



**Stephentown Comprehensive Plan
December 2018**





Stephentown Comprehensive Plan

**Adopted:
December 17, 2018**

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Vision Statement

As in the past, Stephentown will have clean water and air, rich diverse natural resources and habitats, fertile farmland and a rural atmosphere, but with a greater number of young people, families, business and recreational opportunities for all ages. There will be healthy local businesses and strong community institutions such as the library that will provide places to gather in and support local businesses. Improved technology will allow all residents and businesses to be connected with the world. Seasonal residents and tourists who are encouraged by attractive, maintained business areas will help to keep the local businesses healthy throughout the year. Different areas of Stephentown have different issues and town strategies and policies are established to address these differences.

A mixture of residential and commercial development will occur in areas such as the hamlet areas, encouraging mixed-use walkable development. Commercial development along existing commercial corridors will also be encouraged. Stephentown will take advantage of existing infrastructure and encourage redevelopment of existing buildings and previously developed areas. An appropriate mix of residential and commercial development will provide a variety of necessary goods, services, entertainment and attractions for local, regional and tourist patrons.

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Introduction

Comprehensive plans are documents to guide municipalities through the near and more distant futures cognizant of the past. Comprehensive plans are a “playbook” for communities to deal with issues and direct growth in the future. Although issues are looked at broadly and a broad spectrum of scenarios are examined, unexpected issues arise which are not foreseen in the Comprehensive Plan. Additionally, issues which seem imminent may become non-issues. For these reasons, Comprehensive Plans should be reviewed regularly and updated periodically. Special plans can also be incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan after the plan is completed.

Comprehensive plans are publically-available document that helps guide governmental decisions, including policies, laws and capital improvements. The comprehensive plan should be posted on the Town’s website as well as paper copies in the Town Offices and the Stephentown Library. Zoning changes are required to be in keeping with a community’s comprehensive plan. State and county departments can use the Comprehensive Plan to determine the community’s goals and wishes when proposing an activity or installing or upgrading infrastructure. Individuals and businesses wanting to buy property or create a business can use the Comprehensive Plan’s data to determine whether the community will meet their needs.

Comprehensive plans are publically-engaged documents adopted by the Town Board and reviewed on a regular basis. Comprehensive plans should not be created in a vacuum. Public input into a comprehensive plan allows community buy-in and ownership. Town board makeup may change on a regular basis, but when a comprehensive plan is owned by the community, the plan can provide steady guidance through political upheaval by providing a document which all sides agree on. Regular review will keep the ideas and recommendations fresh in the reviewers’ minds as well as give an indication when an update of the plan is needed.

A comprehensive plan identifies assets and issues in a community, along with a game plan for preserving/using assets and reducing issues and their impacts. In Rensselaer County, each municipality has its own particular strengths and resources. A comprehensive plan should provide a broad inventory of the strengths and resources, and provide ways to protect, promote and utilize these assets.

A comprehensive plan should also note the known weaknesses, needs and problems within a community and try to find ways to ameliorate these issues.

Stephentown's Comprehensive Plan - The Process

In early 2014, the Stepentown Town Board put out a Request for Proposals for a consultant to work with the Town on creating a full Comprehensive Plan. Previously, the Town had adopted its zoning regulations in 1991 as part of its master plan policies following New York State's case law. The zoning regulations remained unchanged until 2013 when certain promises made during the adoption of the zoning law were followed through on. These changes made the Town Board realized that a more thorough look was needed to help guide the Town for the next 20 years.

The responses from consulting firms were too costly for the Town to consider, so they requested assistance from the Rensselaer County Bureau of Economic Development and Planning. The Bureau provided a sketch of what the process to create and adopt a Comprehensive Plan entails and agreed to work with the Town on the creation of a Comprehensive Plan.

In early 2015, the Town Board publicized that they were looking for members of a Comprehensive Plan Committee. A representative of the Town Board, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals and Code Enforcement were selected as well as a member of the public who is knowledgeable in planning issues. The Committee started meeting in March 2015. In early discussions, it was determined that several subcommittees would provide research and information on specific topics using knowledgeable members of the community. These subcommittees were:

- Emergency Services in the Future
- Business
- Natural Resources
- Technology/infrastructure

To gain insight of the needs and preferences of the community at large, including those owning second homes, a survey was created and sent out to all the residences in the town in June 2015. The survey and results can be found in Appendix A. This survey was followed by a Public Workshop on July 27, 2015 which explained comprehensive plans, the process of creating and adopting

comprehensive plans, requesting members for subcommittees, providing a schedule and getting input for creating a vision statement for the Comprehensive Plan.

A second public workshop was held on February 22, 2016. This public workshop presented the results of the survey, provided public input into the revision of a rough vision statement and looked for input on community strengths and issues. A further call for subcommittee members was made.

During 2016, the subcommittees were busy investigating the topics of their purview. In the summer of 2016, the Broadband/Infrastructure Subcommittee created a survey to determine the broadband needs and wants of residents in the town. The results of this survey, as well as many discussions with the local provider, Fairpoint Communications, as well as with New York State “Broadband For All” officials helped shape the report of the Broadband/Infrastructure Subcommittee. It was determined that internet connectivity/broadband was the greatest need in the community and that other infrastructure needs did not, at this time, need examination.

The Business Subcommittee had interviews singly and jointly with business ventures from the town. During joint meetings, businesses shared their obstacles as well as remedies to obstacles. These discussions helped shape the Business Subcommittee’s report.

A third public workshop was held on March 27, 2017. This public workshop provided a report from the subcommittees and gained public input on the goals, objectives and tasks.

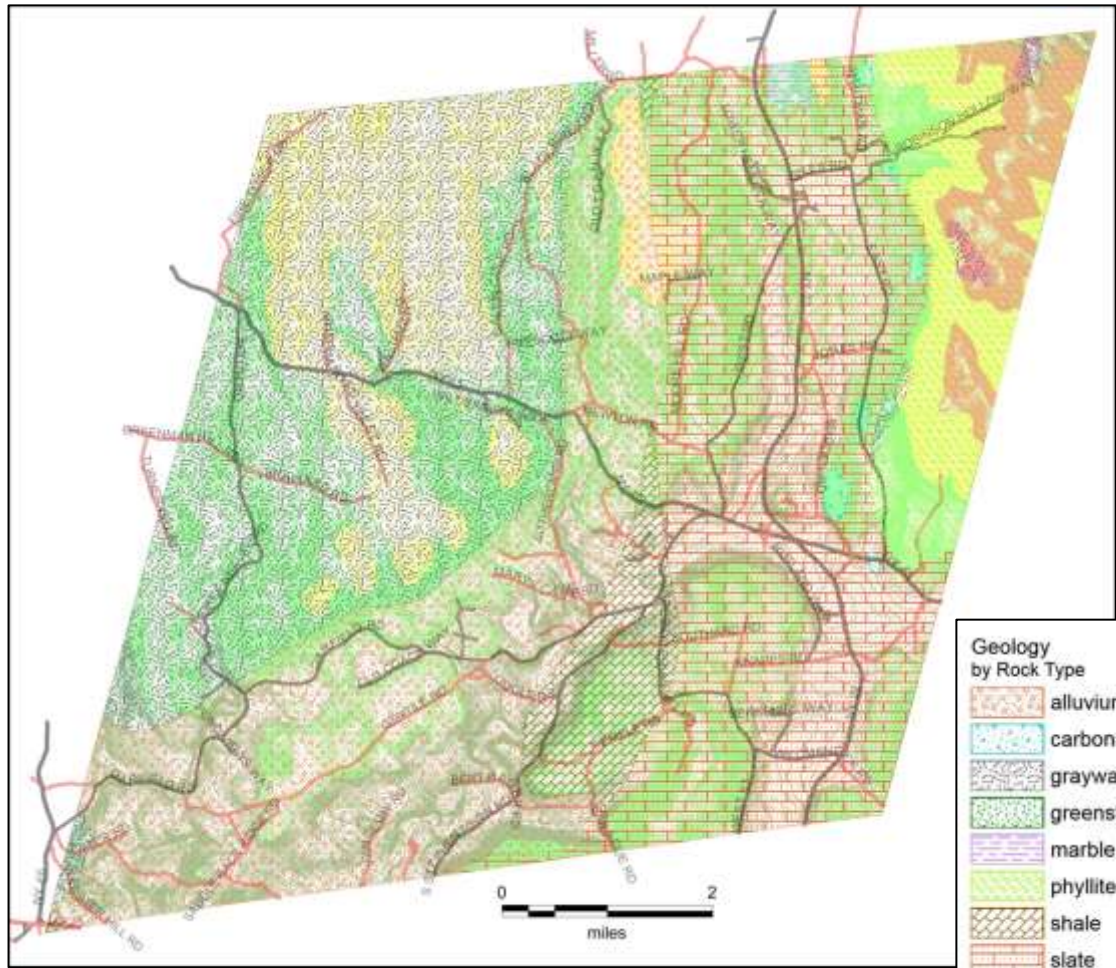
Rensselaer County Bureau of Economic Development and Planning used information ascertained from the Comprehensive Plan Committee and subcommittees, as well as information available from the U. S. Department of Labor Census Bureau, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resource Conservation Service’s Soil Survey, Rensselaer County Health Department, to provide information to create the comprehensive plan which was reviewed by Comprehensive Plan Committee and subcommittee members.

The draft Comprehensive Plan was released on January 9, 2018 with a public hearing held on January 22, 2019. At the beginning of the public hearing, a brief presentation was held on the Comprehensive Plan. Along with hard copies at the Town Hall and Stephentown Memorial Library, the Comprehensive Plan was uploaded to the town’s website. After reviewing the comments

received at the public hearing, in writing and at the Comprehensive Plan Meetings, the Comprehensive Plan Committee ordered some revisions to the draft and voted to rerelease the updated draft Comprehensive Plan on May 18, 2018 with a new Public Hearing to be held on June 25, 2018. Following a review of the new comments received on the updated Draft Comprehensive Plan, the Comprehensive Plan Committee voted on July 23, 2018 to forward the plan with a few minor revisions.

On August 13, 2018, the Town Board received the Comprehensive Plan and long form Environmental Assessment Form with expanded Environmental Assessment. On August 20, 2018, the Town Board voted to accept the Comprehensive Plan and declared that the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan is a Type 1 action under New York State Environmental Conservation Law. On September 17, 2018, the Town Board set a public review period and public hearing date of October 22, 2018 and ordered that copies of the plan be placed in the Town Clerk's Office, Library and on the town website. On October 22, 2018, the Town Board held a public hearing on the Comprehensive Plan. On November 19, 2018, the Town Board considered the comments received at the Public Hearing and during the public comment period. On December 17, 2018, the Town Board adopted a Negative Declaration on the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, after which the Town Board adopted the Comprehensive Plan by local law.

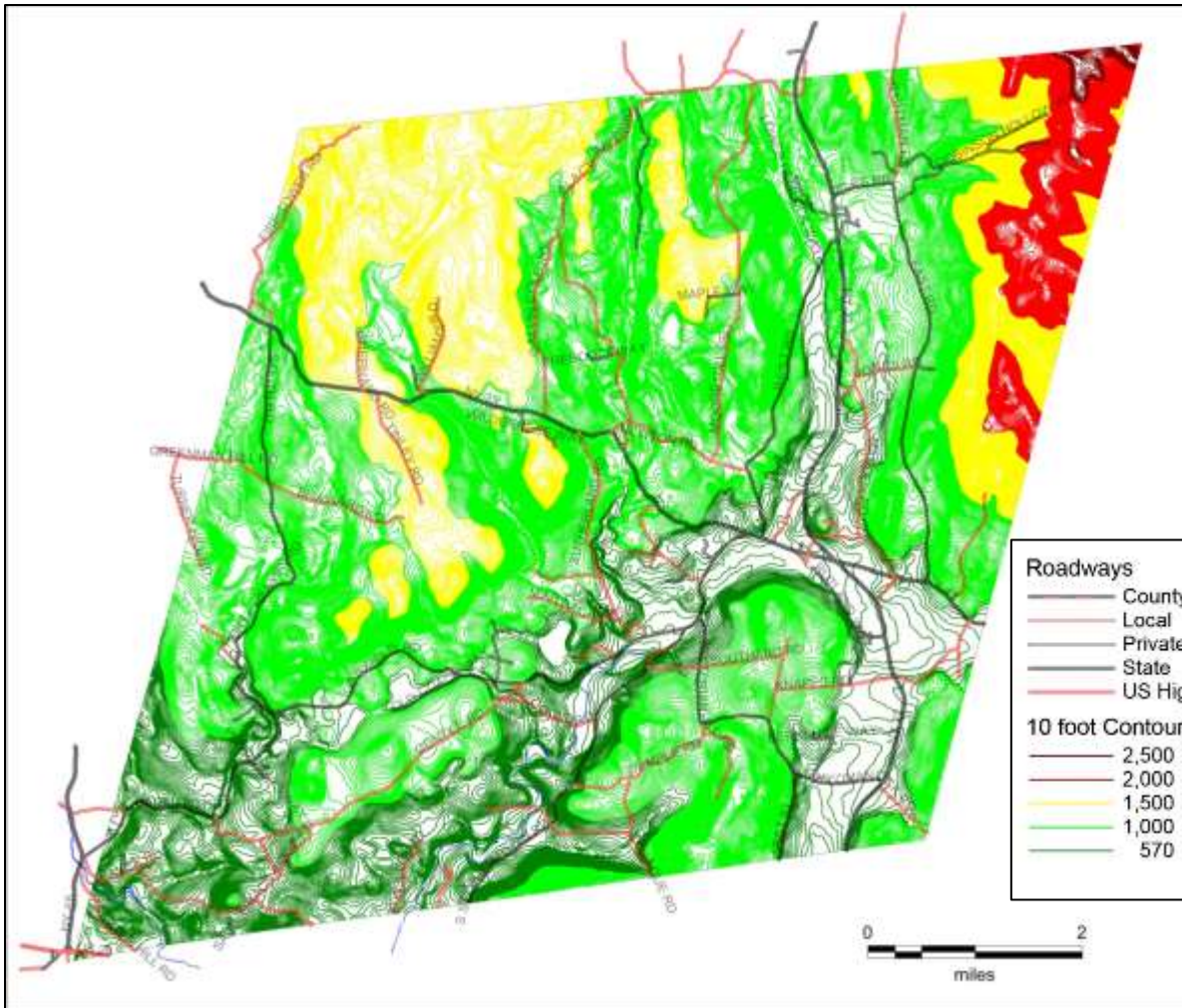
Natural Resources



Geology

Stephentown’s geology can be primarily categorized by the Rensselaer Plateau on the north western portion and Taconic Mountains on the eastern portion of the town. The Rensselaer Plateau is underlain by Rensselaer Graywacke, green sandstone which is prized in road building for its longevity and lack of greasiness. The Rensselaer Plateau is a primarily flat upland with relatively steep sides, although the steepness is moderated in the towns of Stephentown and Nassau. The Taconic Mountains were folded during the Taconic and Acadian mountain-building periods and comprise mainly of over thrust phyllites and green schists. The central valley running south from Cherry Plain and widening and splitting at the Stephentown hamlet is underlain by Walloomsac slates which had been exposed by glacier scouring of the softer Taconic rocks. South of the Rensselaer Plateau is an area of glacial and alluvial deposits.

Map 1: Stephentown Bedrock.



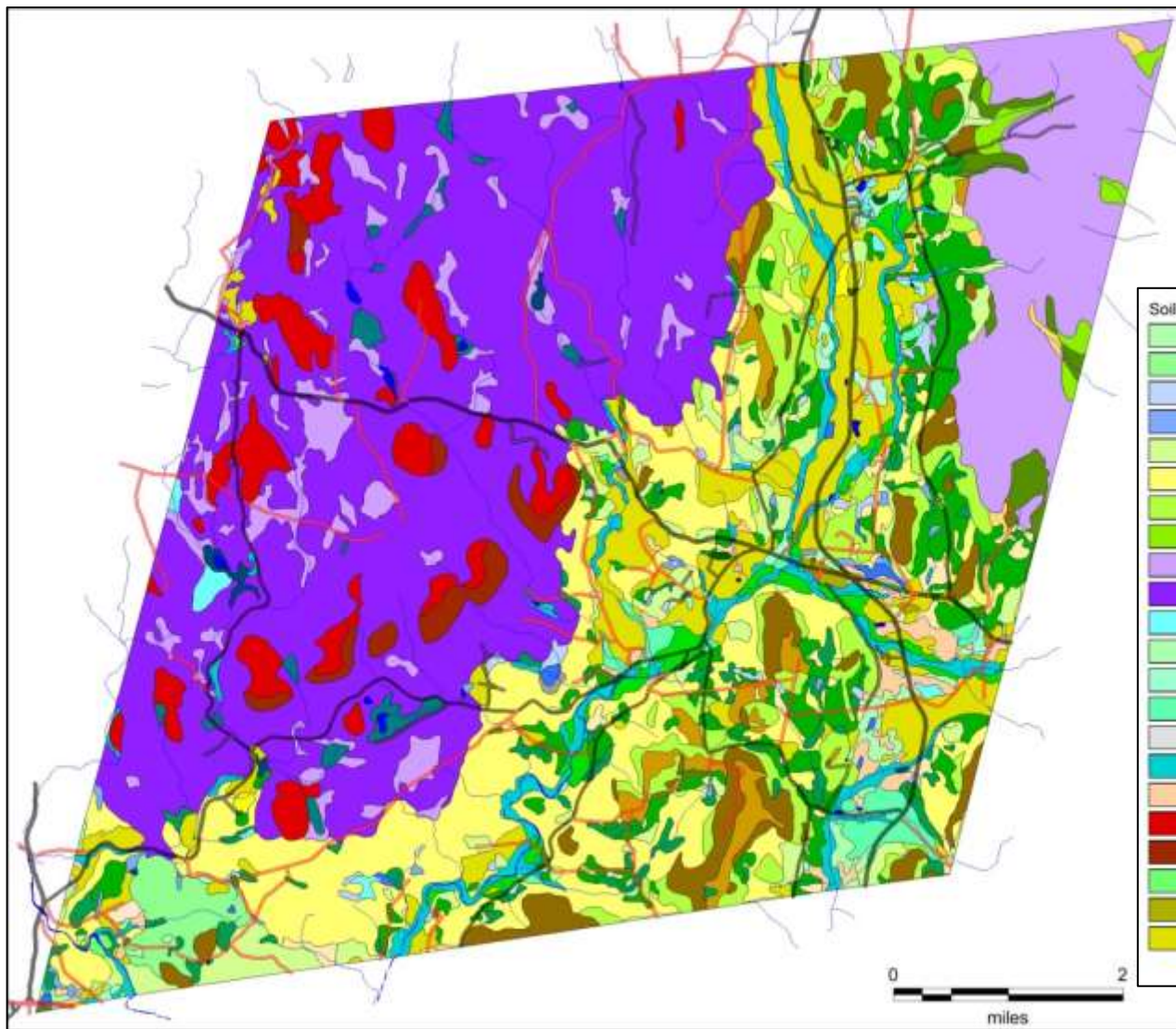
The highest point in town of 2,630 feet is found on Misery Mountain, which is trisected by the town lines of Berlin, Hancock and Stephentown. Other named hills include Eagle Rock, part of the Misery Mountain complex; Butternut Hill, which summit is just over the Berlin town line; Round Mountain, part of the Taconic Range; Moore Hill, Johnson Hill, Buckwheat Hill, Pomeroy Hill and Turner Mountain, all part of the Rensselaer Plateau; and Bald Hill and Roberts Hill, both glacially deposited eskers or deltas.

The lowest point of 590 feet can be found where the Kinderhook Creek leaves the town on the Columbia County border.

Soils found on the Rensselaer Plateau are primarily Buckland soils with areas of Glover and a variety of saprists and other wetland soils. Buckland soils are categorized as stony loam which is well drained and has many large stones (boulders). Due to a shallow fragipan (dense, low-permeable subsoil layer), in

Map 2: Topography of Stephentown.

spring and during wet periods the soil can become very wet. Glover soils are also categorized as stony loam with rock outcroppings. Glover soils are very shallow and bedrock is found at less than two feet. Soils on the plateau tend to be acidic due to the nature of the green sands comprising the greywacke.



Macomber-Taconic soils are found on the Taconic range. These are categorized as slaty silt loams that are very shallow and well drained to excessively drained. These soils are generally very steep. Soils on the Taconic range tend to be either

Soils Types	
Al - Albrights	Lm - Limerick
Am - Albrights	Lo - Loxley
An - Alden	Ma - Macomber-Taconic
Ao - Alden	Na - Nassau
Be - Bernardson	Nr - Nassau-Rock outcrop
Bf - Bernardson	Ob - Occum-Barbour
Bn - Bernardson-Nassau	Pa - Palms
Bo - Bernardson-Pittstown	Pg - Pits, gravel
Br - Brayton	Pt - Pittstown
Bu - Buckland	Pu - Pittstown-Bernardson
Ca - Carlisle	Ra - Raynham
Cb - Castile	Rk - Riverhead
Ch - Chenango	Sa - Sapristis & Aquents
Ck - Chenango	Sc - Scio
Du - Dumps, landfills	Sr - Scribe
Fl - Fluvaquents, Udifluvents	St - Shaker
Fr - Fredon	Sv - Scriba
Gl - Glover	Te - Teel
Gm - Glover-Rock outcrop	Ud - Udorthents
Ha - Hamlin	Un - Unidilla
Hb - Haven	W - Water
Ho - Hoosick	Wn - Windsor

neutral or slightly basic due to the presence of limestone and marble as part of the underlying rock.

Map 3: Stephentown Soils.

In the valley between the Rensselaer Plateau and Taconic Crest and in the rolling area south of the Rensselaer Plateau, gravelly and sandy silt loams such as Bernardston, Chenango, Hoosick, Nassau-Manlius, Pittstown and Riverhead can be found along with Fluvaquents-Udifuluents along the Kinderhook Creek and other streams. These gravelly and sandy soils provide the medium for a large aquifer that runs down the valley into the southern portion of the town. Many of these soils are highly productive soils where they are not too wet and can provide high agricultural yields in areas that do not get flooded.

Mining

The gravelly soils and sandy soils have created opportunities for mining opportunities, especially in areas where glacial features such as glacial melt deltas and glacial outwash gravel deposits provide deep resources. Additionally, the graywacke rock of which the Rensselaer plateau consists, is mined in other parts of Rensselaer County. Graywacke is a hard sandstone which does not become “greasy” with wear, providing a great road surface. Responsible mining should take place to protect the environment, especially water resources. Mining should not take place below the water table, which would require the continual dewatering and lowering of the water table in the general area. In fact, a protective distance of five to ten feet of materials between the working area of the sand or gravel mine and water table would be best to keep potential pollutants out of groundwater.

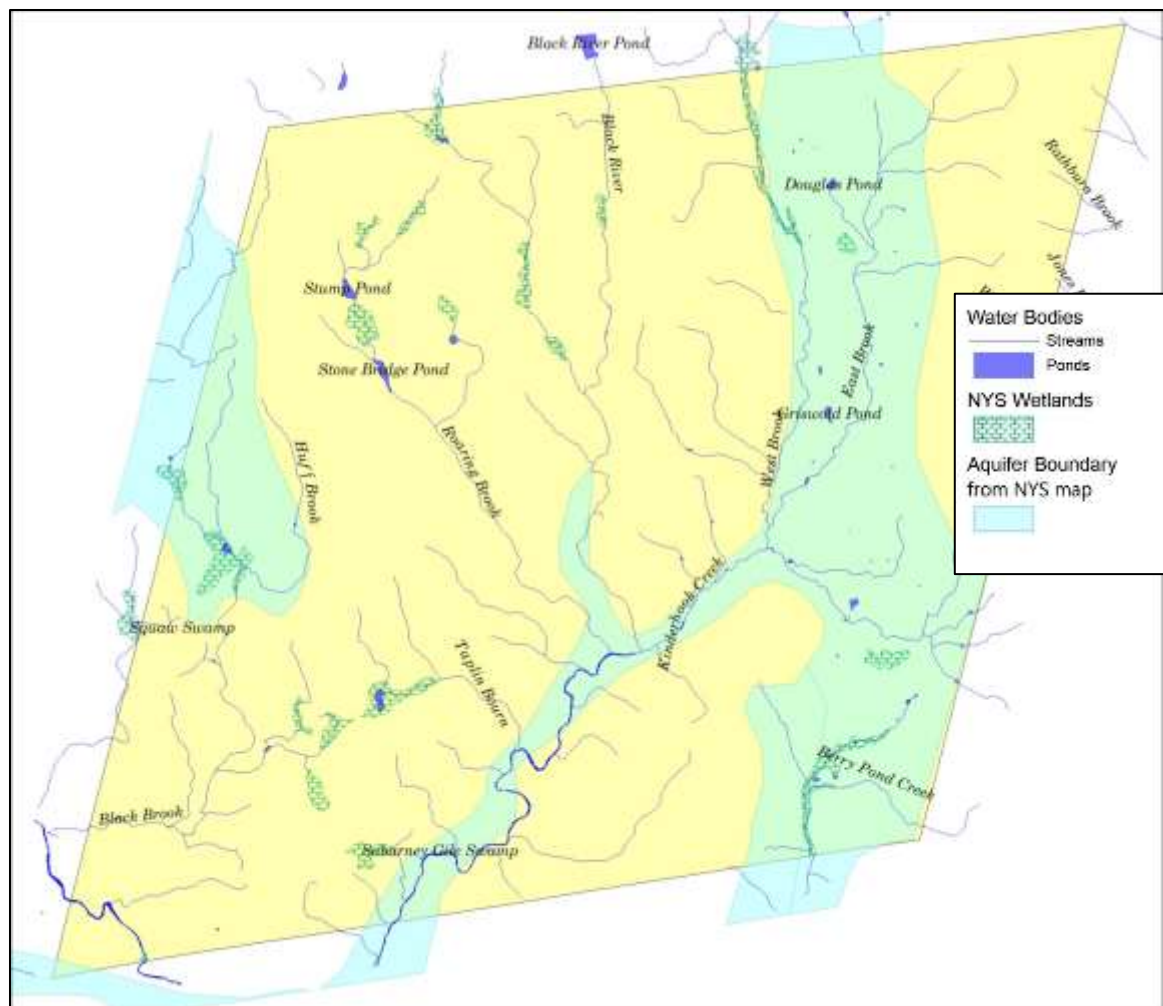


Photo 1: View of the Taconic Range from the toe of the eastern edge of the Rensselaer Plateau.

Water

The town of Stephentown is fortunate to have abundant water resources, both surface and ground waters, which could be affected by over development, over use and pollution. Stephentown receives around 44 inches of precipitation annually, with the northern mountainous section of the town receiving most likely a bit more. This ample precipitation provides the source of the waters found in the town.

The Kinderhook Creek, the greatest of the brooks in the town, begins in Stephentown at the convergence of the East Brook and West Brook. The Berry Pond Creek, Black Creek, Black River, Huff Brook, Rathburn Brook, Taplin Bourn, Whitman Brook and Wyomanock Creek all flow into the Kinderhook Creek which flows into the Stockport Creek which flows into the Hudson River in the town of Stockport, Columbia County. The streams are classified as “C”, with many of the creeks classified as “C(TS)” for trout spawning. The Greater Stockport Creek Watershed Association performs testing throughout the Stockport Creek Watershed. In its 2011 report, the testing site just above the Presbyterian Hill Road bridge sampled in July of that year was shown as non-impacted. In 2006, testing at this site showed that the water quality was slightly impacted, but close to non-impacted.



Map 4: Water resources in Stephentown.

Although there are many ponds, natural and man-made, in Stephentown, there are no lakes or large bodies of water. The largest pond is Stone Bridge Pond which is man-made, followed by Stump Pond, Taplin Pond, Griswold Pond, Black Pond and Douglas Pond. In addition to its many streams and creeks, Stephentown has many larger swamps and marshes, including the Sabarney Gile Swamp. Taplin Pond and Black Pond are both part of a larger swamp complex.

In the gravelly and sandy soils of the Stephentown bottomlands is an aquifer that is partially recharged by rainfall and snowmelt on the soils as well as rainfall and snowmelt running along the top of the shallow bedrock on the Rensselaer Plateau and Taconic Crest. Additionally, the New York State Aquifer Map shows an unconsolidated rock aquifer running south from West Stephentown along South Road and westward into the town of Nassau. Several large wetlands seem to be connected into this aquifer, probably fed by it.

Issues:

- Since all the town is serviced by well water with no nearby systems to hook into should a contamination problem happen in the aquifer(s), maintaining a clean aquifer system is an imperative for all the residents and businesses in the town.
- On July 29, 2009, a microburst hit Stephentown with significant rain of 5.8 inches in a short period. This led to flash flooding which destroyed roadways and damaged the NY 22 Bridge over the Kinderhook Creek at Prevost Road. Flooding also caused the destruction of the Garfield hamlet, previously known as the Stephentown Flats and led to the greater development of the present Stephentown hamlet.

Recommendations:

- Since spring water quality, well water quality and ground water quality and quantity are affected by land uses, an understanding of the aquifers in town should be attempted. Using existing well log data held by New York State and Rensselaer County, information on soils and bedrock can be gleaned to show a better approximation of aquifer locations, depths, yields, varieties and issues. This information could then be used to better inform land use decisions and educate residents and businesses to maintain and improve water quality. The U.S. Geologic Service's Water Bureau can be of assistance as well as possible university partnerships. Since the Kinderhook watershed is in the town of Hancock in Massachusetts as well as Stephentown, the use of federal assistance is appropriate as the study should include multiple communities and states.
- If the Town were to install a public water supply in any part of the town, a sewer system should be installed at the same time or planned for installation to reduce the groundwater loading that would occur when the water/septic system wastes added in an area does not equal the amount of water pumped out of the ground.

- Education of citizens and businesses to recognize the importance of the ground and surface waters to the survival of the community will help maintain water quality. Proper use and storage of chemicals, maintenance of septic systems, monitoring of fuel systems including gas stations as well as home oil tanks, and disposal of wastes should be taught and enforced.
- The site plan and special permit section of the zoning law can be amended to require the use of best management practices for businesses selling, storing and using chemicals.
- Although waterside living is very popular, houses located next to creeks may be vulnerable to flooding, even when not in an official flood plain. Due to the rocky, shallow soils on the Rensselaer Plateau and Taconic range, heavy rainfall in Stephentown can end in flash floods along all streams. Development should be discouraged in FEMA’s flood boundaries and is required to be flood-proof when it is. Additionally, structures should be located well away from minor streams which have not had flood boundaries determined for them.

Air Quality & Climate

With its lack of traffic congestion and large factories, the town of Stephentown has a good air quality. No monitoring stations are located in Stephentown, therefore air quality data from the closest monitoring stations were used. Air quality has been good in 2017 93.26% of the time and moderate 6.74% of the time. For carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxides and particulate matter of 10 micrometers or less, pollutant levels have remained below the maximum for the 0 to 50 “Good” Air Quality Index value. For ozone, pollutant levels have remained below the “Good” Air Quality Index value 93.33% of the year with 6.67% in the “Moderate” Air Quality Index. For particulate matter of 2.5 micrometers or less, pollutant levels have remained below the “Good” Air Quality Index value 78.89% with 21.11% in the “Moderate” Air Quality



Photo 2: Hazy autumn conditions caused by humidity, pollen and dust.

Index. The sensor used for 2.5 micrometer particulate matter is located in downtown Pittsfield, which would have higher readings than rural Stephentown. The sensor used for ozone is located at the reservoir on Shaker Road in Colonie, which would also have higher ozone readings as it is located in a suburban location half a mile from I-90.

The climate in Stephentown is temperate. Stephentown receives approximately 45 inches of precipitation annually and receives, on average, 63 inches of snow annually. There are, on average, 88 precipitation days and 180 sunny days annually. The average July high is 79.9° F and the average January low is 12.3° F. Stephentown is located in USDA growing zone 5.

Ecology

Due to the Rensselaer Plateau and Taconic Crest, Stephentown has several significant natural communities in its borders.

The Rensselaer Plateau is a significant forest area on highlands which are similar to the Adirondacks. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation has used the Plateau as a test area for projects for the Adirondacks due to its similarity and closeness to Albany. The Plateau is the fifth largest forest area in New York State with large continuous areas that have no road crossings. Significant natural communities on the Plateau in Stephentown include beech-maple mesic forest and hemlock-northern hardwood forest. Several rare plants and animals live in these forests and much wildlife lives in the forest due to some of the forest being a working forest and getting harvested regularly, providing browsing opportunities for deer and moose. The Plateau is characterized by a steep escarpment at its sides with rolling areas on its high ground.

The Rensselaer Plateau is listed on the New York State Open Space Plan. The Rensselaer Plateau section of Stephentown contains part of the Capital District Wildlife Management Area and a small section of Cherry Plain State Park. The Plateau also contains a community forest owned by the Rensselaer Plateau Alliance on Brainard Road which has been used to breed American chestnut trees that are resistant to the chestnut blight. Audubon New York considers the Rensselaer Plateau an important bird area.

The Taconic range contains a large forest area on the New York/Massachusetts border. Due to the different underlying rocks creating soils that are much less acidic, the forests are much different from those on the Plateau. There are several Significant Natural Communities, including a rich sloping fen and maple-basswood rich mesic forest on Butternut Hill, and beech-maple mesic forest on the upper areas of the ridge. Less significant beech-maple forests communities can be found on the lower portions of the ridge. The Taconic range is steep, but less steep than the Rensselaer Plateau escarpment.

The Taconic Crest is listed in the New York State Open Space Plan. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation owns or has easements on lands at the top of the ridge, where the Taconic Crest Trail follows the top of the ridge. Like the Rensselaer Plateau, the forests on the Taconic ridge were working forests, although they have not been harvested as recently as some of the Rensselaer Plateau. Some working farmland climbs the lower reaches of the ridge, providing some deer browsing areas.



Photo 3: Picturesque view of grazing lands and forests.

The lowlands of Stephentown are characterized by forests, scrub brush, large wetlands and farm fields. Due to the varying biomes and availability of many food sources, the lowlands are also very rich in wildlife. The streams in the lowlands are also rich with fish and invertebrates. The classification of most of the lowland streams is C(TS) which signifies that they are trout spawning streams. Invertebrate studies of the Kinderhook at Presbyterian Hill Road in 2011 showed that the population of invertebrates was such as can be found at non-impacted streams.

Agriculture

Up to 20 years ago, dairy was king of the agricultural industry. Since the herd buy-outs of the 1990s, the agricultural profile of Stephentown has diversified. The main crops are corn (sweet & commodity), vegetables & fruit, nursery and bedding plants. Other agricultural endeavors include maple products, stables and beef cattle. Since less than one third of the land area in Stephentown is higher quality agricultural soils, there is a limited area for traditional agriculture.

The Rensselaer Plateau area is characterized by very large stones, shallow soils, possibly steep soils and acidic soils which are not very conducive to growing crops. One crop that does well in the Rensselaer Plateau is blueberries. Similar fruit may also grow well in these conditions. Historically, grazing was also a major agricultural use in this area. The largest crop presently in the Rensselaer Plateau is trees and wood products. Much of the land on the Rensselaer Plateau is owned either by New York State or the Conservation Fund.

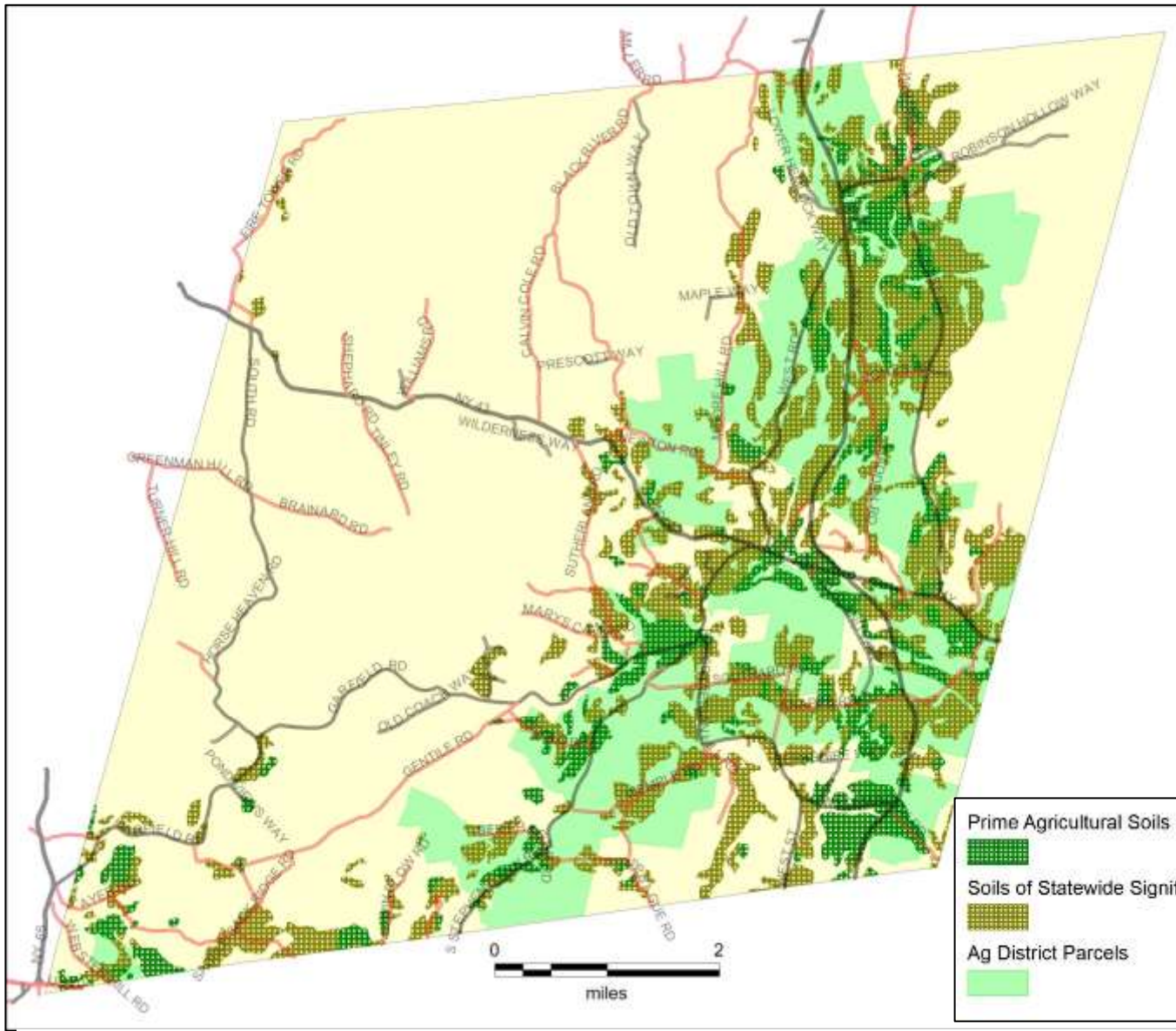
The Taconic Ridge is categorized by large stones and shallow, steep and more basic soils. In bench areas of the side slopes of the mountains where slopes are less steep, some crop-raising can occur, as is seen in parts of the town of Berlin. Grazing is possible for steeper areas as long as overgrazing does not create conditions conducive to ground slumping. The largest crop presently in on the Taconic Ridge is trees and wood products. Much of the land on the upper Taconic Ridge is owned either by New York State or the Conservation Fund.

The valley between the Rensselaer Plateau and Taconic Ridge contains flat, agriculturally rich lands. The majority of these soils are Hoosick gravelly sandy loams and Pittstown gravelly silt loams with Bernardston gravelly silt loams and Bernardston-Nassau complexes on the lower slopes of the Taconic Ridge. Many of these are considered prime agricultural soils and are very good for raising many varieties of crops.

South of the hamlet of Stephentown, the valley widens to incorporate a much wider area. This area becomes more rolling with hills and valleys. The valley areas are primarily



Photo 4: Produce grown in Stephentown.



comprised of Hoosick gravelly silt loams, Chenango gravelly loam, Bernardston gravelly silt loams, Occum-variant/Barbour-variant silt loam complex, Fredon silt loams and Pittstown gravelly silt loams. The valley areas have many prime agricultural soils and are good for raising many varieties of crops. The upland, hilly areas are categorized by Nassau-Manlius complex, Nassau-Rock outcrop complex, Bernardston very stony silt loam and Bernard-Nassau complex. These soils are characterized by stoniness or close underlying bedrock. The Nassau-Manlius complex soils may either be prime agricultural soils or soils of statewide significance and are good for agriculture. In the other soils, some areas may be okay for the raising of field crops once stones are

Map 5: Agricultural resources.

removed, but may be less drought-tolerant. Some areas may be too stony or have exposed bedrock. These areas are better for grazing or tree production.

Due to the valleys receiving the waters of relatively large hillside drainage areas, some valley soils can be wet due to flooding problems or high water tables. These areas may not be conducive to agricultural pursuits where the water table remains high much of the year.

People

Stephentown’s population has been growing since 1940. In 1850, the town’s population was 2,512 as counted by the US Census. By 1900, the Census counted 1,499. In 1990 and 2000, Stephentown was the fastest growing community in Rensselaer County, partially due to its size relative to its growth. Part of the increase in population in 2000 was due to the Town’s outreach to the community to get 100% of the community counted during the decennial census.

Population, Town of Stephentown					
Year	Population	Ten Year Change	Percent Change	County Population	County Change
1940	1,181	--	--	121,834	--
1950	1,295	114	9.7%	132,607	8.8%
1960	1,361	66	5.1%	142,585	7.5%
1970	1,731	370	27.2%	152,510	7.0%
1980	2,031	300	17.3%	151,966	-0.4%
1990	2,521	490	24.1%	154,429	1.6%
2000	2,873	352	14.0%	152,538	-1.2%
2010	2,903	30	1.0%	156,602	2.7%
2020*	3123	120	4.1%	158,579	1.3%
2030*	3213	90	2.9%	159,995	0.9%
2040*	3325	112	3.5%	161,379	0.9%

Table 1: Population, Town of Stephentown. Source: Bureau of the Census, except (*), population projections from the Capital District Regional Planning Commission.

Comparative Population Change, 1960 - 2010						
	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
Rensselaer County	142,585	152,510	151,966	154,429	152,538	159,429
Town of Berlin	1,329	1,562	1,696	1,929	1,901	1,880
Town of Hancock	455	675	643	628	721	717
Town of New Lebanon	1,674	2,035	2,271		2,425	2,305
Town of Nassau	3,721	4,043	4,479	4,989	4,818	4,789
Town of Sand Lake	4,629	5,843	7,022	7,642	7,987	8,530
Town of Stephentown	1,361	1,731	2,031	2,521	2,873	2,903

Compared to surrounding towns, only Stephentown and Sand Lake have continually grown during the sixty year period shown below.

Table 2: Comparative Population Change, 1960-2010. Source: Bureau of the Census

Stephentown has become more diverse since 2000. Minorities are now 4.8 percent of the population as compared to 1.1 percent in 1980.

Comparative Racial Makeup – Town of Stephentown				
	1980	1990	2000	2010
White	2,009	2,488	2,819	2,765
Black	11	20	9	31
American Indian, Eskimo or Aleutian	3	6	6	8
Asian or Pacific Islander	2	3	6	34
Other	6	4	11	20
2+ Races	--	--	22	45
Hispanic	14	18	32	51

Table 3: Comparative Racial Makeup. Source: Bureau of the Census

Comparative Age Makeup – Town of Stephentown				
	1980	1990	2000	2010
Under 5 years	160	216	183	81
5 to 9 years	169	171	221	226
10 to 14 years	197	153	231	227
15 to 19 years	194	168	177	169
20 to 24 years	122	146	119	126
25 to 34 years	324	456	345	345
35 to 44 years	463	429	548	555
45 to 54 years	212	268	465	469
55 to 59 years	97	108	156	136
60 to 64 years	86	125	128	140
65 to 74 years	138	184	187	159
75 to 84 years	70	78	94	80
85 years and over	13	19	19	30
Median Age	30.7	32.2	38	44.3

Stephentown has become a community with a much older population. The under 5 population in 2010 was half that in 1980. The 85+ population in 2010 was more than twice that of 1980. The 45 to 54 population in 2010 was also more than twice that in 1980. Although the upper age range has grown, people aged 55 to 64 have decreased between 2000 and 2010.

Table 4: Comparative Age Makeup. Source: Bureau of the Census

Although the population increased by 30 persons between 2000 and 2010, the number of households increased by twice that number – 61. This increase in households represents the smallest increase in the number of households since 1990. The persons per household, of course, dropped with the increase of households greater than population.

Household Projections, Town of Stephentown			
Year	Number of Households	Ten-Year Change	Persons Per Household
1980	691	--	2.94
1990	951	260 (37.6%)	2.66
2000	1,129	178 (18.7%)	2.54
2010	1,190	61 (5.4%)	2.44
2020*	1,285	95 (8.0%)	2.43
2030*	1,350	65 (5.1%)	2.38
2040*	1,415	65 (4.8%)	2.35

Table 5: Household Projections. Source: Bureau of the Census, except (*) projections from the Capital District Regional Planning Commission.

Households by Type, 1980 - 2010, Town of Stephentown				
Type	1980	1990	2000	2010
Married couple families	473	622	627	794
Male headed household, no wife	20	39	57	66
Female headed household, no husband	36	55	93	97
Non-family households	162	235	307	396

All types of households increased in number, although the single parent households increased at a greater rate than married couple families and non-family households.

Table 6: Households by Type, 1980 – 2010. Source: Bureau of the Census

Educational Attainment						
Attainment Level	1990 (Town)	2000 (Town)	2008-12 (Town)	1990 (County)	2000 (County)	2008-12 (County)
Less than high school diploma	25.0%	15.7%	7.4%	22.3%	15.1%	10.2%
High school diploma or higher	75.0%	84.3%	92.5%	77.9%	84.9%	89.8%
Bachelor's degree or higher	22.1%	25.6%	19.4%	19.6%	23.7%	27.9%

Educational attainment has increased for high school diplomas, but not for those with Bachelor's degrees or higher. This is not reflected in the county as a whole.

Table 7: Educational Attainment. Source: Bureau of the Census

Civilian labor force participation and unemployment reflect the general U.S. economy as well as the economy in the Pittsfield area for the 2008-2012 American Community Survey data. In the 2008-2012 data, the female civilian labor force was greater than the male civilian labor force.

Labor Force Data, Town of Stephentown				
	1980	1990	2000	2008-12
Total civilian labor force	859	1,334	1,565	1,605
Civilian labor force participation rate	58.9%	68.4%	71.3%	68%
Total unemployed	57 (6.6%)	90 (6.7%)	68 (4.3%)	165 (10.3%)
Male civilian labor force	531	759	801	797
Male civilian labor force participation rate	77.4%	78.7%	73.7%	69.5%
Males unemployed	33 (6.2%)	57 (7.5%)	46 (5.7%)	83 (10.4%)
Female civilian labor force	285	575	764	808
Female civilian labor force participation rate	40.4%	58.4%	69.0%	66.6%
Female unemployed	24 (8.3%)	33 (5.7%)	22 (2.9%)	82 (10.1%)

Table 8: Labor Force Data. Source: Bureau of the Census

Resident Employment by Industry, Town of Stephentown				
Industry	1980	1990	2000	2008-2012
Agriculture, forestry, mining	48	53	21	11
Construction	72	124	146	155
Manufacturing, total	173	214	154	97
Nondurable goods	40	57		
Durable goods	133	157		
Transportation	33	41	66	24
Communications and public utilities	14	16	39	38
Wholesale trade	28	56	48	11
Retail trade	77	185	199	58
Finance, insurance, and real estate	34	59	23	89
Services, total	253	418	698	851
Business & repair services	48	65	123	176
Personal, entertainment, and recreation	31	75	140	255
Health services	49	82	168	393
Educational services	88	110	202	27
Other professional services	37	86	65	
Public administration	70	78	98	106

The data to the left shows the decline of natural resource jobs of agriculture, forestry and mining as well as manufacturing. A significant increase of employment in the services sectors as well as finance, insurance and real estate. Also dropped significantly is employment in retail and wholesale trade and transportation.

Table 9: Resident Employment by Industry. Source: Bureau of the Census. In 2000, the categories for several of the industries changed. 2008-2012 data is from the 2008-2012 American Community Survey Estimates. Categories for several of the industries changed or were combined.

Resident Employment by Occupation, Town of Stephentown				
Occupation	1980	1990	2000	2008-2012
Management, business, science and arts occupations	178	362	465	490
Sales and office occupations	158	310	415	317
Service occupations	95	158	222	306
Natural resources, construction and maintenance occupations	85	89	119	216
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	286	325	271	111

Sales and office occupations dropped whereas service occupations rose.

Table 10: Resident Employment by Occupation. Source: Bureau of the Census. Due to the changing nature of employment, the categories were changed in the 2000 Census and in the 2008-2012 American Community Survey. Traditional manufacturing categories such as Operators and inspectors and Laborers were removed and Construction was added. The categories removed were absorbed into other categories

The table below shows a drop in residents who work outside New York State, reflecting on the loss of employment opportunities in Pittsfield. Residents are also less likely to be employed in Rensselaer County, which also may reflect the local employment situation.

Resident Commutation Patterns, 1990-2015, Town of Stephentown			
	1990	2000	2011-15
Worked in Stephentown	225	176	*
Worked outside Stephentown (total)	992	1289	*
<i>Worked in Rensselaer County</i>	436	562	426
<i>Worked outside Rensselaer County but in New York State</i>	382	483	548
<i>Worked outside the Albany MSA</i>	570	600	*
Worked outside New York State	382	420	362

Table 11: Resident Commutation Patterns, 1990-2015. Source: Capital District Regional Planning Commission and Bureau of the Census. * This information not available for the 2011-2015 American Community Survey.

Income Data, Town of Stephentown 1980-2000				
	1980	1990	2000	2008-2012
Median household income	\$14,145	\$31,682	\$43,506	\$65,938
Median family income	\$16,629	\$34,770	\$45,679	\$83,897
Per capita income	\$5,567	\$14,301	\$18,822	\$28,009
Individuals below poverty level (%)	15.9 %	9.9 %	6.6 %	6.8 %
Families below poverty level (%)	5.9 %	9.9 %	5.7 %	2.4 %

Incomes rose especially for families. Families below the poverty level dropped, but individuals below poverty level have increased slightly from 2000.

Table 12: Income Data, 1980-2000. Source: Bureau of the Census

Compared with Rensselaer County, New York State and the nation, Stephentown has grown more slowly in population than the rest of county, state and nation. It is much whiter and somewhat older than the county, state and nation. It more closely reflects the county’s household and family size than that of the state and nation. It ranks higher with the achievement of high school diplomas, but with significantly less in college education. The labor force participation is higher than the county, state and nation, but the unemployment rate is also much higher as well.

Median household and family income is higher than the county, state and nation. This is not reflected in the per capita income, which is lower than the county, state and nation. The percentage of individuals below poverty is lower than the county, state and nation. The low per capita income and low percentage of individuals below poverty shows that there is a significant number of households that have low but not poverty level wages or are on fixed incomes with modest pensions.

The percent single family housing is significantly larger than the nation, county and state, as is the percent of owner-occupied housing. The percent of vacant housing is higher than the nation, county and state, which may be reflective of the number of second homes in the town. The median house value and median rent is higher than the county and nation but lower than the state, which includes a significant amount of data from the high-priced downstate area.

Comparative Data, Town, County, State and Nation				
	Town of Stephentown	Rensselaer County	New York State	United States
Population Change, 2000-2010	1.4%	4.3%	2.1%	9.71%
Households Change, 1990-2000	5.4%	8.1%	3.7%	10.7%
Percent Minorities, 2010	4.8%	14.3%	41.7%	36.3%
Median Age, 2010	44.3	39.2	38.0	37.2
Average Household Size, 2010	2.44	2.38	2.57	2.58
Average Family Size, 2010	2.91	2.94	3.20	3.14
% with High School Diploma, 2008-2012	92.5%	89.8%	84.9%	85.7%
% with Bachelor's Degree or higher, 2008-2012	19.4%	27.9%	32.8%	28.5%
Labor Force Participation Rate, 2008-2012	68.0%	67.6%	63.8%	64.7%
Unemployment Rate, 2008-2012	7.0%	5.4%	5.6%	6.0%
Median Household Income, 2008-2012	\$65,938	\$58,959	\$57,683	\$53,046
Median Family Income, 2008-2012	\$83,897	\$74,494	\$69,968	\$64,585
Per Capita Income, 2008-2012	\$28,009	\$29,674	\$32,104	\$28,051
% Individuals Below Poverty Level, 2008-2012	6.8%	11.8%	14.9%	14.9%
% 1-Unit Housing, 2008-2012	74.5%	60.6%	47.0%	67.5%
% Owner-Occupied Housing, 2008-2012	83.6%	65.8%	54.5%	65.5%
% Vacant Housing*, 2010	15.4%	9.5%	9.7%	12.5%
Median Housing Value, 2008-2012	\$190,200	\$181,600	\$295,300	\$181,400
Median Gross Rent, 2008-2012	\$929	\$835	\$1,061	\$889

Table 13: Comparative Data, Town, County, State and Nation. Source: Bureau of the Census. * includes second homes not in use during the 2010 Census in April. Data from 2005-2009 may contain very large margins of error for the Town of Stephentown and should be used more as a reference number.

Infrastructure

Infrastructure is an important part of a community. This chapter reviews the non-transportation infrastructure found in Stephentown as well as infrastructure needs. Due to its rural nature, Stephentown is very limited in its infrastructure. Additionally, providing full infrastructure throughout the town as found in urban areas would be cost prohibited.

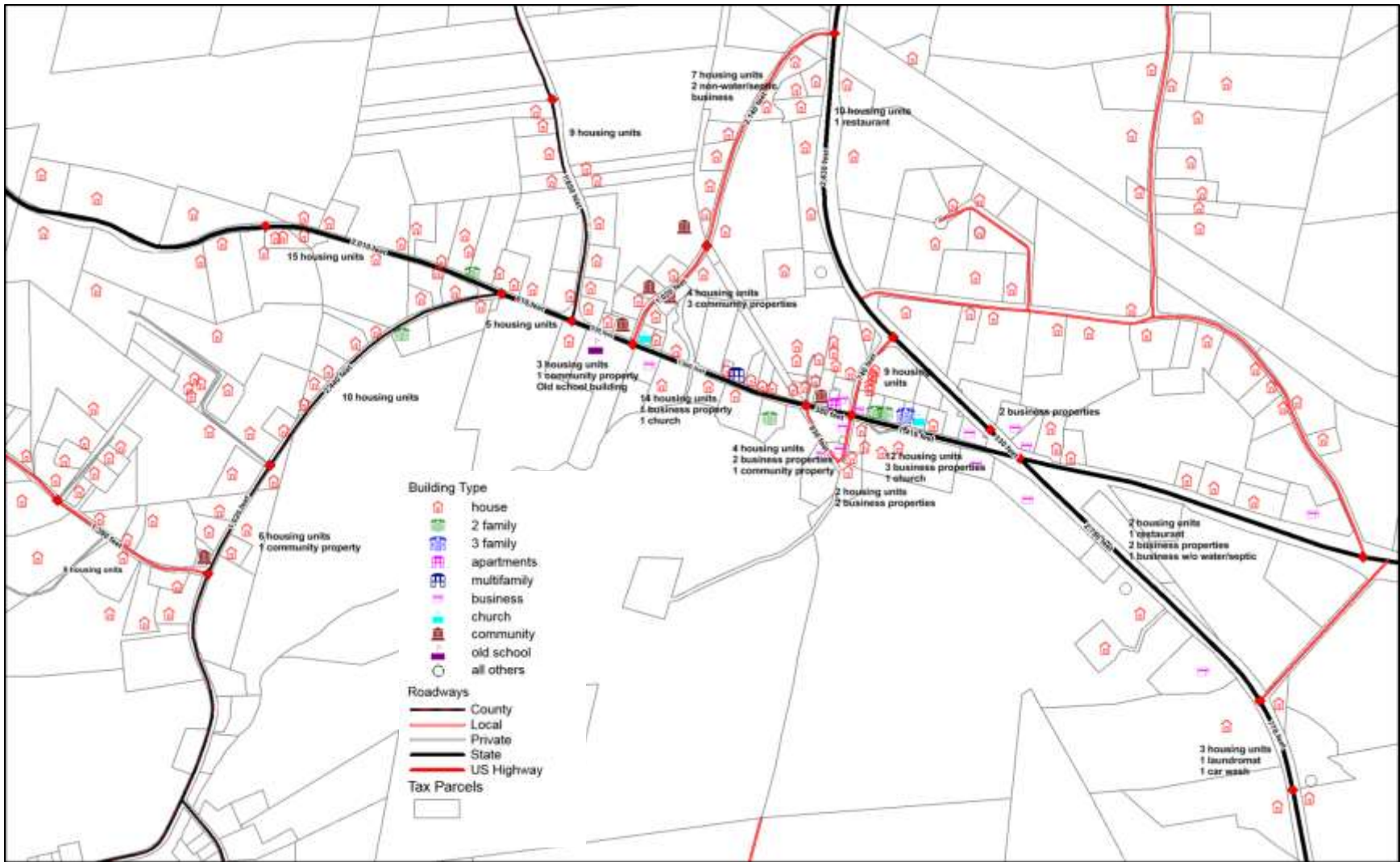
Water

There are no publically-owned water systems in the Town of Stephentown. There are 4 community public water supplies defined by a water system that serves at least five service connections used by year-round residents.

At this time there is no known issue with the groundwater, therefore no direct need to create a public water system to replace private wells in the town. In the future, there may be a business which may require a public water system or some pollutant can enter into the aquifer making a public water system desirable. Residential and commercial density for somewhat affordable public water is only found in the central hamlet area of Center Stephentown and in the Stephentown hamlet. If public water were to be provided, it is recommended that public sewers be provided or planned for near-term to reduce the impacts of additional loading of septic system liquids without groundwater removal from wells which often leads to boggy backyards and septic leach field issues.



Map 6: Density in the Stephentown Center Area.



Map 7: Density in the Stephentown hamlet area.

Sewer

There are no public sewers in the Town of Stephentown. All residential and commercial uses have a private septic system of some sort.

Public sewers would be required if the groundwater in one of the hamlets became polluted due to the concentration of septic systems. Group septic systems could also be used to increase density for a subdivision. These group septic systems would either be a super large septic system or a sand filter. As with the public water supply systems, the only areas with sufficient density for an affordable public sewer system would be in the central hamlet areas of Center Stephentown and in the Stephentown hamlet.

Electricity

Electricity is supplied by New York State Electric and Gas (NYSEG). NYSEG's regional offices are in Mechanicville. In 2015, the reliability of the power grid was, excluding major storms, 1.17 number of customers affected per customers served and 1.97 hours average duration per customer affected. The five year average for these performance metrics was 1.09 customers affected per customers served and 1.99 hours average duration per customer affected. These metrics were under the current RPM targeted to 1.20 customers affected per customers served and 2.08 hours average duration per customer affected. In 2015, outages were caused by tree contacts (45.3%), accidents (16.8%), equipment failure (15.1%), lightning (9.2%), unknown (8.6%), overloads (2.7%), customer equipment (1.1%), prearranged (1.1%), and errors (0.3%). These figures are similar to 2014. The data given is for the entire New York State Electric and Gas service area. In 2015, the Mechanicville division has duration indices better than their goals but frequency performances worse than goals.

Solar installations on private homes and businesses have slowed at this time (Summer 2017) but were occurring at a rate of about eight per year. No solar "farms" have been installed in the town as of this point. The Town has shown interest in becoming energy neutral with the installation of solar, either on town property such as the closed landfill or on a private site.



Photo 5: Several of Beacon Power's flywheel power storage units prior to installation.

Beacon Power built a power storage facility north of the Stephentown hamlet. The facility uses flywheel technology to store surplus energy off the grid.

Telephone

Hard-wired phone service in Stephentown is provided by Consolidated Communications, who also provides internet access through DSL. Some outer areas have poor phone service due to aged infrastructure. This will probably be remedied with the broadband funding discussed below.

Cellular service is available throughout most of the town, especially on the Verizon system. Areas with narrow valley terrain may have limited cell service, as with remote areas behind hills. Due to increased cellular service users and “hot spot” broadband connections, cellular service quality may decline and a need for additional or upgraded antennae may be needed.

Cable

There is no cable in the town except on parts of Fire Tower Road where the road goes between the towns of Nassau and Stephentown. Spectrum is located in parts of the towns of Berlin, Hancock, Nassau and New Lebanon. The town may have opportunity to work with Spectrum as it expands within these towns and bring cable along NY 22 and possibly NY 43 as well as some areas on the periphery of the town. Television service is either received through satellite or standard television antenna from Albany or Pittsfield. Provision of improved broadband would allow residents to receive television/ entertainment through their connected devices.

Internet

A majority of town residents receive their internet connection through a Consolidated Communications DSL hook up. Although some residents located near the point-of-presence areas have speeds above 10 Mbps down and 3 Mbps up, most residents receive speeds less than 5 Mbps down and 1 Mbps up, some significantly less. Consolidated Communications has received a federal grant to improve their infrastructure. The goal of the grant is to bring broadband throughout the town at speeds of 25 Mbps down and 3 Mbps up. This will be achieved through the middle mile improvement with equipment upgrades and the installation of fiber optic to augment the slower copper wire presently used.

Additionally, internet is accessed by satellite and cellular hot spot. Satellite users have issues with foliage during growing season, as well as weather and usage limitations. Cellular hot spots have issues with cellular availability as well as cost above certain usage.

Broadband Subcommittee

The Broadband Subcommittee met with representatives of Fairpoint Communications, as well as the NYS Broadband Office and NYS Public Service Commission. The Broadband Subcommittee also sent out a Survey Monkey survey on Broadband issues in 2016. The broadband survey found that most respondents had issues with their broadband availability (86%), especially in lack of competition (78%), low speeds available (73%) and significant gaps in broadband coverage (52%). A plurality (43%) paid above the national average for internet service. A majority (53%) of household members were not satisfied with their broadband service. Most (93%) would like to see newer and faster connections such as fiber optic connections. Many felt that low-income households (56%), seniors (48%) and unemployed individuals (43%) did not have adequate access to broadband services. Most (97%) would like to see the Town have a comprehensive technology plan to guide new developments over the next 2 to 5 years.

The Broadband Subcommittee had the following vision for Broadband in Stephentown:

An internet enhanced educational experience for our children that puts them in touch with the world wide web of knowledge and supplements the satisfaction of their intellectual curiosities and develops and refines the skills needed to prepare them for their future professions.

A computer literate population including seniors, augmented by computer literacy training and access to devices through the public library that can enrich their lives with a broad array of “quality of life” knowledge and guidance from distant internet subject experts in a wide range of information domains.

An economic and business development capability that enables new entrepreneurs, supports home based small businesses and fosters the expansion of existing successful local business ventures including agribusiness.

A competitive telecom marketplace that offers a range of structures for basic desired telecom services that are reasonably priced and within everyone’s financial reach.

Additionally, the Broadband Subcommittee created the following Goals and Objectives:

- Business efforts - Ensure businesses have access to broadband services
 - Survey current local businesses to determine their needs
 - Form an advisory committee to work in partnership with town government to accomplish identified needs
- Residential efforts - Increase broadband access and consumer choice for all Stephentown residents
 - Contact and engage current private telecom companies to better serve Stephentown residents

- Advocate new and faster broadband technologies such as fiber-optic connections
- Develop a range of basic digital literacy training programs for unserved/underserved Populations including, but not limited to: Unemployed individuals, Low-income households, Seniors, and Individuals with disabilities
- Provide basic education and training on using email, word processing, spreadsheets, databases and browsing the WWW
- Government efforts – Create a public portal to serve citizen’s information needs regarding town government and other local public institutions and organizations seniors, veterans, historic society, etc.
 - Identify other prospective private telecom services for interest in meeting the unmet needs of Stephentown residents and explore developing possible regional consortiums with other nearby municipalities with similar needs
 - Encourage more up-to-date technological applications in community organizations such as schools, governmental service agencies, libraries etc.
 - Identify other State and Federal resources such as Broadband4all, and Connect America to fill the gaps private telecoms don’t or won’t cover

Transportation

Maintaining roadways is one of the basic responsibilities of government. Without the ability of residents and businesses to move around within a community and gain access to areas outside of the community, a community would quickly die and business would stop. There are 48 miles of town-maintained roads, 27 miles of county-maintained roads, 17 miles of state-maintained roads and 10 miles of private roadways. Whereas all of the state and county roads are paved, some town-owned roadways are paved and some are not.

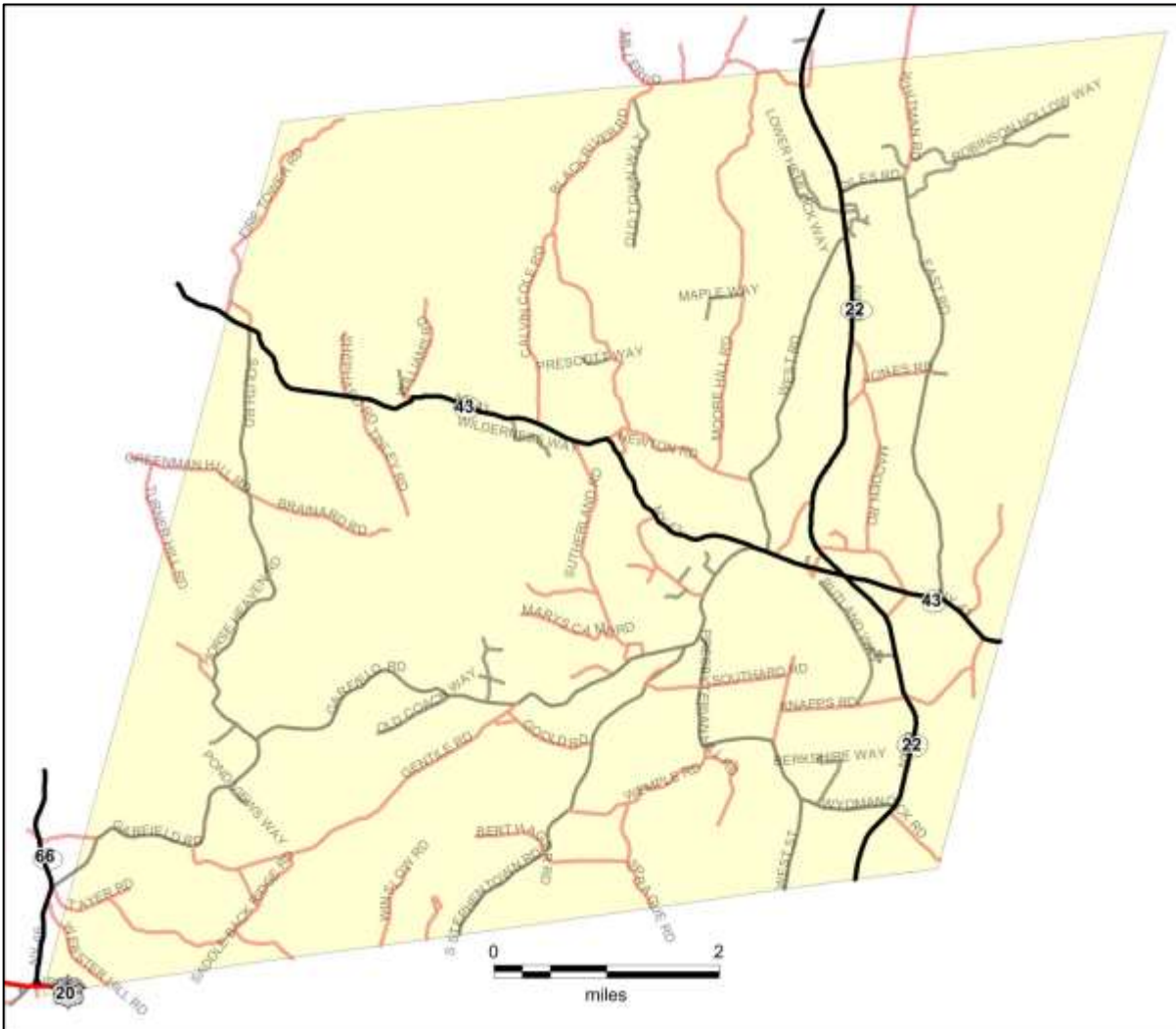
Although traffic congestion was considered one of the least likely issues in the future in the survey taken in 2015, there were several traffic concerns and bicycle and pedestrian concerns listed in the section of the survey for these items.

State Highways

New York State owns NY 22 and NY 43 as well as the small section of US 20 that runs through the southwestern corner of the town. Traffic counts on these roadways are fairly low for a state-owned facility. The chart below shows the average annual daily traffic for these roads. US 20 runs from Boston to Newport, Oregon, passing through Chicago on its way. Locally, US 20 runs east from Stephentown to Pittsfield, MA and west to Albany. NY 22 runs from New York City to the Canadian border.

Rt. #	Count Location	Average Annual Traffic Counts					
		count	year	count	year	count	year
20	Nassau/ Stephentown town line	4,583	2010	5,301	2006	5,796	2005
22	Co. Line to NY 43	4,102	2011	3,243	2008	4,524	2006
22	NY 43 to Berlin town line	2,301	2013	2,281	2010	2,511	2007
43	Nassau to Massachusetts	1,837	2012	2,400	2009	2,388	2003

Table 14 Federal/State Highway Traffic Counts. Source: NYS Department of Transportation, 2014 Traffic Counts



Map 8 State and Federal Highways

More immediately, the roadway runs south from Stephentown to New Lebanon and US 20 and to I-90 Exit B-3 of the New York State Thruway, Berkshire Spur. NY 22 runs north through Berlin and meets NY 2 in Petersburg and NY 7 in Hoosick. NY 43 runs from I-90 Exit 8 in North Greenbush to Williamstown, Massachusetts. It immediately runs west into Sand Lake and east to Hancock, Massachusetts. NY 22 is has a 12- plus foot wide travel lanes with 8- to 13-foot shoulders in much of the town narrowing as the road approaches the Columbia County. NY 43 is much narrower with 10- to 12-foot travel lanes with three- to six-foot shoulders through much of the town west of NY 22. East of NY 22, NY 43 is wide with 12- plus foot wide travel lanes and 10- to 14-foot shoulders.

Although the traffic on New York State roads is fairly light, several problem areas were identified by residents in survey responses which correspond with areas of crashes in a map of crashes

between January 1, 2011 and December 31, 2015. There were no high crash areas in the Town of Stephentown.

The greatest number of comments received on any section of roadway was at the intersection of NY 22 and NY 43. This intersection has the largest amount of traffic flow through it, including traffic running from the Capital District area to Jiminy Peak and those using NY 22 to travel

from the downstate area to Vermont. The intersection is skewed, which creates problems with the traffic lights, especially on windy days, when the westbound traffic's light and the southbound traffic's lights can be confused, as well as the eastbound and northbound lights. Although there are slip ramps for right turns at the acute angle turns, large trucks have difficulty making left turns from east-bound NY 43 to north-bound NY 22 and west-bound NY 43 to south-bound NY 22.



Photo 6: Intersection of NY 22 & NY 43 shown with a roundabout treatment. Due to skewed angle of intersection, a circular roundabout would not work at this intersection due to the required entrance angles.

Additionally, during quiet periods some traffic treat the traffic light as it were a stop sign and stop at the light and then continue without waiting for the light to change. As the light does not meet traffic warrants, the light's purpose of safety is countervened when the traffic signal is intentionally ignored or unclear due to confusion. Although no fatalities occurred at the intersection, there were a number of injury and property damage accidents in that location. The replacement of the intersection with a roundabout would alleviate the safety issue while eliminating the wait at a light when no traffic is present, and additionally reducing air pollution by greatly reducing wait idling times.

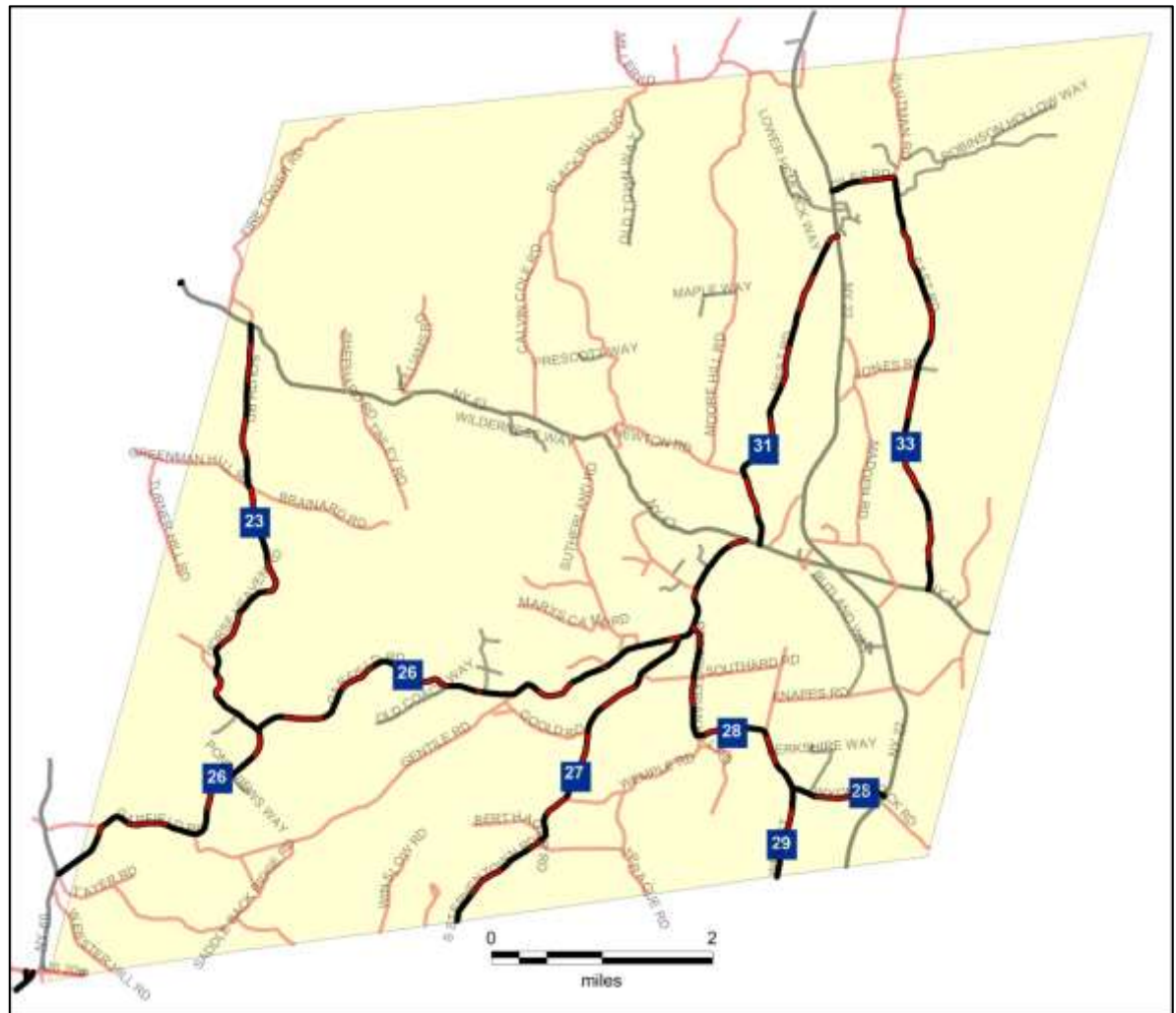
Along with issues directly at the intersection, traffic approaching the intersection from the north, south and east are traveling at 55 MPH or higher. There is no indication to a driver

coming from these areas that they are entering into a built-up area. Reduction of the speed limit on NY 22 from Grange Hall Road to Stewart

Road and on NY 43 from Madden Road to NY 22 to 45 MPH will inform drivers that they are entering into a built-up area as well as provide comfort to residents and patrons of businesses in this area. Additionally, vehicles are legally allowed to pass just north and south of the light.

The area with second greatest comments is the intersection of NY 43 with Garfield Road/County Route 26. This will be discussed below in the County Highway section. The third greatest comments are for the intersection of NY 43 and South Road/County Route 23. One commenter stated that the removal of brush next to NY 43 east of the intersection would eliminate much of the sight distance issues. The speed limit in this area is increased to 55 mph from 45 mph in the Town of Nassau. Keeping the speed limit at 45 mph until the top of the hill may reduce issues, especially as the recommended yellow sign speed for this area is 35 mph.

Another area of significant comments is the North Stephentown area on NY 22 between Giles Road and West Road. This is a site of a fatality although fewer accidents have occurred in this location. Speed appears to be a major complaint in this area. In fact, speeding appears to be an issue on both NY 22 and NY 43. Additionally, NY 43 from Staples Road to the hamlet of Stephentown could have the speed limit reduced from 55 mph to 45 mph, which is much closer to the recommended yellow sign speed limits of 35 mph.



Map 9 County Highways.

County Highways

Rensselaer County maintains several of the roadways in Stephentown, including Horse Heaven Road (CR23), South Road (CR23), Garfield Road (CR26), South Stephentown Road (CR27). Presbyterian Hill Road (CR28), Wyomanock Road (CR28), West Street (CR29), West Road (CR31), East Road (CR 33) and Giles Road (CR 33), totaling 27.2 centerline miles. All have low traffic counts. Most of the county highways

Cty. Rt. #	Road Name	Traffic Count	Year	Section start:	Section end:
23	Horse Heaven Rd	326	2008	Garfield Rd	Brainard Rd
23	South Rd	326	2008	Brainard Rd	NY 43
26	Garfield Rd	387	2008	Nassau Line	Woodward Rd
26	Garfield Rd	386	2013	Woodward Rd	Horse Heaven Rd
26	Garfield Rd	423	2015	Horse Heaven Rd	S. Stephentown Rd
27	S. Stephentown Rd	510	2013	Columbia County	Garfield Rd
28	Presbyterian Hill Rd	416	2009	Garfield Rd	West Street
28	Wyomanock Rd	147	2009	West Street	NY 22
29	West Street	306	2009	Wyomanock Rd	Columbia County
31	West Road	481	2013	NY 43	NY 22
33	East Rd	136	2008	NY 43	Jones Rd
33	East Rd	180	2013	Jones Rd	Whitman Rd
33	Giles Rd	180	2013	Whitman Rd	NY 22

Table 15: Traffic counts for County Highways. Source: NYS Department of Transportation



Photo 7: Revised photo showing the intersection of NY 43 with Garfield Road with a right angle.

have 10- to 11-foot travel lanes with zero- to three-foot shoulders.

An area with many traffic comments was the intersection of Garfield Road/CR26 with NY 43. The accident data for this intersection shows a property damage accident and is near a fatality accident. The intersection of Garfield Road with NY 43 is a typical wye intersection. Additionally, NY 43 has a slight curve to the west of the intersection with a house close to the roadway. Also NY 43 comes up a slight rise when approaching from the west, providing approximately 450 feet line of sight coming to the intersection. Several of the signs located in the triangle provide an additional sight issue. Teeing the

intersection would provide approximately an additional 50 feet of line of sight reducing possible conflicts.

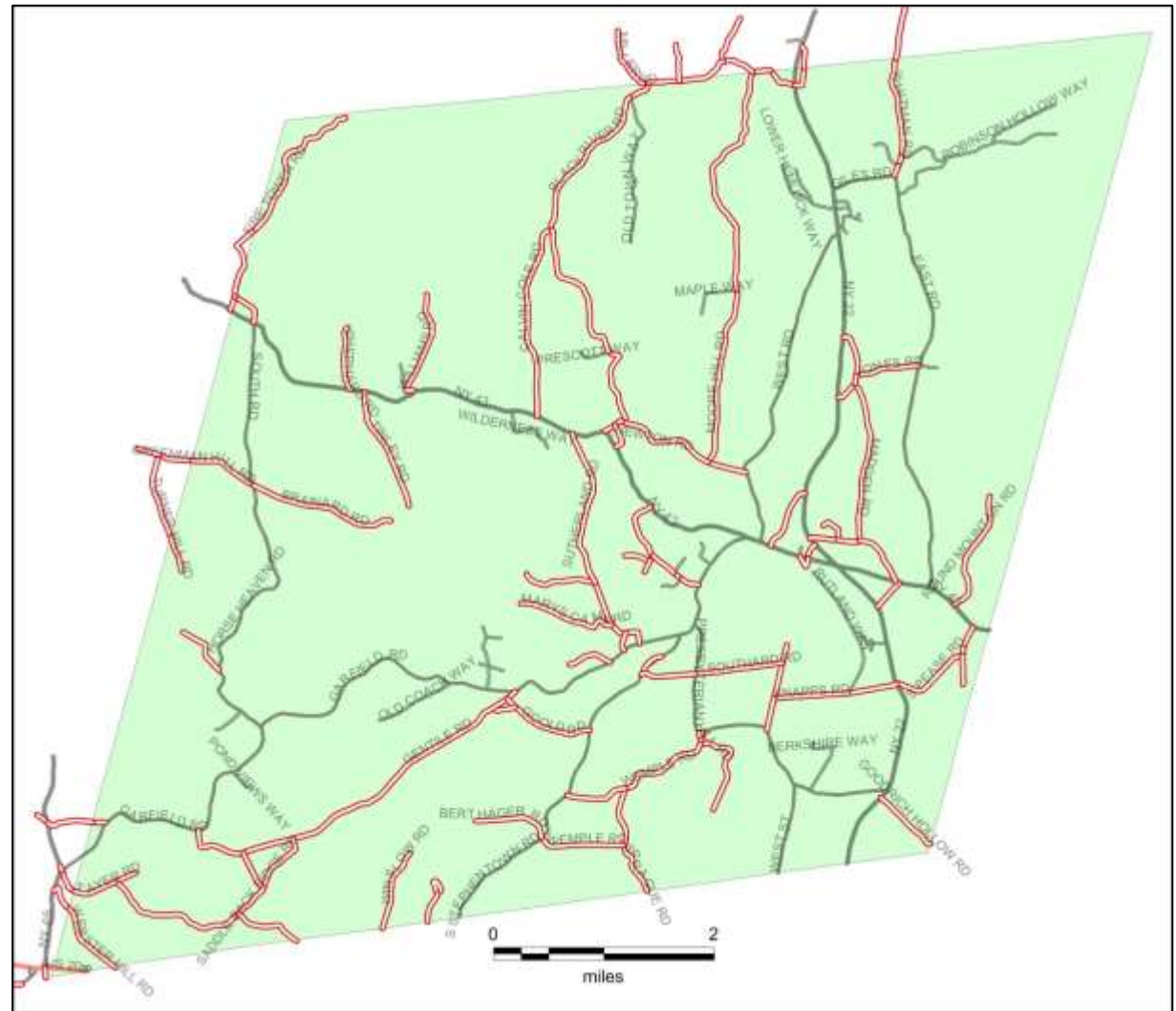
The corner of West Road/CR31 with Newton Road also received significant comments. No accidents have been reported here between January 1, 2011 and December 31, 2015. West Road comes up a relatively steep gradient when approaching the intersection from the north, providing little line of sight.

The simplest solution to this intersection, should it ever become a problem, is to place stop signs on West Road making the intersection a three-way stop. This may also reduce the route from being a speedy short cut from NY 43 to North Stephentown. Placing a “Stop Ahead” sign at the end of West Road may reduce the accidents at the end of the road. Speeding is considered an issue on Garfield Road (CR26), South Stephentown Road (CR 27) and Presbyterian Hill Road (CR28).

Town Roadways

The Town of Stephentown operates the majority of roadways in town as user roads. These include Adams Road, Andrews Lane,

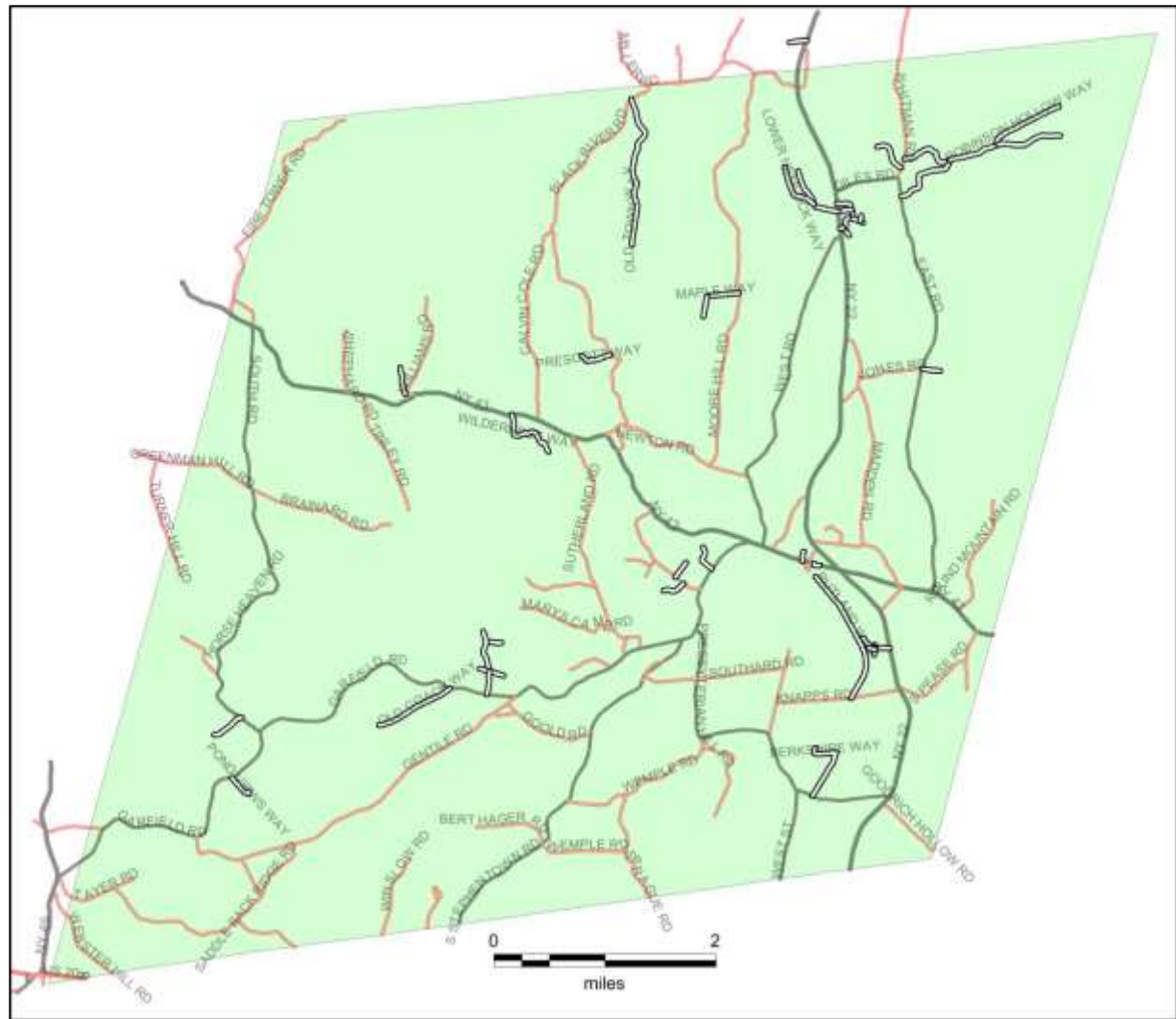
Bateman Road, Bert Hager Road, Black River Road, Borg Road, Brainard Road, Browns Road, Burns Road, Calvin Cole Road, Cemetery Hill Road, Firetower Road, Gardner Hill Road, Garvin Road, Gentile Road, George Hunt Road, Goodrich Hollow Road, Goold Road, Grange Hall Road, Griffin



Map 10: Town Roadways.

Road, Hankey Mull Road, Hotel Road, Joe Ward Road, Jones Road, Knapps Road, Losty Road, Madden Road, Moore Hill Road, North Pease Road, Newton Road, Nora Way, Odell Road, Partridge Lane, Provost Road, Round Mountain Road, South Pease Road, Saddleback Road, Schmich Road, Shepard Road, Short Road, Southard Road, Sprague Road, Staples Road, Sutherland Road, Tayer Road, Tinley Road, Tom Titus Road, Turner Hill Road, Valley View, Webster Hill Road, Wemple Road, Whitman Road, Williams Road and Wolfs Den Road, totaling 48.1 centerline miles. Twenty six of these roadways are paved and the average width of the roadways is approximately 15 feet.

The Town’s highway garage is on Grange Hall Road across the street from the Town Hall where the Highway Department offices, garage, salt storage and materials storage can be found. The Town Highway Department actively uses a capital plan with which to plan purchases of equipment and upgrades of facilities. The capital plan has allowed the Town to avoid bonding to purchase equipment, saving taxpayers money by not requiring to pay interest on funds borrowed.



Map 11: Private roadways.

Private Roads

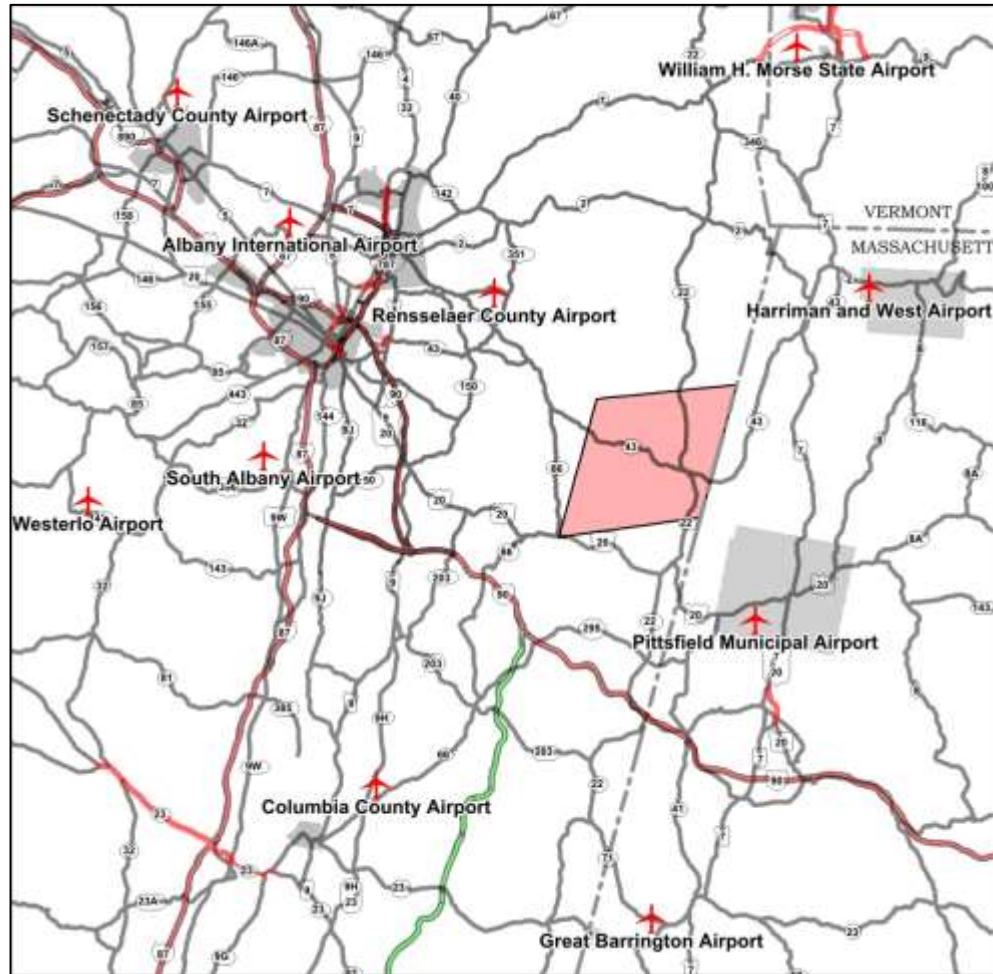
There are several private roadways within the town that were built as part of subdivisions or as long driveways. These roadways have not been built to town highway specifications and therefore the town does not want to take these roadways over.

These roadways include Robinson Hollow Way, Hemlock Ridge Way, Lower Hemlock Way, Fawn Ridge Way and Quail Way. These roadways will require being brought up to town highway standards before becoming town roadways.

Town roadway specifications should be reviewed to make sure the specifications reflect the rural nature of the town. The widest town roadway is a recent subdivision roadway. Although it may sound like a good idea to have any new roadways built wide, the reality is that when the roadway requires repaving, the cost of the additional asphalt can add up. Additionally, extra road width adds to impermeability in the development, increasing stormwater runoff, which can add to flooding in extreme circumstances. Roadway specifications should require sufficient base preparation to keep new roadways from disintegrating during mud season, but should not require road bases to heavy duty unless the road is expected to have heavy truck traffic, i.e. commercial development, logging/sawmill area.

Air travel

Stephentown’s closest passenger airport, Albany



Map 12: Airports in the Stepentown Region.

International Airport, is found 25 miles northwest of town in Colonie. Albany International Airport is served by American Airlines, Cape Air, Delta, Jet Blue, Southwest and United. Stephentown's closest airport is Pittsfield Municipal Airport in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Pittsfield Municipal Airport has two runways, one 5,791 feet and one 3,496 feet. There is no control tower.

Additionally, there are airports in North Adams, Massachusetts -Harriman and West Airport, 4,300 feet runway, Bennington, Vermont - William H. Morse State Airport, 3,704 feet runway and Great Barrington, Massachusetts, Great Barrington Airport, 2,585 feet runway.

Trains

The closest Amtrak station is in Pittsfield, Massachusetts with a train running east and west between Boston and Rensselaer/Chicago once daily. The Rensselaer/Albany train station has 13 trains daily to New York City, 5 trains daily west, one train daily to north to Montreal and one train daily to Boston. Metro-North Harlem rail to New York City can be accessed at Wassaic in northern Dutchess County, approximately 60 miles, one hour fifteen minutes to the south. Freight lines no longer run through town anymore.

Non-motorized alternatives

Although most households in Stephentown have a car, walking and bicycling has become more important to these households for recreation and health purposes. In nice weather, residents can be found walking along NY 43 in the Stephentown hamlet. The wide shoulders of NY 22 make it a popular bicycling route although the shoulders need to be improved.

Walkers can use the newly opened Corkscrew Rail Trail in the southern part of the town. This can be accessed at Wyomanock Road and Knapp Road. Walkers should remain on alert for wildlife, especially bear, in the summertime. Additionally, the Taconic Crest Trail runs along the northeastern part of the town and can be accessed at Round Mountain Road and Robinson Hollow Road.

There is an opportunity, when properties are redeveloped, that a sidewalk can be established along one or both sides of NY 43 in the Stephentown hamlet area. A small portion of sidewalk already exists in front of 422 and 430 NY 43. The sidewalk should be at least five feet wide if possible to accommodate passing strollers and wheelchairs and be located a short distance from the road shoulder to allow the sidewalk to be useable and not accumulate winter grit from plow tailings. Also requested in the town survey are cross walks in front of the library and playing fields at the school to assist people crossing NY 43. A cross walk at the post office may also be needed.

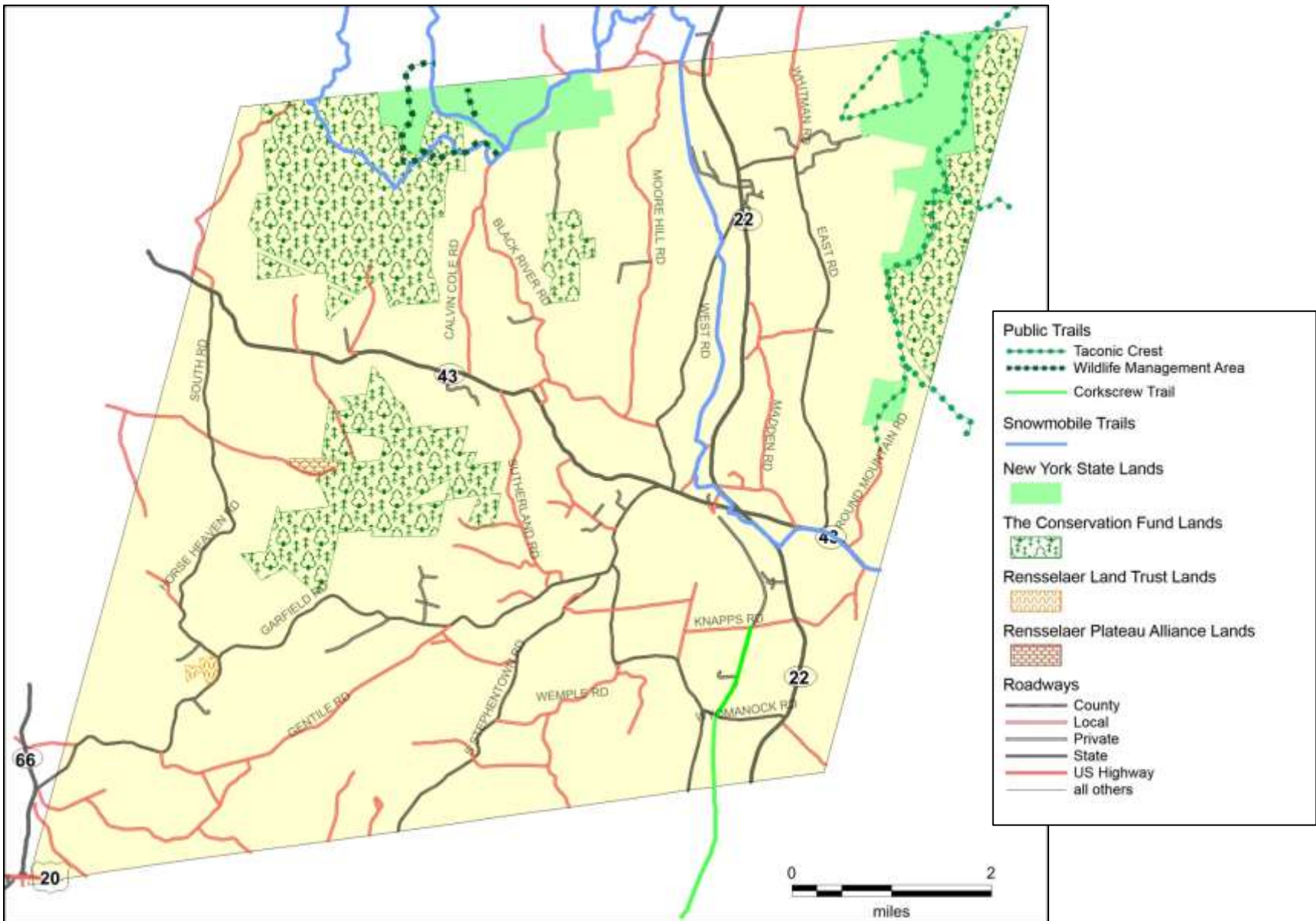
The speed of car traffic was a great concern for pedestrians and bicyclists throughout the town but especially on the state and major county highways. Speed enforcement by the New York State Police and Rensselaer County Sheriff's Department would not only make it safer for pedestrians and bicyclists, but also for drivers as many of the accidents could be avoided by reduced speed. The width of NY 22 and NY 43 east

of the Stephentown hamlet encourage speeding by appearing similar to interstate lanes. Traffic calming measures should be used in the areas entering the Stephentown hamlet to reduce speeds. The use of a road diet in this area may help slow down traffic as it approaches the traffic light as well as built up area.

The Stephentown Trail Riders Snowmobile Trail Club has a snowmobile trail that runs from the Massachusetts state line near NY 43 to Cherry Plain State Park. At Cherry Plain State Park the trail meets the Black River Raiders; trails running west to Sand Lake or the Grafton Trail Blazers' trails running north to Grafton Lakes State Park and beyond.



Photo 9: Sidewalk opportunities in the Stephentown hamlet area connecting businesses to residences and community facilities.



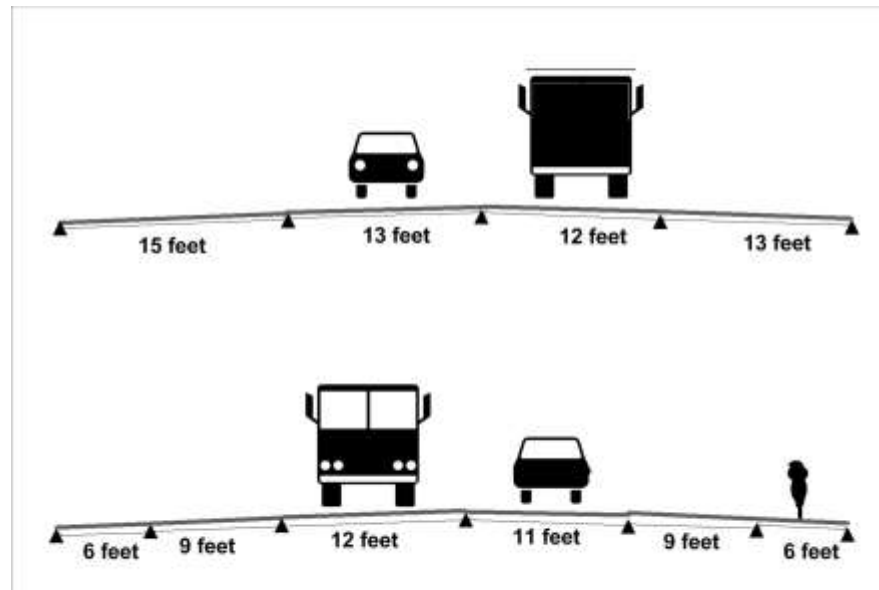
Map 13: Hiking and snowmobiling trails in Stephentown.

Road Diets

The high speeds seen on NY 22 and NY 43 east of the hamlet are not unusual. Studies have shown that wide roads with wide shoulder give drivers a feeling that they are on an interstate, so they drive like they are on an interstate. The narrower the roadway, usually, the more carefully the motorists drive.

In the past decade or two, municipalities and state DOTs are slowing drivers down by putting roads on road diets. Extra, unused lanes and supersized shoulders and driving lanes are being pared back to provide bicycle lanes, sidewalks and green space.

In the case of NY 43 east of NY 22, the total pavement width is 53 feet. NYS DOT has reduced the westbound driving lane to a mere 12 feet compared to the 13 feet in the eastbound lane. Although 12 feet is considered standard in rural areas, driving lanes can accommodate trucks and be as narrow as 10 feet, as is found on NY 43 west of NY 22. NY 43 east of NY 22 can be restriped to accommodate driving lanes, sizeable breakdown lanes and also provide striped bicycle lanes to provide a sense of security with bicyclists.



Business

Prior to the Civil War, Stephentown had three cotton mills, one wool mill, a batting mill, a tannery, a carriage shop, a wagon shop, many blacksmith shops, many more saw mills, grist mills and multiple stores including a grocery in South Stephentown. After the Civil War, many of the cloth mills disappeared or moved to the nearby cities, leaving the economy in Stephentown based on agriculture and supplying farmers' needs. As the forests disappeared, the charcoal industry faded away by the 1900s.

The hamlet of Stephentown grew to provide the materials for farmers, now brought in by train or, later, truck. In the 1950s, it included two car dealerships, a drugstore, a café and stores. With improved roadways, multiple automobiles in households and double-earner households, the customer base shrank even though the population more than doubled. Now a limited number of establishments remain in the hamlet, with a need for a grocery and drug store for the town.

In the 2012 Survey of Business Owners, the US Census reports that there were 348 businesses in the town of Stephentown, including businesses without employees. Of those, 2 were Hispanic, 1 was minority and 66 were female-owned. Of the 348 businesses, 78 had paid employees. The following chart shows the breakdown of businesses by sector, sex of owner, and employees.

The data to the right shows that Stephentown, although a rural community, contains a significant number of businesses, one for every 8.3 people. Most of these businesses are very small – only 77 of the total 348 have employees. Many may not be a full-time occupation for the owner-operator.

Sector	# of Firms	All Male owned	Male owned with Employees	All Female Owned	Female Owned with Employees
All Sectors	348	280	77	66	0
Construction	79	77	57	20	0
Wholesale Trade	41	41	0	0	0
Retail Trade	64	60	1	4	0
Professional, scientific and technical services	33	6	4	27	
Arts, entertainment and recreation	34	31	0	3	0
Other services except public administration	66	43	41	23	0

Table 16: Businesses in the Town of Stephentown by Sector. Source: 2012 Survey of Business Owners, Bureau of the Census.

Agriculture

The agricultural sector for many years was dominated by the dairy industry. Starting in the early 1980s, the price of milk dropped with deregulation, creating stress in the industry. Dairy processes changed to discourage smaller farms which created a slow domino effect of closing farms. At present, no dairy farms exist in Stephentown.

The rich valley soils in Stephentown are good for growing vegetables and row crops. Stephentown's largest crop is hay, with vegetables, especially sweet corn, as a close second. Nursery and bedding plants, horses, maple products, beef, horses and other livestock are the other main products raised or grown in Stephentown. There are a few saw mills still in existence in the town, although they are used more for personal use and not as a commercial venture. At the writing of this chapter, a cheese making concern is purchasing the old Stephentown Elementary School to use partly to make their artisanal cheese using milk from a regional dairy.



Photo 10: Sweet corn grown on Wyomanock Road.

Shops and Services

In 1854, there were seven stores spread throughout Stephentown. Multiple doctors provided their services throughout the town. Presently, there is Snow's farm store, Cumberland Farms, the seasonal Berry Patch and a soon to open antique store. There is one gas station, Cumberland Farms, a Dunkin Donuts, and two casual restaurants. Several restaurants have opened and closed due to a lack of customers and community support. A regional grocery store was proposed in neighboring New Lebanon, but was not built due to lack of public water and sewer. In the 2015 survey, 55% of respondents checked that having a grocery store was a "most important issue" and another 20% checked that it was an "important" issue.

No medical services exist in town, or in the neighboring towns of Berlin or Nassau. The closest medical services are in Pittsfield, MA. One issue with this is that many New York health insurers do not have participating medical services in Pittsfield. This requires many residents to travel to Schodack, Albany or Troy to get their medical services.

The aging population of Stephentown may have issues with coping with the lack of nearby services. Many seniors may keep driving beyond their safe driving years. Many seniors may forgo necessary doctor's visits or call the ambulance if they become ill.

Since the population of Stephentown is not large enough to fully support a doctor, dentist or grocery store, the Town should work with its neighbors to find a good centralized location for a small grocery store. Additionally, the towns should work with the Rensselaer County Department for Aging, Rensselaer County Health Department, Rensselaer County Department of Mental Health and possibly health insurers to work out improved transportation, visiting nurses, and possibly a part time regional health center. Additionally, if a ride sharing service were to have service providers in the area, non-driving seniors or others without cars will be able to access grocery stores and services without government intervention.



Photo 11: A restaurant/store now closed.

Business Subcommittee

The Business Subcommittee met with Stephentown businesses as well as the Rensselaer County Chamber of Commerce, Berkshire County Chamber of Commerce and Rensselaer County Tourism. After reviewing the information, the Business Committee came up with the following recommendations to improve the business climate in the town of Stephentown:

Some **growth** is needed in town to support local businesses and provide employees. People are needed to run and operate businesses, to work in these businesses and patronize these businesses. People are also needed to provide the volunteer pool for local service organizations and the children needed to sustain our schools and our future.



Photo 12: The old Sykes Store imagined with a fresh coat of paint, landscaping and sidewalk.

Create a **business district** along NY 43 from Garfield Road to East Road and along NY 22 from Wyomanock Road to Grange Hall Road. The focus of the district would be on traffic based businesses such as tourism, a grocery, pharmacy and bank. High speed broadband is needed along the corridor at speeds at least 100 Mbps Down x 25 Mbps Up. This will allow local businesses to compete with the rest of the world. Tax incentives from the county, school district and town would be used to incentivize the location of businesses in this area. Larger retail (10+ employees) and other businesses creating jobs may be eligible for low-cost loans through the Rensselaer County Job Development Program. Property tax amelioration for new and

rehabilitated business buildings is available through the 485-b tax exemption for commercial, business and industrial property. It is not the intent that the business district would be the sole area for businesses, but that businesses would be spread around town. Reduction of the speed limit on NY 22

Stephentown does not look as appealing as it could to encourage folks to visit businesses or locate businesses in town. Starting in the business district but continuing throughout the town, there is a need to revitalize businesses, rental units and private homes, focusing on energy conservation and curb appeal. **Revitalization** would include new construction and renovation of existing buildings. Tax incentives could be used to encourage building renovation or construction. Additionally, instead of building new roads which are not able to be kept up, encourage development along existing roads. Grants such as the New York Main Street Technical Assistance and New York Main Street Renovation programs, Community Development Block Grant Small Cities program and Brownfields Opportunity Areas program (if the town has any possible brownfields) can help the Town with coming up with plans or actual funding of renovations to improve the hamlet areas and throughout the town as well. Additionally, businesses and residents could be encouraged to spruce their properties up by a beautification contest, with categories for residential and commercial, with subcategories for best and most improved. Winners could receive, along with bragging rights, a commemorative plaque, gift certificate or small cash prize.



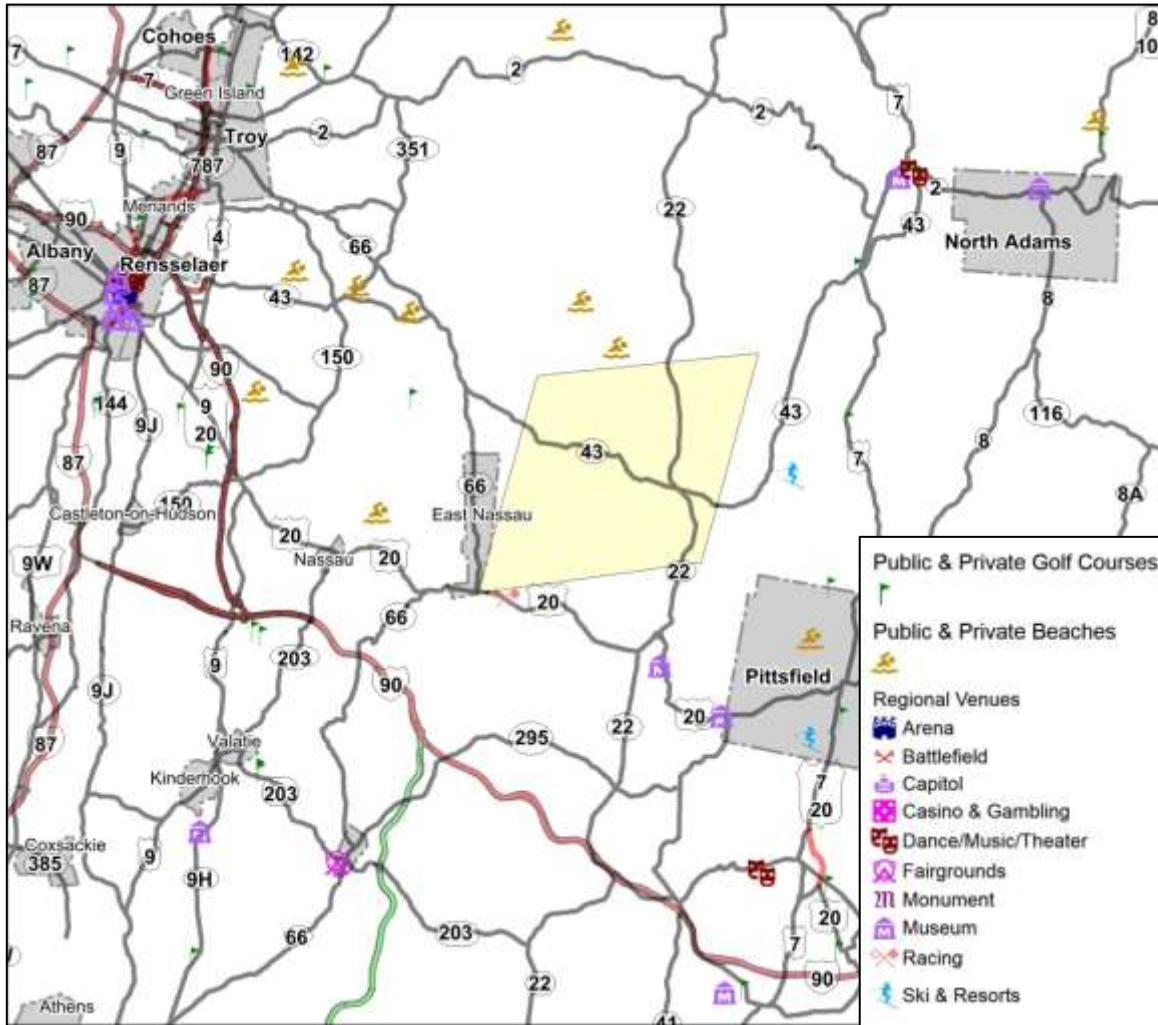
Photo 13: Playing fields at the old Stephentown Elementary School.

To encourage more families in town, as well as provide residents and visitors something to do, provide areas for **parks and recreation**. Already, the elementary school playing fields are being transformed into the Elroy Face Recreational Facility. Additional green space and recreation areas throughout town can **provide local areas throughout town for folks** to walk or bike to. All recreation areas need adequate parking and facilities. The New York State Parks Program provides funding for planning as well as acquisition and development of parks and recreation areas through the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.

As also discussed in the Infrastructure section, **Broadband for All** is needed throughout town. There are many businesses throughout the town,

most of which require quality broadband. Improving Consolidated Communications' infrastructure to improve the existing DSL, plus possibly attracting the new Charter Communications along the NY 22 corridor and NY 43 corridor into Massachusetts would begin to make it easier for businesses to connect to the rest of the world. Attracting an additional provider in the town would provide incentive for Consolidated to maintain their infrastructure as well as keep prices down. A minimum of 50 Mbps down X 10 Mbps up is needed throughout Stephentown.

When business owners got together to gather information for the plan, the ideas and information shared between the owners flowed. A **Stephentown Business Association** which meets regularly would help town businesses address their needs by finding help from their peers. It is envisioned that the Business Association would start with help from the Town, but ultimately would be self-sustaining. All businesses in town could be involved including both the traditional and home-based businesses. As well as helping businesses, the Business Association would also provide a liaison with the Town Board for issues which would affect businesses.



Map 14: Recreation and entertainment venues in the Stephentown area.

To properly promote Stephentown to the rest of the world, a **Marketing Plan** and budget needs to be created. Working with Rensselaer County, Berkshire County and Columbia County as well as the neighboring towns of New Lebanon, Hancock and Berlin, the marketing plan would need to identify local businesses and community and recreational resources to be promoted, who to promote these to and how to promote them. Ultimately, a map should be developed which includes Stephentown and Jiminy Peak.

Lastly, the **zoning law** needs to be updated. Residential areas need to be protected. Guidelines need to be developed for businesses in residential areas as most businesses in Stephentown are home-based and would likely grow from their home base. Additionally, specifications for town roads, private roads and driveways need to be improved. Specifications for rental units need to be created to improve and maintain the health and safety conditions of the units. Also, the budget needs to be increased for the Code Enforcement Officer so that the zoning law will be upheld.

Housing

The town of Stephentown has a wide variety of housing, from mansions to mobile homes. Although much of the town is rural in nature, the several hamlets provide higher density areas of housing. Additionally, several mobile home parks which also provide higher density housing are located in the town. Manufactured housing can also be found throughout the town as it is an affordable housing variety.

From the 1970s to the housing bust, Stephentown has steadily added houses with the present number of houses approximate double that of 1970. Most of the houses that have been built are in the rural areas, often in secluded locations with great views of the Taconic range or the more distant Catskill Mountains. Due to the necessity of having septic systems, housing lots are usually two or more acres.

A great majority of houses are single family (97%) and owner occupied (83%). Most rental units are single family houses or mobile homes. In 2010, there were 223 rental units of a total of 1,482 housing units, 21 of which were vacant and for rent. In 2009, 194 units or 13 percent of all housing units were for seasonal, recreational or occasional use. These units include those of “snowbirds” that move south during winter months as well as the numerous second houses found throughout the town.



Photo 14: A secluded Stephentown house built in recent decades.

The 2011-2015 American Community Survey found that the majority of occupied housing units had four to seven rooms with two or three bedrooms. All had complete kitchen facilities and 99.7% had complete plumbing facilities. A surprising 6.6% of housing units did not have vehicles available. For heating, 57.8% used fuel oil or kerosene, 7.5% used gas, 1.8% used electricity and 32.9% use “all other fuels” which is probably firewood in most cases.

	1980	1990	2000	2010
Number of housing units	889	1,242	1,339	1,482
Number of occupied housing units	691	951	1,129	1,190
Owner-occupied housing units	557	795	929	988
Renter-occupied housing units	134	156	200	202
Vacant units	198	291	210	292
<u>Number and type of units</u>				
Single family	619	854	927	958*
Multi-family	90	80	105	58*
Mobile homes/trailers	95	293	307	305*
Other		14		0*
Median housing value	\$35,100	\$93,000	\$97,100	\$158,700*
Median gross rent	\$154	\$371	\$533	\$758*

Table 17: Housing Data. Source: Bureau of the Census. *Data is from the 2005-2009 American Community Survey.

The majority of houses in Stephentown were built in the 1970s or later. This reflects the building boom of the 1970s and 1980s. Some of the houses built during this period were trailers or mobile homes, which will probably be replaced or abandoned in the next few decades.

The 2011-2015 American Community Survey found that the median self-reported value of owner-occupied houses was \$177,300. Only 64% of owner-occupied houses had mortgages, 36% did not have a mortgage. Median monthly housing costs for those with a mortgage was \$1,193 while those without a mortgage paid \$560. Of those with mortgages, 131 (21%) households paid 30% or more of their income for housing costs. Of those without mortgages, 42 (12%) paid 30% or more of their income for housing costs.

The 2011-2015 American Community Survey placed the median rent at \$957 for those who pay rent. The 2011-2015 American Community Survey also estimated that 30.4% of renters do not pay cash rent. Of those who pay rent, 76 (52.8%) pay 30% or more of their income for housing costs.

Affordability

In August 2016, there were 41 houses listed for sale in the Multiple Listing Service. The prices of the single family houses ranged from \$599,000 to \$45,000. The median house price was \$259,900 and the average house price was \$279,900. The 2011-2015 American Community Survey showed a median household income for Stephentown to be \$61,202. Monthly income for a household making \$65,202 is \$5,100.17. Housing costs should be no more than 33% of a household’s income for the financial health of a household. Using this percentage, a family with the median household income should pay no more than \$1,683 for housing costs. Using a 4% mortgage rate and the equalized 2016 property tax rate with school district tax rates averaged of 26.7943/\$1,000, a household with the median household income can afford a house of \$240,000. (\$1,145.80 mortgage + \$547.05 property taxes). This is \$19,900 less than the median house price within the town. The housing market is therefore unaffordable to the population in the town, although not too unaffordable.

One circumstance that improves the affordability of the town is the property tax rate. In 2016, the Stephentown property tax rate using average school districts rates was the lowest rate in Rensselaer County. In fact, the average Rensselaer County tax rate which includes county property taxes, town and highway taxes, fire district taxes, water district taxes, sewer district taxes, ambulance taxes, library taxes and school district taxes, was \$31.1855/\$1,000. Stephentown’s average taxes were \$4.39/\$1,000 less than the County average and saved property owners a significant amount of money compared to other towns in the county.

Age of Housing, 1990-2000, Town of Stephentown			
Year Built	1980	1990	2000
1995 – 2000 (March)	--	--	138
1990 - 1994	--	--	101
1980 - 1989	--	323	229
1970 - 1979	204	293	256
1960 - 1969	145	159	168
1940 - 1959	113	119	116
1939 or earlier	340	348	331
Median year built	1958	1970	1971

Table 18: Age of Housing, 1980-2000. Source: Bureau of the Census. *Since that decade was just beginning, this number includes the year previous (1979, 1989) into March of the next year.



Photo 15: A new house in Stephentown, which is unaffordable to many current residents.

House prices are set by market forces, although communities sometimes discourage the construction of lower price housing using zoning, land use and other local laws such as manufactured housing bans, large lot zoning, minimum unit size, many large subdivision fees and other requirements. The Town of Stephentown allows manufactured housing, does not require lot sizing more than the County Health Department requires for siting septic systems, does not have a minimum unit size and has low subdivision fees. In future zoning changes, care should be taken that housing costs are not raised through law changes that unnecessarily increase housing costs. Additionally, the accessory apartment law needs to be clarified.

It should be noted that the rental unit prices in Stephentown is much lower than in the Capital District and Pittsfield area, which has led to an

increase of low income families living in these rentals. Unfortunately, the housing quality of some of these rentals does not meet loose housing codes. The Town may want to adopt a rental unit law that requires inspection before new tenants are allowed to rent. This may increase rents by a bit, but the health and safety issues reported by emergency responders would be reduced and tenants would have safe housing conditions.

Senior Housing

In Table 4, Comparative Age, on page 21 of this Comprehensive Plan, it is shown that the most vulnerable group of seniors, those aged 85 and up are a growing segment of the population. Many of these are life-long residents of Stephentown and are living often on their own in their own residences. Although some of these residents may have the wherewithal to maintain their properties by themselves, many houses owned and inhabited by seniors have housing quality issues since seniors are often the most likely to be individuals below the poverty line (Income Data,

Table 12, page 26) due to the fixed nature of their incomes. These residents are often the most likely to have calls to emergency services due to accidents and illnesses, creating a drain on the Emergency Services of the Town (Community Services Chapter, Page 61).

Senior housing in the form of apartments or mini-cottages provide a form of safe residences for elderly residents in the town. As there are not that many seniors in Stephentown (269 65+ and 30 85+ counted in 2010 Census), a small number of approximately 20-30 units would provide housing stability for this vulnerable group. Although the Emergency Services in Stephentown is concerned about such housing increasing their number of calls, limiting the number of apartments to that needed by the local community will not draw more fragile seniors into Stephentown. Additionally, ROUSE, RPC, Rensselaer County’s rural senior housing provider has found that the seniors living together in their apartments have a tendency to help each other with meals, rides to doctors’ appointments and general care. This has allowed their residents to stay independent longer with fewer emergency calls than seniors living separately in their own houses.

Ideally, senior housing should be located in areas with public water, sewer and transportation, but as these do not exist in Stephentown, a site should be carefully chose which can provide sufficient well water and have good soils for a community septic or similar system. Since many grocery stores send buses to senior housing complexes, this could be a way for others in the community needing rides to go grocery shopping to hitch a ride to the grocery store as well.

Residency

Residency in Stephentown appears stable. Over 90% of residents did not move in the past year of those surveyed by the American Community Survey. Those who had moved generally came in from New York State outside of Rensselaer County. As compared to Rensselaer County, residency is also more stable, but Rensselaer County outside Stephentown has a larger percentage of rental units.

Residence 1 Year Ago – 2011-2015 American Community Survey		
	Stephentown town	Rensselaer County
Total	2,280 (100%)	158,296 (100%)
Same house	2,618 (90.9%)	134,514 (85.0%)
Different House In United States	262 (9.1%)	23,162 (14.6%)
Different House in Same county	75 (2.6%)	11,748 (7.4%)
Different House in Different county	187 (6.5%)	11,414 (7.2%)
Same state	111 (3.9%)	8,370 (5.3%)
Different state	76 (2.6%)	3,044 (1.9%)
Abroad	0 (0.0%)	620 (0.4%)

Table 19: Residence 1 Year Ago, 2011-2015 American Community Survey. Source: Bureau of the Census.

Year Householder Moved Into Unit – 2011-2015 American Community Survey		
	Town of Stephentown	Rensselaer County
Occupied Housing Units	1,182 (100%)	63,447 (100%)
Moved in 2015 or later	19 (1.6%)	1,029 (1.6%)
Moved in 2010 to 2014	243 (20.6%)	17,566 (27.7%)
Moved in 2000 to 2009	320 (27.1%)	20,468 (32.3%)
Moved in 1990 to 1999	369 (31.2%)	10,042 (15.8%)
Moved in 1980 to 1989	180 (15.2%)	6,438 (10.1%)
Moved in 1979 and earlier	51 (4.3%)	7,904 (12.5%)

Table 20: Year Householder Moved into Unit – 2011-2015 American Community Survey. Source: Bureau of the Census.

The median year that residents moved into their housing in Stephentown is 1998. As compared to Rensselaer County residents’ date of moving of 2004, Stephentown residents are more likely to stay in place. The larger number of folks who moved in in the 1990s reflects the large number of houses that were built at that time. In the survey sent out by the Town in 2015, several residents stated concerns that they could not sell their houses, which may also be a reason for the lack of mobility in moving.

Housing Programs

There are several programs in existence presently that residents can use to purchase a home, improve housing or help with housing costs.

Rensselaer County Homeownership Program – The Rensselaer County Homeownership Program is funded through NYS Office of Community Renewal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding. The Homeownership Program is run by Rensselaer County Housing Resources through their TRIP Neighborworks© Homeownership Center.



Photo 16: An older Stephentown home.

Income eligible households “first time¹” home buyers looking to purchase a home in Rensselaer County outside the city of Troy can receive up to \$20,000 in 0% interest forgivable loan that is used towards down payment and closing costs. Applicant first must attend classes and counseling at the Homeownership Center. (518) 690-0020 or www.triponline.org

Homeowner Assistance for Rensselaer County (HARC) (housing repair) – The HARC program is funded through the NYS Affordable Housing Corporation and provides up to \$10,000 to lower income, elderly or disabled households for health and safety repairs, roof replacement, structural repairs, electrical repairs, plumbing repairs, heat system repairs/replacement, window replacement, and energy efficiency measures. Health and safety repairs and code compliance corrections are considered first priorities. Properties must be owner occupied and up-to-date on taxes, mortgage and insurance. This program is run by Rensselaer County Housing Resources. (518) 690-0200 or www.triponline.org

Mini-Repair Grant – This Rensselaer County Housing Resources program provides free labor for simple repairs of houses owned by lower income, elderly or disabled households. Home owners are responsible for the cost of materials. 272-8289 x 211 or www.triponline.org

EmPowerNY – This program is available to low-income residents in Rensselaer County to upgrade lights and some appliances to improve electrical efficiency and reduce power bills. The program is operated by the Commission on Economic Opportunity. (518) 272-6012 Ext. 321 or www.ceoempowers.org/services/healthy-homes/empower-ny/

Weatherization Assistance Program – This federal program run by the Commission on Economic Opportunity provides an energy audit and insulation, weather stripping, heating repairs or replacement to low income households. (518) 272-6012 ext. 290 or www.ceoempowers.org/services/healthy-homes/weatherization/

Home Energy Assistance Program – This federal program is run through the Rensselaer County Department of Aging and provides heating cost assistance for senior citizens 60 years and older and are low income. (518) 270-2738

Occasionally, Rensselaer County Housing Resources or the Commission on Economic Opportunity receives HOME (low income) or other funds for housing rehabilitation programs. Interested individuals should contact the agencies’ websites or contact the agency directly to determine whether they have such programs.

¹ First time homebuyer according to HUD definition.

Community Services

A community's quality of life is often gauged by the community services found within and around the community.

Emergency

Fire/Ambulance

Fire protection service is provided by the Stephentown Fire District #1 and staffed by the Stephentown Fire Department. The District was created in 1939 and purchased its first service truck that same year. The Fire District obtains funds for apparatus, training and facilities through tax levies within the town of Stephentown. In 1977 the Fire District approved Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and with a core membership of 6 Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs), began a first response effort in conjunction with neighboring Lebanon Valley Protective Association (LVPA). In 1993, Stephentown Fire District purchased a used ambulance from LVPA and became licensed by New York State Department of Health (NYS DOH) to provide ambulance service for the Town of Stephentown. Stephentown Fire District #1 encompasses the entire Town of Stephentown with a population of approximately 2,903 (Census 2010) residents with approximately 1,000 parcels of property. The farthest point in the district is more than 12 miles by road from the Fire Station.

The Stephentown Fire District #1 currently owns the following vehicles:

- 20XX Ford Explorer Command Vehicle
- 2008 Ford 450 Type 3 ambulance
- 2016 Ford F550 1000 recue pumper with 1000 GPM pump, compressed air foam (CAFS)
- 2003 International 1,000 GPM Compressed Air Foam (CAFS) with 1,000 gallons water + extrication equipment
- 1993 International 1,000 GPM Compressed Air Foam (CAFS) with 1,000 gallons water
- 1987 Mack 1,000 GPM with 1,250 gallons water
- 1983 GMC 1 ton military pickup converted brush truck



Photo 17: Stephentown Fire District Fire House on NY 43.

In association with the Fire District, the Stephentown Fire Department is a not for profit organization dedicating its members for protection of the town which relies entirely on donations and fund raising activities. The Fire Department was created around the time the Fire District was created and began responding to multiple types of alarms and incidents, including power wires down, motor vehicles accidents, floods and other types of weather related emergencies soon after its creation. The mission of the department is to provide emergency services on a volunteer basis for the Town of Stephentown on a 24/7 365-day basis. The department promotes a disaster-resistant community by maintaining emergency preparedness and response that will protect local and regional health, safety and the environment.

Between 2005 and 2015 the average number of incidents has remained constant at about 265 per year, with a spike of 350 calls in 2009. Approximately 70% of all calls are pure emergency medical related. Stephentown transports patients to Berkshire Medical Center, Samaritan Hospital, Albany Medical Center, and occasionally to St. Peters, Albany Veterans Administration, and St. Mary's. A round-trip ambulance call with transport to the hospital generally takes at least 2 hours, sometimes more. The remaining calls are structure fires, mutual aid calls, rescues, weather related emergencies and motor vehicle accidents. Weather related emergency can stretch resources to the breaking point. Although some localized weather incidents allow the Department to get mutual aid assistance from nearby departments, wide spread

emergencies such as Hurricane Irene do not allow neighboring departments to give aid.

Over the past 40 years, the Stephentown Volunteer Fire Department has seen a steady decline in membership. At one time members numbered in excess of 100 with about 50% considered active. Major fires were typically attended by 40 or more firefighters. Today, membership is listed at 50 members with approximately 45% considered to be active firefighters, and of those active members there are 18 interior qualified firefighters and 9 EMTs. Training requirements have greatly increased in the past 20 years from 36 hours to approximately 135 hours for firefighters and from 80 hours to 175 hours for EMTs.



Photo 18: Stephentown Volunteer Fire Department Fire Hall on Grange Hall Road.

Stephentown Fire District #1 is a partner in the Rensselaer County Mutual Aid plan, which affects all fire and EMS services within the county. In addition Rensselaer County also is a partner with mutual aid plans for Washington, Saratoga, Albany and Columbia counties. Also, the State of New York Mutual Aid Plan includes Massachusetts on the east side of Stephentown. Mutual aid is given or received multiple times per year. Without these mutually beneficial relationships, the residents of Stephentown would experience a far reduced level of care and protection. For the benefit of residents in the far southwest corner of Stephentown, the District has an automatic mutual aid agreement with Tsatsawassa Fire

for any type of incident in that area. With this arrangement, both Stephentown and Tsatsawassa are dispatched simultaneously for any call in that area.

Communications is a critical element in emergency services. Stephentown Fire District is unique as it operates in Rensselaer County and provides mutual aid to Columbia County, and Berkshire County, MA, and each county has their own radio type. In 1996, Rensselaer County migrated to an 800 MHz radio system, while maintaining the older low-band system for special uses. Stephentown has embraced and incorporated 800MHz radios into the emergency vehicles, and has 14 portable hand-held radios used to communicate with Rensselaer County Dispatch, other responding Rensselaer County mutual aid departments, and on-site between responding apparatus and officers. Rensselaer County upgraded the 800MHz system to P25 compatible 800 "digital" equipment, which went into service in October 2017. Columbia County utilizes low band radios and is converting to VHF. Berkshire County also utilizes the VHF band. Stephentown maintains a limited number of low band and VHF radios for communications with departments from these mutual aid areas.

The major issue for emergency services in Stephentown is a lack of volunteers, especially during the daytime, especially for EMTs. The long travel times to hospitals in Troy or Albany tie up the ambulance crews for two plus hours. An aging population is requiring more trips to the hospital. Although neighboring community emergency services are coming to the assistance of the District when a call comes in and the ambulance is already on a call, all the neighboring communities have the same issue of lack of volunteers. In 2009, with the increasing number of EMS related calls and the challenges staffing those calls, Stephentown researched the possibility of working jointly with Berlin and Petersburg Rescue Squads to utilize a paid EMT & driver during daytime hours of 6AM to 6PM daily. The result was that cost would have been approximately \$175,000 for the specified period. If the contract were extended to cover 24/7, the cost would have exceeded 3/4 million dollars. Ideas to increase volunteers include receiving a fire district tax break for volunteers, training highway department employees for emergency services or as EMTs and having Rensselaer County hold a Certificate of Need for Emergency Medical Services to allow a county-wide ambulance service instead of each community. More ideas can be found in the Stephentown Emergency Services Commitment to the Future plan in the Appendices.

Police

Police services are provided by the Rensselaer County Sheriff and New York State Police. Both Sheriff and State Police provide service through road patrols which appear to provide speedy enough coverage. The Town of Stephentown also employs a Town Constable who provides security during Town Court.

Governmental

Town of Stephentown

The Town of Stephentown has a four member Town Council headed by the Town Supervisor. The Town Council meets on the second and third Mondays of the month at 7 PM in the Town Hall, 26 Grange Hall Road, Stephentown.

At this time, the Town Clerk's office is open Mondays – 4-7 PM, Wednesdays - 4-8 PM, Fridays – 4-7 PM, 3rd Saturdays – January thru August 9 AM-1 PM/2nd & 3rd Saturdays - September 10 AM-4 PM/3rd & 4th Saturdays – October 10 AM-4 PM/2nd & 3rd Saturdays – November and December 10 AM-4 PM.

Stephentown Town Court is presently held on the second, third and fourth Thursday at 7 PM. There are two Justices of the Peace for the Town of Stephentown.

The Tax Collector's Office is presently open during Tax Collection Season, January – March 31st. School taxes are collected by the school districts.

The Town Assessor's Office is presently open Tuesdays 6 PM-9 PM and Saturdays 9 AM- Noon during winter hours and Tuesdays 6 PM-9 PM during summer hours.

The Code Enforcement/Zoning Office is presently open on appointment. The Planning Board meets on the third Wednesday at 7 PM when advertised. The Zoning Board of Appeals meets on the first Thursday of the month at 7 PM when needed.

The Town employs a Dog Control Officer. The Town has a Youth Commission which works together with the Stephentown Library to run a summer program for children in Stephentown. Additionally, holiday parties and programs are also provided for the children in Town. The Town operates a Transfer Station at the site of the old landfill at 235 Newton Road in conjunction with the Easter Rensselaer County Solid Waste Management Authority (ERCSWMA).



Photo 19: Stephentown Town Hall on Grange Hall Road.

Along with the old landfill site, the Town owns the Town Hall, which was formerly the Grange hall. The Town Hall was renovated in 1996 and is relatively handicapped accessible. Additionally, the Town owns the residence directly south of the Highway Garage as well as a residence with lot on Moore Hill Road.

Most employees of the Town of Stephentown are part time with the exception of the Highway Superintendent and Highway Department Employees. There is a need to create job descriptions for all positions, paid and volunteer to improve the understanding of what new hires should do as

well as for elected officials to understand the needs of each position. Additionally, volunteers for the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals are needed to fill these boards and create alternate members in case of absence.



Photo 20: Stephentown Highway Garage on Grange Hall Road.

The Town Budget has been comparatively stable from 2010 to the present except for a 4.9% increase in 2014 primarily due to an increase in the Transportation and Highway budgets. Unpredictable costs such as the State Retirement and Social Security payments rose significantly in 2015 and then dropped again in 2016 in the case of New York State Retirement. Property tax revenue changes have fluctuated in the period between 2010 and 2017, with a 9.6% increase in 2015 and a 1.4% decrease in 2014.

Rensselaer County

Rensselaer County provides social and other services through its departments.

Aging– The nutrition program provides meals in its 6 senior centers as well as Meals-on-Wheels, transportation to the senior center and shopping, leisure and recreation and welfare and counseling services. The Expanded In-Home Services for the Elderly Program provides case assessment and assistance in accessing housekeeping and personal care services. The Department of the Aging helps seniors to access necessary services to keep them safely in their homes.

County Clerk – The County Clerk’s office is where deeds, liens, mortgages and other legal documents are filed. The County Clerk also has a main DMV office in Troy, as well as satellite offices in East Greenbush, Hoosick Falls and Schodack.

Rensselaer County Court and **New York State Surrogate Court** and **Court of Claims/Supreme Court** are held in the Rensselaer County Courthouse, 80 Second Street, Troy, New York.

Rensselaer County One-Stop Employment Center is located in Troy and works with its partner agencies (NYS Department of Labor, NYS Education Department Office of Vocational Services for Individuals with Disabilities, Hudson Valley Community College and the Rensselaer County Department of Social Services) to employment opportunities, training assistance and other workforce services to residents and employers in a single environment.

Mental Health – The Rensselaer County Mental Health Department provides the following services:

- Unified Services for Children & Adolescents Outpatient Clinic
- Forensic Services
- Rensselaer City Center Outpatient Treatment
- Non-Medicaid Care Coordination
- Hoosick Falls Satellite Outpatient Treatment
- Health Home Care Coordination Services for Adults
- Services to residents of Private Proprietary Homes for Adults (PPHA)
- Children’s Health Home Care Coordination
- MICA (Mental Illness and Chemical Addiction) Outreach and Assessment Services
- Medicaid Service Coordination
- Substance Abuse Prevention Services
- Single Point of Access – SPOA (adult housing and children and youth care coordination)

Health – The Rensselaer County Health Department has several different divisions that provide separate services.

- Children with Special Needs has three program to help monitor and provide services for children who are at risk for or have developmental delay or disability.
- Environmental Health issues food service permits and inspects facilities; conduct home inspections for children who have elevated lead blood levels; investigates public health nuisances including vermin, sewage overflows and mosquito breeding areas; issues tattoo and body piercing permits to operate; inspects and issues permits for campgrounds, hotels and motels, migrant labor camps, fairs and festivals, and mass gatherings; inspects children’s day and overnight camps; permit public swimming pools and beaches and monitor facilities; work with residents with individual water supply issues; inspects and samples public water supplies and deals with complaints;

reviews individual wastewater treatment plans and systems; reviews realty subdivisions; investigates complaints about indoor public smoking and in workplaces and tobacco sales to minors; and conduct surveys for the Healthy Community Survey.

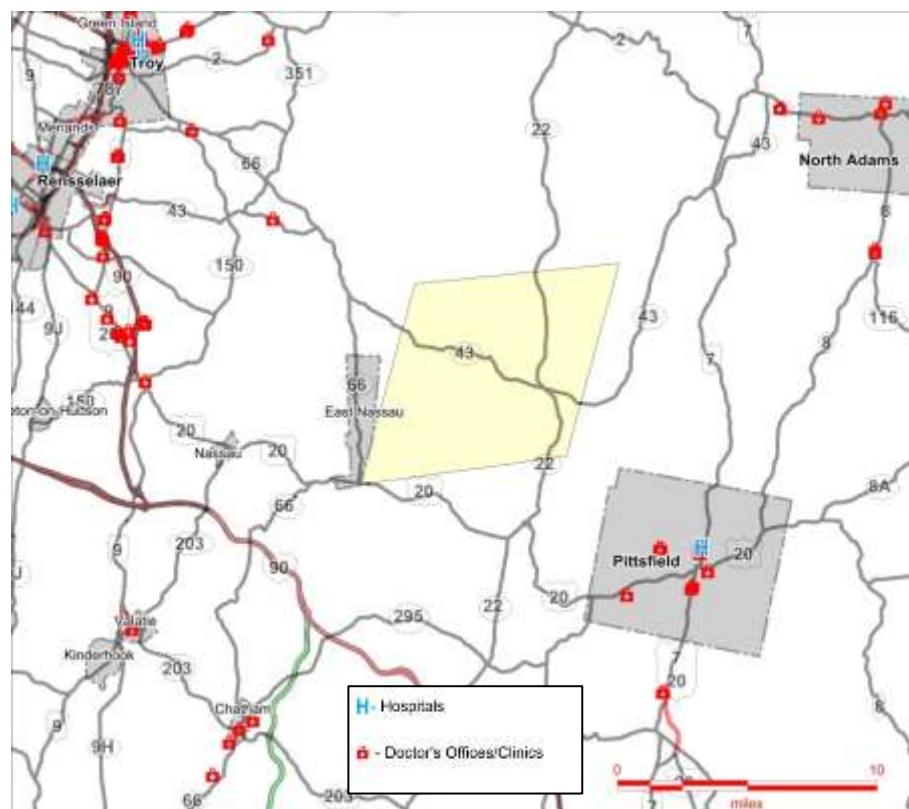
- Medical Examiner investigates certain causes of death.
- Nursing Services run the immunization clinics, TB, HIV and STD testing clinics, rabies clinics, maternal child health program, lead poisoning prevention program, and children with special health care needs program.
- Medical Reserves Corps provides volunteers to supplement existing emergency response services when public health is threatened.

Social Services – The Department of Social Services runs the following programs: Temporary Assistance, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Medicaid, burials of indigent individuals, HEAP, long term home care, Project HIRE, adult protective services, adoption, foster care, child protective services, and day care assistance.

Veteran’s Service Agency – Provides counseling to veterans and their families for entitlement to pensions, compensations, insurance, hospitalization, loans, burials, grave markers, educational benefits, annual VA questionnaires, and any other benefits provided by the Federal and State governments and assistance in completing paperwork for available benefits.

Medical

Presently, no medical services are located in the town of Stephentown. The nearest hospital, Berkshire Medical Center, is in Pittsfield, MA, approximately 15 miles away. Samaritan Hospital in Troy and Albany Memorial Hospital in Albany are the next closest, at approximately 22 miles away. Albany Medical Center and St. Peter’s Hospital in Albany are approximately 25 miles away and Southwestern Vermont Medical Center in Bennington, VT is approximately 30 miles



Map 15: Medical offices in the area surrounding Stephentown. Note the distances needed to travel to facilities.

away. Many New York State health insurers do not have Massachusetts providers, which require that residents use medical facilities in New York State.

The nearest doctor's offices are in Averill Park or Pittsfield, MA, and the next closest doctor's office is in Schodack Center. The nearest dentist's office is in Averill Park. Due to a lack of medical services in Stephentown and its surrounding communities, the attraction of - at minimum - a part-time medical clinic would ease the stress on the ambulance service and help the senior population in the area. The clinic could be staffed with certified physician assistant nurses under the direction of a part time physician. There is

Schools

Elementary/High School

Stephentown is served by three school districts – Averill Park Central School District, Berlin Central School District, and New Lebanon Central School District. The majority of the town land area is in the Berlin Central School District, while the western portion of the town is in the Averill Park School District and the southern portion is in the New Lebanon School District.

The Averill Park School District had 2,823 K-12 students in the 2015-2016 school year with an average class size of 22. There are three elementary schools, one middle school and a high school. Graduation rate is 93%. Economically disadvantaged school population is 22%. Tax rate per \$1,000 assessed for the 2016/2017 year is \$19.343431.

The Berlin School District had 691 K-12 students in the 2015-2016 school year with an average class size of 19. There is one elementary school and middle school/high school. Graduation rate is 84%. Economically disadvantaged school population is 53%. Tax rate per \$1,000 assessed for the 2016/2017 year is \$16.147411.

The New Lebanon School District had 409 K-12 students in the 2015-2016 school year with an average class size of 16. There is one elementary school and one junior/senior high school. Graduation rate is 88%. Economically disadvantaged school population is 47%. Tax rate per \$1,000 assessed is \$13.596951.

Many children in Stephentown are home-schooled.

Although there were two private schools located in Stephentown in the 1860s, no private schools are located now within its borders. The following is a list of private schools in the area:

- Catholic Central High School, Troy, NY – grades 7-12
- Darrow School, New Lebanon, NY – grades 9-12, boarding & day
- Doane Stuart School, Rensselaer, NY – grades pre K - 12
- Emma Willard School, Troy, NY – grades 9-12, girls only, boarding & day
- Hoosac School, Hoosick, NY – grades 8-Post Grad, boarding & day
- Lasalle Institute, Troy, NY – grades 6-12, boys only
- Miss Hall’s School, Pittsfield, MA – grades 9 – 12, girls only, boarding & day
- Mountain Road School, New Lebanon, NY – grades pre K – 8
- Oakwood Christian School, Troy, NY – grades pre K – 12
- Redemption Christian Academy, Troy, NY – grades pre K – Post Grad, boarding & day
- Robert C. Parker School, North Greenbush, NY – grades pre K – 8
- St. Joseph’s Central High School, Pittsfield, MA – grades 9 - 12
- St. Mark School, Pittsfield, MA – grades pre K – 8
- Sinai Academy of the Berkshires, Pittsfield, MA – grades pre K - 2
- Susan Odell Taylor School for Children, Troy, NY – grades pre K – 6
- Woodland Hill Montessori School, Rensselaer, NY – grades pre K - 8

Colleges/Universities

Stephentown is well located among many highly ranked universities and colleges in New York State, Massachusetts and Vermont.

- Albany Law School, Albany, NY – graduate & post graduate law
- Albany Medical College, Albany, NY – graduate & post graduate medical
- Albany School of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, Albany, NY – undergraduate, graduate & post graduate in pharmaceutical and health studies
- Bard College at Simon’s Rock, Great Barrington, MA – undergraduate liberal arts
- Bennington College, Bennington, VT – undergraduate liberal arts
- Berkshire Community College, Pittsfield, MA – 2 year broad curriculum
- The College of Saint Rose, Albany, NY – undergraduate & graduate in liberal arts, education, sciences, fine arts and business
- Columbia Greene Community College, Hudson, NY – 2 year college, broad curriculum

- Community College of Vermont Bennington, Bennington, VT – 2 year college, broad curriculum
- Excelsior College, Albany, NY – on-line undergraduate & graduate in liberal arts, business, nursing, health sciences, public service and technology
- Hudson Valley Community College, Troy, NY – 2 year college, broad curriculum
- Maria College, Albany, NY – 2 year college in business, computer information, nursing, occupational therapy, physical therapy and early childhood education
- Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, North Adams, MA – undergraduate & graduate liberal arts
- Northeastern Baptist College, Bennington, VT – undergraduate theological
- Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, NY – undergraduate, graduate & post graduate in architecture, business, engineering, & multiple sciences
- Russell Sage College, Troy, NY – women’s , under graduate liberal arts
- The Sage Colleges, Albany, NY – undergraduate in liberal arts and graduate & post graduate in education, health sciences & management
- Schenectady County Community College, Schenectady, NY – 2 year college, broad curriculum
- Siena College, Loudonville, NY – undergraduate liberal arts
- Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY – undergraduate liberal arts
- Southern Vermont College, Bennington, VT – undergraduate liberal arts
- Union College, Schenectady, NY – undergraduate liberal arts
- University at Albany, Albany, NY – undergraduate, graduate & post graduate in liberal arts & sciences
- Vermont Technical College, Bennington, VT – 2 year nursing program
- Williams College – undergraduate liberal arts

In addition, training and educational opportunities can be received at the Capital District Opportunity Center in Troy, Mildred Elly Institutes in Albany and Pittsfield, Samaritan Hospital School of Nursing and Memorial College of Nursing.

Activities and Recreation

There are plenty of activities to be had in and around Stephentown for all ages.

Library – The Stephentown Memorial Library empowers its community by offering free access to information, programs and services to all its residents. As a living memorial to those who have served our country, the Library aspires to help each generation remember the past, thrive in the present and fulfill the promise of the future.

In addition to hosting and organizing annual events for the Stephentown Youth Commission, such as the Easter Egg Hunt, Youth Summer Camp and Halloween Party/Trunk Or Treat, the Library offers a broad range of benefits to its membership of over 700 active cardholders, including a monthly schedule of family-friendly events, meeting space for a variety of local organizations, free access to computers and high-speed internet, and passes to area museums, in addition to the latest books, movies and periodicals. More information is available at stephentownlibrary.org



Photo 21: Stephentown Memorial Library on NY 43.



Photo 22: The Stephentown Heritage Center on Garfield Road operated by the Stephentown Historical Society.

different activities can be found at the Senior Center most weekdays. There is another senior center with nutrition center in Schodack on NY 150 near US 9 & 20.

Veterans – The Veterans of Stephentown meet monthly. They maintain a Memorial Garden on NY 43 near the intersection with NY 22. The Veterans of Stephentown are supported by the Town.

Historical Society – The Stephentown Historical Society was created in 1973 to bring together those interested in the history of Stephentown. It purchased the Methodist Episcopal Church and uses it as the Stephentown Heritage Center, which provides space for collections, a research and genealogy library and meeting space. The Historical Society meets on a monthly basis with lectures or discussions on specific topics. The Town of Stephentown provides funding assistance for the upkeep of the Heritage Center.

Seniors – The Stephentown Senior Citizens meet from 11 to 3 on Thursdays in the Stephentown Fire Hall. The Senior Citizens also have dinner outings, take trips and assist in town events such as the Christmas Tree Lighting. The Stephentown Senior Citizens are supported by the Town by payments to allow the use of the Fire Hall.

Rensselaer County’s nutrition center for seniors in Stephentown is the Eastern Rensselaer County Senior Center in Grafton. The nutrition center provides a hot lunch Mondays through Fridays for a suggested donation. Additionally,



Photo 23: Stephentown Veteran’s Memorial Garden on NY 43.

Stephentown Food Pantry – the Stephentown Food Pantry is located in Stephentown Federated Church on Garfield Road. It is open on Saturdays from 9-11 AM to all residents of Stephentown and Hancock.

Stephentown Rod & Gun Club – the Stephentown Rod & Gun Club, located on NY 43 near West Stephentown, meets biweekly for its fish fry.

Stephentown Trail Riders Snowmobile Trail Club maintains and operates 9 miles of snowmobile trails from Cherry Plain State Park to the Massachusetts border with volunteers. The trails are funded by the New York State Snowmobile Trail Fund and connect to Grafton Lakes State Park and into Washington County. The trails are open to all New York State registered sleds.

Horseback riding can be found at Gardner’s Riding, which also has weekly rodeos.

Hiking can be found in along roads as well as several trails and in the Capital District Wildlife Management Area. The Corkscrew Rail Trail starts at Knapp Road and runs 2.5 miles south into Columbia County. The Taconic Crest Trail is a large trail system that runs into Massachusetts and Vermont and is maintained by the Taconic Hiking Club. Trailheads can be found at the top of Round Mountain Road and Robinson Hollow Road. Events such as the Cystic Fibrosis Extreme Hiking Challenge use this mountain top trail. The Rensselaer Land Trust trails at the Bob Ingalls Memorial Park are located at the intersection of Garfield Road and Horse Heaven Road. Additionally, the Rensselaer Plateau Alliance has trails at its new chestnut forest. Nearby, the Hand Hollow State Forest in New Lebanon, NY, has trails and other recreational activities, and the Mud Pond Preserve, in the town of Nassau, provides three trails centered around the Mud Pond.

Capital District Wildlife Management Area and Cherry Plain State Park also provides recreational opportunities such as hiking, hunting, snow shoeing. The Cherry Plain State Park over the border in Berlin has a beach and allows camping, boating and fishing.

The Kinderhook Creek is a cold water fishery that supports trout. A parking area for fishing on the Kinderhook is located on Garfield Road west of Garvin Road. Many of the tributaries of the Kinderhook also support trout, as well as other fishes.

Nearby, the Northern Cave Conservancy, Inc. owns the Berlin Cave south of the hamlet of Berlin for moderate spelunking abilities. Downhill skiing possibilities exist close by in Hancock at Jiminy Peak, Bousquet, Butternut and Catamount ski resorts. Twelve additional downhill skiing venues can be found within an hour and a half drive from Stephentown for all skiing abilities. Cross-country skiing can be found in Poestenkill at the Pine Ridge Ski Center. Twenty-four public and private golf courses can be found within 20 miles of Stephentown, many in neighboring Berkshire County.

Children/Youth Activities

There are presently a few programs in Stephentown for children at the elementary school age and little opportunity to keep pre-teens and teens occupied. Due to the low number of children in Stephentown and surrounding towns, groups such as the Boy Scouts may only have one group for several towns, requiring transportation to get to meetings and activities. Additionally, summer employment opportunities for teens are extremely limited. The summer day camp program presently run by the library has become very popular. A summer work program or youth build program could help Stephentown’s teen population. State and federal funding through Rensselaer County’s Youth Department could provide funding for these programs. Transportation for participants to access the program may need to be provided.

Youth Program – the Town of Stephentown runs a youth program that provides events and activities for the youth of the town, including the Summer Program held at the library and holiday parties.

Taconic Valley Soccer is played at the Berlin Elementary School. Pre-K to 6th grade is part of the John Werner Soccer League based in southwestern Vermont. Grades 4 through 6 travel in the area of eastern Rensselaer County and Southwestern Vermont. Grades 7 through 9 are part of the Capital District Soccer League and travel throughout the Capital District.



Photo 24: Playing fields at the old Stephentown Elementary School.

Shatford Little League plays in Shatford Park in New Lebanon. Twin Town Little League’s closest fields are in the town of Sand Lake and play games throughout the Capital District.

The local Boy Scout troop is located in Petersburg and chartered by the Petersburg Veterans Memorial Community Center. The local Girl Scout troop is located in Berlin and meets in the Berlin Elementary school.

Religious Institutions

There are five churches in the town of Stephentown. The following is a list of churches and religious institutions:

- West Stephentown Baptist Church
- Crossroads Church
- St. Joseph's Church
- Stephentown Center Baptist Church
- Stephentown Federated Church



Photo 25: St. Joseph's Church on NY 43.

Land Use Laws

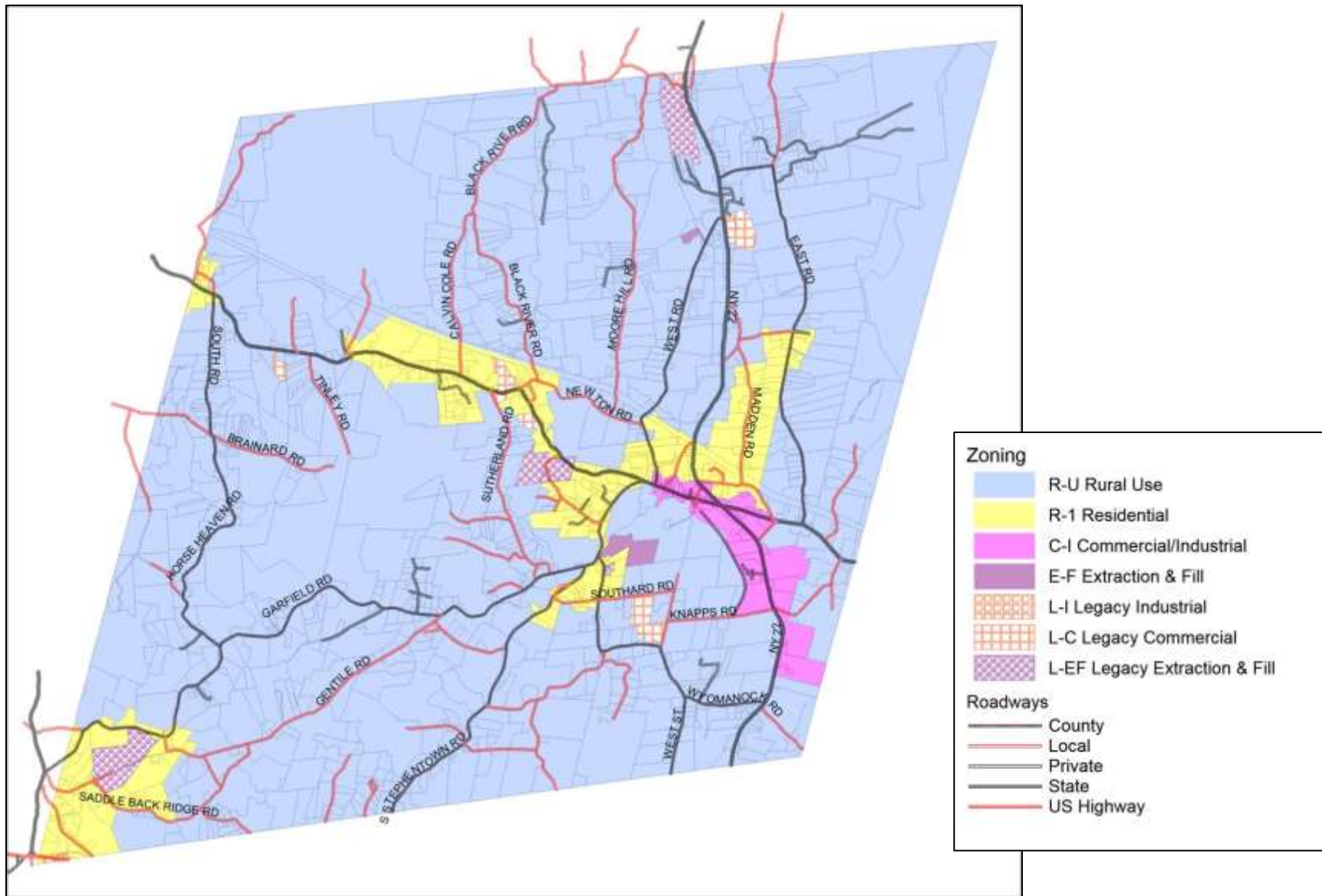
Stephentown can be categorized as a low density rural town with a few areas of medium density in hamlets and mobile home parks. At a density of 50 people per square mile, Stephentown is one of Rensselaer County's least populous towns. Considering that there are many large parcels owned by New York State or Cowie Forest Products which do not have any inhabitants, this is not surprising. Excluding this acreage gives a density of 59 people per household, still a low density. This low density allows many residents to be a distance from their neighbors which creates a greater tolerance for neighbors' use of their land.

Land Use Regulations

The Town of Stephentown adopted its Land Use Regulations in 1991 after several years of crafting the law. The majority of land is zoned R-U Rural Use which allows many uses by right or by special permit. Other zones are R-1 Residential, C Commercial, I Industrial, and EF Extraction and Fill. Minimum lot area in the R-U district is 1 acre.

The R-1 Residential district is located in and around the hamlet of West Stephentown, along NY 43 from Stone Bridge Road to east of the hamlet of Stephentown including lands on both sides of Staples Road and Garfield Road to Presbyterian Hill Road and lands along Moore Hill Road, West Road and NY 22 north to the transmission lines, south of Jones Road along Madden Road and East Road to Gardner Hill Road on both sides, along South Schodack Road, Andrew Lane and Presbyterian Hill Road to Andrew Lane and between Garfield Road and Saddleback Ridge Road and the Columbia County and Village of East Nassau borders. The R-1 zone allows most residential and agriculture by right and many other general uses by right or by special permit. Personal services, professional offices, restaurants, bed & breakfasts are allowed by right with site plan review. Minimum lot area in the R-1 district is 1 acre.

The C Commercial and I Industrial districts are listed separately in the zoning text but combined in the zoning map. The C & I district is shown on the zoning map to be along NY 43 from Cranston Hill Road to beyond NY 22 and up NY 22 to Cemetery Hill Road and down NY 22 to Knapp Road on the west and approximately 7/10 mile south of Knapp Road on the east. The C and I districts allow most residential uses by right, along with many general uses. Day camp is not allowed in the C or I district. Most commercial uses are allowed in the C and I districts by right or by special permit except for commercial recreational vehicle park and mining uses. The C and I districts vary on by junk yards being permitted by right in the C district and by special permit in the I district and manufacturing being allowed by special permit in the C district and by right in the I district. The C and I districts also vary in lot size requirements. The minimum lot area in the C district is 2 acres and the minimum lot area in the I district is 10 acres.



Map 16: Zoning Map of the Town of Stephentown, 2017.

The EF Extraction and Fill district is limited to a portion of a specific parcel on West Road and three parcels on northern Presbyterian Hill Road. The EF district allows municipal uses, commercial kennel and or veterinary hospital and commercial mining by right and religious, educational and non-profit recreational uses, on-site screening of mined materials, on-site crushing of mined materials and on-site processing of mined material by special permit.

The FP Flood Prone District is that as designated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Any use in this district requires a special permit. The Land Use Regulations do not state whether the Flood Prone District is solely the 100 year flood boundary areas or also includes 500 year flood boundaries as well.

In 2013 after complaint from some commercial uses that became pre-existing non-conforming uses which were promised to be allowed to operate and change when the Land Use Regulation was enacted, an amendment to the Land Use Regulations was adopted creating Legacy Parcels which allowed the use of the zoning pertaining to the use of the parcel – i.e. Legacy commercial must conform to the C zone. Many of the Legacy parcels are located in the hamlet areas which are zoned R-1.

Although there is no text in the Land Use Regulations to permit it, the Town of Stephentown uses the Land Use Regulations as permissive zoning where the Planning Board uses the closest use in the Use Schedule to the unlisted use proposed. This has worked for the past 25 years since the Land Use Regulations were adopted, but could be put to question if a proposed unlisted use had strongly lawyered protesters or applicants who wanted to follow less strict code. Adding text to the regulations to codify the method of closest use would actually give the Planning Board the ability to use the closest use. Additionally, creating charts, either as part of the zoning law as can be found in the Town of Sand Lake Zoning Law, or as part of Town Development Guidelines, that enumerate the processes which applicants and the board must go if one applies for a site plan review, special permit, area variance or use variance. This chart will help board members and potential applicants understand what needs to happen and how long it will take to receive the required approvals.

Additionally, uses that the Town wants to attract or prohibit which are not listed should be added. If a business wanted to locate in Stephentown but could not determine if they were allowed, they may go to neighboring communities where the zoning was clearer as to whether the business was allowed to operate and what restrictions may be placed on the business. One such use is solar use, which has become prevalent in recent years. Additionally, when Beacon Power wanted to install their electrical storage facility, it was not a listed use. Commercial uses such as call centers and general offices are not impossibility for Stephentown but are not listed on the Use Chart. Other uses that the Town may want to encourage in town which are not an allowed use should be added to the Use Chart. Additionally, the Town may want to incorporate its Telecommunications Towers law into the Land Use Regulations.

Since there is almost no difference between the C and the I district and the zoning map combines both districts into one, it may be easiest to combine both districts into one in the law rather than breaking up the CI district into the C district and I district on the map. The largest difference between the two districts is the minimum lot size.

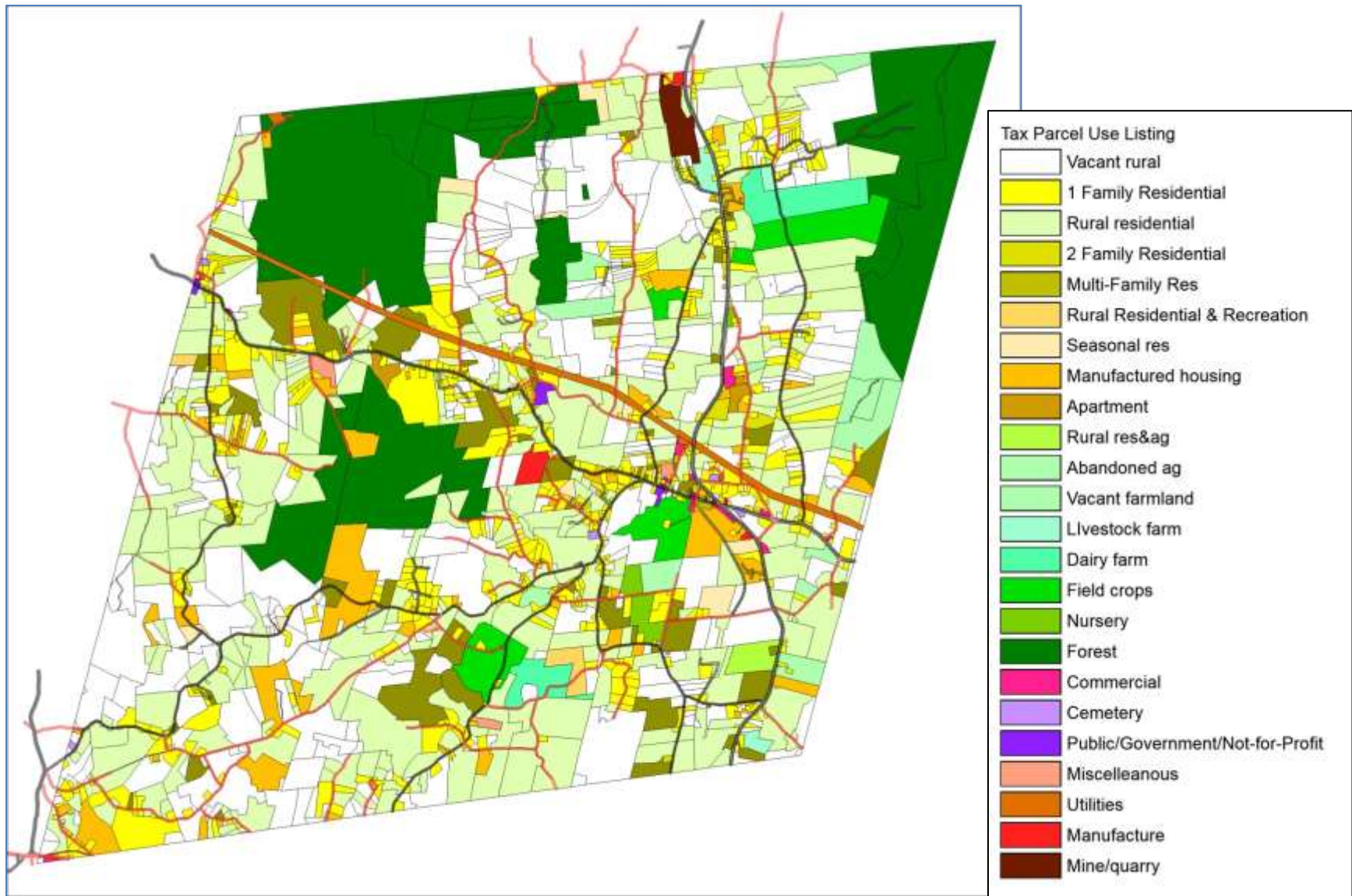
In the survey responses, there was a strong preference to alter zoning laws to protect open space (65% agree or strongly agree) and increase small business in town (66% agree or strongly agree). The zoning regulations can require cluster subdivisions to preserve open space, but the minimum lot size for the residential districts is smaller than the requirements for a septic system in Rensselaer County. The Town can adopt guidelines that encourage house placement not at the top of ridges and at the edge of fields instead of in the center.

There are many small businesses in Stephentown. Most are home occupations. Occasionally, home occupations grow too large for basements, garages and barns, and require separate spaces. Allowing small businesses in the hamlet areas can help provide the necessary services needed in town in areas that have traditionally provided these businesses. The creation of a mixed-use Hamlet district could also address the Legacy parcel issues without the specter of spot zoning. Business size should be limited and required to go through the special permit process to ensure protections to neighboring residences.

When the Land Use Regulations were adopted in 1991, use and area variances were not codified in New York State Town law, but followed case law. In 1993, New York State updated its Town Law and codified the requirements for use and area variances. The Land Use Regulations need to be updated to reflect these requirements.

Land Subdivision Regulations

The Land Subdivision Regulations of the Town of Stephentown, New York are very simple subdivision regulations that cover the subdivision of five lots or more or the re-subdivision of a previously subdivided parcel. The regulations do not cover the subdivision of four or less lots unless they are part of a previously subdivided parcel or lot line amendments. This is presently done by the Code Enforcement Department although they do not have any written authority through law to do so. The Town should address this by adding the code enforcement review into its subdivision code or having the Planning Department review subdivisions with four lots or less or lot line adjustments using an abbreviated review process to ensure that lots are being created that fulfill Land Use Regulation lot requirements. Without any legal authority to review the four lot or less subdivisions, the Town could be legally challenged to their right to review these subdivisions. The subdivision regulations should also be updated with roadway and other requirements that clearly spell out requirements needed for the Town of Stephentown to take over subdivision roadways.



Map 17: Land Uses from 2015 tax parcel data.

State Environmental Quality Review Act

New York State adopted the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) in 1987 with several changes occurring through the years. SEQRA applies to most decisions and actions local governments take in their day to day activities as well as extraordinary ones. SEQRA is intended to protect the natural and human environment from the impacts of decisions of the state, county, local and quasi-governmental agencies in New York.

When property followed and used, the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) should not impede beneficial activities, but help shape them to be their best for the community and for the applicant in the long run. Following the SEQR process is not difficult and can be fit into the approval process so that most projects are not hampered by SEQR for a long period of time. The Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals must follow SEQR as it is the law of the State of New York. The SEQR process should be included in any process chart written for site plan review, special permits, use variances and area variances. It should be noted that many area and use variances would be considered a Type 2 Action under SEQR which would only require a note that the action is such in the file.

Action Plan

In order to accomplish some of the ideas put forth by this comprehensive plan, some tasks need to be undertaken. Below is a brief list of some of these actions. This list should not be considered exhaustive. Some of the tasks are being performed already. Some tasks may ultimately be considered unnecessary.

Economic Development

Goals:

- Encourage home businesses
- Business Association
- Marketing Plan and Budget
- Enhance curb appeal of Stephentown locale
- Work with the Rensselaer County Chamber of Commerce, Berkshire County Chamber of Commerce and Columbia County Chamber of Commerce

Task 1 - High Priority

- Review and **update existing zoning regulations** to ensure that the establishment and growth of new home businesses is not hindered
 - Lead: Town Board, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Code Enforcement
 - Timing: Initial Review to be complete by September 2019. Completion expected by January 2020.

Task 2 – Medium Priority

- Create a task force that develops a plan for the creation of a **Business Association** that will work on common issues such as skill gaps and hiring, branding, human resources, regulations, challenges and miscellanea. The Association would represent Stephentown and surrounding towns and villages.
 - Lead: TBD Task force members of NY 22 & NY 43 businesses in designated towns.
 - Timing: Initial plan to be complete by January 2019. Stretch objective for launch of Association is September 1, 2019.

Task 3 – Medium Priority

- In conjunction with the Business Association, develop a targeted marketing plan and budget that results in three to five **branding and curb appeal improvements**. These improvements will lead to business growth of 10% for Stephentown, NY, and surrounding area.
 - Lead: TBD
 - Timing: Post Business Association formation. Launch October 2019. Complete by July 1, 2020.

Sustainable Community Services

Goals:

- Establishing Urgent Health Care
- Obtaining a Grocery Store
- Support of Community Assets
- Community Events
- Foster Children & Youth Activities

Task 1 – High Priority

- Develop plan to provide sufficient emergency Fire and EMS services 24 hours a day 7 days a week.
 - Lead: Stephentown Fire District and Town Board
 - Timing: Complete initial proposal by September 2019. Deliver continual services by January 2021.

Task 2 – Medium Priority

- Develop a plan with Berkshire Medical Center, Albany Medical Center or St. Peter’s Health Care to obtain urgent or other **health services** for the Stephentown/New Lebanon/Berlin/Hancock area.
 - Lead: Town Boards of Stephentown/New Lebanon/Berlin/Hancock and Rensselaer County Health Department, Columbia County Health Department
 - Timing: Complete initial proposal by September 2020. Health services start by January 2023.

Task 3 – Medium Priority

- Develop a proposal to secure the creation of an **all-season grocery market** for the Stephentown/New Lebanon/Berlin/Hancock area.
 - Lead: Town Board Member along with local volunteers and nearby towns.
 - Timing: Complete initial proposal by June 2019. Obtain grocery services by June 2021.

Task 4 – Medium Priority

- Create a task force that identifies the top three critical needs for continued long-range sustainability of the Stephentown Library, the Stephentown Historical Society, the Stephentown Volunteer Fire Department, the Food Pantry, the Senior Citizens' group and the Veterans Organization.
 - Lead: TBD Representatives from the organizations
 - Timing: Launch task force by September 2018. Complete proposals by January 2019.

Enhanced Connectivity of Broadband

Goals:

- Work with providers to get good internet service throughout the entire town (underway)
- Enhance Town of Stephentown website

Task 2 – High priority

- Perform a best practice review of 5-10 local town websites and provide five key recommendations for improving the layout and functionality of the Town of Stephentown website. Determine a webmaster.
 - Lead: Town Board
 - Timing: Complete best practice review by September 1, 2018. Work to be completes on website by January 1, 2019.

Preservation of Natural Resources and the Environment

Goals:

- Identify important and significant agricultural assets and natural resources. Create a long range plan to protect these assets.
- Update zoning to reflect Conservation Plan
- Create protocols for groundwater monitoring
- Create educational program with partners promoting Stephentown's water and air
- Ensure sufficient protection of water and air in local laws

Task 1 – High Priority

- Establish a task force that creates a rigorous protocol to examine and document the status of ground waters and surface waters. Problem areas, if found, should be identified with recommendations for solutions.
 - Lead: Town Board, Rensselaer County Health Department, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, New York State Health Department
 - Timing: Launch task force by September 1, 2018. Complete initial report and recommendations by October 2019.

Task 2 – Medium Priority

- In partnership with Rensselaer County, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, the Rensselaer Land Trust and the Rensselaer Plateau Alliance, establish a task force that collects data and documents the status of natural resources including agricultural resources, biodiversity and other important resources within the town. Identify any problem areas and provide recommendations.
- Lead: Planning Board
- Timing: Launch task force by January 2019. Complete initial report and recommendations by June 2020.

Task 3 – Medium Priority

- Educate the local community on these natural resources and any factors influencing their sustainability
 - Lead: TBD Team members from the above organizations and the Stephentown Planning Board
 - Timing: June 2020 and onward

Enhanced Zoning Effectiveness

Goals:

- Regular review of land use regulations
- Maintaining residential code for rental units
- Update zoning regulations to reflect any modifications to environmental or conservation changes

Task 1 – High Priority

- Conduct an in-depth review of all town land use regulations. This review should consist of updating these regulations in light of any environmental, conservation and building dynamics that have occurred in the last decade. Special focus areas include:
 - Insuring that all rental units adhere to minimum standards
 - Conducting a potential problem analysis to forecast and identify the top three problem areas around building or business locations
 - Creating regulations that are straightforward and user friendly.
- Lead: Code Enforcement, Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals
- Timing: Initiate review by September 1, 2018. Submit status reports to the Town Board six months until completion January 2020.

Protecting Town Assets – Municipal Facilities Plan

Goals:

- Create a long term highway plan with long-term Capital Plan

Task 1 – High priority

- Perform a Situational Analysis and Needs Assessment of the highway and building assets. Using a range of scenarios and assumptions, outline critical gaps, equipment needs and resources needed to maintain credible roads, bridges, and buildings over a period of three, five, ten and twenty year perspective. Recommend a Capital Plan to address these needs, gaps and resources. (Of a lower priority, but factoring in this objective is an updating of town highway specifications).
 - Lead: Highway superintendent, Town Board
 - Timing: Initiate analysis October 1, 2018. Present report and recommendations to the Board by July 1, 2019.