

### **3.14 Parks, Recreation, Open Space Resources, Library and Cultural Resources and Tourism**

#### **3.14.1 Existing Conditions**

Existing on-site recreational facilities are limited, and not open to the public. Currently, there is an above-ground swimming pool located adjacent to one of the tenant houses. Farm and woods roads run throughout the site, and appear to be used sporadically and informally as riding, hiking, ATV or snowmobile trails. The breeding horses kept on site are not ridden.

The Town of Amenia's *Recreation Plan 2006* [available for download at <http://www.ameniany.gov/Docs/REC/RecPlanPart1.pdf>] was developed following a community survey and meetings of the Town Board, Recreation Commission and the Recreation Planning Group, and it was adopted in July 2006. The Town of Amenia's *Recreation Plan 2006* identifies the Town's existing recreational resources and the community's needs and desires for recreational development. It lists the following existing recreational facilities and programs available locally and regionally.

#### **Town Recreation Facilities**

Beekman Park  
Wassaic Park  
Borden Park  
Amenia Elementary School Basketball / Tennis Courts

#### **Local Non-Town Recreational Facilities**

Silo Ridge Golf Course  
Amenia Fish and Game  
Vinciarello Park  
Webutuck High School Recreational Facilities

#### **Regional Recreational Facilities**

DEC's Wassaic Multiple Use Area  
Harlem Valley Rail Trail  
Taconic State Park

#### **Recreation Organizations**

Amenia Lions Club  
Amenia Fish and Game Club  
Chess Club

#### **Recreational Programs**

Ballroom Dancing Senior Clubs  
TriArts at the Sharon Playhouse Senior Trips  
Youth Music and Dance Program Senior Swim Program  
Youth Baseball Music & Dance Program  
Youth Soccer Tennis Program  
Office of the Aging (Nutritional Program) Youth Summer Camp

Beekman Park is a 48-acre park with lighted ball fields, a playground, parking and other facilities. It is located adjacent to the Hamlet of Amenia. Wassaic Park has a playground, ball field and basketball court, as well as access to trails and the Wassaic Public Fishing Access. The recreational facilities are on approximately 5 acres of land on a parcel owned by the Town of Amenia that is also used by the Department of Public Works. Borden Park, at less than an acre in size, is located near Wassaic Park. Figure 23.A. indicates the location of parks in the town.

In addition to Amenia's park system, the Webutuck School District provides recreational and athletic programs throughout the school year and during the summer for children and adults in the Town of Amenia. Activities include tennis lessons for adults and children; basketball, baseball and flag football camps for children. The high school makes the building available after hours during the winter months as part of the "Harlem Valley Walks" program. Other town-sponsored recreational activities, such as ballroom dancing lessons and tae kwon do classes are held in the school buildings. Area private schools also provide the Town's residents with recreational opportunities. Indoor swimming programs for adults and children are available at Maplebrook School. Millbrook School has an ice skating rink, and provides public access on a limited schedule.

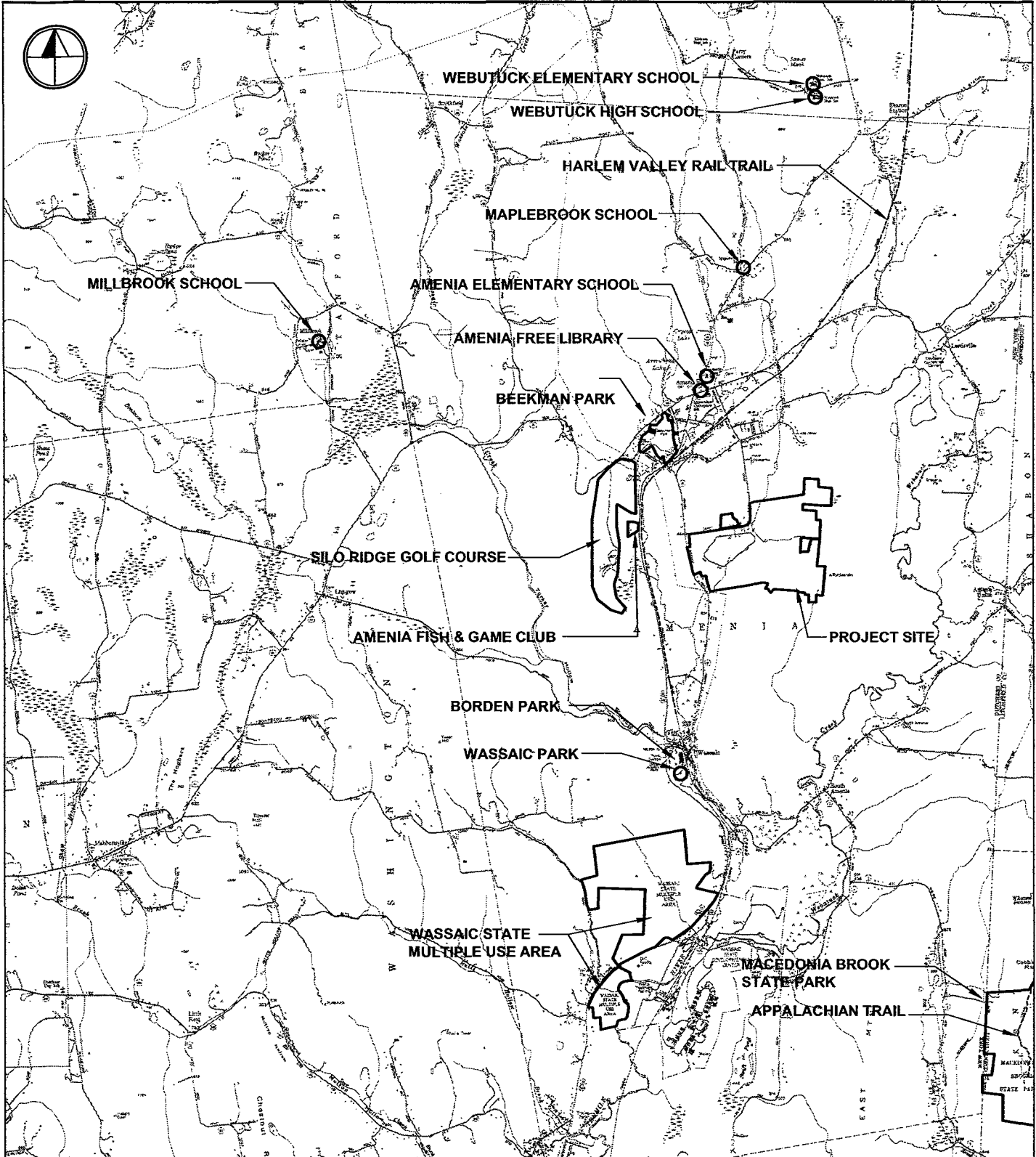
The Harlem Valley Rail Trail (HVRT) is a linear park on the former Harlem Valley Railroad railbed. In Dutchess County, there are 15 paved and 8 unpaved miles of trail. The park is maintained by Dutchess County Department of Parks in cooperation with the Harlem Valley Rail Trail Association (HVRTA), New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, the Towns of Amenia and Northeast, and the Village of Millerton. The trail extends north into Columbia County, where efforts are being made to acquire land so that the trail will one day reach to Chatham, NY. The Rail Trail permits pedestrians and bicycles; horses and motorized vehicles are prohibited. The rail trail passes within one mile of Depot Hill Farm.

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation owns the Wassaic Multiple-Use Area in the Town of Amenia. Gravel has been mined from parts of the Multiple-Use Area, and the DEC actively manages its timber and forest lands. It consists of approximately 500 acres of land in three separate parcels, and is mostly undeveloped. According to the DEC, there are no official trails on this property, but there are old logging roads that people may use for hiking. The multiple-use area supports hunting, hiking and fishing activities, and camping is permitted for stays of three days or less.

The survey conducted in conjunction with the *Recreation Plan 2006* indicated that the Hudson Valley Rail Trail was the most-used recreational resource in the town (135 out of 175 respondents indicated they had used the HVRT in the past year). The Amenia Library was used by 95 respondents and Silo Ridge Golf Course was used by 52 respondents. Less than 20% of respondents indicated that they had used Beekman Park.

#### Libraries, Educational and Cultural Resources

The Amenia Free Library is located in the center of the Hamlet of Amenia at 3309 Route 343. The Amenia Free Library's operating income was \$63,778 in 2006; and its collection includes 8,375 books, 106 audio materials, 332 video materials and 35 serial subscriptions. In 2006, the



1	NORTH ARROW ADDED	6/17/08   DPJ
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**DEPOT HILL FARM**

TOWN OF AMENIA                      DUTCHESS COUNTY

**CRAWFORD & ASSOCIATES**  
ENGINEERING, P.C.  
551 Warren Street, Hudson New York 12534

**PARK, RECREATION, CULTURAL  
RESOURCES AND TOURISM MAP**

DATE 12/21/07	DRAWN BY: EOB	# \WORK\2773.0\DRAWINGS\FIGURES\ FIG 23
SCALE N. T.S.	DESIGNED BY: EOB	
	CHECKED BY: BKN	C&A JOB# 2773.0
	APPROVED BY: BKN	DRAWING: FIGURE 23.A

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library had 1,609 registered card holders, 12,715 user visits and 4,026 users of electronic resources. It is part of the Mid-Hudson Library System (MHLS), which includes 68 libraries in Dutchess, Columbia, Greene, Putnam and Ulster Counties, so despite its small size, the Amenia Free Library has access to the resources of a larger system. The MHLS has 1,854,170 books, 81,992 audio holdings and 121,356 video holdings, many of which are available through interlibrary loan to other member libraries. Within the entire Mid-Hudson Library system, Amenia Free Library ranks third to last in operating budget receipts per capita.

The Webutuck School District is discussed in Section 3.13. In addition to the Webutuck Central School District, there are many private schools in the region, including several Montessori schools, schools for disabled students (ranging from those with profound developmental disorders to moderate- and high-functioning students with learning disabilities), boarding and day schools, religious and non-sectarian schools. Kildonan School and Maplebrook School, both located in the Town of Amenia, are coeducational boarding schools that specialize in educating students with learning disabilities. Among the boarding schools within 20 miles of the Town of Amenia are Millbrook School, Kent School, Hotchkiss, Trinity Pawling, Berkshire School and Canterbury. Figure 23.B. provides a map of regional school districts.

Dutchess County Community College, Bard College, Vassar College, the Culinary Institute of America and Marist College are all located in Dutchess County. All but DCC offer bachelor's degrees; and Bard and Marist offer graduate degrees in specialized fields. All of the schools offer resources to non-student residents, including non-credit courses, certificate programs and distance learning.

Regionally, there are many cultural resources that residents may find appealing. In Dutchess County, Bard's Frank Gehry-designed Fisher Center for the Performing Arts and its curatorial studies program bring the work of world-class performing and fine artists to the area, and Dia:Beacon holds one of the most important collections worldwide of large-scale 20<sup>th</sup> century sculpture and serial works.

### Tourism

Amenia has several accommodations for visitors, including several B&Bs, a motel and a luxury resort (Troutbeck Inn and Conference Center). Tourism is not currently a major industry in Amenia, but it is likely to become a more significant economic force. The Town of Amenia's Comprehensive Plan notes the potential for agri-tourism, heritage tourism and recreational tourism attractions within the town. The proposed Silo Ridge resort will add substantially to the recreational tourism base in the town of Amenia, and will add significantly to the number high-end tourist accommodations available, both in its conventional hotel rooms and timeshare opportunities.

#### 3.14.2 Potential Impacts

Assuming that Depot Hill Farm is occupied by full-time residents at rates typical for new development in New York State, the population of the Town would increase by just over 500. With the nearly 1,100 additional residents predicted at Silo Ridge added to the projected 4,450 residents projected as the Town of Amenia's population by 2015, there would be as many as

6,000 people in Amenia within the next ten years. The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) developed planning standards to guide municipalities in assessing the adequacy of existing park and recreational facilities. The NRPA rule of thumb is that a park system should provide between 6.25 and 10.5 acres of what the NRPA calls “developed open space” per 1,000 in population. With the Town of Amenia’s parks amounting to approximately 54 acres, the Town alone has adequate land devoted to recreational uses for current residents and projected populations – according to the NRPA, 54 acres would serve between 5,400 and 8,640 people –although not all of this space is developed or programmed for active recreation. The Town has identified that facility improvements will be needed to meet the demands of the existing residents of the town, but the addition of residents from Depot Hill Farm is not expected to make the needed upgrades any more urgent. The DEC Multiple Use Area, the Harlem Valley Rail Trail, and recreational facilities at the Webutuck School Campus augment the Town’s holdings.

The site will include trails for riding and walking, and cross-country skiing in the winter, but bicycles and motorized vehicles will not be permitted on the equestrian trails. All trails will be available for public use. This will help to fill a gap left by the prohibition of horses on the Harlem Valley Rail Trail. In Amenia’s Recreation Plan, 57 of the 175 survey respondents indicated that horseback riding was an activity that interested them, making it the fifth most popular activity after swimming, fitness programs, open walking or jogging programs and ice skating. The COA will own four horses that will be available for residents of Depot Hill Farm and members of the public for a fee. Stalls in the equestrian facility will be available for rent to the residents of Depot Hill Farm and the public.

Other recreational and tourist attractions in the town include Troutbeck Inn and Conference Center and Silo Ridge Country Club. Troutbeck Inn and Conference Center is located at 515 Leedsville Road, east of the project site. It is a luxury inn and resort with 42 rooms and six suites, on a 450-acre estate. The site was settled in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, but the current buildings date to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The estate has significance in American intellectual and civil rights history. Silo Ridge Country Club operates an 18-hole golf course at 4651 Route 22. The golf course is open to the fee-paying public. The current facility includes a clubhouse, banquet facilities and a pro shop. Entertainment includes weekly barbeques, karaoke, live music and DJs. Silo Ridge has proposed a significant expansion that will include a full-service resort hotel and spa, time share and full-time residential units and restaurants in addition to upgraded golf facilities.

Equestrian communities are an emerging trend in real estate development, and their appeal lies in the blending of active and passive recreational opportunities, their reliance on sustainably developed open space, and the bringing together of people who share similar interests and values. The target market is socio-economically similar to the market for high-end golf course communities, but the temperament of the prospective homebuyer would be different, as suggested in the passage below:

“A significant percentage of home buyers that choose to live in equestrian communities will never be seen on the back of a horse – and that is just the way they want it. They – and the active equestrian participant – are drawn to the quality of life offered by these developments. Often called ‘new ruralism,’ it provides an often highly sophisticated personal living environment (elaborate master bedroom suites, gourmet kitchens, smart, wireless-networked homes) in a pastoral setting with easy access to services

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traditionally found in a neighborhood. These specially-designed communities provide an opportunity for residents to enjoy horses (their own or their neighbor's) on their terms and with the level of interaction they want. That interaction spans the gamut from simply viewing horses at liberty in a pasture or being ridden in one of the community's riding venues, to boarding their horse at the community facility, to providing *all* of their horse's care at the private barn on their property. Furthermore, the minimally-disturbed and manipulated nature of these sites strongly appeals to many people's desire to live in a less contrived, natural setting. Effectively-designed trails will preserve and highlight the areas of exceptional natural beauty on the property. This feature, as well as the ability for hikers and riders to generally coexist on the community's trails, are in stark contrast to most golf communities (where hikers are welcome only during non-golf hours)." [fn: Michael Donovan, "Where Conservation Meets Development: On the Horse Trail," <http://www.eqsv.com/quarterly/2007-Q2.html>]

Echoing the opinion of Michael Donovan in the passage above, the applicant anticipates that the project's residents will be concerned about their impact on the environment and the accessibility of relatively undisturbed spaces available for active and passive recreation. As will be discussed in the demographics and fiscal impacts sections of this DEIS, the project is expected to appeal to second-homeowners and New York City commuters looking for an escape from the complexity and rush of urban life. As such, it is expected that residents will be especially attracted to the relaxing recreational activities provided on site – horseback riding, walking, gardening and enjoying nature. For the most part, the development will be recreationally self-sufficient, although Depot Hill Residents are expected to make use of the Rail Trail for biking and running, and nearby regional parks for hiking. The Depot Hill Farm COA will own and care for horses that may be used by the project's residents and the public, as well as provide boarding and care for horses owned by individual residents.

The proposal features a strong conservation component to protect agricultural and recreational areas and uses on site. In accordance with the Town of Amenia's Zoning Law, Depot Hill Farm, which is being submitted under the Resort Development Overlay provision, is required to have a conservation easement protecting a minimum of 80% of the parcel as open space. The proposal exceeds the open space requirement, with more than 85% of the total land area preserved as recreational or agricultural open space.

### 3.14.3 Mitigation Measures

The According to NRPA planning standards, the town has the parkland necessary to meet its recreation demand at present population levels and following construction of the various proposals slated for the town, although the Town's recreation plan has noted deficiencies in recreation programming and is planning facility improvements throughout the recreation system. As mentioned above, the site's residents are not expected to significantly increase usership of the Town's existing recreational facilities, and therefore will not exacerbate existing deficiencies.

Open space protection and passive recreation opportunities on site will provide the greatest on-site benefit to the community. The site's trails will be open to the public for hiking, riding and cross-country skiing, as will the equestrian facilities.

Additionally, the Town of Amenia levies a \$2,500-per-unit recreation fee for residential development upon site plan or subdivision approval in accordance with the Town's Schedule of

Fees. The fee will be paid by the Applicant. With the development of 137 units, this would provide the Town of Amenia an additional \$342,500 for recreation spending.