



Town of Copake Smart Growth Comprehensive Plan

May 16, 2026



Department
of State

This project has been funded in part by a grant from the New York State Department of State Smart Growth Comprehensive Plan Program through Title 11 of the Environmental Protection fund.

INTRODUCTION

Copake's **Smart Growth Comprehensive Plan** includes a Community Profile that provides data about the Town across the 13 sections of the plan:

- Smart growth hamlet hubs
- Demographics
- Land use characteristics and regulations
- Zoning
- Vacant and underutilized properties
- Agricultural and forest lands
- Infrastructure and public utilities
- Transportation systems
- Natural resources and climate
- Parks and public spaces
- Historic preservation
- Community services
- Fiscal resources of the Town



The Comprehensive Plan Review Committee is considering Smart Growth Principles and potential actions that can be taken over the next decade to achieve progress in each area.

INTRODUCTION

Smart Growth Comprehensive Plan Committee

- Chair, Stephanie Rabin
- Former Chair, Jeanne Mettler
- Town Board Liaison, Richard Wolf
- Lesley Zlatev, NYS DOS
- Brian Boom
- Peter Doty
- Benedict Gedaminski
- Davin Gurin
- Amelia Harnish (Secretary)
- Edgar Masters
- Catherine Mikic
- Todd Proper
- Roberta Roll
- Terry Sullivan
- Alden Warner

Focus Groups Held 2025-2026

Copake Falls	June 2, 2025
Copake Hamlet	July 7, 2025
Copake Lake & W. Copake	August 4, 2025
Businesses	September 2, 2025
Craryville	October 6, 2025
Non-profits	November 3, 2025
First Responders/Health care	December 1, 2025

**Update
Committee
Formed**
Late 2025

**Community
Survey**
yields 375
responses
2025-2026

**Community
Workshop
One**
June 28,
2025

**Community
Profile**
Drafted -
2026

**Draft
Action Plan**
Underway
2026

**Community
Workshop
Two**
May 16,
2026

INTRODUCTION



DRAFT VISION

Our vision is for the Town of Copake to thrive as a vibrant rural community with a strong sense of place, enduring rural character, and a caring, connected community.

PLANNING PRINCIPLES

- Preserve Our Rural Charm
- Provide Housing Choice and Affordability
- Attract Young Families
- Reinvest in Each Hamlet
- Invest in Our Natural Resources
- Enhance Quality of Life

COPAKE SMART GROWTH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Moving from Needs to Action – Identifying Action Plans

- The Town of Copake Smart Growth Comprehensive Plan Community Profile sets out data about the Town of Copake in different sections.
- We conducted a **community survey** with 375 responses. The survey asked participants to consider the smart growth principles that NYS DOS has set out.
- Committee members also took a survey. They are now in the process of identifying actions the Town can take in the next decade to achieve progress in each section.



Department of State
Planning, Development
& Community Infrastructure

SMART GROWTH PLANNING AND COMPREHENSIVE PLANS



MAY 15, 2026

WHAT IS SMART GROWTH?

Smart Growth is a community planning approach encouraged by New York State, focusing on ten key principles that promote **livable**, **sustainable**, and **equitable** communities.

These principles **promote** community participation to creatively tackle the specific planning challenges and opportunities present by setting standards for community development that will effectively balance economic growth with the conservation of natural resources.

Community Planning Priorities

- Climate Resilience
- Housing choice and affordability
- Accessible Communities
- Waterfront Development and Revitalization



DOS SMART GROWTH PRINCIPLES

1. Allow for and encourage neighborhoods with a mix of uses
2. **Enable a diverse mix of housing types.**
3. Prioritize infill and redevelopment of existing buildings to revitalize neighborhoods and downtowns.
4. **Provide well-planned, equitable, and accessible public spaces for people of all ages and abilities.**
5. Encourage compact neighborhood design and concentrated development around existing infrastructure.
6. **Preserve open space, agricultural resources, and natural resources.**
7. Prioritize transportation options that are safe and accessible for everyone, including pedestrians, cyclists, and public transit users.
8. **Promote climate resiliency and adaptation, preferably through nature-based solutions, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.**
9. Build on unique traits to create an attractive and welcoming community with a strong sense of place.
10. **Engage in an inclusive, collaborative public planning process.**



WHAT SMART GROWTH IS NOT:



- ✗ Single-use development
- ✗ Automobile-centered
- ✗ Challenging to walk or bike
- ✗ Overwhelmed with pavement
- ✗ Absence of greenspace
- ✗ Scarcity of place or character



COMPREHENSIVE PLANS

- ✓ Reflects a community's vision and goals
- ✓ Addresses a wide range of planning issues
- ✓ Provides legal basis for zoning regulations
- ✓ Guides local decision making





MIXED-USE NEIGHBORHOODS

NYS DOS | Planning, Development & Community Infrastructure



01

01 MIXED-USE NEIGHBORHOODS

Develop plans and land use regulations that allow for and encourage mixed-use neighborhoods.

- Increases walkability and access to needs
- Reduces environmental impact of travel
- Improves mental and physical health
- Fosters economic development
- Strengthens the local tax base

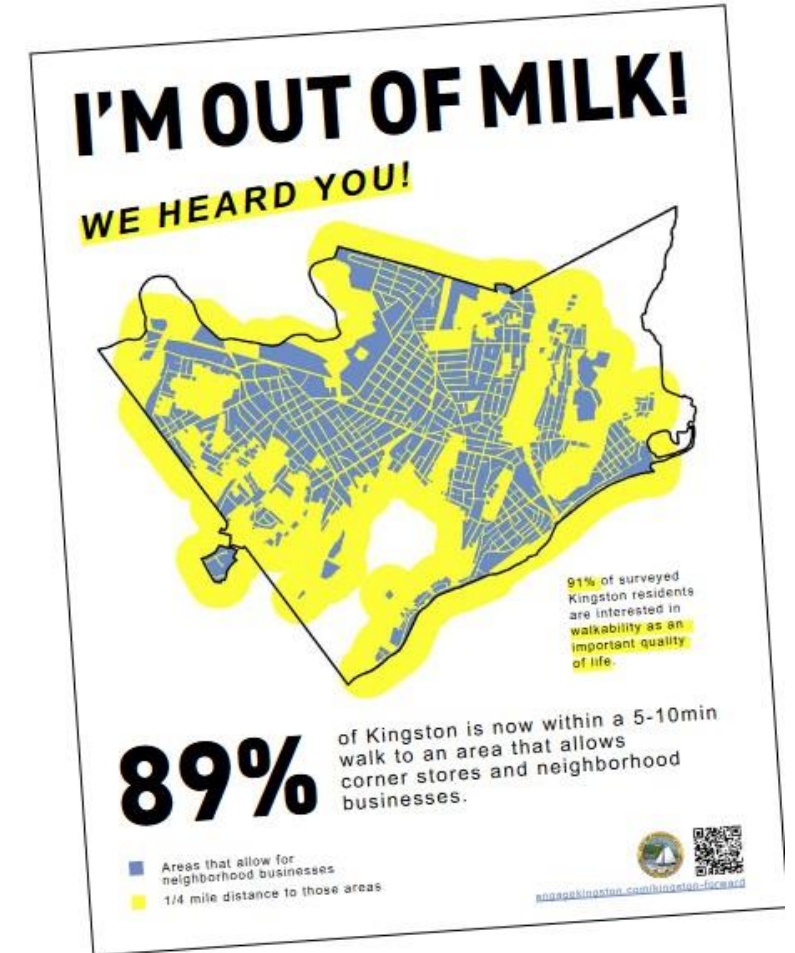


DOWNTOWN NEW PALTZ, NY
SOURCE: GLOBALPHILE

01 MIXED- USE NEIGHBORHOODS

Use In Comprehensive Plans:

- Identify neighborhoods that could benefit from integration of other uses or are overly restrictive
- Analyze how neighborhoods have changed over time
- Work with community to determine where needs and services are missing or not accessible
- Identify buildings, sites, streets, or neighborhoods that may be ideal locations for new services and uses





DIVERSITY OF HOUSING TYPES

NYS DOS | Planning, Development & Community Infrastructure



02

02 DIVERSITY OF HOUSING TYPES

Enable a **diverse mix** of housing types that provide for **opportunity** and **choice** for all.

- Attracts new and retains existing residents
- Makes for more socially and economically vibrant neighborhoods
- Ensures mix of home types and price points
- Improves local housing market



02 DIVERSITY OF HOUSING TYPES

Use In Comprehensive Plans:

- Assess the local housing inventory, market
- Consider needs of those who are struggling to find housing in their community
- Identify areas that would be most appropriate for new housing where buildings have been removed



DIETZ STREET LOFTS,
A DRI PROJECT IN ONEONTA, NY



INFILL AND REDEVELOPMENT

NYS DOS | Planning, Development & Community Infrastructure



03

03 INFILL AND REDEVELOPMENT

Prioritize infill and redevelopment of **existing buildings** to revitalize neighborhoods and downtowns, including areas around **public transit**.

- Makes use of underutilized or abandoned properties in community cores, adding vibrancy
- Spurs investment in nearby properties and improves perception of neighborhood
- Adds density to existing neighborhoods and reduces automobile dependency
- Increases local tax revenue without adding the financial burden of expanded infrastructure



INFILL DEVELOPMENT,
MONTGOMERY, NY

03 INFILL AND REDEVELOPMENT

Use In Comprehensive Plans:

- Inventory underutilized and vacant lots and buildings conducive to redevelopment
- Match inventory with outreach efforts aimed at identifying missing community needs
- Identify strategies and/or funding sources to overcome barriers to redevelopment
- Create community vision with clear strategies and steps to take toward revitalization

AURORA STREET POCKET
NEIGHBORHOOD,
ITHACA, NY





PUBLIC SPACES



04

04 PUBLIC SPACES

Provide well-planned, **equitable**, and **accessible** public spaces.

- Provides valuable opportunities for socialization, recreation, and relaxation for all community members
- Increases desirability of neighborhoods
- Provides cleaner air, regulates temperature, and protects water quality
- Ensures all residents live near and have access to quality public spaces
- Contributes to community infrastructure that attracts investment



LENOX SKATE PARK
CANASTOTA, NY

04 PUBLIC SPACES

Use In Comprehensive Plans

- Document public spaces and how they are distributed across the community
- Identify underutilized spaces that could be improved to function as a community space (parking lots, 'micro parks')
- Determine the strengths and shortcomings of existing public spaces
- Consider current and potential users of public spaces
- Require new development to include public space, such as a playground or public plaza



TRAIL STATION PARK CONCEPTUAL DESIGN,
DRI ROUND 5, GLOVERSVILLE, NY



COMPACT NEIGHBORHOODS

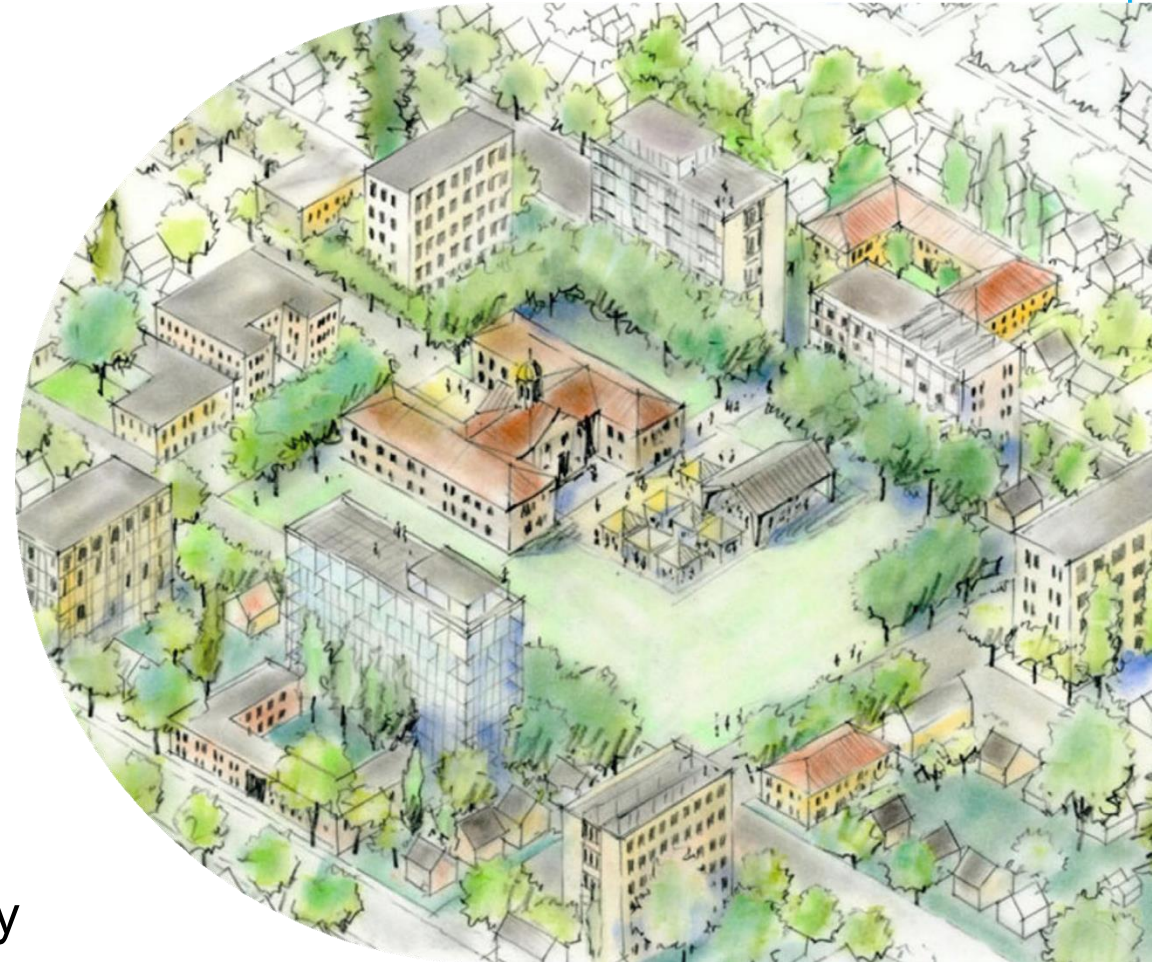


05

05 COMPACT NEIGHBORHOODS

Encourage **compact neighborhood design** and concentrated development around **existing infrastructure**.

- Maximizes the use of land without expense of new infrastructure
- Increases the local tax base
- Minimizes infrastructure costs
- Boosts walkability and ease of access to key amenities
- Contributes to sense of place and community identity
- Protects agricultural land, natural areas, and open space



SOURCE: RICK POTESTIO



OPEN SPACE



06

06 OPEN SPACE

Preserve open space, agricultural resources, and **natural resources**.

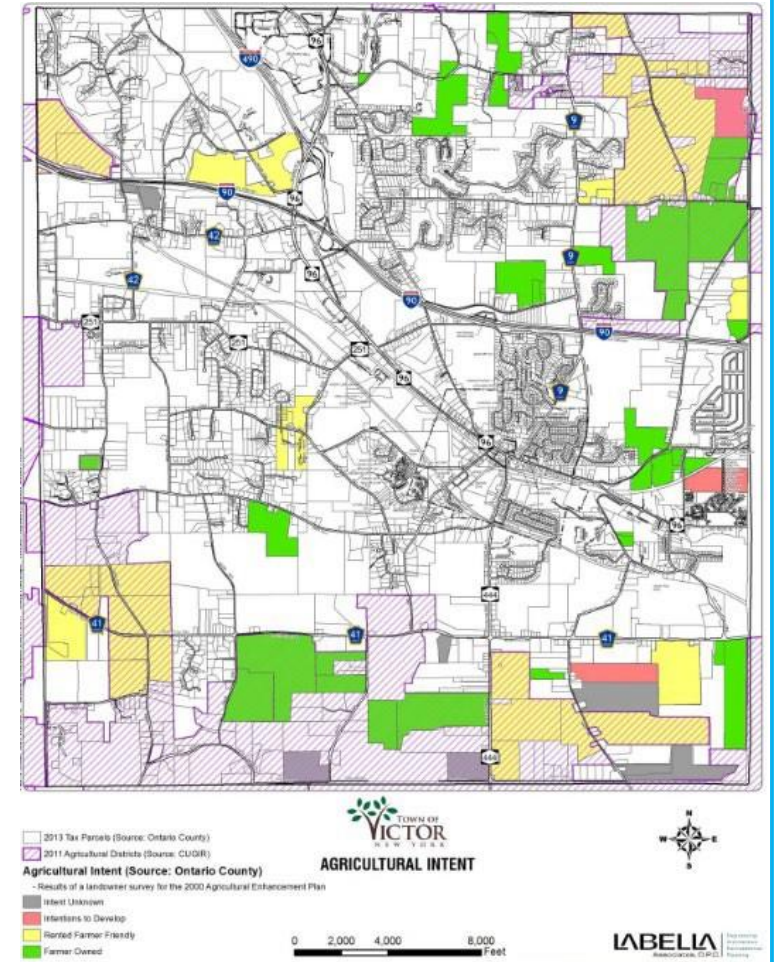
- Ensures agricultural soils are available for future agricultural use
- Protects sensitive natural areas from development
- Ensures community access to open space
- Maintains scenic views
- Protects local agricultural economies



06 OPEN SPACE

Use In Comprehensive Plans:

- Inventory existing open spaces within the community and areas with critical natural and agricultural resources that are need protection.
- Demonstrate and document the importance of these spaces and resources within the comprehensive plan.
- Develop strategies that will encourage the preservation of these resources and deter development, including cooperation with land trusts or state agencies



SOURCE: TOWN OF VICTOR, NY



ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION

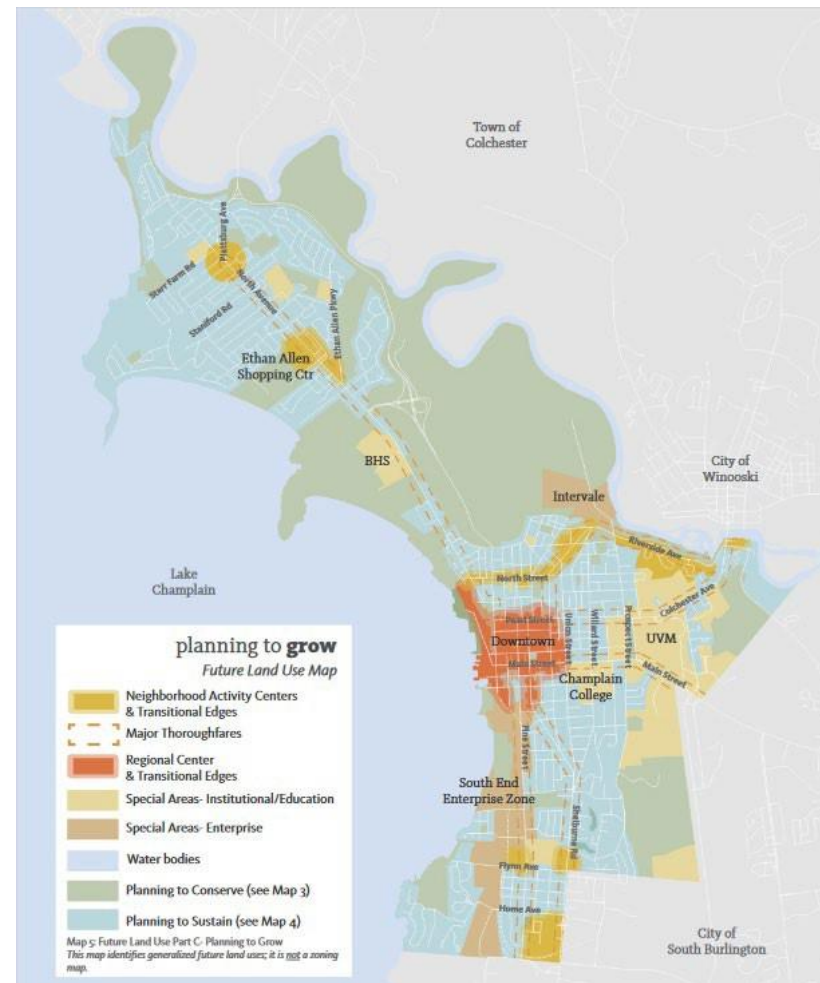


07

07 ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION

Use In Comprehensive Plans:

- Analyze the relationship between transportation systems and surrounding land uses
- Identify gaps in pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and streets in need of redesign
- Develop transportation strategies that provide access to core amenities, services, and employers
- Examine space dedicated to car infrastructure



FUTURE LAND-USE MAP, BURLINGTON, VT
SOURCE: CITY OF BURLINGTON



CLIMATE RESILIENCE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE | PLANNING,
DEVELOPMENT & COMMUNITY
INFRASTRUCTURE



SHEEP GRAZING UNDER A SOLAR ARRAY
IN NEWFIELD, NY SOURCE: ITHACA VOICE

08

08 CLIMATE RESILIENCE & MITIGATION

Promote **climate resiliency** and adaptation, preferably through **nature-based solutions** and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

- Utilize development, infrastructure, and land use strategies to build resilience to extreme weather
- Minimizes property damage and loss, and minimizes recovery time
- Enhances natural environment through nature-based solutions such as riparian buffers, restored floodplains and other green infrastructure
- Reduces emissions and encourages use of renewable energy



IMPACT OF 2019 FLOODING EVENT
IN DOLGEVILLE, NY

08 CLIMATE RESILIENCE & MITIGATION

Use In Comprehensive Plans:

- Inventory existing **natural**, **social**, and **built** resources
- Anticipate issues for vulnerable resources, populations, and community assets and develop early action steps
- Interpret risks and consider achievable mitigation and recovery strategies
- Incorporate mitigation strategies throughout plan





SENSE OF PLACE



09

09 SENSE OF PLACE

Build on **unique traits** to create an **attractive** and **welcoming community** with a strong sense of place.

- Creates a unique, memorable local place
- Helps to retain and attract residents
- Draws visitors to your community
- Fosters and sustains local businesses
- Encourages walkability



SOURCE: BLEND-A-RAMA 3 ON 3 TOURNAMENT,
ONEONTA, NY

09 SENSE OF PLACE

Use In Comprehensive Plans:

- Document existing conditions and include a narrative on the community's history and culture to help identify unique assets
- Clearly identify the unique traits that contribute to the community's character within the plan to signify their importance
- Develop a vision statement that captures the community's local identity
- Include strategies for planning and designing spaces that are visually interesting and help tell the story of the community

BEFORE



AFTER



MURAL IN GLENS FALLS, NY



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



10

10 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Engage in an **inclusive, collaborative** public planning process that considers the **needs** and **character** of the community.

- Drives an accurate and compelling community vision
- Secures community buy in and overall success of the planning process
- Leads to confident, informed, and cohesive decision making



VILLAGE OF HEMPSTEAD, NY

LESLEY ZLATEV

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE |
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INFRASTRUCTURE



COPAKE SMART GROWTH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

YOU SHARED YOUR VISION AT WORKSHOP #1:

Our vision is for the Town of Copake to thrive as a vibrant rural community with a strong sense of place, enduring rural character, and a caring, connected community.

NOW SHOW US YOUR PRIORITIES!

Please review the displays that show **draft goals and actions** for Copake. You also have a handout that lists more detailed actions. On the first board of each topic use the color dots to indicate whether you think each goal is:

-  **HIGH**
-  **MEDIUM**
-  **LOW** priority for you.

On the second board for a goal, use any dots to identify the **top 3 actions** you feel will help Copake to achieve that goal.

COPAKE SMART GROWTH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The boards around the room address the current draft of 8 goals and their related actions for you to review and provide your proprieties, questions, comments, etc.

- GOAL ONE: QUALITY HOUSING FOR ALL RESIDENTS
- GOAL TWO : THRIVING ECONOMY ACROSS ALL HAMLETS
- GOAL 3: FOSTER WALKABLE CONNECTED AND VIBRANT HAMLET CENTER
- GOAL 4: MAINTAIN OUR NATURAL/SCENIC LANDSCAPE
- GOAL5: PROVIDE A CHOICE OF PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE
- GOAL 6: PROVIDE EFFICIENT MUNICIPAL SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE
- GOAL 7: SUPPORT THRIVING FARMS AND AGRICULTURE
- GOAL 8: PRESERVE HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES



COPAKE SMART GROWTH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

GOAL 1: Quality Housing for All Residents

Smart Growth Principles Addressed by this Goal



- Enable a diverse mix of housing types, providing opportunity and choice for people of all ages, abilities and incomes.

PRIORITY: Please place a blue (H), green (M), or red (L) dot here to show how you would prioritize this goal.

COMMENTS:

Place your sticky note here with any ideas, comments, or questions.

COPAKE SMART GROWTH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

GOAL 1: Quality Housing for All Residents

ACTIONS. Put a dot next to 3 areas you feel would most help achieve this goal in Copake.

A. Roe Jan School reuse for housing.

B. Life-cycle housing for all ages and incomes.

C. Housing that appeals to younger families.

D. Housing tax incentives/gap funding.

E. Working with County Housing & Tri-Town Cty.

GOAL 1: QUALITY HOUSING FOR ALL RESIDENTS.



- a. Advance options to reuse the former Roe Jan School for housing and mixed use.
- b. Provide a life-cycle range of housing types (apartments, town homes, least cost housing including tiny homes, single family etc. and assisted living) to diversify housing choice and increase affordability.
- c. Develop housing that appeals to younger families.
- d. Consider tax incentives and gap financing to attract housing investment.
- e. Work with Columbia County Housing Services and the Tri-Town Housing Committee.

GOAL 2: A THRIVING ECONOMY ACROSS ALL HAMLETS.



- a. Encourage commercial use in already settled areas such as Route 22, 7 and 7A and vacant and underutilized sites Townwide.
- b. Facilitate pedestrian connectivity, quality design, and efficient permitting to expedite commercial development in and around each hamlet.
- c. Position Copake as a bicycle tourism destination with lodging, dining, bicycle parts, and services.
- d. Facilitate growth of businesses around Catamount Ski Area, school district, and major employers.
- e. Work with Columbia County Tourism Board to attract visitors.
- f. Work with the Taconic School District and other partners as determined to develop day care services.

GOAL 3: FOSTER WALKABLE, CONNECTED, AND VIBRANT HAMLET CENTERS.



- a. Develop land use regulations (zoning and related codes) that encourage quality design of mixed-use hamlets with sidewalks and pedestrian facilities.
- b. Encourage mixed-use development and a common-sense suite of placemaking for each hamlet including kiosks, wayfinding, welcoming gateways, accessibility, broadband access, sidewalks, pathways, lighting, public spaces, and banners.
- c. Improve and increase bicycle and pedestrian connections in and around each hamlet.

GOAL 4: MAINTAIN OUR NATURAL/SCENIC LANDSCAPE



- a. Limit development around Copake Lake, Robinson Pond, and Taghkanic Creek and work with NYS DEC to address invasive species.
- b. Implement projects identified in the NYS DOS-funded Copake Waterfront and Community Revitalization Plan to protect land and water quality including: 1). Protect and educate on the importance of fish and wildlife habitat/scenic resources; 2). Plan for preservation of rare animals and plants; 3). Address impairments of Robinson Pond and Taghkanic Creek; 4). Promote compatible land cover over the Town's sole source aquifer, and 5). Work with DEC programs to combat invasive species on Copake's roadsides and 6). Encourage siting criteria and performance standards.

GOAL 4: MAINTAIN OUR NATURAL/SCENIC LANDSCAPE



- c. Plan and regulate Copake's waterways and watersheds by 1). Planning for the Upper Taghkanic Creek and Roe Jan watersheds; 2). Updating flood laws; 3). Implementing the Columbia County HazMat Plan; and 4). Support Taconic State Park designation as Priority Landscape Area.
- d. Advance Climate Adaptation by working with FEMA and NYS Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services to study flood risks, potential for remapping, using green infrastructure and maintaining healthy riparian edges along primary waterways including the Joe Jan Creek, Bask Bish Brook and Taghkanic Creek.

GOAL 5: PROVIDE A CHOICE OF PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE.



- Implement a Plan of Action for Copake Trails (PACT) to construct a series of on and off-road trails and sidewalks and trails including the Copake Spur Trail to the Harlem Valley Rail Trail, Cup of Coffee trail, Fire Pond Park, etc.
- Create a passive park at the Fire Pond in the downtown Copake Hamlet.
- Upgrade Memorial Park including basketball, pickleball, and skateboarding facilities and add a new perimeter trail and also a sidewalk connection from Memorial Park to the Copake Hamlet.

GOAL 5: PROVIDE A CHOICE OF PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE.



- d. Enhance pedestrian and bicycle safety by slowing driving speeds, creating linkages, defining safe walking or biking routes between anchors such as hamlets, parks, and school facilities.
- e. Complete connections to the Copake Spur Trail to the Harlem Valley Rail Trail.
- f. Fold the Town's Park Department into the Highway Department, leading to greater efficiency.

GOAL 6: PROVIDE EFFICIENT MUNICIPAL SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

- a. Work with Columbia County and neighbors to develop a multi-modal transportation plan for pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and future transit and senior transport users and construct Copake Spur.
- b. Update zoning and land management tools to focus on 1). smart growth hamlets; 2). housing and commercial development; 3). restricted development on wetlands or in areas that flood; inventory vacant and underused sites for redevelopment; 4.) Permit and encourage mixed housing types, and 6). pursue best practice improvements to property maintenance code focused on mixed-use design quality.
- c. Determine feasibility of Taconic Hills School buses dropping children at the Library or other venues after school.
- d. Continue the Administrative Assistant to the Supervisor to provide smooth transitions. Continue to pay staff salaries competitively with other Towns.

GOAL 6: PROVIDE EFFICIENT MUNICIPAL SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE



- e. Develop a town-wide contact list.
- f. Address needs of emergency service providers.
- g. As land use changes, we continue to plan for public water and wastewater in Hamlets.
- h. Develop a marketing strategy and social media to support events at Memorial Park, the Grange, and other venues and promote a biking and trail brand. Consider creating a larger social media presence including both Facebook and Instagram facilitated by a Town employee or volunteer.
- i. Fold the Town's Park Department into the Highway Department, leading to greater efficiency.

GOAL 7: SUPPORT THRIVING FARMS AND AGRICULTURE



- a. Increase access to year-round local food through food-related businesses and year-round farmers market, in collaboration with Columbia County and surrounding communities.
- b. Implement the approved Community Preservation Fund Act.
- c. Facilitate landowners to lease land for long-term agriculture.
- d. Encourage protection of agricultural land by easements.
- e. Support community events that expose residents to farming. Partners: Camphill Village, community residents, farmers market, Town, Copake Grange, CLC, FarmOn, etc.
- f. Market the town's agricultural resources and support a buy-local campaign focused on local produce, the farmers market, local farm stands, and similar enterprises.

GOAL 7: SUPPORT THRIVING FARMS AND AGRICULTURE



- g. Support development of a Columbia County Farm Hub. Partners: Town of Copake, local farmers and local farm businesses, Taconic Hills School.
- h. Work to ensure farm succession and success of young farmers. Partners: Taconic Hills School, Future Farmers of America, Young Farmer Coalition, Town of Copake.
- i. Ensure agricultural exemptions are granted only where acceptable farming practices occur.

GOAL 8: PRESERVE HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES.



- a. Facilitate a townwide Cultural Resources Survey (CRS) and Preservation Plan.
- b. Pursue State/National Historic Register District nominations.
- c. Encourage preservation of at-risk historic properties.
- d. Protect and enhance Copake's identity as a historic farming town by preserving assets, building traditions, rural landscapes and vistas.
- e. Market Copake as a tourism destination featuring its heritage.

GOAL 8: PRESERVE HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES.



- f. Develop historic routes, markers, and collateral materials and maps.
- g. Promote and preserve historic and cultural resources including the Copake Memorial Clock, Copake Methodist Church, Copake Grange Hall, Copake Railroad Depot, Church of St. John in the Wilderness, Copake Iron Works Historic Site, Taconic State Park; Astor Guest Cottage and the Craryville Train Depot, among others.

NEXT STEPS



- Review of your input and comments.
- Committee discussion of actions at regularly scheduled Committee meeting (First Monday of each month) at Town Hall.
- Expand goal and action statements into full projects.
- Revise the Town of Copake Community Profile and post for review.
- Prepare materials for required consultations: Town Board, County Planning, County Agriculture and Farmland Protection and SEQR.