

3.10 Local and Regional Plan Consistency

In order to fulfill the Town of Amenia's vision for the community, it is important to understand the specific goals of the Town government and its citizens.

3.10.1 Existing Local and Regional Plan

This section evaluates the proposed project's consistency with the goals and objectives of the following local and regional plans:

- *The Town of Amenia Comprehensive Plan*
- *Directions, The Plan for Dutchess County*
- *Greenway Connections*
- *Dutchess County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan*

A brief summary of the goals and objectives found in each of the above referenced plans is provided below.

3.10.1.a *The Town of Amenia Comprehensive Plan*

In 2007 the Town of Amenia implemented an update to the Town's 1991 Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan's stated goals [Chapter 1, pp 5-6] are as follows:

1. To achieve a broad-based balance between the rural, agricultural beauty of the town as it is and the need for appropriate and smart economic growth and development.
2. To establish a business-friendly attitude and commitment that:
 - a. will attract and support the development of retail, small business, service business and even light industry;
 - b. will create employment opportunities (especially for young people); and,
 - c. will increase tax revenues.
3. To develop and encourage the growth of agriculture as a profitable business within the context of preserving open space.
4. To encourage more housing – low, affordable, moderate-income, high-end, and rental – to create a genuinely multigenerational community:
 - a. a vital place with good schools for growing families;
 - b. a safe place for young people to grow up and to which they will want to return because of the employment opportunities they have here; and,
 - c. an attractive, safe place for elderly people.
5. To maximize the Town's strengths and attract tourists, shoppers, athletes, lovers of good food and wine, historians, and other money-spenders.

6. To forge a strong positive public consensus about the future of Amenia so that it will live up to the commitments it makes, enforce the laws/regulations it has, and consistently support community pride.

3.10.1.b *The Plan for Dutchess County*

The Dutchess County Planning Department prepared a Master Plan in 1987, entitled *Directions: The Plan for Dutchess County*. The Plan identifies the following 14 goals, each with specific policies to help achieve a balance between economic growth and environmental responsibility:

1. Community Values Goal: To create strong, healthy communities that facilitate supportive interpersonal communications, enhance an individual's sense of well-being, support and encourage strong families, and provide an environment wherein people can understand and respect one another.
2. Demography Goal: To provide for anticipated population growth, while allowing for the orderly and reasonably-timed expansion of community services to accommodate this growth.
3. Regional Perspective Goals: 1) To foster Mid-Hudson regional identity and cooperative activity; and, 2) to maintain and improve the beauty of the Hudson River shoreline.
4. Economic Base Goal: To preserve and strengthen the economy of Dutchess County, and to encourage a growing and increasingly diversified economic base.
5. Natural Resources Goals: To preserve and maintain the quantity and quality of the County's surface and groundwater resources; and 2) to protect the county's soils, prime and important agricultural lands, steep slopes, and significant natural areas, and to preserve the health and usefulness of the County's forests.
6. Water Supply and Waste Disposal Goal: To ensure adequate long-term supplies of clean, reasonably priced water and environmentally sound disposal of wastes.
7. Land Use Goal: To promote a land use pattern that strengthens existing centers, protects important natural resources, maintains an efficient transportation network, provides for economical services and facilities, fosters an orderly pattern of growth and development, and helps each community protect its community values and maintains its distinct identity.
8. Transportation Goal: To maintain and enhance the existing transportation system, to encourage alternative means of transportation, to maintain a coordinated, effective, efficient and comprehensive public transportation system, and to ensure that future improvements are a positive force in shaping the physical, social, and economic environments.
9. Housing Goal: To provide housing alternatives for all residents, which ensure quality in construction and environment, variety, affordability, and accessibility.
10. Community Facilities Goal: To promote the maintenance, enhancement and development of community facilities and services that meet the needs of as many people as practicable in the most cost-effective way.

11. Recreation and Open Space Goal: To preserve an interconnected system of permanent open space that protects significant cultural, scenic and natural features and provides physical separations between adjacent communities within urban and suburban areas and to maintain the open, forested and agricultural atmosphere in rural communities.
12. Historic and Cultural Resources Goal: To promote the historic and cultural heritage of Dutchess County and to preserve significant artifacts, records, landscapes, structures, and sites.
13. Energy Goal: To promote conservation and the efficient use of the existing energy supplies while encouraging the development and use of less polluting, less costly, and locally produced renewable energy resources.
14. Site Planning Goal: To achieve consistent high-quality site planning to Dutchess County in order to promote beauty, order and harmony, to ensure compatibility with surrounding land uses, and to provide a visual and natural environment that will encourage economic stability and growth.

3.10.1.c Dutchess County Greenway Connections Plan

The *Greenway Connections Plan* was prepared in 1991 by the Dutchess County Department of Planning and Development and the Town of Amenia adopted the Greenway Compact in 2000. The 1991 Hudson River Valley Greenway Act created a process for voluntary regional cooperation among 242 communities within the 13 counties that border the Hudson River, known as Greenway Communities. The intent of the Greenway Act is to promote the goal of the preservation, enhancement and development of the resources of the Hudson River Valley while continuing to emphasize economic development activities. The Greenway legislation identifies five major goals:

- Natural and cultural resource protection
- Economic development
- Public access
- Regional planning; and,
- Heritage and environmental education.

The Greenway Connections Plan is a sourcebook of ideas and solutions that highlight community projects and provide principles to build on or improve landscape patterns in Dutchess County. Greenway Connections provides a list of greenway Guides with specific policies to be implemented for achieving the desired plan of development for Dutchess County, including:

1. Protecting the Countryside:
 - Fitting into the landscape
 - Preventing Strip Subdivision
 - Site Sensitive Utilities
 - Saving farmland with development

2. Strengthening Centers
 - Priority growth areas
 - Walkable communities
 - Building context
3. Improving Suburbs
 - Commercial strip redevelopment
 - From congestion to circulation
4. Greenway Connections
 - Connected habitats
 - Stream corridor protection
 - Highways into greenways
 - Wellhead and aquifer protection
5. Site Specifics
 - Landscaping
 - Signs
 - Parking lots
 - Lighting
 - Street trees

3.10.1.d *Dutchess County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan*

The Dutchess County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan was adopted in 1998. The Plan was developed by the Dutchess County Agricultural Farmland Protection Plan Board who analyzed agricultural trends and farm activities in Dutchess County and developed the Plan which describes the activities programs, and strategies to be used to promote continued agricultural use in Dutchess County. The Plan promotes local initiatives for protection and development of farmland operations and resources in Dutchess County. The Plan has the following five major, interrelated recommendations:

1. Taxation Policies: Property tax relief and equitable and consistent assessments:

The County must encourage equitable assessment standards and practices across all towns. The county should work with the state to establish universal standards and to see that they are maintained by regular review of local practices. The county should also study the advantages of a county wide assessment program.

2. Resource Protection: Resource management (labor, soil, finances, etc.)

Prime agricultural soils, like air and water, should not be abused. The efforts of the Soil and Water Conservation District should be an integral part of the ongoing farmland protection program. The SWCD should be a primary resource in assisting local communities to identify and maintain their most productive farmlands.

3. Local Farmland Protection Strategies: Municipal planning and regulation relief

Farmland protection is primarily controlled by local use policies and regulations. Each town should set a goal of 2000 or more acres for permanent protection. The master plan, zoning, assessment practices and natural resource policies should all be directed toward achieving protection. Marginal, non-agricultural, soils should be identified as favored areas for housing, and development pockets should be used..

4. Marketing: Agri-business initiative

Recent successful efforts at marketing local products should be extended. A Hudson Valley Harvest Marketing Association should be established and staffed aggressively increase the sale of locally produced goods.

5. Education: Agricultural education and public awareness

Separate educational strategies for children, adults, consumers, farmers and special groups (i.e., realtors) are recommended. The importance of agriculture should be stressed with respect to economic impact, environmental benefits and compatibility with other uses and ways to enjoy the land.

3.10.2 Local and Regional Plan Consistency

3.10.2.a *The Town of Amenia Comprehensive Plan*

The proposed development has been developed in unison with goals of the Town of Amenia to the extent possible and to the extent to which the project is relevant to the particular goal.

1. *To achieve a broad-based balance between the rural, agricultural beauty of the Town as it is and the need for appropriate and smart economic growth and development.*

The proposed Depot Hill Farm is designed to be sensitive to the Town's rural character. The proposed project was specifically designed to maximize economic development opportunities for the Town of Amenia and will contribute to the diversity of the economic base of the Town. The target market for the proposal is affluent secondary homebuyers. The proposed project anticipates increasing tax revenues for the Town of Amenia.

2. *To establish a business-friendly attitude and commitment*

While the Applicant understands *The Town of Amenia Comprehensive Plan's* vision, the proposed project does not further this goal. .

3. *To develop and encourage the growth of agriculture as a profitable business within the context of preserving open space*

The Depot Hill Farm will maintain operation of the existing Keane Stud Farm. The proposed project encourages the growth of agriculture as a profitable business within the context of preserving open space. This will create employment opportunities for the Town while simultaneously preserving the natural and historic beauty of the area.

- 4. To encourage more housing – low, affordable, moderate-income, high-end, and rental – to create a genuinely multigenerational community:*

The proposed project expects to create a multigenerational community. The project will not be age restricted, nor will it be marketed exclusively to retirees. The applicant envisions a mixed-age community where families with school-age children will have the opportunity to participate in a working farm, where young and middle-aged adults will seek respite from hectic work-weeks, and where older adults can retire yet remain active. The proposed project anticipates attracting growing families, couples and individuals. It does not anticipate furthering the goal of adding any but high-end housing inasmuch as it targets affluent secondary homebuyers.

- 5. To maximize our strengths and attract tourists, shoppers, athletes, lovers of good food and wine, historians, and other money-spenders.*

The proposed project will attract second-homeowners and equestrians. The Town's *Comprehensive Plan* acknowledges the benefits of second homeowners with the following statement:

“While the Town needs to keep its middle-class families, it also benefits from the presence of a large number of second-home owners and retirees who pay taxes but do not send children to school. These residents generally contribute more in taxes than they consume in municipal services. They also employ many local service workers and spend money in the community.”

- 6. To forge a strong positive public consensus about the future of Amenia so that we will live up to the commitments we make, enforce the laws/regulations we have, and consistently support community pride.*

It is the Applicant's opinion that the proposed project targets a population who will value and seek to be part of the rural beauty of the Town. As such, the population will support pride in the community which they have chosen to be a part of.

3.10.2.b The Plan for Dutchess County

Depot Hill Farm is consistent with the following goals:

- 1. Community Values Goal: To create strong, healthy communities that facilitate supportive interpersonal communications, enhance an individual's sense of well-being, support and encourage strong families, and provide an environment wherein people can understand and respect one another.*

The proposed project design is a model for new ruralism, which Sibella Kraus describes as "... a framework for creating a bridge between Sustainable Agriculture and New Urbanism. Sustainable agriculture can help bring cities down to earth, to a deeper commitment to the ecology and economy of the surrounding countryside on which they depend. New Ruralism embraces the power of place-making that can help American agriculture move from an artificially narrow production focus to encompass broader resource preservation values. As a place-based and systems-based framework, the New Ruralism nurtures the symbiotic relationship between urban and rural areas." [Sustainable Agriculture Education, "A Call for New Ruralism," <http://sagecenter.org/new-ruralism.pdf>]

2. *Demography Goal: To provide for anticipated population growth, while allowing for the orderly and reasonably-timed expansion of community services to accommodate this growth.*

While the Applicant understands *The Plan for Dutchess County's* vision, the proposed project does not expect to require expansion of community services.

3. *Regional Perspective Goals: 1) To foster Mid-Hudson regional identity and cooperative activity; and, 2) to maintain and improve the beauty of the Hudson River shoreline.*

While the Applicant understands *The Plan for Dutchess County's* vision, the proposed project does not further this goal.

4. *Economic Base Goal: To preserve and strengthen the economy of Dutchess County, and to encourage a growing and increasingly diversified economic base.*

Agriculture is a cornerstone of Dutchess County's economy, and residential development is often implicated in the decline in number and productivity of farmland in the County and the rest of the Hudson Valley. This proposal enables the existing Keane Stud Farm to continue operation, while developing high-end housing that will generate tax revenues for local taxing jurisdictions; refer to Section 3.18 for a detailed discussion of the fiscal impacts locally. In addition to local and regional fiscal benefits, the proposed project will generate local and regional economic benefits. The expected market value of the residential units will positively affect surrounding property values. Depot Hill Farm related employment and spending will directly contribute to increased spending in Dutchess County.

5. *Natural Resources Goals: To preserve and maintain the quantity and quality of the County's surface and groundwater resources; and 2) to protect the county's soils, prime and important agricultural lands, steep slopes, and significant natural areas, and to preserve the health and usefulness of the County's forests.*

The project site has 223.81 acres of soils designated as either Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance. Proposed development will consume 48.54 acres of prime agricultural soils. Despite this, the proposal will reserve 212 acres for agricultural uses including hayfields, paddocks and community gardens. Additionally, steep slopes and woodland areas are minimally disturbed, and a central sewer system is proposed to eliminate impacts to groundwater resources posed by individual septic systems.

6. *Water Supply and Waste Disposal Goal: To ensure adequate long-term supplies of clean, reasonably priced water and environmentally sound disposal of wastes.*

The Applicant proposes to serve the Depot Hill Farm with an on-site wastewater system, and connect to the existing municipal water system, as a preferred alternate. A central private water system will be created if connection to the municipality is not acceptable to the Town.

7. *Land Use Goal: To promote a land use pattern that strengthens existing centers, protects important natural resources, maintains an efficient transportation network, provides for economical services and facilities, fosters an orderly pattern of growth and development, and helps each community protect its community values and maintains its distinct identity.*

While the Applicant understands The *Plan for Dutchess County's* vision, the proposed project does not further aspects of this goal.

8. *Transportation Goal: To maintain and enhance the existing transportation system, to encourage alternative means of transportation, to maintain a coordinated, effective, efficient and comprehensive public transportation system, and to ensure that future improvements are a positive force in shaping the physical, social, and economic environments.*

While the Applicant understands The *Plan for Dutchess County's* vision, the proposed project is not specifically a transportation project and does not further all aspects of this goal. However, the site's proximity to the Metro-North Station makes the project especially appealing to those wishing to commute to New York City. Depot Hill Farm will provide a shuttle to and from the train station for residents.

9. *Housing Goal: To provide housing alternatives for all residents, which ensure quality in construction and environment, variety, affordability, and accessibility.*

While the Applicant understands The *Plan for Dutchess County's* vision, the proposed project does not further all aspects of this goal. However, the proposed project offers 137 single family homes designed in a distinct site layout to ensure the preservation of the existing hay fields, pastures, paddocks, and woodlands, and which will be constructed to a high finish.

10. *Community Facilities Goal: To promote the maintenance, enhancement and development of community facilities and services that meet the needs of as many people as practicable in the most cost-effective way.*

The proposed project will comply with the community facilities goals. Depot Hill Farm proposes to create an active Condominium Association which will oversee the existing working stud farm, an equestrian complex and program, an organic vegetable garden for the residents, and the growing of hay to supply the stud farm and the equestrian complex.

11. *Recreation and Open Space Goal: To preserve an interconnected system of permanent open space that protects significant cultural, scenic and natural features and provides physical separations between adjacent communities within urban and suburban areas and to maintain the open, forested and agricultural atmosphere in rural communities.*

The layout and design for the Depot Hill Farm allows for the preservation of approximately 418 acres, as open space and agricultural lands, which will maintain the integrity of the rural and scenic community character of the vicinity. Layout of the community has been carefully planned to minimize fragmentation of existing large patches of woodland and fields. The proposed Depot Hill Farm project includes public use of the equestrian facilities, as well as hiking trails.

12. Historic and Cultural Resources Goal: To promote the historic and cultural heritage of Dutchess County and to preserve significant artifacts, records, landscapes, structures, and sites.

The Applicant commissioned Phase 1A/1B and Phase 2 Archaeological Surveys of the site to assess the historical and archaeological resources. The Applicant plans to display any identified artifacts in the on-site community center to promote the historical and cultural heritage of Dutchess County.

13. Energy Goal: To promote conservation and the efficient use of the existing energy supplies while encouraging the development and use of less polluting, less costly, and locally produced renewable energy resources.

The proposed project will use new energy-saving features and designs to maximize energy efficiency and reduce usage. Some of the features that may be included in the project design include the following: solar, geothermal and photovoltaics.

14. Site Planning Goal: To achieve consistent high-quality site planning to Dutchess County in order to promote beauty, order and harmony, to ensure compatibility with surrounding land uses, and to provide a visual and natural environment that will encourage economic stability and growth.

Specific design considerations have been proposed to help blend the proposed project with the natural environment and surrounding land uses, including siting along existing hedgerows, screen vegetation and use of neutral coloring/natural building materials. Refer to Section 2.2.1.

3.10.2.c *The Greenway Connections Plan*

Depot Hill Farm complies with *The Greenway Connections Plan's* specific policies in the following ways, where applicable:

1. Protecting the Countryside

The proposed Depot Hill Farm is designed to be sensitive to the Town's rural character. In addition, the layout and design for the Depot Hill Farm allows for the preservation of approximately 418 acres as open space and agricultural lands, which will maintain the integrity of the rural and scenic community character of the vicinity.

2. Strengthening Centers

While the Applicant understands *The Greenway Connections Plan's* vision, the proposed project does not further this goal.

3. Improving Suburbs

While the Applicant understands The *Greenway Connections Plan's* vision, the proposed project does not further this goal.

4. Greenway Connections

The proposed project is designed with 87% of the total land area of the parcel preserved by a conservation easement as open space. The proposed project values the scenic and rural character of the area; preservation of the site's open space is the strength of the project design. The development of the site has specifically targeted the protection of the character of scenic resources in the Town and the protection of the water resources and biodiversity of Ten-Mile River, creeks and their tributaries. The proposed project especially seeks to protect the views to and from DeLavernge Hill, ridgelines, historic resources, unique ecosystems, prime agricultural land, and water resources.

3.10.2.d Dutchess County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

The proposed project follows the following five recommendations of the Dutchess County Agricultural and Farmland Protection:

1. Taxation Policies

While the Applicant understands The *Dutchess County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan's* vision, the proposed project does not further this goal.

2. Resource Protection

Depot Hill Farm is designed to maximize resource protection. While residential use will be constructed on approximately 69.37 acres (approximately 15% of the project site), of which 48.54 acres are prime agricultural soils, the proposed project layout preserves approximately 170 acres of prime agricultural land, keeping it in active agricultural use. Due to steep slope constraints, it has been necessary to locate some development on prime agricultural soils found in the low-lying, relatively flat portions of the site.

3. Local Farmland Protection Strategies

Depot Hill Farm encourages the growth of agriculture as a profitable business within the context of preserving open space. The proposed project is designed with a minimum of 80% of the total land area of the parcel preserved by a conservation easement as open space.. The proposed project especially seeks to protect the views to and from De Lavernge Hill, ridgelines, historic resources, unique ecosystems, prime agricultural land, and water resources.

The project proposes to incorporate the existing working stud farm, to provide an organic vegetable garden for the community to manage existing hay fields to supply hay to the stud farm and the equestrian complex.

The project site has 223.81 acres of soils designated as either Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance. Proposed development will consume 48.54 acres of prime agricultural soils. Despite this, the proposal will reserve 212 acres of the site for agricultural uses. Additionally, steep slopes and woodland areas are minimally disturbed, and a central sewer system is proposed to eliminate impacts to groundwater resources posed by individual septic systems.

5. *Marketing: Agri-business initiative Not Applicable*

6. *Education: Agricultural education and public awareness*

While the Applicant intends to create a community which will appeal to persons of all ages who are interested in agricultural activities. These activities will include the Keane Stud Farm, an equestrian center, a large organic garden, composting operations and hay meadows. Public education programs are not planned for any aspect of the site's agricultural operations. Instead, the proposed project promotes agriculture as a profitable business within the context of open space preservation and carefully planned residential development, and as such may introduce a model for communities in which residential and agricultural uses are closely intertwined. This will create employment opportunities for the Town while simultaneously preserving the natural and historic beauty of the area.

3.10.3 Proposed Mitigation Measures

The proposed project is consistent with the majority of the goals and objectives of applicable local and regional plans. Mitigation is not necessary.

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