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Introduction

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A comprehensive plan is a written document that identifies the goals, objectives, principles, guidelines, policies, standards, and recommended strategies to guide the growth and development of a community. Since decisions and actions affecting the immediate and long-range protection, enhancement, growth and development are made by local governments, New York State considers adoption of a comprehensive plan to be a critical means to promote the health, safety and general welfare of the people of the town and to give consideration to the needs of the people. It is the policy foundation upon which communities are built. It is not a law in itself, but state law requires that all land use laws in a municipality be consistent with a comprehensive plan. The Town of Cairo is authorized to develop and adopt a comprehensive plan by New York State Town Law Section 272-a. There are several advantages to having an adopted comprehensive plan in Cairo including:

- 1) All government agencies involved in planning capital projects in Cairo must first consider this plan. That means the Town now has a much larger stake in what other governmental agencies want to do when they are proposing a project in town.
- 2) Development of the plan can build consensus and support for common goals.
- 3) Programs and regulations may be adopted to implement your plan to protect the town's resources and encourage desired development and growth. Comprehensive plans are also important documents to help the town be successful in finding grant monies.
- 4) In New York State, all land use regulations must be in accordance with a comprehensive plan (Section 272-a). The plan provides the basis for regulatory programs. All land use laws should be reviewed, and updated where necessary to be in accordance with this plan.

Past Comprehensive Planning Efforts

Several other comprehensive planning efforts have taken place in Cairo. In 1972, a Comprehensive Plan was developed which included background studies, community goals and recommendations for community facilities, central business districts, highways, the environment and proposed land use. At that time, comprehensive plans were developed and adopted differently than they are now. Under current New York State law, comprehensive plans must be adopted, via a resolution by the town board after public hearing, environmental review and county planning board review. In 1972, those requirements did not exist. In 1995, the Town of Cairo Planning Board developed, with help from the Greene County Planning Department, a draft update to the 1972 plan. This draft updated the analysis of conditions in the town and concentrated recommendations on land use and circulation (transportation). This draft

plan was not adopted by the Town of Cairo. The 1995 draft recommendations related to land use were very similar to those recommended in 1972. The intent of this current comprehensive planning process was to revise and update the 1995 draft plan.

Components of the Comprehensive Plan

This most recent effort attempts to answer four questions vital to the future of Cairo:

- 1) Where are we now?
- 2) Where are we going?
- 3) Where do we want to be? and
- 4) How can we get there?

Without answering these questions it is unlikely that Cairo can adequately plan for its future. Without a clear direction of where it wants to go and how it plans on getting there, outside forces will be the controlling factor. These outside forces may be at odds with what the community of Cairo desires for itself. The goal of this comprehensive plan is to give the Town of Cairo and its residents the “power” to control its own destiny and to help fashion the inevitable change in ways that meet community goals.

Profile and Public Input: This plan is based on community input. The inventory and analysis of community resources are incorporated into this plan and provide answers to the “where are we now?” and “where are we going?” questions (Appendix 1). They describe current conditions,

demographics, physical and cultural features, and detailed information from the residents. The issues, goals and recommended strategies included in this plan are based upon studies of information and data gathered about the Town of Cairo, as well as the input of many Town residents and local businesses. Specific sources of information



used to prepare this plan included:

- Cairo Resident Survey (July 2002).
 - Planning and Visioning Workshop (August 2003).
 - Background studies of land use, population and economic profiles, housing, community facilities, transportation, recreation and educational resources, public safety programs, and environmental conditions of the Town and analysis of the regional growth patterns and trends that have affected, and will continue to affect the area’s growth. (July 2003 through November 2003)
 - Interviews and focus group meetings with area business owners and managers (September and November 2003).
 - Information and perspective from the Town Board.
 - Information from the planning consultant.
-

● Public Meetings

Vision: The Vision for Cairo sets the tone and overall direction the Town should take in the future. It was developed directly from the public comments received during the planning process during 2003. The vision statement depicts in words what the community hopes to become. It should be considered as the starting point for the creation and implementation of action plans.

Goals: A series of goals have been established; each is a broad statement that reflects “ideal” future conditions desired by the Town. The goals offer more specific direction and are consistent with the stated vision of Cairo. The analysis of public input in this most recent comprehensive planning effort did not detect any dramatic shifts in public sentiment regarding the current conditions or future direction for the Town. Thus, the goals established in this plan are quite similar to those in the 1972 plan. However, this plan provides the most up-to-date information needed for decision making and takes a comprehensive look at current needs and issues facing Cairo.

Recommendations: The recommendations are a series of action steps or strategies that the Town can take to accomplish each goal contained in this plan. When put into action, these strategies will help Cairo attain its vision. This plan outlines a variety of options that the Town can discuss and implement in the future.

Greenway Principles

In May 2003, the Town of Cairo passed a

resolution requesting designation as a Greenway Community. The Hudson River Valley Greenway Act establishes the Greenway Compact. This compact creates a process for voluntary regional cooperation and decision making among the communities in the Hudson River valley. As such, the Town has formally documented its support for the criteria contained in the Greenway Act: natural and cultural resource protection, regional planning, economic development (including tourism, agriculture and urban redevelopment), enhancing public access to the Hudson River and heritage and environmental education. As a Greenway Community, Cairo has agreed to consistency between the Greenway criteria and this comprehensive plan. These criteria are:

















1. Natural and Cultural Resource Protection – Protect, preserve, and enhance natural resources, including natural communities, open spaces,



cultural and historic resources, scenic roads and scenic areas.

2. Regional Planning – Develop mutually beneficial regional strategies for natural and cultural

- resource protection, economic development, public access and heritage and environmental education.
3. Economic Development – Encourage economic development compatible with the preservation and enhancement of natural and cultural resources including agriculture, tourism, and the revitalization of established community centers and waterfronts.
 4. Public Access – Promote increased public access to the Hudson River through the creation of riverside parks and the development of the Hudson River Valley Greenway Trail System.
 5. Heritage and Environmental Education – Promote awareness among residents and visitors about the Valley’s natural, cultural, scenic and historic resources.

		Greenway Principal Supported by the Plan				
Goal Number	Topic of Goal	Protect, Preserve and Enhance Natural and Cultural Resources	Promote Regional Planning	Economic Development Compatible with the Preservation and Enhancement of Natural and Cultural Resources	Promote Public Access to Hudson River	Promote Awareness about Hudson River Valley and Promote Heritage and Environmental Education
Goal 2	Aesthetic Character					
Goal 3	Aesthetic Character					
Goals 5 through 8	Economic Development					
Goal 9	Environmental					
Goal 9	Farmland and Open					
Goal 10	Recreation					
Goal 11	Historic Resources					

A Vision for Cairo

A public input process that included a written survey, two planning and visioning workshops, and multiple interviews and focus group meetings resulted in the following vision statement for the Town of Cairo:

IN THE FUTURE,

Cairo is an aesthetically pleasing, well-maintained community where civic pride and friendly, positive attitudes drive our success at providing a high quality of life for our residents. Our community is sustained by a diversity of cultural, recreational and educational opportunities for all ages. Cairo's forests, streams, and other natural resources are maintained and continue to contribute to our health and welfare.

Our government is responsive, works cooperatively with residents, businesses and community leaders, and delivers effective leadership and administration. An affordable broad-based tax system supports quality public services, a well-maintained infrastructure that allows for controlled growth and a safe and supportive living environment for all residents.

Main Street is the cultural and economic focus of the town and is filled with vibrant businesses, beautiful buildings and landscaped streets. It has a diversity of retail and service businesses that meet the needs of local residents and provides jobs for all income and education levels. Our many unique historic buildings and locations are preserved and appreciated. Cairo's economic initiatives take advantage of our most important assets – our great scenic beauty and small town ambiance.

Benchmarks for Attaining this Vision

Our vision for the Town of Cairo will have been achieved if the following are true in the year 2018:

- The town is well-maintained with no junk or junk cars spoiling the landscape. Main Street's character has been further improved with flowers, landscaping, attractive signs, and pedestrian amenities such as garbage cans, benches, sidewalks, and adequate street lighting. A tree-lined Main Street has restored buildings and architecture of new buildings is consistent with our traditional building styles.

➤ Crime, drug use, vandalism, loitering, and disorderly conduct on Main Street have been eliminated.

➤ Access to the creeks, and hiking and bike trails has been improved.

➤ Main Street is the commercial focus of the town. It has no empty storefronts, has a diversity of small businesses, and has a vibrant pedestrian environment. Adequate parking exists for both residents and businesses along Main Street. Businesses located outside the downtown core supports and compliments those located in the core. There are more quality restaurants.

➤ Additional recreational opportunities have been created such as a community center for teens, swimming, and nature enjoyment.

➤ Impressive entranceways greet the resident and visitor alike and attractive signs welcome and easily direct people to the Main Street core.

➤ A variety of high quality rental and owner-occupied housing options exist that serves all income levels and family situations.

➤ Cairo will be a highly sought after tourist destination spot. The resorts are busy year round.

➤ Homes and buildings throughout Town are

maintained with a great deal of pride.

➤ Water and sewer facilities in the hamlets are adequate to support controlled, but sustainable growth.

➤ Throughout the town, growth has taken place in a planned way with needed transportation and infrastructure improvements implemented to meet current and future growth and in a way that maintains our rural character and open space. Public and private investments in Cairo will have improved the quality of our environment and creative site planning will have protected significant natural areas and recreational systems.

➤ The Town's forested character is intact.

➤ Viewsheds to the impressive mountain range are open and remain the dominant visual element of our town.

➤ Agriculture remains a part of our rural landscape.

➤ Cairo has attracted residents who volunteer their services in organizations and community activities in which they feel pride and ownership.

➤ The tax base is broadened and includes incentives for continued investments in properties. Prosperous commercial, light

industrial development and tourism growth have added significantly to the tax base.

- ▶ Historic structures are identified and preserved.

 - ▶ The towns' population is very diverse.

 - ▶ A great deal of cooperation and planning exists between the Cairo-Durham school district and the town.
-

Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats Analysis

A detailed analysis of the demographic, economic, environmental and cultural profile of the town, along with public input, allowed identification of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing our community. An understanding of these is important because this comprehensive plan should be targeted to address the negative and positive influences in Cairo. This plan is designed to offer recommendations on how to ensure that strengths remain so in the future, that areas of weaknesses are addressed and minimized, that opportunities are taken advantage of to benefit all, and that threats are eliminated.

STRENGTHS (Strengths are resources or capabilities that will help Cairo accomplish the vision.)

1. Numerous historical resources and an attitude that these resources are important to the community.
2. Established tourism base.
3. Beautiful views and scenery.
4. Land available for development.
5. Interest and willingness for economic development.
6. Intact hamlet remains “center” of town.
7. Natural resources for open space and recreation, including the Catskill Creek

and its tributaries.

8. Significant ecological and wildlife communities.
9. A diverse and healthy environment.
10. Significant rural and small town character.
11. Business development relatively concentrated and not exhibiting high levels of highway sprawl.
12. Infrastructure available in hamlet.
13. Housing opportunities are relatively affordable.
14. Improvements to Main Street in Cairo.
15. Recreational resources in the hamlet of Cairo.
16. Friendly people.
17. Volunteer services are good.
18. Healthy local supermarket.
19. Established hamlets.
20. County offices located in Cairo.



WEAKNESSES (Weaknesses are deficiencies in resources and capabilities that hinder the Town's ability to accomplish the vision)

1. Crime and vandalism increasing.
2. Poor law enforcement or perceptions of poor law enforcement.
3. An aging population.
4. High levels of population increases concurrent with high levels of housing development.
5. Low housing vacancy rates.
6. Lack of employment locally.
7. High town taxes or perception of high town taxes.
8. Poorly maintained properties with junk, junk cars, and trash.
9. Lack of retail services available locally.
10. Vacant buildings downtown.
11. Inadequate signage to direct people to Main Street.
12. Aging resorts and changing tourism clientele and needs.
13. Larger number of households headed by females with no males present (may require additional public services not currently readily available).
14. Lack of day care opportunities.
15. Worn appearance of Town Hall.
16. Lack of signage and information for visitors.
17. Lack of organized teen activities and community center.
18. Lack of quality rental apartments.
19. Rentals allowed on first floor of commercial buildings downtown.
20. Lack of parking along Main Street.
21. Generally poor attitudes towards new businesses.
22. Perception that project review is difficult and not very business friendly.
23. Inconsistency in project reviews.
24. Sewer capacity may be limiting factor.
25. Lack of volunteers and civic boosters.

OPPORTUNITIES (Opportunities are factors or situations that can affect the Town in a favorable way and help Cairo reach your goals.)

1. Desire for more job and retail growth specifically, and economic growth in general.
2. Remaining cluster of open, agricultural lands in South Cairo.
3. Concentration of hamlets and opportunities to continue commercial development in hamlets.

4. Good water capacity and potential for sewer capacity to handle growth in hamlet of Cairo.
5. High desire for farmland protection as a method to promote open space.
6. Excellent location in region to draw business and tourism from major urban areas.
7. Access to mountains.
8. Scenic roads and views.
9. Cultural resources and history can be taken advantage of.
10. Resort and tourism “infrastructure” that can be built upon.
11. Ample environmental resources and open space resources to be taken advantage of to draw visitors.
12. Local ski resorts (Hunter and Windham) can be better taken advantage of.



THREATS (Threats are factors or situations that can affect the Town in a negative way and prevent Cairo from reaching your goals.)

1. Lack of land use controls coupled with large areas of land available for future development could lead to loss of character and rural sprawl.
2. Lack of commercial development impacts the tax base and makes it difficult for residents to find work locally.
3. Lack of protection of significant views to the mountains and other important landscapes.
4. Lack of planning to maintain rural and small town character, open spaces and farming.
5. Difficult conditions to maintain active agricultural operations.
6. Poor attitudes regarding Cairo, fear of change, and apathy of many citizens.
7. Lack of established long term vision and plans to reach that vision.
8. Removal of large properties from tax base.
9. New business development that weakens Main Street’s role in the economy and in the community.
10. Lack of stable atmosphere for investment in new businesses and properties (resulting from attitudes, perceptions, and lack of long term planning and zoning).

Comparison of Past Planning Efforts

It is important not to dismiss planning efforts that have taken place in the past. The original plan was developed in 1972 and an update was completed, but not adopted in 1995. Both the 1972 and 1995 plans recommended zoning for the town. For this update, planning solutions were developed based on the ongoing needs and desires of the community. In order to fully understand these needs and desires, an effort was made to study goals established in earlier plans and evaluate if they had been attained or if they are still valid today. A comparison was made of community goals established in past plans to those established in this Comprehensive Plan. A chart was created showing the comparison and a short discussion of trends or changes that have taken place over the years is included (see Appendix 1 for this chart). From this information, it can be concluded that the residents and businesses in Cairo have consistently embraced similar goals for over 30 years. However, at the same time, many of the issues and problems still exist and many goals have not been met or adequately addressed. In some cases, new issues have arisen and will need to be addressed. The recommended strategies not only address ways that Cairo can meet this latest set of community goals, but those of the past three decades.

Goals and Recommended Strategies and Options

Planning Topic: Aesthetic Character

Goal 1: Delinquent and poorly maintained properties will be improved.

1. Primarily, the town should commit to strong enforcement of its existing local laws related to property maintenance: these are the Local Law for the Control of Dumping and Littering in the Town of Cairo, and Town of Cairo Salvage and Junk Yards. They must make it clear to all involved that enforcement is a priority for them. In order to address this, the town should:

- a. Enhance and update these two existing local laws. Consider combining the existing laws (and any new laws related to property maintenance) into one new consolidated law that addresses all the property issues in one place. Consider increasing the fines and penalties, as allowed for in New York State law.
- b. Consider developing a new law for unsafe buildings and property maintenance with provisions for dealing with nuisances, vacant property, complaints, inspections, and exterior maintenance

(including signs, billboards, fences and landscaping). These are currently topics not adequately addressed in any local law. The town needs additional enforcement tools beyond junk and junk cars.

- c. Enhance the Enforcement Officer's ability to enforce all local laws. Consider making the code enforcement officer full time.
 - d. Work with the Cairo Police Force and NY State Police to identify what they need to be more effective at enforcing these laws.
 - e. Develop a code and law enforcement booklet that outlines enforcement procedures in the town. The purpose of this booklet is to help citizens understand the expectations and process. It is recommended that this booklet be developed with the assistance of the Police Department and include telephone numbers, procedures and forms to lodge a complaint. This booklet should be made available when requested and given to everyone seeking a building permit.
2. Complete an inventory of properties having maintenance issues on an annual basis and incorporate this requirement as a duty of town staff in the local property maintenance law, above. This inventory should become a "checklist" for the Police Force and/or code enforcement officer to use in on-going enforcement efforts. Consider requiring a progress report

- from the police/code enforcement every six months so that the Town Board can maintain leadership to solve the problems.
3. Consider creating a standing committee, sanctioned by the Town and representing a coalition of residents, businesses, and police to meet regularly and work together to address property maintenance issues. This will be most effective after the local laws are fully developed as mentioned in #2, above. One method that could be implemented by this committee is to send out letters to landlords/owners of delinquent properties in an attempt to improve the situation prior to formal enforcement. Other communities have had much success in approaching delinquent and poorly maintained buildings in this manner. This program could include the following steps: 1) property owners whose properties need attention receive a warning letter with general information, 2) if a problem still exists, a more formal letter is then sent outlining the specific conditions that need addressing and asking that an effort be made to rectify the conditions, 3) if no action has been taken, another letter follows indicating that no progress has been made and that formal enforcement will begin in two weeks and 4) a final letter is sent indicating that enforcement action will be taken immediately.
 4. Another program that could be sponsored by this coalition is a “Landlord or Landowner Hall of Shame” program that prints reports on problem properties and landlords in the local newspaper or other public places. This could be oriented towards rental properties if needed. On the positive side, initiate a “Landlord or Landowner of the Year Award” program or a program that gives “stamps of approvals” to good landlords.
 5. If absentee landlords are an issue and maintenance issues relate to their absence, develop a local law that requires that landlords of rental properties to register their properties with the town. In this way, Cairo has the name and address of the appropriate person to contact should an issue arise regarding this property. Often enforcement proceedings are hampered by lack of knowledge and communication with absentee landlords.
 6. Place and maintain trash receptacles downtown.

Goal 2: Cairo will maintain its small town and rural character. New development will be consistent with this character. Main Street will be visually pleasing, foster pedestrian activity, and provide locations for expanded commercial development.

Cairo has a unique advantage that it can market for economic success –

distinctiveness. Cairo should understand that people are actively seeking out places that are distinct and that have a personality. Homogenization of America's small towns, create "Anywhere USA". Homogenization is created by the trend toward mass production, affordability of that mass produced item, the rise of franchises, and the replacement of local or regionally specific businesses with national and multinational corporations. Homogenization results in places that all look the same. Homogenization has not severely affected Cairo yet and this means that there are still opportunities to encourage distinctiveness.

Recommendations for the Hamlet of Cairo

1. Maintain existing street widths and oppose road widening or lane addition projects within the hamlet. Wide, multi-lane roads will change the character of the area, make it less pedestrian friendly, and are generally not considered as aesthetically pleasing. Maintain street edge plantings where they exist and plant new trees where none exist. Maintain curbing, sidewalks and on-street parking to help reduce traffic noise, dust, and general disturbances and enhance the pedestrian atmosphere.
2. Extend sidewalks so that at least the area extending from the Fountain to the Great American plaza is included in the pedestrian system.
3. Enhance crosswalks so that pedestrians and vehicles are aware of where they are.
4. Consider amending the existing site plan law to incorporate design guidelines for new development



(applied to those land uses currently subject to site plan review). Quality design of new commercial development is critical to the economic success of Cairo. One of the most important economic advantages Cairo has is distinctive quality. This quality must be enhanced and maintained over the years. Establishing a clear and fair set of design standards to be implemented through the existing site plan review law will help Cairo maintain a distinctive character. It will also provide stability for additional business investment because the rules will be outlined and a fair development review process will result.

- a. Include illustrations that show important design features that are characteristic of the hamlet's architecture and landscapes. Concentrate design standards on those aspects most important to ensure that new buildings will be compatible and visually consistent with older buildings. Guidelines are not intended to inhibit creativity or result in architectural monotony. The design expectations can include

Recommendations for maintaining rural character outside of the Hamlet of Cairo

1. Consider amending the existing subdivision law to allow for and encourage more flexible subdivision layout. This would include provisions for use of conservation subdivisions and clustering (see explanation below). The amendment should allow for either use of these techniques on a voluntary basis, and offer incentives to those developers who choose to use these techniques or on a mandatory basis under specific circumstances. The Planning Board should have the authority to require these kinds of subdivision layouts if the environmental conditions on the site warrant it. Environmental conditions that should be evaluated to determine if these techniques would be useful to protect the rural character and environment include: presence of floodplain, wetland, steep slope, active agricultural fields, open fields, scenic views of the Catskill Mountains, and excessively wet conditions.
2. As an incentive to promote use of clustering or conservation subdivisions, offer a density bonus as allowed for under New York State law. Density bonuses allow developers to build additional houses above what is allowed by the local building law (currently at 1 dwelling per 40,000 square feet in non-sewered areas.)
 - a. The object of both clustering and conservation subdivisions is to approve the same density of housing allowed for in the local building law but at the same time develop a site layout that maximizes protection of sensitive environmental features and open space. In this manner, developers can realize the same gain and at the same time protect important aesthetic and environmental features of Cairo that contribute to its rural character.
 - b. Conservation Subdivisions are a preferred method for maintaining rural character and protecting open spaces. This is a subdivision technique that allows development to occur on a site at the same time that important open space features are permanently protected through easements. Conservation subdivisions are done in four simple steps:
 1. Identify important open space and environmental components on the property. These could be agricultural lands, wetlands, floodplains, steep slopes, mature tree stands, views from the road towards the Catskill Mountains, aquifer recharge areas, significant plant and wildlife habitat areas, cultural features such as barns and other historic buildings. For agricultural lands, the most productive portions of the land should be included in the open space component. Once identified, these conservation areas are protected from future subdivision through either an

- easement or a deed restriction.
2. Potential house sites are located so that each one has physical or viewing access to the protected areas of the site. The house sites can be widely spaced or placed in closer proximity to each other. As such, conservation subdivisions do not necessarily result in a cluster of homes.
 3. New roads are drawn in as the third step and are located in such a way to provide access to each home with limited curb cuts off the main access road and driveways within the subdivision. Shared driveways are encouraged where they would enhance the subdivision design.
 4. As a final step, lot lines are drawn. Lot lines and lot size are the least important features included in the subdivision. This technique allows for a variety of lot sizes and configurations to meet real estate sale, environmental, rural character and open space goals. Conservation subdivisions are also useful in that small, more affordable lots can be easily created. It is also feasible to install a small package plant or other alternative sewage treatment method to treat the sewage from all the houses contained in the subdivision.
- c. Clustering is another alternative subdivision layout technique. Its goal is to preserve a maximum of open space on the parcel by clustering all the homes together on smaller lots located in one more concentrated area of the parcel. Clustering can be very useful, especially where development is taking place closer to one of the hamlets. The clustered homes can be placed closer to the hamlet where denser housing already exists while leaving the open space to the outside. (See illustrations)
3. During subdivision review, new development should be encouraged to incorporate the following ways to protect rural character:
 - ◆ Minimize clearing of vegetation.
 - ◆ Retain stonewalls, hedgerows, and other rural elements.
 - ◆ Place buildings and access roads in treelines or along the edges of fields in order to avoid construction in open fields or on ridgelines. The important aspect is that the placement of new homes should respect the rural



character of the site.

- ◆ Provide for setbacks from streams, lakes, and wetlands to protect water quality.
 - ◆ Re-use farm roads or country lanes whenever possible, rather than constructing new wide roads.
 - ◆ Where forested vegetation currently exists along the road, consider leaving this vegetation to form a visual buffer between the new houses and road.
4. Consider amending the existing Ordinance for the Dedication of Town Roads and Streets to ensure that new roads are built to maintain the rural road standards and are not overbuilt, suburban style roads. Review the existing law and use models such as the rural road standards from Dutchess County or Delaware County as a guide for improvements (See transportation section).

Goal 3: Scenic views of the Catskill Mountains will be maintained and will remain a defining feature of the Town.

1. Inventory and locate major viewsheds of the Catskill Mountains. This inventory should include a description of the property (is it developed, undeveloped, open, forested) and identify landowners.
2. Explore nonregulatory techniques to work with landowners to maintain or enhance views of the mountains from the road. Some techniques could include educational initiatives,



developing an interpretive or landscape tour of the town, developing roadside pull-offs with interpretive signage, and a property owners manual containing information on how changes to the property can be made in keeping with the character of the area and to protect views. This manual could address topics such as clearing vegetation and voluntary land conservation techniques.

3. Explore nonregulatory techniques that the Town of Cairo could implement. This could include management agreements with property owners to maintain views from the road and use of conservation easements (purchased by or donated to a local land trust) to protect these areas.
4. Explore the use of incentives as a key component to accomplish this goal. Tax abatements in the way of reduced property taxes can encourage the protection of important Viewshed areas. Or, consider assistance grants to help property owners maintain views by cutting trees or brush.
5. Develop and publicize a scenic driving tour of the town.

Goal 4: Entranceways to the Town will be well marked and inviting.

1. Develop well designed “Welcome to Cairo’ signs to be placed at the major entrances to the town. Consider landscaping around these signs with low-maintenance but attractive shrubs and flowers.
2. Develop new directional signage to be placed on Route 23 to better invite and direct traffic towards Main Street. The signage should identify retail opportunities as well as convey the Main Street experience of that area.

Planning Topic: Economic Development

Goal 5: Progressive economic development programs will support and enhance the quality of life, tax base, and economy of the town. Main Street in Cairo will be a distinctive and attractive location for businesses and organizations, and will be vital to the Town's cultural life and economy. Cairo will take advantage and encourage development of new business opportunities along Main Street from the Great American to the fountain.

The Town of Cairo should make a commitment to an economic development process that is aggressive, proactive, multi-faceted, and follow a long-term plan. Establishing a direction for the economic growth of the town is central to the economic development process and the vision statement and goals included in this Comprehensive Plan should be used to define this direction. In order to be economically successful, the Town of Cairo should work towards developing a diversified economy including retail, service and light industries. Economic development activities on Main Street should be considered a priority and commercial areas elsewhere should be linked physically and economically.

A strong and long-term commitment on the part of all players including Town leaders, businesses, and residents will be needed in order to be successful. The recommended

economic strategy for Cairo should apply the following major principles:

- Insist on quality;
- Efforts should promote public-private partnerships;
- Focus and take advantage of existing assets and Cairo's distinctive character (which includes both natural resources and Main Street);
- Encourage emotional investment in the community; and
- Be incremental in nature and implementation oriented.

Models from other locations have shown that economic development is most successful if both the public and private sectors are involved in the effort. It is recommended that as a first step, the Town initiate a formal economic development program and organization to oversee the effort. A successful model for such an activity should be the National Trust's Main Street Center Program. The "Main Street Approach" advocated by that group, has been successfully used in hundreds of small towns and villages across the country. The Main Street Approach is based on four points (text is adapted from the Main Street Approach by the National Trust):

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| Design | Improve the areas' image by enhancing its physical appearance. |
| Organization | Build consensus and cooperation among the groups that play roles in the economy of the area. |

- Promotion Market the areas’ unique characteristics to shoppers, investors, new businesses, tourists, and others.
- Economic Restructuring Strengthen the existing economic base while diversifying it.

Past success from the Main Street Approach has shown that all four points outlined above must be worked on.

The following are some general tools and approaches that can be used to maintain Cairo’s distinctiveness and that this comprehensive plan addresses (adapted from “*Save Historic Assets and Renew Economies by Inviting Tourism: A Strategy to Manage Character and Economic Diversification*” developed for the Village of Sharon Springs, NY and other Route 20 communities):

- Active agriculture
- Historic resource use and reuse
- Open space protection
- Creative residential development
- Managing commercial development
- Roadside management

It is recommended that the economic program for the town and Main Street in particular consist of at least the following strategies:

1. Initiate a formal economic development effort and organization. Follow the Main Street Approach and create an economic development committee to oversee the effort. This committee should include property owners, business owners, renters, real estate agents, lenders, local government officials, county economic development and/or planning officials, the chamber of commerce or other business groups, and the general public. This structure will ensure that the effort is community designed and driven. The primary goal of this organization is to build a revitalized economy based on local assets, values and identity, and to maximize hidden, undervalued potential. Purchase all pertinent manuals, guides, and other resources from the National Trust and others as guidelines to help.

2. Understand economic assets. A first task of the economic revitalization group should be to inventory buildings and vacant lots. This should at least be done along Main



Street in Cairo, although it is equally important in the other hamlet areas. This will build a database of information on what is available and what the properties' characteristics are. The Town should be prepared to answer requests for information about the commercial market and available locations. This inventory will help determine the economic role of the building or lot and will start to give information on how it can be taken advantage of for existing or future opportunities. In order to complete this inventory, seek assistance from realtors familiar with the Town and the local assessor. The inventory should include:

- ✓ A definition of how the buildings or lots are used;
- ✓ A description of their condition;
- ✓ Description of the size, sale or rental costs, ownership, significant alterations and historical data;
- ✓ Photographs (current, and historical, if possible); and
- ✓ Contact people and phone numbers of owners or real estate agents.

3. **Make small, visible improvements early in the process.** Build upon the successes and improvements already made to Main Street in Cairo. Small property improvements such as new paint, new signs, removing inappropriate facade covers, or other simple repairs must happen early and

be highly visible. This work must be aggressively promoted both within and outside the Town. Cooperation of the Town, residents and landowners, and businesses is vital in order to accomplish these tasks.

4. **Consider hiring a program manager to help the public/private economic development organization to manage the economic program and Main Street professionally and efficiently.** Small towns will always find difficulty in competing head on with national chains, shopping malls, and big box centers. However, the Town should learn and borrow some of the malls' best management techniques such as hiring a professional director and maintaining a high standard of maintenance for public spaces.

Seek grants to fund this position. This persons' role should be to help the committee develop and implement policy, and to serve as the day-to-day coordinator for activities. This person is to be the advocate for the Town and should be an authority on information, resources and programs related to the economic development effort. It may be feasible to share a full time person with one or more nearby communities undertaking similar efforts. Efforts should concentrate on Main Street but overall town-wide economic development and other initiatives directed at other hamlets in town is important too.

5. **Work to maintain and enhance existing businesses first.** Attention should be paid not only to attracting new businesses, but also to strengthening existing businesses. Paying particular attention to the following could strengthen existing businesses:
- ✓Identify areas of opportunity and designing strategies to build on these opportunities;
 - ✓Help existing businesses find better ways to meet their customers needs and then expand to meet market opportunities;
 - ✓Enhance the physical appearance; and
 - ✓Develop incentive programs to stimulate commercial and real estate development and investment.
6. **In order to recruit those businesses that are desired and needed, the local economy should be measured and understood.** Work with the County to evaluate the economy of the town and the trade area of the Catskill region. Much of this information exists in the County Economic Development Plan. The revitalization group should decide which potential businesses are best for the town as a whole using the Comprehensive Plan and its vision as the base. Other specific information that could be collected is the volume of sales leakage to other

locations, understanding why people shop elsewhere, and what they want in the town. This information should be updated every five years to keep current with the commercial climate and desires of town residents.

7. **Recruit new businesses to help strengthen the economic base by filling gaps in the existing business mix.** Ensure that new businesses offer a high quality of retail and service. A department store and quality restaurants are business that are highly desired. Many of the existing business owners felt that new businesses should not duplicate existing sales and businesses and that a diverse retail and service climate be developed.
8. **In order to be successful with business expansion efforts, develop a clever presentation and creative ways to market and recruit potential business owners. Promote Main Street as a unified shopping area with a unique identity and a commitment to meeting consumer needs.** Consumers should include both visitors and local people. Establish a coordinated advertising effort that markets Cairo's opportunities and distinctiveness. A widespread good first impression must be made. Put together any information a prospective business will need to make an informed decision.

- 9. Identify the strengths and weaknesses in the towns business mix.** An inventory of what currently exists should be made and cross-referenced to those commercial activities that are needed or desired. Ensure that this inventory is kept current and included in the regular Five Year Comprehensive Plan Update.
- 10. Stimulate building improvements by creating financial incentives and programs to reduce the risk of investing in building rehabilitation or business expansions.** Consider low-interest loans, incentive grants, specially designated block grant funds, or interest buy-down programs. Small loan pools having low interest rates (\$50,000 with 3% interest, for example) are generally more successful than large loan pools (\$500,000, for example). The town should educate landowners about and assist them in taking advantage of the existing façade improvement program, and develop new programs such as tax credits, delayed assessments, and other programs available to preserve historic buildings.
- 11. A major task of the revitalization group must be to explore and aggressively seek financing for economic activities.** Put in place a financing mechanism that ensures reliable funds to implement revitalization efforts. Look into the following financing options:
- ✓Community Development Block Grants (HUD)
 - ✓HUD 108 Loans
 - ✓Economic Development Agency Planning Grants
 - ✓Economic Development Agency Public Works Grants
 - ✓TEA-21 Funds
 - ✓Tax Increment Financing
 - ✓The Mohawk Valley Economic Development Corporation
 - ✓Setting up a Special Improvement District or Business Improvement District (see below)
 - ✓Micro-loan/Small Loan Program
 - ✓Offering PILOT agreements
 - ✓Using the Community Reinvestment Act - work with Banks
 - ✓Raise money with Sponsorship Programs, (such as selling “bricks” for \$20.00) each.
 - ✓Contact NYS to learn about, and tap into, state level funding opportunities such as the Small Cities Grant Program.
 - ✓Work more closely with the County IDA program.
- 12. Ensure that Cairo has high-tech communications networks and utility infrastructure to support commercial development.** High speed Internet access and other

technologies should play a role in business recruitment. In addition, Cairo should consider:

- a. enhancing the sewer system in the hamlet so that there is capacity for future growth; and
- b. exploring mechanisms to provide affordable public infrastructure in the other hamlets to promote both residential and commercial growth there. There are many alternatives to central sewer districts that should be examined. These include constructed wetlands, small package plants, decentralized management systems, biological treatments, and other technologies that are now available. A centralized sewer serving large areas beyond the developed areas around the hamlets is not recommended due to both its cost and sprawl inducing features.

Other Economic Development Recommendations

1. Create a municipal parking area to serve primarily the downtown Cairo businesses.
2. Create a Business Improvement District in Cairo to provide long-term funding for improvements. A BID is a downtown management tool that allows commercial districts to develop, fund, and administer programs and services targeted solely within the district. BID's can provide services such as business retention and recruitment, marketing, professional management, maintenance, safety and security, and streetscape improvements. (For more information see Article 19 (a) of New York State's General Municipal Law.) Some of the advantages of local BID's include the ability to provide additional and enhanced services that will improve the business environment, and the opportunity to take advantage of professional management techniques that can enhance the district and strengthen economic capacity.
3. In conjunction with the Main Street economic development program and the BID, initiate other streetscape improvements to include new sections of sidewalks to link all parts of Main Street in a pedestrian system, landscaping (flowers and street trees), benches, period light poles, flags and banners, and other street furniture such as waste receptacles.
4. Ensure that the transition zones between the public areas and private enterprises (such as window displays, porches, and alleyways) are attractive and full. For example, fill empty windows in vacant buildings with displays such as school artwork, photos, or historic information. Always remember that the main

street experience should be enjoyable for the pedestrian – think of the downtown core as an outdoor mall.

5. Develop a “Main Street Cairo” web site and brochure that focuses specifically on the businesses and events taking place here. These promotional items could include:

- ✓Introduction and history of the village and the downtown program
- ✓Photos
- ✓List of existing businesses with addresses and phone numbers
- ✓Available office or retail space
- ✓Calendar of upcoming events such as concerts, fairs, or festivals
- ✓Directions and a map of the area that highlight businesses, recreational and historic locations.

6. Work with the resort owners to capitalize on tourism opportunities. The resort/golf/ski and outdoor and



cultural experiences available in or near Cairo (example, the East Durham Irish events and hiking) should be a focal point for new development. Given the proximity to hiking trails into the Catskills, promote Cairo as a “hikers’ gateway to the mountains”. The resorts need to work cooperatively with each other and with the town in economic development activities. Consider forming a resort owners group that meets regularly to find ways and implement programs to cooperatively market, seek new clientele, and offer new services.

7. Consider implementing a local law that prohibits first floors of Main Street businesses from being converted to residential uses. A mixed use is desirable, but street level commercial spaces should be reserved for business use.

8. Work cooperatively with business groups to create a new business “Welcome Wagon”. Create a welcoming atmosphere to support new businesses in the community. The town, through the Chamber or through the Main Street revitalization committee should explore and implement ways to support local businesses and act as liaison to county and state services and programs.

9. Seek ways to award business owners

who improve their buildings. Create programs that offer tax incentives such as deferred increases in real estate assessments, or other similar credits.

10. Consider exploring locations suitable for new business development and consider developing a pre-approved, shovel-ready site to attract desired commercial opportunities. On Main Street, a pre-approved site should cater to provision of retail opportunities while locations elsewhere should cater to light industry and non-retail segments.
11. Consider writing a Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS). Authorized under the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA), a GEIS is type of environmental impact statement (EIS) more general than a site specific EIS. It is used to consider broad-based actions that may happen in the future. It is more general or conceptual in nature and often addresses issues through hypothetical scenarios. The broader focus of a GEIS helps in the identification and analysis of cumulative impacts and is particularly helpful because it can set forth conditions, criteria or thresholds under which future site-specific actions may be taken. Thus the usefulness of a GEIS for Cairo related to commercial development would be to have the GEIS fully evaluate the potential impacts of commercial development and outline thresholds and criteria that will be acceptable to Cairo to minimize

negative impacts. In this way, potential developers can fulfill the requirements of SEQRA if they meet these criteria. A GEIS can make the review process more efficient and also outlines the expectations upfront.

12. Work with the County to explore ways of fully utilizing the existing County office building in Cairo. This may be an opportunity to set up a conference center or house a regional health center.

Goal 6: Hamlets will be desirable locations for residential and small business development. Infrastructure will support commercial development and areas with higher density of development.

1. Form a standing committee made up of local officials and representatives of businesses and residents of the hamlets to discuss and develop solutions to hamlet-specific issues. This committee could work to generating ideas for improvements, infrastructure needs, etc. This committee should work closely with and report to the Town Board and provide leadership to ensure that recommendations move forward.
2. Evaluate infrastructure needs in the hamlet areas and explore all available technologies and alternatives to provide cost-effective

infrastructure in hamlet areas where needed. Consider use of a decentralized management system for on-site septic systems to ensure proper placement and management of septic systems. A decentralized management system is an efficient, cost-effective method to manage septic systems in rural areas and is a preferred method according to the United States EPA. Decentralized wastewater management can be defined as the use of on-site and small cluster treatment systems as a long term, effective wastewater treatment strategy for a community. It is called “decentralized” because it is a management system of septic systems over a larger geographic area. Treatment options occur at or near the source of wastewater generation. This is opposite a central sewer system that collects sewage from a variety of sources and places and brings them together at one central facility. The term includes use of traditional septic systems, advanced technologies located on individual lots and cluster systems servicing several homes or neighborhoods. The idea also includes municipal management of individual septic systems. Benefits of these methods include: regulatory flexibility, creative land use (development could be channeled more effectively onto poorer soils, while leaving good lands open for farming), high level of pollution control, and cost-effectiveness.

3. Consider amending the existing site plan review law and establish hamlet

style design guidelines for the hamlet areas. Hamlets should allow buildings that have shallower setbacks, smaller lots, a mix of uses and a variety of residential opportunities. Lot sizes should vary but are typically have between 40 and 80 feet of road frontage. Siting guidelines should be based on and emulate existing development patterns in hamlets and should not introduce suburban residential or highway strip commercial styles. Street trees and sidewalks are especially important in hamlet areas.

Goal 7: Active involvement of volunteers in civic and community promotion will be increased.

1. As recommended above, active leadership on the part of town government and formation of strong public-private partnerships is important to attain all of the goals established in this plan. Consider initiating an ad-hoc committee or working group structure organized by topics addressed in this plan. One ad-hoc group could be formed per topic. The Town Board should establish a clear and attainable scope of work for these committees and outline time lines, expectations, end-products, and mechanisms to communicate with the board and the public. As an alternative, the Town could initiate a Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee made up of representatives from government, businesses, environmental groups,

residents, etc. to oversee a coordinated implementation effort for the plan.

2. Improve communication and partnerships with advocacy groups like the Cairo Task Force, Chamber of Commerce, and other local groups and actively involve them in implementation efforts.
3. As the Town actively involves more volunteers, initiate a recognition program to celebrate these people's contribution to Cairo. News articles, thank you notes, "volunteer of the year" and other similar programs can be small, but important ways to show appreciation for volunteers.

Planning Topic: Environmental Quality, Farmland and Open Spaces

Goal 8: The Town supports and works toward implementing the Greenway Principles related to natural resource protection and maintenance of agricultural operations and open spaces. Sensitive environmental areas such as wetlands, steep slopes, floodplains, and ridgelines will be protected. Active farm operations will be encouraged and maintained. Open spaces including open fields remain vital components to the distinctive character and quality of

life in Cairo.

1. Consider amending the subdivision law to maximize open space when property is divided. Consider setting a percent open space target goal and use the use of conservation subdivision and clustering techniques to obtain this open space. These techniques could easily allow preservation of at least 50% of a parcel as open space without impacting the number of houses allowed on the lot. See details on Goal 2.
2. An open space system for the site or subdivision (no matter how small) can be designed and integrated with adjacent natural areas, trails, or open spaces. Amend the subdivision law to ensure that applicants and the Planning Board work to integrate preserved open spaces with these existing resources.
3. Consider amending the subdivision, site plan review and/or the local building law to enhance environmental protection by:
 - a. Establishing a buffer or setback from streams. Currently, NY State law requires septic systems to be setback 100 feet. However, buildings can be closer to the stream bank. The vegetated zone along the bank is very critical to the health of the stream ecosystem



and also serves to “filter” pollutants and sediments so that they don’t enter the water. In order to protect stream water quality and wildlife habitats, building should be setback so as to not disturb this riparian zone.

- b. Requiring either a NYS State Pollution Discharge Elimination System permit (required when more than one acre of land is to be disturbed) or an erosion and sedimentation control plan to reduce stormwater and runoff impacts. At the least, local laws should have strong provisions to control erosion and sedimentation. An erosion and sediment control plan can ensure that there will be no erosion or slipping of soil, or cause sediment to be discharged into wetlands or other water bodies. Such planning can also help reduce runoff and flood potential.
- c. Incorporate use of best management practices for environmental protection. The town should create mechanisms within the subdivision law for landowners to use the latest
 - d. Allow nonstandard design techniques to address environmental protection including erosion, sedimentation and stormwater control. If a developer can clearly prove that alternative designs will maintain the same performance levels but produce better environmental results, they should be allowed to use these.
 - e. Some other performance standards that could be considered during the review process to enhance environmental protection include:
 - ◆ Preserve native vegetation and natural topography so that the scenic quality of an area is retained.
 - ◆ Place structures on that portion of the property where existing vegetation will screen the development from view as much as possible. Use screening vegetation or earthen berms to block or disrupt views of the development.
 - ◆ Use non-reflective or low

best management practices to address unique site conditions. Various government agencies such as the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the Natural Resources Conservation Services publish guides to best management practices. The town should have on file copies of the latest published guides and the Planning Board should be familiar with them.

- reflective building materials and dark natural or earth tone colors, especially if the structure is highly visible from many locations.
- ◆ Minimize paving to the greatest extent possible to decrease the amount of impervious surfaces and large expanses of pavement.
 - ◆ Restrict development to those portions of a parcel less than 20% slope.
 - ◆ Driveways on steep slopes should be no greater than 1:16 for down slopes, and 1:3 on side slopes if not terraced or structurally stabilized.
 - ◆ On hills or ridge tops, building heights should remain below the surrounding forest canopy level to maintain the tree line or should be placed below the ridgeline to prevent disruption of the ridgeline.
4. Protect the environment by enhancing environmental review and promote effective use of SEQRA during project review.
 5. Utilize the physical features maps (Appendix 1) and GIS data to identify and analyze known environmental resources during project review.
 6. Keep the inventory of town resources and conditions contained in this plan current. The GIS database and maps should be periodically reviewed and updated as new information becomes available. Other data and analysis included in this plan should be reviewed every five years to ensure that it is current.
 7. When scenic resources are of concern, the Town should use the SEQR Visual EAF Addendum so that visual impacts can be evaluated by the Planning Board during project review as provided for in NYS SEQRA.
 8. Arrange for annual training for all town officials, including the planning board on SEQR. The Department of State can be contacted to provide an on-site training free of charge for the town and its neighbors. Alternately, consider funding one or more members to attend the various planning and training workshops held around the region and state. At the minimum, the Town should provide the SEQR handbook and SEQR “Cookbook” to all planning board members.
 9. Initiate a Conservation Advisory Council. This is a town-appointed advisory council with volunteer members. It is authorized to assist the planning board in the environmental review of proposed projects by making site visits and observations. They can also play an

- important role by being part of a viewshed/scenic inventory as recommended in this plan, and can work over time to ensure that resource maps and inventories are kept up to date.
10. The Planning Board should make a site visit for each proposed project in order to more thoroughly evaluate the site. This is also a role that a CAC could take on for the Planning Board.
 11. Glare and light pollution associated with new development can be minimized by use of outdoor fixtures that use “full-cut off shielded lights”. These fixtures direct light down rather than out.
 12. Consider the following strategies to encourage active agriculture and preservation of remaining farmlands:
 - a. Consider enacting a Right-to-farm law in Cairo.
 - b. Work with Cornell Cooperative Extension and consider sponsoring a town-wide event to help showcase and recognize area farmers. Events such as fairs, festivals, or farm tours can help establish the economic, cultural and resource stewardship values of having active farms in town.
 - c. Evaluate local assessments to ensure that agricultural structures are properly assessed and encourage eligible landowners to participate in the New York State ag exemption program. Ensure that tax programs are fair to all residents. As farmland receives fewer public services, it should not be taxed at the same rate as other land. Work with local landowners to increase participation in programs such as the farm-building-exemption portion of the Real Property Tax Law; Section 483; NYS Farmers School Tax Credit; NYS 480A Program for Forestland; NYS Historic Barn Credit Program; the NYS Barn Rehabilitation Cost Share Program, and the 480-A program for woodlands. All eligible landowners should be encouraged to take advantage of these programs.
 - d. Offer term easement tax abatement programs. Consider offering tax abatements in return for a term easement. Term easement programs are voluntary and reduce assessed land values for landowners who agree not to develop their land for a period of years. Some communities have used similar programs to reduce assessed land values by 70 to 90 percent in exchange for term conservation easements that are valid for a period of 15 years. Offer additional locally sponsored property and building tax incentive programs that compensate landowners for protecting farmland. The town could consider tax benefits to those not eligible for statewide ag exemptions. For example, offering agricultural assessments to farmers that can show a \$5000 or more gross income

from farm activities on their land or that have 4 or more acres of farmland will allow those who may have “hobby” farms or smaller alternative farms to receive benefits for maintaining agricultural land.

- e. The town should ensure that all requirements of NY Ag and Markets Law-25AA are met when proposed development is in or near a NY agricultural district. These existing requirements include:

- ◆ Instituting required fines when land in an agricultural district is taken out of production.
- ◆ Determining if applications before the planning board have negative impacts on agriculture.
- ◆ Ensuring that the ag notification requirements are met.

- f. Promote use of conservation easements (also called development rights). Funds may be available for purchase of such easements from state and federal sources.
- g. To minimize impacts of new, non-farm development on existing farms and farmlands consider subdivisions that have buffers to protect residential uses from adjacent farm uses. New residential development that is adjacent to agricultural lands should provide for its own buffer

and/or landscaping plantings for screenings when necessary.

13. Develop an “official map”. An official map (not a zoning map) is a map showing all new streets, highways, right-of-ways, drainage systems, parks, infrastructure and other physical features. The “Official Map” is final and conclusive with respect to the location and width of streets, highways, drainage systems, rights-of-ways, infrastructure locations and parks shown on it and is established to conserve and protect the public health, safety and welfare. It essentially shows where infrastructure will be and where it will not be. An official map could be a powerful tool to direct long-term growth. Restricting public water and sewer, which are growth inducing services, to hamlet areas is recommended and this can help preserve open space and rural character. It is recommended that the town considers developing official maps for the hamlets in Cairo.

Planning Topic: Recreation

Goal 9: Additional recreational opportunities will be created to take advantage of the natural resources in Cairo and provide organized activities and facilities.

1. Establish a working group made up of representatives from town government, local organizations, the

County, and youth representatives to examine the feasibility, funding needs, and operational needs to develop a youth center in Cairo. This working group should ultimately make a recommendation to the Town Board addressing the location and logistics of creating such a center in Cairo.

2. Take advantage of existing town-owned property at the reservoir on Route 23 to develop a public access park for town residents. This location has exceptional opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy a beautiful natural setting. It also provides an opportunity for the town to establish another recreational opportunity with minimal development and infrastructure needs. Form an ad-hoc working group to form recommendations to the Town Board to develop this idea further.
3. Continue to work and support further recreational opportunities at the town park in Cairo.
4. Work with NYS DEC to improve access to the Catskill Park.



Improvements to trails, trail parking areas and additional trails would be helpful.

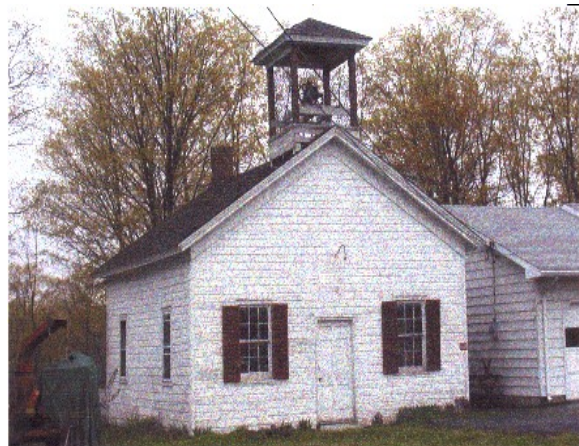
Planning Topic: Historic Resources

Goal 10: Historic resources remain vital cultural and economic features of Cairo.

1. Ensure that environmental reviews associated with projects before the Planning Board includes consideration of historic resources and neighborhood character. Each application coming before the board for permitting, subdivision or site plan should be reviewed with a critical eye towards historic and aesthetic resources. Use SEQR tools (such as the Full Environmental Assessment Form) to gather information on historic resources that may be present on a proposed project site and to mitigate any potential impacts that may occur.
2. Promote and facilitate listing of historic homes, structures and sites on the state and federal registers of historic places. This is not a regulatory process but an inventory and listing program. Participation in these programs is voluntary and could lead to opportunities for grants and technical assistance. The State and National Registers of Historic Places are the official lists of buildings, structures, districts, objects and sites

significant in the history, architecture, archaeology and culture of New York and the nation. The same eligibility criteria are used for the State and National Registers. Benefits of being included in such a district are:

- a. Registered properties and properties determined eligible for the Registers receive a measure of protection from the effects of federal and/or state agency sponsored, licensed or assisted projects through a notice, review and consultation process.
 - b. Owners of depreciable, certified historic properties may take a 20 percent federal income tax credit for the costs of substantial rehabilitation as provided for under the Tax Reform Act 1986.
 - c. Registered properties receive a priority consideration from federal and state agencies in space rental or leasing.
 - d. There are no restrictions placed on private owners of registered properties. Private property owners may sell, alter or dispose of their property as they wish. If state or federal funds are used or if a state or federal permit is required for alteration to a historic resource, the proposal will be reviewed by the SHPO staff - regardless of listing status.
3. Identify and develop tools for historic preservation such as providing financial incentives or tax incentives for rehabilitation projects of old buildings. Investigate grant opportunities to accomplish historic preservation through the State Historic Preservation Office. Consider implementing small local historic preservation property tax credit or rebate incentives.
 4. Explore the desirability of creating a local Historic District program through adoption of a Local Historic Preservation Law in the hamlet of Cairo. This can encourage the restoration, preservation, rehabilitation and conservation of historically, architecturally, and archaeologically significant areas, structures, buildings, sites, objects and their surroundings. Locally designated historic districts allow review of new construction design or changes to the exterior of an existing building by a local commission or board (such as the Planning Board) to ensure compatibility with the character of the district and to



safeguard against any potentially adverse influences. A historic district or neighborhood is characterized by groups of buildings whose collective architectural qualities and cultural associations give them significance. The downtown core of Main Street, could form the core of a historic district.

5. Work with Greene County to encourage use of the established small loan program to help property owners with façade improvements and streetscape improvements.

Planning Topic: Community Safety

Goal 11: Safety will be enhanced and crime decreased.

1. Work with the New York State Police to maximize their presence in town.
2. Consider creating a full time police force.
3. Ensure that all officers have proper training.
4. Consider developing a noise law to reduce noise nuisances in Cairo.
5. Consider developing a loitering law to give the police proper tools to solve this issue.

Planning Topic: Housing

Goal 12: A variety of quality housing opportunities will exist to meet the location and economic needs of residents, especially for senior citizens. Homeownership opportunities will be enhanced.

1. Work with the County and consider applying for federal Community Development Block Grants to establish a local home repair and rehabilitation loan program. This loan program can consist of both deferred loans and low interest loans and to establish a First Time Homebuyer Program.
 2. When a major subdivision occurs, consider offering the developer a density bonus in return for the long-term designation of some of the units as “affordable”. Density bonuses are often given for provision of affordable housing, environmental protection, open space or recreation. A density bonus gives the applicant additional units when they agree to provide for a need identified as desirable by the town.
 3. Promote formation of neighborhood associations to help maintain character and pride in the village.
 4. Certain development patterns can contribute to high housing costs. For example, large minimum lot sizes can create unaffordable conditions by forcing residents to purchase large acreages of land. Subdivision and
-

road standards that require wide pavement widths and intensive site improvements increase costs for development: most of these costs are passed along to homebuyers. In order to avoid these situations, Cairo should:

5. Allow for alternative subdivision techniques such as conservation subdivisions and cluster development. These techniques allow more flexibility in the site layout and can be designed for more efficient and less costly services and infrastructure.
6. Density is currently controlled in Cairo by the establishment of a 40,000 square foot minimum lot size in areas without sewers. Although one-acre minimum lot sizes are small enough to foster affordable housing lots, it also results in a) “cookie-cutter” subdivisions which are not likely to foster rural character, b) too high a density for certain environmentally sensitive areas of the town, and c) result in development patterns where all the land is “used” as home sites. A better technique for rural areas is to rely on a density measurement instead of lot size. It is recommended that Cairo de-emphasize minimum lot sizes, and instead, rely on use of density as measured by dwellings per acre. When land is subdivided based on dwellings per acre, minimum lot sizes can be very small. This can foster more conditions that will make housing lots more affordable.

7. Promote a variety of affordable housing options. Allow for the use of accessory apartments, use of elder cottages, apartment buildings, multi-family attached housing, and senior housing.

8. Develop housing options for senior citizens with emphasis on safety, affordability and access to daily needs. Senior housing should be located as close to the hamlet as possible. Use of a variety of types of senior citizen housing such as assisted living centers, nursing homes, and senior citizen housing units, adult retirement communities, congregate residences, and continuing care retirement community all can contribute to more affordable housing opportunities for seniors.

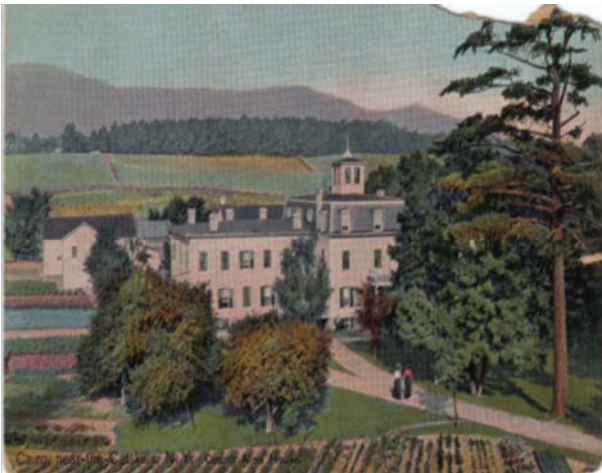
Planning Topic: Government

Goal 13: Cairo will improve communication with residents, landowners and businesses and will improve the administration, implementation and enforcement of local laws and public services.

1. Establish a town web site to enhance communication and to promote Cairo. This web site should contain local laws, this comprehensive plan and the maps created for it, minutes of town board and planning boards, calendar of public meetings and

events, and important links to people and other area websites. This could be an important mechanism for people to contact appropriate town officials or offices and connect to area businesses and organizations. There are many fine examples of municipal websites that the Town could use as models.

2. Consider establishing a town newsletter. This newsletter could be posted on the town web site, as well as mailed to residents.
3. Explore other effective mechanisms, in addition to the website, to disseminate official minutes of town business.
4. Ensure effective and consistent reviews by the Town Planning Board. Applicants should clearly understand development requirements and procedures. Consider developing a brochure that describes the development process, expectations, and resources for applicants for subdivision and site plan review. This brochure can establish expectations so that all involved



understand the rules. In addition to the brochure, consider developing a site plan review and subdivision review checklist for the planning board. This could include a list or materials and information required by the local laws, a list of steps to be taken and considered, and a list of resources to review (such as the resource maps now created for the town).

5. Ensure effective enforcement of approval conditions. Consider requiring that the code enforcement officer (and police if needed) attend Planning Board meetings to better communicate approval conditions and to report on compliance.
6. Consider amending existing subdivision and site plan laws to strengthen and provide for the hiring of professional consultants in connection with the review of applications. Further, the Town Board could encourage and provide for professional assistance for the Planning Board on a regular basis.
7. Provide for training of the Planning Board. Explore the desirability of requiring training for each planning board member on an annual basis. This training could be provided by the County, the New York State Department of State, and other organizations such as the Hudson Valley Greenway. Consider budgeting for this training to cover travel and registration expenses so that planning board members can attend conferences. Consider purchasing some of the many fine

videos and books developed for local boards from organizations such as the American Planning Association so that local members can review and study these resources at home.

8. Improve communication and partnerships with advocacy groups like the Cairo Task Force, Chamber of Commerce, and other local groups.
9. The Town Board should participate in programs such as the NYS Quality Communities Program, FEMA, the Agro-Forestry program, and others to support implementation of this plan.
10. Review this plan and make any necessary adjustments every five years.

Planning Topic: Transportation

Goal 14: Roads will remain well maintained and safe and traffic congestion will be minimized. Local roads will remain rural in character and function. Streetscapes will be aesthetically improved and pedestrian friendly.

1. Consider amending the site plan review law, subdivision law, or any future land use law to minimize curb cuts and provide for traffic access management for major subdivisions and commercial development along major roads and highways in Cairo. Promote use of traffic access

management techniques to control traffic congestion when new development occurs. Some layout and siting examples that serve to improve traffic when development occurs include:

- a. Use linked and shared parking areas between commercial developments. This can be accomplished through subdivision and/or site plan review.
- b. Allow and encourage use of shared driveways for both commercial and residential development.
- c. Establish standards to decrease curb cuts on highways and arterial roads whenever possible.

2. Consider hiring a transportation engineer to study traffic patterns on Route 23, Main Street and especially the intersection by the Great American plaza. Consider alternatives to this awkward intersection such as using a roundabout.

Photo: New roundabout in Manchester, Vermont

3. Sidewalks should be required whenever a business builds a new building anywhere on Main Street in Cairo.

4. Local regulations should require provision of safe pedestrian facilities within new parking lots. This could be incorporated into the site plan review law. Some techniques that may be appropriate to consider include use of raised intersections, curb extensions, textured crosswalks, speed humps and pedestrian crossing islands.



5. Provide well-identified crosswalks. Crosswalks will be most effective at intersections, rather than mid-block. To further enhance use and safety of crosswalks, consider enhancing the ground texture of the sidewalk and crosswalk to create a ground pattern different in color and texture from the roadway. Use brick or concrete pavers or used scored and colored concrete to simulate natural materials.
6. Consider purchasing a centrally located lot to develop into a municipal parking lot in the downtown section of Main Street.
7. Ensure that standards in the highway law are appropriate to rural roads.

New roads should not be overbuilt. New residential roads should be appropriate for low volumes and built so that they maintain the character of the area. Further, implementation of the following road standards will also result in less construction and maintenance costs which will assist in making new development more affordable.

- a. Consider reducing pavement widths to 16 to 22 feet depending on projected volume and the shoulder width. Where lots are larger than one-acre in size, a 20-foot wide road width is adequate to handle over 500 vehicles per day.
- b. Grading and clearing should be reduced to the minimum necessary. Usually between 10 and four feet from the roadway edge is adequate (the wider 10-foot width is only necessary where sidewalks, utilities, curbs and drainage are in the right-of-way).
- c. Curbing should only be required where natural drainage systems are impractical.
- d. Topcoat standards could allow gravel or oil and stone.
- e. Limit use of cul-de-sacs. Where they

are built, reduce the radii to 30 feet with a 40-foot right of way radius or include a narrow, one-way loop with a planted island. Instead of using a cul-de-sac, which results in large areas of pavement, consider requiring “T” or “Y” turnarounds instead.

8. There are a variety of tools that can be used to contribute to effective management of roads and traffic. Cairo should consider using tools such as driveway spacing standards, limitations on the number of driveways allowed, reduction of the number of driveways from a subdivision to an arterial, use of shared driveways when flag lots are proposed; and encouraging future interconnection of parking areas for commercial uses.

9. Classify local roads based on traffic volumes, types of vehicles using the road, and the adjacent land use. For this task, use the *Manual: Guidelines for Rural Town and County Roads* (Local Roads Research and Coordination Council. December 1992. New York State Department of Transportation. Albany, NY 50 pp.) for low-volume roads with fewer than 400 cars per day as recommended by the New York State Department of Transportation, Local Roads Research and Coordination Council and the publication *Classifying and Managing Low-Volume Local*

Roads (Geoffroy, Donald, P.E. 1996. Cornell Local Roads Program, CLRP Report # 96-6). These manuals outline a classification system for low-volume roads, offer guidelines for the rehabilitation of a low-volume road, and contain local road maintenance guidelines and recommendations for traffic control. Local roads could also be classified as recommended by the Local Road Classification Task Force of New York State: low-volume collector (collects traffic and channels it to higher level roads such as arterials and interstates); residential access (residences); farm access (to a farm’s center of operations, including the residence); agricultural-land access; resources/ industrial access (provides access to industrial or mining operations); and recreational land access (provides access to recreational land including seasonal dwellings and parks).

10. Some techniques that could be considered where traffic needs to be slowed and calmed include:

For roads with design speed is between 35 and 50 mph):

- ◆ Streetscaping to include color contrast or patterns/markings
- ◆ Landscape development such as street trees
- ◆ Use of shoulders
- ◆ Use of sidewalks (in areas with more dense development)

- ◆ Surface textures (so that one portion of the roadway has a different texture than others)
- ◆ Modified intersections and channelization
- ◆ Higher visibility crosswalks
- ◆ Signage

For (neighborhood roads where the vehicle operating speed is 15 to 25 mph):

- ◆ Use of roads designed with chokers or neckdowns
- ◆ 1-way entry/exit choker
- ◆ Reduced intersection radii
- ◆ Single lane roundabouts

11. Consider amending subdivision and/or the local highway standard regulations so that safe walking areas are provided outside the motor vehicle traffic travel-way for all new roads. Sidewalks or side paths along rural roads should be well separated from the travelway. An off-road path — also known as a "side path" — is a type of walkway used in some rural settings. This path may be paved or unpaved, and is separated from the roadway by a grass or landscaped strip without curbing. This maintains a rural look, but is safer and more comfortable than a shoulder.

12. Safe pedestrian facilities should be provided for within new parking lots. This could be incorporated into the suggested site plan review law amendment. Some techniques that may be appropriate to consider include use of raised intersections, curb extensions, textured crosswalks, speed humps and pedestrian crossing islands.
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Land Use Options to Address Community Goals

Both the 1972 zoning recommendations and its 1995 update applied environmental planning principles. In other words, the suggested zoning was based on existing environmental conditions and was designed to preserve important environmental features and establish development potential that was consistent with the ability of the land to handle growth. Additionally, those proposals incorporated existing land use patterns such as hamlets.

Given the longstanding and consistent goals of the Town of Cairo, an environmental planning model that addresses many of the future needs of the community is an option to consider. Whatever level of land use control is chosen, the town's programs and policies should be based on the following principles:

1. The primary goals of any regulatory program should be to protect the environment and rural character, enforce development patterns that are efficient and economically feasible, support the continued revitalization of Main Street, and provide ample opportunities for appropriate commercial economic development.
2. The basic strategies should be to:
 - a. Use a true density measurement

instead of a minimum lot size to give the town much more flexibility to meet its goals. Appropriate densities can be set either town-wide (as it is now through the building law) or through a land use law that establishes districts at some point in the future, each with an appropriate density of development.

- c. Use enhanced design and siting standards to ensure that all new development performs to the high expectations of the community. The existing site plan review law already gives the Planning Board the authority to review design. However, there are no guidelines, illustrations, or standards for them to base a fair review on. This aspect can largely be addressed through amending existing subdivision and site plan review laws.

3. In addition, the following recommendations are also recommended to help Cairo meet its long-term goals:

- ◆Density, as measured by the number of dwelling units per acre is to be more important in the long run than lot size.

- ◆Development is to be consistent with the Greenway Goals.

- ◆Future development should

strengthen hamlets and encourage higher residential and commercial growth there. Distinct boundaries between built and un-built areas should be maintained, as this is a significant feature of “rural character”.

- ◆ Regulations should incorporate incentives to reach community goals as much as possible.

- ◆ Regulations should focus on impacts of uses (performance zoning), rather than regulate solely by the type of uses (conventional zoning).

4. Amend the site plan review and subdivision laws as described in this plan to address design, enhanced environmental protection and traffic access management.