

Marbletown

TOWN PLAN UPDATE
2024



TOWN BOARD OF THE TOWN OF
MARBLETOWN

Adopted _____, 2024

The 2005 Marbletown - New York Town Plan was prepared by the Town's Planning and Zoning Committee following the "Future of Marbletown" Workshops, held in the Spring of 2000. Shuster Associates Planning Consultants assisted the Committee with preparation of the Plan. Sean O'Dwyer was a web-site consultant that assisted the effort.

Public Hearings on a Draft Comprehensive Plan document were held in 2004, revisions were made to the draft Plan document based on comments received, and the Town Plan was adopted by the Town Board as the Town of Marbletown Comprehensive Plan on January 18, 2005.

During 2022, the Town Board created the Marbletown Housing Committee, which studied the need for affordable housing in the Town, conducted a survey of residents on housing issues, and presented its recommendations on March 17, 2023. Marbletown also joined Ulster County's Housing Smart Communities in 2022. In 2023, the Town Board reviewed the Housing Committee's recommendations, engaged GREENPLAN Inc. to assist it with a review of the 2005 Town Plan, and determined that an Update to the 2005 Town Plan was needed. The 2024 Plan Update is the outcome of the above steps.

MARBLETOWN TOWN BOARD

Rich Parete, Supervisor
Ken Davenport
Daisy Foote
Tim Hunt
Don LaFera

2004 PLAN COMMITTEE:

Will Husta, Chairman
Mary Collins
Tom Jackson
Richard Lanzarone
Stephen MacDonald
Mark McLean
Paris Perry
Peter Reynolds
Andy Sindt

2022 HOUSING COMMITTEE:

Vincent Martello, Chairman
Miriam Bourin
Bob Cappelletti
Innis Lawrence
Marian Martinez
Tony Russo

2024 Plan Update Consultant

GREENPLAN Inc.

J. Theodore Fink, AICP

Table of Contents

PREFACE

I VISION STATEMENT

II MARBLETOWN TODAY

 A.Physical Setting.....

 B.Population and Housing.....

III BACKGROUND FOR PLANNING

 A.Past Accomplishments

 B.Planning for the Future.....

 C.Nature of the Plan.....

 D.Regional Context

IV GOALS AND STRATEGIES

V CONCEPTUAL LAND USE PLAN.....

 Concept Plan Map

VI ACTION PLAN



PREFACE

“A comprehensive plan sets forth a community’s goals and recommended actions which will make the community a good place to live, work, and visit. The plan outlines what needs to be done and how to do it in order to ensure that the community grows in an orderly, well-thought-out fashion and that the needs of the community will be met.

A comprehensive plan is not a static blueprint of how to get to some specific end-point. It is a living document that provides continual guidance for the work of the community’s leaders and staff. Municipal decisions need to be weighted against the values and ideas set forth in the overall plan to ensure that the community is heading in the right direction.

While the comprehensive plan sets forth recommendations for how a community should develop, the plan itself is not a regulation. A comprehensive plan states where you have been, what you are like, and where you are going; ordinances, regulations, or local laws are the rules of the game for getting there. A zoning law, for example, is a land regulation tool often used to help implement a comprehensive plan’s goals. In fact, a zoning law or ordinance must be prepared in accordance with the recommendations of a comprehensive plan.”

Excerpts from "A Practical Guide to Comprehensive Planning", Published by the New York Planning Federation, 1996

I. VISION STATEMENT

A plan of any kind begins with an idea, and a plan for a town is no different. What qualities does the town value? What kind of place do we want this to be? As a starting point for planning, the Vision Statement lays out some of these values in a general way. The following statement was adopted at the Future of Marbletown Workshops held in the Spring of 2000 and modified following a public hearing on March 22, 2004.

“Marbletown is a quiet and peaceful place, rich in local history and surrounded by natural beauty and open space. We cherish the quality of our natural environment and acknowledge our dependence upon healthy, intact local ecosystems for the clean air and pure water, food, fiber and fuel we require to sustain our health and our spiritual and emotional wellbeing. We cherish the rural character and small-town atmosphere of our community and embrace sound planning as a tool to balance growth and conservation. We are proud of the friendliness and diversity of our residents, our strong sense of community, and especially the quality and talent of our young people. We seek to preserve these qualities that we love, and which make Marbletown a unique and special place.”

Our vision for the future of Marbletown is one in which we will conserve its open space, preserve our farmland and promote sound and responsible development through pro-active planning. We will continue to search for, adopt and employ ways to preserve and protect our natural resources and their biodiversity. We will endeavor to improve safety and reduce traffic along our major roadways, improve access to infrastructure, and provide a pedestrian-friendly atmosphere within the entire Town. We hope to

create a unified community with an abundance of programs and activities for residents of all ages. In seeking change, we hope to improve our community in ways that will benefit everyone — making it a better place for generations to come.”

In 2023, the Town Board reviewed the Vision Statement of the 2005 Town Plan and held public hearings in February and March of 2024 to obtain resident feedback on the 2024 Plan Update. In 2024, our goals are largely the same with an even more vigilant eye to ensuring the delicate balance between the small-town rural character desired by residents to maintain a thriving community, protection of the town’s valuable natural resources and biodiversity, and the need for affordable housing.

II. MARBLETOWN TODAY

Because the future grows out of the past and present, the next sections describe our community today in terms of its human and physical resources and discusses what Planning in Marbletown has accomplished in the past.

The Town Plan aims to identify and protect critical elements of the community’s natural and cultural heritage while ensuring that an adequate base is available for continued growth and economic welfare. With the plan, we will be able to ensure that the Town’s assets benefit the lives of current and Future generations. Given this balance between conservation and growth, the community is enriched.

To move from a vision of Marbletown’s future to a plan for Marbletown’s future it is important to understand Marbletown today. This section begins with a description of the town’s physical and demographic features, then proceeds to what planning has accomplished in the past, how it is carried on today, and how it will be carried out in the future ~~with this new on-line planning tool.~~

PHYSICAL SETTING LOCATION

The Town of Marbletown is located in the central portion of Ulster County on the eastern edge of the Catskill Mountains and the northern edge of the Shawangunk Mountains. The Town is roughly equidistant from Albany to the north and New York City on the south. In Ulster County, Marbletown is situated between the Village of Ellenville to the south and the City of Kingston to the north. The area of the Town is 54.9 square miles measuring approximately 7.6 miles in a north—south direction generally paralleling Route 209 and approximately 8.5 miles in an east-west direction in the southern portion of the Town. The Town is bounded by the Town of Hurley to the north, the Town of Olive to the west, the Town of Rochester to the south and the Towns of New Paltz and Rosendale to the east.

TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

The natural terrain of the Town has influenced the location and extent of development since the days of original settlement. Even with modern construction equipment, new growth must respect existing physical characteristics such as areas of steep slope, wetlands, major streams and floodplains. The Town’s diverse topography varies from the rugged slopes of the Shawangunk Mountains in the southern portion of the Town and the rolling land of the Catskill Mountains in the western portion of the Town to the flat lands along the Rondout Creek and Esopus Creek.

The Rondout Creek flows in a south to north direction through the Town. It is subject to periodic flooding in the portion of the Town south of Route 213. In the south it is characterized by broad bottom lands with deep agricultural soils and stands of mixed lowland hardwoods. North of Route 213 is the waterfall in High Falls followed by stretches of rapids. From the falls north the Rondout has steeper banks with some rocky cliffs cut by the creek, slab rocks and gravel spits.

A small portion of New York City's Ashokan Reservoir is located in the northwest and is the source of the Esopus Creek in the Town. The Esopus Creek flows through the Town in a west to east direction and then in a south to north direction. The western portions are characterized by steep banks with some ravine formations, such as the Middle Esopus Gorge, and thin, rocky soils supporting upland hardwoods mixed with white pine and pockets of hemlock. At Tongore near Hurley Mountain Road, the Esopus begins to turn north and takes on the wide floodplains, agricultural soils and other characteristics similar to the Rondout basin in the southern part of the town.

The dominant physical characteristics of the Town are the Shawangunk and Catskill Mountains. The Shawangunk Mountains rise to a height of approximately 1,500 feet above sea level in the southeastern tip of the Town at Lake Mohonk. This is the highest point in the Town. The Shawangunk's rugged slopes in the Town are characterized by thin, rocky soils, cliffs and hemlock northern hardwood forest. In the western portion of the Town, the Catskills reach an elevation of approximately 1,100 feet at a point located west of Atwood Road and north of The Vly Road. Generally, however, the elevations of the Catskills within the Town are less than 1,000 feet. The Catskills here have slopes gentler than the Shawangunks with deeper soils and mixed hardwood vegetation interspersed with white pine and hemlock.

The lowest elevation in the Town is 120 feet located along the Rondout Creek at the Town of Rosendale boundary. The lowest elevation of the Esopus Creek is approximately 160 feet located at the Town of Hurley boundary.

Other notable natural features of the Town include several swamps, such as the Scarawan Swamp, Cantine Swamp and Noxes Vly. Marbletown has several federal or state-listed wetlands, such as those along the northern Coxingkill and some significant secondary streams draining into the Rondout or Esopus Creeks. These include the Kripplebush Creek, Northern Peterskill and the Coxingkill. Several other smaller creeks, such as Mossy Brook and Vly Brook, are also present in the Town.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER AND SCENIC RESOURCES

The physical setting of the Town of Marbletown is worthy of special consideration. The steep, mostly wooded slopes of the Shawangunk Mountains and the Catskills and the valleys of the Esopus Creek and Rondout Creek are natural assets. The largely undeveloped

landscape and mountain setting contributes to the Town's scenic rural character and are an important part of the Town's history. Crop fields dominate the Esopus Creek flood plain in the north of the Town and the Rondout Creek lowlands in the south, while livestock, hayfields and residences occupy the lower slopes of the Shawangunks and the Catskills

The Ashokan Reservoir, a small portion of which is located in the Town of Marbletown, is an example of a valuable point of scenic interest and beauty. Spectacular views of the reservoir can be obtained from Route 28A which follows the southern boundary of the Reservoir. Lands adjacent to the Reservoir have been kept in their natural state and function to protect the Reservoir from pollution. The New York City Department of Environmental Protection administers these lands as well as those immediately adjacent to the Catskill Aqueduct which runs generally from the northwest to southeast corner of the Town at the New Paltz line.

The past heritage of the Town is reflected in the many historic buildings and landscapes throughout the Town. The concentration of historic buildings are located along Route 209, particularly in our nationally registered historic districts: the Main Street Historic District in at Stone Ridge (1988), and Kripplebush (1994), Rest Plaas (1995), and the also in High Falls Historic District (1998). The remains of the Delaware and Hudson Canal extend from High Falls south to the Town line near Alligerville, and bluestone walls built in the early 20th century as part of the New York City water supply thread along roads and through the woods in the northwest of the Town. The bed of the former Ontario and Western Railroad now the Rail Trail linear park, generally follows the Rondout Creek in the south, passes through Cottekill and leaves the Town at the Hurley border. Numerous historic homes, barns and farms grace the Town and stone walls from early agriculture run through woods and fields in many places.

Marbletown possesses an abundance and wide variety of scenic areas and features. These give the Town a unique character, an incomparable beauty and constitute a non-renewable resource. They include scenic roads and road segments, scenic entrances to hamlets, prominent hilltops/ridgelines and mountain views, pastoral landscapes or landscape elements (farm fields, stone walls), and spectacular features (waterfalls, gorges, cliffs). The beauty and character of the Town's landscape is dependent on these cultural and historic resources, and the integrity and health of the Town's woodland, wetland, stream and old field ecosystems. Measures will be taken to conserve and maintain these historic and cultural features and promote biodiversity and ecosystem health.

Marbletown has continued to plan for its future in line with resident's vision for the future. Since the 2005 Town Plan was prepared and adopted, a number of inventories and planning studies have been completed including those addressing historic resources, natural resources, biodiversity, groundwater resources including drinking water sources, and resident priorities for preserving the Town's community character. The Town's website maintains electronic copies of all planning studies and documents related to the

Town Plan on an ongoing basis. See www.marbletown.net [here](#) and [here](#) for further information.

**POPULATION AND HOUSING
POPULATION GROWTH (SOURCE: US CENSUS)**

According to the United States Census, in the 40 years between 1960 and 2000, Marbletown’s population increased from 3,191 to 5,854 — a gain of 83.5%. The 1960’s produced the greatest numeric and percentage increase — 955 persons and 30%. Since then, growth has been steady but somewhat slower. The 1990’s saw an increase of 569 persons and 10%. Since the 2000 US Census, Marbletown’s overall population has been relatively stable, as shown in Table 2-1 below, decreasing by 247 persons between 2000 and 2010 and then increasing slightly to 5,658 by 2020 but still less than the high in 2000. Stone Ridge has remained almost flat between 2000 and 2020 but High Falls’ population has increased by 95 persons.

Table 2-1: Total Population				
(Table DP1)				
	2020 2020 US Census	2000 2000 US Census	Change 2000-2020	% Change 2000-2020
Marbletown	5,658	5,854	-196	-3.3%
Stone Ridge	1,234	1,230	4	0.3%
High Falls	700	605	95	15.7%
Ulster County	181,851	177,749	4,102	2.3%

The Ulster County Department of Planning now hosts an expansive set of up to date population and housing statistics on its website. For the latest US Census data including updates, [see the link provided on Ulster County’s website](#) to the Census Bureau’s data for further information from the US Census.

The biggest change since the 2005 Town Plan was adopted has been a significant rise in housing costs. School property tax increases have added to the cost burdens homeowners and renters are facing. Marbletown recognizes that this trend has created challenges to maintaining an economically diverse community.

This is not an issue unique to Marbletown but has been described as a state and national crisis. New York State’s Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli, in a 2019 report entitled [Housing Affordability in New York State](#) sums it up: “As of 2017, nearly 2.8 million New York

households faced housing costs that were 30 percent or more of their income, meaning they were above a commonly accepted benchmark for housing affordability. Almost half of all renters and more than one in four homeowners were in this category, according to U.S. Census Bureau data. Based on criteria used by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, more than 1.3 million households – including more than one of every four renters – were “severely burdened” by housing costs of half or more of their income.”

Since the 2019 State report was published, the situation has gotten even worse. According to the Ulster County Housing Smart Communities Initiative, “Housing sale prices have increased 48% over the past 8 years...These increases were compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic [beginning in 2020] with the median home sale price increasing 31% over the past three years, from \$245,000 in 2019 to \$320,000 in 2021...There is a mismatch between the housing needed and the housing being built. Most new, single-family development in Ulster County consists of larger homes with high-end finishes on large lots. As of December 2020, the average size of all homes built in Ulster County since 2015 was 2,245 square feet with a median sales price of \$425,000...Rents are increasing while wages are stagnant. The average rent for one and two-bedroom apartments in the county have increased by approximately 40% over the past 10 years while wages have remained stagnant or declined...[and]...Approximately 12% of owners and 29% of renters in Ulster County spend more than half of their monthly income on housing costs, an amount that makes them considered “severely cost burdened.”

In 2020, Mid-Hudson Pattern for Progress prepared a Town of Marbletown Housing Snapshot 2020 detailing the state of housing at that time. While now outdated due to the subsequent release of US Census Data from 2020, the Snapshot shows many important trends in population, income, housing, employment, and wages in Marbletown; the report can be found here. These trends are also occurring regionally and Marbletown, like other communities in the region, must give due consideration to the needs of people living in the region. This plan has considered regional housing needs in the policies established herein.

The Town Board created the Marbletown Housing Committee in 2022 to study the issue and to make recommendations for how the Town could address housing affordability locally. In a 2022 public opinion survey conducted by the Housing Committee, 80 % of the 484 respondents to the survey indicated that there was: “Not enough adequate, affordable housing in Marbletown.”

Fortunately, Marbletown’s goals and strategies outlined in Chapter IV below were sound in 2005 when they were established as official Town policies and, with a few minor modifications, remain sound in 2024 in this Plan Update. The Town should continue to address Marbletown’s housing policies by monitoring the trends in housing affordability carefully and working towards implementing the Plan’s recommendations including those of the Housing Committee in their report to the Town Board found here.

In contrast, Ulster County grew by 50% in the past 40 years and 7.5% in the last decade.—

Population and Housing Characteristics—

Age: The Town's age profile as compared to Ulster County's is as follows:—

Town—

Pre-School (under 5)—

School Age (5-19) 20.3%—

Young adult (20-44)—

Middle age (45-64) 31.3 %—

Seniors (65+)—

Median Age 42.0—

County—

4.7% 5.5%—

20.5%—

30.6% 35.7%—

24.8%—

13.2% 13.3%—

38.2%—

As can be seen, the only significant difference between the Town and County is in the young adult and middle-age categories where the Town has a significantly lower portion of young adults and higher proportion of middle aged. In 1960, the Town had a pre-school population of 9.7% and senior citizens of 14.8%.—

Family Size: The average household size in Town was 2.43 persons in 2000 as opposed to 3.09 in 1960. The County average was 2.47.—

Housing: There were 2,386 housing units in Town in 2000 of which 302 (10.6%) were considered seasonal. 79% of the units are owner-occupied and 87% are single family homes. In the County 16.7% of housing was seasonal, 68% owner-occupied and 68% single family homes.—

Education: Over 36% of the Town's population over the age of 25 have a bachelor's degree or higher as opposed to 25 % for the County.—

~~Employment: Almost half (47 %) of the employed Town residents are management, professional and related occupations versus 35.4% for the County as a whole. The most prevalent industry group in the Town was educational, health and social services (24.5%). Manufacturing employment was 7.4% in the Town and 10 % in the County and agriculture, forestry, fishing and mining 0.6% in Town and 1.4% in the County. Self-employed workers were substantially higher in the Town (15.6%) as opposed to the County (9.7%).—~~

~~Income: Median family income was \$54,085 in Town and \$51,708 in the County. 4.4% of families and 7.3% of individuals are included in poverty status in the Town as opposed to 7.2% and 11.4% in the County.—~~

~~Summary: In general, Marbletown currently has a more mature, better educated, more affluent population than the County as a whole. The housing stock has a greater proportion of seasonal and single-family dwellings than the County.~~

III. BACKGROUND FOR PLANNING

PAST ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The quality of Marbletown today reflects efforts over the past 30 years to plan for the future and protect the past. Some major accomplishments include the following:

- In 1969, the Planning Board adopted the Town's first Comprehensive Plan. Shortly thereafter, the Town enacted a zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations to provide legal tools to implement goals of the Plan.
- In 1985, the Town undertook a study which evaluated the location of existing business districts and confirmed that business development should be confined to the area of existing hamlets rather than extending along major roads. Zoning changes were made to further protect the quality of development in the hamlets.
- In 1988, the Zoning Law was amended to establish new density standards throughout the Town based on natural features and development constraints.
- In 1997, to address increasing concerns about the Town's future, a survey of Town residents was conducted with the following results:

"The findings of the survey suggest that Marbletown is a community in transition. Residents are faced with a dilemma typical of many attractive rural communities throughout New York State and the nation. In one respect, residents place high value on the many quality of life or "place" attributes of the community. Long time residents cherish these attributes, while newcomers are attracted to the community because of these attributes. Yet, in other respects, the rise in population and the cultural and economic changes which have accompanied population growth have generated new tensions over historic preservation, land use, traffic, demands for additional services, and preservation of rural lifestyles.

"These tensions are important and the means by which they are resolved are as important as how they are resolved. However, the survey results suggest that residents of Marbletown are willing to use planning tools (e.g., Comprehensive plan) and municipal regulations to guide its future development. The survey shows that respondents recognize that population growth and economic development will continue to impact the community but want to insure that both proceed at a moderate pace. In addition, there is strong support for using planning tools and municipal regulations to insure that development occurs in a manner that is orderly, compatible with the historical layout of the community, and respectful of community values (e.g., peaceful and quiet)."

In 1999, in response to one of the major concerns expressed in the survey, analysis of the Town's business districts was carried out and resulted in zoning amendments which

established detailed design standards and guidelines for each of the Town's business districts to ensure that new development respects the scale and character of the hamlets.

Over the ~~past 310~~ years, as noted above, four historic districts have been placed on the National Register of Historic Places - Stone Ridge, High Falls, Kripplebush and Rest Plaus Road. Also in recent years ~~Since the 2005 Town Plan was adopted~~, the O & W Rail-Trail was established as a linear recreational way extending along most of the former Ontario and Western (O & W) rail line from the southern to northern border of the eastern Town and beyond known as the Hurley-Marbletown Rail Trail Linear Park and the Marbletown O&W Rail-Trail Linear Park. In September of 2019, a Historic Resource Survey Update was completed and can be found at the link on the Town website.

In the Spring of 2000, a series of workshops resulted in the vision statement for the Town which has guided the preparation of this plan and detailed recommendations for actions to achieve the vision.

In 2002, a second series of workshops was conducted to review progress and to establish new tasks for action. 53 issues of concern were identified. Of these, three were selected as most important in the following order: 1) local purchase of development rights initiative (open space protection), 2) aquifer protection plan, and 3) property tax reform.

Also in 2000, a report was prepared which evaluated open space in Marbletown and recommended techniques and priority areas for preserving open space and agricultural land. Revisions to this report began early in 2004 with the goals of completing a comprehensive natural resources inventory. The 2005 Index of Natural, Cultural, and Historic Resources is the result and it is posted in [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#) documents on the Town's website. ~~Open Space Index and Open Space Protection Plan for the Town.~~ These will be applied to planning, zoning and development and help guide decision making in the Town.

In late 2003, the Town began working with a consultant on an Aquifer Protection Study and Plan. This defines Town water resources, specifically underground aquifers. This project will also propose zoning overlays to protect and wisely use the water resources identified for adoption into the Town zoning and development ordinance. The Study was completed in September 2005 and [can be found here.](#) ~~It is scheduled to be completed in summer, 2004.~~

In 2007, the Town adopted the Town of Marbletown Historic Preservation Law 2-15-2007 by L.L. No. 1-2007, Chapter 128 of the Town Code. The goal of this law is to protect and enhance the landmarks and historic districts which represent distinctive elements of Marbletown's historic, architectural, and cultural heritage; foster civic pride in the accomplishments of the past; protect and enhance Marbletown's attractiveness to visitors and the support and stimulus to the economy thereby provided; and to ensure the harmonious, orderly, and efficient growth and development of the Town. The law

established a Historic Preservation Commission to support its goals and to recommend to the Town Board potential local historic resources for landmarking.

In 2022 and 2023, the Town created a Community Preservation Program in accordance with the Hudson Valley Community Preservation Act. A Community Preservation Plan was first prepared outlining the priorities that residents had expressed for preserving the natural and cultural resources most important to protect Marbletown's community character. This Plan also described the Town's long history of planning, which included a summary of the plans and planning studies commissioned and enacted over at least the past 20 years. The Plan was adopted by Local Law and it provided the basis for a voter referendum on election day in 2022. Voters overwhelmingly approved the ballot measure by a 76% majority that led to creation of a real estate transfer tax applying to buyers of new residential lots. Revenues from the transfer tax are placed into a dedicated fund, also created by Local Law, that can only be used to acquire, from willing sellers, conservation easements or fee simple acquisition of lands that are identified in the Community Preservation Plan as a priority for protecting Marbletown's community character. Further information can be [found on the Town's website](#).

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Most rural communities like the Town of Marbletown were originally established without comprehensive plans, review boards, or regulatory controls. The historic hamlets, natural features which shaped growth and the rural road system remain from the era of initial development and combine to create a picturesque environment.

By carefully examining current conditions and issues in the context of citizen involvement, a community can prepare a plan to guide its future. The plan should establish community goals, and include recommendations intended to preserve the environment, while supporting growth that is compatible with community standards.

In 2001 the Town Board applied for and received a grant from the New York State Department of State to update its Comprehensive Plan. The Board appointed a committee comprised of members of various Town bodies as well as citizens at large to prepare a plan for recommendation to the Town Board.

NATURE OF THE PLAN A NEW KIND OF TOWN PLAN

The vigor and commitment with which residents of a town actively plan for its future can strengthen many aspects of community life. The Marbletown community has developed a growing commitment over the last several decades to careful planning and to broad civic involvement in local government. Recognizing the wealth of its own diverse human and

natural resources has been a fundamental element of this process and has been reflected in the Town's Vision Statement. Such a strong sense of identity and widespread participation in civic life is the basis for a new and ambitious Town Plan that is innovative in both structure and scope. Our hope is that this document will serve as a practical and familiar tool for residents to participate in planning and implementing practical steps towards a desirable future for Marbletown on an ongoing basis.

LEGAL BASIS FOR THE PLAN

New York State Town Law (§272-a) authorizes preparation of a master (or comprehensive) plan by a town and sets forth the procedures to be followed. The law includes a statement of "legislative findings and intent" that emphasizes the importance of the planning process to the health, safety and general welfare of Town residents and the essential need for open citizen participation in the design of the comprehensive plan.¹

The law goes on to define the comprehensive plan as follows:

"Town comprehensive plan" means the materials, written and/ or graphic, including but not limited to maps, charts, studies, resolutions, reports and other descriptive material 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."

The 2024 Town Plan Update has been prepared, adopted, and filed in accordance with the Town comprehensive plan requirements of Section 272-a of New York State Town Law. That means all Town of Marbletown land use regulations must be in accordance with the 2024 Two Plan Update. It also means that all plans for capital projects of other government agencies, on land included in this 2024 Town Plan Update, must take our 2024 Town Plan Update into consideration.

This Comprehensive Plan incorporates the ~~1969~~2005 Town Plan and updates it based upon a review of the continued relevance of the information contained within it. Where needed, this Update modifies the 2005 Plan as a result of the Town Board's review and it also includes highlights of the accomplishments taken by town boards since 2005 ~~by reference~~. The 2024 Town Plan Update is subject to the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act and in 2024, the Town Board conducted a review of the potential for the Update to cause any significant adverse effects with a determination that no such adverse effects would be created by adoption of the 2024 Update. ~~Where that Plan is inconsistent, this more recent document shall prevail. In all other cases, the 1969 Plan shall remain in affect until officially revised or deleted by the Town Board.~~

¹ This Town Plan is intended to fulfill the requirements for a comprehensive plan for the Town of Marbletown.

SCOPE OF THE PLAN

We recognize that future actions in the Town are dependent on a variety of factors and interrelated decisions by both government agencies and residents, many of which cannot be predicted in advance. In addition to this, external political, economic, and demographic changes frequently require the amendment and updating of aspects of the Plan. The Town Plan must therefore contain a balance of flexibility as well as of specificity which will help clarify the community's intentions.

At the same time, we understand that the collective action of many of our local boards, committees, organizations, and citizens activist groups represent the research and implementation of many practical elements of the Town Plan itself. Therefore, the Marbletown Town Plan recognizes the entire spectrum of visioning, planning, research, deliberation, budgeting, ratifying and implementing as within the scope of the Town Plan itself. These collective endeavors on the part of all residents and town officials will henceforth be recognized under the single document of the Town Plan.

This expanded scope is one of the principal innovations of the Plan and requires a larger structure in order to organize the many ongoing efforts of town residents and government effectively.

STRUCTURE OF THE PLAN

For both practical and legal purposes, ~~therefore~~, the Town Plan ~~will be~~ is structured in two parts: A “Core Plan” and a Working Plan.” –

The Core Plan is that portion the Plan which contains the vision, goals, policies, and strategies that have been ratified by the Town Board and therefore contain the force of official policy for the Town of Marbletown. It is principally the elements of the Core Plan which will serve as a guide for the practical implementation of its policies, and which form the basis for meeting legal requirements under of New York State Law. The Core Plan will be maintained by the ~~Planning and Zoning Committee, Town Board and their~~ recommendations for changes will be made ~~to the Town Board~~ periodically as ~~they~~ become necessary and evident through the activities and actions within the Town.

The elements included in this current ~~hard-copy~~ document serve as the initial Core Plan, and the policy elements [see Goals and Objectives Section IV] contained herein shall be updated, extended, and more fully detailed ~~by working committees~~ as time goes on. These policy elements can be used to evaluate future proposals for action by public and private entities and will serve as a guide for decision-makers.

The Working Plan is that portion of the Town Plan which contains and facilitates the

practical implementation of the policies, goals, and priorities of the Core Plan. It includes a web pages that facilitate the progress of each of the ongoing activities of the various agencies and volunteer committees. These activities are known as “Action Items” and the process and product of their work will become the attention and locus of additional constructive contributions by the diverse citizenry of the Town. ~~More specific rules for citizen participation in the Working Plan can be found in the on-line version of the Town Plan under “How to use the Plan.”~~

RENEWAL OF THE PLAN

In order to maintain its relevancy and usefulness, the Town Plan will no longer be a static document but rather one which continually evolves as it is used by the community. To accomplish this, a format for renewal of the Town Plan has been designed to allow ready updating, modification, and expansion through the continuing process of review. The new format involves the following planning process.

INITIAL ADOPTION OF THE CORE PLAN

- This 2024 revision is the most recent update of the Town Comprehensive Plan.
- This Update has been presented to the public in a series of Public Hearings designed to assure a full opportunity for citizen participation in the preparation of this 2024 Town Plan Update.
- In adopting the 2024 Town Plan Update, the Town Board seeks to make it a living breathing document – providing continual guidance for the actions of Town officials and the public as well as other agencies operating in the Town, adapting to changes in a manner consistent with the conservation and development of the limited resources available in the Town as outlined herein, and ensuring that the present generation of Marbletown residents are able to meet their needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- On-going Public input is welcome – the Plan is available at Marbletown.Net.
- ~~P & Z Committee prepares draft plan~~

~~Plan is presented to the public via meetings, posting on the web, etc.~~

~~Plan revised based on public input Public hearing~~

~~Adoption of plan by Town Board~~

ON-GOING PUBLIC INPUT

- On-going public input on the 2024 Plan Update is always welcome. The Plan is available at Town Hall, at Stone Ridge Library, and online at the Town's webpage devoted to Adopted Town Plans/Studies. ~~Committee(s) established to pursue action tasks~~
- In the future, the Town Board may ask for additional input from residents by establishing committees to pursue action items outlined in the 2024 Plan Update. ~~Opportunities (meetings, chatrooms, data exchange, etc.) provided for dialogue on goals, issues, concerns, progress, etc.~~
- ~~Repository established for data, agency contacts, funding sources, progress reports, etc. and updated on continuing basis for access by Town residents.~~

PERIODIC REVIEW OF PLAN

Regularly scheduled review of the Plan should follow the following process:

- A summary of progress on action tasks and current issues will be prepared by the ~~Planning and Zoning Committee~~ Town Board or an appointed committee for public dissemination.
- A Town Vision meeting will typically be scheduled every ~~two~~ few years to discuss status of action tasks, respond to changing contexts, review Plan visions and goals, suggest next steps, and establish an agenda for ~~the next two years~~ what follows next. Additional formal reviews of the plan, including public comment, may occur more frequently if desired.
- Committee meetings and public dialogue will be followed by the preparation of proposed amendments to the plan.
- The Town Board will conduct public hearing(s) and adopt the revised Plan and action tasks as necessary.

REGIONAL CONTEXT

Many of the goals and strategies set forth in this plan will be influenced by factors and/ or agencies that transcend the Town's boundaries. The ability to recognize such external factors and to coordinate and collaborate with other agencies ~~is~~ is extremely important if the town is to achieve its objectives. In particular, opportunities for productive partnerships should be pursued with communities in the Route 209 Corridor and the Rondout Valley, as well as with Ulster County. For example, traffic and transportation goals

in the route 209 Corridor will require a unified approach which must be supported by all of the affected communities to be effective. **Housing and environmental initiatives sponsored by the state and county should be considered.**

IV. GOALS & STRATEGIES

In this important policy section of the Plan, the generalized ideals of the Vision Statement take a more practical shape. In each of six more important areas, the plan spells out concepts and, in some cases, specific tasks to be accomplished. This part of the plan also guides the Town Board in enacting zoning and planning legislation.

The future of the Town of Marbletown is tied to its unique natural and man-made resources. These resources — woods and mountains, clear streams, abundant wildlife, spectacular views, historic hamlets and rich agricultural lands — provide the raw material for a healthy, peaceful lifestyle for the Town's residents and a successful economy based on environmentally sensitive development to sustain them. To achieve this vision, the comprehensive plan outlines goals and strategies to be embodied and applied through town initiatives, ordinances and laws.

The Town's future also depends on its people. The residents of Marbletown are a diverse mixture ranging from those whose ancestors farmed here hundreds of years ago to recent arrivals who came because the Town offered an attractive rural environment and appealing quality of life. Preserving these qualities while maintaining Town residents' financial capacity to keep their roots here is a difficult challenge and will be a significant measure of the long-term success of the Plan.

THE ENVIRONMENT GOALS

The fragile features which form the natural environment — steep slopes, shallow soils, karst topography, wooded ridges and hilltops, ~~major stream corridors~~, rich agricultural soils, ~~wildlife habitats and corridors~~, wetlands, stream corridors, flood-plains and groundwater — must be protected from physical, chemical, biological and aesthetic degradation to preserve the Town's main natural and economic resources.

Recognizing the special nature of the Catskill and Shawangunk Mountains and the flatlands between them, ~~where opportunities exist to connect all three areas with recreational trails and protected wildlife corridors~~, form a coherent and sustainable approach to ~~conservation and development that should be implemented. All three areas should be considered for - which provides~~ special protections ~~that should include tofor~~ surface water and groundwater quality, woodlands, wetlands, ~~wildlife habitats, recreational resources~~, and agricultural soils.

The rural quality of the Town should be preserved by maintaining a landscape where the predominant feature is the natural environment, and the intrusion and impact of development is minimized.

In 2023, the Town Board adopted by Local Law a Community Preservation Plan which includes all plans and studies commissioned and enacted by the town in the last twenty years. This document is available here: [Marbletown Community Preservation Plan](#). The Town also created a Community Preservation Fund — all monies in this fund may only be used for the purchase of land and easements with the goal of protecting our most valuable natural resources. In 2023, the Town Board also enacted by Local Law a Real Estate Transfer Tax. Monies from this tax are deposited directly into the restricted Community Preservation Fund, described further on the link to the Town’s website above. In 2024, the town of Marbletown purchased the ninety-nine acre Osterhoudt Flats on Old Cooper street. This property will be preserved and maintained as a new park.

STRATEGIES

Natural Resource Protection: Marbletown prepared a Community Preservation Plan (CPP) and, with voter approval in 2022, established a Community Preservation Fund (CPF) in 2023. In order to preserve the rural character of the Town and the natural resource base upon which our community depends, the Town should continue this effective program for protecting natural and cultural resources, update it as new information on such resources is identified, and continue to work with landowners and land trusts to conserve natural and cultural resources using the CPF. Land conservation and stewardship of such resources are goals an overwhelming majority of Town residents support. The CPP should be updated every five years to be consistent with the Hudson Valley Community Preservation Act. The CPP’s priorities for resource preservation include: a) drinking water resources; b) wildlife habitats; c) forests and woodlands; d) streams and wetlands; e) recreation and trails; f) scenic areas; g) historic and cultural resources; and h) agricultural resources. Each update should be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure resident priorities are consistent with the CPP’s stated priorities and with new and important information that becomes available on natural and cultural resources in the Town. ~~In order to preserve the rural character of the Town and the natural resource base upon which our community depends, important natural resources must be identified and conserved, and land conservation and stewardship promoted. The Town should develop and maintain an inventory of natural resources identifying areas of steep slopes, erodible soils, karst topography, agricultural and poor soils, unfragmented woodlands and forest, wetlands, aquifers, streams and floodplains, open fields, habitat for rare or threatened or endangered species, and other biotic, scenic, and outdoor recreational natural resources. It should identify, quantify and describe the quality of surface and groundwater resources as related in the Aquifer Protection Study completed in 2004 and from other resources.~~

The critical natural resources identified must continue to be reflected in Town planning through the ~~development and maintenance of an~~ 2005 Open Space Index of Natural, Cultural, and Historic Resources and updating it so it can serve as a Natural Resources Inventory, which identifies undeveloped lands for protection and establishes the pattern of

future land use in the Town, and ~~at the 2008 Town Open Space~~ **Natural Heritage Plan**, defining specific measures to make conservation of these priority natural resources possible. **Other planning initiatives that should be maintained and updated regularly to remain relevant include the significant habitat studies and biodiversity reports, the 2005 Aquifer Protection Study, 2019 Climate Action Plan, 2019 Historic Resource Survey, and the 2010 Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan.** Town zoning ~~ordinances~~ **regulations**, development **standards and guidelines**, planning activities and other initiatives must clearly reflect the identified natural **and cultural** resource protection priorities.

Ecosystem Health and Biodiversity: Local **laws and ordinances**, government initiatives, education programs and other measures which encourage the protection and enhancement of the health and biodiversity of our natural resource base will be developed and promulgated. **Marbletown's Community Preservation Fund (CPF), established in 2022, is an example of a successful government initiative that can and should be used concertedly to protect ecosystem health and biodiversity resources in the Town. Purchasing conservation easements on biodiverse lands or through fee acquisition by the Town or in cooperation with other agencies and land trusts is a well established and permanent means to ensure that wildlife habitats and biodiversity will be preserved for the foreseeable future. Residents have consistently expressed their support for a program such as the CPF in the Town.**

The use of native plants in landscaping, development and land use should be encouraged with guidelines designed to foster the use and success of native species, and to minimize the risk of introduction or increase of ~~exotic~~ **non-native** invasive species. Populations of species facing decline due to loss of habitat should be protected through local measures as well as existing state and local laws.

Management and stewardship of wooded lands to maintain healthy, productive forests resilient to catastrophic events such as pest infestation, windthrow and fire should be encouraged. Development and planning guidelines will take into account and incorporate the requirements of maintaining ecosystem functions.

Air Quality: Protection and improvement of air quality is an important part of public health and environmental protection. It is a necessary part of Town planning and will be ensured through education, **local laws and ordinances**, practices and incentives that promote **high-quality-clean** air and deter air pollution. These should include encouraging the use of low **and no** emission vehicles, ~~and discouraging~~ **avoiding** open barrel burning, especially in residential areas, discouraging engine idling, and controls on emissions-producing heating systems or other sources.

Waste Management and Recycling: Appropriate management and disposal of waste is critical to maintaining public health, the natural beauty of the landscape, and protecting community resources. Recycling and responsible disposal of waste should be promoted, and facilities structured and operated to maximum benefit and minimum negative impact.

Residents and businesses should be encouraged to select and work with disposal and removal contractors with practices that meet the highest health and environmental standards. The discarding of refuse outside of designated facilities should be curtailed and responsible waste management principles publicized and encouraged.

Responsible Resource Use: Responsible use of water, and energy, and non-renewable resources by Town residents and businesses can help to ensure the future quality and viability of our community. Water recycling systems, technologies that minimize unnecessary water and energy consumption, and renewable and clean energy sources should be promoted and incentives for their use created wherever possible.

Erosion Control: New development and activities on steep slopes can increase erosion unless proper erosion protection measures are taken during construction and incorporated into the final design. Development plans in these sensitive areas must include erosion protection plans, and in some more susceptible areas, development may be precluded. Banks of streams should be stabilized and riparian buffers should be avoided to prevent further erosion, using recognized best management practices, where public or private property or safety or natural resource integrity are threatened, and eroded banks repaired using techniques that minimize damage to the natural and visual environment.

Recreational Use of Natural Resources and Open Areas: Recreational uses of natural resources include consumptive uses such as fishing, trapping, and hunting, and non-consumptive uses such as hiking and walking, boating, swimming, biking, horseback riding, wildlife photography, bird watching, nature study, environmental education, and the like. The availability of outdoor areas for recreation is a community asset and valuable characteristic of the Town. Recreational use of resources such as parks, woodlands and waterways will be promoted where appropriate in terms of public safety, public health and resource conservation. Outdoor recreation should also be used to promote understanding of the natural environment and the development of a land stewardship ethic among recreational users. Recreational use must ensure the protection of flora and fauna and ecosystem function, and also take into consideration other assets provided by these resources such as the protection of air and water quality, promotion of public health and economic uses of natural resources such as sound agricultural practices and sustainable forestry conducted in accordance with State guidelines.

Wetland Preservation: Zoning requirements, and review of subdivision and site plans will be used to shield designated and other freshwater wetlands and their associated drainage basins from the adverse effects of development. Adverse effects include erosion, sedimentation, pollution, damage to wildlife habitats, destruction of hydrological function, and similar affects. In order to better protect wetlands, additional strategies may be employed, such as requiring impact mitigation through creative approaches to offsets that are designed to avoid fragmentation of contiguous wetland areas, rather than simple replacement. Some seasonal wetlands or those falling outside the protections afforded by federal and state law may need protection on the local level, particularly under

circumstances where such habitats are being used by ~~rare, threatened or endangered~~ **Species of Greatest Conservation Need**, or where the wetlands provide essential water recharge services for a connected aquifer.

Scenic Resource Protection: Siting and design guidelines **and standards** should be used to ensure maximum protection of the Town's important scenic resources including historic hamlets along the Route 209 corridor and elsewhere in the Town ridge lines of the Shawangunks and Catskills, the natural scenic vistas created by unfragmented forests and old fields, undeveloped spaces and agricultural lands. Sprawl including development spread along the Town's main roadways such as 209 and Route 213, will be prevented as it would significantly detract from the Town character.

Some areas possessing these features or qualities have already been recommended as special targets for Open Space Preservation, based on the results of community participation (Town-wide surveys in 1987 and 1997 and workshops in 2000). The targets concern areas located along or visible from Routes 209 and 213, providing "gateways" or "buffers." They are either agricultural land, contain historic buildings and features, lie close to the Esopus Creek, or provide views toward the Shawangunk Ridge. Though these targets may not represent the only scenic resources ultimately meriting protection, the importance ascribed to them by the community attests to their role as providers of a sense of community identity.

While these target areas are critical for scenic resources preservation, ~~o~~**Open s**Space ~~p~~**Planning** requires a more comprehensive approach. The Town should ~~obtain~~**maintain and regularly update its** a comprehensive open space index **and Community Preservation Plan** that identifies the Town's most important scenic resources. ~~Following that the Town should prepare a new Open Space Plan (created with community involvement), that recommends a specific action program.~~ As outlined in the current ~~Open Space~~**Natural Heritage Plan**, a variety of measures exist, including purchase of development rights~~l~~ conservation easements, local land use **laws and ordinances**, such as zoning and subdivision ~~ordinances~~, and conservation development guidelines. ~~An expanded Open Space Plan is needed that~~**The Town's Community Preservation Plan** addresses the Town's scenic resources in a comprehensive manner and ~~recommends~~**prioritizes specific measures in** specific areas **and parcels**. It is of critical importance that the Town ~~possesses~~**maintains** this ~~type of~~ tool for land use planning and planned development purposes. The action program should involve the development and implementation of **standards and** guidelines for building in scenic areas.

Each development situation is unique and the **standards and** guidelines will have to be applied accordingly and consider both the scenic resource and the Town's development objectives and priorities.

Control of Quantity and Quality of Run off: Stormwater runoff can significantly affect adjacent properties and water quality in streams, wetlands and reservoirs. To avoid

adverse impacts, the release of stormwater runoff from a developed area should not exceed predevelopment conditions unless drainage analysis recommends otherwise, ~~and~~ stormwater control can be addressed through adequate structural means, and measures outlined in New York State's Stormwater Management Design Manual are followed. The impacts of the "first flush" should be controlled in stormwater management plans because most runoff-related water quality contaminants are transported from land, particularly impervious surfaces, during the initial stages of a storm event.

Town laws, ordinances, and design standards and guidelines will promote the goal of minimizing new impervious surfaces (paving, expansive parking lots and other surfaces), which act as collectors and conduits of runoff. Alternatives to standard pavement and drainage structures will be evaluated and adopted as appropriate for maintaining high quality surface water and groundwater, and to addressing the renovation of impaired surface water and groundwater quality.

Lighting and Illumination: The vast expanse of unobstructed night sky and constellations is a significant feature in the rural environment. Necessary lighting should be shielded, directed downward and limited in intensity to prevent light spillage that diminishes views of stars and planets or casts glare toward roads or adjacent properties. Incorporating Dark Sky standards and guidelines into the development review process and creating a guide for property owners on best outdoor lighting practices can help preserve this essential feature of rural Marbletown.

Traffic Impacts: Route 209 is the road with by far the greatest capacity to carry traffic in the Town, in terms of speed, volume and weight. With the exception of a few County roads, other roads are only able to accommodate limited traffic generated by abutting low density, primarily residential and agricultural uses. Therefore, uses proposed on sites that do not have direct access to these large roads should be very carefully considered in terms of the type of vehicles generated, ~~and~~ the average daily traffic produced, the potential public safety threats posed especially for pedestrians and bicyclists, and the potential noise and air quality impacts presented. Uses incompatible with the nature and intended use of town roads should be prevented. In particular, pedestrian and bicyclist injuries and fatalities have increased substantially for those who use roads as their only means of transportation or for recreation. Smart Growth America's latest annual report on the issue, Dangerous by Design, has catalogued a 77% increase in pedestrian deaths between 2009 and 2021. Marbletown should consider the mobility and convenience of all users when transportation projects are planned. Establishing a complete streets program for all roads in Marbletown, in line with the State's Complete Streets Act, which is encouraged by the Department of Health and the Department of Transportation, should also be considered.

Promote Conservation Design: Many of the objectives set forth above can be accomplished by refining the Town's conservation design process found in the Zoning Law and Subdivision Regulations, which arranges development on each parcel as it is being planned to preserve and protect sensitive natural and cultural features and environmental

resources. This process, known as “conservation design,” provides a density-neutral method of preserving streams and wetlands, natural habitats, flood plains, steep slopes, prime agricultural lands, historic sites, scenic viewsheds, and so on in permanently protected open space while allowing development on the least sensitive lands. This process also allows creation of a linked system of open spaces and conservation lands to be preserved in the Town. The process should be updated by modifying the voluntary guidelines in Appendix B of the Zoning Law so they become standards to be applied in the Planning Board’s review processes, supplemented with illustrations of the design process so compliance is easier for applicants to obtain, requiring a greater percentage of open space where possible, and considering the use of the conservation design process for certain uses subject to Site Plan Review and Approval. ~~Many of the objectives set forth above can be accomplished by establishing a design process, particularly for major subdivisions, which arranges development on each parcel as it is being planned to preserve and protect sensitive natural and cultural features and environmental resources. This process, known as “conservation design” provides a density-neutral method of preserving streams and wetlands, natural habitats, flood plains, steep slopes, prime agricultural land, historic sites, scenic viewsheds, etc., in permanently protected open space while allowing development of the least sensitive lands. As opposed to conventional subdivision designs, this process allows the creation of linked systems of conservation land.~~

THE ECONOMY GOALS

Business activities which promote the sustainable use of natural, historical and cultural resources, and do not create substantial negative impacts on the environment, public safety, public health, and the rural character of the Town should be encouraged. In particular, agricultural uses should be preserved and new opportunities for specialized or niche agricultural uses encouraged. Managed use of forest and woodlands and, where appropriate other natural resources, using contemporary best management practices, should also be encouraged.

Four season tourism should also be promoted, recognizing that both residents and tourists come to this region because of its unique environmental setting and historic and cultural resources.

Small scale business and service uses should be encouraged which can be accommodated in the existing hamlets or as home-based occupations, particularly crafts, services and internet uses. Large commercial developments or businesses that negatively impact the rural and undeveloped character of the Town will be prevented.

DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS GOALS

The natural resource base must be considered, along with scenic resources, in evaluating proposed development, since these resources are the limiting factors in every aspect of our lives. The Town’s historic development pattern of concentrated hamlets separated by low density open areas will be perpetuated. Existing commercial hamlets should be strengthened and the distinct character of each enhanced. Route 209 — the thread which binds the valley together — must be planned and designed as a series of separate but coordinated experiences: mountain views, bustling hamlets, open fields, unique shops and tourist stops, educational and historic sites, all with quality of design and maintenance worthy of the resource. Areas of significant open space should be preserved between the hamlets, particularly wetlands, bedrock outcrops, fields and farmland and undeveloped stream and creek corridors, to maintain the functional and visual separation of developed areas, and the rural and natural character of the Town.

STRATEGIES

Hamlets: Hamlet growth should be limited to prevent creeping expansion along Route 209 and Route 213. The depth of the hamlets should be increased, if practical rather than their length. New development within the hamlet areas should be compatible with the scale, density and architectural character of the existing hamlets, as appropriate to the capacity of existing sewer and water systems, topography, and natural resources, including drinking water aquifers. New development in the hamlets should take into account traffic patterns for motorized vehicles, non-motorized vehicles, such as bicycles, and pedestrians.

Marbletown’s hamlets are ideal locations in the town to support residents’ wants and needs for affordable living including housing choice, public transit and walkability, and proximity to services. The hamlets developed long before there were cars and are already the most walkable neighborhoods in the community. This characteristic should be encouraged to address both affordability and climate change. Choice involves supporting existing housing including allowing limited conversions and encouraging different housing types and styles that were abundant before cars became ubiquitous. These housing types have come to be known as “missing middle” housing that are best defined as house-scale buildings with either single-family detached or small-scale multiple units in walkable neighborhoods including single-family, two-family, small multi-family structures of three to four dwelling units per building but resembling single-family structures, and appropriately scaled cottage style dwellings in cottage courts of six to eight dwelling units. Such housing can also include appropriately sited and scaled workforce housing meeting the Town’s design standards and guidelines but it does not include townhouses, condominiums, apartment buildings, slot homes, or multiple, full-sized single-family detached dwellings on one lot.

Affordable living means not only the provision for housing affordable to all Marbletown

residents, but doing so in a way where the costs of living can be more affordable to those who serve the community, like emergency services providers, police and fire personnel, teachers, working families, and typical middle-income occupations. This type of housing also appeals to singles, empty nesters, senior citizens, and single parent households. Next to housing, transportation is generally the second largest cost for a household.

In an effort to make Marbletown's hamlets more walkable so transportation costs can be reduced, the town has installed sidewalks in Stone Ridge and is planning to expand and provide for sidewalks in High Falls. Marbletown is also proposing to promote walkability between the hamlets of High Falls and Stone Ridge. Revenues from the Community Preservation Fund are planned to be used for purchasing trail easements for the construction of new walking/bicycling paths between the two hamlets. In 2023, Marbletown and Ulster Community College completed a trail between Route 209 (behind the Ridgewell Gym) and the Ulster Community College Campus.

In addition to providing this new pedestrian and bicycle connection, these improvements also help to mitigate the effects of climate change by reducing carbon emissions from vehicles. The town has also installed several free EV chargers in an effort to promote the use of electric vehicles in the Town. These efforts should continue by incrementally improving non-vehicular transportation in the Town. See below for additional recommendations on establishing a complete streets program to improve the safety of all road users in the Town, whether on foot, a bike, or in a vehicle.

Mixed uses combining residential and commercial development are quite acceptable and help concentrate activity within the hamlets. Small scale commercial development may be appropriate where resources are available to support an increase in development, and where anticipated traffic flows may be accommodated. The Town should also consider amending the Zoning to reinforce the existing scale of the hamlets by encouraging mixed-use buildings that accommodate small scale residential and compatible small scale non-residential uses, allowing adaptive reuse of both existing residential and commercial buildings for creating a more diverse mix of dwelling units in the Town. The Town should identify sites where such mixed-uses are most appropriate and where such mixed uses can be sensitively sited with small changes that appeal to Town residents and support the local workforce including those who provide services to the community like emergency services providers, farm laborers, teachers, and Town employees as well as young families, senior citizens and others on limited incomes.

The Town's design guidelines should be used to ensure that in-fill development in the hamlets has the same setback and orientation to the street as existing buildings. Odd, angled buildings or large set-backs should be avoided. Building standards and guidelines should encourage use of materials, architectural styles, colors and landscaping in keeping with the history, culture and existing aesthetic of the hamlet. Guidelines and standards for landscaping and plantings applying to new development should be developed to encourage native species supportive of local ecosystems and deter the use and introduction of

exotic non-native and invasive species detrimental to the Town's natural resource base.

Shade Trees and other vegetative buffers should line hamlet streets to provide shade and to integrate sometimes diverse building forms, and supporting the scenic and rural character of the Town. Heritage trees and certain other historical vegetation should be preserved. Basic principles of urban forestry, such as suitable species selection and species diversity among street trees to increase resilience to catastrophic events, should be implemented.

Route 209: Between the hamlets, Route 209 establishes the image of the Town — long views of mountains, glimpses of farms, streams, open fields and wooded hillsides and a varied array of small, diverse structures and uses glimpsed at 55 mile per hour. In general, the design principle for Route 209 should be to blend manmade development into the natural landscape to the maximum extent possible and to prevent an increase in development intensity in terms of physical and visual impact. This can be achieved by the following techniques.

Existing vegetation or new landscaping which employs native plants should be maintained between buildings and parking lots and the roadway. Residences in particular should be screened by natural growth or stone walls, but commercial buildings should also be designed with set-backs and aesthetic buffers to perpetuate the Town's rural character.

New buildings should be located on the edges of fields rather than the middle, if at all possible, and should be sited so as not to interfere with views of natural features or dominate views by placement at a curve or high spot. Clustered development — collecting buildings along adjacent property lines or at a single location rather than dispersing them on a property — will be encouraged.

Buildings should be consistent with the rural character of the area in terms of design and materials.

Agricultural Lands, Forest Lands and other Open Space: Agricultural lands, particularly those visible from major road corridors, such as Routes 209 and 213, reflect the origins of Marbletown. They maintain its development pattern by defining the entrances to Town and creating buffers around the hamlets, should be incorporated under formal open space protection and Town planning, and preserved to the maximum extent possible.

Preservation of the Town's remaining agricultural land can reinforce the viability of farming by maintaining a critical mass of productive lands and creating opportunities for a new generation of farmers.

All residents benefit from our local farms and farmers, not only because of their contribution to our scenic resources, but also because our farms are evidence of the persistence of a cherished town tradition. Prime agricultural soils lend themselves to sustainable agricultural practices, while local and regional markets allow for conservation

of non-renewable energy resources and limit air pollution. It may be beneficial to increase the space available for farmers markets, given the level of interest farmers have expressed.

Forests and woodlands also define the Town by creating vegetative expanses between hamlets and residences, contribute notably to the open, rural and mountainous character of the Town, and are an important economic resource. Maintenance of contiguous unfragmented forests and woodlands should be encouraged. Management of forests to maintain long-term forest health, resilience, productivity, and scenic and ecological value should be promoted. Sustainable extractive uses of forests using responsible techniques and recognized best management practices should be supported.

Other open fields along the major road corridors and along the Rondout and Esopus Creeks which maintain the Town's rural landscape should be preserved to protect scenic views of open fields, ridgelines and mountain tops, as seen from public roads.

Other types of open space such as woodlands and wetlands are also important and should continue to be protected by existing legislation. The impact of development on these areas should be mitigated by design guidelines and restrictions on poor practices.

Critical Environmental Areas should be identified, a designation based on specific criteria. This allows for the delineation of especially rare and unique areas. Areas so designated by the state or the town will receive greater protection at State or Town levels. **Marbletown's Community Preservation Plan, adopted in 2022, should continue to be used in a concerted manner to protect all of the above noted environmental resources and updated every five years. Additional tools available to protect community character when CPF revenues are not available, such as strengthening the Zoning Law's conservation design technique and considering state-of-the-art overlay zoning districts to protect specific environmental resources, should receive serious consideration for biodiversity protection, scenic viewshed protection, water resources protection, and conservation of other sensitive environmental features.**

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES GOALS

Among the most valuable manmade resources are those structures or areas which are of historic, archaeological or cultural significance. These include old stone walls, the Delaware and Hudson Canal, the railway, fording places on the Esopus Creek, early and native dwellings, and burial grounds. The protection of these structures and areas must involve a recognition of their importance and the ability to identify and describe them. The resources can be found in the hamlets, in isolated structures and in unique sites or facilities **and many were captured in the Town of Marbletown Historic Resource Survey Update Part 1, 1669-1900 (2019) on the Town's website.** All practicable means to protect these resources, such as use of the Community Preservation Fund, should be taken and these

should likewise be addressed in development planning.

The long tradition of arts, crafts and cultural expression in the Town should be strongly supported and encouraged as a link to the Town's past and an integral part of its future.

STRATEGIES

The Town will conduct and maintain an inventory of cultural resources to identify priority historical and cultural resources for conservation. This data will be used as a basis to protect these resources that may include, for example, landowner incentives for conservation, **conservation easements and façade easements using CPF funds**, and state preservation easements **and local landmarking**. This should also be used to inform **local laws and ordinances, guidelines and standards**, and site-specific proposals.

All proposed actions within proximity of the boundary of an historic, architectural, cultural, or archaeological resource that would be incompatible with the objective of preserving the quality and integrity of the resource and its surroundings should be carefully considered and rejected when necessary. Compatibility between the proposed action and the resource means that the general appearance of the resource should be reflected in the architectural style, design material, scale, proportion, composition, mass, line, color, texture, detail, setback, landscaping and related items of the proposed action to the maximum extent possible.

Alteration of or addition to one or more of the architectural, structural, ornamental or functional features of a building, structure, or site that is a recognized historic, cultural, or archaeological resource should be compatible with the resource.

Demolition or removal in full or part of a building, structure, or earthworks that is a recognized historic, cultural, or archaeological resource should only be undertaken if restoration or preservation is determined to be impractical.

Features which are integral to the historic landscape, such as stone walls, barns, **unique historical features**, and outbuildings, should be maintained and integrated with new development to the maximum extent practical.

Archaeological resources are non-renewable resources that should be preserved for continued use and enjoyment by future generations. Landowners should be encouraged to minimize activities that disturb sites and protect them from looters.

HOUSING GOALS

Housing opportunities for the full economic range of the Town's population should be provided in a form that is compatible with the scale and pattern of existing development.

The special housing needs of senior citizens, lower-income and young families should receive particular attention.

STRATEGIES

Single family houses are the predominant housing type within the present development pattern. Where adequate utilities are available, single family homes should be clustered on small lots to preserve green space and important natural features. Guidelines and standards for environmentally sensitive, visually appealing, and appropriately scaled missing middle housing types discussed above under "Hamlets" should be allowed to accommodate future population in a compatible manner, and provide for affordable living including housing opportunities and socio-economic equity in our community. ~~Single family houses are the predominant housing type within the present development pattern. Where adequate utilities are available, single family homes should be clustered on smaller lots to preserve green space and important natural features. Guidelines for environmentally sensitive and visually sound multi-family dwellings in hamlets, such as town homes and apartments, should be developed to accommodate future population growth in a compatible manner, and provide for affordable housing opportunities and socio-economic equity in our community.~~

Low density, multi-family housing may also be appropriate for certain demographic groups, such as senior citizens and others with special needs. Such housing should be located in or adjacent to existing hamlets and designed to be compatible with the scale, design and architectural character of single-family home development.

Rehabilitation of the Town's existing housing stock is the most effective means to provide housing opportunities that are compatible with existing development patterns and to foster hamlet revitalization. Renovation and revitalization should be promoted through incentive plans.

In March of 2023, the Marbletown Housing Committee conducted a survey in which 80 percent of all those surveyed (484 respondents) said that there was not enough "adequate and affordable" housing in Marbletown. As in much of the nation, affordable housing for seniors and for many growing families is an urgent issue. The Ulster County Housing Smart Communities recommendations provide many potentially beneficial housing actions that should be considered. Going forward, Marbletown will need to focus on this if it is to remain a vibrant, livable, and truly equitable community. A vital middle class is a must if the town is to continue to grow its public schools, health and other support services.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES GOALS

Necessary infrastructure, including sewage disposal and water supply and system augmentation, may eventually be necessary to allow concentration and expansion of the hamlets.

In 2006, due to groundwater contamination in High Falls, the federal government (EPA) funded a new water district in the hamlet. New York City's Catskill Aqueduct traverses the Town and the water district was able to "tap" into the Aqueduct as its long-term source of drinking water. In 2020, the line was extended to Ulster Community College. The Town should investigate the potential for use of the Aqueduct as a source of drinking water for serving the hamlet of Stone Ridge, as well.

In 2024, the Town began to explore the potential for Marbletown to extend this water line to the hamlet of Stone Ridge, which would be an ideal means of promoting responsible growth within the confines of our town's two hamlets. As discussed above, the hamlets are ideal locations for enhancing affordable living in Marbletown and helping town residents achieve the vision and goals outlined in this 2024 Town Plan Update.

The quantity and quality of existing surface water and groundwater supplies must be protected and monitored to ensure that safe and adequate supply is preserved for existing uses and available for future users. Similar services should be coordinated with all involved public, non-profit and business agencies to provide "one-stop shopping" for tourists.

State-of-the-art communications services must be provided to facilitate economic growth dependent on high speed access to outside markets and to enhance emergency service response.

Enhanced, affordable public service should be provided to support the quality of life of residents and the experience of tourists.

STRATEGIES

Repair or construction of underground utilities (electric, phone and cable) in the hamlets should be coordinated with sidewalk development and development of off-street parking areas and underground relocation of overhead lines.

Techniques to regulate development in accord with the capacity and quality of groundwater supplies should be developed and measures to facilitate development of central water supply systems investigated.

An appropriate site or sites for cell tower placement should be identified. Sites should be

selected according to amount of available setback¹ low impact on viewsheds¹ health concerns¹ if applicable, and suitability of a site's physical properties.

Tourist information services, visitor centers, lodging referral networks and similar services should be coordinated with all involved public, non-profit and business agencies to provide "one-stop shopping for tourists.

V. CONCEPTUAL LAND USE PLAN

The attached conceptual land use plan for the Town has been prepared to depict the general location and distribution of major land use categories - hamlets, open space and different residential density areas as envisioned by the goals and objectives of the Plan. This should be updated as cultural and historic inventories, and natural resource inventories of the Town become available **or are updated**. A brief description of each category follows **and the descriptions are followed by the Conceptual Land Use Plan:**

HAMLETS: MIXED USE

This category includes the two largest hamlets in Town - Stone Ridge and High Falls - which contain a mixture of residential commercial and service uses and should continue and be strengthened as the focal points for activity in the Town. Intensification of development is encouraged consistent with contemporary health standards for sewage disposal and water supply systems and design guidelines, as well as protection of natural resources. The smaller hamlets at North Marbletown and at the intersection of Route 209 and Kripplebush Road are also included in this category.

HAMLETS: RESIDENTIAL

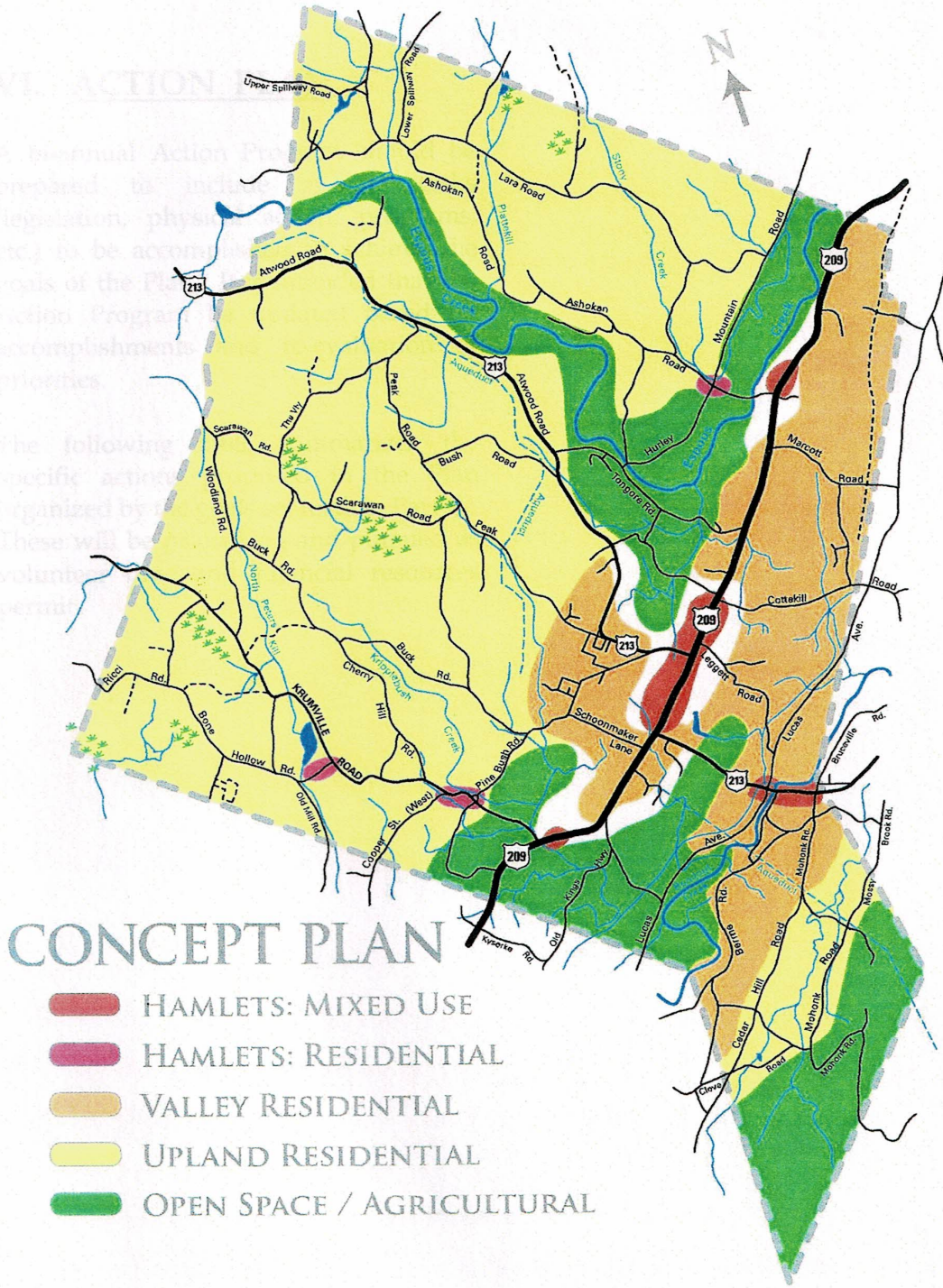
This category includes the other existing traditional hamlets in the Town - including Kripplebush, Lyonsville and Lomontville. These hamlets should continue to function as the center of the surrounding residential areas and retain their residential character. Very limited service or retail uses may be appropriate to provide services to residents.

OPEN SPACE/AGRICULTURAL

This category includes agricultural lands in the Route 209 valley, open space along Route 213, the open space along the Rondout and Esopus Creeks, the higher elevations on the Shawangunks, woodlands of the Catskill foothills to the west, and the floodplains and wetlands which are interwoven with the open spaces, as well as those recognized by federal and state agencies. These areas comprise the agricultural heritage and natural features which are the essence of Marbletown and should be protected and preserved.

In 2023, the Town Board adopted a Community Preservation Plan by Local Law, which includes all plans and studies commissioned and enacted by the town in the last twenty years. At the same time, the Town Board also created the Community Preservation Fund and a Community Preservation Fund Advisory Board by Local Law. All revenues in the Fund may only be used for the purchase of land and easements with the goal of

Marbletown Conceptual Land Use Plan



preservation of our most valued natural resources including open space and farmlands. In 2023, the Town Board also enacted into law a Real Estate Transfer Tax and all revenues from this tax, paid by buyers of residential properties, are paid directly into the Community Preservation Fund.

VALLEY RESIDENTIAL

The more level lands around the hamlets and outside the agricultural lands are suitable for residential use. However, much of this land is open former agricultural fields and, although moderate density development may be appropriate, such development should use design techniques to minimize the visual economic and environmental impacts of development.

UPLAND RESIDENTIAL

This category includes much of the wooded higher elevations in the western portion of the Town as well as the slopes leading up to the Mohonk Preserve. Low density and clustered development on large lots is appropriate to preserve the wooded character of the foothills of the Catskills, with areas of protected open space, including contiguous forest lands, swamps and secondary stream drainages.

INDUSTRIAL

There are few suitable sites for industrial development in the Town. Several existing industries are included in this category. Others will be evaluated, if proposed, on a case-by-case basis and only approved if the impacts of such uses can be mitigated and avoid additional disturbance to the basic land use patterns, environment, economy and character of the Town.

VI. ACTION PLAN

A bi-annual Action Program should be prepared to include specific tasks (legislation, physical action, programs, etc.) to be accomplished to achieve the goals of the Plan. It is intended that the Action Program be updated based on accomplishments and re-evaluation of priorities.

The following table summarizes the specific actions proposed in the Plan organized by the goals set forth in Part IV. These will **continue to** be prioritized and pursued as volunteer time and financial resources permit **with amendments considered on an on-going basis in accordance with New York State Town Law.**

Marbletown Action Plan Policies	
Goal	Proposed Action
1. Environment	1.1 Update the Develop <u>a natural heritage plan as needed and develop a natural resources inventory.</u> 1.2 Develop and m <u>Maintain the Open Space Index.</u> 1.3 <u>Develop guidelines and standards to maintain ecosystems.</u> 1.4 Prepare new <u>Maintain the Open Space Plan and continue using the Community Preservation Plan.</u> 1.5 <u>Develop guidelines and standards for building in scenic areas.</u> 1.6 <u>Promote "conservation design" and adopt applicable standards and procedures for both subdivision and site plans.</u> 1.7 Adopt <u>Enforce regulations governing site clearance and grading and consider updates to such regulations to minimize new impervious surfaces.</u>
2. Economy	2.1 <u>Compile inventory of suitable sites for business development.</u> 2.2 <u>Survey existing businesses to determine needs and future plans.</u> 2.3 <u>Promote high-speed internet infrastructure capacity.</u> 2.4 <u>Develop a central visitor center.</u> 2.5 <u>Encourage sustainable locally-owned and operated businesses.</u>

Marbletown Action Plan Policies	
Goal	Proposed Action
3. Development Patterns	<p>3.1 Develop standards for <u>“neo-traditional” walkable mixed-use</u> development in and adjacent to the hamlets to maintain historic character.</p> <p>3.2 Prepare landscape <u>and design standards guidelines</u> appropriate to the land use patterns <u>and rural character and small-town atmosphere of the town.</u></p> <p>3.3 Promote <u>conservation clustered</u> development (see Action 1.6, “conservation design” above).</p> <p>3.4 Require interconnection between adjacent lots in business areas.</p> <p>3.5 Analyze development regulations to determine need for new approaches.</p> <p>3.6 <u>Maintain</u> Develop the Community Preservation Plan program to <u>continue purchase of development rights and fee acquisitions</u> to sensitive lands.</p> <p>3.7 Develop timber harvesting regulations.</p>
4. Historic and Cultural Resources	<p>4.1 Maintain and update <u>the an</u> inventory of historic and cultural resources.</p> <p>4.2 Explore incentives for preservation of important resources <u>including concerted use of the Community Preservation Fund and local landmarking.</u></p>
5. Housing	<p>5.1 Establish incentives to provide affordable housing.</p> <p>5.2 Expand opportunities for accessory dwellings.</p> <p>5.3 <u>Revisit the Zoning Law’s provisions for affordable housing to determine if adjustments are appropriate.</u></p> <p>5.4 <u>Focus on the hamlets to provide affordable living opportunities.</u></p> <p>5.5 <u>Reduce transportation costs for renters and homeowners by continuing to support pedestrian and bicycle connections in the town.</u></p>

Marbletown Action Plan Policies	
Goal	Proposed Action
6. Infrastructure	<p>6.1 Establish aquifer protection overlay districts.</p> <p>6.2 Coordinate undergrounding of overhead lines in the hamlets.</p> <p>6.3 Require interconnection of streets in adjacent developments.</p> <p>6.4 Develop positive plans for location of commercial telecommunication system facilities.</p> <p>6.5 <u>Where applicable, coordinate sidewalk development in the hamlets with NYS Department of Transportation.</u></p> <p>6.6 <u>Continue to explore the potential for extending the High Falls Water District’s water supply infrastructure to investigate central water supply resources for Stone Ridge.</u></p>