

A Comprehensive Plan for the  
Town of Montour &  
Village of Montour Falls



**DRAFT**  
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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

In 2005, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Schuyler County, secured an intermunicipal planning grant from New York State's Quality Communities program for the Town of Montour and Village of Montour Falls. Although both municipalities had land use regulations in place, neither had comprehensive plans in place to promote quality development and guide desired regulation changes. Since mid-2006, the Town and the Village has been working with Shepstone Management Company & Fairweather Consulting to create an intermunicipal comprehensive plan and appropriate updates to local regulations. This draft comprehensive plan is the culmination of one-half of the effort. Work has begun and is ongoing on reviewing and revising the Town and Village zoning codes.

This intermunicipal venture is an innovative step for local government in New York State. It is based upon the strong home rule traditions in State law and in the participating communities: the Town of Montour and the Village of Montour Falls. It also reflects the commitment on the part of the Town and Village to seek the best possible solutions to the challenges and opportunities facing them both.

The challenges are considerable. As a review of the plan and its supporting materials indicate, Montour and Montour Falls are small jurisdictions with limited resources and, over recent decades, declining populations. They face challenges of maintaining and upgrading aging infrastructure and revitalizing a local economy that has seen more than its share of downsizings and economic distress.

Yet, there should be no mistake about this. Montour and Montour Falls comprise a community with enormous potential. The community offers a high quality of life, with a strong sense of community ties and a small town character that is rapidly disappearing elsewhere in New York State. It is a scenic area, with such gems as Havana Glen and Che-Qua-Ga Falls set amid rolling hills and farm land. Downtown Montour Falls is graced with a number of beautiful buildings, culminating in the "glorious T" of the Village's historic district. Finally, Montour and Montour Falls are at the southern tip of one of New York State's increasingly important tourism destinations: the Finger Lakes. It is not unreasonable at all to project that, over the next decade or so, Montour and Montour Falls will be able to use these assets to tap into the energy and income associated with increased tourism and a general long-term rise of the Finger Lakes region to create a new era of prosperity and promise for both the Town and Village. This is the overall purpose to which this plan is dedicated.

## **II. A BRIEF HISTORY OF MONTOUR AND MONTOUR FALLS**

Officially, the town of Montour was formed from portions of the town of Catharine in 1860 and expanded by the addition of portions of the town of Dix late in the nineteenth century. However, the history of the town, and of its principle village, Montour Falls, goes back much further, to the arrival of the first non-native settlers around 1780.



*Queen Catharine was the ruler of the Seneca tribes in the area that would become Montour.*

In the late eighteenth century, Queen Catharine, the half-native wife of the local Seneca chief, ruled over a community of Senecas in the area that would become Montour Falls. As Sullivan's Army marched north from their rout of the native tribes at the battle of Newtown, the natives fled from their settlements throughout the Catharine valley and the southern end of Seneca Lake. Several years after this initial foray into the region, one member of Sullivan's force, Silas Walcott, returned to settle in the area around the former Seneca village, and this settlement eventually grew into the small village of Catharine's Town.

By 1836, the village incorporated and became known as Havana, and by this time the newly completed Chemung Canal was the primary driver of economic growth for the region. In 1854, Schuyler County was formed from portions of the surrounding counties, and Havana was selected to be the seat of the new county government. After some dispute, neighboring Watkins Glen was finally selected as the county seat, however.



*A recent photograph of the village, looking down Main Street to Montour Falls.*

Historical accounts from 1894 paint a detailed picture of the demographic and economic situation in Havana. The village's population was approximately 2,000, and the primary businesses operating in the village were the Cronk Hangar Works, manufacturers of high-quality door hangars and steel pliers; the Shepard Bridge Works, which produced various structural iron products and continued to be a major employer in Montour Falls (under various names) until it finally closed in 2002; the VanVleet Wood Works, which manufactured boxes, wheel-barrows, and apple barrels; the Phoenix Flouring Mills, which exported goods through the canal system; the E.A. Dunham & Co



*The Chemung Canal in Montour Falls*

Banking House; and the McKeg Opera House. For a short time, from 1872 to 1880, the Bethesda Sanitarium was a popular institution within the village.

The history of the town and the region is tied closely to the rise and fall of the prosperous New York State canal system. Upon opening in 1833, the Chemung Canal became the lifeline for the region's

economic survival. Watkins Glen served as the southern port for Seneca Lake and the northern end of the Chemung Canal, which linked Elmira and the Chemung River to the Erie Canal through Seneca Lake. Montour Falls, then known as Catherine's Town and soon after incorporated as Havana, was home to Station #1 on the Chemung Canal.

Throughout its early history, Montour and Schuyler County prospered on lumber and wood ash production. However, once the forests were depleted, agriculture and farming became the dominant industries, and have remained so to this day. What little manufacturing is present in the region is mostly farm-related. Climate and elevation make most

of Schuyler County well suited for grazing and hay production rather than general farming, though fruit trees and grapes are well suited for the climate.



*The People's College, later Cook's Academy, is now home to the NYS Academy of Fire Science.*

An important factor in the early growth of Montour was its position as a major station on the Chemung Canal, which connected Elmira and Corning to the Erie Canal through Seneca Lake. The canal and lake

were part of an important shipping route linking southern New York state and Northern Pennsylvania to the major population centers in the Northeast. Historical accounts suggest, however, that the canal, which was completed in 1833 grew rapidly obsolete and fell quickly into disrepair, particularly with the rise of steam locomotion and the railroads. With the growth of rail transportation, Montour's position on the canal shipping route diminished in importance.

A notable chapter in the history of the town relates to the proposed People's College (now the Academy of Fire Sciences). This large institution was initially a candidate to become a university during the Congressional Land Act of 1862. However, Cornell University in neighboring Ithaca was selected instead. By the end of the nineteenth century,

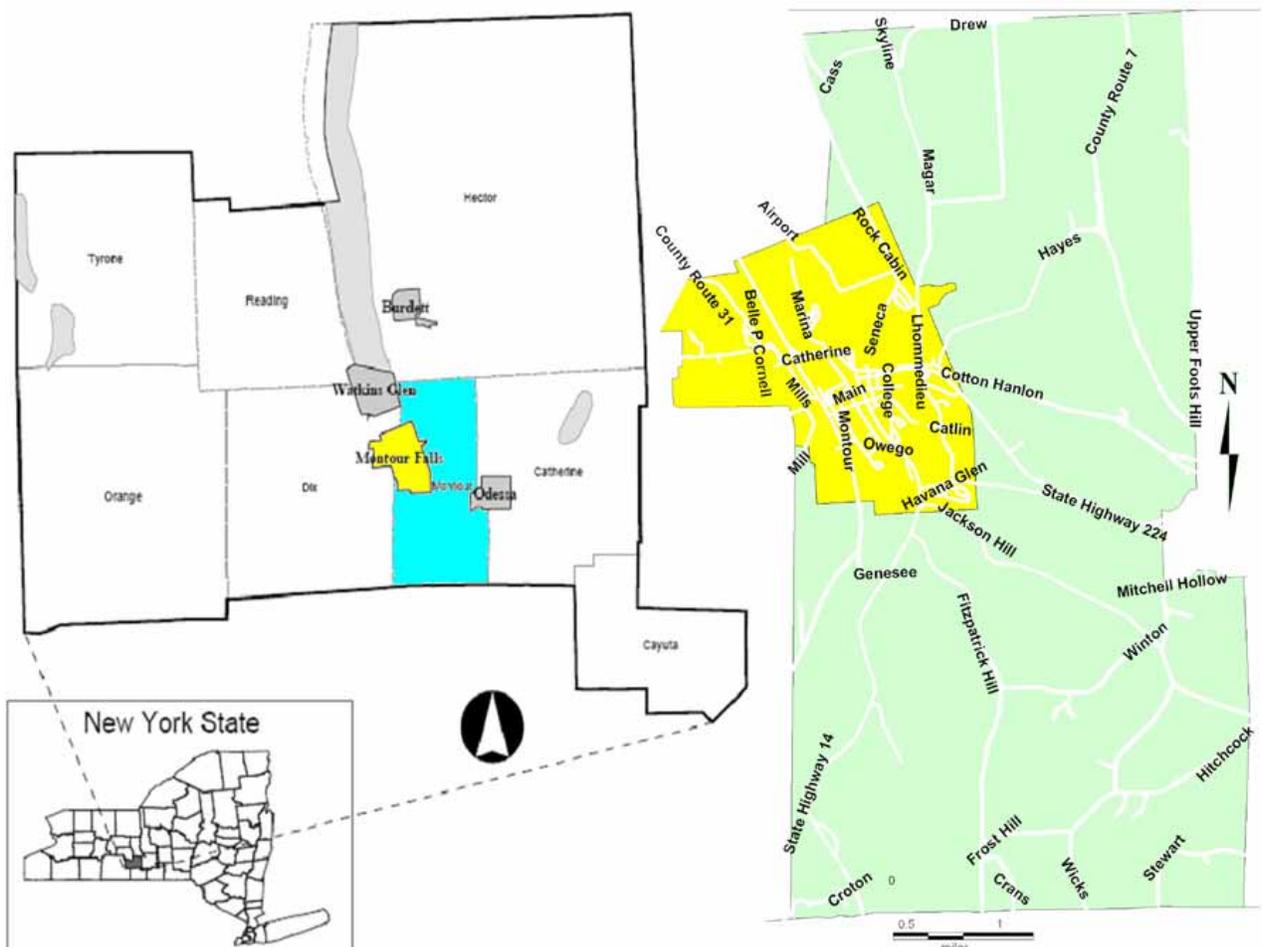
the facility was operating as the Cook Academy, which, by one local account, was a successful and reputable college preparatory school.

### III. COMMUNITY SETTING

#### A. Location and Access

The Town of Montour and Village of Montour Falls are in the southern half of Schuyler County, immediately south of the Village of Watkins Glen and Seneca Lake. As such, the Town and Village constitute a southern gateway to the Finger Lakes region. NYS Route 14 provides direct access to US17/I-86 and serves as the main thoroughfare for both the Town and Village. NYS Route 224 links the Village of Montour Falls to the Village of Odessa to the east. West bound traffic on that route are given spectacular vistas of Seneca Lake and the highlands surrounding Montour Falls. County Route 7 transverses the northeast corner of the Town, connecting Odessa with the Village of Burdett.

*Location of Town of Montour and Village of Montour Falls*



The Elmira-Corning Regional Airport is located in Chemung County, 18 miles south of Montour Falls, accessible from US17/I-86 or from Hickory Grove Road off of NYS Route 14.

## **B. Important Natural Features**

One of the distinguishing characteristics of the Montour/Montour Falls area is the wealth and diversity of natural resources found in the area. As part of the Schuyler County Comprehensive Plan of 2004, the Kestral Haven Avian Migration Observatory compiled an inventory of natural assets in Schuyler County, organized by Town. The assets listed below were identified in the Town of Montour/Village of Montour Falls. NOTE: the full inventory is included as an appendix to this plan.

***Queen Catharine Marsh (Catharine Creek Wildlife Management Area):*** This 890-acre marsh, of which 415 acres are in Montour, is one of the largest cattail marshes remaining on the East Coast and is a home to rare vegetative communities, rare plants and the nesting ground for threatened bird species.

***Montour Falls Biodiversity Area:*** The current evaluation by Cornell Plantations botanists is that this site may be the most biodiverse and biologically important site in the region.

***Catharine Valley Trail:*** The trail is under development as a 12-mile hiker/biker trail following the old Conrail railway bed from Horseheads to Watkins Glen.

***Catharine Creek Trout Stream:*** This active, healthy stream is world famous for rainbow trout.

***Havana Glen:*** The entire area is very important in Native American History and remnants of a turtle mound are still visible.

***Rock Cabin Road:*** Rare Nodding Wild Onion and three uncommon butterfly species can be seen on properties along its eastern border. The road is an excellent nature trail with large stands of wildflowers visible in the proper seasons.

***Aunt Sarah's Falls:*** A large waterfall on the west slope of Route 14 just north of Montour Falls is easily visible from the roadway.

*Che-Qua-Ga Falls:* A spectacular view from the villages main street, the 160 foot falls is a major tourist stop. The heavily engineered basin and diversion channel eliminated a constant source of flooding to the village. A small park at Main and Genesee Streets provides visitors with access.

*John's Creek:* Off Skyline Drive, it is a major tributary to Queen Catharine Marsh and drains a large section of Hector.

*Catlin Mill Creek/Deckertown Falls:* Another major tributary, this creek boasts a constant water supply even in drought and has excellent trout fishing.

### C. Significant Viewsheds

The inventory acknowledges that Schuyler County abounds with scenic views. It list several important ones for Montour/Montour Falls. These include:

*Hospital Hill:* A picturesque view from south of Montour Falls through Queen Catharine Marsh and up Seneca Lake can be enjoyed from the parking lots of Schuyler Hospital and the Primary Care Center on Steuben Street.

*View of Montour Falls from Hospital Hill*



*Skyline Drive:* County Rte 8 runs N/S above the Catharine Valley from Watkins Glen to Montour Falls providing a vista of the valley, marsh, villages and lake stretching to the hills of the western townships.

### D. Important Community Facilities

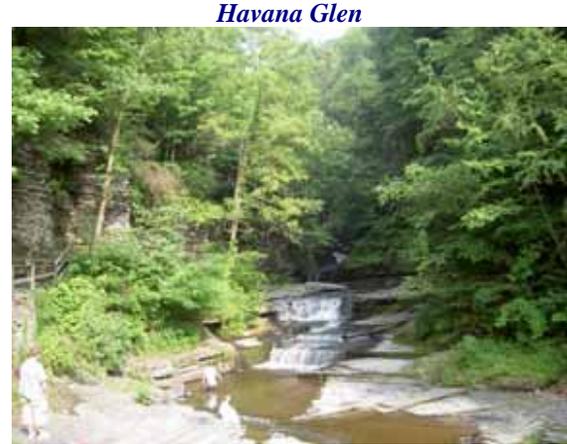
*Catharine Valley Rail Trail:* According to the Friends of the Catharine Valley Rail Trail Website, upon completion, the Catharine Valley Trail (CVT) will be a 12-mile, multi-use trail that will connect Watkins Glen State Park and Mark Twain State Park in the Southern Tier of New York State. Most of the trail is on portions of abandoned Northern Central Railroad and Chemung Canal

*Directional Signage for the Rail Trail*



towpath corridors in New York's Finger Lakes region. The trail spans Schuyler and Chemung counties, passing through the communities of Watkins Glen, Montour Falls, Millport, and Pine Valley to Horseheads.

***Havana Glen:*** Havana Glen is the site of spectacular Eagle Cliff Falls and contains a variety of opportunities for hiking, swimming and other types of outdoor recreation. The Town Park contains a pavilion, picnic Areas, campsites with electricity, restrooms and showers



***Montour Falls Municipal Marina and Campground:*** The marina features 180 boat slips on the old barge canal that provides access to Seneca Lake. The campground has 90 sites with complete hook ups. There is also a public boat launch, fishing, children's area, recreation building, camp store and picnic pavilions.

***Montour Falls Sewer and Water System:*** Only the Villages of Montour Falls and Watkins Glen have both water and sewer districts. The Villages of Odessa and Burdett offer municipal water to their residents. The towns of Hector and Dix have formed water districts. The Dix district is under construction. The Hector district is located along State Route 414 and may already be at-capacity. A small district extends along State Route 14 in the Town of Reading, just to the north of the Watkins Glen municipal boundary. In July 2003, HUNT Engineers, under contract to the Schuyler County Partnership for Economic Development (SCOPED) evaluated the water and wastewater infrastructure systems in the county. The study recommends looking for a future opportunity to regionalize wastewater systems between Watkins Glen and Montour Falls and considering a regionalized water system for Watkins Glen and Montour Falls should enough growth in those areas occur.

***New York State Fire Academy***

Operated by the Department of State's Office of Fire Prevention and Control, the Academy of Fire Science offers courses in many areas including fire suppression, technical rescue, fire equipment maintenance, incident command, fire instructor



development, fire officer development, firefighter health and safety, dispatcher training, emergency medical technician (EMT), EMT refresher, EMT pilot core material training, hazardous materials, arson investigation and general fire service training. The general fire service training areas include. State sponsored National Fire Academy (NFA) courses are also available. The administration and residential building accommodates a total of 205 students in 75 double rooms and six 12-person dormitories.

***Odessa/Montour Central School District***

Montour and Montour Falls are served by the Odessa/Montour Central School District. In 2004-2005, the district had 865 students and 73 teachers. The District operates three schools: B.C. Cate Elementary School in Montour Falls, Howard Hanlon Elementary School in Odessa, and Odessa/Montour Middle/High School in Odessa.

***Schuyler County Historical Society***

The Schuyler Co. Historical Society is housed in the Clawson House, the oldest building in Montour Falls (Havana), built in 1805, which used to be a stage coach inn. Artifacts beginning with the Indian era are on display. Some of the other items are antique farm implements, tools, American Indian relics, ladies' fashions, and antique toys.

***Schuyler County Historical Society***



***Schuyler Hospital***

Schuyler Hospital provides comprehensive acute medical-surgical care, emergency care, and skilled nursing care, and has widely recognized programs in obstetrics, physical rehabilitation, and radiological care. With the main hospital campus in Montour Falls, Schuyler Hospital also provides primary care services and various medical sub-specialty services in Ovid, Watkins Glen, and Montour Falls. Established in 1920, Schuyler Hospital is a not-for-profit community hospital accredited by the Joint Commission (formerly JCAHO). The medical staff includes physicians that specialize in internal medicine, family practice, obstetrics, surgery, orthopedics, pathology, radiology, pediatrics, pulmonology, critical care, pain management, sleep medicine, and anesthesiology. Seneca View, our 120-bed skilled nursing care is located in the hospital offering in-patient services that include physical, speech, and occupational rehabilitation.

**E. Historic Sites**

Montour and Montour Falls contain a number of significant sites and buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places. They are described below.

**Montour Falls Historic District Main and Genesee Sts., Montour Falls** (added 1978 - District -#78001911)

The historic district is the “Glorious T,” a collection of buildings created to house the county seat when it was in Montour Falls, then known as Havana. The district also contains several residences and the Montour House, an imposing Greek-revival hotel. Although the county seat now resides in Watkins Glen, the “Glorious T” historic district remains a regional jewel.

*A sample of Architectural Styles in the “Glorious T” of the Montour Falls Historic District*



**Brick Tavern Stand** (added 1994 - **Building** - #94001283)

Also known as Clawson House, 108 Catharine St. (NYS Route 14), Montour Falls. It houses the Schuyler County Historical Society. According to the Schuyler County Historical Society, it was erected as a tavern on the stagecoach route. It has also been a school, a boarding house and the home of Dr. Charles Clawson, who ran the nearby Bethesda Sanitarium in the 19th C. After his death it continued to be the family home until his grandson, Charles Lattin, sold it to the Society in 1974.

There are eleven rooms on exhibit: the living room and dining room are furnished in the style of the late 19th century. Also on the first floor are the Research/Geneology room and the Early Settlement room.

(See photo of the Historical Society in the “community facilities” discussion.)

**Lee School** (added 1998 - **Building** - #98000572) NYS Route 14, Montour

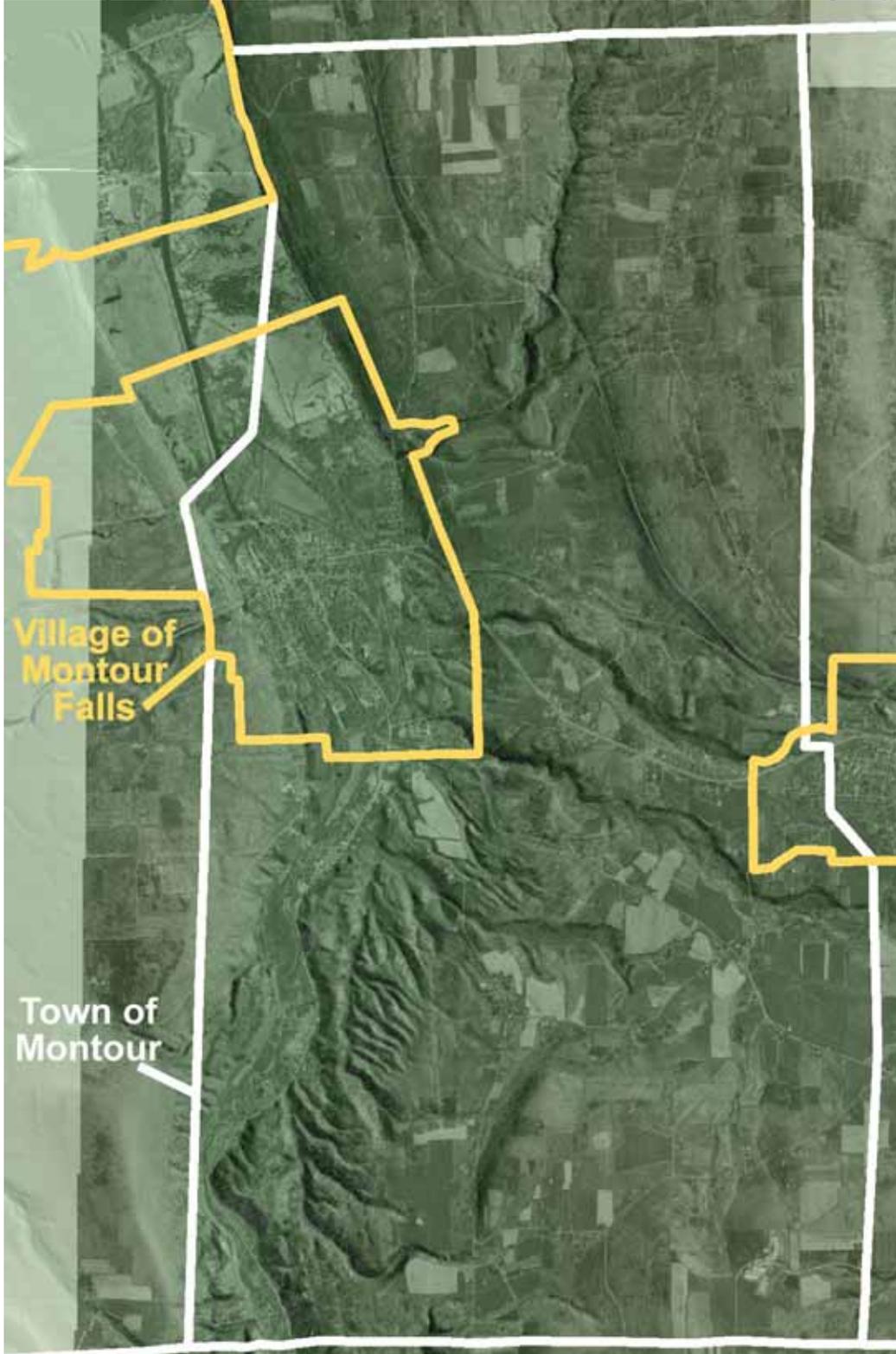
According to the County Historical Society., the Lee School was part of the Odessa-Montour School District until the mid-20th century. It was acquired by the Society in 1960. It is a 1884 wooden one-room school, furnished as it was in the early 20th Century. It contains the original school desks, early school texts, and other school-days artifacts.

*The Lee School*

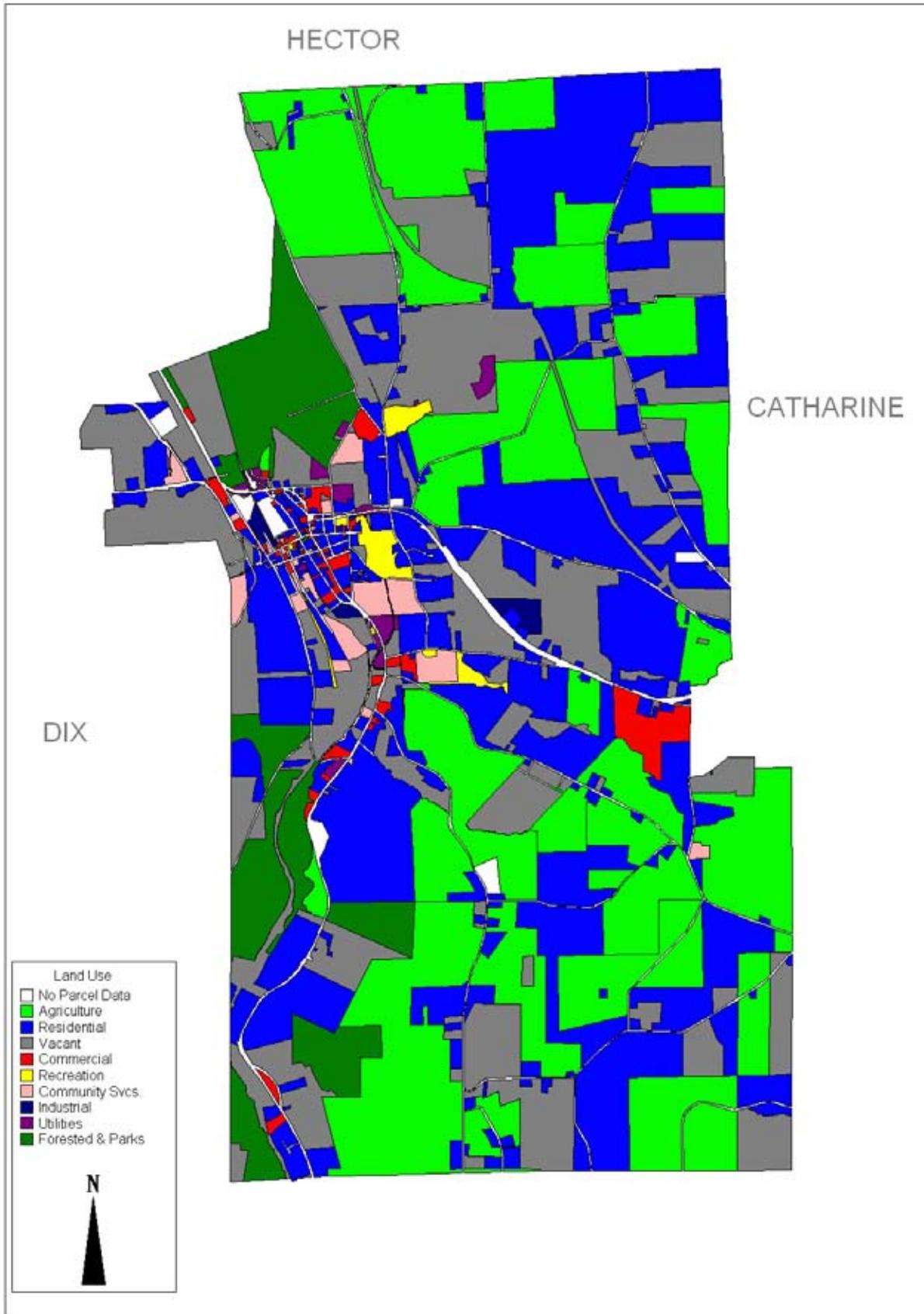


#### IV. LAND USE PATTERNS

*Relief Map of Montour and Montour Falls Showing How Development Conforms to Topography  
(Source: Prepared by Fairweather Consulting from data from Cornell University Geographic Information Repository)*



*Land Use by Major Category for the Town of Montour and Village of Montour Falls  
(Source: compiled by Fairweather Consulting using real property data supplied by Schuyler Co. Planning)*



The patterns of land use in Montour and Montour Falls provide a clear indication of the community's natural environment, agricultural legacy and history as a canal town. The bottom lands along the Catharine Creek and former canal right of way are the areas of most dense settlement, concentrated in the Village. In the Town outside the Village, most of the land remains in large parcels devoted to residential uses, agriculture or remains vacant. The Village maintains a mixed use character with small commercial establishments mixed in with community services (e.g., houses of worship, community organizations, etc.) and housing. Indeed, in many ways, the area's traditional development patterns already embody "smart growth" patterns that are now advocated by the planning community. This long tradition of "smart growth," directing more intense uses to the locations that have municipal services while supporting less intense uses in and near farms and open space is worth preserving as Montour and Montour Falls eventually will experience the growth associated with increased tourism in the area and the general long-term economic expansion in the Finger Lakes region.

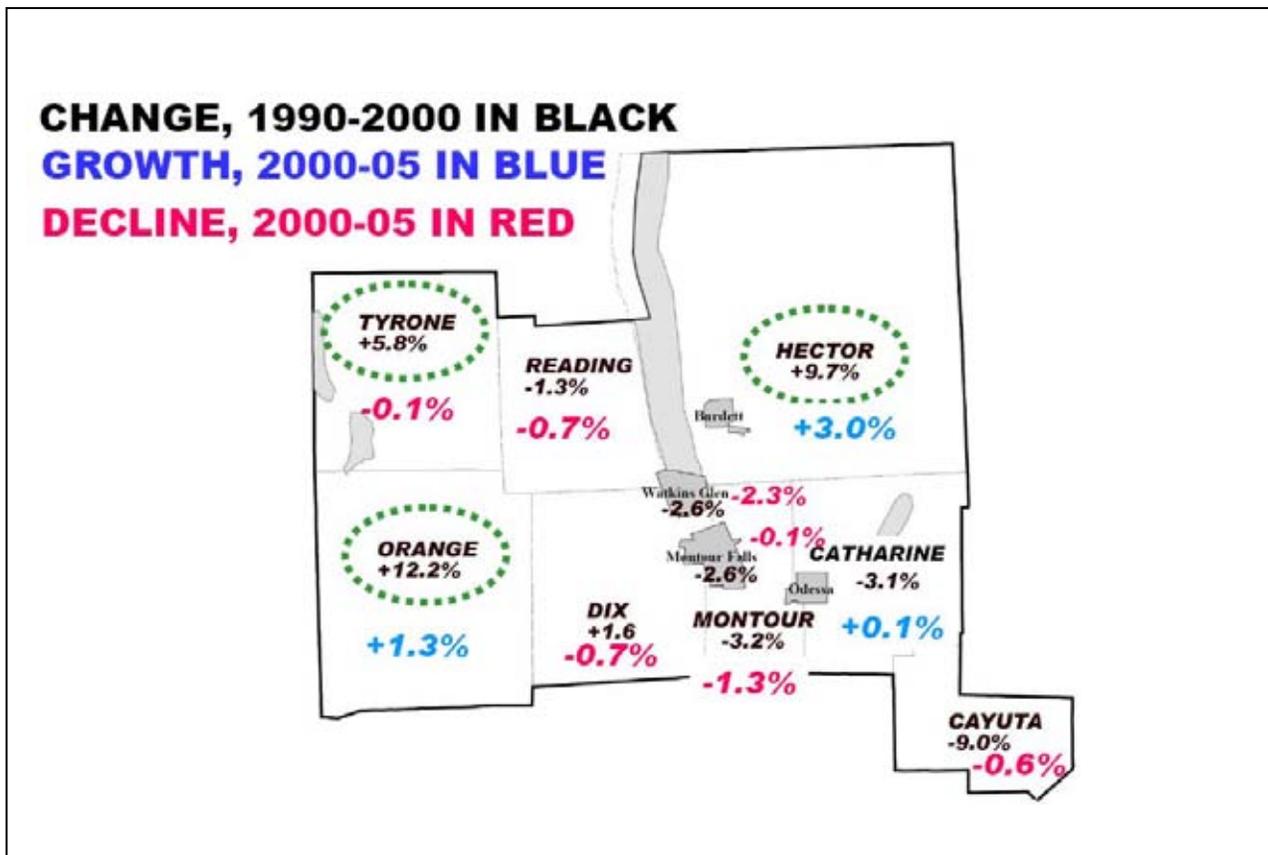
These existing patterns also lend themselves to attractive future patterns of development. In most cases, the topography of the area promotes a clear transition between the densely settled areas and the rest of the Town. The one area that is an exception to this is the Route 14 corridor south of the Village. Nondescript commercial development along that corridor weakens the sense of arrival in the Village. In addition, the intersection of Route 14 and Main Street provides no clear indication or link between the corridor and the Village's central business district. In general, though, the overall patterns of land use lend themselves to the creation of an attractive built environment that can serve as the basis for sound, sustainable growth in the community. The future land use plan detailed later in this document addresses these issues and others related to land use in the Town and Village.

## V. COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS

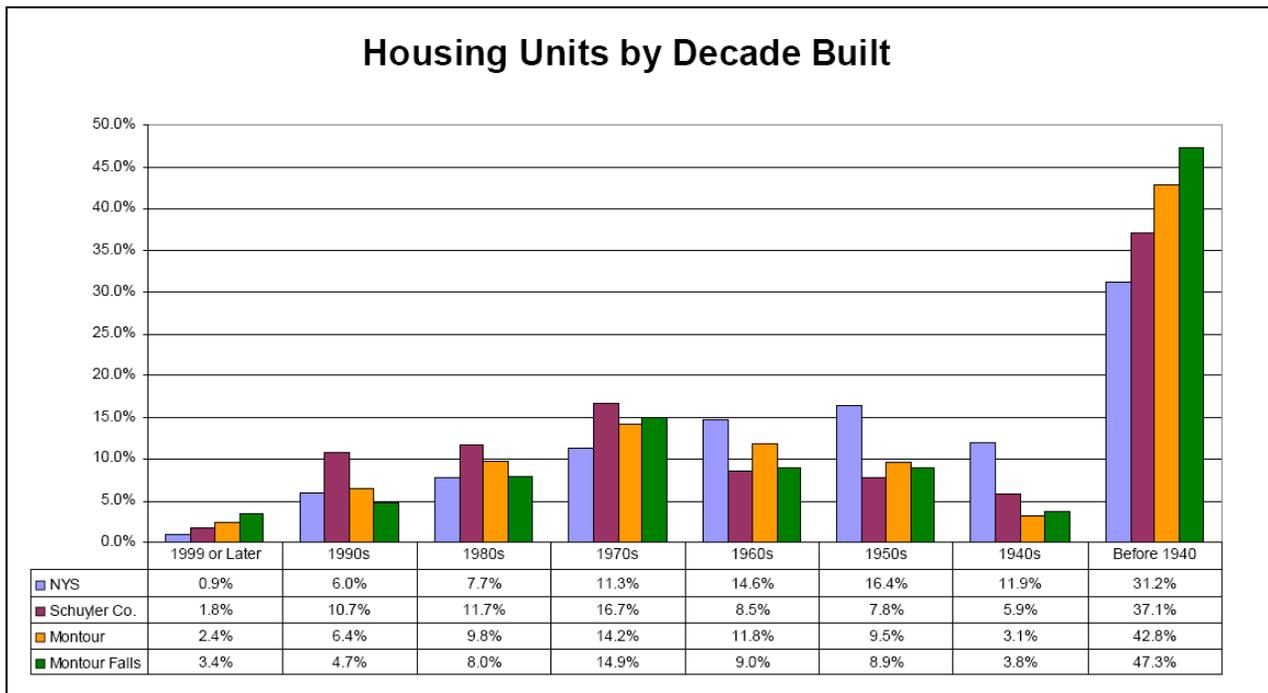
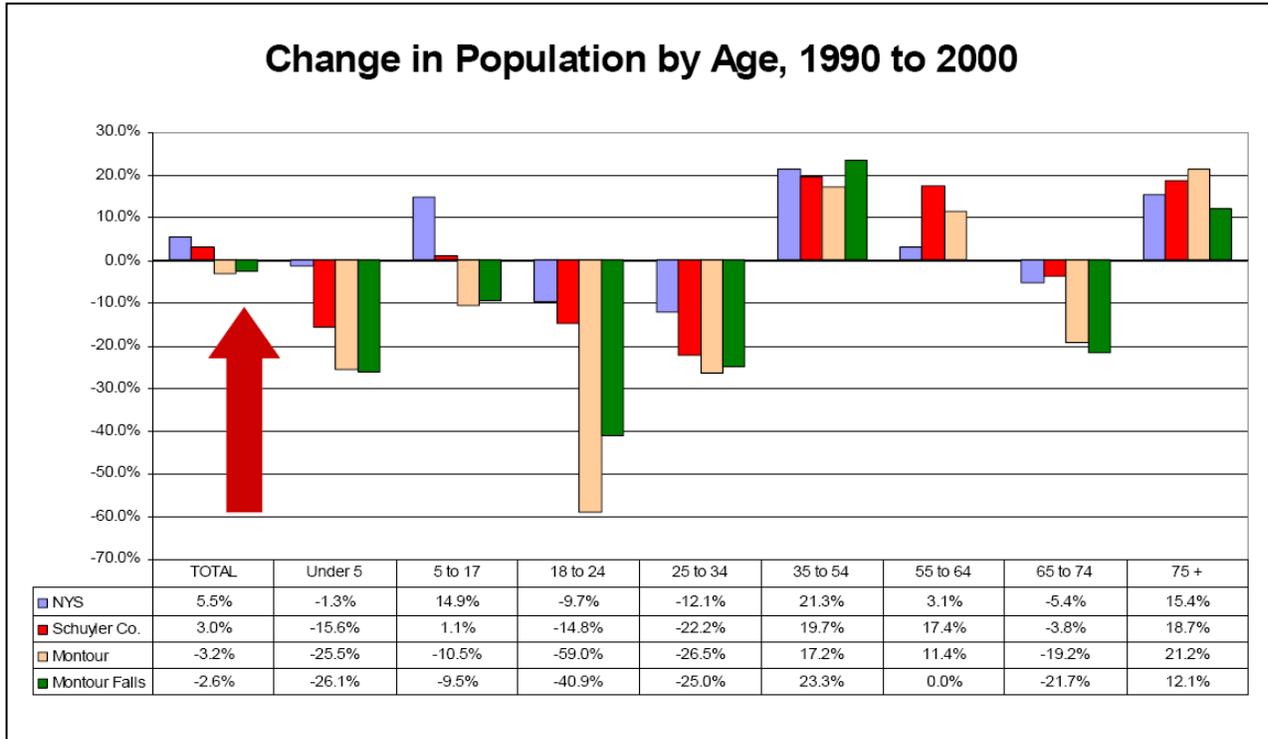
According to US Census Bureau estimates, the Village of Montour Falls had a population of 1,781 in 2005, the Town of Montour had a population of 2,414, with 633 residing in the Town outside of the Village. Montour and Montour Falls are located in an area of New York State that has experienced slow population growth and/or population declines in the last few decades.

The Town's population declined by 32 people or 1.3 percent from 2000 to 2005. The Village experienced a drop of 16 persons or 0.9 percent. The population in the Town outside the Village dropped by 16 people also for a 2.5 percent decline. Some communities adjoining the Town of Montour have experienced growth in the past two decades.

Immediately north of Montour, the Town of Hector saw its population increase by 3 percent in the first five years of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Catharine, to the east of Montour grew slightly by 0.1 percent Orange's population rose 1.3 percent from 2000 to 2005.



These long-term trends of slow and/or declining growth have had predictable consequences for the Town and Village. The population is aging in both the Town and Village. While detailed data are not available for 2005, the



period between 1990 and 2000 saw the Town and Village lose population under age 34, with gains in the 35 to 54 year-old cohort (the so-called “baby boomers”) and the population over 75.

Slow and/or declining population growth has also affected the age of the housing stock in the Town and Village. As shown in the chart below, the vast majority of the housing stock in the Town and Village was built before 1940. In every other decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the Town and Village lagged behind Schuyler County and New York State in terms of the proportion of housing stock built in that decade. NOTE: see the plan appendices for more detailed demographics from the 2000 Census for both the Town and Village.

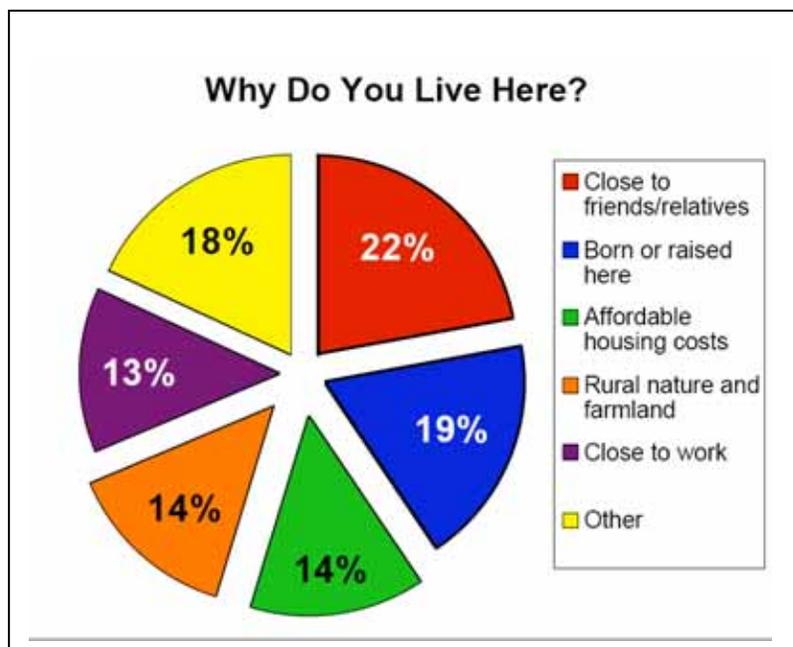
While trends in the Montour community have been marked by slow growth and population declines, these demographics are not necessarily destiny. The analysis does show that nearby towns in Schuyler County have experienced some growth in recent years. In some cases this has been by attracting households commuting to Ithaca and the Elmira area. In other cases, people are moving in the area to take advantage of the high quality of life offered in the Finger Lakes. There is every reason to expect that Montour and Montour Falls will also be able to take advantage of these factors to promote growth and revitalization through this plan.

## **VI. UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY VALUES THROUGH PUBLIC OUTREACH**

### A. Survey

In the summer of 2006, a community survey was conducted to understand the ideas and opinions of residents of Montour and Montour Falls. The Shepstone Management Company sent the survey out to a random sample of 500 residents. 172 responses were returned, for an excellent return rate of 34 percent.

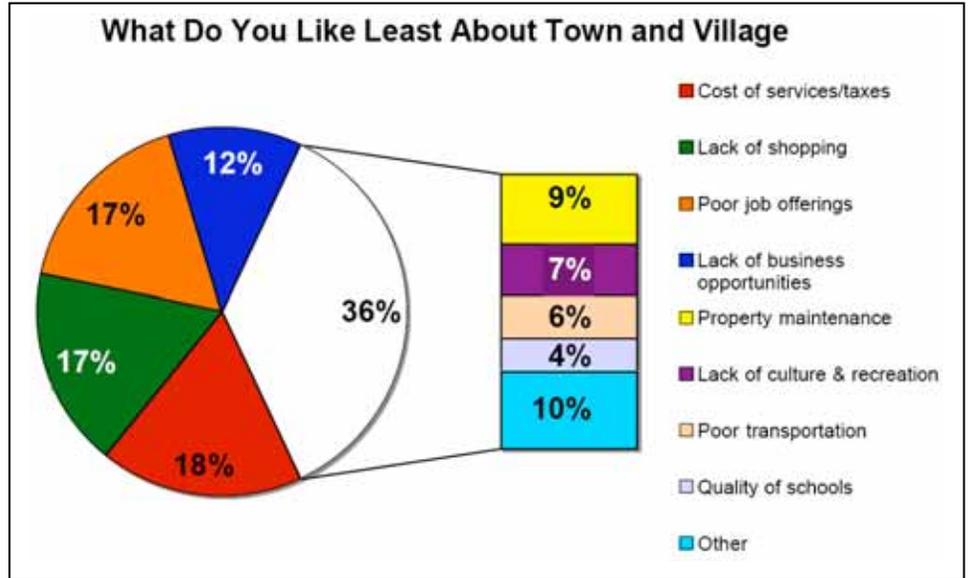
This section highlights some of the key findings from the survey. A full



tabulation of the survey results is included as an appendix to this plan.

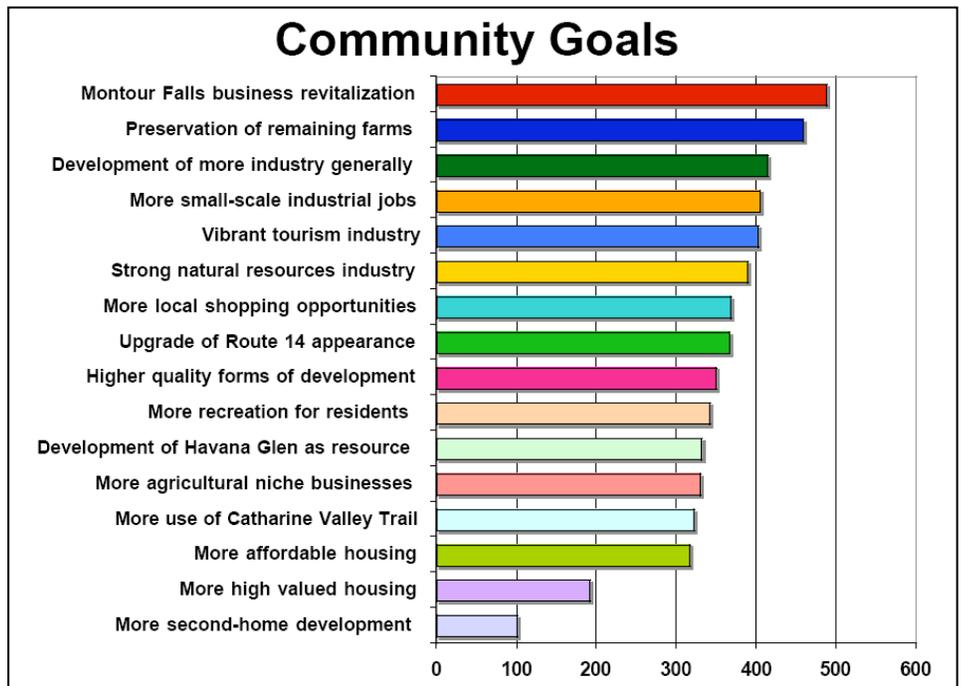
***Why People Live in Montour/Montour Falls***

According to survey results, the most common reason people gave for living in the Town and/or Village is that it was close to friends and relatives. (22% indicated this was the case.) Another 19 percent said that the reason they lived in the community was that they were born or raised there. Other reasons cited for living in the community included affordable housing costs (14% of the respondents), rural nature and farmland (14%) and being close to work (13%).



***Focusing on Development and Revitalization in the Town and Village***

The survey results indicates that economic development and revitalization are important to residents of the Town and Village. When asked what people like least about the Town and Village, 18 percent of the respondents identified the cost of services/taxes, 17 percent said the lack of shopping. An additional 17 percent cited poor



job offerings. A lack of business opportunities was identified by another 12 percent.

When asked to evaluate alternate goals for the comprehensive plan, economic development and revitalization also figured prominently in people's deliberations. One survey question asked people to rate the importance of sixteen different goals using a five-point scale, one being "not that important" and five being "extremely important." The chart below shows the total points given to each of the goals by the survey respondents. "Montour Falls business revitalization" was the top-rated goal. Note also that the top seven goals are all directly related to economic development.

## **B. Plan Scenarios**

A community input session for the comprehensive plan was held on September 21, 2006. At that session, participants were presented with three alternative plan scenarios and asked to comment on each one. The scenarios are listed below.

Scenario A: Becoming a Tourism Gateway to the Finger Lakes

Scenario B: Building upon Family-friendly Neighborhoods

Scenario C: Living Well while Living within Our Means

Each plan scenario contained the following information:

- A summary description of what the scenario involves, the factors that make it viable scenario for Montour, and what aspects of the community would be emphasized under the scenario
- Potential community goals & objectives briefly listing the planning priorities that would be set if this scenario were followed
- Potential land-use priorities for the scenario, identifying the areas of the communities and the types of land-use policies that would be emphasized if this scenario were the basis of the Town and Village plan
- Potential community facilities priorities describing the recommendations for investments in community facilities that would emerge from a plan based upon each scenario
- Potential transportation/circulation priorities identifying the major priorities for improving transportation and circulation in the community defined by this scenario

Participants at the sessions embraced various aspects of each scenario. As with the survey responses, economic development and community revitalization were identified as important components for Montour and Montour Falls.

Most people responded favorably to improving the tourism potential of the area and its potential for enhancing economic development. At the same time, participants also responded favorably to enhancing the residential quality of life as a means of retaining and attracting population and families.

Full descriptions of the plan scenarios and the responses to them are included in the appendices.

### **C. Youth Outreach**

On Saturday, March 31, 2007, a session was held to gather input and ideas from students attending Odessa/Montour schools. Six students who were recruited for the session by school faculty attended the session. They were given two exercises to complete.

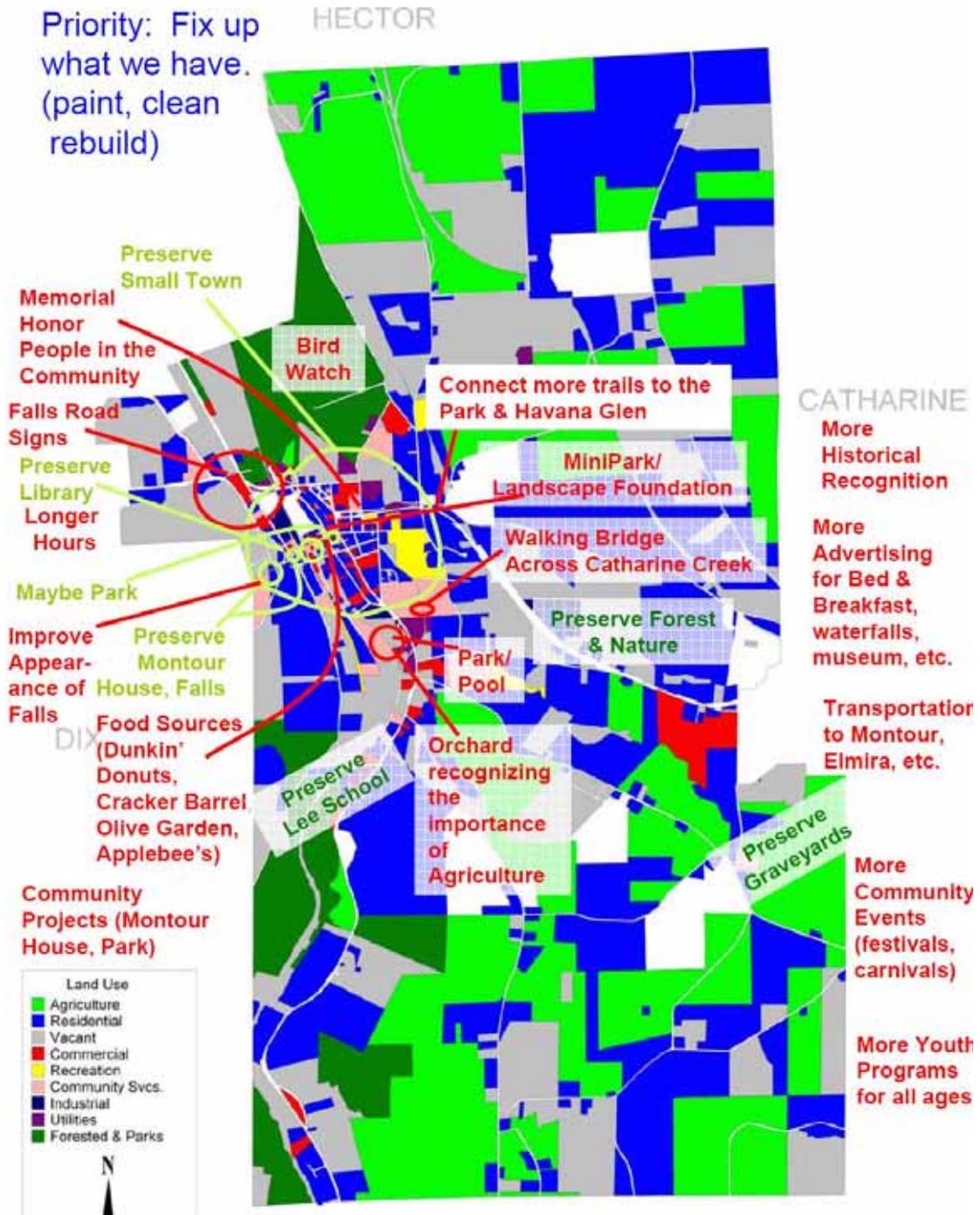
In the first, students were asked to identify hopes and concerns for Montour's/Montour Falls' future. They were asked to list the three biggest concerns about Montour and Montour Falls, particularly related to the needs and wants of young people in the community. They were also asked to list the three biggest hopes for Montour/Montour Falls in the future, particularly related to the needs and wants of young people in the community.

The results of this exercise were very similar to the survey results summarized above. Jobs were a key concern for the students, with the lack of jobs identified by four of the six participants as a concern. The students were also concerned about community appearance and the need to preserve small town character and historic sites. They also advocated for more youth-related activities and expressed concerns over the potential for students to become involved with drugs for lack of other outlets.

The second exercise involved students using a map of the Town and Village to make group decisions about things that needed to be changed or improved as well as things that needed to be kept the same or protected. Once the group agreed on the things that needed to change or improve, they were instructed to identify them using a red marker. Similarly, the group was asked to identify those things to keep the same or protect using a green marker. Finally, the group was asked to identify the single most important thing to be done to help the Village and Town using a blue marker.

The results of this session are summarized in the figure below. Note that the single most important thing identified by the students was to “fix up what we have (paint, clean, rebuild).” They expressed a desire for more eating

*Results of the Mapping Exercise at the Youth Outreach Session.*



places in the Village's downtown (to the point of identifying the types of restaurants they would like to see). They also expressed a keen interest in preserving and disseminating the history of the community through improved use of the historical society/museum, preservation of the Lee School and other key sites, and the creation of a community monument commemorating residents who have made significant contributions to the Montour Community.

A full compilation of the youth workshop results are included as an appendix to this plan.

## **VII. PLAN GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The inventory of assets and analysis of community attitudes and values summarized in the section above are essential ingredients in establishing a direction for planning for the future of Montour and Montour Falls. They lead to the creation of goals and objectives for the community's future. Goals are high-level statements that provide the overall context for what the comprehensive plan is trying to accomplish for the community. Objectives are concrete statements describing specific outcomes that the plan is trying to achieve. The following are the goals and objectives on which this Plan is based:

**GOAL 1: Position Montour and Montour Falls as the southern gateway for the Finger Lakes and further develop the tourism economy.**

### **Objectives:**

1.1 Use design guidelines to create an overall community appearance that reflects the beauty and excitement of the Finger Lakes in the commercial areas of the Town and Village.

1.2 Use "way-finding" signage and other techniques to provide clear, direct connections between Route 14 and the tourism-related opportunities in the Town and Village.

1.3 Promote tourism-related businesses in the Town and Village such as bed-and-breakfasts and other lodging, restaurants and enterprises related to outdoor recreation and culinary arts through local zoning and other regulations.

1.4 Ensure the commercial zones along Route 14 are configured as compact, pedestrian-friendly groupings of business that encourage tourists and shopper to park and walk to several shops, rather than zones that lead to standardized “strip development.”

1.5 Encourage the development and improvement of local recreational, cultural, historical and culinary related facilities such as trails, museums, cultural centers, etc.

1.6 Ensure intersections with Route 14 are configured to promote easy traffic flow to key local tourist spots such as downtown Montour Falls and Havana Glen.

1.7 Provide adequate sidewalks and parking so that commercial areas can accommodate vehicular and pedestrian traffic from tourists, wherever possible, ensuring sidewalks and trails create strong pedestrian links between tourism resources and commercial districts.

**GOAL 2: Ensure a continued supply of affordable quality housing within the Town and Village.**

**Objectives:**

2.1 Upgrade zoning, subdivision and site plan standards to ensure the Town and Village foster high-quality residential development.

2.2 Ensure Town and Village zoning regulations provide for a range of housing types, including small “starter” homes for young couples, traditional family housing and appropriate options for “empty-nesters” and senior citizens.

2.3 Strengthen the pedestrian-friendliness of the Village business district(s) and provide for concentrations of mixed-use development in a few residential areas of the Town so that residents are able to walk to services and stores with young children.

2.4 Ensure zoning and other regulations provide for increased presence of telecommuters, home-based businesses and small businesses that may be created by new residents or in response to demand by new residents.

2.5 Avoid those zoning and other regulations that needlessly raise the price of housing through excessive lot size or other arbitrary requirements.

2.6 Strengthen the transportation links between the Town and Village and major regional employment centers such as Corning, Ithaca and Elmira through transportation investments and land-use policies.

**GOAL 3: Hold down the costs of services while maintaining or even improving quality.**

**Objectives:**

3.1 Share and/or reconfigure municipal services and facilities to improve efficiency using capital facilities planning to identify ways to meet current and projected space needs through shared facilities among the Town, Village, School District and fire districts.

3.2 Promote the growth and expansion of existing local businesses and the commercial tax base.

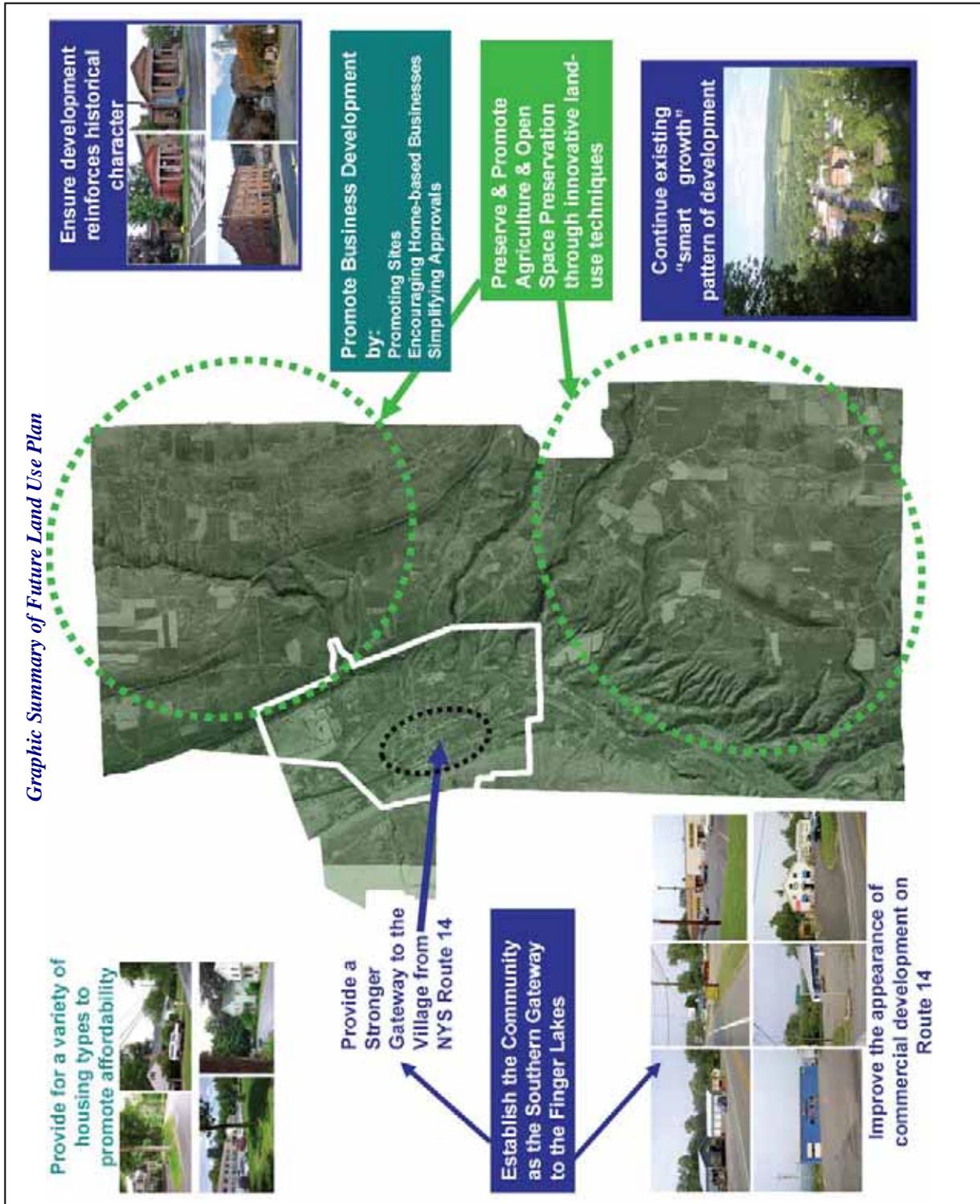
3.3 Review regulations to ensure they allow existing businesses to expand with as little costs as possible, providing that such expansions do not disrupt other nearby uses.

3.4 Review development standards such as setbacks and others to ensure they promote flexibility in creating housing that is both affordable and liveable for persons on fixed incomes.

3.5 Review standards for roads, site plans and subdivisions to ensure that they promote high-quality development with as low maintenance costs as possible.

## VIII. FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

This section outlines the land use plan for the Town and Village that is intended to accomplish the plan goals and objectives. The graphic below summarizes this land use plan.



The land use plan for the Town of Montour and Village of Montour Falls seeks to enhance and improve the quality of the existing downtown area and neighborhoods in and adjacent to the Village of Montour Falls. At the same time, the plan seeks to preserve the scenic beauty of the outlying areas of the Town and direct development to appropriate areas in the Town and Village. A central focus in this plan is improving the business climate in the Town and Village. Agriculture is an important part of the community life and economy and the plan seeks to support that important sector. In addition, the plan calls for revitalization of the Montour Falls Central Business District. It also identifies ways to prepare sites for the development of commercial activities and light industry.

The intention of the land use plan is to position Montour and Montour Falls to build upon their strengths as a community. These strengths include:

- the economic benefits of serving as a southern gateway to the Finger Lakes, one of New York State's most popular tourism areas
- the scenic beauty and historic character that contribute to community quality of life
- a quality of life featuring close knit neighborhoods and small town character

The following recommendations are important elements in realizing this land use plan:

*Employ techniques to reinforce existing "smart growth" patterns of development.* Smart growth is the channeling of development into areas that are easily served by existing public infrastructure in ways that minimize future consumption of resources such as open space, as well as providing that future development can be served by a variety of transportation modes including pedestrian access, bike trails, and transit as well as individual automobiles. The Town and Village should explore implementing techniques designed to foster such "smart growth." These include:

- Incentive zoning that allows developers density bonuses and other incentives if they agree to modify their development proposals in ways that meet community goals (e.g., provide a better pedestrian network, expand recreation space, etc.)
- Clustering provisions that allow a developer to achieve full development for a parcel, while ensuring that the houses are grouped close together to preserve open space, and minimize the road infrastructure needed to support that development
- A "conservation subdivision process" which enables development to go forward configured in a way so that it has minimal impact on the important resources associated with the land to be developed. It involves a four step process illustrated below. During development, important resources to be protected are identified first (e.g.,

natural resources, agricultural land, etc.). Only after this is completed are the houses sited, then the road network created and , finally the lot lines are established. This process enables growth to take place in the Town in a manner that reinforces the community's existing small-town character and protects important natural resources

*The Conservation Subdivision Process*

**THE SITE BEFORE DEVELOPMENT**



**THE SITE AFTER STANDARD DEVELOPMENT**



**STEP 1. IDENTIFY RESOURCES TO BE PROTECTED**



**STEP 2. ESTABLISH HOUSE SITES**



**STEP 3. ESTABLISH ROAD NETWORK**



**STEP 4. DRAW LOT LINES**

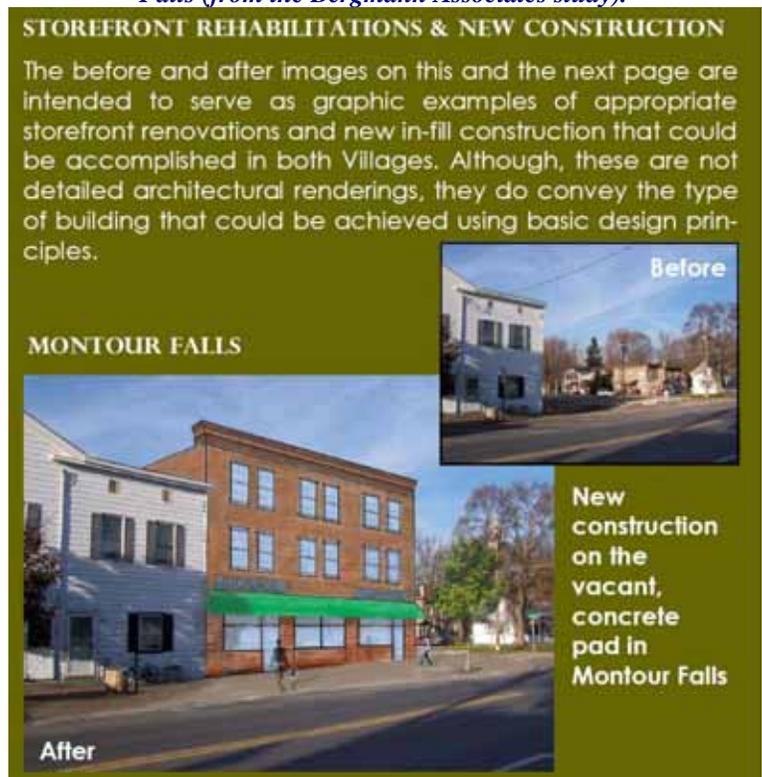


*Establish the Montour Falls Central Business District as the community “hub” for experience-based retail and services.* As the retail industry has changed in the United States, downtowns have successfully adapted to the new environment by becoming centers of “experience-based” shopping. That is, the downtowns can offer historic interest, personal interaction, personal service and an experience of community that can be encountered in modern shopping malls. The Montour Falls central business district has tremendous potential to compete as this kind of retail center. The Village and Town can support this effort by:

Creating design guidelines for Downtown Montour Falls. The Downtown Improvement study of Montour Falls and Watkins Glen conducted recommended the creation of design guidelines for the Montour Falls Central Business District to ensure that renovations and future development reinforce the area’s historic character. This will be an important step in enhancing the competitiveness of the community as a whole.

Promoting development patterns that enhance the Village as a pedestrian-friendly area. The neighborhoods and stores in or adjacent to Montour Falls should be connected with a series of sidewalks and/or walking/bike trails. Wherever feasible, existing sidewalks should be extended to integrate the residential neighborhoods into the sidewalk system. This will encourage greater use of resources in the downtown area by pedestrians, improving the potential for business in the downtown while alleviating some of the demand for parking. The Village should ensure that its regulations provide for outside dining and sidewalk sales in the Village. In combination, these initiatives will support a livelier downtown area that will become even more attractive to tourists seeking an “experience-based” retail experience.

***An Illustration of the Importance of Design Guidelines for Montour Falls (from the Bergmann Associates study).***



Source: Bergman Associates et al., Watkins Glen/Montour Falls Downtown Improvement Study, page 49.

*Establish Montour and Montour Falls as a gateway to the Finger Lakes.*

As Route 14 traverses Montour and Montour Falls, it provides an uninspired visitor experience. This discourages travelers from stopping in the Town or Village and thereby reduces the economic potential for tourism in the community. Two steps are required to remedy this situation:

Creating a stronger, more attractive physical link between Route 14 and the Montour Falls Central Business District. The Downtown Improvement study recommended creating a stronger physical link between West Main Street and Route 14 through streetscape improvements. This is an essential element in this land use plan and is also reflected in the community facilities plan.

***Physical Improvements for the Route 14/Main Street intersection recommended by the Downtown Improvement Study***

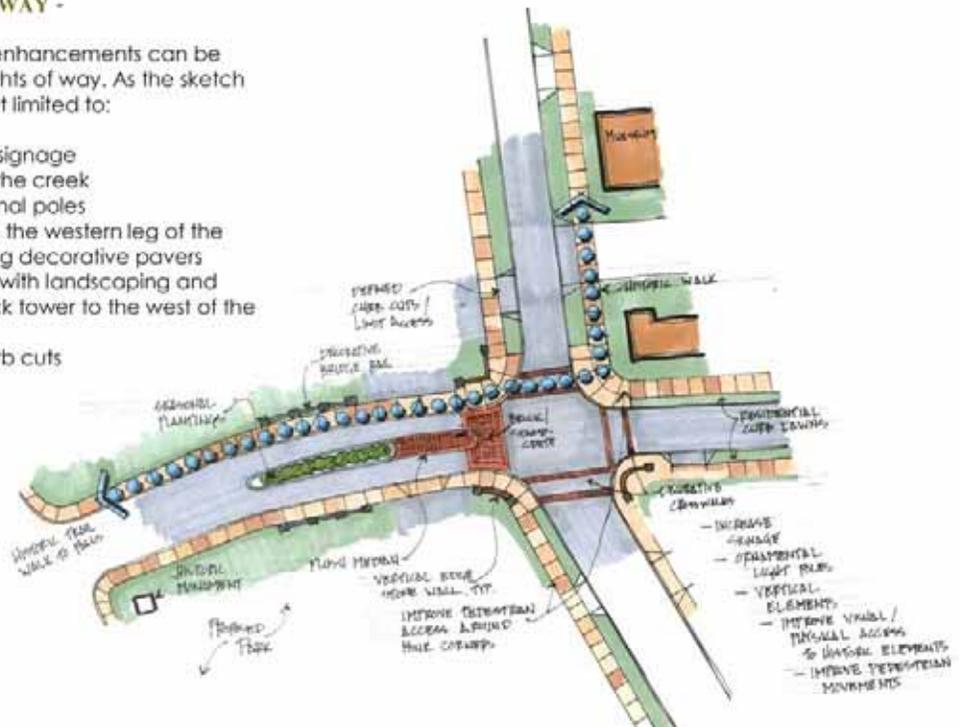
**MONTOUR FALLS EASTERN GATEWAY - FUTURE CONDITIONS**

A significant amount of gateway enhancements can be accomplished within the public rights of way. As the sketch illustrates, these include but are not limited to:

- Textured crosswalks
- Stone walls at the corners with signage
- Decorative bridge railing over the creek
- Decorative mast arm traffic signal poles
- Placement of a flush median in the western leg of the intersection that is created using decorative pavers
- Placement of a raised median with landscaping and vertical element such as a clock tower to the west of the flush median
- Better defined driveways or curb cuts

Additionally, signage is needed south of the gateway, so that drivers are aware that they are approaching the district.

These improvements will not only make the intersection more attractive but also safer for motorists and pedestrians by calming traffic and reducing the number of conflict points experienced by people traveling through the area.



Source: Bergman Associates et al., *Watkins Glen/Montour Falls Downtown Improvement Study*, page 56.

Improving the physical appearance of the Route 14 corridor throughout the Town is equally important to this effort. Among the issues to be addressed by commercial development guidelines for the corridor are upgraded standards for landscaping and parking, particularly focusing on creating more greenspace and plantings between the right of way and parking lots, encouraging curbing and sidewalks along appropriate areas of the corridor and restrictions on

the use and/or location of temporary signs. These simple enhancements will make dramatic improvement in the attractiveness and competitiveness of the commercial areas along Route 14.

*Examples of the Current Conditions along the Route 14 Corridor.*



*An example of a well-developed commercial/industrial site*



*Promote sites for light industry/commercial development.* Montour and Montour Falls have existing sites that are appropriate and available for commercial and/or light industry uses. The Town and Village should continue to work closely with the Schuyler County Partnership for Economic Development (SCOPED) to ensure the sites are well-prepared for development in terms of zoning, regulations and incentive packages as well as appropriately promoted to potential occupants/owners. These sites include the former National Health site and properties that may become available through changing needs of such firms as Shepard-Niles.

*To the greatest extent possible, clarify and simplify the process by which existing businesses can expand in sites zoned for such uses.* The Town and Village should review regulations on commercial and industrial zones to ensure maximum “user-friendliness” to businesses in a manner that upholds the requirements for general public health and safety. Simple, clear regulations will reduce the costs involved for businesses seeking to expand in existing commercial and industrial zones.

*Provide for home-based businesses and telecommuting.* Such enterprises are an increasingly important source of employment in rural areas like the Montour/Montour Falls community. Regulations should encourage appropriate home-based occupations by addressing impacts on quality of life in residential areas by tailoring standards to the size and types of enterprise involved, recognizing that many such businesses have few or no such effects.

*Create and implement policies to promote local agriculture,* including:

- Maintaining “right to farm” protections that reinforce State regulations protecting farmers’ rights to use accepted farming practices on their lands so that local policies and laws are consistent with NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets’ regulations regarding accessory uses
- Reviewing local zoning and other regulations to ensure that they:
  - Encourage direct marketing of agricultural products through farm stands and similar activities
  - Provide opportunities for farmers to earn non-farm income on their properties, such as allowing farm buildings to be re-adapted to other, similar uses (e.g., small engine repair) and allow farm-related mining to occur below the DEC threshold of 1,000 tons per year with the minimum amount of impact on residential areas
- Support agri-tourism activities by ensuring local regulations allow for such activities and encouraging local and county tourism promotion efforts to highlight agri-tourism, agri-business and agri-recreation in Montour and Montour Falls

- Creating either a plan, or town committee, to promote and develop local agriculture. This would combine the above initiatives with others that could provide farms with expanded markets, enhanced tax planning opportunities and similar benefits

*Provide for a variety of housing types and styles.* Montour and Montour Falls can benefit from an increased variety of housing types. In many areas, local regulations are such that developers are given strong incentives to build one type of house: a large footprint house on a large lot. While this type of development can be desirable and attractive, if it is the only type of development in a community, many residents and newcomers will find themselves priced out of the housing market. In addition, if seniors looking to “downsize” to a smaller, easier to maintain house and lot have that option, it frees up their former, larger house for younger residents. Therefore, Montour and Montour Falls should seek to promote a variety of housing styles at a range of price points through such techniques as:

- Incentive Zoning that can be used to encourage various housing styles by allowing a developer additional density in a project if it contains smaller, more affordable houses along with standard, market-rate units
- Inclusionary Zoning that requires developers to set aside a certain number of units in large-scale residential projects for purchasers who meet certain income guidelines
- Planned Unit Developments that enable a developer to use a single large parcel of land to create mixed-use developments that can include a wide range of housing styles from large-lot estates to small apartments in the second floor of commercial buildings
- Allowing mixed uses particularly in the Village which has traditionally been a source of starter housing for young couples and an option for elderly housing. Apartments and condominiums on the upper floors of nonresidential development is a traditional style of village housing
- Delineation of areas for manufactured housing developments so that this type of lower-cost housing can be provided
- Federal and/or State grants through such programs as the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s HOMES program which can provide funding for the creation of housing for those with moderate to low incomes, including senior citizens

*Upgrade the general provisions of the Town and Village Zoning codes.* In addition to the specific recommendations of this plan, the Town and Village should improve the ability of their zoning codes to serve as effective tools to guide and direct development. A preliminary analysis of the local codes identified the following areas for improvement:

Village of Montour Falls:

- There are far too many districts making it difficult for users of the code to understand and implement the purposes and provisions of each district.
- Better landscaping standards are needed for commercial uses
- Steep slope regulations too generic & unenforceable
- Solar and wind provisions unusual and perhaps unnecessary
- Multi-family standards don't address management of common property
- Nonconforming use rules unrealistic in that they do not provide adequate opportunities for existing nonconforming uses to expand and/or make improvements in their facilities

Town of Montour:

- A schedule format is needed to make the regulations more user-friendly
- Assuming R-1 lots of 3 acres are in agricultural use is a large loophole in terms of ensuring compatible uses within the zoning district
- Residential lot sizes in some districts are extremely small
- Coverages of up to 90% are too high in some instances, encouraging out-of-scale development
- Stormwater is not addressed in meaningful way

## **IX. COMMUNITY FACILITIES PLAN**

This section contains recommendations for community facility projects that would support the plan goals and objectives. Special attention has been paid to seek solutions that can minimize or reduce costs through shared planning and/or the actual sharing of facilities.

### *Actively pursue opportunities for adaptive reuse of community facilities and/or consolidation of such facilities.*

The Rural-Urban Center provides an example of how existing facilities can be readapted to new uses as the old uses are no longer required. The Town and Village should actively seek other opportunities for adaptive reuse, particularly to better serve the needs of an aging population.

### *Create a joint Town/Village comprehensive capital facilities planning process that*

- Identifies and/or reviews the town's 5-year capital needs on annual basis that encompasses highways, sewer and water infrastructure and municipal facilities
- Creates a system for establishing clear priorities for funding capital projects
- Shares information among the Town of Montour and Village of Montour Falls and/or other jurisdictions to identify ways to share costs and/or benefits in capital facilities
- Anticipates and provides for growth in the Village and key areas of the Town
- Identifies opportunities for sharing facilities by co-locating Town and Village functions into shared facilities

Such a planning process would enable the Town and Village to keep their respective and shared plant and equipment reasonably up to date and identify and potentially avoid the often-hidden costs involved with deferred maintenance of facilities.

*Participate in regional planning for Sewer and Water infrastructure.* In 2004, the County Comprehensive Plan recommends that Montour, Montour Falls and the Village of Watkins Glen consider creating a regional water system and wastewater system, should sufficient growth occur to justify it. The Villages collaborate in planning for regional water and wastewater needs. The Village and Town should explore preliminary planning with the Village of Watkins Glen about such an initiative so that all three jurisdictions are prepared to move forward as growth accelerates in the area in the years ahead.

*Use municipal capital investments to create a physical link between Route 14 and the Montour Falls Central Business District.* As mentioned above in the “Future Land Use Plan,” it is important for a stronger physical link be created between West Main Street and Route 14 in Montour Falls. Plans should be made and funding sought for the streetscape improvements required to create this linkage. The Downtown Improvement retail study of Montour Falls and Watkins Glen should serve as a guide for pursuing this initiative.

*Develop pedestrian infrastructure linking neighborhoods to Downtown Montour Falls.* As described in the “Future Land Use Plan,” the viability of downtown Montour Falls depends upon creating strong pedestrian links to neighborhoods. The improvement and/or extension of sidewalks, bike paths and trails that link to the downtown should be an important component of facilities planning for both the Town and Village.

*Continue to enhance park and recreation facilities.*

Improving and expanding park and recreation facilities are an important part of enhancing the quality of life for community residents and strengthening the competitiveness of the area’s tourism sector. The Town and Village should collaborate on strengthening links to Havana Glen, including trails and signage. In addition, Town and Village parks should be upgraded and new facilities created. Firemen’s Grounds, the site of the

*Firemen’s Grounds, Site of the Local Farmers Market*



farmers market on Route 224 should have improved landscaping and, as the market grows, expanded facilities. During the Youth workshop, several interesting possibilities for enhanced recreational and community facilities were identified, including the creation of a working orchard as a community park and the erection of a monument honoring citizens making a significant contribution to the community.

## X. CIRCULATION PLAN

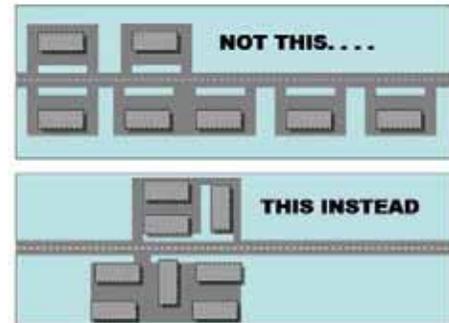
The circulation plan identifies important initiatives to facilitate the movement of people and goods through the Town of Montour and the Village of Montour Falls. These recommendations are intended to complement the “Future Land Use Plan” outlined above.

*Ensure that commercial and industrial zoning districts and associated development standards:*

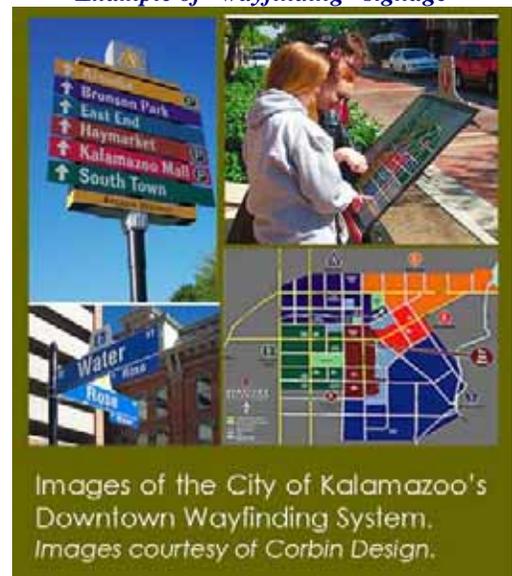
- Create nodes of activity rather than strips along the Route 14. This reduces the number of curb cuts required to support commercial development and eases traffic flow throughout the corridor.
- Aggressively manage access along Route 14 to avoid excessive curb cuts by requiring shared driveways, internal circulation roads and other designs that direct traffic to well-defined locations best able to support that traffic.
- Provide reasonable parking standards and promote shared parking and access. Too often parking standards deal with each business or building in isolation. In such cases the resulting parking that is developed is far greater than that actually required to handle the subsequent traffic. Such “over-built” parking lots often cause communities to lose opportunities for landscaping, street furniture or even additional commercial space.

*Establish a coordinated system of “wayfinding” signage throughout the Town and Village.* The Montour/Montour Falls community has a wealth of assets that can contribute to community quality of life and the area’s draw for tourists. Part of the effort to promote these assets will be to create clear, coordinated wayfinding signage that direct residents and visitors to such important assets as Havana Glen, Downtown Montour Falls, the

### *Create Nodes, Not Strips*



### *Example of “wayfinding” signage*



Images of the City of Kalamazoo's Downtown Wayfinding System. Images courtesy of Corbin Design.

Source: Bergman Associates et al., Watkins Glen/Montour Falls Downtown Improvement Study, page52.

Catharine Valley Rail Trail, the Lee School and others. The Town and Village should collaborate in creating such a system of signage for the entire community.

*Establish land use policies that support multiple modes of transportation.* One factor contributing to traffic congestion nationwide is the tendency to create facilities that can only be reached by auto, requiring every visitor to that facility to add to auto traffic. To the greatest extent possible, Montour and Montour Falls should site high intensity uses such as municipal facilities, shopping areas and others in locations that can be served by pedestrian walkways, bikeways and transit as well as automobiles and ensure that the infrastructure is created to support multiple means of access.

*Explore opportunities for transit links.* The Town and Village should explore creating transit links between Montour Falls and such employment/shopping destinations as Corning, Elmira and Ithaca. In addition, the Town and Village should explore creating a “loop system” that would serve locations within the Town and Village with potential links also to Watkins Glen so that non-drivers (e.g., seniors and school children) will have better options for mobility in the community. The loop system could link Montour Falls, Watkins Glen, Odessa/Montour Schools, and other areas in the community.

## **XI. IMPLEMENTATION**

The schedule below is intended as a guide for implementing the plan. It groups actions into three potential priorities. “Immediate priority” actions should be initiated and completed within the first six months after plan adoption. “Secondary priority” actions should be completed within the first two years after plan adoption. “Long-term priority” actions should be completed within five years of plan adoption. Note: Each action listed includes in parentheses the page number of the plan on which can be found a full description of that action.

One of the first actions, after adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, is to establish a realistic implementation schedule. This schedule should be reviewed annually to evaluate progress and to modify as necessary.

**PROPOSED SEQUENCE FOR PLAN IMPLEMENTATION**

| <b>IMMEDIATE PRIORITY</b>  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Action: Future Land Use Plan</b>  | <b>Responsible Party(ies)</b>  |
| Employ techniques to reinforce existing “smart growth” patterns of development (page 25)                                   | Zoning review committee/Village & Town planning boards /Village &Town boards                     |
| Establish Montour Falls as community “hub” for experienced-based retail (page 27)  | Zoning review committee/Village & Town planning boards /Village &Town boards, Downtown merchants |
| Establish Montour & Montour Falls as a gateway to the Finger Lakes (page 28)   | Zoning review committee/Village & Town planning boards /Village &Town boards                     |
| Clarify and simplify the process by which existing businesses can expand in sites zoned for such uses (page 30)            | Zoning review committee/Village & Town planning boards /Village &Town boards                     |
| Provide for home-based businesses and telecommuting (page 30)  | Zoning review committee/Village & Town planning boards /Village &Town boards                     |
| Upgrade the provisions of the Town & Village Zoning codes (page 32)  | Zoning review committee/Village & Town planning boards /Village &Town boards                     |
| <b>Action: Community Facilities Plan</b>   | <b>Responsible Party(ies)</b>  |
| Create a joint Town/Village comprehensive capital facilities planning process (page 33)                                    | Village & Town Boards  |
| Participate in regional planning for Sewer and Water infrastructure (page 33)  | Village & Town Boards  |
| <b>Action: Circulation Plan</b>  | <b>Responsible Party(ies)</b>  |
| Upgrade commercial & industrial zoning districts and associated development standards (page 35)                            | Zoning review committee/Village & Town planning boards /Village &Town boards                     |
| Establish land use policies that support multiple modes of transportation (page 36)  | Zoning review committee/Village & Town planning boards /Village &Town boards                     |
| <b>SECONDARY PRIORITY</b>  |  |
| <b>Action: Future Land Use Plan</b>  | <b>Responsible Party(ies)</b>  |
| Promote sites for light industry/commercial development (page 30)  | Zoning review committee in cooperation with SCOPED   |
| Create and implement policies to promote local agriculture (page 30)   | Village & Town Boards  |
| Provide for a variety of housing types and styles (page 31)  | Zoning review committee/Village & Town planning boards /Village &Town boards                     |
| <b>Action: Community Facilities Plan</b>   | <b>Responsible Party(ies)</b>  |
| Actively pursue opportunities for adaptive reuse of community facilities and/or consolidation of such facilities (page 33) | Village & Town Boards  |
| Create physical link between Route 14 and the Montour Falls Central Business District (page 34)                            | Village & Town Boards in cooperation with NYSDOT   |
| Continue to enhance park and recreation facilities (page 34)   | Village & Town Boards  |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Action: Circulation Plan</b>  | <b>Responsible Party(ies)</b>  |
| Establish a coordinated system of “wayfinding” signage throughout the Town and Village (page 35) | Village & Town Boards, Downtown property owners, Downtown merchants in cooperation with NYSDOT |
| <b>LONG-TERM PRIORITY</b>  |  |
| <b>Action: Community Facilities Plan</b>   | <b>Responsible Party(ies)</b>  |
| Develop pedestrian infrastructure linking neighborhoods to Downtown Montour Falls (page 34)      | Village & Town Boards, Downtown property owners, Downtown merchants                            |
| <b>Action: Circulation Plan</b>  | <b>Responsible Party(ies)</b>  |
| Explore opportunities for transit links (page 36)  | Village & Town Boards  |

## **IX. APPENDICES**

Demographic Data on Montour and Montour Falls

Keslering Inventory of Natural Assets

Listing of Historic Places

Survey Results

Plan Scenario Descriptions and Comments by Participants

Results of Youth Workshop

Bergmann Associates, RKG Associates, Steinmetz Planning Group. Montour Falls & Watkins Glen Downtown Improvement Project, 2005.