather than the narrower White Creek provisions (see page 49 above). We believe the Planning Board should have available the maximum “tools” feasible to address future growth. Since it was adopted in 1999 (amended in 2003 and 2007), the Salem law has worked well according to those involved with it there and no major problems in administration or implementation have arisen. This recommendation differs from the *Public Review Draft Comprehensive Plan* which recommended site plan review authority only for “significant changes”.

Besides allowing for consideration of any proposal on the “health, safety and general welfare” of the Town, regulations under the new authority should enable the Town to consider such specifics as: location of structures and other improvements relative to roads, property lines, neighboring structures, natural features, etc.; driveways, parking and traffic flow; primary and accessory structures; signs and lighting; water supply; storm water management; sewage and garbage disposal; visual screening and noise buffers; and as discussed in “Ridgeline Development” above, viewscales could be considered as well. Finally, and perhaps uppermost, the impact of any proposal on the suitability for agricultural use of all but the smallest lots should be considered.

This initiative would require a new Town Law and so would require legal review and assistance. Given existing precedents within the County, the cost of this should not be onerous.

3. SEQRA (Rec#27)

We recommend that the Planning Board use the provisions of the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) and its regulations more prominently in its review of actions. Specifically, the assessment forms prepared by applicants should be given careful scrutiny early in the review process. If special expertise is needed for larger or more complex projects, the Planning Board should employ the services of experts, with these review costs being borne by the applicant. All Planning Board members should receive formal training in SEQRA.

4. Conservation Planning (Rec#28)

We recommend that the Town incorporate the principles of “conservation planning” into all aspects of its land use planning. This would require: revisions to existing Town subdivision regulations; incorporation into site plan review regulations; and formal training for Planning Board members.

5. Incompatible Uses (Rec#29)

We recommend that, to the extent permitted by New York State Town Law, the Town should enact ordinances to prohibit specific land uses that would be incompatible with the rural character of Cambridge. Under current law, only private landfills and salvage yards can be restricted. Other potentially incompatible uses, such as commercial motorsports tracks, commercial target shooting, and “big box” retail stores, cannot be prohibited under current law. Enacting a Town ordinance to prohibit private landfills and salvage yards would require a new would require legal review and assistance.

* * *

Part V. Implementation

A. FINALIZING THE PLAN

The review and adoption of the *Comprehensive Plan* has proceeded in accordance with the process described in New York State Town Law. Copies of the *Public Review Draft* plans were available in advance of public meetings and notice was provided in local newspapers and mailed to all landowners.

Public Review

The general public - residents and landowners - had opportunity to make their voices known during both a public meeting and a formal comment period. The Team accepted *oral* comments on the *Public Review Draft* at a single public meeting and accepted *written* comments through a defined period of time afterward.

After the close of the formal comment period, the Team also met jointly with the Town Board and the Planning Board in a public meeting and the Team also entertained questions and comments from the public at their April and May 2008 working meetings. Once all the comments were received, the Team considered each of the ideas expressed and then decided which comments warranted revisions to the *Plan*. The *Final Draft* reflects several substantive revisions and is the subject of a formal public hearing conducted by the Team. The Team will then submit the *Final Draft of the Town of Cambridge Comprehensive Plan* to the Town Board for action.

Environmental Review

The Plan Team has prepared an environmental review as required by SEQRA. A draft environmental assessment and a *Negative Declaration* will be submitted to the Town Board along with the *Final Draft Plan*. The Town Board, as the lead agency, has the responsibility for conducting the SEQRA review and issuing the appropriate findings.

Town Board Review

Once the Town Board receives the *Final Draft Plan*, it must hold a formal public hearing on it within 90 days. The Town Board can then adopt or reject the *Plan*. They can also modify the *Plan* and then adopt it. It then becomes the *Final Plan*.

County Planning Board Review

The Town Board must also submit the *Final Plan* to the Washington County Planning Board.

B. IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS

The job of guiding the development of the Town is *not* finished when the *Comprehensive Plan* is completed and a *Final Plan* adopted by the Town Board. The *Comprehensive Plan*, by itself, has no regulatory authority. As the reader has seen, the *Plan* includes a number of recommendations. Until these recommendations are carried out, no additional protections will be in place. Once the *Plan* is adopted by the Town Board, the next step is to implement the recommendations. Any proposed regulations need to be drafted and promulgated pursuant to Town Law procedures. Non-regulatory actions can be implemented with or without active Town participation or support. Both types of actions will require volunteers.

Communication

The recommendations contained within this Plan are summarized in Table 4 below. Many of the recommendations require that information be imparted on a variety of topics for a number of reasons. Each of these would be greatly simplified if the Town had a means of communicating with residents on a regular basis. A newsletter, perhaps mailed twice per year to each resident, would be very useful in this regard. A website would be similarly valuable.

Timing & Priorities

Most of the recommended actions described within the *Plan* and summarized in *Table 4* below can and should be implemented immediately. Although some will take longer than others to complete, all can be initiated simultaneously. From a land use perspective, establishing authority for site plan review and revising the subdivision regulations to include “farm-friendly” and “conservation planning” provisions would do the most to prevent development that could compromise the character of the Town. From an economic development perspective, finding a way to provide high speed internet throughout the Town would likely yield the broadest benefits.

Comprehensive Plan Implementation Team

Once the *Final Comprehensive Plan* is fully adopted, we recommend that the Town Board create a small team to oversee its implementation. We envision that each of the recommended actions might require individual *ad hoc* teams to complete each task. An *implementation team*, though, should be responsible for overseeing the progress on each task and reporting to the Town Board. At least one Town Board member should serve on such a team. The *implementation team* would serve until all recommended actions are completed.

Periodic Review

Once the *Plan* is adopted and implementation has begun or completed, the Town should schedule a periodic review, perhaps on a ten-year cycle. The purpose of such a review would be to measure the effectiveness of the *Plan* and to provide an opportunity for modifications.

Table 4 - Summary of Recommendations for Town Board Action

Category	Rec #	Page	Recommendation	Type of Action	Responsibility
A. Natural Resources	01	17	Improve surface water quality	Infrastructure Development	Highway Department
	02	18	Protect natural night sky	Information & Awareness	Volunteer Team
B. Cultural & Historic Resources	03	21	Historic Places Registries	Information & Awareness	Volunteer Team
	04	22	NYS Barn Tax Credit	Information & Awareness	Volunteer Team
	05	22	NYS Barn Grants	Information & Awareness	Volunteer Team
	06	22	Town Designate Historic Structures	Voluntary Activity	Volunteer Team
	07	22	Cemetery Preservation	Voluntary Activity	Volunteer Team
C. Population & Housing			None	NA	NA
D. Agriculture	08	28	Require soil maps	Regulatory	Planning Board
	09	28	Minimize Ag interference	Regulatory	Planning Board
	10	28	Minimize subdivision fragmentation	Regulatory	Planning Board
	11	28	Farmland protection plan	Information & Awareness	Town Board
	12	28	Work with County IDA	Information & Awareness	Town Board
	13	28	Purchase of development rights	Information & Awareness	Town Board
	14	29	"Celebrate our Farms Day"	Information & Awareness	Town Board
	15	29	Ag curriculum	Information & Awareness	Town Board
E. Economic Development		31	Site plan review - See Rec #26		
		31	Internet & cell svc - See Rec #18-21		
		31	Incompatible uses - See Rec #29		
F. Transportation	16	33	No new roads, curbs or street lights	Infrastructure Development	Town Board
	17	34	Prevent runoff pollution	Infrastructure Development	Highway Department
G. Utilities	18	39	Hi-speed internet - strategy	Infrastructure Development	Volunteer Team
	19	39	Hi-speed internet - public programs	Infrastructure Development	Town Board
	20	39	Hi-speed internet - cable contract	Infrastructure Development	Town Board
	21	39	Regulate cell tower siting	Regulatory	Town Board
	22	39	Do not support street lighting, water supply or sewers	Infrastructure Development	Town Board
H. Outdoor Recreation	23	40	Support trail systems	Voluntary Activity	Volunteer Team
I. Regional Needs & Cooperation	24	42	Continue to cooperate & support	Information & Awareness	Town Board
J. Land Use	25	59	Expand subdivision regulations	Regulatory	Town Board
	26	60	Enact site plan review regulations	Regulatory	Town Board
	27	60	SEQRA - Training & expanded use	Information & Awareness	Planning Board
	28	61	Conservation planning	Regulatory	Town Board
	29	61	Incompatible uses	Regulatory	Town Board

Part VI. List of Appendices

A complete set of these appendices is available upon request from the Town Clerk. They are also available at two locations on the Internet: the Cambridge Valley Chamber of Commerce website (www.cambridgenychamber.com) and the Washington County Planning website (http://www.co.washington.ny.us/Departments/planning/pln_news.htm).

- A. Section 272a of Article 16 (Zoning and Planning) of the New York State Town Law
- B. Survey Questionnaire
- C. Survey Results
- D. Comments from Balloon Festival
- E. Vision Notes
- F. Open House Notes
- G. White Creek Site Plan Review Regulations
- H. Model Cell Tower Regulations
- I. SEQRA - Negative Declaration

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