

# **Town of Catharine Comprehensive Plan 2015**



**Adopted May 2015**



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## Foreword

The citizens of Catharine are interested in improving their existing zoning policies to promote development that improves town services while maintaining the natural assets they enjoy.

As change and development happen throughout the region, the Town of Catharine recognizes the need to plan and prepare for historical and economic change in order to protect and support characteristics of our town that citizens value.

Beginning in 2010, a joint committee of citizens from the Town and the Village of Odessa began a process of surveying residents on the qualities of the town they valued or had concerns about. In the summer 2012, the Town of Catharine hired Julie Johnstone, a graduate student from Cornell's School of Planning who after a series of public information gathering meetings produced a rough draft of a document that summarized citizens' concerns and visions for land use, development, public services, and goals. During the fall of 2014, members of the Town Board and Planning Board met to synthesize the last few years of research and public input to create this Comprehensive Plan



Photo Credit: Richard Owlett

## Introduction

The Town of Catharine is located in the southeastern portion of Schuyler County. It shares a northern border with the Town of Hector, a western border with the Town of Montour, a southern border with Chemung County and the Town of Cayuta, and an eastern border with Tompkins County.

The Town is rural in character, with large areas of forest and farmland. The housing stock is predominantly single-family, and the businesses are family run. Residents and visitors benefit from the natural beauty, and recreational areas including Connecticut Hill, Texas Hollow, and Cayuta Lake. There is a public boat launch which provides public lake access, and it, like Connecticut Hill and Texas Hollow, is managed by the New York State department of Conservation.

Catharine's most recent population counts reports 1,762 residents including Village's population. The median age is 42.7, making it the third youngest town in the County. Of all the towns in Schuyler County, Catharine lost the largest percentage of its population over the past decade. This may be associated with the economic challenges facing the Town today. Catharine currently holds the second highest unemployment rate in the County at 10.6%, heavily influenced by the high unemployment rate among teens (over 45%). The percentage of residents living below poverty in Catharine (11.8%) is nearly one-third higher than the County's rate. Furthermore, the median household income for the Town is the third lowest in the County at \$46,701.

Despite the difficult economic conditions it faces, the Town of Catharine is a quaint place with plenty of outdoor activities, recreational areas, and rural pastures. Residents appreciate the small town feel offered by Catharine and value their access to clean water and air, as well as open natural areas.

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# History

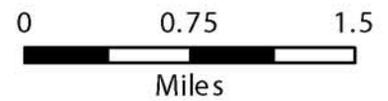
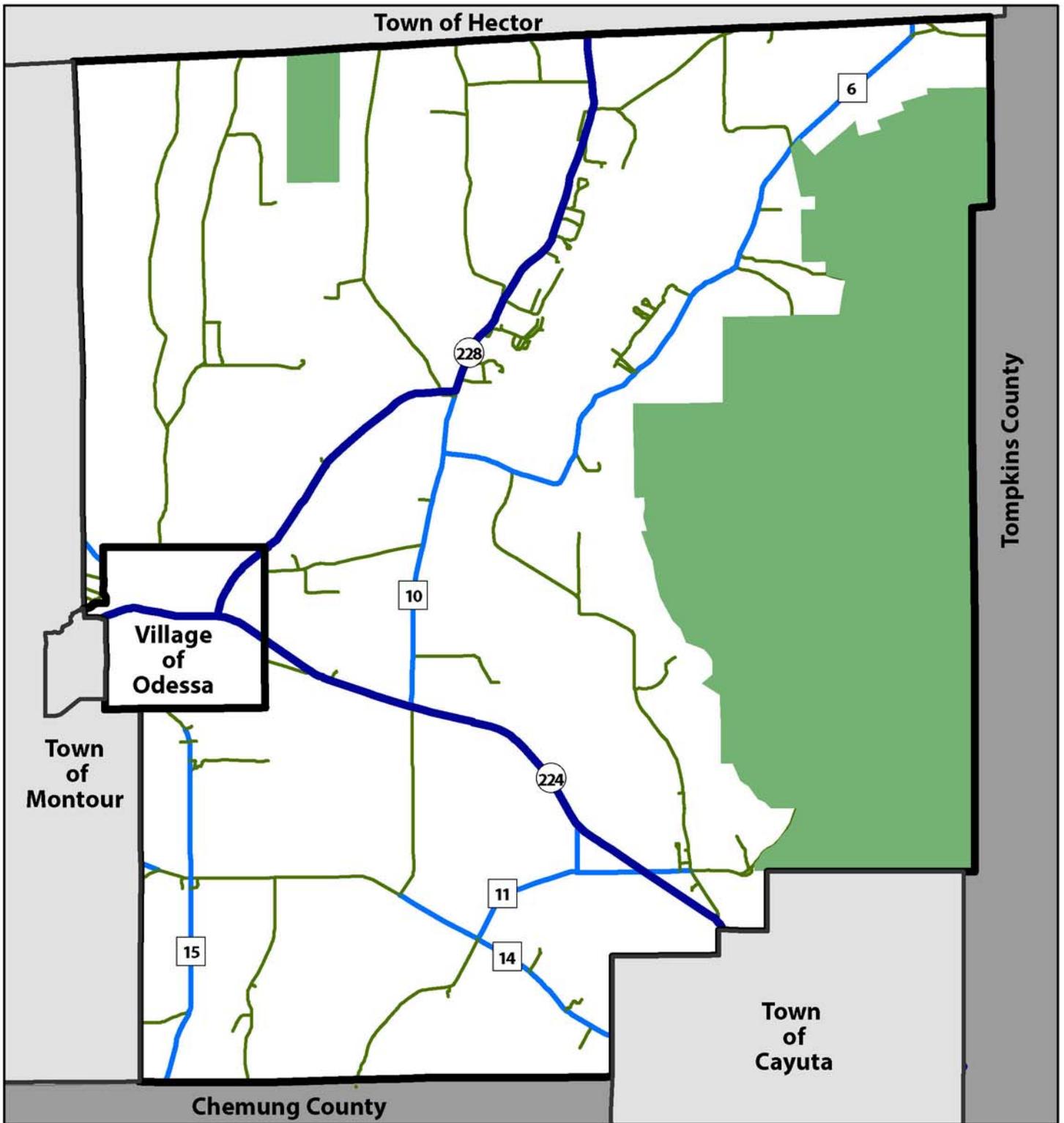


**Photos:** Alpine c. 1905 (top), Odessa c. 1910 (bottom)  
**Photos Provided by:** Schuyler County Historical Society

The Town of Catharine was established in 1798 after Sullivan’s military campaign and the Revolutionary War ended and non-native settlement became possible. Two land speculators had acquired all of the land currently in the Town from New York, with Jonathan Lawrence owning the eastern part and Robert Johnson the rest (it originally included the current Town of Montour as well). By 1825, Lawrence’s three sons built several mansions along Cayuta Lake, two of which remain today. The Lawrence’s and the Johnson’s sold lots to settlers, and these buyers established homesteads, farms, and businesses.

The Catharine’s Town- Cayuga Lake Indian Trail went through the Town connecting Seneca and Cayuga Lake. The hamlet of Johnson’s Settlement, now Catharine, was at a major east-west and north-south crossroads. The county’s first Methodist and Episcopal churches were built there, but the Chemung Canal, the railroads and the automobile eventually helped Alpine and then Odessa to outgrow Catharine Hamlet, with Odessa officially becoming a village in 1903

Starting in 1929, the area known as Connecticut Hill (most of its settlers had come from Connecticut) was deemed unsuitable for farming because of it’s marginal and sub-marginal soils and terrain. New York State and federal government acquired parcels, and the residents were relocated. It subsequently became the Connecticut Hill Wildlife Management Area, which includes land in the Town of Catharine and Tompkins County.



# Current Assessment

## Notable Landmarks and Features

### Natural Features

- Cayuta Lake
- Connecticut Hill Wildlife Management Area
- Finger Lakes Trail
- Gulf Road Trail
- Hinman Swamp
- Martin Nature Preserve
- Texas Hollow State Forest



Photos: Top Left - Connecticut Hill WMA [www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/9331.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/9331.html) ||| Top Right - Texas Hollow Pond, DEC ||| Bottom Left - Cayuta Lake, [www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com) ||| Bottom Right - Martin Nature Preserve, [www.flt.org](http://www.flt.org)

### Landmarks

- Methodist Church (Catharine)
- St. John's Episcopal Church
- Cayutaville Church
- Fontainebleau
- Lawrence Chapel
- White Gates



Photos: Top Left - Lawrence Chapel ||| Top Right - Fontainebleau ||| Bottom Left - Cayutaville Church, [http://drydenumc.org/TTWEB\\_files/page0009.htm](http://drydenumc.org/TTWEB_files/page0009.htm) ||| Bottom Right - St. John's Episcopal Church, [www.episcopalchurch.org](http://www.episcopalchurch.org)

### Places

- Catharine Park
- Hamlet of Catharine
- Schuyler County Veteran's Memorial Park

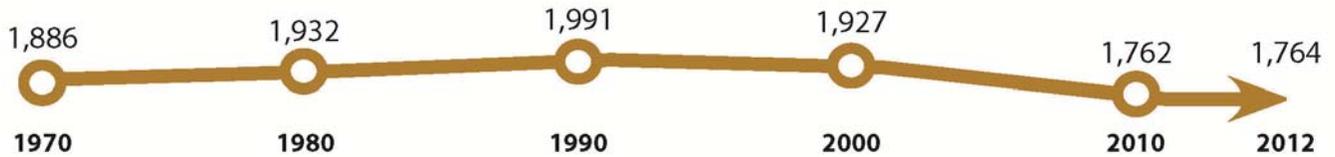


Photos: Top Left - Catharine Park [www.townofcatharine.com](http://www.townofcatharine.com) ||| Top Right— Hamlet of Catharine, Richard Owlett ||| Bottom— Schuyler County Veterans Park, [www.viewphotos.org](http://www.viewphotos.org), javajoe5

## Demographics

The Town of Catharine has consistently been the fourth most populous town in Schuyler County, while Odessa has traditionally been one of the smaller villages.

### Historic Population Counts

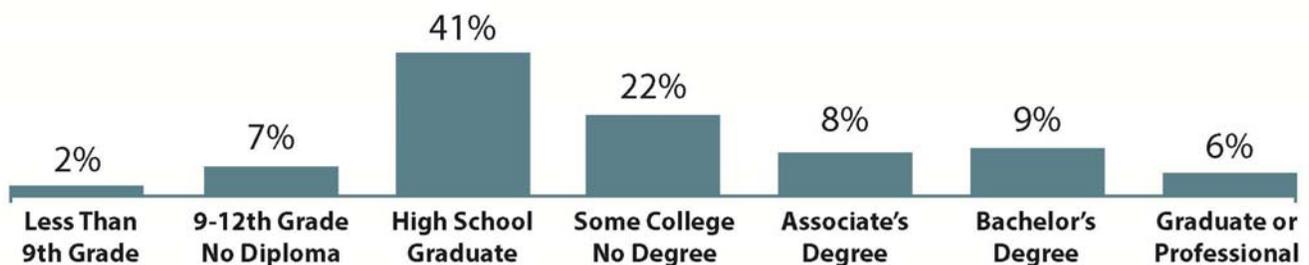


### Age Distribution



While projections suggest an overall stable population in Schuyler County through 2030, they find interesting age-specific demographic shifts. Most significantly, PAD projects a decrease in the 45-65 age group (2010 31.8% of population, 2030 25.2% of population). Coinciding with this decrease, they project that the 65+ category will swell from 17% of the total population in 2010 to 26.6% in 2030. Though it is a much smaller age group, the 85+ population is also expected to increase through 2030. Essentially, the overall population numbers will likely decline slightly. As the large population of Baby Boomers ages however there is not a counter balance of young professionals and new families to offset the increased need for services and resources for elder care which allow older residents the ability to age-in-place.

### Educational Attainment



90% of Catharine residents have earned a High School diploma or higher and 19.2% have earned a Bachelor's degree or higher compared to New York State 84.4% w/high school diploma, 32.1% w/ bachelor's degree and Schuyler County 87.4% w/high school diploma, 17.4% w/bachelor's degree

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## Land Use and Zoning

In order to adequately plan for future development, it is necessary to understand how land is currently used. An inventory of circulation infrastructure and patterns should be taken, and housing statistics must be reviewed. Sustainable planning aims to align appropriate land use along existing circulation infrastructure and nodes, which effectively reduces the need for large capital investments and elevates potential for alternate modes of transportation.

### Land Use

The map to the right illustrates the existing type land cover in Catharine and Odessa. Land cover illustrations help understand the extent and type of vegetation, type of water bodies and extent of development. Land use, alternatively, delineates what types of activities occur in a given place, regardless of the material that covers the land (ie. Industrial land use can occur on an impervious or forested land cover area). In Catharine, forested, shrub, cultivated crops, pastures and wetlands dominate the land cover typologies. Land cover in the Village of Odessa reflects its higher density, with primarily developed land and to a lesser extent pastures and cultivated crops.

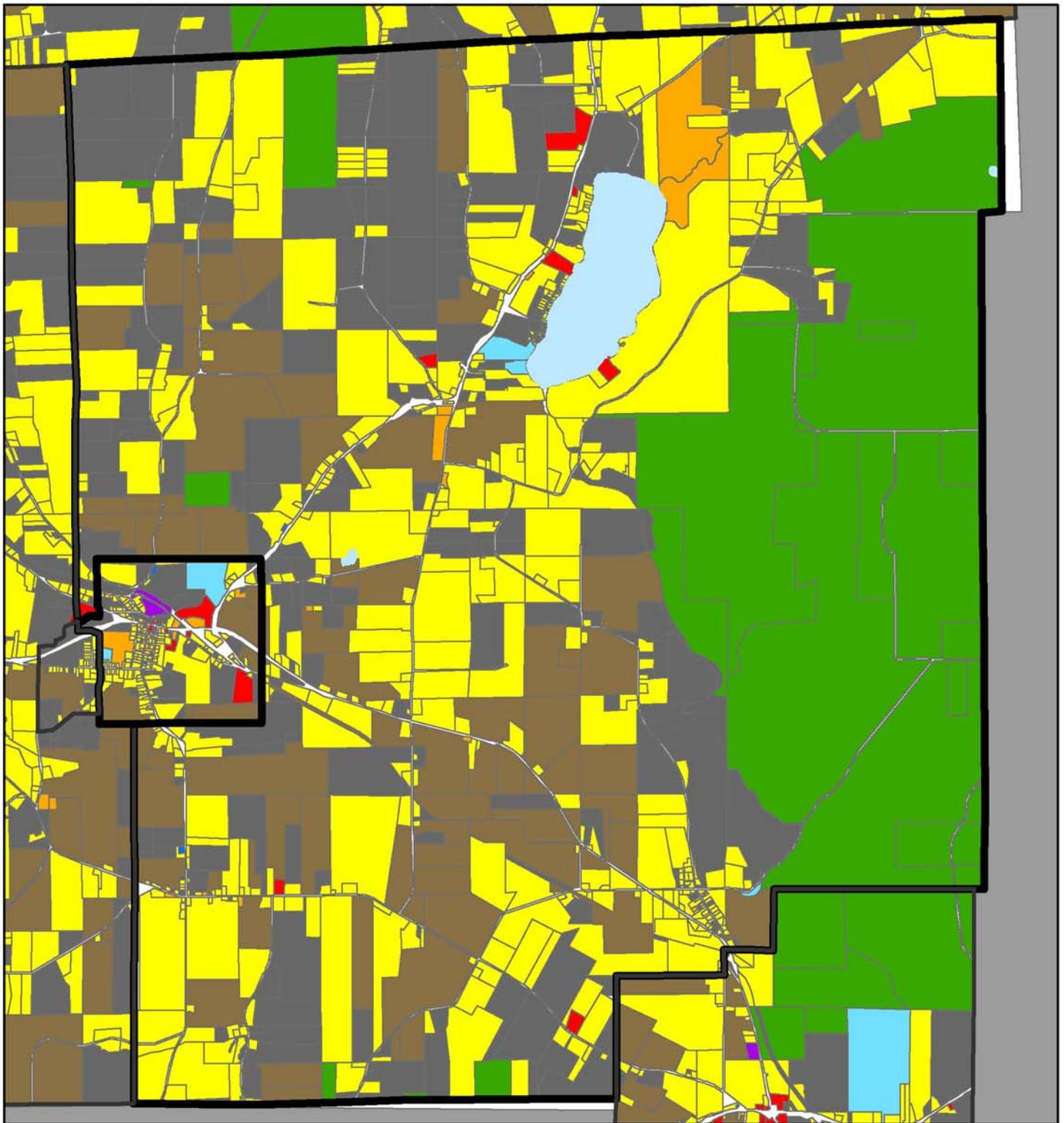
### Zoning

| Property Class                                    | Description   | Acres |
|---|---|-------|
| Agriculture                                       | Property used for the production of crops or livestock.   | 3,665 |
| Commercial  | Property used for the sale of goods and/or services. Also includes living accommodations such as hotels, motels, and apartments | 66    |
| Community Service                                 | Property used for the well being of the community   | 189   |
| Public Service                                    | Property used to provide services to the general public   | 2     |
| Recreation & Entertainment                        | Property used by groups for recreation, amusement, or entertainment.  | 33    |
| Residential                                       | Property used for human habitation.   | 6,674 |
| Vacant  | Property that is not in use, is in temporary use, or lacks permanent improvement.   | 4,944 |
| Wild, Forested, Conservation Lands & Public Parks | Reforested lands, preserves, and private hunting and fishing clubs  | 4,861 |

**Note:** These calculations do no account for parcels within the Village of Odessa.

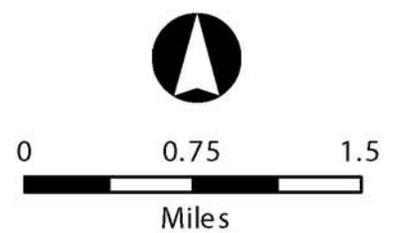
**Source:** Classifications: NYS Real Property Services, Property Type Classification & Ownership Codes Data: Schulyer County Tax Parcel Data, 2014,

Catharine has a zoning ordinance adopted in 1967 and is still currently in effect. It is expected that the zoning law will be updated in 2015. The zoning ordinance has divided the town into three current districts: One Family Residential Use, Agricultural Business Use and House Trailer Use. The ordinance also provided for the additional future use districts: Multi-Family Residential Use, Recreational Business Use and Industrial Use. The future-use districts have not been used as much; while the 'special use permit' process is used much more frequently to achieve development goals that do not fit into the three primary use districts.



Source: Schulyer County Tax Parcel Data, 2014

- Agriculture
- Commercial
- Community Services
- Industrial
- Public Service
- Recreation & Entertainment
- Residential
- Vacant Land
- Wild, Forested, Conservation Lands & Public Parks



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## Infrastructure

### Circulation & Transportation

#### Roads

The two major state routes through Catharine & Odessa are 228 and 224. The map on page 9 depicts the circulation pattern for the town. In terms of public transportation, there are a few bus routes and on-demand services available.

The local roads are in a condition that is comparable for rural towns in the area and appear to be adequate for the current traffic load. However there is a concern that expansion within the large-scale farming and forestry industries could have an a significant negative impact on local roads which the Town Board and Planning Board should consider in approving any new development.

#### Public Transportation

In terms of public transportation, there are a few bus routes and on-demand services available. Through Schuyler County Transit the only bus route starts at Odessa Municipal Building and goes through Montour and Watkins Glen and finally ends in Burdett. Although this is the only route serving Schuyler County, there are transit connections in nearby Town of Cayuta (in Alpine Junction) which serve Tompkins and Chemung County destinations. Additionally, Schuyler County Transit provides Dial-A-Ride transportation, which is available to all county residents and has expanded coverage for disabled persons. As of now, most likely due to sparse development pattern, formal bikeways or bike lanes do not exist in Catharine or Odessa. However, there is high potential to connect the Finger Lakes Trail to the Catharine Valley Trail and future studies should assess where and how this could happen.

### Water & Wastewater Treatment

#### Water

Properties supply their own water with individual wells. Most of Odessa is served by a public water system. The water system was built in 1938, and serves 810 people through 290 connections. However, it is outdated, and has become a growing concern in recent years because it, along with the lack of a village wastewater treatment system, stymies economic development in the village. Odessa upgraded the system in 2000 to include a new water storage tank, two groundwater supply wells and newly installed water mains.

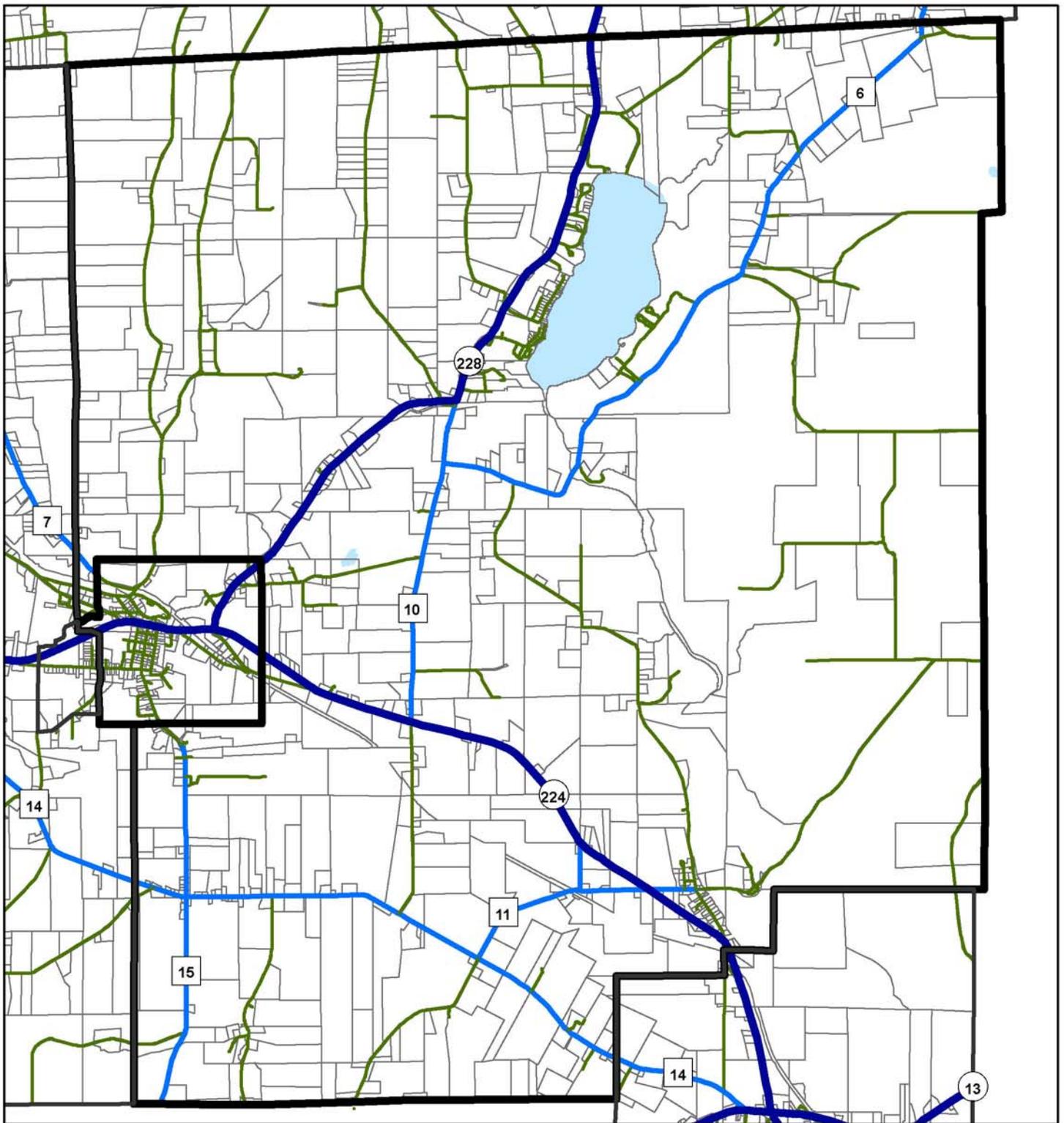
A recent study assessing possibilities for green infrastructure wastewater management cited Odessa's aged infrastructure as the cause of groundwater contamination issues.

#### Wastewater Treatment

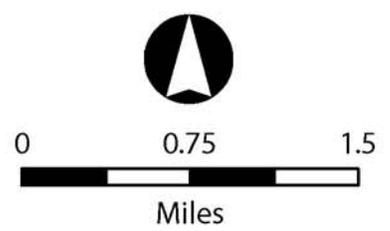
Wastewater treatment for Catharine residents and businesses is performed by individual septic tanks and drainage fields. Some campgrounds still store wastewater in cisterns.

#### Internet

Broadband internet is not widely available in the more secluded rural areas, due to lack of cable and fiber connections. Those properties with services available via cables systems or DSL have good high-speed internet access. The Southern Tier Network has brought a multi-region fiber-optic trunk line to Schuyler County in 2014 through grant support that makes future infrastructure expansion possible, although it does not currently reach into the town. With wide broadband accessibility, the county could become much more attractive to potential residents and businesses.



- State Roads
- Local Road
- County Road
- WaterBody



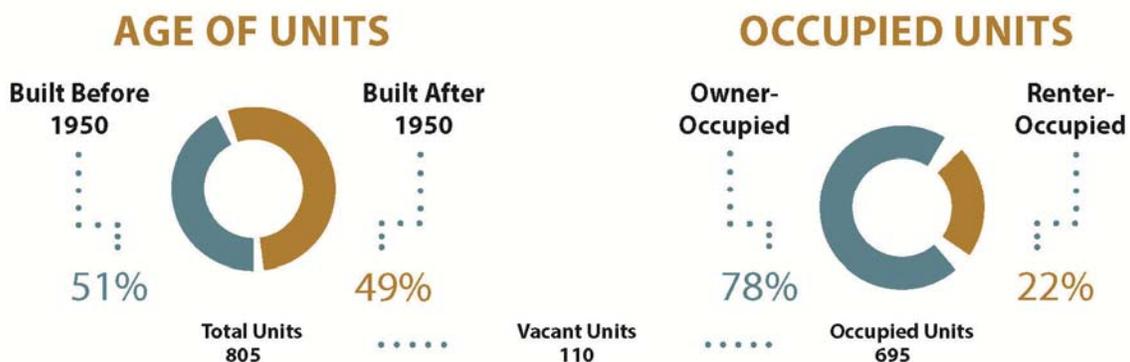
## Housing

Based on the 2013 American Community Survey (ACS), the Town of Catharine has a total of 805 housing units, 78% of which are owner occupied. In comparison the total number of housing units in Schuyler County is 9,455, with 60% being owner-occupied.

High home-ownership rates are often considered an indication of community and neighborhood stability. The Town should strive to maintain a balance of ownership options within the housing stock, which will meet a wider variety of their resident's needs.

In terms of rental vacancy rates, Schuyler County currently averages 20% vacancy, while the Town of Catharine averages 11% and the Village of Odessa averages 5%. Both Odessa and Catharine fare relatively well compared with Schuyler County vacancy averages. Though a certain percentage vacancy is desirable, if the rate is too high then it demonstrates lack of demand for housing.

### Current Housing Characteristics



### Distribution of Home Values



Home values provide a general gauge of the desirability of a community. In addition, maintaining home values is important to communities because of the contribution to its tax base these values have in the form of property taxes. With 54% of homes in Catharine valued at less than \$100,000; the Town needs to focus on economic policies and efforts that support existing property values.



## Community Facilities & Services

Public services and facilities provide a stable social backbone for communities. Like much of Schuyler County, the Town shares many emergency, fire and police services, with the Schuyler County Emergency Management Services overseeing most service provision. The Schuyler County Volunteer Ambulance Association provides emergency medical services. The Odessa Volunteer Fire Department provides emergency fire services. The County Sheriff oversees and supplies crime oversight and prevention.

As part of the Southern Tier Library System, the Dutton S. Peterson Memorial Library in Odessa is one of four in Schuyler County. The other three are located in Hector, Montour Falls and Watkins Glen. The library is a great community asset as it provides other services beyond book lending, such as free wireless internet at public computers, photocopying, and children's educational services etc.

### Education

The Odessa Montour School District serves the families and children of Catharine. The school is often considered a focal point of the community.

The schools' have approximately 745 students. Despite that one-eighth of the students have been classified with a disability and almost half qualify for free or reduced school lunches, the high school has a low drop-out rate of 2% for the 2012-2013 school year. For the 2014-2015 school year Odessa spent \$19,709 per student, compared to the state average of \$22,552. The 4 and 5-year graduation rates are comparable to the New York State rates. Nearly two-thirds of the graduates attended a 2 or 4-year college or enlisted in the military. During that year a staff of 60 taught 231 classes. This is a reduction from the 2010-11 year with 70 teachers and 271 classes. Shrinking enrollments and services at the schools concerns residents.

### Crime & Safety

In the Year 2014, there were approximately 30 Vehicle and Traffic citations, and approximately 40 Penal Law citations. The Vehicle and Traffic citations were combinations of DWI, and minor vehicle infractions. The Penal Law citations involved Harassment, Violation of Probation charges, Disorderly Conduct, Possession of Marijuana and one Arson charge.

Fire Protection is provided to the Town of Catharine by the Odessa Fire and Rescue. Between 4/1/12-3/31/13 there were 23 Fire Calls, 150 Rescue calls, 24 hazardous conditions calls (wires down, etc.), 25 false alarms, 9 service/weather calls (cellar pumping), 40 Mutual Aid calls to other departments and 26 Motor Vehicle Accidents. OFD requested mutual aid from other companies a total of 27 times. The members of the Fire Department spent a total of 2295 hours in training and a total of 7,584 hours in total (fire calls, training, meetings, etc)

Overall, the Town of Catharine is a safe place to live and raise a family.



## Natural Resources & Conservation

### Forest/ Conservation Resources

The Department of Environmental Conservation controls Connecticut Hill Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and Texas Hollow State Forest. The two state forests in Catharine as well as forest stands on private properties provide access to recreational opportunities and produce many environmental benefits. Residents and visitors have close access to a variety of activities such as hunting, hiking, and wildlife observation. This, in turn, contributes to the local economy. In addition, these forested areas absorb carbon emitted by industry and automobiles, capturing a large amount of air and water pollutants. Working to protect the forested areas of the town will contribute not only to the pristine air and water quality of the area, but will ensure that the tourism sector of the local economy is protected.

Catharine also hosts a small portion of Texas Hollow's sphagnum bog (the only one in Schuyler County).

The Martin Nature Preserve on Steam Mill Road is protected by the Finger Lakes Land Trust. With 110 acres of woodlands, the Preserve hosts a 300-year old white oak boasting a 5 ft. diameter, which is located on the banks of Catlin Mill Creek.

### Water Resources

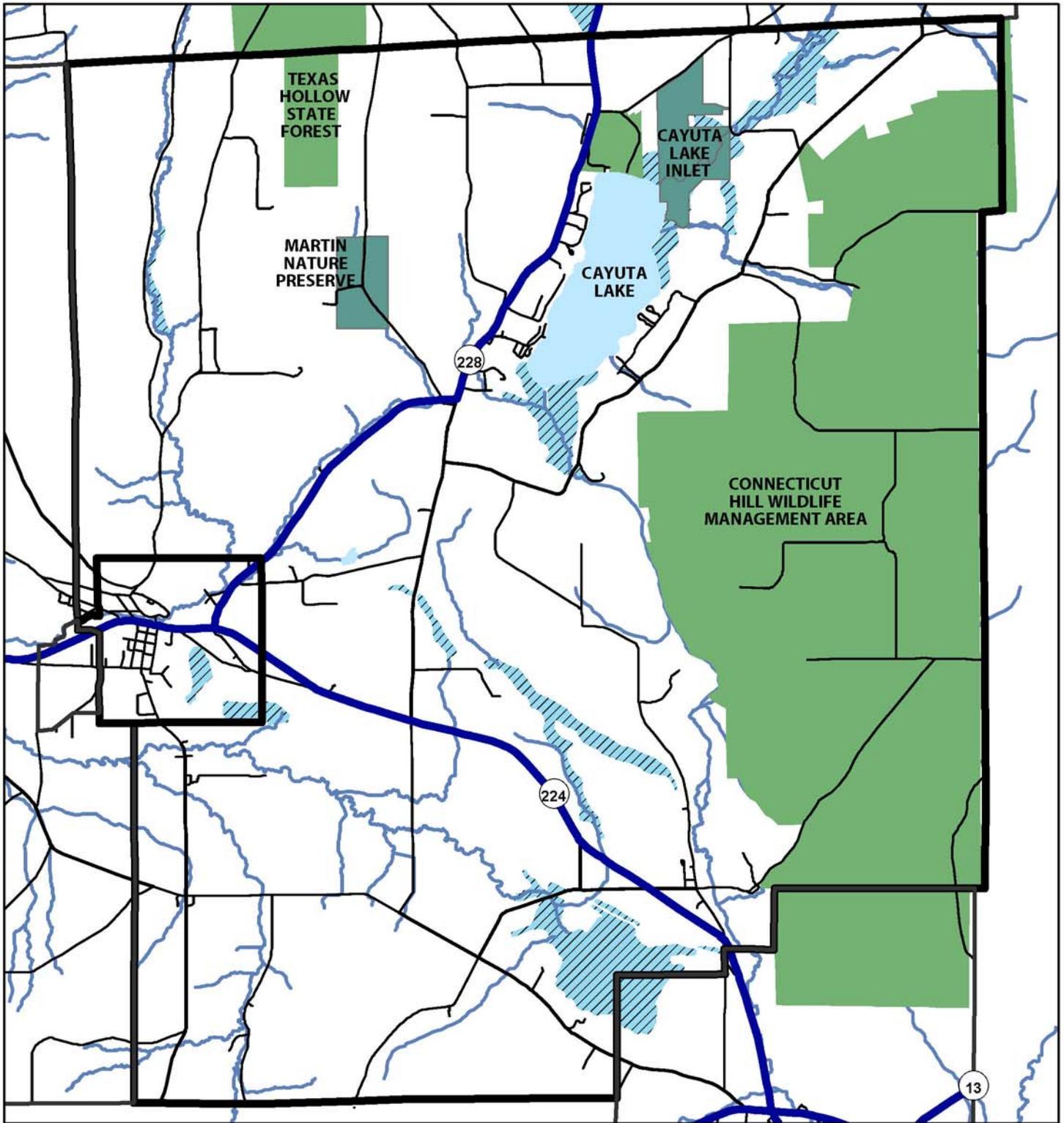
Cayuta Lake is a shallow (< 24 feet) eutrophic lake, meaning that it has high biological productivity. Because of excessive nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus, Cayuta Lake supports diverse aquatic plants. The task group noted that the lake has a nutrient load related with bottom sediments, runoff from agriculture, and breached septic systems. While the nutrient load is quite high, Cayuta Lake still hosts a good fish population, and it is popular for boating and swimming. Growth of waterweeds and the potential for invasive species, especially Hydrilla, is a significant worry. There is one DEC public access point on the north end.

The Cayuta Lake Inlet (Cornell Plantations James W. and Helene D. Allen Wetland Preserve) spans 95 acres of meadow, upland forest, swamp forest and wetland shrub thicket. Spongilla is a globally rare fresh water sponge found only in the Inlet and in Siberia, which flourishes in streams with mud or silt likely containing shale with calcium carbonate (calcareous.)

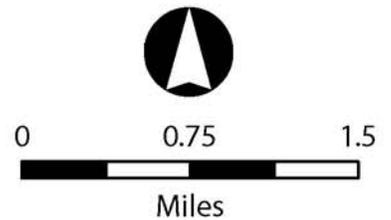
Cayuta Lake drains into several deep gorges, affording nice vistas and unique habitats. There are three outlet gorges ("The Gulf" "Lost Gorge" and "Hendershott Gorge"), of which Hendershott is the deepest and hosts primordial bottomland hardwood swamp flora and fauna. Cayuta Creek drains into the Susquehanna River.

There are a variety of wetland types throughout Catharine and Odessa: Lacustrine, Palustrine and Riverine. Catlin Mill Creek and Mitchell Hollow Creek run through Odessa and Catharine and ultimately drain into the Catharine Creek which hosts an impressive stock of trout.

Hinman Swamp, south of State Route 224, east of County Route 11 hosts an abundant diversity of plant and animal species. Specifically, Green Heron tend to breed here, though other avian species utilize the swamp during migration and dispersal due to convenient snags.



-  State Roads
-  DEC Land
-  Wetlands
-  Private Organization Owned Natural Land
-  Streams/Creeks





## Recreational

Catharine has a variety of recreational resources within close proximity. The New York DEC manages two major recreational areas: Connecticut Hill State Game Management Area and the Texas Hollow State Forest. The DEC also oversees the only public boat launch and access point to Cayuta Lake. The Finger Lakes Trail, a hiking trail which spans 558 miles, passes directly through Catharine via Connecticut Hill and through Texas Hollow. The trail attracts hikers and outdoor enthusiasts from several counties, particularly trail user's seeking a 'wilderness type' experience (motorized vehicles & bicycles prohibited).



The public boat launch is adjacent to marsh property owned by Cornell University, near where Cayuta Lake Inlet feeds into the lake. The DEC manages the land to the west of the public boat launch. On the southern end of the lake, Cayuta Creek flows out towards the Susquehanna River. The land surrounding Cayuta Lake is privately owned and managed, with year-round and seasonal private residences. Additionally, there are two private RV parks, one on east side of the lake and the other on the west side.

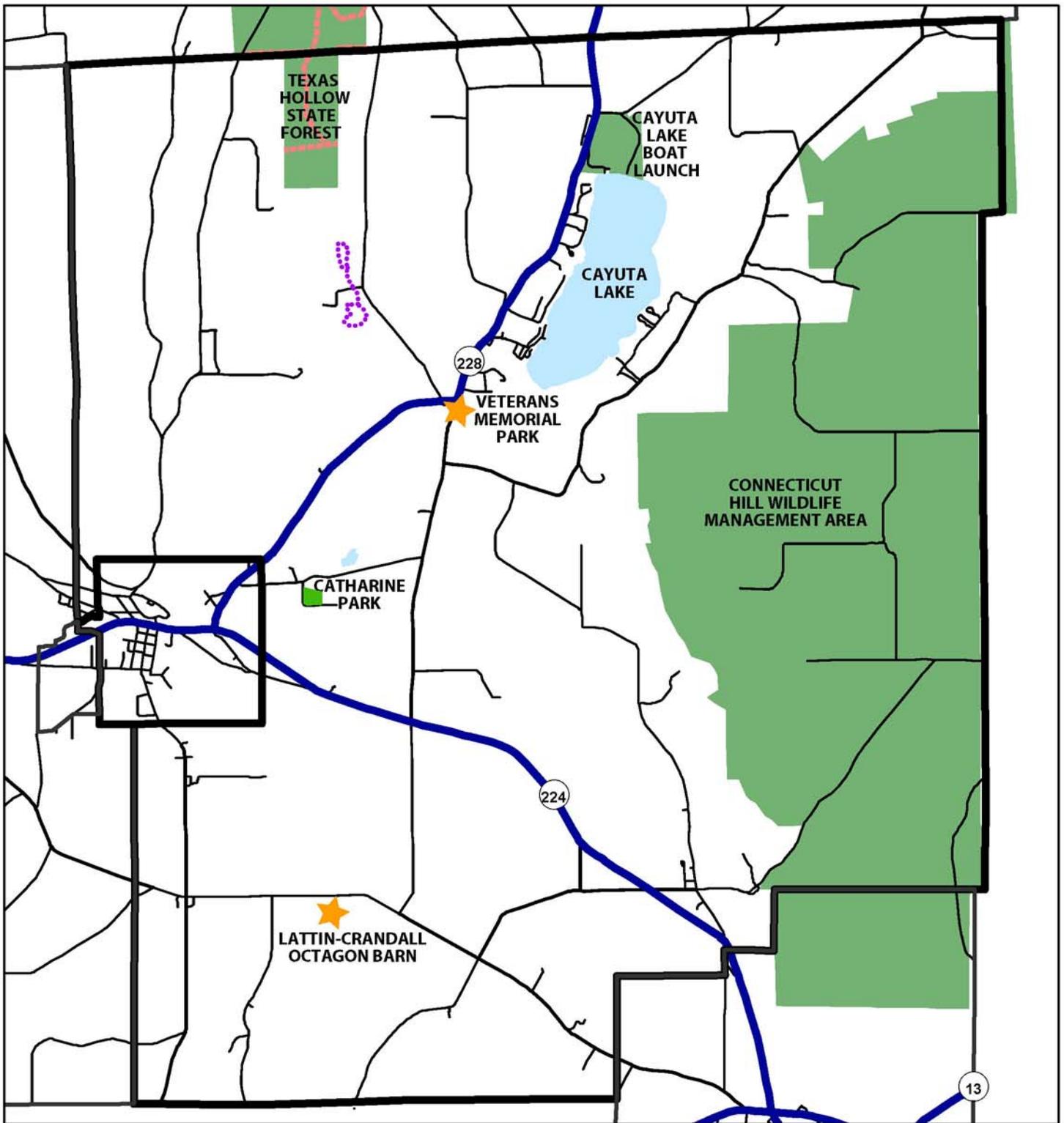
Catharine Park was started in 1962 with a resolution by the board on December 5, 1962 and a bond received from the

Finger Lakes Park commission and NYS Conservation Department. The town had to pay back 25% of the total of \$5931.30 so the Town paid \$1482.83 for the 56.61 acres of parkland. The park has 2 picnic pavilions, barbeque grills, a drinking fountain, ball diamond, and playground. The trails around the park are being developed in conjunction with BOCES to be used for plant and tree identification classes.

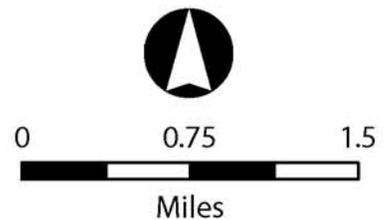
## Cultural Resources

Catharine and Odessa have a variety of cultural resources. Primary social organizations include the American Legion, the Schuyler County Veterans Memorial Park, the Boy Scouts of America and the American Heritage Girls Club. There are several religious institutions located in Catharine as well. Their buildings are quite prominent, and the congregations provide a certain amount of social organization and cohesion adding a great deal to the overall character of the community.

Finally, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Lattin-Crandall Octagon Barn in Catharine is cherished, unique landmark. William S. Lattin built the barn in 1893 and it was added to the Register in 1984.



-  State Roads
-  DEC Land
-  Martin Preserve Trails
-  DEC Trails
-  Point of Interest





## Agriculture

The predominant crops in Catharine and Odessa are hay crops and corn. There is also potential to cultivate hops in Catharine. Slope suitability and soil quality considerations should guide where and to what extent the land is used (poorer soils can be ideal for hay, less agricultural production on slopes leading to water bodies). There is one large-scale dairy operation that dominates the landscape. Several small dairies and many other small, family-owned artisanal farms benefit from increased interest in local foods.

### Agriculture Districts

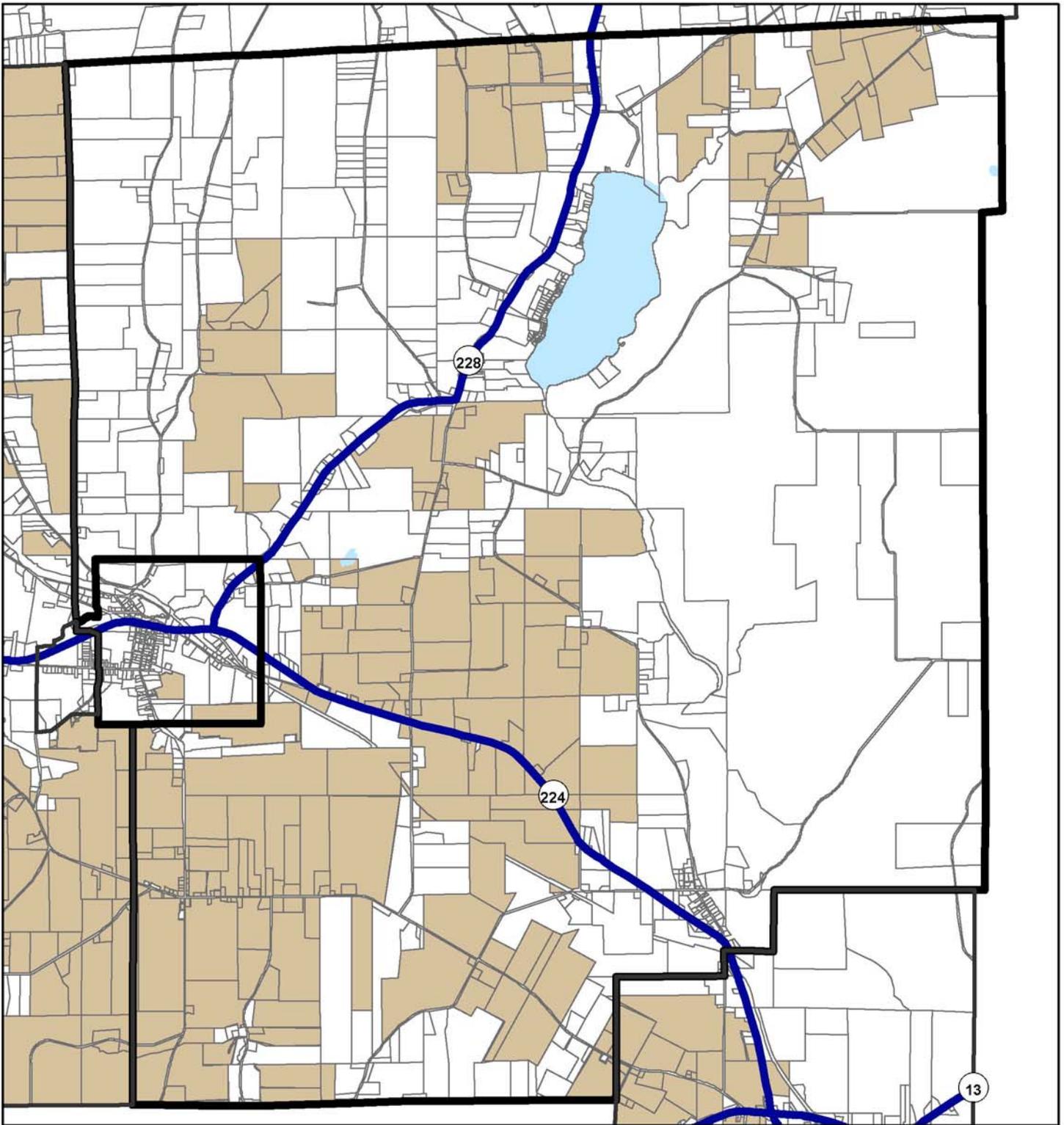
In Schuyler County, there are three agricultural use districts. The Towns of Catharine, Cayuta and Montour comprise District 3, as certified by the New York Department of Agriculture and Markets on 1/31/11. The map on page 17 illustrates parcels which are part of District 3 and are therefore eligible for certain benefits and protections from the State of New York.

### Agriculture and Water Quality and Quantity

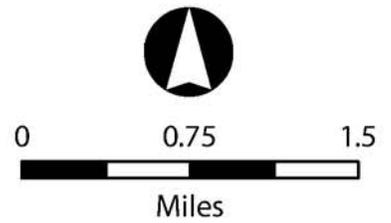
Whether it is a small or large farm it is important that these farms have the income to implement quality conservation practices such as creating buffers between crops or animals and streams to best protect local water sources. While depletion of groundwater in the Town of Catharine and the Southern Tier is currently not a concern, practicing water conservation in all uses will ensure that local wells do not run dry. Larger scale farming activities that include a concentration of animals such as livestock or poultry farms may need to work with New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC) to receive a General Permit for Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs). These permits are necessary in order to comply with state and federal water quality requirements. In order to comply, farmers in Catharine should work with the Schuyler County Soil and Water Conservation District, NYS Agriculture and Markets and NYS DEC.

Agricultural issues such as manure on the roads washing into roadside drainage and manure spreading in a close proximity to private wells are difficult to regulate and enforce. Agricultural activity is protected by State, County and Town Right to Farm laws. The best way to protect private water supplies is to separate uses of residential and agricultural nature through zones and set-backs within zoning. By including set-backs of agricultural activities to residential wells in the zoning, the Town code enforcement officer will have the ability to enforce required setbacks and thus protect private wells.

The Town recognizes farming is an essential enterprise and an important industry, which enhances the economic base, protects the natural environment and quality of life, and demands minimal public services in the Town of Catharine. However, as the agricultural industry continues to expand and land becomes increasingly scarce, it will be imperative to not only protect existing farmland but also balance the need for additional farmland with the need for housing and community functions throughout the town to maintain a high quality of life for all of the Town's residents and businesses.



- State Roads
- WaterBody
- Ag District #3



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## Economy, Employment & Tourism

Agriculture and the natural environment continue to attract visitors to small businesses in town. Examples of these include the Fontainebleau Inn, Cool-lea Camp and Lake Grove Park which benefit from Cayuta Lake and Sunset View Creamery that attracts agri-tourism through the Finger Lakes Cheese Trail and annual festival. Seasonal hunting, and fishing also attract visitors to the area.

The median household income in Catharine is \$46,701, which compares to the New York State median of \$55,603 and Schuyler County median of \$47,404. The poverty rate in Catharine is 12% (New York State 14.2%, Schuyler County 8.3%).

According to the American Community Survey for 2006-2010 (the latest), there are 813 workers in the Town of Catharine civilian labor force. Of those Catharine workers, 35% (291) work within Schuyler County and 65% (522) outside Schuyler. The unemployment rate in Catharine is 8.2% and in Odessa is 11.3% (New York State 7.5%, Schuyler County 8.3%). (Source ACS 2006-2010). Largest employer would be Odessa-Montour Central School. Another large employer would be Parmenter Inc. Other industries within the Town include forestry and gravel mining.

## Guiding Principles:

The Comprehensive Plan Committee put considerable thought into what principles should guide the town. At the beginning of the process, numerous ideas earned common support, but after much discussion and analysis, the group concluded these all fell into three essential areas of importance the Plan must endeavor to promote. These areas represent the fundamental visions and goals of the Town, and should therefore underpin actions and laws the town decides to implement. Each principle is valued as equally important, so any implementation item that focuses on one principle as opposed to another should not be thought of as superior to other items.

- **Economic Development** – Economic health is essential to Catharine’s character and viability, so it is essential to foster and sustain the prosperity of the town’s residents. Town actions or regulations should promote this goal by increasing employment opportunities, promoting local ownership, the equitable wealth accumulation within the community, and by improving the quality and availability of affordable goods and services.
- **Natural Environment** – The health and quality of the local natural environment is fundamental to the Town’s character, its wellbeing, and its quality of life. Town actions or regulations should sustain or improve the cleanliness and quality of the town’s air, water, and soils by protecting its natural habitats, ecosystems, and watersheds, and sustaining the quality of its views and rural character.
- **Town Services** – Catharine’s quality of life depends upon its basic infrastructure and the services provided for our residents’ essential needs. Town investments, services, and regulations should effectively and efficiently promote the community’s health, safety, and welfare. Services should support or positively influence the basic needs of transportation, communications, education, energy supply, building safety, water services, waste disposal, and civil, social and recreational activities, among other functions.

These principles may sometimes be in tension with each other, so the promotion of one may well involve trade-offs with the others. The best action items will promote all three principles simultaneously, or support one without hurting the others. The goal of the Town’s decision-makers should attempt to balance all three at once.

# Comprehensive Plan Objectives and Implementation Plan

The following actions were developed based upon review of constituent feedback, assessment of town needs and analysis of other comprehensive plans. All potential actions were collected, organized, prioritized and the resulting actions were compiled into the three categories of:

- Zoning and Land Use,
- Services and Infrastructure
- Quality of Life and Community.

## Zoning and Land Use

### Objective:

**Update and improve town zoning in alignment with the comprehensive plan goals. These updates will address regulatory controls required to support reasonable quality of life standards for all town residents, manage development activities and conserve and preserve the town's natural assets.**

### Implementation Actions

|   | Actions   | Timing     | Economic Development | Natural Environment | Town Services | Action (A) or Influence (I) |
|---|---|------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 | Identify and protect soils through land-use regulations   | Short Term | X                    | X                   |               | A/I                         |
| 2 | Protect viewsheds and watersheds  | Short Term | X                    | X                   |               | A/I                         |
| 3 | Protect lake environment with effective and appropriate development regulations.  | Short Term | X                    | X                   |               | A                           |
| 4 | Manage industrial development (i.e. power generation, agricultural, etc.) to appropriate development sites capable of supporting industrial needs while balancing competing town goals. | Short Term | X                    | X                   | X             | A                           |
| 5 | Ensure that local regulations and permit procedures appropriately balance agricultural activities with the needs of the community   | Short Term | X                    | X                   | X             | A                           |
| 6 | Define & direct business and residential development to appropriate areas that will leverage municipal services, existing hamlets and protect resident's quality of life.               | Short Term | X                    | X                   | X             | A                           |
| 7 | Establish laws to rectify health & safety concerns and address neglected properties   | Short Term | X                    | X                   | X             | A                           |
| 8 | Manage housing quality, density and diversity through appropriate regulations   | Short Term | X                    | X                   | X             | A                           |
| 9 | Preserve historical and architectural value of appropriate sites and structures.  | Short Term | X                    | X                   |               | A                           |

## Services and Infrastructure

### Objective:

**Develop and maintain appropriate Catharine Town services and encourage development and support of essential public and private provided services.**

### Implementation Actions

|    | Actions  | Timing    | Economic Development | Natural Environment | Town Services | Action (A) or Influence (I) |
|----|--|-----------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|
| 1  | Provide and/or Promote the health, safety, and welfare of residents  | Ongoing   | X                    |                     | X             | A/I                         |
| 2  | Safeguard residents and property from flooding hazards   | Ongoing   | X                    | X                   | X             | A/I                         |
| 3  | Maintain roadways necessary for safe transportation  | Ongoing   | X                    |                     | X             | A/I                         |
| 4  | Promote transportation options between residential, recreational and commercial centers  | Ongoing   | X                    | X                   | X             | I                           |
| 5  | Provide consistent, reasonable and lawful code enforcement   | Ongoing   | X                    | X                   | X             | A                           |
| 6  | Foster development of diverse housing options including rentals and "age-in-place" opportunities                                 | Long Term | X                    |                     |               | I                           |
| 7  | Encourage development of high speed internet accessibility and publicly available WiFi hot spots                                 | Ongoing   | X                    |                     | X             | A/I                         |
| 8  | Provide effective and efficient town communications, leveraging appropriate media and technology                                 | Ongoing   | X                    | X                   | X             | A                           |
| 9  | Collaborate with area governments and institutions to improve service efficiency.  | Ongoing   | X                    | X                   | X             | I                           |
| 10 | Pursue green technologies and energy conservation to maximize environmental sustainability and minimize our environmental impact | Ongoing   | X                    | X                   | X             | A/I                         |
| 11 | Encourage and expand recycling   | Ongoing   | X                    | X                   | X             | A/I                         |

## Quality of Life and Community

### Objectives

**Promote public and private activities that develop and sustain an appropriate quality of life for our residents. These activities include enabling and encouraging civic and municipal community events, recreational and leisure activities, and activities of civic virtue.**

### Implementation Actions

|   | <b>Actions</b>   | <b>Timing</b> | <b>Economic Development</b> | <b>Natural Environment</b> | <b>Town Services</b> | <b>Action (A) or Influence (I)</b> |
|---|--|---------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 | Increase utilization of town assets (i.e. town park and town hall) that enhance community value.   | Ongoing       | X                           | X                          | X                    | A/I                                |
| 2 | Encourage and promote civic, social, recreational and leisure activities   | Ongoing       | X                           | X                          | X                    | I                                  |
| 3 | Improve signage for all recreational services  | Long Term     |                             | X                          | X                    | A/I                                |
| 4 | Promote town sites and features including Cayuta Lake, Connecticut Hill Wildlife Management Preserve, Finger Lakes Trail, Catharine Park, etc. | Ongoing       | X                           | X                          | X                    | A/I                                |
| 5 | Develop trails that can be utilized for educational and recreational activities  | Long Term     | X                           | X                          | X                    | A/I                                |

# Comprehensive Plan Challenges and Mitigation

It is recognized that all plans must adapt to varying conditions and circumstances. This section attempts to anticipate and respond to those changes that are most likely to impact the viability and effectiveness of our Comprehensive Plan.

| Challenge  | Examples  | Mitigation   |
|--|---|--|
| Activities generated by external influences moving too fast for the town to respond.                                       | Large industries such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Oil and gas</li> <li>– Wind</li> <li>– Industrial development (included agricultural development)</li> <li>– Natural and man-made disasters</li> <li>– Waste disposal</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Periodically assess town environment to identify potential plan vulnerabilities.</li> <li>– Proactively engage potential disruptive industries and influences to assess exposure to disruptive conditions.</li> <li>– Proactively engage county, state and other resources for council and advice.</li> </ul> |
| Distraction and complacency allows us to drift and/or deviate from our Plan.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Board decisions are made that do not align with the Plan’s objectives.</li> <li>– Funding is not identified to advance planning priorities.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Incorporate periodic review of the Plan in our annual budget development process.</li> <li>– Annually assess development priorities and identify funding resources.</li> </ul>  |
| Town constituent priorities change that fundamentally challenge the premise and assumptions upon which this Plan is based. | Constituent pressure to not enforce zoning and building code enforcement.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Conduct periodic plan reviews with Town residents</li> <li>– Identify themes and opinions that differ from the Plan assumptions and assess if Plan updates are required.</li> </ul>   |
| Unanticipated social and/or demographic changes  | Appreciable changes to the town workforce, criminal activity (drugs), town health conditions.   | This risk requires similar response as the first risk (external influences) identified above.  |

# **Appendix A**

## **Process**

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In 2010, members of the Town of Catharine and Village of Odessa's respective Planning Boards formed the Joint Comprehensive Plan Sub-Committee. The Subcommittee's goals were to assess the existing planning context (documents, mechanisms etc), gauge and analyze citizen/business owner opinions, engage the community in creating the comprehensive plan and ultimately adopt a Joint Comprehensive Plan to guide development for the coming decades.

## **2011 Survey**

The first task was to take a public opinion survey. The survey (mailed and available online) asked residents/business owner a variety of questions. Of the approximately 2600 Town and Village residents, 6% (or 172 people) responded to the survey. The following paragraphs summarize the types of questions, responses to those questions and similarities and differences between Catharine/Odessa respondents.

The survey asked questions regarding: why chose to live in Catharine/Odessa, what challenges Catharine/Odessa face, quality of public services, priorities for local government review, priorities for local government spending, priorities for law/enforcement, development priorities, policy/program priorities, Town/Village zoning, priorities for Catharine Park and demographics of respondents.

Respondent profile:

172 responses

36% Village of Odessa (60), 51% Town of Catharine (118), 13% Other (5)

82% homeowners, 5% renters, 2% Other

87% Lived in their home 20 years or more

## **Public Visioning Meeting (6/20/12)**

This meeting intended to provide Catharine and Odessa residents an opportunity to voice primary concerns and opinions on a variety of topics. Participants broke up into several small groups, with one note-taker, and had timed discussions on the following topics: community facilities & infrastructure, agriculture, natural resources & cultural resources, transportation, tourism & business development, housing, land use, government & services and social concerns. The primary objective was to have small enough groups that each participant could voice opinions, concerns and suggestions. The appendix contains all notes and materials from this meeting.

## **Land Use Charrette (6/27/12)**

The purpose of the land use charrette was to engage participants in shaping future land development. Participants were asked to identify places they highly valued, to develop a vision statement for their land use plan and to make bubble diagram land use maps. General in nature, two groups produced land use maps and created their own land use categories to fit their development objectives. The two groups were asked to present their land use map to each other and state how the categories/placement of land use typologies support their vision for Catharine/Odessa.

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## **Goal-Setting & Vision Development Meeting (7/18/12)**

The purpose of the goal-setting meeting was to conduct a SWOC analysis, based on all that was gleaned from the survey, visioning meeting and land use charrette, and translate that into goals for the future. Participants were asked to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges for Catharine and Odessa. Once the SWOC was completed, the group collectively articulated several overarching goals, some of which aim to fortify identified strengths and some of which aim to guard against threats. The appendix contains full notes from the SWOC. The goals identified in this meeting are developed in the next section.

## **Comprehensive Plan Working Document Review (8/15/12)**

The purpose of the working document review meeting was to elicit feedback on the CP vision statement, goals and objectives. Attendees reviewed together the statement and goals and were given opportunities to provide verbal and written feedback. As a result of feedback, the vision statement incorporated more references to Catharine and Odessa's cultural history and to abundant recreational opportunities. Also, the goals expanded to incorporate children and family-oriented objectives (parks, recreation, and activities) and historic preservation objectives. Full notes from this meeting are in the Appendix.

## **2014 Comprehensive Task Force (9/2014- 3/2015)**

The Comprehensive Task Force began meeting on September 2014 and drew together the information gathered from all of the meetings held prior. Information was gathered from the County Comprehensive Plan meetings, the Charettes held in the Town of Catharine, and historical information.



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# **Appendix B**

## **2012 Comprehensive Plan Working Documents**

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## “Natural Resources” defined

In order to maintain the quality of life that residents value so much it is imperative to protect and preserve Catharine & Odessa’s natural resources. Speaking of natural resources in very broad terms (vegetation, water bodies, watersheds, soil, wildlife), stakeholders identified their importance on several levels, from economic dependence on ecological balance and health (farms, agriculture etc) to placing value on recreational opportunities in close proximity. Whatever the point of view, stakeholders almost unanimously value the rural pace of life and place high priority on protecting what makes it such.

### Goal #1: Watershed Quality

As mentioned in the background section, one major priority for protecting natural resources will be to pay more attention to the watersheds. Currently, Catharine & Odessa do not have planning tools which directly protect their water bodies and tributaries. One way in which to protect water bodies and tributaries is to create riparian buffer zones which forbid construction within certain distances. Not only will this action help preserve water quality but will also create healthier habitat corridors for animal species.

### Goal #2: Appropriate Development

Appropriate development means that new construction, new development and modifications to existing structures or forms adhere to the values set out in this document. While the idea of ‘appropriate types of development’ likely will change over time, at the present time appropriate development or change falls into a few categories: new structures ought to be located along established infrastructures (roads) and small scale commerce or industry also in established areas and/or along existing roads. Inappropriate development, at the time of CP adoption, includes additional vacation home development around Cayuta Lake and more mobile home parks (as indicated in public participation and in the 2011 survey). Since stakeholders reject many different types of change planning review should prioritize the types of development that stakeholders value (ie. Small-scale, cluster residential or agricultural production). Catharine and Odessa should reinforce those priorities through budget allocation, policies, supporting programs, regulation and enforcement. The latter two are particularly important in order to ensure that in-compliant development doesn’t occur and if it does that there is proper code enforcement.

#### **Promote appropriate types and scale of development**

- A. Strengthen existing infrastructure
- B. Locate small residential cluster development near existing pathways and nodes.
- C. Support commercial development within the Village of Odessa
- D. Support residential and commercial development with transit options at primary nodes/activity hubs.
- E. Adhere to design guidelines (lot sizes, setbacks, architecture etc) for proposed development or renovation in different types of areas (rural, semi-rural, semi-urban, urban)

#### **Preserve, protect & enhance historically and culturally significant sites/features and strengthen existing sense of community.**

- A. Support unique local producers, farmers, artisans etc.
- B. Establish town, village and hamlet design & development guidelines
- C. Create activities and recreation for youth and families

#### **Maintain Catharine/Odessa’s rural, agricultural character**

- A. Protect ecological balance (habitat and species diversity)
- B. Establish types and scales of agricultural production that support the town/village character

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### **Goal # 3: Nodes & Pathways**

Nodes are higher density concentrations of development. The Village of Odessa and Hamlets of Alpine, Catharine and the Cayuta Lake district (Cayutaville) all qualify as nodes in this context. Pathways can be roads, bikeways, sidewalks or any other path that facilitates movement. Given that Goal #2 aims to limit development in new areas and concentrate development along existing infrastructure or at existing nodes, the Hamlets, Village, and lake district ought to focus energy on developing appropriate density and streetscape design guidelines.

### **Goal # 4: Development Scale**

Appropriate development scale refers to both the size of new structures and the number of new structures associated with a project. Broadly speaking, 'structures' refers to residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural or energy related construction. New structures or modifications to existing ones ought to adhere to guidelines set out by the zoning ordinance and design guidelines.

### **Goal #5: Waste & Wastewater Management**

As indicated in public input and through reading previous reports, lack of combined public waste and wastewater management practices hindered economic development particularly in the Village of Odessa.

#### **Upgrade or establish combined water, sewer and wastewater management system**

- A. Prioritize water and sewer system within nodes with higher population
- B. Implement green infrastructure methods for wastewater management

### **Goal # 5: Green Infrastructure**

A recent report by SCOPED investigated the potential for green infrastructure in Schuyler County. For municipalities with a smaller budget, green infrastructure strategies for waste and wastewater management would be highly beneficial, both for financial and environmental reasons. Popular green infrastructure strategies include bioswales, rain barrels, rain gardens and vegetated buffers.

### **Goal # 6: Energy Development**

At present, there are two main types of energy development that may affect Catharine and Odessa: wind farms and Marcellus shale drilling. Public input indicated that residents and business owners prefer types of energy infrastructure which does not dominate the landscape. Future research should quantify the economic benefits to the community itself for hosting energy infrastructure such as windmills or gas drills. Also, updated zoning ordinances ought to detail which hilltops can have windmills, since some viewsheds have high aesthetic value. Of course, public input is necessary to determine which viewsheds should be protected and where, if at all, energy infrastructure can be located.

#### **Promote small scale energy development**

- A. Manage location, size and type of energy infrastructure
- B. Create zones where energy infrastructure is and is not appropriate
- C. Manage energy development to protect community character

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# Context & Implementation Considerations

## Social Characteristics

### Demographics:

Baby boomer housing, elder care, public shuttle/cars to hospital, find ways to keep young population in Catharine/Odessa

### Income, Education & Poverty::

Considerations for CP: Increase options for college, transit to local community colleges, poverty and unemployment particularly high in Odessa, poverty high in Catharine- what kinds of social services exist? College grad rates low compared with NY State, investments in education very important. Both Catharine and Odessa are below the county median income...why? Access to Jobs? Cultural Space? Affordable housing?

## Land Use, Transportation & Housing

### Land Use & Land Cover

New land use categories would be appropriate for Catharine...too outdated. Commercial, Light Industry, Gravel Mining, Agriculture, Residential/Agriculture, Recreational, Woodland?/Manufactured Homes

Lake District?

Research: How do we define commercial? Home biz?

### Housing

Comp plan considerations rental housing sparse and not well maintained, vacancy relatively low in Catharine, though a certain percentage vacancy is desirable, if the rate is too high then it demonstrates lack of demand for housing. In this case, Catharine and Odessa are below the County average, indicating that demand for housing in those two places remains higher respectively, need a thorough market analysis of housing demand in Catharine/Odessa and also in surrounding areas, Catharine/Odessa may become quite attractive for subdivisions due to employment growth outside Schuyler. Subdivisions to small lots limited to Village or Nodes? Preserving open space and ag qualities with larger Res/Ag and Ag lots?

### Circulation- Infrastructure & Transportation

Don't invest in new roads if pop isn't rising, connect FLT and CVT with a bikeway, seriously look at developing greenway for bikes and pedestrians, connect to Tompkins County transit...lots of people commuting there... this will help air quality. If the Village and nodes were connected to employment via transit to encourage growth or sustain population.

## Infrastructure & Community Facilities

### Water, Waste & Wastewater treatment

Town & Village must strategically invest in creative waste & wastewater solutions. Green Infrastructure report outlined some solutions.

### Internet

Continue working with the Southern Tier Central Planning Board and the Southern Tier Network to initiate wider internet access.

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## **Community Facilities & Services**

Because residents are generally satisfied with police, fire and medical provision, municipal policies and programs and budgeting ought to maintain the current level of provision.

The Dutton S. Peterson Memorial Library is a wonderful resource and there are definitely opportunities to expand its programs. In particular, given that there aren't many opportunities for youth, the library could provide after school programming.

## **Agriculture, Natural Resources & Conservation**

### **Natural Assets**

Because a comprehensive inventory of Catharine/Odessa's natural assets exists, specific management and conservation plans ought to be developed for high priority areas (Cayuta Lake and tributaries).