

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This *Comprehensive Plan* updates the Town of Southeast's 1992 *Master Plan*. The Town has undertaken this update in response to a number of factors affecting its quality-of-life and character. The Plan updates the policies contained in the 1992 *Master Plan* to take into account the following factors:

- changing demographic and land use trends;
- the need for greater protection of community and natural resources; and
- the Watershed Rules and Regulations promulgated by the New York City Department of Environmental Protection.

The New York City Watershed Regulations could have a dramatic effect on local land use, community character, and economic activity in the Town of Southeast. This effect, however, could be used to enhance many of the qualities of the community, including its rural open space character. The *Comprehensive Plan* helps establish a basis upon which the Town of Southeast can affirm its primacy in local land use planning and community development issues that contribute to water quality protection and watershed planning efforts.

Much of the descriptive text in the 1992 *Master Plan* remains relevant, especially with respect to the community's historic and geographic relationship to its neighbors and Putnam County. This material has been included in the *Comprehensive Plan* with some editorial changes or updated information.

The *Comprehensive Plan* was prepared by Allee King Rosen & Fleming, Inc. based on its own investigations, discussions with the Town Board and members of the Master Plan Steering Committee (MPSC), and the compiled notes and final report of the MPSC. The MPSC began its review of the 1992 *Master Plan* in 1997 and met a number of times in 1997 and 1998 to prepare a set of recommendations for actions or further investigations. This report was provided to Allee King at the beginning of the final phase of completion of the *Comprehensive Plan* update.

Public participation has been included in multiple stages of the *Comprehensive Plan* development. Allee King presented an overview of the comprehensive plan process and the findings of the MPSC as well as a review of population and land use trends since 1990 at a public information meeting in April 1999. Draft sections of the *Comprehensive Plan* as they were developed were presented to and reviewed by the Town Board between May and July 2000. A full draft of the *Comprehensive Plan* was presented and discussed with the MPSC at two sessions in August 2000. The revised document was presented and distributed to the public at public information meetings on April 25, 2001 and May 15, 2001 and a Public Hearing was held on June 7, 2001. Based on public comment received at the public hearing, revisions were made and presented at a new public hearing on October 4, 2001. A third public hearing was held on January 24, 2002 at which the Final revisions were presented. This document incorporates all

public comment on the Comprehensive Plan from all public hearings as well as all written comments received by the Town.

Environmental analysis of the policies and implementation measures included in the plan is included as an integral part of the *Comprehensive Plan*. To comply with the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA), the Town prepared a Full Environmental Assessment Form (EAF) and circulated the EAF with a Notice of Intent to Declare Lead Agency on May 17, 2001. The Town Board declared itself Lead Agency on July 19, 2001 and issued a Negative Declaration of Environmental Significance on June 20, 2002.

1.1 COORDINATION WITH OTHER PLANNING EFFORTS

This Plan has been prepared in coordination with the Town's portion of the *Croton Watershed Plan* (the "*Croton Plan*") being prepared by the Towns and Putnam County as a requirement of the Memorandum of Agreement between the watershed communities and New York City. The *Croton Plan* contains specific planning and engineering analyses and policy recommendations for balancing land use development, infrastructure capacity, and water quality protection. The *Croton Plan* contains land use and natural resource protection objectives to be implemented at the town level. These objectives and recommendations have been integrated into this *Comprehensive Plan*. A summary of the major findings and recommendations of the *Croton Plan* are included as Section 10 of this *Comprehensive Plan*. The *Croton Plan* should be considered an appendix of this document.

Several recent studies have been prepared by other agencies to assess the impact of new development on the Town of Southeast. These studies have informed this *Comprehensive Plan*, although they are not formally part of this *Comprehensive Plan* and are not part of the Town's official growth and development policies. These studies may be referred to for additional information on historic trends and projections for growth. Additional planning studies include the *Phase I Planning Analysis* prepared by Rapport, Meyers, Whitbeck, Shaw & Rodenhausen, LLP and the Chazen Companies as part of Putnam County's *Croton Plan* effort, and a Growth-Inducing Impacts assessment prepared by Edwards & Kelcey for NYSDOT for the Route 22 widening project.

1.2 THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

From a planning perspective, there is little difference between a "master plan" and a "comprehensive plan." Either term describes a document that describes a community's vision for land development, natural resources, transportation systems, and community facilities among other issues. "Comprehensive plan" is the more modern term and is defined in New York State Town Law §272-a.2(a) as "the materials, written and/or graphic, including but not limited to maps, charts, studies, resolutions, reports and other descriptive material that identify the goals, objectives, principles, guidelines, policies, standards, devices and instruments for the immediate and long-range protection, enhancement, growth and development of the town located outside the limits of any incorporated village or city." This *Comprehensive Plan* is prepared under the authority of Town Law §272-a.

All land regulations (zoning, subdivision, natural resource protection) must be "in accordance with a comprehensive plan" (Town Law §263). Consequently, the policies articulated in this plan serve as the basis for future revisions to the Town's land use regulations. In addition, the law requires that capital projects of other government agencies on land included in the adopted comprehensive plan must take the Plan into consideration. As a result, this Plan not only helps

the Town of Southeast develop its own programs, but it enables the Town to help shape the capital programs of other units of government acting within its borders.

The *Comprehensive Plan* is a vision for how the Town of Southeast will grow and develop over the next decade or more. This plan updates the 1992 *Master Plan*, and this plan should be revisited and updated within five to ten years. The *Comprehensive Plan* should be a “living” document, and every year the Town Board should review the Plan and develop a specific set of goals and actions for the year, noting which goals have been met, and examining those which have not. This annual review should result in a strategic implementation plan for the upcoming year.

1.3 THE VISION

The Town of Southeast seeks to balance a healthy economic environment with quality residential and commercial character while protecting the integrity of its natural resources and infrastructure. This overarching vision is embodied in the goals and policies of this *Comprehensive Plan*:

Protect the Town’s community character

Maintain the Town’s picturesque rural character, including historic and scenic resources, while allowing for appropriate commercial and residential development.

Protect valuable natural resources

The Town of Southeast is committed to protecting its natural resources as a critical component of quality-of-life, the Town’s character, the region’s ecological functions, and water supply. Wetlands, watercourses, open space, woodlands, and agricultural lands contribute to the quality and character of Southeast, and their preservation, enhancement, and restoration must be considered in all actions that may affect them.

Provide a diversity of housing opportunities

The Town of Southeast seeks a balanced diversity of housing opportunities and types to meet the needs of its current and future residents. The Town seeks to maintain its existing supply of housing, including its variety of price ranges, to accommodate residents of all income groups. New housing styles and types should reinforce the Town’s rural qualities and predominately single-family detached housing patterns. New housing should also be sensitive to existing environmental constraints, including those related to the Croton watershed.

Provide a healthy economic environment

The Town of Southeast seeks a diversified base of business and industry to strengthen the Town’s tax base and to provide employment opportunities for area residents while preserving the Town’s rural residential character and protecting the Town’s portion of the regional drinking water supply. Future non-residential uses should be targeted to those areas where they will have minimal impact on water quality, traffic, and community character.

Provide necessary community services

The Town of Southeast is committed to providing its residents with adequate, accessible, and efficient community services and facilities.

Maintain the Town's transportation network

The Town of Southeast is committed to maintaining an efficient, uncongested, safe and well-maintained network of roadways to serve local and through-travelers, especially residents, businesses and visitors. The Town is committed to maintaining the rural flavor of Southeast by protecting the character of many of its rural and scenic roadways.

