

# **DRAFT Delhi Comprehensive Plan Goals, Policies and Actions August 17, 2011**

## **I. DRAFT GOALS, POLICIES AND ACTIONS**

### **A. GOAL: COMMUNICATION AND COOPERATION**

**Promote communication and cooperation among the Town, Village, Community Institutions and Delaware County.**

#### **1. Context**

Delhi is a diverse community that serves as the Delaware County seat. It is the location of nonprofit organizations, government services, a State University of New York campus, and is a desirable place to live and work. Meeting the needs of a diverse population requires shared planning and continual cooperation. Delhi will assess the desirability and feasibility of sharing services to reduce the growing costs of delivering needed services to citizens. Over fifty percent of survey respondents support efforts to consolidate nonprofit services, municipal services and Town and Village governments.

#### **2. Policies**

- a. Promote open dialogue with residents and seek out the maximum amount of involvement in public decisions.
- b. Be actively aware and appropriately engaged in regional efforts to address critical systems including the economy, housing, resource conservation and environmental protection. Consider regional needs when undertaking planning efforts.
- c. Continue to enhance and expand methods for communication with and between residents through the Town and Village web sites, and new approaches such as social networking sites, e-newsletter, and marketing of local services and events.
- d. Improve and coordinate methods for communications with residents in emergencies (through emails, telephone calls, and improved cellular and data transmission services) between EMS providers, other public safety officers, and local hospitals.
- e. Continue to coordinate with large employers to address shared issues, such as needs of staff and students, and “town-gown” relations.

- f. Maintain an open dialogue with other public, private, and nonprofit organizations and institutions regarding plans and projects.

### **3. Recommendations**

- a. Use improved communication and an improved web site to make codes, ordinances, plans, budgets, reports, audits, maps and other materials available online in an accessible format that allows for public access, review and comment.
- b. Use social networking sites to educate residents about the unique aspects of the environment, scenic resources, farming, and historic preservation through partnerships with local groups, SUNY Delhi, the Chamber of Commerce, Delaware Academy and other organizations. Promote community events through a centralized calendar, kiosk, and brochures to increase community involvement.
- c. Support O'Connor Hospital in order to maintain access to services, quality of care, and availability of specialists.
- d. Work with the Delhi Historical Society to promote the creative use of historic buildings such as the restored Cannon House, Delhi Telephone Company, Courthouse Square and the Central Business District.
- e. Continue to maintain a close relationship with SUNY Delhi. Work to expand utilization of college services and facilities. Focus on strategies to encourage college students to participate in community events and frequent Delhi businesses.

## **B. GOAL: EFFICIENT GOVERNMENT**

**Delhi will govern openly and cost effectively.**

### **1. Context**

Delhi Town and Village governments have made a decision to work together to strengthen our community. This plan commits us to efficient delivery of community services and excellent community services at all levels of government.

### **2. Policies**

- a. Expand cooperation between the Town and Village regarding municipal functions and explore opportunities for consolidation.

- b. Monitor and track progress, including a periodic review of the implementation and effectiveness of this Plan.
- c. Periodically review property assessed valuations to ensure consistency and equitable results.
- d. Provide adequate financial, personnel, and technical support to implement these goals and actions.
- e. Enact, and diligently enforce clear, precise and understandable codes and ordinances to address our goals and actions.

### **3. Recommendations**

- a. Assertively pursue grant funding and public-private partnerships to support municipal services and joint projects.
- b. Apply for a grant from the State of New York Department of State to study shared services and perhaps municipal consolidation.
- c. Evaluate the benefits of any new regulation, incentive, service or program against its costs and tax consequences, both short and long term.
- d. Carefully monitor and stabilize the level of property taxation and increase the percentage of revenue derived from sources other than property taxes.

## **C. GOAL: THRIVING ECONOMY**

**Build a resilient economy that grows local businesses, provides quality jobs, protects historic main streets and strengthens the social fabric of our community.**

### **1. Context**

Our goal is to provide a stable, competitive and prosperous business environment, encouraging working farms, environmentally responsible small technology companies and light industries that create living wage jobs for our current and future skilled workers. We support our agricultural enterprises and work with farmers to identify strong regional and urban markets for their products. We are also focused on addressing issues identified by major employers, including farmers, such as the need for suitable housing and

professional employment for spouses of industry, hospital, and SUNY Delhi employees.

Our lively Village can be a valuable public space that attracts tourists who support our merchants and provide a significant economic stimulus to the community. As a college town, we must plan for the needs of students and find ways to integrate them into Village life.

From the Community Profile, we understand that the major employers in Delhi include government, educational institutions, health care facilities, manufacturing businesses, and retail establishments. The Delaware County Department of Economic Development and the Industrial Development Agency provide a variety of programs for new and existing businesses. In addition, economic development programs are available through the Catskill Watershed Commission. Those programs attempt to mitigate the impact of watershed regulations and land acquisitions by supporting and maintaining environmentally sound businesses.

Survey respondents felt that Delhi should attract a family restaurant (not fast food), clothing shop for adults, clothing store for children, department store, movie theater and recreation business (bowling alley, skating rink, etc.) Over seventy percent of residents supported medium scale retail development, retention of existing businesses, environmental or green businesses, focusing business in existing settled areas, small scale retail development, large scale retail development, a buy-local campaign and new light industry. For more information refer [to Appendix XXX: Survey Results](#).

## **2. Policies**

- a. Focus on the mixed-use Village as the center for retail and service activities by keeping it walkable, compact, livable and affordable. Promote active, walk-in retailing, services and cultural attractions. Maintain public buildings as strong anchors for the Village center.
- b. Protect existing small businesses through marketing, a business-friendly attitude and a buy-local mentality.
- c. Attract new service and retail businesses that meet the needs of all residents, students, and employees.
- d. Work with NYC DEP and others to attract environmentally responsible light industry, particularly green businesses that are compatible with Delhi's traditional character.
- e. Promote tourism as a significant regional economic driver.
- f. Encourage local business development through home occupations that are compatible with the residential and rural character.

- g. Plan for and meet the shopping, service and housing needs of students through close coordination with SUNY Delhi.
- h. Ensure that Delhi is business-friendly by continually updating, streamlining, and enforcing codes and permitting processes.
- i. Make residents aware of the CWC Economic Development Programs and other County and State assistance programs. Advocate for new initiatives that benefit Delhi's businesses.

### **3. Recommendations**

- a. Increase resident knowledge about grant, loan, marketing, workforce development, and business planning programs, available from Delaware County Industrial Development Authority, Delaware County Economic Development, the Small Business Administration, the Chambers of Commerce, and the Catskill Watershed Corporation.
- b. Target business attraction initiatives to specific businesses that are likely to succeed in Delhi.
- c. Work with Delaware County's Industrial Development Agency to develop "shovel ready" locations and flexible space for start-up companies and plan for development of appropriate infrastructure to support business expansion.
- d. Work with local Chambers of Commerce and SUNY Delhi to inventory nearby attractions and amenities and conduct market analysis to identify a strategic position for Delhi in the regional tourism market.
- e. Adopt design standards to ensure that buildings and sites are consistent and compatible with the architectural character of the surrounding Town and Village environment.
- f. Identify and market Delhi's assets through brochures, web sites, and face-to-face education.
- g. Identify and revitalize underutilized sites and encourage streetscape and building rehabilitation to improve the physical environment of business areas.
- h. Consider development of local incentives, perhaps through adoption of performance standards or use of development bonuses to encourage commercial building rehabilitation and downtown revitalization.

## **D. GOAL: SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE**

**Actively support and promote sustainable agriculture as a vital component of our community and our local and regional economy.**

### **1. Context**

Maintaining active farms is essential. Farming makes a vital contribution to Delhi, playing an important role in maintaining productive land and open space, providing jobs and food, and expanding tourism. Delhi can strengthen agriculture and support our farmers by fostering their economic viability in the following manners: encouraging innovation, use of alternative energy, marketing, establishment of farm stands and development of programs and facilities that add value to farm products.

From the Community Profile, we understand that there are 90 parcels of agricultural land comprising 9,158 acres in the Town of Delhi, including three parcels containing 249 acres in the Village. Agricultural land accounts for 23.5% of the total land in Delhi. According to the assessor's database, 62% of agricultural land is used by dairy farms, followed by vacant farmland (21%) and cattle farms (11%).

Survey respondents strongly agree that Delhi should work to promote local farm products and protect agriculture from the impacts of development. Over seventy percent of respondents felt strongly that Delhi should help market local agricultural products, encourage Community Supported Agriculture, protect agriculture from the impacts of development, enable agricultural businesses to expand, encourage niche or specialty farming, and develop a voluntary program to purchase development rights. For more information refer [to Appendix XXX: Survey Results](#).

### **2. Policies**

- a. Educate the public and government leaders about the historic and vital role agriculture plays in Delhi's character and economy.
- b. Continually evaluate and address the challenges facing local farmers as identified in the 2010 Delaware County Agriculture Survey, including high assessment and land cost, and lack of access to capital, labor and specialized training.
- c. Use regulatory tools and techniques to conserve the maximum amount of agricultural land in large blocks for farm use, and for the benefits agriculture provides in maintaining open space, scenic vistas, water resources, and wildlife habitats.

- d. Direct development to suitable non-agricultural areas. This will prevent loss of fertile lands and use of prime agricultural soils.
- e. Encourage farmers, non-farmers who own farmland, and the public to participate in local land use decisions affecting agriculture.
- f. Seek advice and input from the public and private organizations that support the continuation of farming.
- g. Support a variety of farm types and farm businesses such as niche farming, micro-farming, alternate energy farming and sustainable methods and co-ops.
- h. Continue to work with the Watershed Agricultural Council and advocate for changes and new strategies to benefit Delhi's farms.
- i. Promote agri-tourism in the Delhi area. Advocate that agricultural products be included in local marketing programs.
- j. Recognize and support the Delaware County Ag & Farmland Protection Plan.

### **3. Recommendations**

- a. Develop an Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan that supports local farms.
- b. Advocate for changes in Watershed Agricultural Council policies that will increase flexibility in easement programs, and make it easier for land under WAC or DEP easement or ownership to be leased for farming.
- c. Encourage community-supported agriculture and support a buy-local food campaign that focuses on local produce, meats and dairy, value-added products, farm stands and farmers' markets.
- d. Consider allowing and encouraging a wider range of on-farm businesses to help farmers diversify their operations.
- e. Support the development of regional, community-scaled value-added agriculture enterprises including processing facilities.
- f. Evaluate the costs and benefits of providing additional tax incentives for farming.
- g. In anticipation of development pressure, consider enacting a Community Preservation Fund Law to protect agricultural land, open spaces, habitat and other natural resources.
- h. Increase resident knowledge about agricultural resources available from the Delaware County Watershed Affairs, Watershed Agricultural

## **E. GOAL: EFFECTIVE LAND MANAGEMENT**

**Create and enforce regulations which protect Delhi's scenic and natural resources and preserve our architectural and historic character.**

### **1. Context**

Traditional development patterns help to preserve relationships and interactions between neighbors and define the rural character. Individual land use decisions will drive the need for infrastructure, public services, and the ability to conserve natural resources and environment. Working within the framework of the New York City Watershed Memorandum of Agreement, Delhi will balance land use to achieve the goals of controlled growth, support for working farms and conservation of open space. Over seventy percent of survey respondents felt strongly that Delhi should protect architectural resources and historic character, direct site design, preserve scenic resources, protect farmland, buffer residential uses and preserve open space.

### **2. Policies**

- a. Encourage land uses that are compatible in density, scale, setting and architecture with traditional character and contribute to scenic beauty by avoiding disruption of scenic vistas, viewsheds, ridgelines and other features.
- b. Encourage utilization of NYC DEP-owned lands for traditional land uses such as sustainable forest management and bluestone and gravel mining.
- c. Encourage commercial growth in a well-planned and carefully thought-out manner. Focus development in already settled areas and away from environmentally sensitive resources to conserve open space and maintain rural character.
- d. Work to utilize the available benefits and mitigate the impacts associated with the NYC watershed agreement.
- e. Prevent the pollution of air, surface and groundwater supplies, streams and ponds. Ensure the adequacy of drainage facilities, safeguard the water table, and encourage the wise use and sound management of natural resources.

- f. Use landscaping, signage, public art or other decorative features to define and improve the entrances or gateways to the community.
- g. Encourage and make suitable provisions for the use of alternative energy sources, such as solar and wind energy systems.
- h. Provide for fair, thorough and consistent implementation and enforcement of local zoning and subdivision regulations.
- i. Maintain active involvement in reviewing NYC land acquisition and easement proposals within the Town of Delhi.

### **3. Recommendations**

- a. Protect soils - especially prime agricultural soils - by focusing development in settled areas around the hamlets, downtown and existing clusters of housing or commercial uses whenever possible.
- b. Encourage low-impact development (LID), where appropriate, as a sustainable land development approach.
- c. Review the Zoning Ordinances and related land use regulations. Appoint a joint Town and Village committee to guide the process to update the codes to conform to the Comprehensive Plan as soon as possible.
- d. Work with NYCDEP to expand access to protected lands for recreational use such as cross country skiing and hunting.
- e. Evaluate the need to develop regulations to address gas drilling and hydrofracturing.

## **F. GOAL: QUALITY HOUSING**

**Develop a varied selection of quality housing for people who live and work in Delhi.**

### **1. Context**

Delhi strives to offer quality housing for residents of all ages, incomes and stages of life. An increasing number of upstate New York communities are facing a variety of housing problems. In Delhi's case the significant amount of land that is under easement or targeted under the Land Acquisition Program increases competition for remaining buildable land. A balance between jobs and available housing is essential.

Major employers note that a lack of housing considered desirable by their professional staff presents a significant challenge when recruiting personnel. Delhi's approach strives to offer life cycle housing where young couples can rent an apartment or buy a starter home; grow into a home large enough for a family, and, as empty nesters, transition into townhomes or other retirement options.

Over seventy percent of survey respondents support development of single family homes, homes affordable to young families and seniors, affordable apartments and assisted living housing options for seniors.

## **2. Policies**

- a. Encourage rural residential land uses that are of such density, scale, setting, and architecture that they do not detract from scenic vistas, viewsheds, ridgelines and other features.
- b. Provide a range of housing opportunities for families and seniors, primarily in the Village, and secondarily in the Town nearest to the Village.
- c. Plan for the needs of residents who wish to downsize from large homes to smaller living accommodations.
- d. Use clustering for new residential developments to assure more economical provision of services and infrastructure and protect open space.
- e. Allow barn conversions, in-law apartments, and residential use of accessory structures (such as senior cottages) to provide affordable housing options for seniors.
- f. Work closely with SUNY Delhi to successfully integrate student housing into the community.
- g. Work with major employers to attract professional level housing. This will aid in recruitment of personnel desiring to live in Delhi and subsequently contribute to the quality of life.
- h. Encourage or incentivize public and private cooperation in maintaining the visual image of the community. Permit traditional land use patterns and residential densities that strengthen community character.

### **3. Recommendations**

- a. Consider development of a phased tax exemption for first-time homebuyers earning less than 80% of the area’s median income. Delete?
- b. Consider adoption of a density bonus that allows additional residential units to be constructed if the sponsor sets aside a percentage of units at a sales price that is affordable to homeowners earning between 80% and 120% of the area median income.
- c. Explore opportunities to partner with local housing providers to secure New York State Funds through the Division of Homes and Community Renewal (HCR) to develop a program that offers grants and loans to first time homebuyers earning between 80% and 120% of median income, in order to close the affordability gap in current purchase prices.
- d. Encourage rehabilitation and improvement of rental properties.
- e. Address the need for accessible and affordable senior housing.
- f. Explore the feasibility of locating a retirement community and/or assisted living community in Delhi.
- g. Review all existing building codes and update them as necessary.
- h. Adopt design standards for new multi-family housing to ensure that buildings and sites are consistent with the architectural character of the surrounding Town and Village environment.

## **G. GOAL: WELL MAINTAINED MODERN INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Ensure that our infrastructure meets current and future needs for reliable telecommunications, transportation, green energy and a walkable community.**

### **1. Context**

The availability and adequacy of infrastructure is critical to maintaining quality of life, encouraging density in the Village, and ensuring that new development does not negatively affect farms, water quality, and effective wastewater management for existing property owners. Access to infrastructure for

telecommunications, transportation, energy, utilities, and other municipal services are important to attract and retain residents and businesses.

Over seventy percent of survey respondents supported Delhi's efforts to: improve road conditions, make the village more walkable with sidewalks and other amenities, provide public and senior transportation, provide telecommunications including internet and cable, support alternate energy such as wind and solar, improve parks, trails, and community spaces, and expand senior services

## **2. Policies**

- a. Continue to supply high quality and cost-effective municipal services and utilities.
- b. Work to promote energy conservation, energy efficiency and renewable energy production in a manner consistent with Delhi's character.
- c. Develop the telecommunications infrastructure required to maintain and improve Delhi's status as a competitive business location. In addition to high-speed infrastructure for email and entertainment, plan for other forms of e-commerce as well as advanced services such as distance learning and telemedicine.
- d. Plan for multiple modes of transport, including cars, trucks, buses, bicycles, and walking. Ensure that these conform with ADA accessibility standards where possible.
- e. Provide for safe and easily accessible off-street trails, providing access to parks, schools, activities, shopping, natural areas, and protected lands.
- f. Preserve scenic roads in order to maintain aesthetic quality, natural beauty, scenery, roadside views and rural character.

## **3. Recommendations**

- a. Make efforts to "green" municipal operations and reduce environmental impacts, including use of alternate energy and the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Program Certification.
- b. Work with Town and Village Highway Departments, the NYS Department of Transportation, and utility companies to minimize the undesirable effects of road management (paving, widening of shoulders, ditch-cleaning, tree-cutting, development of the transportation

network, etc.) while still ensuring safety. Pursue opportunities to locate utility lines underground when possible.

- c. Develop a joint multi-modal transportation plan that meets the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and future transit users/senior transport users. Plan to provide infrastructure to support hybrid and electric cars.
- d. Expand bicycling amenities to benefit residents and cycling enthusiasts by designating, developing and maintaining bicycle routes, safety measures, and bike racks.
- e. Identify and designate scenic roads. Investigate the development of a scenic byway link as part of the Route 28 Central Catskills Scenic Byway being proposed by the Central Catskills Collaborative. Consider the adoption of a scenic road law/rural road law.
- f. Adopt a “Complete Streets” ordinance that results in a road network that is safer, more livable and more welcoming to everyone including the young and old, motorists and bicyclists, pedestrians and wheelchair users, and others.

## **H. GOAL: HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE**

**Promote a high quality of life including a full array of cultural and recreational resources and community services that match the needs and interests of residents of all ages and abilities.**

### **1. Context**

Throughout the visioning workshop, survey and focus groups residents identified the quality of life, friendliness of the community, and ability to comfortably raise a family as aspects of Delhi they most admire. Art, culture and recreation play an important role in helping the community to remain a family-friendly community and in positioning the community as an appealing place for new companies and employees. In addition, access to cultural and recreational programs contributes to the physical health of community residents. Over half of survey respondents ranked ambulance and fire protection, utility services, health care, and highway maintenance as good or excellent.

### **2. Policies**

- a. Provide and continually improve a variety of recreational resources that are accessible to youth, adults and seniors on municipal lands and facilities and through partnerships with other organizations.

- b. Strive to increase opportunities for residents to access recreational facilities at Delaware Academy and at SUNY Delhi.
- c. Educate the public about existing municipal recreational resources and cultural events.
- d. Create linkages and trails. Extend existing pedestrian walkways to create continuity throughout the community, providing connections to existing and planned mixed use areas, amenities and recreational resources. Expand bicycling amenities to benefit residents and cycling enthusiasts by designating, developing, and maintaining bicycle routes, safe roadways, and bicycle racks.
- e. Support arts and cultural activities and organizations to enrich the lives of local residents.
- f. Advocate for increased access to NYCDEP-owned land for recreation.
- g. Maintain a safe community by supporting the EMS service and fire department.
- h. Plan for and encourage excellent telecommunications services including cellular phone coverage, cable and satellite television and high speed internet through facilities that are located in such a way to have minimal or no impact on scenic resources.

### **3. Recommendations**

- a. Work with O'Connor Hospital and SUNY Delhi to evaluate the health and recreation needs of the community and develop a recreation plan that inventories existing resources, identifies emerging recreation interest areas and establish a plan for improvement and enhancement of recreation facilities and programming.
- b. Develop a system of impact fees or other mechanisms to ensure that any future higher density development contributes to the park and recreation programs.
- c. Develop and improve public access to the river corridor and reservoirs for walking, biking, fishing, kayaking and canoeing. Continue to advance projects to develop boat launches at Fitch's Bridge and at Hoyt Park.
- d. Develop a system of walking trails and sidewalks strengthening the linkages to the Village core.

- e. Consider development of new amenities, including recreational facilities, a dog park, and community gardens. Bring the West Branch Recreation and Aquatics Center to fruition.
- f. Improve maintenance of existing playgrounds.
- g. Collaborate on grant applications to funding sources such as the NYS Council on the Arts, and the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. Provide financial support, as available, for cultural programs, events and venues.
- h. Preserve historic resources including buildings, places, views, and stone walls which represent distinctive elements of our historic, architectural and cultural heritage for the economic, cultural and educational benefit of the community. Encourage nomination of local historic landmarks for listing on a local, state and national register of historic places in order to access available funding and protect sites from adverse impacts.
- i. Protect the architectural style and character of the Village's buildings and spaces. Review and revise, as necessary, policies to inventory, designate, and preserve the Village's historic structures and period architecture.
- j. Review the general code regulations with a view towards eliminating inconsistencies, outdated practices and conflicts.