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# **Liberty Joint Comprehensive Plan**

DRAFT

September 2007

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**(or photo credits for**  
**cover if applicable)**

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## Introduction

### *What is a Comprehensive Plan?*

A comprehensive plan provides a general, broad overview of the development of a town or village and reviews the past development patterns which have led directly to present conditions. Additionally, the plan provides a long range view of how a town or village should develop or redevelop. Simply stated, the comprehensive plan defines where a particular community has been, where it is presently, where it wants to go, and how it plans to get there. Without a comprehensive plan a municipality has no basic guide or frame of reference to ensure that decisions support the desires and aspirations of its residents.

The content of the comprehensive plan can vary, but generally contains the following elements: goals and policies, land use plans, housing, economic development, natural and cultural resources, services and facilities, open space and recreation, circulation and implementation. The comprehensive plan is not an end product; moreover, it is an evolutionary process requiring ongoing refinement and review. By its very nature a comprehensive plan must be flexible, and able to accommodate change when needed, to insure that it can react to unforeseen events while maintaining the overall objectives of the plan. While a common link or strategy should exist between each element of the comprehensive plan, each element should be able to stand on its own. To reiterate, the comprehensive plan, and each element thereof, will remain relevant and useful only when the comprehensive planning process continues as an ongoing municipal function.

### *Why does Liberty need a comprehensive plan?*

Liberty is a perfect example of why comprehensive plans are a necessity for any municipality. Decades ago, Liberty enjoyed relative prosperity due to significant tourism. Along with this economic prosperity, came a school district regarded as one of the best in the state academically and a regional power house athletically. Community pride was strong and civic responsibility was worn as a badge of courage.

As Liberty's economy declined, so did the very fabric of this once proud town. Like many Sullivan County towns, Liberty has been struggling for an identity, reminiscent of the good old days, and waiting for some unforeseen event to save the town and make everything as it used to be. This has not happened and will not. As citizens of Liberty, it is our responsibility to reverse this trend. This responsibility begins with the development of a comprehensive plan designed to guide Liberty and its residents to a rebirth of economic strength, civic unity and community pride.

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*Comprehensive Planning Process – How we developed the Plan*

The Liberty comprehensive planning process began in July 2006. Under the direction of Town of Liberty Supervisor, Frank DeMayo a committee was formed with the task of updating the 1999 Comprehensive Plan that was never formally adopted. Seven community stakeholders representing different aspects of the town were asked to participate in the process. Every effort was made to seek public input from the community and to receive as much feedback as possible from everyone who wanted to contribute.



Liberty in the Region

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Two public input sessions were held to solicit comments from the public. The first took place on August 24, 2006 at the CVI building in Ferndale. Participants were given an overview of the comprehensive planning process and were asked to identify one thing they love about Liberty and one thing they would like to change. About fifty people from the community participated. The second community outreach meeting was held at BOCES and built upon the information gathered at the first meeting. Participants were asked to develop goals and projects related to the committee’s identified policy areas as well as complete a mapping exercise to identify where they would like to see different types of development (i.e., housing, commercial, industrial, etc.). The results of both community outreach meetings are located in the Appendix of this document.

Also, two surveys were developed to solicit comment from all residents. Every effort was made to send the first survey to as many people in the town as possible through a saturation mailing process. A total of 506 completed surveys were received. Questions ranged from personal demographics to what people would like to see in the town, to things people would like to see changed.

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A second survey was developed to get involvement from Liberty’s youth, a demographic that is critically important for the future development of the town. Surveys were handed out to students in school and as a result 392 responses were analyzed. A youth meeting was also held at the high school and students were asked to identify what they would like to see in Liberty based on the policy areas that the committee identified. Approximately thirty-five students attended the after school event and useful feedback was incorporated into this plan.

Based on all the feedback received, the comprehensive planning committee synthesized the data in meetings, typically every other week. The committee utilized the survey results to develop the plan’s goals and objectives, and identified tasks that must be implemented to carry out this plan.





*History*

The Town of Liberty is located in the north-central section of Sullivan County. Surrounding towns within Sullivan County are Callicoon to the West; Rockland to the North; Bethel and Thompson to the South; and Fallsburg and Neversink to the East. Liberty is also bordered by the Catskill State Park to the North and a very small portion of the Town extends into the New York City Water Supply Watershed. The lands of the Town of Liberty encompass approximately 85 square miles. Major transportation arteries include Route 17 (future Interstate 86), and State Routes 52 and 55.

Liberty includes historic rural communities that feature a unique mix of forest preserves, working farms, retail businesses, industrial sites, and residential areas. The communities' natural beauty, rich social history, high quality schools and vibrant civic life, as well as their small town feel, growing arts community, and proximity to nearby employment centers, has attracted an unusually diverse population. The Village of Liberty is an urban center of approximately two square miles with high residential density, a historic downtown district along North and South Main Street, a commercial area on State Route 52, and spans both sides of Route 17 (future Interstate 86).

The Town of Liberty encompasses extensive lands and several hamlets surrounding the Village: Parksville and Bradley to the North & East, White Sulphur Springs to the West, and Ferndale and Swan Lake towards the South. Approximately 5,000 residents live within the Village border, and another 4,500 in and around the town hamlets.

Liberty was first settled 200 years ago as a farming community to supply fresh food to New York City's rapidly expanding urban population. When the Erie Canal made it possible for agricultural products from fertile areas of the Midwest to be shipped economically to New York City, Liberty evolved into one of New York City's major sources of poultry products. By the mid-1800s, the area's physical isolation, fresh air, abundant water resources and excellent rail service helped transform Liberty into one of the nation's most important tuberculosis treatment centers. Increasing numbers of New York City residents became familiar with the area's scenic beauty while visiting family members "taking the cure" and interest in the area as a vacation center grew.

As the 19<sup>th</sup> century neared to a close, large numbers of working-class families—seeking to avoid the stifling summer heat of New York City's tenement districts—began vacationing in the increasingly abundant bungalow colonies, boarding houses, hotels and youth camps located in and around Liberty. Among the most famous of these establishments were Grossinger's in Liberty, Kutsher's, and the Villa Roma Resort, which were known for their American Plan family vacations featuring three complete meals a day, a wide range of programmed recreational activities for children and



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adults, and headliner entertainment from New York City. The popularity of New York City Jewish comedians among the region’s Jewish, Irish, and Italian vacationers helped the area earn the nickname, “The Borscht Belt.” The success of the region’s hotels during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century enabled the Village of Liberty to develop into one of upstate New York’s most vibrant retail centers.

The economic base of the Village and the Town of Liberty remained strong through the late 1960s, when American leisure time preferences began to change and inexpensive airfares made destinations and resorts in Florida, the Caribbean, Arizona, Nevada, and California accessible to increasing numbers of working and middle-class New Yorkers. Between 1960 and 2000, the number of resorts operating within Sullivan County plummeted from 300 to 30. The collapse of the region’s hospitality industry undermined the profitability of local farms, many of which provided fresh produce, poultry, and meats to this key industry. Business losses in the hospitality and agricultural sectors, in turn, caused many retail businesses in the Village and the Town to close. These economic losses eroded the value of local real estate, causing tax revenues to fall and creating serious financial problems for both the Village and Town, which had to reduce vital services. While increases in state and Federal government aid to cities and counties helped the Village and the Town cope with these losses during the late 1960s and early 1970s, subsequent deep cuts in domestic social spending intensified the Village and Town’s fiscal problems during the latter part of the 1970s and the 1980s.

While much of the country enjoyed a much-needed period of economic growth during the 1990s, “upstate” New York continued to experience serious economic problems. The regional economy grew by less than 5% between 1980 and 2000, and urban sprawl led to a 40% growth in urbanized areas during this period. This pattern of development undermined the vitality of most of the region’s established villages, towns, and cities, while increasing the costs of providing basic public services – roads, sewers, street lighting, snow removal, and public education.

Beginning in the early 1990’s, community activists created a variety of community revitalization programs that achieved significant initial successes and rewards. Over time, these community efforts progressed to more organized stages as local businesses and residents joined forces and established volunteer-based organizations, including the Chamber of Commerce’s Revitalization Committee and Liberty ALIVE. In October 2004, the Town and Village, together with the local Gerry Foundation, founded the Liberty Community Development Corporation (LCDC) to create an organizational framework for a long-term, sustained revitalization of the Liberty.

While many of the effects of a sustained economic depression are visible in the community today, with tax rates high and the tax base low, and while public services



are limited and the infrastructure shows its age – there is commitment and determination in the community to turn its condition around and become, once again, a vibrant and desirable place to live.

This document is an important part of these efforts, and the Comprehensive Plan Committee would like to thank all residents involved in making this plan – today and going forward – a living and breathing tool to work towards the improvement of our community.

**INTRODUCTION**

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**INTRODUCTION**



### How to Use This Plan

Are you a developer or a business?

1. Refer to the **Land Use** section
  - A. This section will assist you in determining if the use you are contemplating is permitted in Liberty.
    - i. This is accomplished by reviewing the schedule of district regulations.
  - B. This section will identify the areas in Liberty where the proposed use is permitted.
    - i. This is accomplished by reviewing the schedule of district regulations.
    - ii. In addition the zoning map of Liberty will define where the districts are located.

Housing Specific?

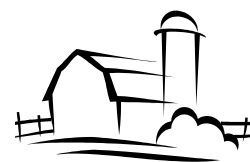
Business Specific?

If the proposed use is related to housing refer to the **Housing** section.

- A. This section defines the types of housing stock that Liberty has identified as necessary to support its citizenship.
- B. This section defines Liberty's demographics.
- C. This section defines what types of housing are permitted in each district.

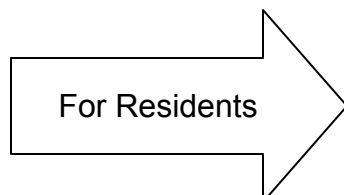
If the proposed use is related to a business refer to the **Economic Development** section.

- A. This section defines the types of businesses that Liberty has identified as desirable to support its economic diversity and the needs of its citizens.
- B. Additionally, this section will identify support systems available to the potential businessman.
- C. This section defines the demographics of Liberty.
- D. This section defines what types of businesses are permitted in each district.



**How to Use this Plan (cont.)**

**INTRODUCTION**

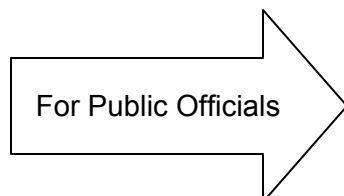


This comprehensive plan will:

Provide insight into how the comprehensive plan will insure that Liberty can grow, improve its economic strength and diversity while maintaining its rural atmosphere, open spaces and environmental sensitivity.

To understand how this will be accomplished the reader should first review the zoning map and district intent table. The remainder of the comprehensive plan is divided into specific subject areas that are self explanatory and detail how the identified goals will be achieved.

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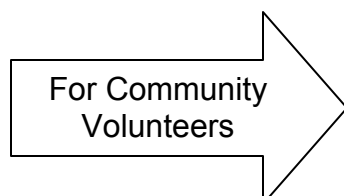


This comprehensive plan will:

Provide a blueprint for officials to follow as they enact legislation and develop policies.

To understand how this will be accomplished the reader should first review the zoning map and district intent table. The remainder of the comprehensive plan is divided into specific subject areas that are self explanatory and detail how the identified goals will be achieved.

**INTRODUCTION**



This comprehensive plan will:

Provide guidelines for community based committees to follow to insure that the decisions that they make support the objectives of the comprehensive plan.

To understand how this will be accomplished the reader should first review the zoning map and district intent table. The remainder of the comprehensive plan is divided into specific subject areas that are self explanatory and detail how the identified goals will be achieved.



Liberty Joint Comprehensive Plan 2007

Economic Development



Introduction

Economic Development activities beneficial for the Development combines abstract policies as well as initiatives to restrictive regu

**INTRODUCTION** - This section helps to define the specific policy area.

and engaging in ents. Economic nents, includes from pro-active

**POLICY AREA** - Refer to specific policy area for further information.

Objectives

- Work towards a diversified activities.
- Preserve and protect hist among Liberty's residents.
- Promote an attractive imag

**OBJECTIVES** - This section helps to identify specific items to be accomplished in working toward achieving the overall goal.

**GOALS** - Refer to page 13 to see what goals pertain to the policy area.

Economic Development Tasks

- ⊙ Establish the CDC as a clearinghouse "1-stop shop" for existing and new businesses.
- ⊙ Create tools (i.e. marketing, PR, informational packets) to educate small bu
- ⊙ E: to CDC iness
- re

**TASKS** - The tasks set specific actions to help satisfy the goals and objectives. All of the tasks are located in the Implementation Schedule.

**Agri-tourism:** Tourism based on attracting visitors to a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural or agribusiness operation for the purpose of enjoyment, education, or active involvement in the activities of the farm or operation.  
**BID:** A special assessment district to create a source of funds for economic development in which property owners agree to have an additional charge placed on their tax bill in order to fund special activities such as capital improvements or business

**DEFINITIONS** - Terms identified in the text are defined to help the reader understand the plan





## Goals

*The goals established by the Liberty Comprehensive Planning Committee were formed as a direct result of the feedback received via the community surveys and the focus group meetings held at the beginning of the planning process. Each goal represents an issue that was identified as an area of importance by the data collected from the residents of Liberty. The goals will require the efforts and cooperation of multiple individuals and organizations at the local, state and regional levels to ensure they are accomplished.*

- 1 Balance conservation and development to provide for sustainable growth.
- 2 Provide residents and visitors with a diversity of year round activities while preserving and capitalizing on the town's natural resources.
- 3 Meet the housing needs of the existing and future town population.
- 4 Create, enhance and promote hamlet and village business centers.
- 5 Encourage the diversification of the town's economic base by supporting environmentally conscience initiatives, while achieving a sustainable balance between the built and natural environment.
- 6 Sustain, promote and support active agricultural and forest land.
- 7 Plan, build, manage and maintain public and private utilities and infrastructure to meet the needs of the growing population and environment.
- 8 Recognize, support and promote the social and educational benefits of high quality schools and libraries while developing an educated, productive citizenry and quality workforce as a means for preparing for the future.
- 9 Improve efficiency, information dissemination and communication within municipalities.
- 10 Encourage the continuous support of improving tax reform through specific legislation.

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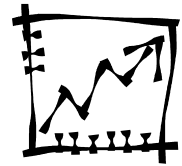


**GOALS**

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## **Economic Development**

Economic Development for Liberty will include developing and engaging in activities beneficial for the economic future of the town and its residents. Economic Development combines quantitative and qualitative measurements, includes abstract policies as well as hands-on operational tasks, and ranges from pro-active initiatives to restrictive regulations.

Through its comprehensive planning process, Liberty has examined a variety of questions: What is our labor force and economic base? What types of businesses and jobs would we like to attract to and grow in our community? Where should businesses locate? How can we market our community and what do we have to offer in terms of technical and financial assistance? How much will our overall tax revenue increase? What is the best way for Liberty to balance economic growth, preservation of open space, and protection of our environment?

Statistically Sullivan County and Liberty are significantly below average when it comes to key economic indicators in the region. However, the potential for positive economic development has built up over the last several years.

Local residents, second homeowners and short-term visitors have renewed their interest in one of the last remaining rural environments within a two-hour drive from the New York City metro area. General shifts in 'quality of life' priorities are adding momentum to the increasing number of smaller scale high-quality businesses that make up the economic fabric in the region, be it in the agricultural, industrial, or commercial sectors, and public and private organizations (e.g. County Government, Town and Village officials, Liberty Community Development Corporation (CDC), Sullivan Renaissance, etc.) have joined forces to establish a support network for new and expanding entrepreneurs.

Through their participation, Liberty's citizens provided input and direction for the creation of the economic development goals for this Comprehensive Plan. Through its implementation, Liberty is determined to improve its economic performance.

### **Objectives**

- »»»→ Work towards a diversified tourism industry with a balanced mix of year round activities.
- »»»→ Preserve and protect historic sites and landscapes to foster stewardship among Liberty's residents.
- »»»→ Promote an attractive image of Liberty to tourists.

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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»»»» Encourage and promote the arts and cultural activities as a vital industry.

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»»»» Encourage environmentally friendly business growth and construction methods.

3

»»»» Encourage adaptation of waste management techniques.

4

»»»» Increase and diversify quality job opportunities for quality employment.

5

»»»» Increase agricultural economic development and diversification of existing farms/croplands.

6

»»»» Preserve and enhance downtown areas and historic districts.

7

»»»» Encourage the establishment of a diversified local economy.

8

»»»» Increase tax rateables.

**General Economic Development Tasks**

- ⊙ Establish the CDC as a clearinghouse "one-stop shop" for existing and new businesses.
- ⊙ Create tools (i.e., marketing, PR, informational packets) to educate *small businesses* coming to the town.
- ⊙ Establish an Economic Development task force in the CDC to focus on promoting entrepreneurship and business recruitment.
- ⊙ Create and maintain an inventory of existing businesses.
- ⊙ Create a comprehensive business plan for Liberty by defining target industries and businesses that are desirable and suitable for Liberty, including a five-year strategic plan for Economic Development.
- ⊙ Promote community groups in their effort to improve the visual beauty of the town to encourage business development.

**Agricultural Economic Development Tasks**

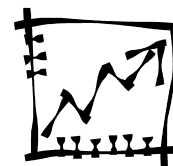
*In an effort to ensure existing farms carry on, certain steps need to be taken to ensure their survival, among them are:*

- ⊙ Preserve the critical mass of farms and agriculture support service by creating a

**Agri-tourism:** Tourism based on attracting visitors to a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural or agribusiness operation for the purpose of enjoyment, education, or active involvement in the activities of the farm or operation.

**BID:** A special assessment district to create a source of funds for economic development in which property owners agree to have an additional charge placed on their tax bill in order to fund special activities such as capital improvements or business promotion.

**CDC:** Community Development Corporation; a not-for-profit organization incorporated to provide programs, offer services and engage in other activities that promote and support a community. CDCs usually serve a geographic location such as a neighborhood or a town.



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niche market for each farm through diversification and innovative farming strategies.

- ⊙ Research opportunities to promote *Agri-tourism* through the creation of a year-round farmer’s market, such as a *produce transfer station*, including marketing, processing and distribution/exportation opportunities.
- ⊙ Create an Agricultural Taskforce at the CDC level to ensure farmland preservation.
- ⊙ Continue efforts in developing the Ag Industrial Park.

***Light Industrial Economic Development Tasks***

- ⊙ Develop standards to provide clean/light industrial development opportunities along the Route 17 Corridor (Future I-86).
- ⊙ Create shovel ready sites (such as high tech/green corporate parks)
- ⊙ Create a ‘*Green Liberty*’ Taskforce to work with the college to create incentives for green building techniques for new construction and renovations.

***Retail Services Economic Development Tasks***

- ⊙ Develop standards and target retail growth towards Main Streets to continue existing efforts.
- ⊙ Establish *BID* in Downtown Liberty.
- ⊙ Create Retention and Development Plans for local hamlets to create profiles/identities for business recruitment and retention.

***Hospitality Economic Development Tasks***

- ⊙ Encourage the development of hotels, motels, and B&Bs to locate within Liberty (i.e.:conference centers).
- ⊙ Research and develop a feasibility study for the creation of a county fairground.

**Green:** Refers to the utilization of sustainable living principles to reduce impact on the environment.  
**Produce Transfer Station:** A centralized location where agricultural producers or distributors sell directly to consumers or other distributors. An agricultural distribution center where local producers deliver their product and then is distributed to consumers (i.e. individuals, restaurants, schools, etc.).  
**Micro-business:** A subset category of small business referring to independent, consultants, freelancers, artists, etc. with minimal employee base and annual sales.  
**Small Business:** An independently owned business having a less than 500 employees.



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**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**



## Infrastructure

Infrastructure encompasses those services such as water, sewer, roads (including drainage structures), public transportation and solid waste disposal which are provided for the public under the management and supervision of various Town and Village departments. These services are paid for by the public through user fees and/or municipal taxes.

The Town and Village have historically officially managed their respective infrastructure needs as separate governing bodies. Unofficially, the two governing bodies have cooperated in shared services when necessary.

In more recent years, specific arrangements have been made between the two governments to memorialize agreements through contracts and specific agreements. For instance, the Village provides sewer capacity at pre-determined rates for sewer districts within the Town. Water systems have been integrated to allow for shared water in the event of a shut down or shortage to either Town or Village systems. Road maintenance and equipment are shared for specific projects.

Currently the Town's infrastructure consists of 125 miles of road in the Town, and an additional 21.1 miles of road in the Village.

The Town manages three water supply systems, with a fourth system expected to be on line in by the spring of 2007. The Village manages two water supply systems. The eight water districts are engineered to provide adequate capacity to all public systems.

Currently Liberty does not offer any public transportation services other than the management of its roads. Short Line bus service and local taxi services are available as private companies for the transportation needs of the public.

Solid Waste collection services are available through private companies in the Town. There is also a County run waste transfer station available in Ferndale. The Village has mandatory solid waste and recycling pick up within its boundaries.

### **Objectives**

- »»»→ Plan for the future disposal of solid waste while maximizing environmental and economic benefits.
- »»»→ Optimize transportation network (roads, sidewalks, recreational paths) for current and future needs.
- »»»→ Establish effective service and support infrastructure for Liberty's

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- 1 development, prioritizing the use of low impact, innovative systems.
- 2 → Plan and provide for the expansion of water and sewer to meet current and future needs.
- 3
- 4 → Protect the towns water resources to ensure quality and quantity.
- 5 **Tasks**
- 6 ⊙ Demonstrate cost saving measures for *Green Infrastructure* (NYSERDA, LEEDS) and set an example for forward thinking and innovation for sustainability.
- 7
- 8 ⊙ Build on and take advantage of I-86 conversion.
- 8 ⊙ Reduce garbage and increase recycling opportunities.
- 10 ⊙ Create a long term plan for an integrated, comprehensive water and sewer system for Liberty.
- ⊙ Look at requiring individual septic/water systems for large scale developments.
- ⊙ Develop standards for use of private water and sewer systems.
- ⊙ Research availability of DSL, Road Runner, Cable, Cell towers, natural gas possibilities, and geothermal opportunities within Liberty.
- ⊙ Create a monitoring system for cumulative impacts of multiple developments.
- ⊙ Create design standards for infrastructure (i.e. lighting, signage, roads, sidewalks, etc.) improvements.
- ⊙ Develop and adopt an *Official Map* for the town and village by identifying roads, bridges and culverts to prioritize improvements.
- ⊙ Create a *Capital Improvement Plan* to carry out the *Official Map*.

**Capital Improvement Plan:**  
A legally adopted plan of proposed infrastructure improvements and outlines a budget to finance them over the years.

**Green Infrastructure:**  
Structures that incorporate the principles of design that minimizes the impact of the building on the environment will be minimal over the lifetime of the building.

**Official Map:** A legally adopted map that conclusively shows the location and width of existing and proposed streets, drainage rights-of-way, public facilities and public areas, including parks.



## Open Space

Open space in Liberty is comprised of forests, fields, wetlands, lakes, streams, and park lands. Whether publicly or privately owned, a large portion of the lands in Liberty remain undeveloped.

Public feedback indicated that open space is the major contributing factor to the quality of life here, as it directly affects the Town's environmental, social and economic welfare. From the time of its original settlement, and throughout its existence, open space and abundant natural resources have defined Liberty as a rural community and residents have indicated that they would like it to continue.

In an effort to conserve open space the Town, as well as the Village, maintains a number of parks and other open lands. These include:

- Walnut Mountain Park (265 acres).
- Hanofee Park (24 acre lake).
- La Polt Park
- Revonah Park
- Swan Lake Community Park

Each of these parks feature different venues of social opportunities. Among them are hiking, swimming, picnicking, bird watching, boating, and other sports. In the near future, a skate park will be added to this list of features.

The attractiveness of Liberty's open space is a major component of its economic existence. Farms, tourist and health related establishments have flourished as a result of these lands. Although Liberty has experienced a shift in these types of industries, new economic opportunities continue to be stimulated by Liberty's natural resources. There has been growth in part-time residents, timber related businesses and alternative types of farming, such as organic and non-traditional crops and livestock.

Traditionally, Liberty has not experienced large scale expansion and urban sprawl. Most land divisions have been minor subdivisions. Of late, there has been a significant increase in major subdivisions, resulting from land developers who see Liberty's open space as prime development opportunity. Residents and local officials recognize that it makes most sense for development to occur near the existing hubs, the Village and hamlets, in order to conserve open space and natural resources; and to minimize government expenses by utilizing existing infrastructure. This interest in major subdivision has been a driving factor in updating the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Laws.

Of course, the future benefits of open space are contingent upon the quality of its natural resources. Abundant wildlife and plant habitats are dependant upon clean soil, water and air. There is a delicate balance that must be maintained in order to support the biodiversity necessary for the existence of these resources.

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OPEN SPACE

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OPEN SPACE



OPEN SPACE

- 1 In recognition of the vital role open space plays, the Town recently appointed an Environmental Conservation Commission. The purpose of this Commission, among other duties, is to advise the Town Board in regard to development and preservation issues, conduct public information programs to increase the community's understanding of environmental issues, develop an inventory of open space resources, conduct studies and surveys and more.
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- 5 Protection of open space can help shape future growth and development. Proper planning will enable Liberty to attract new industries and residents while retaining its natural assets.
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**Objectives**

»»»→ Preserve viewsheds, natural resources and environmentally sensitive areas.

OPEN SPACE

- 10 »»»→ Encourage development practices to protect open space.

»»»→ Encourage preservation of farmland especially within existing Agricultural Districts.

»»»→ Promote stewardship for the preservation of open space.

»»»→ Create and expand recreational resources and opportunities within the town.

**Tasks**

- ⊙ Development of a recreational trail system throughout the town.
- ⊙ Zone for Open Space by requiring a minimum percentage of Open Space in specific zones.
- ⊙ Research and identify development practices for the protection of open space, such as conservation easements, TDR, PDR, deed restrictions and land trusts.
- ⊙ Create a public education campaign on the importance of the environment and the protection of open space.
- ⊙ Create an Open Space Advisory Council to assist in the development of the Open Space Plan.
- ⊙ Create an Open Space Plan to identify tracts of land that are currently open space, as well as the land uses of all properties in the Town and Village of Liberty. An inventory of natural resources should be included in this plan.
- ⊙ Develop high impact development checklist to assess and track the cumulative impacts of projects.

**Forest Management:** The application of business methods and forestry principles to the operation of a forest property for the purpose of maintaining forest resources and producing a continuous supply of forestlands.

OPEN SPACE





- ⊙ Create a Recreation Development Plan for the Parks & Recreation Department.
- ⊙ Redefine district intent in zoning to promote desired land use.
- ⊙ Promote conservation subdivisions.
- ⊙ Educate residents on the importance of *Forest Management* (i.e.. Logging, 480a tax leg) by developing standards and regulations.

*Refer to Agricultural Economic Development Tasks and Housing Tasks for further*

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OPEN SPACE



**Government Issues**

Government issues are defined as those activities undertaken by the Town and Village authorities in order to manage the affairs within their respective jurisdictional boundaries. Responsibilities include planning, budgeting and handling day to day operations as well as communicating and working with State and Federal agencies on matters relating to Town and Village management.

The Town of Liberty was established in 1807. The Village became a separate and distinct governing body in 1871. Historically, the Town and Village have governed each other's own affairs, however, within the past fifteen years, there has been interest in consolidating services. The town currently provides all of the Assessors responsibilities and the two municipalities share the information technology service. In 2006, a study was undertaken to examine the consolidation of the Village and the Town.

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GOVERNMENT ISSUES GOVERNMENT ISSUES GOVERNMENT ISSUES

**ELECTED OFFICIALS:**

Town of Liberty (4 year terms)	Village of Liberty (2 year terms)
Supervisor	Mayor
4 Councilpersons	4 Trustees
Town Clerk	
2 Town Judges	1 Village Judge
Highway Superintendent	

**MUNICIPAL DEPARTMENTS:**

Town of Liberty	Village of Liberty
Finance Office	
Town Clerk's Office	Village Clerk's Office (incl. Finances)
Court of Justice	Court of Justice
Building & Code Enforcement	Building & Code Enforcement
Highway	Department of Public Works (combines Highway, Water & Sewer)
Water & Sewer	
Parks & Recreation	
	Police Department
Assessor's Office (shared between Town and Village)	

**BOARDS AND COMMITTEES:**

Town of Liberty	Village of Liberty
Town Board	Board of Trustees
Planning Board	Planning Board
Zoning Board of Appeals	Zoning Board of Appeals
Grievance Review Board	Sign Review Committee
Parks & Recreation Board	
Environmental Conservation Commission	



**1 Objectives**

»»»→ Secure on-going coordination and cooperation between the Town and Village, school district, and neighboring municipalities.

**4**

**5**

»»»→ Increase communication and outreach to provide for effective community involvement.

»»»→ Identify and research additional sources of income for Liberty.

**8**

**9**

»»»→ Identify and research achievable means of tax reform and/or identify and research realistic options to reform taxation

**10**

**Tasks**

- ⊙ Continue and enhance court enforcement of property maintenance codes for compliance.
- ⊙ Review/create impact mitigation laws and ordinances for new housing developments.
- ⊙ Develop a checklist for developers at the planning board level to identify the necessary development processes to clearly define the necessary procedures for adhering to local ordinances.
- ⊙ Define the development process for new developers in town.
- ⊙ Develop an integrated zoning code to ensure continuity between the town and village.
- ⊙ Establish inclusionary zoning.
- ⊙ Research financial incentives to the improve Liberty.
- ⊙ Review and create an abatement program for the improvement of buildings in Liberty.
- ⊙ Educate planning and zoning board members to stay informed on local land use issues.
- ⊙ Create a sound capital improvement budget planning policy for all taxing authorities, including but not limited to the Town, Village, school district and emergency services.

For a listing of government services, see appendix.



## Youth

Liberty's past strong economy and the social climate of the times provided a different environment for its youth than our youth experience today. In past decades there were turbulent periods in our country's history, but Liberty with its small town attitude, protected its most vulnerable citizens with a sense of community, honor and respect.

Our school district was once recognized as one of the best academically in the state. Our athletic teams were considered regional power houses. Our scholastic teams competed on a national level. Liberty's youth were challenged at school, home and in the community to become the best citizens they could be. The school was a major part of the community. Throughout the community adults looked out not only for their own kids but those of their neighbors and took time to learn about those they did not know.

There were no arcades, sport complexes or teen clubs. A bowling alley, roller rink, little league, the outdoors and an imagination were the entertainment venues in Liberty during the sixties.

Children were allowed to be children. That is, simple childish indiscretions were dealt with appropriately, discretely and fairly. Good behavior was expected not rewarded. Mistakes were expected and not blown out of proportion. Problems were dealt with without excuses.

Our children today are growing up in a town that has little sense of community. This situation is not unique to Liberty, in fact most would say it is a sign of our times that we have to accept. Liberty remains a small town and as such is in a unique position to *not* accept this as status quo.

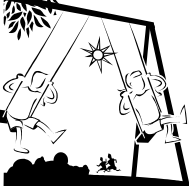
This is not about returning to a time of long ago because that is impossible. It is about restoring some fundamental basic values and accepting nothing less as a community. Pride, responsibility and accountability need to be restored in Liberty's children, school and community. The adults of this community must be the driving force behind this effort first by setting good examples and secondly by encouraging and facilitating the involvement of the youth of this community.

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YOUTH

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YOUTH

**1 Objectives**

- 2** >>>> Create an environment that is attractive for youth to live and work.
- 3** >>>> Improve communication between youth and various organizations.
- 4** >>>>
- 5** >>>> Encourage youth involvement and activism in Liberty.
- 6** >>>> Improve the connection between youth and Liberty.
- 7** >>>>
- 8** >>>> Integrate Liberty School District into community context.

**9 Tasks**

- ⊙ Work towards the creation of a Youth Center in Liberty.
- ⊙ Support the completion of the Skate Park at Walnut Mountain Park.
- ⊙ Establish a Job Center for Youth to create apprenticeship opportunities and promote jobs for youth.
- ⊙ Improve transportation opportunities for youth.
- ⊙ Educate youth in civic responsibility and participation.
- ⊙ Fully implement the Communities That Care (CTC) process for youth development in Liberty.
- ⊙ Develop programs to facilitate involvement in emergency services.
- ⊙ Establish and communicate a comprehensive activity and engagement program for youth in Liberty
- ⊙ Promote youth and School District participation in the municipal government process.
- ⊙ Foster collaboration between the Sullivan County Community College, BOCES and the new green technology initiatives to create degree programs.

**FACT:** In a survey among 392 high school students, 67% declared their intentions to attend 4-year college. 57% also stated that they did not plan to return to Liberty afterwards. A 2005 Communities That Care survey identified 'Community disconnect' as a major risk factor for Youth in Liberty.

YOUTH

YOUTH



## Housing

To live in safe and sound dwellings – that has been a basic human need since we started to huddle in caves. Few things show the quality of a community more than the availability of good housing for all residents, regardless of income or social status. Market forces normally take care of the upper end of the housing market – if there is a market for expensive homes, there are builders to put them up. However, without a full range of housing options a community can quickly become lopsided in its social make-up. Quality housing is important for public health, safety and the development of young people.

Housing is also an area of intense discussion and controversy in a community:

- Where shall new housing be built?
- What kind of housing?
- Do we prefer high to low density?
- How do we best balance housing needs and development projects with conservation and protection of the environment?
- Do we prefer homeownership to rental housing units?
- How many new units can the community bear?
- Rebuild or Rehabilitate?
- Public water and sewer or individual facilities?
- How 'green' can we build?

Those are just a few valid questions and concerns when it comes to housing – and we need to make sure that we have a framework in place to consider them.

And housing is an important economic factor in our region. Many jobs are directly or indirectly connected to building, maintaining and servicing houses and their inhabitants. For Liberty, as a municipality in New York State, property taxes are the main income source to pay for public services and our schools.

One of the few “urban” settings in Sullivan County is the Village of Liberty, which is completely surrounded by the Town of Liberty. In fact, according to 2000 US Census Data 13% of the county’s population live in the Town and Village of Liberty. While new development proposals are brought forward, the existing housing stock in Liberty is aging and deteriorating. More than 51% of the residential housing units were built prior to 1959 and 21% of the units were built before 1939.

Over the last couple of years, the housing market in our region has undergone significant changes, and the pressure is likely to remain high. Through the

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HOUSING

1 objectives

3 and tasks in this Comprehensive Plan, we intended to move towards an environment for housing development in Liberty that is proactive and mindful, and creates

4 a comprehensive operative framework for all involved.

**Objectives**

7 → Maintain the rural quality of life for Liberty residents.

→ Meet the housing needs of the existing and the future population of Liberty.

→ Encourage renewable energy and green building design.

10

→ Identify and research achievable means of tax reform

→ Provide housing in a wide range of housing types and price ranges.

→ Eliminate blight and neglect.

→ Improve utilization of existing housing stock.

HOUSING

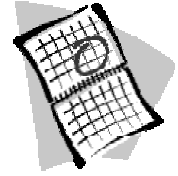
**Tasks**

- ⊙ Create programs for housing rehabilitation.
- ⊙ Review and update local land use regulations with regard to housing provisions in Town and Village codes.
- ⊙ Improve zoning flexibility with regard to housing density and zone placements.
- ⊙ Continue efforts to lobby for tax exempt reform.
- ⊙ Revise and amend the approval process for housing developments and construction to exclude premature development activities and to integrate innovative design, land use techniques and development standards.
- ⊙ Create housing diversity guidelines.
- ⊙ Promote the use of sustainable and/or renewable energy sources and environmentally sensitive building materials and techniques.
- ⊙ Minimize the vacant building stock through adaptive re-use or rehabilitation and the elimination of substandard living.
- ⊙ Create a housing master plan for Liberty to define future needs.

HOUSING

*Refer to Government Issue Tasks for further reference to housing.*





## How to Read the Implementation Schedule

Priority	Task	Policy Area	Timeframe	Key Leaders	Status

**Priority:** Divided into three distinct categories: High, Medium and Low. Tasks with a high priority and an immediate timeframe rating would be at one end of the spectrum while tasks with a low priority and a long-term timeframe rating would be at the other end.

**Task:** Identifies a specific activity that must be undertaken in order to support the goals and objectives of a policy area.

**Policy Area:** Six separate areas (Economic Development, Housing, Infrastructure, Government Issues, Open Spaces and Youth) that compromise Liberty’s comprehensive plan. Each policy area is supported by goals, objectives and tasks.

**Timeframe:** Immediate, Mid-term and Long Term. Immediate identifies the tasks that need to be completed with one year. Mid-term identifies those tasks that need to be completed within one to three years. Long term tasks need to be completed within three to five years.

**Key Leaders:** Identifies the group that will take the lead role in assuring that the task is completed in support of the goals and objectives of the comprehensive plan. This group might actually perform the task or may oversee another group or individual that completes the task. Key Leaders identified in this plan are:

- (TB)-Town Board
- (VB)-Village Board
- (PB)-Planning Boards
- (ZB)-Zoning Boards
- (CDC)-Community Development Corp.
- (ECC)-Environmental Conservation Commission
- (PD)-Parks Department
- (LCS)-Liberty Central Schools
- (CED)-County Community and Economic Development
- (SCP)-Sullivan County Partnership for Economic Development
- (CPC)-Comprehensive Planning Committee

**Status:** Denotes the state of completion of a specific task at a specific point in time.

IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

## Implementation Schedule

Priority	Task	Policy Area	Timeframe	Key Leaders	Status
H	Create an Agricultural Taskforce at the CDC level to ensure farmland preservation.	Economic Development	I	CED	
H	Create a comprehensive business plan for Liberty by defining target industries and businesses that are desirable and suitable for Liberty, including a five-year strategic plan for Economic Development.	Economic Development	I	CDC	
H	Develop a checklist for developers at the planning board level to identify the necessary development processes to make it easier to follow ordinances.	Government Issues	I	PB	
H	Define development process for new developers in town.	Government Issues	I	PB	
H	Educate planning and zoning board members to stay informed on local land use issues.	Government Issues	I	TB, VB, PB & ZB	
H	Continue efforts to lobby for tax-exempt reform.	Housing	I	TB & VB	
H	Revise and amend the approval process for housing developments and construction to exclude premature development activities and to integrate innovative design, land use techniques and development standards.	Housing	I	PB	
H	Create a monitoring system for cumulative impacts of multiple developments.	Infrastructure	I	PB	
H	Develop standards for use of private water and water systems.	Infrastructure	I	ECC	
H	Create an Open Space Advisory Council to assist in the development of the Open Space Plan.	Open Space	I	TB & VB	

## Implementation Schedule

Priority	Task	Policy Area	Timeframe	Key Leaders	Status
H	Develop high impact development checklist to assess cumulative impacts of projects.	Open Space	I	PB & ZB	
H	Redefine district intent in zoning to promote desired land use.	Open Space	I	CPC	
H	Support the completion of the Skate park at Walnut Mountain Park.	Youth	I	CDC	
H	Establish and communicate a comprehensive activity and engagement program for Youth in Liberty	Youth	I	CDC	
H	Fully implement the Communities That Care (CTC) process for Youth development in Liberty.	Youth	I	CDC	
H	Continue efforts in developing the Ag Industrial Park.	Economic Development	M	CED	
H	Develop standards and target retail growth towards Main Streets to continue existing efforts.	Economic Development	M	CDC	
H	Develop a zoning code that is consistent between the town and village.	Government Issues	M	CPC	
H	Create programs for housing rehabilitation	Housing	M	CDC	
H	Improve zoning flexibility with regard to housing density and zone placements.	Housing	M	CPC	

## Implementation Schedule

Priority	Task	Policy Area	Timeframe	Key Leaders	Status
H	Review and update local land use regulations.	Housing	M	CPC	
H	Create an Open Space Plan to identify open space and use, including, inventorying natural resource areas (i.e., CEAs, habitats, etc.)	Open Space	M	ECC	
H	Establish a Job Center for Youth to create apprenticeship (connect youth with local businesses, farmers, gov't, env't, emergency mgmt.) opportunities and promote jobs for youth.	Youth	M	LCS	
H	Create shovel ready sites (i.e. high tech/green corporate parks)	Economic Development	L	SCP	
H	Develop standards to provide clean/light industrial development opportunities along the Route 17 Corridor.	Economic Development	L	ECC	
H	Establish BID in Downtown Liberty.	Economic Development	L	Liberty Chamber of Commerce	
H	Create a "Green Liberty" Taskforce to work with the college to create incentives for green building techniques for new construction and renovations.	Economic Development	L	TB & VB	
H	Preserve the critical mass of farms and agriculture support service by creating a niche market for each farm through diversification and innovative farming strategies.	Economic Development	L	ECC	
H	Court enforcement of property maintenance codes for compliance.	Government Issues	L	Code Enforcement Officers	
H	Create a master plan for Liberty to define future needs for all aspects of housing.	Housing	L	CDC	

## Implementation Schedule

Priority	Task	Policy Area	Timeframe	Key Leaders	Status
H	Create housing diversity guidelines.	Housing	L	CDC	
H	Promote the use of sustainable and/or renewable energy sources and environmentally sensitive building materials and techniques.	Housing	L	ECC	
H	Create a long term plan and revitalization concept for the development of an integrated, comprehensive water and sewer system for Liberty.	Infrastructure	L	TB & VB	
H	Demonstrate cost saving measures for Green Infrastructure (NYSERDA, LEEDS) Set an example for forward thinking and innovation for sustainability.	Infrastructure	L	ECC	
H	Reduce garbage & increase recycling opportunities.	Infrastructure	L	TB & VB	
H	Zone for Open Space by requiring a minimum percentage of Open Space in each zone for certain developments.	Open Space	L	CPC	
H	Educate residents on the importance of Forest Management by developing standards and regulations.	Open Space	L	ECC	
H	Educate youth in civic responsibility and participation.	Youth	L	LCS	
H	Promote the Youth and School District participation in the municipal government process.	Youth	L	LCS	
H	Work towards the creation of a Youth Center in Liberty.	Youth	L	CDC	

## Implementation Schedule

Priority	Task	Policy Area	Timeframe	Key Leaders	Status
<b>H</b>	Create a sound capital improvement budget planning policy for all taxing authorities, including but not limited to the Town, Village, school district and emergency services.	Government Issues	<b>L</b>	TB, VB & LCS	
<b>M</b>	Create and maintain an inventory of existing businesses.	Economic Development	<b>I</b>	CDC	
<b>M</b>	Create tools (i.e., marketing, PR, informational packets) to educate small businesses coming to the town.	Economic Development	<b>I</b>	CDC	
<b>M</b>	Establish an Economic Development task force in CDC to focus on promoting entrepreneurship and business recruitment.	Economic Development	<b>I</b>	CDC	
<b>M</b>	Promote community groups in their effort to improve the visual beauty of the town to encourage business development (i.e. downtown, views from highway, etc.)	Economic Development	<b>I</b>	CDC	
<b>M</b>	Research opportunities to promote Agritourism through the creation of a yearlong farmer's market or a produce transfer station, including marketing, processing and distribution/exportation opportunities.	Economic Development	<b>M</b>	CDC	
<b>M</b>	Review and create an abatement program for the improvement of buildings in Liberty.	Government Issues	<b>M</b>	TB & VB	
<b>M</b>	Review/create impact mitigation measures for new housing developments	Housing	<b>M</b>	PB	
<b>M</b>	Create a Capital Improvement Plan to carry out the Official map.	Infrastructure	<b>M</b>	TB, VB & LCS	
<b>M</b>	Create design standards for infrastructure (i.e. lighting, signage, roads, sidewalks, etc.) improvements.	Infrastructure	<b>M</b>	PB	

## Implementation Schedule

Priority	Task	Policy Area	Timeframe	Key Leaders	Status
M	Develop and adopt an Official Map for town and village by identifying roads, bridges and culverts and prioritizing improvements.	Infrastructure	M	TB & VB	
M	Create a Recreation Development Plan for parks & recreation department.	Open Space	M	PD	
M	Research and identify development practices for the protection of open space (i.e. conservation easements, TDR, PDR, deed restrictions, land trusts, etc.)	Open Space	M	ECC	
M	Utilize existing tools and disseminate to the public to educate them on the importance of the environment and the protection of open space.	Open Space	M	ECC	
M	Develop programs to facilitate youth involvement in emergency services.	Youth	M	Emergency Services	
M	Create Retention and Development Plans for local hamlets to create profiles/identities for business recruitment and retention.	Economic Development	L	CDC	
M	Establish the CDC as a clearinghouse "one-stop shop" for existing and new businesses.	Economic Development	L	CDC	
M	Research and develop a feasibility study for the creation of a county fairground.	Economic Development	L	CED	
M	Research financial incentives to improve the town.	Government Issues	L	TB & VB	
M	Minimize the vacant building stock through adaptive reuse or rehabilitation and the elimination of substandard living.	Housing	L	CDC	

## Implementation Schedule

Priority	Task	Policy Area	Timeframe	Key Leaders	Status
<b>M</b>	Look at requiring individual septic/water systems for large scale developments.	Infrastructure	<b>L</b>	<b>TB &amp; VB</b>	
<b>M</b>	Research availability of DSL, Road Runner, Cable, Cell towers, natural gas possibilities, geothermal opportunities within town.	Infrastructure	<b>L</b>	<b>TB &amp; VB</b>	
<b>M</b>	Improve transportation opportunities for youth.	Youth	<b>L</b>	<b>LCS</b>	
<b>M</b>	Foster collaboration between the Sullivan County Community College, BOCES and the new green technology initiatives to create degree programs.	Youth	<b>L</b>	<b>CED</b>	
<b>L</b>	Encourage the development of hotels, motels, B&Bs to locate within town the town (conference centers).	Economic Development	<b>L</b>	<b>CDC</b>	
<b>L</b>	Inclusionary zoning (include a % of affordable housing East Fishkill example)	Government Issues	<b>L</b>	<b>CPC</b>	
<b>L</b>	Build on and take advantage of I-86 conversion.	Infrastructure	<b>L</b>	<b>CDC</b>	
<b>L</b>	Development of a recreational trail system throughout the town, including converting the old O & W Rail Line to a public trail, to create linkages for interconnection of towns through open space.	Open Space	<b>L</b>	<b>CDC</b>	
<b>L</b>	Promote conservation subdivisions to create linkages for recreational trail system.	Open Space	<b>L</b>	<b>ECC</b>	



## **SEQRA Process**

This comprehensive plan has been funded by the Town and Village of Liberty, who contracted with the Sullivan County Division of Planning and Environmental Management for technical assistance throughout the process. The plan has been developed in response to growing development pressures not only in Liberty, but in Sullivan County as well. The impacts on adjoining communities and the County as a whole were also considered. Finally, the environmental impacts attendant to the recommendations contained herein were reviewed. Findings with respect to environmental impacts are as follows:

### *Impacts*

Many of the recommended measures contained herein are designed specifically to address environmental concerns while providing opportunities for economic growth and community development. If implemented, the goals outlined in this plan should help to achieve the overall vision of the residents of Liberty.

### *Impacts That Cannot Be Mitigated*

There are no environmental impacts that cannot be mitigated by good site plan review procedures, and the Town and Village Zoning Laws provides a proper vehicle for this. Those procedures will be enhanced by referral to the goals and objectives as outlined in this Plan.

### *Irreversible Commitments of Environmental Resources*

There are no recommendations contained in this Plan for actions that would constitute an irreversible commitment of environmental resources. Indeed, many of the recommendations relate to protection of those resources. The plan has recommended specific locations for the future siting of residential and commercial development, as well as targeted areas for land preservation, via the recommended zoning map. Moreover, it is anticipated all actions would be subject to individual review under SEQRA.

### *Alternatives*

The various alternatives for development of the Town and Village have been considered in the context of the land use discussions contained herein. The Comprehensive Planning Committee strongly believes that this plan, if implemented, will provide for the safest and healthiest environment for Liberty's residents. The Town and Village could, of course, attempt to resist new commercial, industrial and residential development, but that course of action will do nothing to improve the environment or the economy, whereas carefully planned development subject to site plan review can actually incorporate environmental improvements to deal with some of the aesthetic problems the Town and Village have faced. The plan also focuses on

SEQRA PROCESS

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SEQRA PROCESS

expanding the opportunities available in Liberty. Infrastructure improvements can guide development to areas where it is welcome and improve the overall health of the environment. At the same time, this plan manages to address the youth of the Town and Village, a component that must not be forgotten if Liberty wishes to have a healthy community and workforce for future generations.

*Conclusion*

This Plan, if implemented, will cause no significant adverse effects on the environment that could be classified as important. Rather, the Plan will significantly improve the natural and built environment by upgrading infrastructure and providing specific goals and objectives relating to environmental protection, economic and community development, local government affairs and youth.