Mohawk River
Public Access Plan

The University at Albany
Planning Studio
Fall 2006
Mohawk River Public Access Plan

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Introduction

Each year the State University of New York at Albany’s Masters in Urban and Regional Planning program undertakes a Graduate Planning Studio project with a community in or around the Capital Region. This year, the Town of Colonie contracted with the University at Albany Planning Studio, led by Dr. Gene Bunnell, to study its 10.2 miles of waterfront along the Mohawk River.

The Planning Studio is a team planning project in which students prepare a land use planning report for and with a community of stakeholders. Its goal is to provide a vehicle for practical experience and the opportunity to apply theoretical approaches and skill sets in the area of urban and regional planning.

The goals for developing the Mohawk River Access Plan were as follows:

- Improve Physical and Visual Access to the Mohawk River
- Strengthen Existing Mohawk Hudson Bike-Hike Trail in Colonie
- Enhance Recreational Activities
- Recommend New Trail Links
- Identify Interpretive Signage and Amenity Opportunities
- Investigate Stormwater and Aquatic Weed Control
- Promote Special Projects

For this project, students worked with The Mohawk River Community Partners of Colonie, Inc. (MRCP), the Town’s Planner Kevin DeLaughter as well as other local stakeholders and members of the community to identify areas of significance along the waterfront and the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail. Other stakeholders involved in the planning process were representatives of the New York State Department of State, municipal officials, agency stakeholders and Town residents.

The Bike-Hike Trail runs parallel to the waterfront in many areas that could be enhanced or preserved to balance ecological concerns with increased access. Other trails throughout the Town were studied in relation to how improvements could be made to enhance access to the River, create more usable space and elevate the importance of the Mohawk River as a destination for those in the community.

Students analyzed Town documents such as the Town of Colonie Comprehensive Plan prepared by Saratoga Associates, The Town of Colonie Mohawk River Revitalization Strategy and Action Plan (May 2005) and the Countryside Exchange Report from the Countryside Exchange that the Town engaged in 2003. Other resources that were examined included the Capital District Transportation Commission study of the Route NY7/NY2 Corridor Transportation and Land Use and the DGEIS Land Use Transportation Update - Boght Road-Columbia Street prepared by Creighton Manning Engineering in 2005. In addition, students...
conducted thorough first hand research along the full length of the approximately ten mile Colonie waterfront area.

The waterfront was broken down into four sections (similar to those in *The Town of Colonie Mohawk River Revitalization Strategy and Action Plan*). The four sections referenced in this report are as follows:

Section One – Western Boundary to Forts Ferry Road
Section Two – Forts Ferry Road to I-87
Section Three – I-87 to Route 9
Section Four – Route 9 to the City of Cohoes

These four sub-areas are remarkably diverse, covering land uses including residential, commercial, agricultural, undeveloped areas, public land uses and environmentally sensitive areas. Our report therefore, begins by addressing the needs and opportunities in each of these sub-sections, both individually and separately.

**Section One** – This area serves as a gateway to the Town. Projects in this area were considered in this context and include, but are not limited to: the adaptive reuse of the old water treatment facility as a visitor/education center, construction
of a Boardwalk to the River, trail connections from British American Boulevard with the Bike-Hike Trail, and unpaved connections to the Bike-Hike Trail from adjacent residential neighborhoods and the Ann Lee Pond.

**Section Two** – This area encompasses many environmentally sensitive lands but holds great potential for access if the Town can acquire more land to do so. Items that were investigated include a bike loop down to the Mohawk River at the Town water and sewage treatment facilities, trail spurs to views of Delphus Kill, cliffs, islands, and Twin Bridges, potential new trails for pedestrians and mountain bikers, and a possible Sculpture Garden as a destination for Town Residents.

**Section Three** – The Town Park is a dominant feature in this area but new zoning regulations from the Town provide this area with a great deal of opportunity for enhancing access while preserving the natural environment. Here, there is great potential for redeveloping the abandoned Marina on Route 9 as well as improving linkages between the Town Park and the Bike-Hike Trail. Special projects include creating a Marina District and a Bridge to Bridge Ramble between the Twin Bridges and the Crescent Bridge. This area can also be the launch site of a water trail for use by small non-motorized watercraft, such as a canoe or kayak.

**Section Four** – Although the majority of the land in this section provides an important Town service by hosting the Town Landfill, this area also has a great deal of potential for enhancing trail connections to the Mohawk River. The existing Town Landfill is expected to be capped within 15 years and has already begun to transition the space into a scenic view for bikers and hikers. Enhancements to Freddie’s Park and the Crescent Dam can provide more access to the public as well as the establishment of trails from the Bike-Hike Trail to the Route 9 (Loudon Road) ball fields and the Boght Road soccer complex.

In addition to the study of these areas, this report also contains recommendations for items that will enhance usage of the waterfront by the public, including signage, amenities, parking, land use recommendations and special projects.

Historically, the Mohawk River and the Erie Canal system have served as an economic engine and as a source of recreational activities for members of the community. Today, the Environmental Protection Agency and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation have the Mohawk River listed as an “impaired” waterway. This designation can be traced to current and historic land use practices which have reduced water quality through increased siltation. This has led to the Town’s current problem of invasive species such as the water chestnut in the Colonie portion of the Mohawk River.

Because of this, in considering changes to the Colonie waterfront it is important to keep in mind the greater regional context when local decisions are made. The Mohawk River is a shared resource for all communities within its watershed and
beyond, Colonie’s development and land use policies have the potential to affect communities downriver, as communities upriver have the ability to affect Colonie. The cumulative result of these various policies in riverfront management is the power to shape the future of the Mohawk River for better or for worse. Colonie should be at the forefront of all regional efforts to protect the waterfront while ensuring adequate public access—serving as an example to neighboring communities.

As part of the Mohawk Valley Heritage Corridor and the Erie Canal Greenway, Colonie also has a responsibility to work in conjunction with other municipalities to illuminate the rich regional history and ecological significance of the Mohawk River and its environs, drawing upon its current and historical use of the both the Erie Canal and Mohawk River Waterways.

There also exists an important role for inter-municipal cooperation in planning for public access. For instance, The Town of Halfmoon, just north of Colonie, is planning to improve their waterfront by extending trails along the entire River’s edge, which in turn will connect with other trails running throughout southern Saratoga County. Colonie should seek to form partnerships with neighboring towns as well, whenever possible coordinating their waterfront improvements through consistent signage, trail linkages, and the like. The newly created Vischers Ferry Nature Preserve and Bird Sanctuary in Clifton Park, for example, might also serve as a model for creative bilateral partnerships and “eco-centric” thinking. Such thinking can in turn lead to the development of a permanently protected, rich riparian ecosystem along Colonie’s own waterfront.

By building these larger considerations into the planning process, the Town can avoid making decisions in a vacuum, reduce overhead through shared funding, and ensure the enjoyment of the River by current residents and those yet to come.
Existing Conditions

An assessment of existing conditions was conducted that included site visits to each section studied as well as meetings with Town officials and citizens. In assessing each section, the groups examined physical and visual access points, connections to the Bike-Hike Trail from both the Town and the Mohawk River, parking, amenities and signage as well as the current land use of the area.

Section One

Physical Access

Section One is bordered on the west by the Town of Niskayuna and on the east by Forts Ferry Road. This area is the most ecologically sensitive of the four sections in the approximately 10 mile study area. Major features in this section are the Bike-Hike Trail, DEC protected wetlands, Shaker Creek which is a significant tributary of the Mohawk River, and spectacular views of the River as well as its northern shore. In addition, this region contains the Town’s old water treatment plant, water storage tanks and a pump station that are still in use. The far western area has a piece of land that juts out into the River creating a haven for wildlife including birds and waterfowl that in turn attract hunting. The Town currently has plans for a Boardwalk in this area that will increase pedestrian access to the Riverfront.

Currently there is no formal car top or hand launch for non-motorized boat access to the waterfront in this region. An informal path exists at the western gateway, from the Bike-Hike Trail down to the River. This path is not maintained and has a large amount of debris due to flood conditions over the summer. Immediately to the east of Shaker Creek, the land slopes down to a low-lying flat area which is utilized as an informal put-in for a small non-motorized boat or canoe and fishing access point. This put-in appears to be used for local access and is on property owned by the Canal Corporation that controls much of the land along the waterfront. Most of the waterfront in this area is separated from the trail by heavy vegetation, and/or is inaccessible to the general public because it is...
Visual Access

The views in this region are an asset to the Town of Colonie. Though mostly wooded on either side of the Bike-Hike Trail from Niskayuna to Shaker Creek, in the vicinity of the creek the vegetation gives way to spectacular views of the River. The aforementioned area of land on the far western side of the study area also has excellent views of the Vischers Ferry Preserve on the opposite shore. These idyllic views of the River are some of the best along the 10.2 mile shoreline.

Various species of waterfowl reside in these marshes. According to the *Mohawk River Waterfront Strategy and Action Plan* produced by the Town in 2003, these marshes are home to Bitterns, Rails, Blackbirds, Yellow Warblers and many other songbirds. Great Horned, Saw-whet, and Eastern Screech owls have been sighted here, along with the occasional Bald Eagle. Although this spot is a frequent destination for bird watchers and hunters alike, there is no formal access, nor a designated viewing platform to cater to these visitors.

Bike Trail Connections

Many studies have been conducted on the development of trails in this area. In 2005 the *Route NY 7/NY2 Corridor Transportation and Land Use Study* prepared by the Capital District Transportation Committee (CDTC) states:

“The NY 7/NY 2 corridor is currently a mix of large-scale retail development, office complexes, small shopping plazas and individual businesses, residential neighborhoods, and residential areas transitioning to commercial enterprises. Although sidewalks are present for the majority of the corridor, it remains unfriendly to pedestrians due to the dispersed pattern of development, and the width of the highway. Still, large areas of undeveloped land remain available for commercial and residential development.”

Currently, there is no safe passageway for cyclists and/or pedestrians to get from Route 7 and the British American Trail System down to River Road. Both Buhrmaster and Rosendale Roads are dangerous passageways for pedestrian and bike traffic. These roads are narrow and sinuous, and structures along the roadside have short setbacks. The lack of a physical connection between Route 7 and River Road forces trail users to access the Bike-Hike Trail from the end of Forts Ferry Road or the Niskayuna Train Station (Lyons Park).
Section One: Existing Land Use

Parking

Along River Road, between Buhrmaster Road to the east, and Forts Ferry Road to the west, there are five informal parking areas for cars and trail access points with wooden gates. The five pull-offs are not paved and are shallow, making it dangerous for cars pulling in or leaving. The three smaller pull-offs hold between 2-3 vehicles, while the two larger pull-offs may hold 5-7. There are two formal parking areas for people who drive to this area of the Mohawk River. To the west is the Niskayuna Train Station (Lyons Park). This facility is located just over the Niskayuna town line on Rosendale Road. To the east, there is a formal parking area where the Bike-Hike Trail crosses Forts Ferry Road. The acute angle of this road/trail intersection, and the limited visibility of both trail and road traffic, make this a dangerous place for formalized access.

The westernmost point of access to the Bike-Hike Trail within Colonie is located at the Town’s former water filtration plant. An unmarked road connects the Bike-Hike Trail to a parking area adjacent to the filtration plant.
Amenities

There is no signage along River Road alerting drivers of parking pull-offs or directing them to alternative parking. At Shaker Creek, signs warn users of a bridge but there are currently no signs noting the name of the creek or that it is a watershed area. There is graffiti on the pavement of the Bike-Hike Trail and mile markers and signs are inconsistent. There are no identification or directional signs indicating that this parking is available to visitors. The signage near the entrance of the trail, consisting of a map with an outdated numbering system and no key that corresponds to it is clearly outdated and serves no functional purpose for users of the Bike-Hike Trail.

There are benches provided behind the former treatment plant which overlook the land perpendicular to the River but not the River itself. An additional bench exists immediately to the east of the gate signifying the beginning of the Colonie portion of the Bike-Hike Trail. There are two benches located to the east of Shaker Creek in order to take advantage of the viewshed. However, the benches are narrow and do not have backs. Additionally, they are somewhat blocked from a full view due to high vegetation. No bathroom facilities exist in this portion of the study area.

Land Use

Nearly the entire section is contained within a conservation subdivision overlay. There is also a noise overlay due to the proximity to Albany Airport and significant work has been undertaken by the airport to acquire land to prevent development within the flight path.

Land adjacent to the Mohawk River is owned by the New York State Canal Corporation. The Canal Corporation controls nearly all riverfront property from the western boundary to Forts Ferry Road, where a few parcels belong to private land owners.

In March of 2003, the Town prepared its MS4 Storm Water Management Plan for the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. The goal of this program is to improve water quality, primarily surface waters. In the 2003 plan, the Shaker Creek was identified as a major tributary into the Mohawk. A number of sources of siltation and erosion were identified that may contribute to the shallow riverbanks and consequently to the spread of water chestnut.
Section Two

Physical Access

Beginning at Forts Ferry Road and continuing to the underpass at Route 87, direct public access to the Mohawk River is limited. The Bike-Hike Trail provides little formalized opportunity for public waterfront access. Private access occurs from numerous residential parcels by means of private docks and, in some cases, boat launches. On Town-owned parcels near the Delphus Kill, informal paths to the water have been established which service recreational fishing. However, these access paths are not sanctioned by the Town and have not been maintained by the users.

Visual Access

The Bike-Hike Trail is paved between Forts Ferry and Island View Roads passing through areas of densely wooded steep slopes, low-lying wetlands and low-density residential neighborhoods. Visual access to the water is extremely limited from the trail due to vegetation along the banks. West of the Delphus Kill, year-round views from the Bike-Hike Trail include the high ground and hills north of Pollock Road.

Bike Trail Connections

The Bike-Hike Trail between Forts Ferry Road and the Town’s current water treatment facility does not provide direct access to the water. Beyond the informal trails near the Delphus Kill, no additional formal or informal access to the water exists before the Interstate 87 overpass where the Bike-Hike Trail continues along the shoreline below the overpass.

After crossing Shaker Creek, the Bike-Hike Trail continues straight through an area of increasing residential uses. The trail emerges and crosses Forts Ferry Road. At the road crossing, gates prohibiting motorized vehicle access, striping on the pavement and signage indicate the location of the trail. A small parking area is located at this intersection. Drainage ditches are located on each side of the trail, and have been observed to contain standing water and common reeds in places. Steep forested slopes continue on each side of the trail around Shaker Bay Road and residential houses can be seen.

The Bike-Hike Trail continues to Onderdonk Avenue where gates also prohibit motorized vehicle access. The trail crosses Onderdonk Avenue diagonally and continues through mostly wooded sloping areas and low-lying land skirting the perimeter of the Town’s water and sewage treatment facilities. At this intersection, an industrial chain-link fence and gate, posted with no trespassing
Section Two: Existing Land Use

The Bike-Hike Trail continues along the Town property to the north and Shaker Bay residential development to the south through wooded sloping terrain. On the northern side, an informal walking path has been established into the hills.

A forested wetland with year-round standing water is located on the north side of the Bike-Hike Trail and an open, grassy area leading towards the hills is located on the south side. A single line of chain-link fencing has been erected by the Town on the south side of the trail near the open grassy area. Hikers have established an informal path around the fencing to access the open, grassy area and the hills across Town property. This informal hiking path ultimately runs nearly parallel with the Bike-Hike Trail adjacent to the power lines. Meanwhile, the Bike-Hike Trail continues past the Town’s sewage treatment plant access road. With chain link fencing on both sides of the trail, gates again prohibit motorized vehicles on both sides of the intersection.

Crossing the intersection, the fencing continues on both sides of the Bike-Hike Trail. Two lines of fencing exist on the south side of the trail, near the Town’s sludge drying beds, one along the bike trail and the second surrounding the beds.
Approximately halfway along the sludge beds, the fencing abruptly terminates. Through gaps in the trees along the north side of the Bike-Hike Trail, views of the sewage treatment facility and Twin Bridges are present.

The Bike-Hike Trail continues east and heads over the Delphus Kill, which is virtually indiscernible from the Bike-Hike Trail. Sumac grows along the banks and the area is heavily wooded limiting viewsheds from the bike trail. On the north side, the adjacent land slopes down to a well-known local fishing spot known as the “Sand Bar”. This is also indiscernible from the Bike-Hike Trail. National Grid also maintains an approximately 25 feet wide easement on the east side of the Delphus Kill for overhead power lines. The easement is maintained and cleared to the south of the Bike-Hike Trail, and heavy National Grid vehicles access the easement to work on the lines.

The Bike-Hike Trail curves gently north and east and continues to an open grassy area immediately west of Interstate 87. Although a large bike rack is located here, no additional amenities, such as benches or trash receptacles, are provided. Dog owners often use this grassy area to exercise their pets and fecal matter was apparent on the ground. At the open grassy area, the Bike-Hike Trail makes a sharp, northwest turn down a steep slope to intersect with Island View Road.

The Bike-Hike Trail continues east along Island View Road and is indistinguishable from the vehicle lanes. Here, Island View Road is a rural, two lane residential road; there are at least three curves in the road with woodlands or rocky outcroppings that impede visibility for bikers or vehicles. No shoulder striping or fog lines are apparent and signage indicating the direction of the Bike-Hike Trail is limited. The Bike-Hike Trail continues along the curving road beneath the Interstate 87 Twin Bridges.

**Parking**

Parking in this area is located on Forts Ferry Road approximately 900 feet north of the intersection with River Road. It is a formalized parking area located within a residential neighborhood and at the intersection of Town’s Bike-Hike Trail and Forts Ferry Road. The parking area is approximately 30 feet long and between 15-20 feet deep (on an angle). There is space for between 3 and 4 cars to park safely, however bike racks on the backs of vehicles tend to stick out into road.
While there is signage indicating that the Bike-Hike Trail crosses the road, there is no signage indicating that the area is available for Bike-Hike Trail parking.

Additional informal parking is located along the shoulders of Onderdonk Avenue about 1,800 feet northeast of the intersection with Forts Ferry Road in front of the gates of the Town’s water treatment facility. Popular with local Bike-Hike Trail users, this informal parking is simply a dirt area on the side of the road where no more than five or six cars can park to access the Bike-Hike Trail which crosses Onderdonk Avenue at that point.

There is an informal parking area located off of Island View Road which also serves as an access point to the trail.

**Amenities**

In this area, existing amenities are limited to a bench, without a view, at a small clearing on the north side of the Bike-Hike Trail between the water and sewage treatment facilities and a bike rack just prior to the Bike-Hike Trail joining Island View Road.

**Land Use**

Land uses between Forts Ferry Road and Interstate 87 are a mix of mainly residential and public service uses which include the Town’s water treatment facility and sewage treatment plant. The Town Police maintain a shooting range and skid pad for firearms and vehicle training operations. South of the bike trail, land uses include residential, gravel mining and agriculture production. Vacant or underutilized parcels within this area are located around the water treatment facility, including privately and publicly owned lands, in the hills south of the Bike-Hike Trail, and also east of the Delphus Kill near Island View Road.

Significant sensitive areas exist between Forts Ferry Road and Interstate 87, including floodplain habitat, freshwater wetlands, riparian streambank habitat, steep and eroding slopes, the Delphus Kill tributary area, a kettlehole bog, a cranberry bog, and stands of deciduous forest.

Riparian streambank habitat exists along the Mohawk River in most places between Forts Ferry Road and Interstate 87 except in certain residential areas. This habitat also occurs along sections of the Delphus Kill tributary. In some areas of the riverbank, erosion or invasive vegetation has reduced the apparent integrity of riparian habitat, as indicated by reduced native and increased non-native riparian vegetation or shoreline hardening structures and private docks.
Steep and eroding slopes exist along the Bike-Hike Trail east of Forts Ferry Road near Shaker Bay Road, and west of Interstate 87 south of the Mohawk River. Additional areas of erosion have been reported along the east side of the Delphus Kill. A kettlehole bog was identified in the hill areas on the east side of the Delphus Kill, south of the Bike-Hike Trail, and west of Interstate 87. A cranberry bog was identified by local sources in the hill areas west of the Delphus Kill.

Floodplain habitats exist in multiple areas between Forts Ferry and Island View Roads. This habitat is generally characterized by standing water, certain riparian vegetation, and hydric soils and may receive riverine and upland flood waters during periods of elevated water. Significant floodplain areas exist around the Town’s water treatment facility. During storm flooding events, including during the 2006 Mohawk River flooding, the wellheads at the facility were unreachable due to more than 12 inches of floodwater. Floodplains within an underutilized, vacant parcel located east of the water treatment facility and west of the sewage treatment plant did not receive significant flooding during the same incident according to local officials. Section Two contains significant sensitive areas, with eroding steep slopes. The picture above demonstrates the horizontal natural erosion occurring on the privately owned land between the Town treatment facilities. Similar erosion occurs at the Delphus Kill.

Individual freshwater wetlands under one acre in size are located east of Shaker Bay Road in pockets around the Bike-Hike Trail. Small wetland pockets also exist immediately west of Interstate 87 near Island View Road. Housing located at Shaker Bay is also affecting erosion by building into the slopes, stripping natural vegetation and leaving large areas of exposed soil and mulch. Channelization is visible at this location. Additionally, lawn chemicals in runoff from this location reaches the open ditches alongside the trail and thus to the Mohawk River, increasing nutrient loading.

Deciduous forested areas occur throughout the area from Forts Ferry Road to Interstate 87 on both sides of the Bike-Hike Trail. Tree cover varies by location, and is concentrated in areas of low-density residential, vacant lands, and directly along the Bike-Hike Trail.
Section Three

Physical Access

This area is bordered by Interstate 87 to the west, Route 9 to the east, and the Bike-Hike Trail to the south. Just east of I-87 is a well situated neighborhood that surrounds a commercially operated marina. As one continues north by northeast along Schaffer Drive, there are several large rural residential parcels that together create a picturesque setting. Schaffer Drive becomes Schermerhorn Road as it approaches the nearly 174 acre Town Park, which is one of the more significant features of this section. The Town Park offers already well established public access. This section’s eastern boundary, Route 9, is a mix of land uses: commercial car dealers, billboards, and residential properties. One of special features of this area is the large farm, and greenhouse operation that provides sweeping views of the River and the region’s rolling hills. Prior to crossing Route 9’s Crescent Bridge, heading towards the Town of Halfmoon, is a piece of underutilized New York State Canal Corporation property, that adjoins a landlocked boat yard.

Presently the Town Park is the only established public access point within this section. The park provides access along the riverfront and most significantly contains the Town’s boat launch. A floating dock that extends roughly 100 feet into the River is made available as well. Currently the Town Park operates from mid-May through October, and is open from 10:00 am to dusk daily. The nearly 175 acre Town Park has provided access to the Mohawk River since it first opened in 1967. Services at the park include a swimming pool, pavilions, picnic facilities, tennis courts, softball fields, a football field and boat launch.

The commercial marina located at the intersection of Dunsbach Ferry Road, Island View Road and Schaffer Drive offers various services and commercial access to its patrons—most notably a boat launch. The marina is privately owned, and leases New York State Canal Corporation Land for its waterfront access. Many privately owned boats dock at this marina and pay annual docking fees.

An informal access point has been established under I-87’s Twin Bridges and serves as an unconventional point of access for local residents. A clearly worn path exists from Island View Road down to the water. Currently there is a sign that prohibits various activities from taking place on the bridge (no fishing, no climbing, etc.), which in turn could be misconstrued, leading one to believe such restrictions apply to the area as a whole.

Visual Access

Throughout Section Three there are several viewing opportunities of the River and the basin’s overall viewshed. Both the Crescent and Twin Bridges offer
vantage points that allow one to catch a glimpse of the section’s overall scenic and natural setting. Additionally, the nearly 3,000 feet of shoreline within the Town Park offers Town residents many viewing opportunities of the Mohawk River. The River can also be viewed as one drives along Schaffer Drive and Schermerhorn Road. A farm located off of Route 9 presents sweeping views of the region towards the southwest.

Unfortunately many of these viewing opportunities are limited because one is confined to the inside of a vehicle in order to see them. Although Route 9 is a designated New York State Bike Route, the road configuration offers little safety for bicyclists. Furthermore, Schaffer Drive and Schermerhorn Road have little or no shoulder for any pedestrian form of travel.

Bike Trail Connections

Currently the Bike-Hike Trail runs through Section Three beginning where I-87 passes over Island View Road. The Trail along Island View is a shared roadway; the same is true as it continues along Dunsbach Ferry Road. Afterward, the trail leaves the road and follows the old railroad bed that runs parallel to the River, passing by a newer residential subdivision. The Bike-Hike Trail then passes near the main entrance of the Town Park where a trail user parking lot is located. Heading east, the trail follows alongside the park, where some informal trails have been cut into the Town Park near both the guard shack and football fields. The trail continues through a wooded grove, and by the Route 9 farm before crossing under Route 9 itself.
Here the Hike-Bike Trail is not only a vibrant regional attraction but serves as an excellent conduit for bringing people to the Town Park. Unfortunately, the section along Island View and Dunsbach Ferry Road is both windy and narrow—a potentially dangerous combination. Additionally, there are an inadequate number of signs to clearly convey to a driver that these sections of road are part of a heavily used trail.

Aside from the Bike-Hike Trail, The Town Park offers many trails within Section Three as well. Users can utilize the roadways that move from the entrance of the Town Park down to the Mohawk River or can pass through a network of trails—covering the wooded landscape—which also double as cross-country ski trails.

**Parking**

There is free parking for Bike-Hike Trail users outside the entrance of the Town Park. To access the waterfront in this area, users must enter the Town Park and pay for parking. Individuals are charged for parking - $2.00 per resident car, $5.00 per nonresident car (and must be the guest of a resident), and $1.00 per senior citizen car.

**Amenities**

In terms of amenities, this section contains restrooms at the Town Park that are accessible when the park is open. Trash receptacles are located throughout the Town Park and at the parking area of the Bike-Hike Trail. There are benches near the parking area, along the Bike-Hike Trail and throughout the Town Park.

**Land Use**

The areas to the south and east of the Town Park have conservation subdivision overlays enacted. The Marina District is Single Family Dwelling as-of-right use. The Town Park and the adjoining municipal lands are Conservation Districts. The land to the north of the Town Park is a Planned Development District, which includes a large tract of undeveloped property that adjoins Route 9. Further north, the lands leading to the Crescent Bridge are designated Neighborhood Commercial Office Residential and Commercial Office Residential respectively.
Section Four

This area is bordered by Route 9 (Loudon Road) which lies on the west side and the City of Cohoes on the south east side. In addition to Route 9, Cohoes Crescent Road runs parallel to the River on the east side. Cohoes Crescent Road is the original site of the Erie Canal which was then relocated on the opposite side of the River in Saratoga County. Parts of the original Erie Canal still exist on the landfill and run along Cohoes Crescent Road. The landfill is a major land use in this area although there are also residential and commercial uses. A greater proportion of commercial property is located on the northern end and property use becomes more residential as you travel south toward Cohoes.

Physical Access

At this time access to the Mohawk River in this area is very limited and there are currently only two defined access points. One of the barriers to access is Cohoes Crescent Road that runs along most of the River on the east side with very little land adjacent to the River. This leaves a limited amount of property for new access points to be created. The two current access points are Freddie’s Park (near the Crescent Bridge and off Route 9) which is located on the northwest shore of the River and a very small area at the Cohoes Crescent Dam which is off Cohoes Crescent Road. There are no access points suitable for motorized boat launch in this area. Although Freddie’s Park could serve as an informal put-in for kayaks or canoes, the physical layout of the park is not conducive to this. Boat access at the Crescent Dam is limited due to safety concerns and the proximity to the Cohoes Falls.

At the Cohoes Crescent Dam there is a small designated fishing area wedged between the Crescent Dam Power Facility on the north and land owned by the New York State Canal Corporation to the south. This area has an unpaved parking lot that has a steep slope all the way down to the River. The main problem with access at this location is the safety concern associated with the rapid flow of water being discharged by the power facility. Boat access to the water is restricted due to the proximity of the Cohoes Falls that are further downriver. The Town of Colonie should further evaluate access in this area to promote safer access.
Freddie’s Park provides limited fishing access. There are two benches at this park which are set on a concrete slab. Invasive plants and weeds seem to dominate the border of the grassy area. Paved parking facilities exist at Freddie’s with spaces available for individuals with disabilities. There are currently no trash or recycling bins at this park, but there is a bike rack. The signage is very outdated and a kiosk is the dominant feature as one looks from the parking lot to the River.

**Visual Access**

Visual Access in this area is limited to Freddie’s Park and the Cohoes Crescent Dam although as mentioned in Section Three views are available from the Crescent Bridge. There are also some visual access points from portions of Cohoes Crescent Road but there are no physical access points where a person could get out and stop and enjoy the view due to a steep drop off to the River. As one drives south on Cohoes Crescent Road, views of the River become obscured by housing. The Crescent Dam Power Facility on Cohoes Crescent Road provides beautiful views of Crescent Island although not much of the River as a whole. Freddie’s Park provides a clear view of the River as well as the Town of Halfmoon located on the other side of the Mohawk River.

![Section Four: Existing Land Use](image)

**Bike Trail Connections**

The Bike-Hike Trail continues under Route 9 towards Cohoes with an access point to the trail located at Fonda Road which also serves as an informal parking
A portion of the Bike-Hike Trail from Fonda Road to the City of Cohoes was recently paved by the Town. Although this increases usability of the trail for residents, there is no access from the trail to the River in this area. As mentioned before, Route 9 is a New York State Bike Route however it poses a number of safety hazards to bikers and pedestrians. These hazards include the speed of traffic and limited room for bicycling. There are ample opportunities in this area to improve connections to the trails as well as the River.

Parking

Current parking consists of Freddie’s Park, Crescent Dam and the Fonda Road access point. The parking lot at Freddie’s Park has spaces available for individuals with disabilities. The Crescent Dam parking lot is gravel. The parking at the Fonda Road access point is informal.

Amenities

Currently, there are no bathrooms, benches or trash receptacles in this area. The Town recently acquired a patch of land at the Fonda Road access point. The Town should assess whether this parcel of land is appropriate to be used to place amenities such as a small restroom.

Land Use

Land use in this area is mainly residential, with some commercial and industrial. This area contains the Town of Colonie landfill that has a life expectancy of another 15 years. The landfill is currently closing down sections and planting greenery to enhance the visual appeal of the landfill area as it is capped.
Recommendations

After assessing the different sections, the following recommendations outline possible ways to enhance physical and visual access, trail connections, parking and amenities, as well as land use changes the Town may want to consider in meeting these goals.

Section One

Physical Access

Public access in this area could be greatly improved through small improvements to already existing access points. An informal put-in to the east of Shaker Creek could be an excellent stop along a greater water trail for non-octane watercraft. The placement of one picnic table and appropriate signage would serve to strengthen the spot for both water trail users and people enjoying the area as a viewshed. This area may not be suitable for a formalized put-in for canoes and kayaks as the nearest parking area at Forts Ferry Road may be too far to allow safe and easy access for users. The Mohawk River Waterfront Revitalization Strategy and Action Plan recommended that The Mohawk River “become a vibrant destination for waterborne and water dependent industries, such as fishing and boating; both motorized and non-motorized.” Although these are valid considerations for this space, due to Section One being largely undeveloped, it should remain so. Motorized boat access via a boat ramp is not feasible and would ruin the tranquility and natural beauty of this area.

The proposed Boardwalk to be placed behind the former water treatment facility would also function as a way to lure people down to the edge of the River without significantly impacting the sensitive ecological nature of this particular area. The Boardwalk would allow visitors an opportunity to enjoy the abundant wildlife that lives in the marsh as well as have access to idyllic views of the River. The Town may also consider adding creative design features to the Boardwalk that would cater to waterfowl hunters and fishermen that also use the area.

A stop along a region-wide water trail (please see page 49 for more information) could be established for non-motorized watercraft on the peninsula of land at the far western portion of the study area. This stop would be characterized by a passive camping site and perhaps one sign signifying it as a stop along the water trail. This way, the Town can increase the attractiveness of its waterfront with the least amount of impact possible to this sensitive area.
Visual Access

Section One contains some of the most beautiful views in the study area. To further emphasize these features, the Town should consider improving the benches that already exist to the east of Shaker Creek. More comfortable, wider benches would encourage use of this point as a viewshed. Moving the benches or trimming the brush in front of them would be necessary to improve the attractiveness of the area. The Town may also provide bump-outs for users to stop out of the way of traffic on the trail. This will encourage users to stop and appreciate the view.

Trail Connections

Bike and Pedestrian Connections from Rt. 7 to River Road

In 2005, the Route NY 7/NY 2 Corridor Transportation and Land Use Study prepared for the Town of Colonie by the Capital District Transportation Committee addressed the lack of a safe bicycle/pedestrian connection between River Road and Route 7. The plan proposed three possible connections.

1. To the west end of the study area from British American Boulevard, along Route 7, then through the River Hill Center property
2. Parallel to Buhrmaster Road
3. Extending from Vandenburg Lane to River Road

Section One: Proposed Uses
After a review of these proposals and an assessment of the area, we recommend the Town consider the River Hill Center connection or extending Vandenburg Lane to River Road. Buhrmaster is narrow, sinuous, and provides limited visibility for pedestrians. This is not a viable option for a bike/pedestrian connection.

The River Hill connection according to the Route NY 7/NY 2 Corridor Transportation and Land Use Study takes advantage of several opportunities and conditions. It states, “There are several parcels of undeveloped land along the northern side of Route 7 from British American Boulevard west to the River Hill Center. The route also takes advantage of the more gentle topography found to the west between Route 7 and River Road. The slope directly north of British American Boulevard is more severe, making the possibility of a trail connection north from the intersection less feasible.”

There are no steep slopes to prevent a connection at Vandenburg Lane. Each of these connections will require participation from private land owners. Their consent for a right-of-way easement would be necessary to make the trail connections.

Bike and Pedestrian Connections to British American, Ann Lee Pond

The 10.6 acre Ann Lee Pond is a shallow pond surrounded by wetlands and part of the Mohawk River Watershed. The pond serves as a home to various species of waterfowl and fish. It is a popular place for bird watching and fishing, and is surrounded by unpaved footpaths. During the public input period, while the Mohawk River Waterfront Revitalization Strategy and Action Plan was being drafted, a number of Town residents identified the pond, located in Albany County, as a valuable asset to the Mohawk River study area.

The Ann Lee Pond is also part of a nearby collection of historic sites and attractions that celebrate the Shakers. The MRCP has identified this area for a possible heritage partnership, and would like to see a recreation path connection developed between the Ann Lee Pond and the Bike-Hike Trail. Ultimately, this component could bridge the gap between The Crossings and the Mohawk River. Currently, the multi-use path that runs north from the Ann Lee Pond area ends as an on-road trail along British American Boulevard.
Parking

The provision of a parking for multiple cars at a new interpretive center located at the old water treatment plant site should de-emphasize the need for expanding and or improving the River Road parking turn-offs, as well as the Forts Ferry Road parking area that currently serve the Bike-Hike Trail. One of the turnoffs should be closed or regraded, since it presents a potential accident hazard. It is recommended that no action be taken to increase the capacity of the four remaining turnoffs; however, until more parking is established at the proposed Interpretive Center (see below), signs should be placed on River Road to warn passing drivers that vehicles may be entering and exiting the turnoffs since the turnoffs are difficult to see until a driver is right upon them.

An alternate scenario would be to improve parking capacity at all of the pull-offs. If this is pursued, the Town should place signage in the area and the pull-offs should be regraded to allow for safer parking. Special consideration should be given to the Forts Ferry Road parking area and its awkward, possibly dangerous convergence with the Bike-Hike Trail and the road.

Amenities

Any new bathroom facilities in Section One should be constructed at the proposed Interpretive Center in addition to lockers for trail users and bike rentals. Benches should be placed at significant viewshed areas. The benches that exist behind the former treatment plant adjacent to the Bike-Hike Trail should be moved slightly downhill and oriented toward the River to take advantage of the view. As mentioned above, the benches located to the east of Shaker Creek could be relocated and made more comfortable, encouraging trail users to stop and enjoy the area.

Special Projects

The Old Water Filtration Plant

The Town of Colonie and the MRCP have expressed interest in adaptive reuse of the abandoned facility as a visitors/heritage center that will also function as a western gateway to the Colonie portion of the trail. The Mohawk River Interpretive Center should focus on the history and natural character of the surrounding area. At this access point, a Boardwalk will soon be placed at the River’s edge and will allow visitors to enjoy passive recreation such as bird watching, and perhaps picnicking. Although certain components

Old Water Treatment Facility
of the site are still in operation (the tanks and a pump house), this facility is very suitable for adaptive reuse. Several factors make the adaptive reuse of the water filtration plant ideal for the project.

- The building is structurally sound and secure against the elements of vandalism or weather. This allows for project implementation to be carried out as a long-term goal if necessary.
- The building sits upon 12.3 acres of clear land that is zoned for public services. There is plenty of land around the building for parking, a playground, walking trails and/or a picnic field.
- The Town of Colonie already owns the water filtration plant and the land it occupies. There are no costs associated with the purchase of the land or the building.
- Because the building is close to the Colonie/Niskayuna border it is an ideal location for a Gateway project. This site will welcome trail users into the Town of Colonie, and can potentially introduce them to many of the Town’s assets, both on and off the trail.
- A paved parking lot can be constructed over pre-existing impermeable surfaces, thereby reducing the need for constructing additional pavement.
- The built environment provides a footnote to Colonie’s and the region’s history. The reuse of the water treatment plant is a symbol of the ever-evolving and important role the Mohawk River has in the history of Colonie. By reusing a structure that formerly served to filter drinking water from the River, the Town symbolically addresses the need for sustainable, environmentally friendly development. The building both celebrates the heritage of the River and the future for low-impact enjoyment of the area’s most picturesque and valuable natural resources.
- Historic and civic buildings give citizens an open door to the past, present and future of a community.
- The advantages of adaptive reuse are recognized on a global scale. In 2004 the Australian Department of the Environment and Heritage published a report titled *Adaptive Reuse: Preserving our Past, Building our Future*. The report stated, “Environmental benefits, combined with energy savings and the social advantage of recycling a valued heritage place make adaptive reuse of historic buildings an essential component of sustainable development.” It also stated, “Bypassing the wasteful process of demolition and reconstruction alone sells the environmental benefits of adaptive reuse.”
• This building is not suitable for more intensive development due to its ecologically sensitive location, as well as the fact that the site is still in use as water storage and pumping station.

The three on-site water tanks could be painted with large murals. Each tank could have a separate theme.

• Culture and History – On this tank, the murals should draw on the region’s Shaker heritage, thematically linking the gateway to other sites such as Ann Lee Pond and reinforcing Colonie’s role in the Heritage Corridor. They could feature depictions of Shaker villages, historic buildings and figures, historic maps, and/or depictions of the Mohawk’s role in the history of the Town.

• Arts and Entertainment – This tank could feature various artistic renderings or it could be painted in its entirety to resemble something quite different. For example, the tank could be painted to resemble a fish tank, a flying saucer, even a circular barn. Abstract art could be featured as well.

• Nature and Scenery – In the spirit of building a western gateway to the Colonie portion of the Bike-Hike Trail, one of these murals could depict images from the surrounding wetlands, native flora and fauna and/or natural scenes could be featured on this tank.

Security concerns have been expressed with the possibility of increased pedestrian traffic in the proximity of the storage tanks. The Town Water Department has expressed the need to provide a high degree of security for the water tanks since parts of the facility are still in operation. If the proposed Interpretive Center is established, the Town Water Department intends to have fences constructed around the tanks to secure them from tampering. These fences will no doubt conflict with the welcoming role the Center plays in the area. In conducting a feasibility study for adaptive reuse of the facility, the Town should strongly consider a secure but more visually pleasing method of protecting these tanks. There are a number of fencing options that are both effective against intrusion and more attractive.
To the immediate east of the former water filtration plant there are open concrete storage basins. These basins are surrounded by a rusted chain link fence and present a clear danger, should they be left open, if the building is redeveloped. Because a parking lot will be needed and the creation of additional impervious surface so close to wetlands is not a desirable option, the basin could be filled and paved over, thus trading one impervious surface for another. The number of parking spaces required will depend on the amount of impervious surface the site can support, the degree to which the building will serve as a draw to visitors, and the number of staff the building employs.

Outdoor amenities could consist of bike racks, trash cans, benches, and picnic tables. A small playground would also draw additional visitors to the site.

Indoors, the building could include a wide array of amenities such as accessible restrooms, lockers, water fountains and vending machines. This space should also house a number of unique exhibits about the cultural and historical significance of the Mohawk River. Artifacts and historical items could be on loan or permanent display. Interactive maps, illustrations of local flora and fauna, and historical plaques should greet visitors with information about the area. The second floor of the building could house a classroom, storage, and offices for staff. The interior walls on the first floor could be removed to open up the available space.

The Boardwalk

The plans for constructing a 126 foot raised boardwalk down to the River’s edge are fairly well established. It will follow the footprint of a trail that was created by a youth corps behind the former treatment plant. A boardwalk will not only provide an excellent opportunity for public access to a beautiful part of the Mohawk, but it will also function as a major feature of a western gateway to the Colonie segment of the Bike-Hike Trail in conjunction with the proposed Mohawk River Interpretive Center. The boardwalk should be established with the intention of setting this area aside as a bird habitat preserve that is reinforced by the zoning law that designates this particular area of land as “Land Conservation.” Although a proposal for development has already been approved by the Canal Corporation, the Town may want to consider incorporating design features within the boardwalk that will allow residents to continue using this area for fishing and waterfowl hunting. For safety purposes, semi-permanent signs may be placed near the boardwalk during hunting season alerting trail users that these activities are taking place. Alerts may also be incorporated in Town newsletters to the same end.
The access to wildlife viewing from the proposed boardwalk should be reinforced by designs incorporated into the proposed Mohawk River Interpretive Center at the site. The center may provide passive educational items, such as pamphlets, or interpretive signage, that let trail users know what wildlife they may see on the trail and adjacent boardwalk. Murals on the water storage tanks may also display the biodiversity present in the area.

Shaker Creek Bridge

The area around Shaker Creek is a significant viewshed. Small improvements to this site will enhance viewing opportunities for all trail users. A component of this effort is the redesign of the bridge leading over Shaker Creek. Presently, the chain link fence on either side of the bridge takes away from the general aesthetic of the area. A shorter, less physically imposing barrier design would provide the same benefits as the current configuration. A completely new bridge construction may also be considered. A wooden bridge with hand rails, for instance, would fit more appropriately with the surrounding landscape. The bridge design may provide an opportunity to further connect Shaker or Canal heritage throughout the study area.

Signage

The following is a list of signs that are recommended under current conditions as well as those necessary under proposed improvements:

- To the east of Shaker Creek, one sign down the bank by the edge of the River signifying it as a stop along a water trail. The sign would emphasize it purely as a day use stop along the trail, not as a put-in.

- To the far western portion of the study area on the peninsula, one sign signifying it as a stop along a water trail, as well as a passive camping site.

- At the beginning of the boardwalk, one semi-permanent sign present during hunting season, alerting residents of hunting activities that may be taking place at this location.

- One sign at the Shaker Creek viewshed, describing the view of the opposite bank or interpretive signage explaining the significance of that particular stretch of the trail.
• In the event of a connection between Route 7 and River Road, there should be one sign opposite British American Boulevard directing pedestrians west to reach the trail connection.

• One sign at the River Hill center connection, directing trail users north along the new connection.

• “Share the Road” signage allowing pedestrians safer passage along River Road, slightly east of the proposed Mohawk River Interpretive Center (exact location to be established by the Town in consultation with a traffic engineer).

• Depending on future connectivity of Town trails, establish “To the River” signs along trails leading from The Crossings, through Ann Lee Pond, through British American Boulevard Trail System and down Route 7 to the connection to River Road.

• One directional sign on the Bike-Hike Trail at the western gateway pointing users toward the restrooms, potentially located in the proposed Mohawk River Interpretive Center.

• Signs at each pull-off along River Road alerting drivers to the existence of parking areas.

**Land Use Recommendations**

Although much of Section One lies within either the Land Conservation zoning district or Conservation Development Overlay district, the fragile ecological features in this area warrant close scrutiny of the impacts of human activity and development. This is compounded by the need to control the spread of water chestnuts throughout the region, which are most certainly affected by siltation, transported through runoff and erosion of streams corridors.

In addition to adhering to any broader, region-wide land use recommendations made in this report, several policies can be pursued.

• Follow BMP’s (Best Management Practices) for stormwater included in the Town’s stormwater management plan.

• Follow recommendations and timetable for improvements to water bodies (particularly Shaker Creek) in the Town stormwater management plan.

• Implement and strictly enforce the Conservation Subdivision Overlay designation.
• Consider obtaining Canal Corporation land behind the former water treatment and establishing a park/bird sanctuary.
Section Two Recommendations

Physical Access Improvements

Highlight Delphus Kill Crossing

The current Bike-Hike Trail crossing over the Delphus Kill is poorly defined; visitors have no recognition of the important ecological, cultural or scenic qualities of the tributary. To remedy this, the Town should erect consistent signage indicating that users are traveling over the Delphus Kill. Additional informational signage could be erected that interprets and discusses the importance of watershed management at such a location. Installation of a bench and selective viewshed clearing would further promote utilization of this area.

The Town could redefine the crossing by installing railings consistent with those recommended for the Shaker Creek Bridge in Section One. Establishing a visually distinct crossing would help visitors to be aware of the creek and create a heightened sense of the importance of the waterbody near its confluence with the Mohawk River.

There are a number of opportunities for establishing a non-motorized boat launch on the east side of water treatment plant. If the Town were to acquire either an easement or fee title to the underutilized parcel between the Town’s water treatment and sewage treatment facilities, at least two opportunities would be available for new direct access to the Mohawk River. An additional opportunity may exist if the Town were able to acquire an easement to access Canal Corporation land by crossing privately held upland parcels.

Visual Access Improvements

Multiple opportunities exist to improve visual access, particularly to the Mohawk River and into the hills of Colonie.

Strategic brush clearing along the fence at the sewage treatment facility should be considered to provide educational viewing of the sewage treatment facilities and views of the Mohawk River and Twin Bridges. Strategic brush cutting should also be considered on the south side of the Bike-Hike Trail to provide views to the undeveloped hills. This may require working with Shaker Bay Homeowners Association on property to the west of the sludge drying beds.

Site for Potential Boat Launch
The Town also might consider changing the industrial chain-link fencing that is not used for security purposes to a more aesthetically pleasing design that would allow for greater visual access in this area.

Currently, the Delphus Kill is hidden from view and most trail users are unaware that the stream exists. Brush cutting around the Delphus Kill could provide visual access to the tributary and the gorge. This would provide opportunities to add signage indicating the location of the Delphus Kill and the importance of watershed management. Care should be taken to retain sufficient vegetation to secure the steep slopes and limit soil erosion. Additionally, the Town might consider creating a bridge design that could be used at each tributary to visually remind users of the terrain. The Town should consider brush cutting a trail from the sludge drying beds to the top of the hill on Town-owned land to a high vista point. Costs would be limited to directional and trail blazer signage and periodic brush cutting. Trail use would be limited to hiking and/or mountain biking.

Strategic brush cutting in locations overlooking Island View Road could provide visual access to the Mohawk River, the Islands, and the Twin Bridges.
Improved Trail Connections

Create a Bike Trail Loop on Sewer and Water Treatment Plant Access Road

A review of the Town’s treatment facilities area revealed the possibility of several trail options that might be implemented according to funding and timescale:

As traffic on the treatment plant access road is limited to roughly 40 vehicles per day, and all Town facilities are surrounded by fencing to prevent unauthorized access, it is therefore feasible to have a bike-hike trail loop share the access road with facility traffic from the water and sewage treatment facilities. In order to establish this new bike loop, the No Trespassing signs should be removed from the treatment facility outer gates at the end of Onderdonk Avenue. New signage should be installed indicating the direction and length of the Town Bike-Hike Trail loop. Under this scenario, access to the Mohawk River would be limited to visual access of the islands and the Twin Bridges through the trees on the eastern edge of the site. In order to protect and ensure long term visual access the Town might consider acquiring a visual easement from the private landowners.

Utilizing this approach has several cost, time, environmental and user advantages: there is no cost for land purchase or easements, there is no cost for leveling and paving, there are no additional maintenance costs beyond road striping and usual road maintenance. As such, the trail could be added very quickly to the existing system. As no additional impervious surfaces would be created, this option will have no increase on stormwater runoff or impacts to the floodplain. Because the road is paved it is suitable for a variety of uses. There are no significant slopes, making this an ADA compliant alternative to other trail options.

Alternatively, the Town might consider purchasing land located between the water and sewage treatment facilities, to the north and east of the access road. This land is relatively flat and contains a section under cultivation, a fallow meadow, and a wooded area. Purchasing the land allows for the realigning of the bike-hike loop to create physical access to the Mohawk River and additional uses which will be discussed within the Special Projects Section of this report. Within this alignment, the bike-hike loop would continue to utilize the access road as the primary bike-hike loop, with another loop branching off near the police skid pad, out to the riverbank, and back to the access road. A trail spur could follow along the riverbank on Canal Corporation land. It is recommended that trail materials be limited to permeable options in order to retain the hydrologic function of the
floodplain and reduce stormwater runoff. This option would allow for a level trail that would meet ADA compliance.

The last alignment option would require the purchase of all the private land between the water and sewage treatment facilities, on the north and south sides of the access road. The land south of the access road is heavily wooded, containing very steep hills with low lying lands, streams and wetlands making public use difficult. Under this scenario the trail loop would leave the Bike-Hike Trail at a point east of the entrance to the water treatment facility at the current location of a park bench. The trail would follow a steep incline to a hill ridge through heavily wooded land, and then descend steeply before crossing the treatment plant access road near the police rifle range. After crossing the access road the trail would level out and continue out to the riverbank, looping back to join the access road near the sewage treatment plant.

Due to steep slopes in excess of 5%, this trail would not be ADA compliant. The steep slopes and constraints placed upon path materials due to the significant sensitivity of the wetlands would limit use to hikers and mountain bikers. However, by retaining a portion of the trail loop on the treatment plant access road, physical access to the riverbank could be achieved for all other users. Due to the sensitive nature of the lands south of the access road it is recommended that any trail in this area be retained in as natural a state as possible, with the trail reduced to periodic brush cutting and trail markers. Limited opportunities for use might make this an expensive option that is unwarranted in light of other opportunities for access.

Create a Bike Path Spur West of Delphus Kill

A trail spur should be cut through Town owned lands on the west side of the Delphus Kill, north to overlook the River, the cliff face, the islands, and development along Island View Road. Another spur should be cut from this area down to the west side of the Delphus Kill riverbank, providing access to the sandbar and views. This access would include a dedicated fishing point due to the high level of importance placed on this location by local recreational fishers.
By using land the Town already owns these trails could be added quickly and cheaply to provide physical and visual access to the River and a main tributary with limited expenditures on brush cutting and directional/trail blazer signage. Due to the grade, these trails would not be ADA complaint and would be limited to hiking. Additional discretionary expenditures might provide a formal path with steps to aid in traversing the hills. Benches and waste receptacles could be placed at the visual access points overlooking the Mohawk River and at the edge of the Delphus Kill. Signage interpreting the ecology and geology could be incorporated to create a short educational trail. An additional trail to access the fishing site could be established from the area behind the sewage treatment plant and continue to the dedicated fishing access along Canal Corporation land.

Create a Bike Path Spur East of Delphus Kill

A trail spur should be cut following the National Grid and Town Water Department easements on the east side of the Delphus Kill, north to the top of the cliff for views of the River, the islands and the Twin Bridges. Expenditures would be limited to brush cutting and trail signage initially. Due to the grade, this trail would not be ADA compliant and would be limited to hiking.

Further improvements that should be considered include adding a railing at the cliff face to avoid falling or climbing, creating a gravel path with steps, and a viewing bench. This area might also be used for a special project to attract additional users to the area.

Create a Trail Connection Between the Existing Bike-Hike Trail and Residential Development

It is recommended that the Town contact National Grid for permission to place a trail connection along the National Grid right-of-way, on the eastern side of the Delphus Kill. The trail would travel south from the Bike-Hike trail, across the Delphus Kill to Pollock Road.

National Grid utilizes heavy machinery within this area and the terrain will need significant work to level the deep ruts. Trail materials may be limited by National Grid, its equipment needs, and the potential costs associated with periodic repairs due to heavy equipment access. Until the Town enters into discussions with National Grid about trail placement and materials it is not possible to determine the full range of trail uses and whether or not this connecting trail will be ADA compliant. However, despite these unknowns, with no land purchases, and the flattest terrain, this trail connection solution provides the cheapest option for an off-road link between residential developments and the Bike-Hike Trail. All other possible trail connections require traversing hills and privately owned land. These options might cost considerably more, requiring land purchases and construction of a bridge across the Delphus Kill.
In the longer term, the Town might consider purchasing an easement at the southern most edge of lands of Anderson to the west of the National Grid right-of-way in order to direct the south end of the trail connection behind Morningside Drive. The Town might also consider requiring a bike trail as part of any development occurring on the south side of Pollock Road. These options would remove the trail from Pollock Road and potential conflicts with gravel mining trucks.

**Parking**

There are a few opportunities within this area that can add or formalize parking spaces and improve parking safety.

There may be opportunity for realignment of vehicle parking on Forts Ferry Road. This would include some minor fill and vegetation clearing to enlarge slightly (not more than 10 square feet in total) the existing parking areas and establishing striping to reduce the danger of bike racks sticking into the road. If it is determined that this area should be instead removed from use, Parking Area 9 may be used to fill the parking space gap (please see the Parking Section on page 63 for more information).

Onderdonk Avenue in this area is underutilized and, with no significant residential uses along this stretch of road, presents an opportunity for increased roadside parking. By simply grading the shoulder area of this road and establishing these areas as parking for the Bike-Hike Trail, it may alleviate existing impacts to nearby areas.

The Town might also consider sharing the police skid pad in off hours to add paved parking opportunities.

**Amenities**

Waste receptacles and a bike rack could be placed beside the bench near Shaker Creek to allow for use of the bench as a resting spot. The waste receptacle would also provide resources for the disposal of pet waste which is currently found in the ditches on either side of the path.

A bench and waste receptacle could be placed next to the bike rack near the connection with Island View Road.

Also, benches could be placed at the end of the trail spurs on either side of the Delphus Kill confluence. A railing might be added at the top of the cliff to prevent falling.
If the parcels of land between the sewage and water treatment facilities are purchased by the Town, the Town might consider adding a boat hand launch at this location. Benches could be added under the trees, along with picnic facilities. The Town might consider adding a multipurpose building that could include restrooms, vending machines, and kayak storage in this area. By providing these amenities, the area might become attractive for the local rowing teams and seasonal regattas.

The Town should consider using this area to create a space that could be enjoyed by residents. This would build a sense of community making this a destination for people in the Town. For instance, the Town might work with local artists and historians to create a sculpture garden reflecting historic events and figures. Events and local figures that might be considered for inclusion can be found in the signage history section of this report. If the amenities listed above are added, this space might be utilized for farm and craft markets that could aid in strengthening the local truck farms.

The MRCP should consider expanding its current annual River Fest at the Town Park to include events and activities scheduled at hub points along the trail length, encouraging attendees to explore the trail system.

**Signage**

- The No Trespassing signage could be removed from the outer fence and gates at the water treatment facility and signage added for a trail loop to views of the water. Additional trail blazers should be added as necessary to ensure users are aware of the trail.

- Trail spur and scenic view signs should be added to mark the trails on either side of the Delphus Kill and the trail spur to the hills behind the sewage treatment facilities. Additional fishing signage should be added to the trail spur on the west side of the Delphus Kill.

- Directional signage and trail blazers should be added to the trail connection along the National Grid easement to Pollock Road.

- An interpretive sign marking the Forts Ferry crossing and its role in the Revolutionary war might be placed near the parking area on Forts Ferry Road.

- Interpretive signage could be placed beside the existing bench and at the viewsheds. Subjects covered might include: wetlands, history of the Twin Bridges, geological formations, and ice harvesting.
• Recreational amenities and parking signage should be added to Forts Ferry Road at locations to be determined by a transportation engineer to highlight the recreational opportunities between the Town treatment facilities. In addition, interpretive signage could be added to the sculpture garden.

**Special Projects**

**Highlight the Importance of Town Public Works’ Projects**

The Town could establish interpretive signage which highlights the importance of the Town’s public works, including the water and sewage treatment facilities, and explains the history, mechanics and everyday benefits of the facilities. This will also help to redirect visitors’ perceptions of the industrial public works’ facilities away from being an eye-sore and towards the benefits provided.

**Land Use Recommendations**

Section Two contains a significant amount of constrained land. Additional development in this section would have adverse affects on the environmental features of the section. The land in Section Two is made up almost exclusively of floodplains, wetlands, bogs, steep slopes and the Delphus Kill Gorge. Horizontal erosion is occurring naturally in certain places but also on slopes that have been compromised due to building and gravel mining. Removing trees and vegetation will increase erosion. Building within the area will compromise the hydrologic capabilities of the area, increasing the frequency of runoff events, erosion and flooding hazards. However, development is continuing on the hillsides of Shaker Bay. Land within this development also includes wooded wetland areas.

In addition to adhering to any broader, region-wide land use recommendations made in this report, specific recommendations are given that apply to the management of stormwater runoff and the costs of weed control in Section Two.

• Consider a dock assessment fee to offset costs for dredging and weed control.

• Consider a stormwater assessment for new housing developments to cover the costs of MS4 stormwater management control operation and maintenance costs.

• The use of chemical fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides should be limited in this section.
• Homeowners should be encouraged to keep rain gardens and indigenous vegetation rather than lawns and non-native plant species with large areas of exposed soil and mulch.

• Future construction should be discouraged in the area around Shaker Bay and redirected to areas south of Pollock Road.

The Town might consider purchasing land from Guptills, neighboring the sewage treatment plant for either fee based or free mountain biking trails and courses. Mountain biking courses within the Capital Region are limited, and this area could provide an opportunity to host competition events, increasing visitors to Colonie.

If purchased outright or if an easement were to be acquired, there are numerous opportunities for the currently vacant parcels located adjacent to the west side of the wastewater treatment facility. This area may be used in the future as a park with a hand powered boat launch, or ultimately as a small marina to service Town users.
Section Three Recommendations

Physical Access Improvements

Twin Bridges

The area underneath the Twin Bridges of I-87 is a solid access point for fishing, non-motorized boat access, and waterfront activities. The area underneath the bridge is flat and ideal for permitting such activities. However, the area is low-lying and is highly susceptible to flooding. Any signage potentially associated with this area should provide such information. The spot is accessible by car on Island View Road and by the Bike-Hike shared roadway segment. Parking for five or six cars could be developed on the east side of the bridge. It could also be established further south on Island View Road where a clearing has been maintained since the construction of I-87. All parking lots in this section should utilize pervious surfaces and ecological buffer strips (comprised of native plants) in order to offset stormwater runoff. From the proposed east side parking a relatively gradual path would bring individuals to the flat plane of the underpass. This path could include a rail system that would assist in boat portaging.

Marina District

The Town should create a Marina District encompassing the area between the active commercial marina and the old abandoned Marina on Route 9. There are two possible alternatives for public access along Schaffer Drive. Through the use of the New York State Canal Corporation and Town of Colonie properties, the Town could develop opportunities for residents to enjoy the waterfront in a charming communal setting. Non-motorized boat access could be offered in this area as well. Any parking added should use pervious surfaces and ecological buffer strips.

- **Alternative One:** It is recommended that the Town utilize the 22 acre Canal Corporation property that straddles Schaffer Drive for parking and waterfront access in the form of a pocket park. The south side portion of the property could serve as a parking lot.

- **Alternative Two:** The Town could also expand on Alternative One and utilize the 22 acre Canal Corporation property along with the half acre Town owned property on the north side of Schaffer Drive. This would allow for both parking and waterfront access in the form of a pocket park providing more flexibility on how the space can be used.
The Town Park

The Town Park should encourage more usage by increasing the hours and dates of operation. Increasing access to the Town Park will help position it as a destination for residents of the Town. The main competition for the Town Park comes from other Town owned facilities, such as The Crossings and the new North Colonie Sports Complex, that provide free parking and use to residents. The review and amendment of park operating policies and procedures should incorporate public input through the use of surveys. Funding for the Town Park should correspond with any increased hours of operation.

It is recommended that a trail be created using the 50 foot easement at the northernmost point of the Town Park. The path would connect Loudon Road (Route 9) and the upper section of the Town Park. Using the 50 foot easement as an access point may call for a connection from the north of the park to the amenities in the south end. A new parking area on Loudon Road would facilitate the casual walker or biker to use the more secluded part of the Town Park. If various camping amenities were to be added to the north end of the Town Park—as part of a region-wide water trail—such access would serve water trail users as well.

Visual Access

This area contains many sensitive ecological areas. The proposed projects in this area will provide new opportunities for visual access to the Mohawk River. Brush cutting to create viewsheds is not recommended in this area.

Improved Trail Connections

Parkside Estates Subdivision Trail

The proposed 29 acre, 38 lot subdivision located off of Dunsbach Ferry Road has incorporated a proposed bypass that would allow a cyclist to avoid the dangerous area where the Bike-Hike Trail currently shares the roadway along Dunsbach Ferry Road. It is recommended that this bypass be established in order to minimize pedestrian and automobile conflicts.

Marina District Pedestrian Corridor & Bike Loop

The Town of Colonie should develop a more pedestrian friendly corridor along Schaffer Drive and Schermerhorn Road. As the Town upgrades each section of road it should make use of the right-of-way and create a multi-use pedestrian lane. Appropriate signage and traffic calming measures should be incorporated as well. This modification to existing roads would encourage local residents to walk to the Town Park, provide visual access to the waterfront, physical access to the
proposed Marina District pocket park, and add to the overall scenic quality of the neighborhood.

Section Three: Proposed Land Use

The Town Park

The Town of Colonie’s existing easement at the north end of the Town Park should be developed into a multi-use trail. However, because the setting of the northern end of the Town Park is remote in nature, an overly developed paved trail would be inappropriate. The trail should specifically cater to foot traffic and water trail users.

Amenities

The proposed Twin Bridges access location should provide a multi-use hand rail system. It would serve as a walkway railing for the general public while also assisting those who are carrying non-motorized water craft. The railing would be on both sides of the trail and the top would consist of a soft material in order to protect the craft being dragged over it. A strict “carry in, carry out” policy should be enforced; therefore, trash cans at this site would be unnecessary.

The proposed Marina District Park on Schaffer Drive should provide visitors with picnic tables to promote day use and provide residents with a place to enjoy the setting. Bike racks should be installed in order to promote pedestrian access and use. Trash cans and restrooms should be provided for park users.
Parking

Eventually the Town should consider removing the fees associated with Parking at the Town Park to better allow trail users to access the Mohawk River waterfront.

Special Projects

Bridge to Bridge Ramble

It is recommended that the Town of Colonie develop a "Bridge to Bridge Ramble" (hereafter referred to as the Ramble). The Ramble would allow one to walk/ride from I-87's Twin Bridges to Route 9's Crescent Bridge. The path would follow along the proposed pedestrian friendly upgrades on Schaffer Road, then along already existing paths and roads within the Town Park. A proposed new trail would run parallel to the Mohawk waterfront, leading trail users to the Town Park's northern boundary. The Town of Colonie should ensure that any new developments along this route have a minimum 50’ setback from the Mohawk River. This setback would help the Town achieve stormwater management goals by preserving the vital riparian buffer zone. Simultaneously, the Town should develop a public access trail parallel to the Mohawk River waterfront and the protected riparian buffer zone, which could connect to the Town Park waterfront trail. The trail could end at the proposed Freddie's Park/Crescent Bridge public access and gateway project. All trails should be designed to incorporate Best Management Practice (BMP) stormwater designs and should be well set back from the Mohawk River's riparian zone (see page 51 for more information on this park encompassing Sections Three and Four).

Land Use Recommendations

A preliminary open space inventory for Section Three reveals a large amount of public land, agricultural parcels, and woodlands. These open spaces contain waterways, ridgelines, waterfronts, river islands, steep slopes, floodplains and the like. Because of the diverse nature of both the landscape and open space, coupled with the section’s overall importance to the ecological health of the Mohawk River, the following land use suggestions should become incorporated into an overall Town open space/green infrastructure plan and/or strategy. The goal of such a plan would help to further inventory vital ecosystems and important natural features for preservation and recreation purposes.

It is recommended that prominent ridgelines within the Mohawk River Valley viewshed be preserved. Preserving ridgelines will help to mitigate erosion and stormwater runoff, and preserve the rural character of the region.
The neighborhood associated with the intersection of Island View Road, Dunsbach Ferry Road, and Schaffer Drive is small and quaint. The existing marina on Schaffer Drive also serves as an identifiable link for the community. These unique qualities of this neighborhood should be preserved. The Town of Colonie should adopt special zoning standards specific to this Marina District. Higher density lot sizes and small minimum setbacks should be permitted. Accessory uses should include small home business and eateries. Multiple housing types (i.e. two-family, three-family, etc.) should be permitted in this area in order to provide housing options for a diverse range of income. Architectural design standards should be adopted in order to promote a more unified theme. The Town should conduct an assessment of this area for the feasibility of this project as it is located within a floodplain. A site plan review should also focus on mitigating stormwater through best management standards.

The Town should also consider purchasing all or at least a portion of the undeveloped lands to north of the Town Park. The property then could be managed as a wilderness tract within a conservation district. If the Town were to buy only a portion, they should focus on preserving sections along the waterfront.

The land to the west of Route 9 near the Crescent Bridge may not be suitable for the type of development intended under the Neighborhood Commercial Office Retail/Commercial Office Retail zoning designations. At the very least, the Town should stipulate that developers set aside a large portion of any waterfront—as part of a greater open space strategy/green infrastructure plan—for both public access for the Bridge to Bridge Ramble and a shoreline ecological buffer strip (comprised of native plants). Furthermore, creative design standards should be adopted to offset stormwater runoff (such as bioretention systems and green roofs).
Section Four Recommendations

Physical Access Improvements

Freddie’s Park

Freddie’s Park is confined to a small space but this small space has great potential for becoming a more vibrant community asset. One of the greatest changes that could be implemented at this site would be to increase fishing access. As described in the Special Projects Section of this report, Freddie’s Park could be linked up with the area west of the Crescent Bridge (please see page 51 for more information). With this set up, Freddie’s Park could be a designated fishing area with the adjacent property used as a canoe and kayak launch. This would also include a fishing deck which would make the fishing area more accessible. This area could also be enhanced with a more detailed landscaping plan. The Mohawk River should be the focal point, with the placement of signs and benches reinforcing this focus. Invasive plants should be removed. A trash can and recycling bin should be placed at the parking facility.

Crescent Dam

This spot would be an excellent recreational stop and/or starting point if a proposed bike path were to be implemented. Although the point is limited to a small portion of land there is an opportunity to improve access with the adjacent land that is owned by the Canal Corporation. This point might not be the best access point for boats as the water discharged from the plant and dam increase the Mohawk River’s current. This area could be used as a picnic and bird watching area. There are very scenic views from this point looking south down the River so this area should be limited to picnicking and more passive uses. Access at this point should be thoroughly evaluated in order to provide the safest possible access while allowing the public to enjoy the views.
Improved Trail Connections

To improve access to the various parks and recreational locations in Section Four, the Town should consider the following enhancements. A new bike path should be created off of Cohoes Crescent Road and will need to be located on the landfill property which is on the west side of Cohoes Crescent Road. This Bike-Hike Trail would begin off of Cohoes Crescent Road, near the intersection of Route 9. There is no room on Cohoes Crescent Road to add a bike lane as there is very limited land mass on the east side of the road adjacent to the River. This bike path will need to be routed around a designated wetland on the landfill property which includes portions of the original Erie Canal. This will allow bicyclers and walkers access at this end of the new trail.

To enhance access and connectivity of this path, the Town should consider links to the existing Bike-Hike Trail from the new path off Cohoes Crescent Road. A connection could be made from Cohoes Crescent Road via Fonda Road. The Fonda Road Bike Route would allow for a connection through the Development at Winding Creek Road to the Bike-Hike Trail. A linkage of the Cohoes Crescent Path through the City of Cohoes should also be considered. The Town should consider working with the City of Cohoes to use existing streets and connections in the City of Cohoes to connect again to the Bike-Hike Trail on Manor Avenue in Cohoes.

Section Four: Proposed Land Use

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Mohawk River Public Access Plan
University at Albany- Planning Studio
The Manor Avenue/Boght Road connection is important to meeting the Town of Colonie's goal of Bike-Hike Trail access to the Boght Road ball field and the soccer complexes off of Route 9. This connection would allow for families to access the ball field and soccer complexes without a car as the main mode of transportation. This concept would create a win-win situation for both the Town of Colonie and the City of Cohoes.

Another goal that the Town should consider when the time is appropriate is the development of a path directly from the Bike-Hike Trail to the Boght Road ball fields. Currently, there is undeveloped land behind the parcels facing Route 9 below Fonda Road. The Town should keep in mind that access directly from the Bike-Hike Trail in this area would allow for increased access by children and families, the Town should seek easements from developers for the creation of a new path.

In addition to this, the Town should consider implementing traffic calming measures on Route 9 to make it safer for bikers. Route 9 is currently a New York State Bike Route but the current traffic speed on the road is not conducive to its usage as a bike route. Cars often travel in excess of the already-high 55 mph speed limit, making the road unsafe for experienced and novice bikers alike. The DEIS Land Use and Transportation Update: Boght Road-Columbia Street report, produced by Creighton Manning Engineering for the Town in August of 2005 estimated that the traffic volume on Route 9 had increased by 5,000 to 6,000 vehicles per day since their original study in 1989. The Town of Colonie Comprehensive Plan mentions a wide variety of traffic calming measures that the Town should implement on Route 9 to increase bicycle and pedestrian use.

**Amenities**

Currently, there are few amenities offered within Section Four. As suggested in the Amenities Recommendations Section, benches and picnic tables should be put at Freddie’s Park to accommodate visitors. Waste and recycling receptacles and restroom facilities are also desirable. As suggested in the Section Four recommendations for physical access improvements, the placement of benches and other amenities should not detract from the River, as the main focal point. As proposed in the Signage Recommendations section, amenity and service signage is essentially non-existent along the Bike-Hike Trail. More accommodations should be implemented in this area with the appropriate signage.

**Parking**

Parking at Freddie’s Park may be reconfigured to enable additional vehicle parking. In addition, parking at some of the existing informal parking areas along Crescent Road can be formalized to provide additional spaces and access to the
Mohawk River for fishing. Finally, as the Crescent Dam Park area located at Crescent Dam is improved, parking should be incorporated into the design.

**Special Projects**

**Town Landfill**

The current Town of Colonie landfill has a life expectancy of approximately 15 years. Discussions with landfill staff revealed that the Town is already considering what other communities have done to reuse their landfill. Once the landfill is closed it will be used as a limited low-impact use park. Reusing the land as a public park would protect much of the wildlife that lives in the community. Various birds and geese (i.e. sand pipers and killdeer) thrive in this area because of the ideal habitat. This planned reuse of the landfill works hand in hand with a Cohoes Crescent Bike Trail and would provide optimum reuse of this area given its sensitive environmental consideration.

**Signage**

An effort should be made to place signage markers at the gateway between the Town of Colonie and the City of Cohoes as well as at the informal access points on the trail in this area from the housing developments. Currently there is no signage on the trail telling people when they are entering or exiting the Town of Colonie at the border between Colonie and the City of Cohoes. Additionally an effort should be made to clean up graffiti that was observed in this area, on the entry gates to the trail and in the tunnel under Route 9, near the Fonda Road access point, and on the pavement near the entry gates.

**Land Use Recommendations**

The landfill is one of the dominant features in this section. As such, future land use recommendations have to take into account possible reuse of the site to benefit the Mohawk waterfront once it has reached capacity and is capped. Also prominent is the Crescent Dam access area which currently provides excellent viewing opportunities, but could certainly be improved to draw more people to the River’s edge. This section also possesses significant areas of wetlands that are an asset to the Town and the ecological stability of the watershed. In this area the Town should:

- Look for viable ways to protect wetlands while providing greater recreational opportunities
- Examine possible reuse of the landfill as a park or other recreational purpose
- Expand public access to Crescent Dam area by acquiring adjacent Canal Corporation property and creating a park
- Develop an area wide comprehensive plan for island management in this section
SPECIAL PROJECTS

Water Trail/Island Accessibility

In March of 2006, Governor George Pataki announced $1.5 million in funding for revitalization of the Erie Canal, which includes the creation of an Erie Canal Greenway Water Trail. The goal of the greenway is to create a network of put-ins and take-outs, campsites, and various other amenities for non-motorized boat users to make use of while paddling along the Mohawk River. The program allows for informational and educational kiosks and signage to help identify and define the trail, and provides matching grant programs for engaged communities.

It is recommended that the Town aggressively pursue funding for the development of their part of an Erie Canal Greenway Water Trail. The water trail vision is consistent with the goals of the Town in creating a more usable waterfront. Many of the recommendations within this report are complementary to the water trail concept. As an example, many of the proposed public access points along the waterfront have been primarily centered on non-motorized watercraft. Finally, both the goals of New York State and those of the Town of Colonie can complement one another, providing Colonie the opportunity of using state funds to unite the region.

The nature of non-motorized craft—particularly kayaks and canoes—allows for simple access opportunities. Most kayak and canoe enthusiasts are accustomed to portaging their respective vessels. Therefore there is no need for elaborate docks, piers, and boat ramps. It is also worth mentioning that where one starts their journey on a water trail is not necessarily where they will return. Many long distance canoers and kayakers will get dropped off at one location, and picked up at another. Other water trail users will have their vehicle “shuttled” to the end destination by someone else, or they will leave a vehicle at one end of their trip, only to return to the beginning to pick up the vehicle at the point of origin. With that said, there are three key components to the water trail: access in the form of parking and identifiable put-ins and take-outs, camping opportunities, and interpretive signage.

Access

Parking—Parking, put-in and take-out points should be clearly identified as such.
Parking should be within a reasonable distance from the water access point. As water trail users can partake in multiple overnight trips, overnight parking should be permitted on a first come first serve basis. The Town should adopt a strict carry in and carry out policy for trash within the parking areas.

*Put-in & Take-out*—Many put-in and take-out points can be rudimentary in design for water trail users: natural shorelines, grassy clearings, and existing or proposed boat launches. Nevertheless, the Town could provide additional features along trails from parking areas to access points that incorporate designs to make carrying a canoe or kayak easier (e.g. shallow steps, railing designs that allow individuals to slide their craft along, as opposed to carrying, etc.) It is recommended that the Town develop a more elaborate put-in and take-out at the proposed Crescent Bridge Park, as the centerpiece of the Town of Colonie’s water trail. Design considerations should take into account that canoes and kayaks are low to the water, and any landing site should have minimal environmental impact.

As part of the Erie Canal Greenway, and an overall region-wide water trail, it is recommended that the larger, northernmost island in the Mohawk River be utilized as a “primitive” camping and day use site. Although the water trail could extend all the way to Crescent Island in Section Four, we do not recommend primitive camping be established on Crescent Island. There are safety concerns due to the Crescent Dam Power Facility and proximity to the Cohoes Falls. All campsite design and use regulations should be in accordance with minimal impact standards. Prior to any action, a full environmental impact analysis should be conducted to establish and inventory any sensitive ecological niches. If it is concluded that the island could not support human interaction because of environmental constraints, then another location for water trail campsites should be pursued.

**Camping Opportunities**

It is recommended that the Town develop water trail user campsites, designed and managed with “minimal impact” standards. Possible camping opportunities include the larger north island by the Crescent Bridge, behind the Interpretive Center or a segregated remote section of the Town Park. A strict carry in, carry out trash policy should be enforced at any campsite. Site considerations should include an evaluation of soils, habitat niches, public safety, and accessibility.

**Demarcating & Interpretive Signage**

Demarcating and interpretive signage is a crucial component for any water trail. Signage provides information regarding campsite, put-in, take-out, distances from one point to the next, and parking locations. Signage informs water trail users of local regulations regarding camping and parking. Interpretive signage should be placed at access points that tell visitors about local ecology, history, and special
points of interest. It is also recommended that any signage be compatible with an established signage policy.

**Crescent Bridge**

The proposed link between New York State Canal Corporation land to the west of the Crescent Bridge and Freddie’s Park to the east would require an under the bridge trail. Such a trail should complement the Town of Halfmoon’s design at the other end of the bridge. Design considerations should compensate for individuals carrying or portaging with wheeled attachments for non-motorized water craft. However, the use of ecological buffer strips (comprised of native plants) should be incorporated to mitigate the entire area’s potential stormwater runoff.

It is recommended that the Town of Colonie create a gateway park by joining New York State Canal Corporation property on the west side of the Crescent Bridge and Freddie’s Park on the east side (please see Section Four Recommendations on page 44 for enhancements to Freddie’s Park). A connection would be created under the bridge though the use of bulkheads and fill. A full environmental analysis should be conducted prior to ensure ecological health of the River. Any significant historical remnant of the original Erie Canal Aqueduct should be preserved and incorporated into the design. The expanded Freddie’s Park allows for increased utilization of this space, expansion of amenities and increased usability. The Canal Corporation property on the west side of the bridge would serve as an access point to the Mohawk River for non-motorized boats and a rest room. Additional parking could be located here. Freddie’s Park on the east side of the bridge would remain a location for fishing. Parking should use pervious surfaces where feasible and ecological buffer strips (comprised of native plants) should be placed along the shoreline in order to mitigate stormwater runoff.

The proposed Crescent Bridge Park would be the main launch site for the proposed water trail explained in more detail on page 49.
Signage Recommendations

Creating a comprehensive signage strategy is one of the most important aspects of strengthening the usability and enjoyment of the Colonie Mohawk waterfront. In general, the term signage encompasses an array of functionalities including: regulations, warnings, directions and distances, services and amenities, and interpretive. This report outlines general recommendations for the creation of a signage strategy that can be applied consistently when projects reach fruition.

Directional Signage to the Waterfront

Currently, the Town of Colonie has some directional signage throughout the Town leading to the Town Park. Of note is the lack of signage directing users to the Bike-Hike Trail and its associated amenities. For example, Forts Ferry Road contains one sign directing users to the Town Park but contains no signage to the closer Bike-Hike Trail or parking locations.

Although there is some directional signage to historical locations such as the Pruyn House and the Shaker Sites, there is no directional signage to other notable historical locations in the Town, such as the Old Erie Canal.

Bike-Hike Trail Signage Inventory

An inventory of existing signage on the Bike-Hike Trail revealed that signage consists mainly of regulatory and warning signs posted at the gated entrances, for example: stop signs, no motorized vehicles, park closes at dusk, leash law, and path regulations. There is a general lack of consistency and maintenance regarding the signs located upon the entrance gates. No trespassing signage is also posted at Town facilities and private property located next to the Bike-Hike Trail. Rectangular signs are located periodically along the Bike-Hike Trail, including at the Delphus Kill. These signs are in disrepair, with several bullet holes in the Bike-Hike Trail sign at the Delphus Kill. Bridge warning signs are located on either side of the Shaker Creek Bridge; but stream name plaques are notably absent.

Directional and distance markers are limited; between the municipal border with the Town of Niskayuna and the connection with Island View Road, only one directional marker was discovered. This directional is bent sideways, has peeling and faded paint, and the directions are mostly illegible due to weatherization. Similar conditions were noted between Island View Road and Cohoes Crescent Road. There is a general lack of directional signage at all entrance and exit points along the trail. A few informal unpaved trail entrances mostly in the Town Park, near the football field, main entrance, and new housing developments have no signage providing directions for those getting on and off the trail.
The directional signs are inconsistent as to which places are deemed important, as well as in design and placement. Several local organizations are responsible for the existing signs, resulting in discontinuity in design, color, logo, and message.

There is a wide range of graffiti on the pavement of the trail as well as the tunnel walls of the underpass under Route 9. Most of the pavement graffiti appears to be spray painted distance markers, created and used by runners.

Amenity and service signage is also notably absent from the trail. No signage was discovered along the Bike-Hike Trail providing information on restrooms, boat launches, bird watching, scenic outlooks, or other recreational activities. The survey revealed no interpretive markers of notable spots along the trail, for example none of the creeks or streams are named; none of the historic ferry crossing points are marked; and the original section of the Erie Canal is not marked.

Moreover, the interpretive signage kiosks near the old water treatment plant entrance and at Freddie’s Park are outdated and uninformative; the map at the old water treatment plant contains only numbers and no explanatory text.

Lastly, there is inconsistency in the naming convention of the trail. It is known as the Mohawk Hudson Bike-Hike Trail but signs at some of the access points reference the trail as the Crescent Trailway and it is also referred to as the Bike Path, the Bike-Hike Trail and the Bike-Hike Trail.

**Historical Interpretive Signage**

The Town is rich in history, which can be conveyed through interpretive signage along the Bike-Hike Trail, at the proposed Interpretive Center at the old water treatment plant off River Road, and at other appropriate locations. Subjects for interpretive signage might include:

- Native American history and culture.
- Dutch exploration and settlement, including Henry Hudson’s voyage and the Van Rensselaers.
- The British colonial era, the French and Indian War, and the American Revolution.
- Agricultural history.
• Transportation history, including Dunsbach Ferry and Forts Ferry, the Erie Canal, and the Troy and Schenectady Railroad.
• The Watervliet Shaker settlement.

General Signage Recommendations

The purpose of traffic control devices and other signage is to promote safety, provide for orderly movement of users, supply relevant information on amenities and services available to users, and increase education and enjoyment. However, signage in large quantities can have the opposite effects. When users are overwhelmed with large numbers of signs it has been determined that signage will be ignored, posing safety risks. Large numbers of signs create a cluttered visual effect, as well as increasing maintenance time and cost. It is recommended that the locating of regulatory and warning signage that potentially affects public safety receive precedence over all other signage considerations.

When determining signage requirements, the Town might consider the maintenance requirements. This study recommends an annual sign inspection program to review signs for deterioration and vandalism. Signage which is illegible, deteriorated, and/or vandalized can lead to public perceptions that the path is unsafe, unimportant, and a crime area.

The Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) standards and guidelines is the national standard for all traffic control devices. Under the 1966 Highway Safety Act, all traffic control devices on all streets and highways open to the public must be in substantial conformance with these standards. Any signage which does not conform to these standards is ineligible for Federal and New York State funding.

All regulatory, warning, on road directional, service, and recreational signage recommended within this study should follow the MUTCD standards. As members of the general public are familiar with the MUTCD signage, this study recommends that the MUTCD standards are used for all regulatory and warning Bike-Hike Trail signage, regardless of funding source, to facilitate comprehension and ensure safety.

Although this study recommends consulting the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities for the Bike-Hike and other recreational trails, all other signage designs may be determined by the Town in consultation with funding agencies or groups. To this end, the Town of Colonie could seek funding to undertake a signage strategy to determine signage design standards, priorities, and policies which can be consistently applied. The Signage Strategy Committee should involve stakeholders within the Town of Colonie and in the Capital District to
determine and work toward creating a unified message to the community about the Bike-Hike Trail and its place in both the Town’s history as well as that of New York State.

Although signage siting recommendations are made within this report, all final siting determinations for traffic control signage should only be made after consultation with a licensed transportation engineer.

**Bike-Hike Trail Name Recommendations**

As noted within the existing conditions, the name applied to the Bike-Hike Trail varies. This study recommends that one name should be considered and used consistently throughout the Town both in all signage and documentation. Ideally, the name would be chosen in consultation with the Capital District Transportation Committee and other stakeholders to ensure continuity throughout the regional trail system and regional maps.

**On-Road Signage Recommendations/Directional Signage**

The Town could maintain its current sign conventions regarding signs directing people to the Town Park and the Bike-Hike Trail. Current signage could be supplemented with additional Bike-Hike Trail directional signage along the Route 7 corridor and Forts Ferry Road and signs for Freddie’s Park and the Crescent Dam Park along Route 9 and Cohoes Crescent Road. As the Town grows, or as new projects such as the Mohawk River Interpretive Center, Marina District Park, and the reuse of the underutilized marina reach fruition, directional signage requirements might be reviewed for new needs.

The Town might also consider providing directional signage to notable historical locations, such as the Old Erie Canal. The most important aspect is that all signage should be consistent, if the Town adopts a new type of directional signage to the trail, old signage should be replaced to ensure consistency, following MUTCD requirements.

Signs directing users to parking might be located within 500 feet of all parking locations. Parking signage should be prominently displayed at all parking locations and handicapped spots designated as appropriate.

**Regulatory Signage on the Bike-Hike Trail**

An inventory of regulatory signage posted at each Bike-Hike Trail entrance gate is attached as Appendix B. The Town might review current regulatory signage for applicability and add, remove, or consolidate signage as appropriate to ensure legibility and a consistent message at all path entrance points.
No trespassing signage located on the outer gates at the Town facilities location might be removed and replaced with directional signage if a bike loop is created here and/or the police skid pad is shared for parking during non-work hours.

**Gateway Kiosks on the Bike-Hike Trail**

The information contained within the wooden kiosks located at Town border with Niskayuna, the Town Park entrance and Freddie’s Park is outdated. The Town might remove the signage and consider replacing both the signage and the kiosks with more streamlined models, such as the Canal Corporation three sided kiosk. An additional kiosk might be added at the Town border with the City of Cohoes. The kiosk design should be consistent to provide a unified look throughout. Kiosk signage might include maps of the entire trail system, historical information about the trail, and a “Welcome to the Town of Colonie” section providing information on amenities, trail links and historical sites located on the Bike-Hike Trail and within the Town. For additional recommended signage see Appendix B.

**Directional/Distance Signage on the Bike-Hike Trail**

The current MUTCD standard green and white rectangular bike route signs located randomly along the Bike-Hike Trail might be replaced with trail blazers, containing a logo, color and shape uniquely linked to the trail and designed either by the Town or a regional partnership of area stakeholders. Trail blazers could be placed periodically along the Bike-Hike Trail, upon all trail spurs and connections, at all turns, and at sufficient spacing to ensure that users can follow the trails.

The Town might consider removing and replacing as needed all existing directional signage to correct distance and destination inconsistencies, disrepair, and inconsistent design elements. It is recommended that directional signage, displaying significant destinations and their respective distances within the regional trail and the Town of Colonie, be located at all trail entrances and exits, including: at parking entrance points; intersections with roads, intersections with trail connections, and at park entrances. The Town might consider linking the choice of directional signage color and design to the trail blazer design standards to create a uniform, easily recognizable and coherent appearance.
Restroom and Recreational amenity directional signage could be located with other directionals and within 500 feet of the said amenity.

Existing mile markers might be removed and replaced. It is recommended that markers be placed at least every 1/2 mile. Placing markers every 1/10 mile would aid runners and reduce spray painting but this could lead to a cluttered trail and maintenance issues. An effort should be made to remove existing graffiti. In determining mileage, it is recommended that the Town work with the Capital District Transportation Committee and regional communities to establish a standardized start and end point. This would aid trail users who traverse the path though several municipalities.

**Historic Interpretive Signage on the Bike-Hike Trail**

It is recommended that the Town establish a historic advisory subcommittee as a part of the signage strategy. While not inclusive, this subcommittee might be composed of the Town Historian, the Colonie Historical Society, the Shaker Heritage Society, Friends of Pruyn House, Mohawk Valley Heritage Corridor, Mohawk Scenic Byway Towpath, New York State Canal Corporation, New York State Office of Parks and Recreation, and the Mohawk River Greenway. This subcommittee would be responsible for determining the events and locations of special significance, designing the interpretive materials, and setting standard sign conventions that will apply if future sites of historical importance are discovered. By continuing to create signage in the same framework and design, the Town can develop a cohesive signage program that gives users the feeling that they are on a larger, connected network. To this end, the Town might consider utilizing the same artist and sign conventions employed at The Crossings Park.

This study recommends that interpretive signs are placed at all discrete historical event locations, such as at the fort at Shakers Creek, the original ferry crossing points, and the site of the original Erie Canal. Historic events or activities which occurred within the Colonie Mohawk River frontage, the Bike-Hike Trail, or River Road might be placed beside benches in viewsheds. Events and activities which might warrant attention include:

- The Schenectady Massacre and Schermerhorn’s ride along River Road.
- The history of the ice harvesting industry and the ice house.
- The history of the Twin Bridges and the Crescent Bridge.
- The Dewitt-Clinton Railroad
- Ferry crossing points: Forts, Dunsbach, Vischer, and Loudon
Historic and interpretive information which does not link directly to the riverfront might be located within the new Mohawk River Interpretive Center at the old water treatment plant to prevent the trail from becoming too cluttered and reduce maintenance costs and upkeep. Because the Shaker sites are farther away from the riverfront, we recommend that Shaker history become part of the proposed Interpretive Center instead of having signage along the Bike-Hike Trail. Along with information about the Shakers, information about the history of the River and the Mohican Indian life could also be located at the Mohawk River Interpretive Center.

**Ecological, Geological, and Industrial Signage on the Bike-Hike Trail**

The following interpretive signage is recommended for possible inclusion on the Bike-Hike Trail:

- Creek Names
- Identification of bird and fish species at the Boardwalk
- Information on the formation of a kettlehole bog
- Identification of wetland flora
- Information on the function of wetlands
- Water and sewage treatment facility functions
Parking Recommendations

There are approximately 15 individual public parking areas within the study area supporting access to the Mohawk River and the Bike-Hike Trail. The majority of these areas provide informal vehicle parking at unpaved pull-offs on the shoulders of roads paralleling the Bike-Hike Trail. Current zoning laws do not have many restrictions pertaining to parking areas near the River, parks or Bike-Hike Trail. The zoning laws do require that there should be two spaces per acre for parks, one space per slip and one per employee for marinas. If more formalized parking were established, it would be required to conform to the Federal Americans with Disabilities Act. Decision-making regarding the construction of new impervious surfacing within the watershed of the Mohawk River, including formalized parking areas, should seek to limit stormwater runoff entering the system. Any opportunities to reduce or capture stormwater at these sites should be incorporated into any formalization of parking.

The following is a description of the parking areas, both formal and informal. The parking areas are divided into the four different geographical areas. Although attempts have been made to identify all parking spaces within the trail system, the creation of informal spaces by users of the Bike-Hike Trail makes identification of all spaces difficult. Moreover, due to the informal nature of these parking spaces, rough estimates concerning size and the number of spaces have been made. These estimates are based on a parking space of 9 feet wide and 20 feet long.
Parking Area 1

Parking Area 1 is located off River Road, approximately 2,000 feet east of the intersection of Vly Road on the west side of the former Town water treatment facility. To access the parking area, drivers heading east must turn left off of River Road and continue approximately 300 feet down the narrow, 14 foot wide asphalt driveway to an open asphalted area approximately 25 feet by 40 feet. The parking area is designated by wooden bollards, although there is no indication that this area is authorized parking for the Bike-Hike Trail. The parking area is bordered on the east by a wet lawn that is associated with the old water treatment plant. While no wetland vegetation is observable, this grassy area shows evidence of both surface and pore water conveyance. Immediately east of the parking area, the grassy area slopes down and away from the asphalt creating a shallow depressed area. There is no striping to formalize parking spaces, and the tight radius associated with the eastern most section of the asphalt parking lot may result in the space being underutilized if larger vehicles are parked in the center of the lot. At present, it appears that not more than four vehicles could comfortably utilize the overall space.

Recommended improvements to Parking Area 1 include establishing formalized parking spaces by striping the asphalt. If expanded parking is necessary at this location, the parking area could be expanded by up to 25 feet east of its present location by filling and paving some of the adjacent grassland. Due to the wet conditions, careful engineering would be necessary to avoid slumping. This improvement may result in additional parking for three to four vehicles.

In addition, it may be possible to fill and pave some of the existing grassy area on the east side of the road up to 100 feet from the existing parking area, and up to 15 feet from the edge of the road. This may expand available parking by as much as three times the current capacity.

Parking Area 2

Parking Area 2 is located on the west side of the old water treatment facility and is accessed from a driveway on River Road, approximately 300 feet east of the driveway for Parking Area 1. This area appears to have served as vehicle parking for the old water treatment facility, and is a formal paved, but not striped, space measuring approximately 25 feet by 20 feet. This area could be utilized by as many as three vehicles if and when the old water treatment facility is reinstated for active public use. No specific alterations would be necessary to utilize this parking area.

In addition, significant opportunities exist to expand parking on the eastern side of the old water treatment facility property, both in front of the storage tanks and
along the eastern side of the building. With appropriate planning, the unpaved section of a sloping dirt and gravel road on the eastern side of the building could be reconfigured to provide parking for as many as 50 vehicles. Due to the sloping nature of this side of the property, if formalized parking were to be established, it would be strongly recommended that stormwater management controls be incorporated into the ultimate engineering designs.

Parking Area 3

Parking Area 3 is located on River Road at the intersection of Burhmaster Road and is an unimproved keyhole area approximately 20 feet in depth and approximately 50 feet wide along the road. There is no specific signage at this location and as an unimproved area, runoff from the road collects in the parking area causing the area to be muddy for several days following rain events. The lack of warning signage on Burhmaster and River Roads indicating the location of the parking area makes exiting dangerous.

Areas for possible expansion exist on the west side of the parking area where non-native vegetation is currently thriving. Clearing this area and formalizing parking with striping and graded fill material may result in the establishment of an additional two parking spaces.

Parking Area 4

Parking Area 4 is located on River Road approximately 1,100 feet east of Burhmaster Road where the road gently curves northeast. The area is approximately 50 feet along the road and approximately 15 feet from the road, making this a shallow area for parking vehicles. Bollards have been placed at the site to keep vehicles from accessing the Bike-Hike Trail which is located approximately 15 feet north from the parking area. Small pockets of non-native vegetation exist between the parking area and the Bike-Hike Trail. This area can provide parking for fewer than three vehicles at any one time.

Due to the limited setback from the road, coupled with the curving nature of River Road, exiting from this parking area is somewhat dangerous. Signage on River Road indicating that there is a parking area ahead is necessary at this location for safety. There is also potential for selective non-native vegetation removal between the parking area and the Bike-Hike Trail. This coupled with relocating the bollards closer to the Bike-Hike Trail may improve the safety of parking at this area, but will likely not increase parking capacity. If in the future additional parking is established at other locations along River Road that can provide access to the Bike-Hike Trail, Parking Area 4 could be phased out.
Parking Area 5

Parking Area 5 is located on River Road approximately 1,880 feet east of Burhmaster Road and 700 feet east of Area 4. The informal parking area is approximately 17 feet deep from the road and approximately 70 feet long then narrowing. The area provides parking for between five and six vehicles.

This site has the potential to be expanded if desired in order to incorporate greater parking. The narrowing effect of this site on the west side could be reduced through excavation of existing soil which may create as many as 2 additional parking spaces. Due to its proximity to sensitive creek habitat, formalization of this area should incorporate best management practices for reducing the effects of stormwater runoff.

Parking Area 6

Parking Area 6 is located on River Road about 2,500 feet east of Buhrmaster Road and 625 feet from Area 5. The useable area for parking at this informal site is roughly 25 feet deep from River Road and approximately 55 feet wide. There is no signage or bollards at this site. Not more than six spaces are available for parking, and due to existing trees on the east side of the area, limited space is available for expansion.

Parking Area 7

Parking Area 7 is located on River Road approximately 4,500 feet east of Buhrmaster Road and about 1,900 feet from Area 6. The area is accessed by driving down a very steep slope from River Road which curves slightly to the right immediately before reaching the parking area. This curve, coupled with the almost sunken nature of this parking area creates blind spots for both drivers on River Road and for anyone exiting the parking area. The area contains space for not more than two vehicles at the same time, and is extremely muddy due to the slope which exacerbates any runoff from the road. This parking area is one of the few that include specific signage indicating that it is to be used for parking for the Bike-Hike Trail.

As the elevation is extremely steep and there is a blind curve nearby, it is strongly recommended that this parking lot should be closed.

Parking Area 8

Parking Area 8 is located on Forts Ferry Road approximately 900 feet north of the intersection with River Road. It is a formalized parking area located within a residential neighborhood and at the intersection of Town’s Bike-Hike Trail and Forts Ferry Road. The parking area is approximately 30 feet along road, and
between 15-20 feet deep located at an angle. There is space for between three and four cars to park safely; however, bike racks on the backs of vehicles tend to stick out into road. While there is signage indicating that the Bike-Hike Trail crosses the road, there is no signage indicating that the area is available for Bike-Hike Trail parking.

There may be opportunity for realignment of vehicle parking at this location, including some minor fill and vegetation clearing to enlarge slightly, not more than 10 square feet in total, the existing parking areas, and establishing striping to reduce the danger of bike racks sticking into the road. If it is determined that this area should be instead removed from use, Parking Area 9 may be used to fill the parking space gap.

Parking Area 9

Parking Area 9 is informal parking along side of Onderdonk Avenue about 1,800 feet northeast of the intersection with Forts Ferry Road in front of the gates of the Town’s current water treatment facility. Popular with local Bike-Hike Trail users, this informal parking is simply a dirt area on the side of the road near where no more than five to six cars can park to access the Bike-Hike Trail which crosses Onderdonk Avenue at that point.

Onderdonk Avenue in this area is underutilized, and with no significant residential uses along this stretch of road, presents an opportunity for increased roadside parking. By simply grading the shoulder area of this road and establishing these areas as parking for the Bike-Hike Trail, it may alleviate existing impacts to nearby areas. The Town might also consider increasing parking within this area by utilizing the Police skid pad in the off hours.

Parking Area 10

The Town Park provides a significant paved parking area both north and south of Schemherhorn Road. The Town Park’s main parking area is located along Wallenberg Boulevard on the north side of Schemerhorn Road and has parking for more than 100 vehicles. However, parking in this area requires a fee, limiting its utility for Bike-Hike Trail parking. On the south side of Schemerhorn Road is a free gravel-paved parking area, approximately 75 feet by 130 feet with parking for approximately twenty five vehicles. The Bike-Hike Trail crosses Schemerhorn Road at this location and is heavily utilized from this parking area.

There are limited opportunities to expand or reconfigure this parking area. However, there may be opportunities to relocate the guardhouse at the fee-paid parking lot in Town Park to enable additional free parking opportunities for the Bike-Hike Trail.
Freddie's Park

Located near the Route 9 Bridge, Freddie’s Park provides ten paved spaces, including one handicapped parking space. The total area currently available for parking is approximately 95 feet by 20 feet, although there is a possibility of some minor expansion to create up to three additional spaces. There is also the opportunity to expand parking in this area with the Crescent Bridge Park plan.

Parking Area A

Parking Area A is an unsigned, informal parking area off Cohoes Crescent Road approximately 770 feet from the intersection of Route 9 and Cohoes-Crescent Road. The area is about 40 feet long by 10 feet deep and may provide area for three to four vehicles. This area may be used for access to fishing.

As this area is only 10 feet deep, if formalized, vehicles would be required to park parallel to the road.

Parking Area B

Parking Area B is an informal parking area located on Cohoes Crescent Road about 2,275 feet from the intersection with Route 9, and 1,500 feet from Area A. The area is approximately 15 feet deep from the road and more than 100 feet long.

If formalized, this area may provide significant parking for fishing access. As this area is only 10 feet deep, if formalized, vehicles would be required to park parallel to the road.

Parking Area C

Located at Cohoes Crescent Dam on Cohoes Crescent Road, Area C is an unpaved parking area which provides between ten and twelve spaces at the Crescent Dam. There is potential to expand parking up to 130 feet by 50 feet at the Dam if this area were to be formalized.

Parking Area D

Signed Bike-Hike Trail parking is located near the corner of Mustang and Fonda Roads. This parking area is located approximately 400 feet from the intersection of Fonda Road. Space for approximately three cars exists at this paved parking area. There are no opportunities for expansion of this parking area.
Additional Parking Recommendations

Establish Parking Standards

Although it may not be advisable to pave and formalize all parking areas, certain standards should be followed.

First, all parking areas should have signs 500 feet on either side of parking areas or at a distance determined by the Town’s traffic engineer to identifying parking. This will also provide warnings to other vehicles and pedestrians that cars will be pulling into and out of spaces.

The New York State Department of Transportation design manual suggests appropriate barriers between parking lots or road areas and bicycle paths if they are contiguous. This barrier is appropriate at the more formalized parking areas.

Consider Parking at Dunsbach Ferry Road Bike-Hike Trail Access

The proposed rerouting of the Bike-Hike Trail from Dunsbach Ferry Road to a separate trail within the Parkside Estates subdivision will result in a section of the existing trail adjacent to Dunsbach Ferry Road being unused. This section should be considered for development of a parking area.

Consider Parking at the Northway Twin Bridges

Parking in the vicinity of the Twin Bridges would be desirable to support the potential for fishing, non-motorized boat access, and waterfront activities beneath the bridges. Parking for five or six cars could be developed on the east side of the bridges. It could also be established further south on Island View Road where a clearing has been maintained since the construction of I-87. All parking lots in this section should utilize pervious surfaces and ecological buffer strips (comprised of native plants) in order to offset stormwater runoff.
Amenities Recommendations

To increase usability for residents, it is important that the Town consider enhancing the existing amenities through the 10.2 mile stretch. Amenities include restroom facilities, benches, waste receptacles, picnic tables and bike racks. The Town should also consider constructing a small boat storage area for kayaks or canoes. The Town could rent space to residents who want to enjoy the River but do not want to have to bring their canoe or kayak a great distance to do so.

Mohawk River Interpretive Center

As outlined in greater detail in Section One, it is recommended that the old water filtration plant located on River Road be adaptively reused as a visitors/heritage center. Upon completion of a feasibility study, the center would be the gateway to the western portion of the Bike-Hike Trail. The building would not only have bathrooms, lockers, and vending machines for path users it would also provide information to residents and visitors of the Town. This Mohawk River Interpretive Center should focus on the nature and history of the Town and can have educational brochures and maps to be distributed to visitors.

Shaker Creek Bridge

Currently, the Shaker Creek Bridge is unwelcoming and detracts from the scenic viewshed that exists on this stretch of the Bike-Hike Trail. The current chain link fence is uninviting and should be removed and be replaced with a more natural wooden railing or style consistent with the Town’s history. The recommended design as seen below would have a shorter less imposing design that enhances the natural beauty of the area. The Shaker Creek Bridge is located at one of the most pristine viewsheds on the Bike-Hike Trail and its design should enhance rather than detract from this area.

Currently the Bike-Hike Trail traverses several waterways besides Shaker Creek, however these are not known to the users of the path. It is recommended that in the future railings with the same design as presented for the Shaker Creek bridge be constructed where the trail crosses those waterways to visually remind people of where they are and that they are crossing water.

Benches

The current benches on the bike trail are inconsistent both in design and location. Some have backs while others do not and many are haphazardly placed along the
trail. The recommendation is for the removal of all current benches and replacement with a universal design that is both aesthetically pleasing, but also durable and long lasting.

The picture to the right is of a sample bench. It is made out of Orcaboard which will not fade or splinter. The benches are made in permanent UV stabilized colors which eliminates the need for painting, staining, waterproofing, stripping and resurfacing. The benches are also resistant to paint, ink, mildew, and other contaminants.

These benches should be located at:
- All designated viewsheds
- Bathroom facilities
- Parking areas (where applicable)
- Parks

Picnic Tables

Currently there are no picnic facilities along the Bike-Hike Trail. Picnic tables are limited to the Town Park. As recommended previously with the replacement of all benches, the same is recommended for the current picnic tables that exist at the Town Park. The Town might also consider adding picnic tables at scenic viewsheds along the Bike-Hike Trail.

The recommended picnic tables are made with similar materials as the previously identified benches. They are maintenance free as well as environmentally friendly, non-toxic, resistant to fading, paint, ink and mildew.

Picnic tables should be located at:
- Mohawk River Interpretive Center
- Passive boat launch located at Shaker Creek
- Parks
- Near all bathroom facilities.

Waste Receptacles

Although certain locations along the trail, such as parking areas and Freddie’s Park, contain waste receptacles, the Town should consider increasing the number of waste receptacles throughout the trail system. Pet waste and litter were
observed at several locations along the Bike-Hike Trail, such as in Section Two. The control of pet waste is important to the Town’s stormwater management program. Providing waste receptacles encourages people not to litter and also contributes to a healthier and more aesthetically pleasant social and recreational environment.

Type of receptacles: All-metal trash receptacle with durable, UV and weather resistant plastic coating or one of similar quality and durability. A coordinating recycling receptacle is also recommended. The receptacles should be mounted to the ground to discourage theft and vandalism.

Location: The trash cans should be located at parking areas and bathroom/vending facilities. This placement allows for convenient pick-up by maintenance staff. If receptacles were placed along the trails, without easy access for removal, it could become a significant cost to the Town. Signs can be used to encourage trail users to “leave no trace” and to dispose of their trash when leaving the trail or while visiting a bathroom/vending facility.

bathrooms/vending facilities

At present, the only existing bathroom facilities along the more than 10 miles of the Colonie waterfront are located at the Town Park. The Town Park is accessible to users of the trail, but the trail does not traverse the park. Also, for someone who drives to the waterfront, a small parking fee is required and would be necessary for use of the facilities.

As part of the plan to improve access to the riverfront, bathroom and vending facilities should be located at the proposed Mohawk River Interpretive Center along River Road and at the property between the Town treatment facilities. The sewage treatment plant would be an ideal location for the construction of a low-maintenance bathroom facility. The necessary infrastructure for a bathroom is easily accessible at this location. The Town should consider using products in the construction of these facilities that conserve natural resources. For example, waterless urinals could be installed. These fixtures eliminate water and sewer disposal costs associated with standard urinals.

Beverage vending machines should be incorporated into the design for the proposed Mohawk River Interpretive Center. In lieu of vending machines, local and homemade goods could be regularly sold for fundraising purposes. If a permanent vendor were to use this facility, all necessary permits from the Department of Health must be obtained. Vending machines could also sell emergency supplies such as bicycle inner tubes, band aids, bug spray, sunscreen and other items trail users would need.
**Bike Racks**

Currently, a bike racks exist on the Bike Hike Trail near Island View Road and at the Town Park. No bike racks are located near benches at scenic areas, reducing the ability for trail users to stop and enjoy the views.

**Type of Bike Rack**

The Town might consider a two pronged metal bike rack that will hold four bicycles while not taking up a large amount of space. The Town could also consider commissioning a local welder to design and produce bike racks. In addition to function and appearance, the cost of the rack per the number of bikes it can hold should be considered when purchasing bike racks.

**Location**

Bike racks should be located at:
- Parking areas
- Bathroom/vending facilities
- The Interpretive Center
- The boardwalk
- Parks
- The sewage treatment plant area

**Small Boat Storage**

A secure small boat storage facility could potentially be located on the land near the sewage treatment plant. This would be a prime location because of the easy access to the water. The provision of this facility could correspond to the needs of local rowing/boating clubs.
Land Use Recommendations

The Town of Colonie section of the Mohawk River waterfront contains some of the least developed areas in the Town. This waterfront is home not only to the many residents who enjoy the spectacular views and easy access to the River, but also to a rich riparian ecosystem that supports an abundance of plant and animal life. In addressing public access to the Mohawk, care must be taken to preserve the fragile ecology of the area that draws people there in the first place. A balance between development and preservation must be made so that impacts on the landscape are minimized while the ability to enjoy the river is retained. By examining the waterfront systematically, problem issues such as runoff and increased flooding events caused by excessive impervious surfaces; pollution from fossil fuels, chemical lawn treatments and pet waste; and heavy siltation flows can be mitigated, and the subsequent benefits enjoyed by residents and visitors alike in the form of increased public access and the knowledge that the River is safe and clean.

While it is understood that growth and development are vital to the Town, it is also recognized that it is the quality of life and amenities which attract new economic and residential growth to the Town. Current Town residents and local marina businesses are concerned about invasive weed growth and siltation choking boating access. Moreover, siltation may also increase water turbidity; failing to address this siltation may cause a deterioration of the drinking water quality that ultimately requires the Town to purchase a more intensive and more expensive water treatment system.

Although the weed and siltation problems are caused by naturally occurring and man-made processes throughout the entire upstream Mohawk River drainage basin, the Town can make a difference in its riverfront. Ultimately, decisions will have to be made between continuing development within the waterfront and other critical areas and the Town’s desire to provide boating access and maintain open space. With the recent comprehensive plan and zoning amendments, the Town has begun aggressive measures to reduce development impacts upon the River environment. This report recommends that those efforts continue and that where possible, land along the Mohawk should be kept as open space in perpetuity. Where development absolutely must occur, steps should be taken to mitigate its effects on the landscape and ecosystem. Development should be set back from creeks, streams and the River in order to retain soil filtration capabilities and reduce pollutants being carried by flood waters. Areas identified with steep slopes, wetlands, bogs, and other natural resources sensitive to damage by stormwater runoff should not be developed. The Town might also consider increasing its use of more creative development options to preserve open space and reduce impervious footprints by using conservation overlays, planned development districts, density bonuses and transfer of development rights. The Town might also consider expanding its construction and post construction
stormwater pollution prevention laws to cover all development, regardless of size. Lastly, the Town might consider methods of encouraging property owners within sensitive areas to reduce their impacts by planting native species instead of grass, constructing rain gardens, installing green-roofs, and reducing the use of chemical lawn treatments.

Proper maintenance of the River will provide an example for other communities along the Mohawk. By maintaining consistent, ecologically sound land use practices, the Town can become proactive in dealing with these issues, and in time, reduce the need for further mitigation strategies that require time and money.

**New Zoning Map and Land Use Policy**

The Town of Colonie has recently approved a new Land Use Law. The Town of Colonie’s Planning Board and Planning and Economic Development Department are delegated the authority to review any applications for development. The process for developing lands along the riverfront is extensive. Existing parcels predominantly fall under several zoning designations, which include: Conservation Subdivision Overlay, Land Conservation, Planned Development, Neighborhood Commercial Office Residential and Commercial Office Residential districts. These designations, if enforced, are all an excellent step toward maintaining the integrity of the waterfront.

**Recommendations**

Under the new land use law for the Town of Colonie, aggressive measures have been introduced that provide an effective framework for protecting sensitive lands along the river, as well as regulating development. For example, where development is appropriate, such as at the northern-most point of Colonie by Crescent Bridge, for example, the mixed-use district turns away from traditional zoning and towards a more acceptable approach that maximizes the land’s potential. However, to strengthen the goals of the Town and this report, some further recommendations are included here.

**Stream Corridor Overlay**

As a priority, the Town should adopt a stream corridor overlay that would include Best Management Policies for shoreline and stream corridor protection. As part of the overlay, development should have zero impact on water quality, and incorporate a series of delineated zones that are vital to stream integrity. These delineated zones should be divided into the Streamside Zone, Middle Zone, and Outer Zone. The Streamside Zone should ensure the protection of the “physical integrity of the stream ecosystem,” and always maintain natural vegetative cover. The Middle Zone should have very restricted uses that depend upon such factors
as slope and the 100 year floodplain, and be no less then 200ft. Limited use could include stormwater mitigation techniques such as wet and dry swales and bioretention basins. The outer zone would be a nominal extension (such as 20+ ft.), and would utilize on-site best management practices to mitigate stormwater runoff from site specific development. Determinations of width of each zone should be customized to local conditions, such as soil composition, soil filtration capabilities, slope percentage, and run.

**Strengthen the Land Conservation Zoning District**

Consider ways to add land to this zoning designation. Through an examination of adjacent lands, arrangements may be made with existing land owners to expand upon and ensure compliance of land conservation goals.

The Town may need to undertake various acquisition strategies and/or public private partnerships to accomplish this goal. The Town might consider creating a Dedicated Revenue Source, through a nominal sales and/or property tax increase which could be used to purchase conservation easements and development rights, or fund fee simple purchases. This method has the added benefit of allowing the Town to use bond financing for conservation acquisitions, with the future revenues being used to pay off the interest and principal on the bond.

Partnering with land trusts and organizations such as the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy and The Nature Conservancy to preserve sensitive lands in the region is also recommended. The Town might consider forming a local land trust with assistance from The Land Trust Alliance. Together, these options could help to preserve the critical lands identified in a green infrastructure/open space inventory.

As part of the land conservation inventory, a metric should be developed to help the Town prioritize its acquisitions. When prioritizing properties, the Town might consider such factors as the parcel’s overall ecological role, its relation to existing development, its potential role as part of an overall preservation strategy, and the immediate development pressure.

**Establish a “Green Infrastructure Plan” for Colonie**

Green infrastructure is a network of green space that conserves the natural ecosystem. The Town might consider creating a plan to form a network of linkages connecting all open spaces in the Town, including parks, forested areas, golf courses, and working farms, through trails, easement corridors, and riparian greenbelts. For example, the effort to link The Crossings with the River through Ann Lee Pond and the British American Trail System could provide the impetus for a Town-wide effort of connectivity. Such a plan could entice more bicycle and pedestrian traffic.
Strictly Comply with the Town Storm Water Management Policies

Pollution in water bodies can often be attributed to runoff and stormwater from impervious surfaces such as driveways and parking lots. Growing understanding of regional interdependence of water systems across multiple municipalities has fostered a growing culture of mutual accountability. Legal recourse for those who are negatively affected by municipality mismanagement of water is increasing. After January 8, 2008, private citizens and interest groups will potentially have civil recourse, to fines of up to $47,500 per day of violation, against municipalities who are not in full compliance with Phase II Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System Stormwater Management Program (MS4) requirements. Proactive management policies can hedge each municipality’s liability.

Mismanagement of the streams and creeks throughout the Town has led to increased sedimentation flowing into the Mohawk. As the River becomes shallower through siltation, the banks become a breeding ground for water chestnut and other aquatic weeds, located in the same areas where public access is desired. This invasive species has made boating increasingly difficult, as the water surrounding the boat launches becomes choked with the plant. These problems can be addressed over time, but are crucial to success of any plan for the Mohawk. It is recommended the Town closely follow the NYSDEC Best Management Practices for stormwater, and adhere to the goals and timetables set forth in the Town’s NYS SPDES General Permit for Stormwater Discharges Notice of Intent, and the Town’s Stormwater Management Program (SWMP) for the repair and update of the streams throughout the Town’s jurisdiction. Furthermore, it is highly recommended that the Town consider providing for more stringent controls than the minimum levels required by the NYS SPDES General Permits GP-02-01 and GP-02-02. By approaching these issues systemically, problems may be mitigated before they occur and the costs associated with corrective actions such as repeated dredging and weed harvesting will be reduced.

While dredging will undoubtedly be necessary to deepen the River, dredging is a costly and short-lived solution to the Town’s River access. Sediments will continue to be deposited from upriver and local natural and man-made events and dredge material, with its associated pollutants, must be properly disposed of. River mechanics result in certain areas being prone to sedimentation, and thus promote water chestnut weed growth, which favors shallow water. While it is hoped that the introduction of the New York State’s Phase II program will significantly reduce sedimentation flows, the Town might consider providing physical access to the River at locations where sedimentation is least likely to accumulate, thereby reducing the need to dredge and clear channels. Such areas exist to the west of the Town’s sewer treatment facilities. The Town might also work with other communities to obtain the Canal Corporation’s commitment to dredging and seek revenue funding sources for Town dredging activities.
A docking fee might be used to offset Town costs.

Addressing the existing water chestnut weed will require extensive work. Although herbicides are effective against water chestnut, the use of such chemicals is typically curtailed in water which flows. Water chestnut also provides food and habitat for a small number of fish species, and thus total eradication may not be appropriate. The Mohawk River Community Partners, Inc. has applied for a grant to purchase a mechanized weed cutter, which would cut the plant stems below the water surface before seed is set to manage the growth of the weeds. Hand harvesting, while time consuming and costly, may be an alternative method of control.
Implementation

Although some of the proposals outlined in this document could be costly, the Town of Colonie can take advantage of various state and federal funding sources. Below are just a few that could apply to the projects proposed in this document. As is noted in many of the project areas the Town will need to work with the New York State Canal Corporation on the use of their land for implementation. Much of the shoreline along the Mohawk River is owned by the Canal Corporation. Waterfront property owners - through a permit/lease process - are allowed to utilize Canal Corporation property for setting up docks. Many of the local marinas lease Canal Corporation property for boat launches and dock sites as well. Additionally, working with surrounding Towns on the joint ventures proposed may provide additional funding opportunities.

Most importantly, it is crucial that the Town of Colonie implement some kind of plan to maintain the public spaces of the waterfront, the Bike-Hike Trail, and the various parks and amenities mentioned in this report. It is clear from the condition of signage on the Bike-Hike Trail that minimal effort has been invested, to this date, in making it an inviting and pleasing area for the public to enjoy. The same can be said for various parks in the study area whose maintenance plan appears to be minimal. When the items of this report are implemented, a plan should also be in place for the Town to properly maintain its spaces. To this end the Town may want to consider soliciting corporate sponsors from the community to donate money in exchange for some publicity. The publicity could come in many forms ranging from sponsorship of community events to actually maintaining the Town’s portion of the Bike-Hike Trail (similar to the Adopt-A-Highway clean up program).

Grant Opportunities

The following grants are outlined on the State Office of Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) website. More information, and Grant applications, can be found online at http://nysparks.state.ny.us/grants/.

The Environmental Protection Act/Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) offers funding through linked grant programs including park, recreation, and historic preservation activities. Under the EPF umbrella, there are a number of matching grants, distributed though the State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, that the Town is eligible for. Each project must reflect priorities in the NY Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). The EPF is administered by OPRHP and provides assistance to municipalities (including state agencies) and not-for-profit organizations for the acquisition, development, and improvement of parks, historic properties, and State Heritage Area resources. Grants of up to 50% of eligible project costs can be used for acquisition, restoration, preservation, rehabilitation, protection, and
improvement of historic buildings, structures, sites, and objects. Applications are received once a year. Projects are selected based on a competitive rating system.

Parks Program

The Parks Program is for the acquisition or development of parks and recreational facilities. The goal of the program is to rehabilitate or restore land, water or structures for park, recreation or conservation purposes. For this program, there are two types of funding available. Separate program applications are available for OPRHP depending on the type of project proposed. There is no statutory limit on the number of grants one property or one applicant may receive. Before any action to award grants, the requirements of the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQR) must be met. These are reimbursement grant programs. Successful applicants must document project expenditures in order to receive matching funds. As a result, grantees must plan their financial arrangements accordingly. Under EPF, an advance of up to 25% of the grant amount, not to exceed the eligible match in hand, may be available once the project agreement is formally approved and conditions met.

Funding Eligibility

Environmental Protection Fund

- Outdoor and Indoor recreational facilities ARE eligible
- Three year retroactivity (from application deadline) on some project elements

Land and Water Conservation Fund

- Outdoor recreational facilities are eligible, indoor facilities are not
- Not-for-Profit Corporations are not eligible – The Town would have to apply for funding (MRCP would not be eligible)
- Three year retroactivity (from submittal to National Park Service) for pre-agreement planning costs only

Rating Criteria

The Priority Evaluation Form is based on the following rating criteria (Bold delineates program objectives that the Town of Colonie would meet):

A. The extent to which the project site has suffered from physical deterioration, decay, vandalism, neglect or disinvestment or may be threatened with closure, demolition or inappropriate development
B. The relationship of the project to a local, regional and/or statewide planning document or other assessment of need (In this case the LWRP)

C. The degree to which local recreation, conservation or open space deficiencies will be addressed by the project (Access to open space)

D. Emergencies or disasters

E. State and Federal mandates

F. The ability of the project sponsor to initiate and complete the project on a timely basis, at a reasonable cost, and operate or maintain the completed project

G. Annual programmatic and funding priorities

H. The extent to which the project protects, enhances or interprets natural, cultural or historic resources (The Mohawk River Interpretive Center and Boardwalk)

I. The degree to which the project will primarily serve either a densely populated area or an area where a substantial proportion of the population is of low income or otherwise disadvantaged or underserved

Among the rating criteria, the Commissioner may award any of the following factors up to ten points, for a maximum of ten points. All applications will be reviewed for the relevance of these to the project scope:

A. The geographic distribution of other fundable projects in any given application cycle

B. The extent to which the project will maximize the use and accessibility of a facility

C. Special engineering, environmental and historic preservation concerns or benefits

D. The past performance, if any, of the project sponsor on previous projects, including its compliance with Equal Employment Opportunity and Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise programs

Since applications are to be reviewed, rated, awarded and ranked on a regional basis, and Colonie’s Mohawk River Revitalization Plan meets most of the criteria above, the study area should be eligible for the OPRHP Parks Program matching funding.
Land and Water Conservation Fund Program

The Land and Water Conservation Fund was established by Congress in 1964 to create parks and open spaces, protect wilderness, wetlands, and refuges, preserve wildlife habitat, and enhance recreational opportunities. From parks to playgrounds, wilderness to wetlands, bicycle paths to hiking trails, LWCF has helped communities acquire nearly seven million acres of parkland, water resources, and open space. LWCF has also underwritten the development of more than 37,000 state and local park and recreation projects. As of March 2006, there is the possibility of Federal (LWCF) grant money being appropriated for parks acquisition, development and rehabilitation projects in federal fiscal year 2007 (beginning October 1, 2006). Funds are available to municipal agencies for the acquisition, development and/or rehabilitation of outdoor park and recreation facilities.

The following are not eligible under LWCF:

- Not-for profit corporations – The Town would have to apply for funding (MRCP would not be eligible)
- Indoor recreational facilities
- Appraisals and legal fees
- Payment advances
- The value of municipally-owned land as matching share
- The acquisition of parkland without prior approval of the National Park Service
- State funds are eligible for match, certain restrictions apply

Funding from this program can be used for open space acquisition, creation of new trails, and capital necessary to purchase development rights of properties slated for open space.

Recreational Trails Program

Funds are available to non-profit organizations and municipal, state and federal agencies for the acquisition, development, rehabilitation and maintenance of trails and trail-related projects. Funds for the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) are provided by the national SAFETEA-LU program, The U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration (USDOT/FHWA) administers the RTP in consultation with the Department of Interior (National Park Service and Bureau of Land Management) and the Department of Agriculture (U.S.Forest Service). In New York, RTP is a program of the NYS Department of Transportation administered by the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP).
The Recreational Trails Program is a state administered, federal assistance program to provide and maintain recreational trails for both motorized and non-motorized recreational trail use.

**Program Mandates**

The RTP legislation requires that States use 40% of their funds apportioned in a fiscal year for diverse recreational trail use, 30% for motorized recreation, and 30% for non-motorized recreation. Below is a description of project types and their funding category.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intended Use</th>
<th>Type of Use Examples</th>
<th>Funding Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NonMotorized Single Use</td>
<td>Pedestrian or equestrian, or bicycle only</td>
<td>Non Motorized Funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NonMotorized Diverse Use</td>
<td>Pedestrian, bicycle and skate; both pedestrian and equestrian</td>
<td>Non Motorized and Diverse Funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diverse Use</td>
<td>Equestrian in summer, snowmobile in winter (includes both motorized and non-motorized trail use)</td>
<td>Diverse Funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motorized Single Use</td>
<td>Snowmobile only</td>
<td>Motorized Funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motorized Diverse Use</td>
<td>Snowmobile and Motorcycles</td>
<td>Motorized and Diverse Funding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Funding Eligibility**

The Priority Evaluation Form is based on the following rating criteria:

1. The proposed project must be legally and physically accessible to the public, or be a portion of an identified trailways project which, when completed, will be legally and physically accessible to the public

2. The proposed project must be physically and environmentally developable as a trailway

3. The proposed project must be planned and developed under the laws, policies and administrative procedures of the State

4. The proposed project must be identified in, or further a specific goal of, a trail plan referenced in the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) required by the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of
1965, or the State Recreational Trail Plan. – The Mohawk River and Barge Canal are included in the 2002 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan as a priority project

Rating Criteria

(Bold delineates program objectives that the Town of Colonie would meet):

a. Project provides for innovative recreational trail corridor sharing for motorized and/or non-motorized use (maximum 12 points)

b. Project provides for motorized and/or non-motorized use (maximum 12 points)

c. Project provides development of urban trail linkages (maximum 12 points)

d. Degree to which the project is identified in, or furthers a specific goal of SCORP or the State recreational trail plan (maximum 10 points)

e. Index of Need

f. Degree of citizen involvement in proposal conception and implementation (maximum 5 points)

g. Project ties into other trails, greenway, scenic corridors, or natural, cultural, historical and recreational areas (maximum 10 points)

h. Degree to which volunteer labor, non-traditional labor and other certified donations will be used to accomplish this project (maximum 10 points)

i. Project will utilize existing corridors, (railroad right-of-way, canal towpath, utility lines, publicly owned river valleys or highland ridges, parkways, etc.) (maximum 5 points)

j. Project will improve the continuity of a trail system (maximum 10 points)

k. Reasonableness of Cost (maximum 25 points)

l. Impact the project will have on the recreation needs of the region (maximum 4 points)*

*Bonus points are available
Boating Infrastructure Grant Program

A program of the Department of the Interior, US Fish and Wildlife Service, this is funded through SAFETEA-LU. Funds are awarded to appropriate state agencies for the development and maintenance of facilities for transient, non-trailerable recreational boats. In New York State, all applicants must apply through NYS OPRHP.

Program Mandates

1. Facilities are on navigable waters, allowing reasonable public access to all recreational vessels, charging equitable fees, and being open for reasonable periods
2. Facility’s construction or renovation is designed to last at least 20 years
3. Facilities are for temporary (less than 10 day visit) use by non-trailerable (greater than or equal to 26 feet) transient recreational vessels (operated primarily for pleasure)
4. Facilities are in water greater than or equal to 6 feet of depth at the lowest tide
5. Facilities provide security, safety, and service (including a pumpout station within 2 miles for overnight facilities)

What is Boating Infrastructure?

Boating Infrastructure refers to features that provide stopover places for transient nontrailerable recreational vessels to tie up. These features include, but are not limited to: mooring buoys, day docks, navigational aids, transient slips, safe harbors, floating docks and fixed piers, floating and fixed breakwaters, dinghy docks, restrooms, retaining walls, bulkheads, dockside utilities, pumpout stations, recycling and trash receptacles, dockside electric service, dockside water supplies, dockside pay telephones, debris deflection booms and marine fueling stations.

Eligible Activities

1. Construct, renovate, and maintain either publicly or privately owned boating infrastructure tie-up facilities
2. One time dredging only to give transient vessels safe channel depths between the tie-up facility and maintained channels or open water; (sometimes allow for depths greater than 6’ if justified)
3. Install navigational aids, limited to giving transient vessels safe passage between the tie-up facility and maintained channels or open water
4. Grant administration

5. Preliminary costs (appraisals, environmental reviews, permits, feasibility studies, site surveys, site planning, preparing cost estimates, construction plans and specifications)

6. Information and education materials

*Ineligible Activities*

1. Projects that do not provide public benefits or are not open to the public

2. Law enforcement activities

3. Projects that significantly degrade or destroy valuable natural resources or alter the cultural or historic nature of the area; construct or renovate principal structures not expected to last at least 20 years

4. Maintenance dredging

5. Projects that fund operations or routine, custodial, and janitorial maintenance of the facility

6. Tie-up facilities available for occupancy for more than 10 consecutive days by a single party

7. Dry land storage

8. Haul-out features

9. Boating features for trailerable or "car-top" boats such as launch ramps and carry-down walkways

10. Conducting surveys

*Rating Criteria Rating Criteria*

*(Bold delineates program objectives that the Town of Colonie would meet):*

1. Plan to construct, renovate, and maintain tie-up facilities for transient (less than 10 days in single location), non-trailerable (26' or greater in length), recreational vessels following priorities identified in the state's program plan *(SCORP)*. *(15 points)* – The Mohawk River and Barge Canal are included in the 2002 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan as a priority project

2. Provide for public/private partnerships, involving entities other than US Fish and Wildlife Service and the lead state agency. *(one partner, 5 points; two partners, 10 points; three or more partners, 15 points)*
3. Use innovative techniques to increase the availability of tie-ups; creative, different approaches that improve the overall project. (0-15 points)

4. Include private, local or other state funds in addition to the non-federal match. (26-35% match, 5 points; 36-49% match, 10 points; 50% and above, 15 points)

5. Cost efficient, with features that add a high value compared with the funds required from the proposal. For example, constructing a small feature to an existing facility which adds value and boating opportunities versus installing a complete facility. (0-10 points)

6. Provide a significant link to prominent destinations such as those near major metropolitan areas, cultural or natural attractions, or safe harbors from storms. (10 points)

7. Provide access to recreational, historic, cultural, natural, or scenic attractions (5 points each, maximum 15 points)

8. Provide significant positive economic impacts to a community (1-5 points)

9. Multi-state coordination in locating tie-up facilities. (5 points)

Heritage Area Program

The Heritage Area System is a state-local partnership established to preserve and develop areas that have special significance to New York State. From the Great Lakes to the eastern tip of Long Island, the Heritage Areas encompass some of the state's most significant natural, historic, and cultural resources, as well as the people and programs that keep them vital. Since the entire 10.2 mile stretch of the Mohawk River falls under the Mohawk River National Heritage Area, all of Colonie’s Mohawk waterfront is eligible for funding within a New York State Designated Heritage Area. This program promotes the preservation, rehabilitation or restoration of land, water or structures.

Rating Criteria

(Bold delineates program objectives that the Town of Colonie would meet):

A. The degree to which the project contributes to the preservation, restoration or enhancement of natural, historic or cultural resources related to the interpretive theme(s) in the local heritage area's approved management plan

B. The degree to which the project enhances the function and visual quality of the local heritage area
C. The impact of the facility on the local economy or its contribution to established economic development plans

D. The relationship of the project to a local, regional and/or statewide planning document or other assessment of need

E. The degree to which the project will primarily serve either a densely populated area or an area where a substantial proportion of the population is of low income or otherwise disadvantaged or underserved

F. The degree to which the project directly serves or benefits heritage area visitors and users

G. The applicant's ability to initiate and complete the project on a timely basis, at a reasonable cost, and operate or maintain the project’s annual programmatic and funding priorities

H. Annual programmatic and funding priorities*

*Bonus points are available.

For more information on above listed Grant Programs, the Town should contact John Albert
Saratoga Spa State Park
19 Roosevelt Drive
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866-6214
518-584-2000, FAX 518-584-5694

There are also many funding opportunities for bike trails available to the Town. The Federal Highway Administration (FWHA) has a few other well known programs.

The Town could apply for funding through the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21). In order to be eligible for these funds the bicycle project must be developed and coordinated with State and CDTC transportation plans.

Another FHWA program, the Surface Transportation Program (STP) has funding available that can be used to construct bicycle facilities but can also be used to produce materials such as maps, brochures and public service announcements related to safe bicycle use. The funds in this program are also to be used mainly for transportation purposes although some mixed recreation is allowed. FHWA’s Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) program that aims at reducing pollutants has funding available for the same type of bicycle facilities and related resources.

The programs listed above are basically for the development of bicycle facilities for transportation purposes. These funds could be applied to shared road bicycle
facilities developed by the Town, such as the Boght Road / Manor Avenue connection.
For more information on this program the Town should contact the NYS Department of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation at the address below:

Robert W Reinhardt, Director of Planning
Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation
Agency Bldg #1 17th Floor
Empire State Plaza
Albany NY 12238
518-474-0415; Fax 518-474-7013
robert.reinhardt@oprhp.state.ny.us

FHWA’s National Highway System (NHS) funds may be used to construct bicycle transportation facilities on land adjacent to any highway on the NHS. I-87 is part of the NHS so the Town may want to consider applying for funds to maintain land that runs adjacent to the Northway. More information on these FHWA programs can be found online at: http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bikeped/bp-broch.htm.

The National Park Service (NPS) also has funding opportunities for trails. The Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance Program provides planning and organizational assistance for community projects that promote nature-based recreation and conservation projects, including trails. The Land and Water Conservation Fund program provides matching grants to States and local governments for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities. More information is available at http://www.nps.gov/rtca/.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has a program the Town may also want to look into. Resource Conservation and Development Funds. This program will match 50% of the cost of recreation projects, including parks and land acquisition. The funding is available to state and local governments and non-profit organizations. More information is available at: http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/.
Program Summary

While many individual projects have been proposed in this report, clearly not all can be implemented in the short term. It is recommended that the Town follow the suggested implementation pattern below. Some of the items mentioned herein can be implemented for no or little cost to the Town - those have been recommended as Short Term Goals. The Mid Term Goals are ones that require more planning and possible funding sources and may take more time to implement. The Long Term Goals are ones that require more extensive planning and funding sources; although long term goals cannot be implemented tomorrow, the Town should construct a plan that allows for gradual steps toward these goals to be taken in the short and mid term. By implementing these goals, the Town can eventually achieve its desired goal of attracting more residents to the Town’s waterfront while maintaining its natural beauty.
Recommendations

Signage

Short-Term
• Remove all damaged signs.
• Review all existing interpretive, directional, and distance signage and remove any inappropriate signs
• Repair and replace existing, and ensure conformity of, regulatory or warning signage at sites.

Mid-Term
• Form an interpretive signage advisory group.
• Establish permanent mile markers.
• Develop and install trail blazes.
• Install directional signage at all parking lots and trail entrances and exits.
• Develop specific signage for Crescent Bridge area using Erie Canal history.

Long-Term
• Interpretive and educational signage about creek names, local ecology and geology.
• Historical signage for ferry crossing areas, Schermerhorn’s Ride, and Shaker Creek Fort.
• Historical interpretive signage for ice harvesting, and at the ice house at Twin Bridges.
• Historical signage for Revolutionary War at Freddie’s Park, Town Park, and in the sculpture garden.
• Interpretive signage at the Interpretive Center.

Parking

Short-Term
• Formalize parking along River Road.
• Formalize parking west of old water treatment facility.
• Reconfigure and improve Forts Ferry Road parking.
• Increase parking at Freddie’s Park.

Mid-Term
• Formalize parking along Onderdonk Avenue.
• Create parking at the Twin Bridges.
• Formalize parking at the Crescent Dam.
Long-Term
- Design Interpretive Center parking appropriate for projected need.
- Develop parking on Town Police skid pad if necessary.
- Established improved parking conditions at Town Park off Route 9.
- Develop Marina District parking if necessary.
- Establish parking along Crescent Road.

Visual Access

Short-Term
- Improve visual access east of Shaker Creek.
- Establish view of Twin Bridges near the current sewage and water treatment facilities.
- Improve view to Delphus Kill Gorge.
- Establish additional island views.
- Improve view to undeveloped hills south of the sewer treatment plant.

Mid-Term
- Improve views of and from Shaker Creek Bridge.
- Improve views of and from Delphus Kill Bridge.

Long-Term
- No significant long-term visual improvements.

Special Projects

Short-Term
- Create boardwalk near former water treatment plant.
- Review and modify, as necessary, Town Park policies.

Mid-Term
- Improve the conditions of the Shaker Creek Bridge.
- Improve the Delphus Kill Bridge.
- Establish a hand-powered vessel launch at the Twin Bridges.
- Implement recommended Town Park policies changes.
- Improve Crescent Dam Park with landscaping, picnic area and fishing access.

Long-Term
- Establish an Interpretive Center at the former water treatment facility.
• Develop the Public Facility District between the Town sewer and water treatment plants to include a boat launch, boat storage shed, restrooms, vending machines, local sculpture garden and possibly a small marina.
• Establish a fishing deck at Freddie’s Park.
• Develop a small Interpretive Park within the Marina District.
• Repurpose the underutilized marina on Route 9 for use as a Gateway site.
• Implement Town Park policy changes regarding park amenity design continuity.

Trail Connections

Short-Term
• Establish a trail loop off Town sewer and water treatment plant access road.
• Establish Dunsbach Bypass Trail.
• Develop British American Trail.
• Prepare trails east and west of Delphus Kill.
• Cut new trail behind current wastewater treatment facility.
• Establish Vandenburg Trail.
• Install Boardwalk Trail at former water treatment facility.

Mid-term
• Develop trail along National Grid easement to Pollock Road.
• Establish trail from Town Park to Route 9.
• Place trails under Twin Bridges.
• Establish the Fonda Road-Winding Creek trail connection to the Bike-Hike Trail.

Long-term
• Establish trail from Crescent Road to Manor Road in Cohoes.
• Develop a Bike-Hike connection to Boght Road as the land develops.
• Establish a trail through the Public Utility District.
• Establish Schaffer Drive Marina Trail.
• Develop the Bridge to Bridge Trail.

Amenities

Short-Term
• Develop park trail design strategy to reflect heritage use as older amenities are replaced.
Mid-Term
- Design and install new bike racks as appropriate at the boardwalk and future Interpretive Center, Freddie’s park, new trail cuts to the River, and beside scenic vistas.
- Establish design for benches and install as appropriate at new access points to River.
- Establish a memorandum of agreement between Town and local volunteer organizations to collect rubbish from waste receptacles and clean trail.

Long-Term
- Install restrooms at Interpretive Center.
- Install restrooms in Public Utilities District once established.
Glossary of Terms

BMP – Best Management Practices - are effective, practical, structural or non-structural methods which prevent or reduce the movement of sediment, nutrients, pesticides and other pollutants from the land to surface or ground water, or which otherwise protect water quality from potential adverse effects.

CDOD – Conservation Development Overlay District - The Conservation Overlay District is intended to protect the Town’s natural environment, provide for a balance between developed and undeveloped land, protect air quality, and provide adequate open areas for recreation and conservation. Conservation development will preserve tracts of environmentally, scenically and recreationally significant undeveloped land and preserve contiguous open spaces and important scenic and environmental resources, while allowing compact development and creating more walkable and bikeable neighborhoods.

LC – Land Conservation District - The purpose of the Land Conservation District (LC) is to maintain and preserve land that contains important environmental and natural resources. Many of the land conservation areas are already protected or preserved open space areas.

PDD – Planned Development District - The purpose of a Planned Development District (PDD) is to allow for flexible land use and design for parcels where the objectives of Colonie’s zoning and planning documents as well as the needs of the community can be achieved by creative planning and design. The Planned Development District should allow development that is matched to the unique characteristics of its site and allow innovative development techniques that might not otherwise be possible through strict application of standard use, area, bulk and density specifications.

NCOR – Neighborhood Commercial Office Residential District - The purpose of the Neighborhood Commercial Office Residential District (NCOR) is to promote the development of mixed-use, pedestrian friendly development in neighborhood areas at a scale consistent with small neighborhood uses. This district provides for the intermixing of neighborhood commercial, office, and residential land uses. This neighborhood scale mixed-use district will help reduce the need for excessive parking and lay the foundation for an increase in the use of public transit and pedestrian access. Flexibility is the key to this district, allowing a mix of uses based on the ability of the applicant to be creative. The NCOR district will unify these varied uses through design. Elements such as limited front yard setbacks, two or three story buildings with active retail and service uses on the ground floors, on-street parking where appropriate, and off-street parking on the side or rear of buildings, will be encouraged in this district through the use of design standards.
COR – Commercial Office Residential District - The purpose of the Commercial Office Residential District (COR) is to promote the development of mixed-use, pedestrian friendly areas. This district provides for the intermixing of commercial, office, and residential land uses. The mixed-use district will help reduce the need for excessive parking and lay the foundation for an increase in the use of public transit. Flexibility is the key to this district, allowing a mix of uses based on the ability of the applicant to be creative. The COR district will unify these varied uses through superior design. Elements such as limited front yard setbacks, multi-story buildings with retail, food service and other active uses on the ground floors, on-street parking where appropriate, and off-street parking on the side or rear of buildings, will be encouraged in this district through the use of design standards.
APPENDIX A
Appendix A

Survey Responses

The more than 10 miles of Mohawk River waterfront in Colonie have been identified in the Town Comprehensive Plan as an underused asset. The Mohawk waterfront area is important because of its history, ecology, economic and recreational significance, scenic views, adjacent bike/hike trail, and as the Town’s water supply.

At the Crossings on October 16, 2006 at 7:00 pm, the Town of Colonie, MRCP and the UAlbany Planning Studio invited the public to an input meeting and presentation regarding the implementation of the Mohawk River Waterfront Revitalization Strategy.

The meeting was presented in three parts: 1) a brief overview of river management strategies; 2) a brief overview of gateway improvement project strategies, and 3) a more detailed presentation, by students from the UAlbany Planning Studio, on public-access improvement strategies.

Those in attendance were asked to respond to the public-access proposals with their own ideas and suggestions by returning a brief survey. Public feedback is a requirement of the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program grant from the NYS Department of State, Division of Coastal Resources. The information gathered has been incorporated into this report and will ultimately be used to refine the Mohawk River Waterfront Revitalization Strategy developed by the Town and MRCP. There were a total of 25 surveys returned.

1) In what way(s) have you made use of Colonie’s Mohawk River Waterfront and/or the bike/walk path through Colonie?

The following uses were identified: biking (68%); walking (80%); motorized boat use (44%); non-motorized (canoe/kayak) boat use (56%); swimming (12%); hunting (16%); fishing (72%); and bird-watching (40%). Other responses included: educational field trips on history and ecology; jogging; ice skating; water skiing; and trapping.

2) Lack of parking has made it difficult to gain access to the Mohawk River and/or bike/walk path?

Ten respondents (40%) agreed with this statement, compared with thirteen who did not (52%) and 2 responses of no opinion.

a) If yes, where should additional parking be located near the waterfront?

Responses included: near Crescent Bridge; Freddie’s Park; the Water Storage Facility on River Road; existing small spaces should be improved; and the end of Onderdonk Road.
3) More public amenities and support facilities are needed to increase people’s use and enjoyment of the Mohawk River waterfront and bike/walk path.

Twenty-two respondents (88%) agreed with this statement, two respondents disagreed (8%) and only one respondent had no opinion (4%).

a) If yes, which of the following amenities and support facilities do you think should be added to increase public use and enjoyment of the Colonie waterfront?

Responses included: boat launches (72%); bathroom facilities (64%); benches with backs (56%); boardwalks – with boat launch (48%); shaded seating areas (28%); emergency call box (32%); shelters (28%); bike racks (20%); and lighting (20%).

b) Any suggestions regarding where such facilities should be located?

Responses included: bathrooms near Forts Ferry and across from Town Park; boardwalks into wetlands; bathrooms every 1-2 miles; bike racks at spots you might want to leave bike to go on foot like the boardwalk; benches and bike racks scenic vista viewcuts or historically significant areas; bathrooms and lighting at visitor’s center and entrance at Town Park; boardwalk in close proximity to rivers edge and benches at view points; between Niskayuna and Town Park; every half mile along route for benches/call boxes; bathrooms at western and eastern gateways and at Town Park; and sections east of Niskayuna Station.

4) There is sufficient signage along the bike/walk path.

Eight respondents (32%) agreed with this statement, eleven respondents disagreed (44%) and five respondents had no opinion (20%).

a) If no, what types of additional signage would you suggest?

Responses included: signs leading to the path (28%); signs along the path, directing path users to local sites of interest and destinations further on (44%); and interpretative signs, historical markers and information (24%).

Other responses included: mile signs, emergency, interpretive signs of the ecology of the river and Universal Trail Assessment Process (UTAP).

5) Are there adequate places to sit and rest along the bike/walk path?

Nine respondents answered yes (36%), twelve respondents answered no (48%), and five respondents had no opinion (20%).

a) If no, where would you like additional seating to be located?
Responses included: Every mile (2); sections towards Cohoes; every half mile (3); and at viewpoints (2). An additional comment included “benches with backs”.

6) **When you use the bike/walk path, where do you generally enter the path?**

Fonda Road; Niskayuna Train Station (3); Lyons Park (4); Town Park (3) Dunsbach Ferry Road (2); Between Forts Ferry Road and Burmaster Road; River Road train station across from cemetery; Island View (2); Old Water Treatment Facility Forts Ferry Road (3); and River Road (3).

7) **Would you like to see a connection established between the Mohawk Bike Trail and the Hudson Bike Trail?**

Seventeen respondents answered yes (68%), three respondents answered no (12%) and three respondents had no opinion (12%).

8) **Do you feel there is sufficient boat access along Colonie’s Mohawk River waterfront?**

Three respondents answered yes (12%); twenty respondents answered no (80%), and two respondents had no opinion (8%).

a) **If no, please explain where could additional boat access points be located?**

Responses included:
- “I would like to see canoe/kayak access between the Town Park and the western entry to the Colonie portion of the path.”
- “By the old water treatment plant, or even through the existing water treatment plant.” (3)
- “On either side of the Rte 9 Bridge.” (3)
- “Re-open the Forts Ferry Road access!! We launched from there since 1967 until it was stolen!!”
- “End of Forts Ferry Road that used to be open to the public.”
- “Town Park facility should be expanded.”
- “Need Town Park launch dredged. Crescent Bridge launch needs town to take over and clean up.”
- “The best spot would be where Shaker Creek enters the river as this provides a natural access point and channel through the mud and through the water chestnuts to get access to open water. Please keep boat access aesthetically appealing though!”
- “At Shaker Creek at area around Mohawk view treatment plant, at Town Park, at boarder with Niskayuna.”
- “Freddie’s Park, east of Onderdonk.”
Analysis of Area 1 Survey Responses

Questions Pertaining to Area/Map 1:

1) The former water treatment plant and surrounding property on River Road (which includes three large water tanks) would seem to have the potential for greater public use and enjoyment. What possible uses of the property might you be in favor of?

Responses included: 9 responses for interpretive murals on water storage tanks (36%); 14 responses for visitors center (56%); 22 responses for water and bathroom facilities (88%); 13 responses for small recreational area (52%). Other responses included: picnic facilities, parking (2), guided tours, bird watching clubs, seasonal bike shop, and a boat launch.

2) If a “boardwalk” were built out across the marsh (near the former water treatment plant on River Road) to provide scenic views of the river and opportunities for bird-watching, would you use it?

Eighteen respondents answered yes (72%) and seven respondents answered no (28%).

   a) If no, why not?

Responses included: If with boat launch; if with benches; hunting

3) Would you like to have a bike/walking path connection extending from British American Boulevard and across Route 7?

Eleven respondents answered yes (44%), four respondents answered no (16%); and ten respondents had no opinion (40%).

   a) Please explain where would you like additional bike path access points, if any:

Responses included: access from Rt. 7; access from Albany Shaker/Consaul Roads; good idea but wouldn’t use it; Riveria Estates to Forts Ferry; off-road path along Forts Ferry; Upper Forts Ferry through Shaker Bay

4) Do you believe it is dangerous to bicycle along River Road? If so, where is it particularly dangerous? (Please explain using any distinguishing landmarks)

Responses included: all roads in Colonie are dangerous; not necessary because of bike path location (9); along Forts Ferry; and from Forts Ferry to Burhmaster (possibly more caution bike signs, lower speed limit, redirect River Road traffic to Route 7)
5) Do you believe it is dangerous to bicycle along Forts Ferry Road? If so, where is it particularly dangerous? (Please explain using any distinguishing landmarks.)

Responses included: all roads in Colonie are dangerous; Hill on Forts Ferry (5); speeding 45-65 in 30 mph zone; should just use bike path; last ¼ mile of Forts Ferry; at route 7 and school; and lower road is safe near Onderdonk.

Analysis of Area 2 Survey Responses

1) Favor establishing a new bike path loop along side Onderdonk Road?

Fourteen respondents indicated that they would like to see a new bike path loop established alongside Onderdonk Road while four indicated that they would not, and seven did not have an opinion. The analysis indicates that there is strong support for the proposal when compared to the negative responses, and that it should be considered as part of further investigation.

2) Favor a new bike path loop going through the wooded private land to the river bank, then looping back to join Onderdonk Road near the sewage treatment plant?

Seventeen respondents indicated that they would like to see a new bike path loop that takes riders closer to the water by traversing currently private property and rejoin Onderdonk Road near the Sewage Treatment Plant. Four respondents indicated that they would not like to see this, and four had no opinion. The analysis indicates that there is strong support for this proposal among the respondents, and that it should be considered as part of further investigation.

3) Which activities would you like to see at the Onderdonk Road location?

If the Onderdonk Road parcel or an easement thereon was publicly acquired, the responses indicate strong support for establishing a canoe launch (23 favorable responses), bathrooms and water fountains (18 favorable responses), and fishing access (14 favorable responses). Moderate support (10-11 favorable responses) was indicated for establishing a motorized marina, canoe rentals/lessons, bicycle rental and repair facilities, vending machines (particularly for water) and a sculpture garden. There were no responses indicating that if the parcel were brought under public control that no uses identified in the survey should be permitted at the site.

4) Should the Police Skid pad be converted to parking?

Nine respondents indicated that they would like to see the Town Police skid pad converted to parking. Compared with two negative response and 14 responses of no opinion, the analysis would indicate that there is limited support for this proposal among the respondents.
5) Favor seeing the cliff near Island View Road used for rappelling?

Five respondents indicated that they would like to see rappelling established at the cliff near Island View Road. Compared with seven negative responses and 13 responses of no opinion, the analysis would indicate that there is very limited for this proposal among the respondents.

6) Should a mountain bike course be established in the hills?

Nine respondents indicated that they would like to see a mountain bike path established in the hills of Colonie within the Study Area Boundary. An equal number (nine respondents) reported that they would be opposed to such a proposal and seven additional respondents had no opinion. Based on this analysis, it appears that the two opinions are of equal value.

7) Favor establishing a connecting trail along the Delphus Kill following the NiMo easement to Pollock Road?

Twenty respondents indicated that they would like to see a connecting trail established along the Delphus Kill atop the existing Niagara Mohawk easement terminating at Pollock Road. There were five respondents that indicated either a negative or no opinion. This indicates that this proposal is well supported by the respondents and should be considered further as part of the investigation.

Analysis of Area 3 Survey Responses

1) How important do you think it is to preserve open space between Route 9 and the Northway?

The answers revealed that preservation of open space is a very important (8 out of 11) or important (2 out of 11) issue; only one person deemed the issue to be unimportant.

2) How do you think the Islands along the Mohawk should be used?

The consensus for what respondents deem the best use for the islands can be summed up with strict preservation with no development while permitting access for seasonal hunting, fishing, and bird watching.

Analysis of Area 4 Survey Responses

1) Have you ever visited, and/or are you at all familiar with Freddie’s Park?

Fifteen respondents (65.2%) have visited and/or are familiar with Freddie’s Park, compared with 8 respondents (34.8%) who have not. Three people did not answer this question.
2) If yes, do you think Freddie’s Park has an inviting atmosphere?

There was only one respondent that answered “definitely inviting” (5.6%), 9 respondents answered “somewhat inviting” (50%), 5 respondents answered “not inviting” (27.8%), and 3 respondents answered “no opinion” (16.7%). Eight people did not answer this question.

3) Do you fish along the Mohawk River?

Eighteen respondents answered “yes” (72%) and seven respondents answered “no” (28%). Only one person skipped this question.

4) Have you ever fished at Freddie’s Park?

Seven respondents answered “yes” (33.3%) and fourteen respondents answered “no” (66.7%). Five people skipped this question.

5) If you fish, but not at Freddie’s Park, why not?

6) In general, is there ample fishing access along Colonie’s Mohawk River waterfront?

Three respondents answered “yes” (12%), fifteen respondents answered “no” (60%), and seven respondents answered “no opinion” (28%). Only one person skipped this question.

7) If no, please explain.

8) Would Freddie’s Park possibly be a good boating/kayaking launch site?

Twelve respondents answered “yes” (75%) and four respondents answered “no” (25%). Ten people skipped this question.

9) Do you think that Crescent Dam has sufficient access from the road?

Zero people responded “sufficient access”, one respondent answered “appropriate access” (6.2%), ten people responded “limited access” (62.5%) and there were five “no access” respondents. Ten people skipped this question.

10) Do you think Crescent Dam has sufficient bicycle access?

No respondents answered “sufficient access” or “appropriate access”. Nine respondents answered “limited access” (75%) and three respondents answered “no access” (25%). Fourteen people skipped this question.
11) How would you rank the safety of biking on Route 9?

There were zero “very safe” responses, 2 “safe” responses (9.5%), 5 “somewhat safe” responses (23.8%), 9 “unsafe” responses (42.9%) and 5 “very unsafe” responses (23.8%).

12) If safe bike paths were developed out to Cohoes Crescent Road and/or down to Boght Road (from the hike/bike path) would you be likely to use them?

There were 12 “yes” responses (63.2%) and 7 “no” responses (36.8%). Two people skipped this question.

Other Area 4 Comments include:
I would participate in water chestnut removal.
It’s not just a question of providing access to the roads. I don’t think the roads themselves would support safe, heavy bike traffic.
Freddie’s Park is probably not O.K. for Motorized Boats.
Freddie’s Park is too small for fishing.
Rte 9 has a good, wide shoulder but only to Kirkers, then shoulder ends – only for experienced riders.
I would use bike paths to Boght Rd. Cohoes Crescent is a nice, scenic (a little smelly) road but not too narrow and winding for safe biking.
APPENDIX B
Appendix B

A survey of the Bike-Hike Trail was conducted during the fall 2006 semester. Students walked the Bike Hike Trail to assess the conditions of the trail including, access, signage, parking and amenities. Below is a sampling of signage that was seen on the trail. Much of it is damaged and the Town should undertake an effort to remove damaged or outdated signage. Part of making the trail inviting is providing a consistent atmosphere that is easy to access. Also included here are samples of recommended signs.

Existing Bike Hike Trail Signage

The following signs seen along the trail are samples of good signage that should be replicated throughout the trail or Town following the guidelines outlined in the report.

Directional and Warning Signage

Signs near Island View Rd. and the Town Park

Sign on trail near Dunsbach Ferry Rd.

Gate Signage

Various Gate signage on trail, in general this type of signage is good but should be made consistent at each location.
The following signs seen along the trail are samples of bad signage that should be removed or replaced throughout the trail or Town following the guidelines outlined in the report.

**Inconsistent Markers Mile Markers**

These mile markers are located between the border of Cohoes and the Town Park.

**Damaged or Outdated Signage**

Signage between Town Park and Dunsbach Ferry Rd.

**Inconsistent Signs**

The Town may choose to replace or replicate the following signs, but they do not appear consistently throughout the trail. They should either be replicated and used trail wide or removed.

Marker from informal path leading to trail, at the Town Park, signs on trail near Dunsbach Ferry Rd.

Sign near trail access point at Town Park.
Graffiti

Graffiti on the Gate at Fonda Rd. access point and on the trail.

**Signage Recommendations**

As stated in the report the Town should implement MUTCD Guidelines. MUTCD information can be located at the following website:

http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/

The following are examples of MUTCD signs:

![MUTCD Signs](image)

Although these signs are appropriate for directional signage and safety, the Town should also consider adopting consistent signage throughout the trail. Below are examples of signs recommended in this report.