SCHOHARIE, NEW YORK
MAIN STREET AND GATEWAY STUDY

PLANNING STUDIO
Fall 1998

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DRAFTS

Urban and Regional Planning Program
Department of Geography and Planning
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Introduction

This is the second draft of the sections that deal with specific areas of the NY 30 Corridor. The first draft was reviewed by the instructors, and by Nan Stolzenberg, and the students made some changes based upon their comments. (However, there was only limited time to digest and make use of Nan's remarks; future drafts will reflect her recommendations more thoroughly.)

This round of drafts has not been subject to editing by either the student Editorial Team or the Instructors, so many additions and changes will occur in the coming weeks. Missing elements will be added. Reasons behind the recommendations will be strengthened. Errors will be corrected. The digital copies of these drafts are being put on the computers, and the Editorial Team will make numerous improvements with respect to both format and content.

These drafts contain only a limited number of the photos and photosimulations that will appear in the final document. Many more are currently in production. Work will continue on the photosimulations throughout the month of November.
The final document will include many sections that are not present in this draft. Responsibility for all of these sections has been assigned, and the writing has already begun:

Draft Structure of Document

COVER
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FRONT MATTER (Table of Contents, Map Index, Acknowledgments, etc.)
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
1. INTRODUCTION
2. CORRIDOR-WIDE ISSUES CHAPTER
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1. Existing Conditions

Introduction

The Schoharie Main Street District is currently a lively space and a pleasant core for the County of Schoharie. Among the tight and dense grouping of businesses that make up the village are many good well-maintained examples of Victorian and early twentieth century architecture. Some services such as the post office have left the village core for outlying areas where development is occurring making available retail and office space in the core area while the new County Office structure has allowed for modern and expanded office space for municipal services. The streetscape has intrinsically urban qualities (large sidewalks and historic architecture) however, several pedestrian amenities and considerations are lacking.

Opportunities

- The County Offices along the Main Street draw a continuous flow of potential customers as well as a large workforce for lunchtime purchases and eating. They are currently the strongest part of downtown Schoharie’s economy.
- The Plaza in front of the new county office building (fig. 1) is poorly designed and could sustain more intense usage.
- The buildings and the streetscape opposite the County Offices are possibly the Village’s greatest asset. These structures present a continuous urban-style facade to the less dense eastern side of the Main
Street and can serve as a catalyst and a focal point for future growth and development in the village. Several of these constructions have been properly cared for and should require only minor exterior improvements and general upkeep during the next few years. However, dispersed along the Main Street are several buildings that do require improvements. Hopefully, these structures will most strongly show the success and implementation of the revitalization project.

**The Village of Schoharie has a comfortable sense of place that is in large part created by its dense yet human scale and friendly shops and eateries common to Main Streets of the Northeast.**

**Among the village streetscape are large sidewalks where several opportunities exist for increased pedestrian amenities and considerations. The main deficiencies seem to be proper lighting and crosswalks, street furniture to encourage sitting and strolling, and adequate shade provided by trees or awnings. In addition overhead wires detract from the visual impressiveness of the eastern side of the Main Street.**

**Several Parking lots are located near the village center and at this time (although underutilized) appear to be sufficient to handle current requirements. However, in case of business expansion more lots may be required.**

**Constraints**

**The Parking lot behind the western side of Main Street is operated by several owners who do not act together in making repairs or enabling access for customers to the lots. Currently Fleet Bank is acting alone in paving its section of the lot.**
Metered on-street parking along route 30 that although free continue to dissuade those passing through from browsing or eating at the local businesses.

Through traffic travels at fast speeds along Main Street create an unsafe pedestrian environment.

The County Office structures present a striking architectural dilemma in that the Courthouse (figure 3) remains a historical resource only to be abutted by a modern box-style construction.

The area of Main Street on both sides of Johnson Street has lost its urban or "Main Street" feel and is not in character with the rest of the downtown.

Summary

The most desirable feature of any small business district or Main Street is the presence of an active pedestrian life and to be considered a destination to shoppers and tourists. Within Schoharie the attainment of this goal revolves around the ability to complete several smaller objectives involved in building on opportunities and confronting existing deficiencies. The enhancement of the village can occur by working together as a community with common goals and objectives. In accordance with the Town of Schoharie Comprehensive Plan, it is recommended that the historic atmosphere be the focal point for design and economic stimulation efforts. This design and development plan draws upon and expands the existing village resources in an effort to create a unified and vibrant Main Street that is considered a regional destination point for shopping, working, and tourism.
2. Recommendations

Short Term Implementation

- Improve the pedestrian Realm

The Schoharie Main Street is an active street due to the large number of County Office workers and customers, local residents, tourists, and through traffic to the quarry or onto further destinations. Hopefully, the large amount of transit that passes through the village center will begin to notice the uniqueness and attractiveness of the area. The Main Street area can be made more pedestrian friendly through several simple yet thoughtful steps and design procedures.

- Placement of benches along the Main Street approximately one every three storefronts, with possibly two benches in areas of food establishments.

- Place flowerpots and planters in front of the buildings along Main Street. Many of the Main Street structures are attractive buildings yet they seem cold or unapproachable. The softening of these edifices will noticeably contribute to the pleasantness of the downtown environment.

- Make the existing tree beds more attractive through the use of flowers and protective gates or brick.

- Remove the signpost no longer in use in front of the K & S building (Figure 4). It detracts from the delightfulfulness of the downtown area and portrays a feeling of ambivalence.

- The core area would benefit greatly from better care...
and maintenance of its walkways. "Cracks" in the sidewalks should be kept free of grass and weeds.

- Traffic Concerns

While ease of travel is an important component of today's auto dominated lifestyle, villages such as Schoharie can thrive on offering something different and creative. Good design and concern for other forms of travel (i.e. walking, bicycling) will contribute to the distinctiveness of the village center. Some initial steps to improve this environment include:

- Bring route 30 under control through better enforcement of the current speed limits both approaching and through the village center.

- Paint the existing crosswalks to better delineate crossing areas while adding to pedestrian safety and comfort.

- Utilize "Stop for Pedestrian in Crosswalk" signs (figure 5). They would be an integral part of educating local drivers, enhancing safety, increasing comfort for walkers, reducing traffic speeds, and bringing attention to the village core as a destination where people want to be and walk. These small additions to the roads have had great local success and can be seen in the cities of Great Barrington and Lee, Massachusetts as well as in Saratoga Springs, NY.

- Remove the parking meters along route 30. Visitors, tourists, and shoppers have come to expect easy and free parking while frequenting merchants and stores.
The meters (even with free parking stickers) dissuade drivers from stopping in the
downtown area and detract from the attractiveness of the district. They are not
commonly seen in villages or cities of similar size to Schoharie (and even larger)
and certainly do not contribute to the historic nature of the Village.

- When parking becomes tighter utilize 2 hour parking limits with notification by
  signage and local enforcement. This will keep spaces along Main Street open for
  shoppers while not detracting from the landscape.

- The Buildings of Schoharie's Main Street

  Present day Schoharie finds itself in the situation of having several buildings from an
  earlier era that can now be considered historic. The creation of a Historic District
  Overlay, as suggested in the Comprehensive Plan, will further strengthen their
  designation which could be pursued on a larger scale (National Register of Historic
  Places) so as to enlist state and federal funds towards rehabilitation. The buildings along
  the Main Street would individually benefit from rehabilitation measures; however, their
  enhancement would benefit the district exponentially. Utilizing the Comprehensive
  Plan's suggestion that the historic nature of Main Street act as a focal point for design and
  economic development each structure should do its part in telling the story of the Village
  of Schoharie.

  - Begin brick cleaning or painting of older buildings. Structures with old vinyl
    siding should have it repaired or replaced.
  - Make initial improvements to cornices, windows, and wooden components such
    as porches.
Create outdoor cafes during the warm months. The tables serviced by the interior establishments will add to the atmosphere and enliven local streets. One such area that is well suited to the outdoor cafe is the Parrot House, which already offers an outside vending service aimed at County workers. This could be expanded into a sit down lunch and dinner area in front of the establishment, taking advantage of the existing surplus in space.

Follow steps to place individual structures as well as the whole district on the National Register of Historic Places. Designation will aid in the funding of improvements, enhance the historic legitimacy of the downtown core, create pride in the district, and attract more visitors to the already active Schoharie Valley tourist area. Designation on the Register does not impede property owners from making improvements or changes to their structures, it supplies them with expertise, state funds, and technical support in the enhancement and maintenance of their historic property.

Medium Term Implementation

Pedestrian Realm

Once initial improvements are made on the downtown efforts should continue in each area of revitalization and enhancement. The sidewalks and street may be the most important aspect in fostering a good economic atmosphere by making visitors feel comfortable as they enjoy the village center stores, eateries, and architecture. Embellishments to the sidewalk and the "pedestrian realm" (storefront to storefront on both sides of route 30) will help local businesses and reassure shoppers and visitors that Schoharie's Main Street is an important destination and a fun place to be. Steps taken in
the medium-term phase will require more funding, planning, and community involvement, however, the end result will be a markedly improved downtown.

- Supplant the existing Honey Locust trees along Main Street with the same species at smaller intervals. This will aid in softening the urban facades, provide shade, and contribute in defining the room-like environment along Main Street. The Honey Locust will provide shade after about four to five years and is easy to maintain. More information can be found at the Albany County Cornell Corporation who provide fact sheets and documents related to urban street trees.

- In instances of new plantings, tree beds should be made attractive through the use of brick, protective gates, and/or flowers.

- Enlist the local nurseries (Germsey's and Chris') to act as sponsors of a beautify Schoharie program and as sources of information. Ask citizens for donations or to volunteer in the tree planting process. Educate students and get them involved by contacting the local schools for support and volunteers and possibly initiate a tree planting day.

- Install sidewalks along both sides of Stewarts' (Main and Johnson) to better define the pedestrian area and improve safety.

- Improve the landscaping in front of Chamber of Commerce. This can be completed by removing the existing asphalt and planting grass and/or shrubs.

- Utilize a historic lighting (figure 6) in the village core and the surrounding areas. The lighting will further delineate the importance of the downtown and help creating a "destination" aspect to the Village of Schoharie.
Lighting should be at scale with pedestrian usage and in character with the architectural styles present in Schoharie (Victorian and early Twentieth Century).

- Enforce a uniform style of signage. This can be accomplished by including specifications in the new zoning code on sign styles, materials, and locations. New signs can be phased in over a period of one to five years as the older ones become obsolete. Several resources are available to aid in the design of attractive yet visible and durable signage. Scenic Hudson, Inc. produced a document *Sign of the Times* that discusses legal issues, design, and implementation. The *Village Planning Handbook* offers easy to understand design suggestions including specifics on size and location. However, the standards and regulations will only be effective if they are stated in the zoning code and properly enforced.

- Utilize awnings to supplement trees for shade and soften the facade of Main Street buildings. The Laundromat and the bar in the Taylor Block building are two structures that would greatly benefit from the use of awnings (figure 8).
Insert a row of brick along the curb line. The brick will add to the historic nature of the downtown and enhance the walking environment.

Make the County Office Plaza a more comfortable area for strolling, sitting, or just passing through on foot. The plaza is poorly designed and should be reconfigured to better contribute to the Main Street environment and celebrate the public space it has to offer.

INSERT PHOTO SIMULATION OF REDESIGNED PLAZA

Remove the trees and tree beds from the center of the plaza and move them to the outskirts or in front of the county office structure for screening.

Make the center of the plaza a focal point through the installation of a small fountain, monument, or gazebo.

Use more attractive lighting (as previously mentioned) and move both the benches and the lighting to the edges of the plaza so pedestrians will be inclined to walk in front of those seated, not behind.

Traffic Calming

Completion of the earlier implementation phase will greatly improve the attractiveness of the downtown at low cost mostly through community acceptance and involvement.

Enrichment of the street itself and the creation of a complete historic personality will necessitate increased monetary funding and organization. It is noted that there is a large amount of through traffic along Route 30 in Schoharie that aids in the local economy. However, this traffic often travels at high speeds and threatens the safety of pedestrians on or crossing Main Street. The traffic need not be diverted away, in contrast it should be seen as a resource that only needs to be harnessed or controlled more forcefully. Steps to
be taken in this phase will clearly define the Main Street area, make it safe for pedestrians, and add to the historic identity of the district.

- Construct brick and/or raised walkways at the crosswalks along Main Street. Most important are the crossing points in front of the County Office buildings and at Johnson Street. The brick will add to the attractiveness of the downtown, giving it definition, while helping to slow through traffic.

- Install curb bulbs to ease crossing of route 30 and help focus drivers on the existence of pedestrians in the area.

**INSERT CURB BULB / RAISED BRICK SIMULATION**

- Investigate funding sources available for these types of improvements and projects. Federal ISTEA and State initiatives will help in financing (often matching funds) information for which can be found in the funding section of this document or through contacting the Capital District Transportation Committee (CDTC) for more information. For more information on the design and specifics of traffic calming consult chapter 25 of the Highway Design Manual from the New York State Department of Transportation and for visualizations and more ideas consult *City Comforts* by David Sucher.

- Parking lot behind western side of Main Street

This area of the downtown is of special concern because of the possible impacts on the local economy both now and in the future. Currently, the lot is underutilized, poorly maintained, and under various ownership (which increases the difficulty in operation, access, maintenance, and design). After revitalization steps are taken and Schoharie's economy expands the current parking allotment may be insufficient and the parking area
behind the western side of Main Street will need to be more efficiently operated. To enable the unified construction of the parking several processes must be explored including: lot easements of the land to the Village, lot readjustments, and transfer or sale of development rights.

Design of the Parking Lot

Taking into consideration the recent actions of Fleet Bank this design solution opens the rear parking area to Grand Street while interior improvements will make more parking spaces available and ease circulation behind Main Street. Ample landscaping, lighting, and pedestrian pathways will make the area more attractive and safe. The accompanying CAD rendering suggests removing the existing barn along the tree line to make for better circulation and a sufficient number of spaces.

**INSERT CAD RENDERING OF PARKING LOT AND PHOTOSIMULATION**

- Building Improvements
  - Utilize National Register status in acquiring funds and technical support for the maintenance and rehabilitation of qualified structures.
  - Pay close attention to the rear entrances along the western side of Main Street (structural and aesthetic) as the parking lot will become more active and utilized.
  - Where new construction occurs within the village core it should be reviewed by a site committee that will either deem it in character of the downtown or make suggestions on how to make it fit within the current landscape. The committee should have a strong zoning code that enforces the continuation of current
Long-term Implementation

Recommendations in this final phase should be the culmination of earlier steps and community involvement. Phase three is not a stand-alone solution and should be considered in the context of successful implementation of previous revitalization phases.

- Downtown expansion

Opportunities exist within the downtown core for infill, not through filling in gaps in the streetscape, but in building up to a unified three-story roofline. When economic conditions warrant expansion of retail and office space the village core can be seen as an area for growth instead of following current trends of moving business activity outside the center. The following recommendations should be understood as possibilities for expansion under those circumstances initiated by the property owners:

- Remove the buildings currently housing the Laundromat and the Radio Shack and replace them with a three-story structure in the same architectural style as those it abuts.

- Expand retail and office space through removal of the existing structure next to the historic pharmacy and replace it with a three-story brick edifice keeping similar roofline and a comparable architectural style.

- Where new structures are created allow easy access to the parking areas behind the buildings and pay close attention to aesthetics, understanding they will be facing an active parking area.
INSERT SIMULATION OF NEW STRUCTURES AND INFILL

 Streetscape

 In accordance with the comprehensive plan, bury the wires on Main Street to enhance the attractiveness of the eastern side of Main Street (Courthouse and Parrot House).

3. Analysis and Final Recommendations

The Village of Schoharie has many resources that can be expanded, exploited, and harnessed for economic and social gain through community organization and cooperation. The aforementioned phases are steps in the design process that, along with the completion of other goals and objectives (i.e. protecting viewsheds) will lead to a Main Street that has and increased vitality and a renewed viability. Through its history and architecture Main Street can act as the focal point for expansion, education, tourism, and community pride. The short-term implementation steps should be considered vital in the revitalization process because they enact the involvement of the local citizenry and increase community awareness. Through the completion of these personal, hands-on first steps the Village of Schoharie will emit a strong sense of pride and will be seen as a place that the community cares about and enjoys being.

The medium term implementations and recommendations will require increased funding, time, and coordination among local projects, the municipality, and state organizations. Completion of this phase of revitalization will reaffirm the community’s involvement and dedication to the village core and make Schoharie’s Main Street a formidable tourist attraction and destination point.
The final phase of recommendations assumes increased future economic activity, interest in and focus on downtown expansion (contrasting current office and retail development trends). They should be seen as final touches on a successful Main Street program. Ignoring or failing to implement earlier phases while producing one high-cost major project is not suggested.
Schoharie Main Street

1) Existing Conditions

Introduction

Schoharie’s classic American Main Street is a picturesque center of the community. It is the hub of commercial and civic activity for the town, though at present it remains an underutilized resource. Small stores, restaurants and the county courthouse are housed in charming examples of 19th century architecture. This traditional ambiance appeals to both an untapped tourist market and Schoharie residents.

Opportunities

- A community pride is reflected in the efforts of the revitalization committee and local government officials who have worked very hard in the last year to identify problems in the Town and Village, and incorporated their findings into a series of informative reports and a new comprehensive plan. The involvement of so many citizens helps to garner support for effective revitalization efforts and demonstrates that Schoharie cares about its Village.

- Schoharie’s combination of architecturally pleasing downtown, surrounded by bucolic countryside and nearby historic attractions were also the key components in the renaissance of Cooperstown and Saratoga. Twenty years ago they too were upstate towns struggling with high vacancy rates and falling property values. Today they are highly desirable communities in which to work and live and their Traditional Main Street is considered their greatest asset.

- Like other communities that have successfully cultivated a tourist economy, Schoharie is rich in local cultural attractions and natural resources. The Fox Creek, Old Stone Fort and the Covered Bridge area of town is a wonderful asset for the community that can be utilized to bring more people to Main Street as linkages between all the historic areas in town are strengthened.

- Schoharie’ Main Street business community is well situated to serve the needs of a variety of groups: tourists in the region, local office workers and commuters who pass through the
Village on a daily basis and residents. There is an existing, established market for the local business community that can be further developed.

Constraints

- Leadership and involvement are ongoing needs in the revitalization process. The widest possible community involvement will offer the greatest support. Merchants, who stand to gain the most from a renewed Main Street, should get involved, as well as the historical society, the schools, and other civic organizations that can offer valuable perspectives.

- Presently, a number of buildings on Main Street are deteriorated and in need of costly renovations and upgrading. One of the largest constraints is funding the rehabilitation of properties. Ideally, this can be achieved through a combination of public and private sources. Pursuing funding is one of the crucial undertakings to ensure success.

- Schoharie abounds in cultural and historic buildings and sites that are poorly linked and difficult to locate. Creating higher visibility for these resources and establishing eligibility for funding can be achieved by joining state and federal historic designation programs. There is a local reluctance to participate, that should be overcome, because these programs offer financing and expert advice.

- Finally, there is some threat of paralysis through analysis. Numerous studies, a Main Street assessment, surveys and the new Comprehensive Plan have all examined the problems facing Schoharie and often point to the same solutions. It is up to the Town and Village residents and their representatives, to establish the political will to implement them.

Summary

Schoharie's Main Street has all the ingredients for a successful revitalization that will be an asset to the community and attract tourists eager for the small town charm the village can offer. Designing and implementing a realistic plan will help to achieve the goals of economic
development and historic preservation. A plan with long-term goals, that recognizes the value of incremental change has the best chance of reaching its objectives.

2. Recommendations

Short Term Implementations

The National Trust for Historic Preservation formed the Main Street Project in 1977 to study the problems of America’s small towns and to formulate a strategy on how to save them. Their four point program features design, organization, promotion and economic restructuring as the tools to counter the decline of Main Street. These tenets should be used as a guide to the revitalization of Schoharie, and adapted to fit the needs of the community.

**Design**

The cornerstone of numerous successful downtown revitalizations has been the rehabilitation of historic buildings. Renovation is always an expensive proposition that can take time to fund. While looking for funding, protect the historic buildings in the district.

- Create a historic zoning overlay in the commercial district in the Village and Hamlet as recommended in the Comprehensive plan. Allow creative adaptive reuse, while honoring the architectural integrity of the building. This allows control to remain at the local level as it would be overseen by a preservation committee made up of local residents.

**Organization**

Good organization is needed to aid in Main Street’s revival, to both unify the merchants, residents and community leaders who care about Schoharie, and to provide direction. The most successful revitalizations have occurred in communities that were able to build public private coalitions to gain support and implement their ideas.

- Schoharie’s Main Street merchants need to form a merchant group. This will provide a forum to discuss concerns and a way of presenting Main Street as a larger entity rather than as a disparate
collection of businesses. There is strength in numbers for a downtown in creating identity and for promotional purposes.

**Promotion**

Main Street merchants need to advertise the unique charms of their shopping district. Aim for high quality in design and service, then market the pleasing small town ambiance as a selling point. The following are short term, low cost solutions that require time, energy and commitment.

- A logo, incorporating the historic architecture of downtown should be used for consistency and recognition purposes in brochures and advertising. Look to local graphic designers for pro bono design work and hold a contest for the design, then hang the entries in downtown windows.
- Special events are a wonderful way to promote an area and there are many existing opportunities in Schoharie. Main Street should tie in with the Old Stone Fort Days and the Revolutionary War encampment in the Fall. In past years a parade of re-enactors was held on Main Street and should be revived.
- Capitalize on the town wide garage sale in the Fall with merchant sidewalk sales and look into bringing back the tradition of showing outdoor movies. Sponsor children’s art contests and a community wide Halloween Parade and Trick or Treating of merchants on Main Street. Create a positive, fun image of Main Street while introducing people to the goods and services offered there.

**Economic Restructuring**

Economic restructuring is aimed at strengthening existing businesses while attracting new ones. The goal is to fill retail vacancies on the street level with the appropriate mix of businesses, and the mostly underutilized upper floors. Attracting new business benefits the entire community as it expands the tax base and creates a healthier, more vital downtown.
• Survey the local residents and office workers to determine what goods and services they would like to see downtown. When the results are in, a wish list can be made of desirable businesses to be recruited.

• Immediately, stores on Main Street can establish convenient business hours that meet the needs of residents and commuters. Businesses need to be open evenings and weekends, and the district should share uniform hours.

Longer Term Implementation

Design

• It is recommended that the historic buildings along Schoharie’s Main Street seek designation on the State and Federal Register of Historic Places, both as individual buildings and as a district. This will protect their architectural heritage and make property owners and the town eligible for a greater number of grants and help with historic preservation planning from the state and federal level.

• If commercial property owners with National historic Register Designation make improvements according to U.S. Secretary of the Interior Standards, they can receive a 205 tax credit on their federal income tax.

• There is also a new state program that delays assessment increases on rehabilitated properties in historic districts.

• Historic designation is an honor. It increases property values (as in Saratoga and Cooperstown) and is a valuable tool to promote tourism, which in turn attracts new businesses and residents to town.

Organization
• The revitalization committee should be aided in their efforts by a New York Main Street Alliance circuit rider. Schoharie should use the circuit rider on a part time basis to reduce the expense, and share the costs with the nearby towns of Middleburgh and Esperence, who are also addressing many of the same issues. The Mohawk Valley Corridor Commission is seeking funding for planning issues for the Town of Schoharie, and some of this should be dedicated for a circuit rider.

**Promotion**

• Seek Scenic Byway status for the Timothy Murphy Trail as a means of promoting tourism and increasing eligibility for state and local funding. This helps to highlight and unify the many historic resources of the Town.
• Promote these resources with a self-guided walking tour of all the historic buildings in the village and employ and advertise a carriage service on weekends to tour the village and fort.

**Economic restructuring**

• Seek DOT and TEA II funding to expand the sidewalk system to the fort. Also look into TEA II funding and other sources to adapt the abandoned rail bed leading to Middleburgh as a bike trail. Improved linkage to natural and historic resources will make the town more attractive to tourists as well as residents.
• The local revitalization committee, the merchants association or the circuit rider need to approach local banks about establishing low interest loans for merchants.
• Store window design and lighting are powerful marketing tools that are often overlooked. Workshops that emphasize design and high service quality are valuable to small merchants and recommended on a regular basis for all business people.
• Business Incubators are appropriate tenants for the underutilized second and third floors of older buildings and help add to the activity of a business district. To encourage their establishment, incubators are offered low rent and support services. Today’s technology
allows businesses to be conducted from more remote locales, and as the Village revitalization progresses it will be more attractive to a greater variety of businesses.
PROBLEM: Maintaining the unspoiled character of the Southern approach into the Village

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The southern portion of the Schoharie village proper, and the entrance to the village from the south is in quite good condition relative to its northern counterpart. That is, it has not been encroached upon by unsightly development, bad signage and other blights. There are several vistas presented to the visitor as one enters town from this direction. The reason for this part of town being spared is unfortunately not do to diligent planning and vigilance, but more likely benign neglect. However, this in no way insures that Main Street South will remain in its current state.

GOALS

If controls are not put in place to preserve the current character of this approach to the village, it could fall prey to unwelcome development. The sale of one farm or its subdivision on the west side of Route 30 could destroy the viewshed, as well as the rural and small town character of the roadside.

TOOLS

The village can’t depend on continuing benign neglect. If farmland is to be developed, then the guidelines in the Land Use Code (pages 29, 30) now in progress have to be enforced in order to preserve open space and discourage conventional subdivision.
PROBLEM: Preserving and enhancing the small town character of Main Street South

EXISTING CONDITIONS
Most of the homes along Main Street between the village line and the Spring Street are well maintained, whether historic structures or more recently built. Most of the village's finest historic homes are along this stretch, which is more residential than the northern part of Main Street.

GOALS
To insure that the historic and residential charms of this part of the village remain unspoiled.

TOOLS
Minor improvements in sidewalks and other infrastructure are recommended, such as burying of the most obtrusive power and telephone lines. But these are problems not unique to Main Street South. Much of Main Street suffers from these. This issue should be addressed by the entire village. Encourage façade improvements. (See Corridor Wide Issues)

PROBLEM: The Great American Parking Lot

EXISTING CONDITIONS
The most salient characteristic of the Great American parking lot is its unbroken expanse of pavement. This huge unbroken space lies beside two rights-of-way, one of them Main Street. It greets visitors entering from the Southern and Western gateways with a bad first impression. That is, too much space, no activity, and few if any people. It says to visitors, “Keep driving, this village is dying”. The lot is weedy and unkempt as well. There are also important environmental considerations. Large impervious surfaces mean that less water is absorbed into the ground, resulting in standing water and toxic run-off. Flooding is a common occurrence in Schoharie Village, lying as it does in the floodplain of the Schoharie Creek, and it has been mentioned as an annual problem in the lot.

Improving the entire land use scheme of this huge piece of land should be seen as a tremendous opportunity to effect a significant impact on the Southern end of downtown, and the village as a whole. The lot is so big, and so prominent that it essentially defines the southern end of Main Street. If people begin to think of it as a large, blank slate, rather than simply an eyesore to be covered up, then perhaps the motivation will arise to turn it into something far more than previously imagined.

GOALS

Good zoning focuses on every detail of landscaping when it comes to parking lots. Too often landscaping is an after thought. Many cities and towns have codes that are simply inadequate. The regulations contained in the Schoharie Village’s Land Use Code document now in progress are an excellent starting point for new facilities. This is a pre-existing case however, and must be adapted to the village’s actual needs while following a more realistic assessment of parking requirements. Parking facilities are
always preferable if behind or to the side of the buildings they serve. Since the former is impossible, and the latter may not be sensible in this case, landscaping will likely be the primary tool available to soften and enhance what is now a very large blank slate.

In brief, the benefits of parking lot landscaping are:

- Enhancing the visual environment
- Ensuring public safety
- Moderating the microclimate
- Acoustical control
- Minimizing noise and glare
- Psychological benefit

This is a matter of the public good, and the benefits should be more explicitly stated in the Land Use Code. They are not difficult to justify in a statement of intent when drafting regulations.

TOOLS: ALTERNATIVE ONE: Reduction in size, landscaping

Of primary importance is the reduction in overall size of the parking lot. What remains should be broken up into smaller areas by landscaping, and shielded from the two rights-of-way to buffer its residential edges. A berm made of earth is expensive to construct but easy to maintain. It can be more pleasing than a wall or fence. Otherwise low shrubbery and selected trees which do not impede visibility would suffice.

Landscaping of the lot’s interior will be required if the remaining parking areas will
accommodate thirty cars or more. Eight feet wide planting strips are sufficient, but the planting of trees should also be required to diminish heat and improve aesthetics. These should be planted on curbed islands with human scale lighting fixtures dispersed throughout. There is no reason to continue lighting the lot as if it is a truck stop.

The amount and dispersal of landscaping is difficult to estimate. A general rule of thumb has been that 10 percent of a parking lot be used for landscaping. More specific and separate requirements can be adopted for different types of landscape areas, interiors, perimeters adjacent to other property, and perimeters next to streets or public rights of way.

There should be pedestrian crossing areas to improve safety, possibly delineated with a contrasting paving material. These should be built in front of the Great American grocery store, and within the lot so that each section is pedestrian friendly.

Insert cad drawing of parking lot plan

If no other buildings are planned for the area, then 90 degree parking spaces could be employed. But it might make sense to plan for more efficient use of space with the possibility that other land uses might arise in the future. This would entail angled parking and one-way traffic aisles. In either case, the width of each parking space should be 9 feet, and the length 19 or 20 feet.
Access to the lot should be more tightly controlled by limiting it to one entrance and exit from Furman Lane. The number of curb cuts on a major road should be minimized to improve safety within the lot and on the road itself. Limited access also controls traffic flow so that it moves more efficiently. An alternative is to funnel traffic through the lot with a separate entrance and exit. If necessary, truck traffic servicing the Great American should be removed from customer traffic and pedestrian routes. The use of the lot as a temporary parking place for tractor-trailers should not continue.

The reduction in the overall size of the lot will allow the remainder of the lot to be returned to a field of grass. If no other buildings are planned, then perhaps the remaining open space could be landscaped for recreational purposes. More importantly, the size of the lot needs to be brought more in line with the parking requirements outlined in the new Land Use Code. The ratio of 10 spaces for every 1000 square feet of land use is too often a formula adopted out of convenience, without any assessment of actual parking needs. The plan above is a suggested layout, and contains 78 spaces; more than enough to serve the Great American's current needs, with room for growth in business.

A better method for drainage should be included in the parking lot's renovation. The use of porous paving materials, provided the subgrade is suitable, would reduce runoff,
and look better than asphalt. This could eliminate or minimize the need for drainage infrastructure. Otherwise, water can be retained in a portion of the lot, to be slowly allowed to percolate or flow into storm sewers. Another possibility is an underground storage chamber where water could be kept for irrigation of landscape materials.

The last step in Alternative One is the inclusion of a few more key elements to identify the store from the street and improve existing conditions. Placement of a store sign in the front northern corner of the lot may be necessary to compensate for any lost visibility from the parking buffers. The sign should be a clear advertisement for the store, while not detracting from the character of Main Street. Maintaining the historical integrity of the area is an important factor in the sign’s design. The size should be large enough to attract customers from car traffic, but not too large or too high. It is likely that impulse shoppers will be attracted by a well-designed street front advertisement. The materials used in the sign should be of natural texture such as wood, brick or stone. The sign should be well lit by external lights installed in the ground.

ALTERNATIVE TWO: The remaining land, moderate improvements

The next series of alterations builds on the primary modifications of the parking lot, including several new uses. The idea is to replace all of the asphalt not in use by the Great American parking lot with green space, landscaping and/or another land use. This will serve many purposes. It will make that portion of the lot remaining in use more manageable. It is crucial that the impression given to visitors is one of care and activity. As much as half of the lot can be converted to green space or other uses, depending on
future expansion ideas that might require parking. While the parking area will get much needed landscaping, the remaining land will fit into its surroundings as natural open space, if and until converted to a more intensive use.

A picture here to give example

The store’s appearance is very important in attracting customers. Depending on the growth of the store’s customer base, future expansion may be required. If so, the green space directly to the south of the store could accommodate additional construction. Currently, if no major plans are in the works, the existing store facade could be modernized or improved by painting the exterior and installing a new sign. The Furman Lane side of the building could also be improved with the addition of landscaping materials such as trees, shrubs and flowering plants. It is also important to ensure the continued maintenance of landscaping. Neglecting the improvements is just as bad or worse than not making them in the first place.

(A picture here to give example).

ALTERNATIVE THREE: the remaining space, more intense development

The most significant changes to the lot includes the preceding suggestions, as well as a recreational area, and the addition of a new structure.
Adding a modest new land use is the first step. The parcel has enough space for more than one use. Of least impact would be an open-air pavilion or a playground/recreation area. The best location for this type of activity depends on future uses. The highest expectation for the entire parcel is to put a business in the southern front section of the lot, where it is presently used for a truck stop, if at all. If this takes place, the recreational area could be placed in the northern front section, taking care not to block the Great American store from the street.

The recreational area should be separated a few feet from the road with a landscaped strip or low wall for safety. It is important to consider pedestrian access as well as automobile convenience in the area's design. It is expected that the recreational area will draw pedestrians from the village, as well as automobile traffic. And it would serve children's recreational needs while parents are shopping. Some suggestions for recreational infrastructure are a skating rink, basketball court, or playground.

(A picture here to give example)

If another building is built on the parcel, it should be placed in the southwest corner, with no more than a slight setback from the sidewalk. The business or businesses it contains must compliment the grocery store, not compete with it. This will increase the customer base for both. At this point, there appears to be no dry cleaner in the village. Even a fast food franchise might be welcome. The building's size should not over power the grocery store. Its design and materials should conform to the Village's
historic character. The parking for both businesses and other activity area would remain in the middle of the parcel, set back off the road. If a new business activity moves in the front, dividing the parcel, it may be necessary to define a Main Street entrance or exit to the shared parking area, but this is less desirable limited access plan above.

Insert photo-simulation
North Main Street

1) EXISTING CONDITIONS:

Introduction

The North Main Street area is located between Prospect Street in the south and the Village boundary in the north, near Fox Creek. The floodplain of Schoharie creek lies to the west, with uplands to the east. This section of NY 30 serves as the introduction to the Village of Schoharie for travelers approaching from the north. Key issues are the character of the roadside environment, strip commercial development, and the handling of historic buildings and sites.

In the North Main Street Study Area, there are a total of 26 different types of establishments, including historical, commercial, industrial, public, and not-for-profit land uses. They are as follows:

Niagara Mohawk substation
Quarry
The Old Mill Lawn and Garden Center
Post Office
Bank
Century 21 Real Estate Office
Mobil Gas Station and Food Mart
Fuel Refinery Company
The Dug Out (ice cream stand)
Diner
Restaurant
Joe’s Gas Station
Schoharie Ambulance Co.
Chris Florist & Nursery
Dry cleaner in nursery building
Historic Swart’s Tavern (now a private residence)
1891 Train Car Museum
Easter Egg Museum
Car wash
Sewer plant
Public Safety Building
Schoharie High School
County Highway Department Vehicle Office
St. Joseph’s Church
Support Services Alliance
Schoharie Colonial Heritage Theatre

In addition, a number of private residences are located along Main Street between Prospect Street and the Old Stone Fort. Many of the land uses in the area are not in accordance with the current zoning of the village. For instance, the Easter Egg Museum, Train Car Museum, and Heritage Theatre are located on Depot Lane, which is zoned as industrial. The post office and bank are located in an area that had been zoned agricultural. This mixture of diverse land uses and building types presents a rather confused image to the visitor. However, strategies can be
devised to improve the area’s physical appearance, avoid unnecessary commercial competition with the historic Main Street core, and take better advantage of the cluster of historic resources located here.

Opportunities:

- A number of pleasing open spaces are located in the North Main Street area, such as the park along Fox Creek. These contribute to a positive image of Schoharie for travelers coming down from Interstate 88, and could form part of a network of pedestrian and bike paths.

- The Old Stone Fort historic area has been well preserved, but could be highlighted more as a historic site for tourists. The Train Car museum, Easter Egg Museum, and Heritage Theater are located slightly off of NY 30, reducing their visibility, and could be connected more effectively with other historic institutions, restaurants, cafes, specialty stores, and businesses with a historic theme.

- Some of the commercial establishments along North Main Street do not currently present a pleasing image to the passing motorist or pedestrian, but there are many ways in which the roadside environment could be improved through screening, improved signage, sidewalk improvements, street lighting, and tree planting.
Constraints

- The post office, which should have been retained in the historic core, has been relocated here, and that decision cannot be changed. Other businesses or services might draw economic activity away from the village center if they were to be located in the North Main Street corridor.

- A number of the existing businesses on North Main Street are very car-oriented, with large parking areas in front and no sidewalks. These “suburban-style” site plans do little to enhance the historic feel of the Village of Schoharie.

Some of the signage in this area is unattractive, and conflicts with the beautiful rural landscape visible at numerous points along the road.

The floodplain of Schoharie Creek must be considered when proposing any new construction.

Access to homes and businesses is provided almost entirely by NY 30, with few alternative routes located on either side of this main road.

The homes and business along this stretch of NY 30 present a jumbled appearance with little thematic unity. Building heights and setbacks vary considerably, the pedestrian environment is unfriendly, and the street lighting is inadequate.

Summary

North Main Street serves as the gateway to the historic core of the Village of Schoharie for travelers approaching from the north. Therefore, its visual character is of great importance to the community. Some strip commercial development has already occurred. It conflicts with the historic character of the Village, but there are many opportunities to screen, upgrade, or redesign
problem areas. In addition, the historic resources along North Main Street can be better advertised, interconnected, and linked to local businesses.

2) **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**Short-term Implementation**

- Place more and better-designed signs and markers to announce the location of the museums on Depot Lane. They should be attractive visually and not illuminate the entire area. Markers and signs could also be placed to identify the historical significance of the cemeteries near the Old Stone Fort.

   (Insert)
   
   Photo of Sign Example
   (Photo NMS1)

- Improve signage for the Old Stone Fort. (*Need to provide specifics.*)
- Create a buffer area between the car wash and the historic attractions on Depot Lane. (*Need to provide specifics.*)
- The governmental and light-industrial facilities along North Main Street should be visually buffered from NY 30 to reduce their visual impact. This is especially true of the Niagara Mohawk substation, the Public Safety Building, and the County Highway Department facility. The quarry could also be screened with some tall trees.

   (Insert)
   
   Photosimulation:
   Screening Options
   (Photo NMS2)
• Modify the landscaping in front of the new post office to reduce the barren look of the parking lot. Similar treatments could be used in other locations along the corridor.

(Insert)
Photosimulation of Post Office with Improved Landscaping
(Photo NMS3)
(Insert)
Photosimulation of Redesigned Strip Commercial

• Set up walking tours of the historic homes along Main Street to connect with the historical district, bed and breakfast inns, and Swart's Tavern (if it is converted from a general residence.)

Medium-term Implementation
• If any new stores are permitted in the North Main Street corridor, they should complement rather than compete with the businesses in the historic core of the Village. They should be located in the vicinity of the new post office, which has already become a new node of commercial activity. (Verify)
• Swarts Tavern, which now serves as a primary residence, could be converted back to its original use as a tavern, to add some life to the historic district. The Schoharie Historical Society should seek grants-in-aid funds since the site is on the National Register of Historic Sites. It is currently for sale.
• Historic-style street lamps should be placed in areas that will attract tourists and other visitors.
• Sidewalks should be provided in all areas where there is significant pedestrian traffic. Where possible, the sidewalk should be separated from the road with a planting strip containing street trees.
• A system of bike paths and trails would greatly enhance the local transportation system, especially for young people. The Niagara Frontier Transportation Committee for Erie and Niagara Counties developed an excellent bicycle master plan in March 1998, which could serve as a useful guide for Schoharie.
• Institute a façade improvement loan program for some of the deteriorated houses on Main Street. Any bank through its Community Reinvestment Act, CRA, program can develop a revolving loan fund with low interest rates where founds can are targeted for home improvements.

Long-term Implementation
• Since the main crop in Schoharie used to be hops, a prime beer ingredient, a microbrewery selling a Schoharie beer might be economically viable. Each label could be distinctive and reflect the beauty and character of the rural area. The Association of Brewers is an excellent resource for information and guidance (webmaster@aob.org). As of January 1998, 442 microbreweries exist in the US and 47 percent of American beer drinkers have tried "craft beer."
• Build a café on Depot Lane and creating a historic theme to promote the Heritage Theater, Rail Car Museum, and Easter Egg museum. The ultimate goal should be to create a kind of "Arts and Entertainment District," with good pedestrian connections between historic places, theater events, dining establishments, bed & breakfast inns, and other local businesses.
• The Rail Car Museum could be further developed as an attraction. Railroads of the Adirondacks in Fleishchmanns, New York is a great resource and could provide valuable information about enhancing Schoharie’s rail museum (fredweld@rail-trail.org). The Train Car museum could also serve as a secondary tourist information center.
• Schoharie could consider constructing a rail-trail along the old railroad grade to the west of Main Street.

3) ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS
The North Main Street corridor has many historic and visual resources, which offer opportunities to develop a well-designed and coherent landscape that would appeal to both tourists and residents. Currently, however, the area is somewhat fragmented, the historic sites are not well-connected, and strip-commercial development has made some inroads. (To be continued)
Introduction to the Northern Gateway Area

The Northern Gateway is defined as the area between the NYS Route 30 intersection with NYS Route 7 just north of the I-88 Exit 23 Interchange to the Village limits near where NYS Route 30 crosses over Fox Creek.

Since the Northern Gateway provides the primary visitor and commuter access to the Village of Schoharie, land use issues such as open space and agricultural protection, residential development, the roadside environment and the maximization of the existing cultural, historic and municipal infrastructure have a major impact on activities within the Village.

An abundance of agricultural and open space land uses are prominent features that define character of both the Town and Village of Schoharie. Travelling by car in either direction on Interstate 88 results in a spectacular view of the Schoharie Valley. There is also an outstanding view presented at the intersection of State Rts. 30 and 443. These viewsheds are unique to Schoharie and therefore, measures should be taken to preserve these scenic resources. The agricultural and open space uses are both intricate parts of the viewshed. However if these land uses were to change, the value of this resource would be diminished.

The opportunities presented by the existing quality and quantity of residential development in the Northern Gateway are many. Despite the fact that a park and ride lot is the “development” closest to the I-88 interchange, the traveler headed south towards the Village is spared the asphalt view due to careful site planning which resulted in the construction of the lot well below highway grade. The first visual impression of the highway traveler is that of the scenic Schoharie Valley to the west (picture), coupled with several traditional farm houses located on the west side of Route 30. The land to the east in the area south of the Interstate intersection is currently greenspace, however, it is for
sale as industrial land (picture). Nonetheless, it is fitting that the first views from the highway leading into to the Village involve traditional farmhouses.

Rural roads were the foundation upon which this country was built. These roads and the surrounding landscapes tell the history of the town. Through the landscaping and architecture along rural roadways a mood is set and the characteristic of small towns are revealed. Degradation of these roadways by careless development and lack of planning for preservation and conservation of open spaces that define rural character can destroy the visual integrity of the rural landscape.

The intersection of Route 30 and Route 443 provides a good example of how Schoharie is not making the most of what it already has. Route 443 is a scenic alternate route from the Capital District to the Town and Village of Schoharie. A first-time visitor from Route 443 cannot help but be confused by the poor intersection layout one encounters as Route 443 merges with Route 30.

Drivers heading west on Route 443 must yield to Route 30 northbound traffic and stop for Route 30 southbound traffic. Drivers on Route 30 southbound and turning on to Route 443 eastbound must yield to Route 30 northbound traffic. Drivers on Route 30 northbound and turning on to Route 443 eastbound have no control-of-access. In the middle of this web of an interchange is an Old State Route that serves no purpose except for access to the Fox Creek Bridge, which is blocked off at the southerly end. There is also a large plat of land bounded by Route 443 and Fox Creek that apparently is not used by the Town. While the current intersection layout may be appropriate for higher traffic counts, its configuration is not warranted at this time.

The appearance and land uses in the Northern Gateway area are important to the Village of Schoharie because this area serves as the primary “first-impression” of the Village...influencing the visitors decision to stay and explore or to move on.
EXISTING CONDITIONS

Opportunities

• Large portions of the Northern Gateway area are currently being used for agricultural or open space purposes. By protecting these current land uses the open space characteristics of the viewsheds within the Town of Schoharie will be preserved. Agricultural and Open Space Land Uses should not only be preserved but also promoted within the viewshed protection area.

• The view of the rock escarpment on the East face of Terrace Mountain is visible from many sections of State Rt. 30 and 443 as you are entering the Town of Schoharie. To date, subdivisions, and large bill boards have not hindered the natural beauty of the rock escarpment.

• By and large, the residential development within the Northern Gateway is of a traditional, farm-house nature.

• Many older structures have been lovingly restored to excellent condition. Investment, in terms of time and money in the residential housing stock in the Gateway is evident.

• Residential opportunities include the encouragement of development of Gateway land for residential use (Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Rewrite Draft).

• Large lots are available for residential development, each with excellent access to Route 30, Route 30A and the I-88 interchange.

• Perhaps most the most important opportunity with respect to residential development in the Gateway area is what is not currently there – there are no conventional, loops and lollipops, ranch house subdivisions.
There are many historical resources in the Village of Schoharie and the Gateways leading into the village. Preserving the character of the Gateway roads will help preserve the rural and historic character of the Village.

Relatively low cost and immediately obtainable solutions are available for improving the roadside environment. Sign improvement and landscaping are two methods of improving conditions in the Northern Gateway.

Route 443 is a scenic alternate route from the Capital District to the Town and Village of Schoharie, and in effect serves as a second “Northern Gateway” in addition to the Interstate 88 interchange.

The view from the intersection of Rtes 30 and 443 looking northeast towards Terrace Mountain is one of the most cherished in the Town. (Insert picture of Terrace Mountain as seen from the intersection of Route 30 and Route 443)

The Fox Creek Bridge and Fox Creek are beautiful areas that should be better utilized by the local community and visitors to the Town and Village of Schoharie. (Insert picture(s) of Fox Creek from Fox Creek Bridge and possible Fox Creek Bridge)

The Fox Creek Bridge provides convenient pedestrian access to the historic Old Stone Fort, located on the southern side of Fox Creek.

There is a large amount of open space at the Rte 30/443 intersection that could be converted into a recreational/tourist area, a conversion that is endorsed by the Town and Village of Schoharie Comprehensive Plan.
Constraints

- There is currently at least one large farm within the viewshed protection area that is for sale. If this land is developed in manner that diminishes the quality of the viewshed then curtailing future proposed development would be more difficult.

- There is currently a Dunkin Donuts Restaurant located within the viewshed protection area. It is only a matter of time before hotels, or other fast food restaurants will be considered for development in this area.

- Currently, there are no financial incentives for landowners within the viewshed protection area to preserve open space and agricultural land uses. Landowners can receive a larger dollar amount for their land if they sell it to a developer.

- In order for the viewshed to remain unique and add to the character of Schoharie then the whole area must be protected. The quality of the viewshed will still decrease if only certain “pockets” of land are preserved.

- Upland and Lowland areas do present environmental restrictions as a result of watershed and floodplain best management practices that impact the ability to develop these areas.

- Constraints on residential development in the Gateway area can be viewed more in terms of what could be than what currently exists. The Gateway could become overwhelmed by strip commercial development (photosim), destroying the opportunities to provide quality, characteristic housing stock.

- The Gateway could be subject to conventional subdivisions. (show photosim) New homes could be constructed with inappropriate architectural elements that do not blend in with either the natural environment, nor the current housing stock which features traditional colonial style farmhouses (picture).
• The few homes that have not received the attention and money necessary for maintenance could influence their adjacent neighbors negative, resulting in continued and pervasive degradation of the quality of these aged structures.

• There is currently no site plan review to ensure that new construction meets desired expectations. Specific criteria for signs, parking, lighting and landscaping should be included in the land use code and strictly enforced.

• Large areas of land along the roadside in the Northern Gateway are for sale. Without specific land use codes, these areas may be developed in a way inconsistent with the wants and needs of the community. Careless development of this area will destroy the view and alter the first impression that visitors get when exiting the interstate.

• Remedies such as structural alteration of existing structures may not be financially feasible or politically popular. It is difficult to enforce land use codes on existing buildings.

• Poor intersection configuration at the junction of Rtes 30 and 443 could contribute to accidents, indecisiveness, and a detrimental attitude towards the Town and Village of Schoharie.

• Owners of existing homes and businesses may not support enforcement of aesthetic land use controls.

• Residents adjacent to the Rte 30 and 443 intersection must support the proposed intersection reconfiguration. (Insert picture of residence adjacent to Fox Creek Bridge?)
• The New York State Department of Transportation must work with the Town to produce the desired changes in the Rte 30 and 443 intersection.
OBJECTIVES

The rural landscapes provided in the Northern Gateway area must be preserved. This character is a key resource for strengthening the economy and the community in the Village of Schoharie.

Fortunately, many of the constraints identified in the previous section are “could be’s” and significant positive opportunities exist with respect to open space and agricultural preservation, residential development, the roadside environment, and the maximization of historic, scenic and municipal infrastructure in the Northern Gateway. The Comprehensive Plan and current Zoning Rewrite detail the desire of the community to maintain and preserve the rural character in Schoharie. The rural, farmland characteristics of the roadway corridor and the businesses and homes are quintessentially Schoharie, and the need for various design controls, land use regulations, and infrastructure improvements is evident.

The agricultural and open space resources that are both integral parts of the viewshed within in the Northern Gateway will be lost if immediate measures are not taken to preserve them. There are a number of measures that can be implemented immediately at very little cost to protect the viewshed within the Town of Schoharie. If no action is taken then it will be just a matter of time before the viewshed may look like this. (PICTURE)

The Village of Schoharie is rich with historic sites and homes which are kept a secret as cars whiz by on Interstate 88. It would appear from the highway that unless you want a donut, there’s no reason to get off. Those who are not familiar with Schoharie might go right by, never knowing the historic treasures and quaint Main street that Schoharie holds. Luckily, this is an area that can be easily improved at a relatively low cost. Using simple and relatively low cost methods such as sign improvement at the I-88
interchange and the addition of a visitor information center, more visitors can be drawn into the village bringing more revenue to Main Street.

Preserving and enhancing the rural and historic character of Schoharie can be accomplished in a number of ways. One of the most useful, versatile, and cost effective tools used for screening unattractive objects is natural landscaping... trees. Usually the more the better. Building and landscaping materials should be consistent with local natural materials and native vegetation.

Reconfiguration of the Route 30/Route 443 intersection should result in a decrease driver confusion through more controlled intersection design and the creation of better access to points of interest, i.e. Fox Creek Bridge and the Old Stone Fort. In addition, recreational opportunities through the creation of a park/picnic area in the land bounded by Route 443 and Fox Creek are likely to be increased.

Each of these goals is consistent with the Town and Village of Schoharie Comprehensive Plan. Implementation strategies are listed in the next section, with overall recommendations provided in the final section.
RECOMMENDATIONS

**Short-Term Implementation**

- Landowners and developers should be encouraged to use Flexible Conservation Subdivisions (cluster development). If only a portion of the proposed area to be developed is actually developed then the open space character can be preserved in that area. Financial incentives such as tax breaks can be used to encourage developers to conform to these stipulations. It can also be stipulated in the zoning ordinance that if a person chooses to use this type of development for a subdivision then they may be entitled to construct additional building units. Please refer to the illustrations below for how flexible conservation subdivision will protect the viewshed.

- Specific subdivision regulations can also be used to preserve the rural character of the area. Large minimum lot sizes and building setbacks are both means by which subdivision regulations can preserve the rural and open space character within the viewshed for the Town of Schoharie. The illustrations below demonstrate how the viewshed within the Town of Schoharie may be affected by different minimum lot sizes.

- A low cost tool that can be implemented to address the appearance of residential housing is the formation of a Corridor Beautification Committee. The group would not require funding, as the intent would be to garner volunteer support of beautification projects along the corridor. Communities have used similar organizations with success to provide street clean-ups, planting trees/shrubs/flowers, etc. While these efforts do not directly address the repairs needed on the home in question, the improve quality of the roadside environment can put needed pressure on
homeowners to address such problems. Neighbors may also be willing to help neighbors if manpower is the missing resource.

- A more moderate cost alternative to improving existing residential features would be for the community to develop a residential improvement grant program in concert with HUD (see Colonie model in appendix). Specifically, this program would provide money to homeowners for façade and other necessary improvements.

- The most costly solution that would address the need to rehabilitate housing and other structures in the corridor would involve the outright purchase of these properties by the Town or Village. Should the community need additional space and the location and type of space available was appropriate, this option may make since, however, this solution cannot be considered universally applicable.

- Potable water and sanitary sewers should only be provided in areas where development is encouraged.

- Improve signage at the intersection of I-88 and Route 30 to identify Schoharie’s distinguishing attractions and draw visitors to the Main Street area. Simple highway signs at the exit will inform people unfamiliar with the area that there is life beyond Dunkin’ Donuts. Signs should be judiciously posted to inform visitors of the distance to the Village of Schoharie’s shops and restaurants and the location of tourist information. The Town or County Highway Department could be contacted to make and post these signs.

- Place a well designed kiosk, modest in scale, preferably agricultural in style to blend with the surrounding land uses somewhere in close proximity to the Dunkin Donuts. Here information and maps would be available on what to do and see in Schoharie and how to get there. Maps and signs at the visitor’s center should clearly point out that Main Street is a mere mile down the road. A brief history of the Town (Village) should be provided, necessary services i.e. groceries, pharmacy, bank location should
be clearly identified on the map. Of course all historical attractions such as the Stone

Example of the tourist
information center at
Cooperstown.

Fort, Easter Egg Museum, Train Car Museum etc. should also be shown. Separate
pamphlets for attractions could be available at the visitor’s center. Cooperstown has a
good example of a tourist information center. Although a visitor information center
may be a bit costly, it should be considered immediately to increase the number of
people visiting the village and contributing to its revitalization.

- Historic attractions such as the Stone Fort are a tremendous historical resource and
deserve to have signage to reflect that. The existing sign for the Stone Fort is faded
and is easy to miss. Because the fort is not visible from the road, it is even more
important that adequate signage announces its existence and location.
- Another opportunity to improve sign availability and appearance is at businesses

Picture of Old
Stone Fort Sign
overgrown with
brush.

along Route 30. It was observed that in some cases, sign design, entrances from the
road and parking lots could be improved. With improved signage, the businesses
would be more recognizable and inviting to draw more visitors. Incentives should be
offered to local businesses to undertake minor cosmetic improvements. Tax breaks,
small business loans etc.
A new sign is needed for the BOCES facility. The current sign is large, ominous and institutional. A more creative sign would do a lot to improve the appearance of the building.

Driving down this rural road, one cannot help being struck by the BOCES facility. Though there is a significant set back from the road, the institutional style sign and box shaped building are a stark contrast to the surrounding agricultural and historic character. As structural modifications to this building are highly unlikely, the most probable solution to softening the visual impact of this facility is screening.

Presently, the large area in front of the building is planted with grass. There is a lot of room for tree planting so an effective visual buffer can be established. A mix of deciduous and coniferous trees native to the area should be planted in a natural arrangement (not straight line). The types of vegetation used for screening should consistent with surrounding vegetation.

![Simulation of BOCES building screened with trees and a new sign.](image)

- Efforts should be made to more adequately screen the Dunkin' Donuts parking lot and building. Tree plantings here are rather sparse. The planting of additional trees and a row of shrubs along the fence would help to improve the view from the road.
- Using fences, trees and shrubs, screen other parking lots for businesses along route 30. This will improve the appearance of the buildings to attract more business and
will also enhance the roadside view. Preserving the scenery is an important part of enhancing the character and economy of the Village.

**Medium-Term Recommendations**

- Instead of four story floodlights, turn-of-the-century lighting could be installed at the Dunkin’ Dunouts and at other structures in the office park. These can adequately light the lots while having minimum effect on surrounding properties.
- Parking lots could be moved to the rear of buildings to improve view from the road.

**Long-Term Recommendations**

- Permanent conservation easements could be purchased on large tracts of land within the viewshed. There is currently a Schoharie Land Trust in existence for this purpose. However, the land trust does not currently have the financial support for the purchase of these permanent conservation easements.
- The development rights within the viewshed can be transferred to preserve the open space character of the viewshed. These development rights can be transferred to the areas surrounding the Village of Schoharie were some degree of growth is encouraged. These development rights can also be purchased. However, this option requires a large amount of financial support.
- Structural improvements to the Dunkin’ Donuts building and Schoharie BOCES would be welcome. The addition of peaked roofs would greatly improve the appearance of these buildings. Structural rehabilitation of the facade would most be the most costly option. Because the buildings are already exist it would be more difficult to enforce new land use codes. More likely to be pursued are cosmetic screening options. These might include decorative fencing, shrubs and trees along the perimeter of the parking lot to clearly delineate its boundaries and aesthetically
improve the view of the lot from the road. These options would probably produce the greatest effect for the least amount of money.

- All plans for new businesses applying for a permit in the Northern Gateway area should be reviewed carefully to ensure that they meet the necessary design standards. Enforcement of design standards is integral to maintaining the character and integrity of the roadside from an aesthetic standpoint.

- Perform a viewshed analysis to determine critical viewsheds. This will enable the village to concentrate viewshed preservation efforts in the most critical areas.

- Bury utility wires. This would require a large amount of money that may be available through ISTEA. This would drastically improve the scenery where cluttered utility wires block scenic vistas.

- Reconfiguration of Old State Route Intersection / Fox Creek / Fox Creek Bridge. The attached plan shows the proposed intersection reconfiguration of the intersection of Route 30 and Route 443. As shown, Route 443 would terminate at Route 30 in a “T” intersection. This is the type of intersection considered optimal by transportation engineers. Traffic on Route 443 westbound to Route 30 and Route 30 southbound to Route 443 would be required to stop, and traffic on Route 30 northbound would have freedom to continue on Route 30 or turn right onto Route 443. Traffic volumes on Route 443 do not warrant separate turnoffs for traffic heading on Route 30 northbound and southbound. The resultant intersection layout would result in a much safer, less confusing vehicular and pedestrian experience.

  Insert plan view of proposed intersection reconfiguration (One Page)

  The portion of the Old State Route north of Route 443 would be excavated and replaced with embankment and topsoil, and then seeded. There would be a turn off of Route 443 (again at 90 degrees) that would connect with the portion of the Old State Route to the south of Route 443. In this manner, access to the Fox Creek Bridge and destinations would still be maintained.
The portion of Route 443 that connects to Route 30 northbound would also be excavated and reseeded. This area could be graded as a low point to collect stormwater runoff, and the Town could elect to install a fountain at the lowpoint to make optimal use of the runoff stored there, as well as provide a visually appealing centerpiece for the intersection.

This area would be much more aesthetically pleasing while experiencing an increase in open space, two factors important to residents of the Town and Village of Schoharie. Perhaps more important, the reconfiguration has dramatically reduced the number of decisions made by drivers and those areas where vehicles merge.

- Parking Lot/Scenic Area at Fox Creek

In addition to the intersection reconfiguration, a parking lot/scenic area has been created in the area bounded by Route 443 and Fox Creek (see proposed intersection reconfiguration, previous page). This is a beautiful spot, and I sense that the residents of the Town and Village of Schoharie do not use it to its full potential. As the attached plan shows, there is enough space to provide a parking lot for 11 vehicles (including the disabled) and a picnic/recreation area. This site, perhaps named the “Fox Creek Bridge Park”, could be a great spot for families to come out and have a picnic, for young adults to congregate, or for visitors to enjoy some of Schoharie’s scenic beauty and rich historical background. This spot is unique not only for its access to Fox Creek and the Fox Creek Bridge, for the historic Old Stone Fort is located across the bridge only a short walk away. Visitors and residents alike should be encouraged to come to the new park and visit the Old Stone Fort. Perhaps the Village could obtain a grant to rehabilitate the Fox Creek Bridge to allow vehicular traffic access to the Old Stone Fort.

The site should be properly landscaped in a fashion similar to that shown on the attached plan. This landscaping will serve as a screening to and from...
traffic on Routes 443 and 30 as well as adjacent residential uses. Members of the Studio do not feel that the proposed park would have an adverse affect on residential land uses.

• Signage at Fox Creek Recreational Area

To compliment the intersection reconfiguration and proposed park, the Town/Village should erect signs to attract residents and visitors alike to the Village and the Fox Creek Bridge Park. All signs should be of a design that is compatible with that in Appendix A of the Town and Village of Schoharie Comprehensive Plan or as otherwise indicated in this study. This tool falls in line with the Town’s desires to improve directional and informational signage.

It is recommended that signs be installed in conjunction with the proposed intersection reconfiguration and Fox Creek Bridge Park as shown on the attached plan. Signs are to be located on Route 30 northbound and southbound before its intersection with Route 443 and on Route 443 prior to the intersection with Route 30 and the left-hand turn into the Fox Creek Bridge Park. The general design of the sign layout is shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fox Creek Bridge Park</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access to Old Stone Fort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picnic Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creek Access</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The signs located on Route 30 southbound and Route 443 westbound should have a chain-linked wooden attachment stating "Welcome to the Village of Schoharie". In a similar fashion, the sign located on Route 30 northbound should have an attachment stating "Now leaving the Village of Schoharie, Please Come Again!" The installation of these signs would undoubtedly have a positive effect on use of the proposed park, as well as instill a sense of Village and Town pride.

In addition to the above-mentioned signs, the park could also house an informational kiosk that directs visitors to points of interest in the Town and Village. This kiosk would further supplement the Town and Village desires to promote and protect their historical heritage, as well as provide a gateway information point for tourists. Space could be provided on the kiosk to provide attractive, affordable advertising to local merchants, if desired.
ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The Town of Schoharie desires growth to occur in concentrated nodes in the village, rather than in a sprawling strip development pattern along the highway. The creation of overlay zones with specific land use regulations and required site plan review will go along way towards preservation of the Gateway area and maintenance of the rural character of the road.

There is a large amount of farmland that contributes to the rural character of Route 30. There are also residences and businesses along this road. The beautiful vistas of this country road can be improved easily using screening techniques such as generous tree planting. Aesthetic land use controls should be implemented and enforced in the gateway area to improve the view from the road and to protect existing viewsheds. The combination of history and scenery makes Schoharie unique and desirable. If one is lost, it sure to have a negative impact on the community.

The best practice with respect to residential issues is likely to be a combination of the Corridor Beautification Committee concept and the residential improvement grant program.

Flexible conservation subdivisions and site-specific subdivision regulations are both options that should be implemented immediately to protect the viewsheds that exist within the Town of Schoharie. In addition the Town of Schoharie should continue to make permanent conservation easements economically feasible for landowners that are interested.

The Route 30/443 interchange reconfiguration is considered a medium to long-term implementation mainly because of the high cost involved and the time it would take for the New York State Department of Transportation to include the intersection reconfiguration on the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The Town and Village of Schoharie Comprehensive Plan indicated that the NYSDOT had improvements planned for this intersection and the intersection of Route 30 and Route 30A, so it may not be that difficult to get them to buy into the proposed design.
It is likely that residents of the Town and Village of Schoharie would support the implementation of this recommendation, provided that the proposed intersection reconfiguration meets the satisfaction of the property owner adjacent to the Fox Creek Bridge. The members feel that this medium to long-term recommendation will have a significant positive impact on the Town and Village of Schoharie. Residents will have increased recreational opportunities, visitors will have a more positive perception of the Town and the Village, and residents and visitors alike will have a safer, more controlled intersection to navigate.

The gateway area is not only a valuable scenic resource, but also a vital link to the village. Management of land use in the gateway area will inevitably effect the Village of Schoharie. This area gives visitors their first impression on the village and influences their decision to stay and explore, or to get back on the highway and move on. For this reason it is extremely important to make informational signs and tourist information readily available. This should be a priority. Increased business from non-residents is essential to the success of economic development efforts in the village.

Through sensitive planning and site plan review, ultimately the northern Gateway area can be maintained to promote sustainable economic development in the Village, while preserving the natural, scenic and historic resources of the area which are so important to residents and visitors alike. “Roads not only carry us from place to place, but many... link us to the past, tracing patterns of movement across the landscape that are centuries. ...They inspire a sense of discovery, beauty and neighborliness, in a world where roads have come to mean nothing more than a maddening gridlock of crass commercialism.” (Beach, Virginia. “Buffer Easements: Preserving Scenic Byways. “Views and Vistas. Newsletter of the Low Country Open Land Trust 3(2):1)
Viewshed Looking West From Intersection of Rt. 443 and State Rt. 30
The Southern and Western gateways give one a pleasing "feeling" as one drives towards the Village. The highway backdrop from both gateways are pleasant mountain views which reinforce a special feeling of place for this community nestled in the Schoharie Valley. The magnificent viewshed is mostly complimented by the pastoral scenes in these areas and convey almost an idyllic rural landscape that is well worth protecting, both intrinsically and for the viewshed's reinforcement of the charm of the Village center as on drives north or east to Main Street.

The southern gateway issues center around the incredible views which are present for the entire drive into the village and how the area can be sensitive to change while preserving the important physical characteristics of the area for the future. The area is currently rural and agricultural and an effort should be made to keep as much of the area working agriculture as possible. The roadside environment goes hand in hand with the viewshed issue and includes signage for the businesses along this corridor as well as the way a homesite either fits in or stands out from its surroundings. All of these issues work together to create a pleasant small rural town.

Figure 1 - The View West Today

Figure 2 - The Possible View West Tomorrow
flavor or conspire to detract from that image.

A positive image makes a person slow down to enjoy the view and perhaps entices them to stop in the Village and stay awhile while a negative image just tells a driver this is one more ruined landscape and is nothing special and he can continue on his way to wherever he is going without taking notice of anything.

**Figures 1 and 2** demonstrate the impact of a few more homesites in the viewshed done without some serious thought given to the rural character of the area and the cumulative impact of development to the Village and beyond. **Figure 1** shows the view today while **Figure 2** shows the view as it could look tomorrow.

**Figures 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8** show the impact of three homesites on a viewshed.

**Figure 3** shows a homesite in the southern viewshed which is built against the treeline with some thought given to the materials used. The home becomes a part of the viewshed in **Figure 4**.

**Figures 5 and 6** show another homesite
which has much more visual impact on a viewshed, both close up and at a distance, despite the presence of a pleasing farm scene in the background. [I will find examples of bad impact on a viewshed from elsewhere & change figures 5 thru 8]. More appropriate siting of the home, which would occur with site plan review would address the issue. For existing homesites some simple natural screening would soften the homes with the most visual impact. Some common sense architectural standards, such as color of materials used and design of the home in a neo-classical style or other pleasing style would serve to mitigate the cumulative impact aspects of viewshed protection. Figure 7 shows another homesite that visually clashes with the surrounding area. Figure 8 shows a closer shot of the homesite which is built in an open field surrounded by acres of grass.

The final issue in this gateway is the welcome to the actual village. Figure 9 shows the view as it exists today. Figure 10 shows what some simple improvements to the area could accomplish to give the gateway a more positive flavor. [need to expand]
The western gateway also has some spectacular scenery as you descend the hills to Spring Street. As one crosses the Schoharie Creek at the bridge, Figure 11, a very nice village scene begins to unfold in Figure 12.

As in the southern gateway scenario, a pleasing welcome sign should be added at the turnoff right before the bridge and as well as a map highlighting the major attractions of the area for casual passersby, who might then stop and linger in the Village. As the area opens up as you come to the Guernsey Nursery fields, which allow a view to both the north and south and west, other issues come into play. The major issue is the future use of what is now open agricultural land situated within the village proper. There will be some strong development pressures if the Village continues to grow since the eastern edge of the Guernsey property has sewer line access, making it an easy area to develop and weave into a village style street pattern. Extra homes here will also give the local businesses a bigger potential client base.

Development up until now seems to have been one lot
at a time, which can put enormous stresses on municipal services such as water and sewer if they are added after the fact. Perhaps some thought could be given to making the northern part of the property a primary area for Village growth [Figure 13]. Higher density than is presently the case could be negotiated in exchange for a conservation easement on the southern side of the property to keep it in agricultural production [Figure 14]. Planned and controlled growth is always preferable scattered infill and incremental expansions of Village water and sewer services.

A final issue which impacts the western gateway, but is also of concern to all other areas, is public access to the Schoharie Creek. Getting easements for public access at various key points to the Creek and then attempting to weave them into a hike and bike trail should be a high priority for the plan. All of these issues were discussed in the recently enacted Comprehensive Plan and are in keeping with those recommendations.

**Recommendations**

**Low Cost Alternative** -

*Site Plan Review* and *Open Space Subdivision* regulation should be adopted to allow the Town and Village more control over the visual impact of future development and how subdivision can change the character and use of land. Open space subdivision regulations will also allow much more land to remain in its natural state and be available for farming and other rural pursuits while
accommodating the modest growth which has been forecast for the area.

These have no monetary costs but do have costs in political capital to enact the regulations. They are also simple mechanisms to insure that one person’s freedom to do what he wants with his land does not adversely impact other property owner’s rights and undermine community standards, preferences and expectations as outlined in the Comprehensive Plan.

Moderate Cost Alternative -

In addition to the low cost alternatives, landscaping regulations should be added to screen the visual impact of new construction. Enacting Architectural Review Regulations will give the Town and Village control of the appearance of new construction in the viewshed. A prohibition against clear cutting or thinning trees will also protect the viewshed. These again are purely political costs to propose and enact these regulations. There will be some residual monetary costs associated with having new construction being built to a recognizable architectural style but the costs should be moderate.

Ideal Alternative -

Low cost and Moderate alternatives plus a Transfer of Development Rights [TDR] program or a Purchase of Development Rights [PDR] program. TDR would designate areas where new construction could occur, the “receiving areas”, and prevent new construction in areas which are designated “sending areas”. Purchase of these rights by owners in the receiving areas from owners in the sending areas
would spread the profit of property sales and new construction more evenly across the town while protecting the viewshed and sensitive areas. PDR would be accomplished by the Town and/or Village or other entity such as a Land Trust purchasing development rights to important properties. A TDR is a more free market mechanism but requires more administration to accomplish.

These will have significant political costs and will require a long education process before serious consideration could be given to either program. Another real cost of these programs will be the shifting assessed valuation of land which will have to be thought out and then implemented as permitted land uses are expanded or curtailed in various areas of the Town and Village.