

II. SHANDAKEN TODAY

This section highlights the conditions of the community today related to population and housing, land use and development limitations, economy and tourism, historic resources, infrastructure, community services and natural features.

A. Population and Housing

A review of population and housing characteristics in Shandaken provides insight into the evolving demographics of the community. A detailed demographic assessment was undertaken with the previous draft plans. This section will highlight some of the trends.

Table 1 - Summary of Census Data			
<i>(source: US Census)</i>			
		Shandaken	Ulster Co.
Total Population			
	1990	3,013	165,304
	2000	3,235	177,749
	% Increase/Year	0.74%	0.75%
	2002 (est.)	3224	179,986
Age Profile (%)			
	0-4	4.90%	5.50%
	5-19	17.40%	20.70%
	20-44	27.70%	35.70%
	45-64	32.60%	24.80%
	65+	17.40%	3.40%
	Median	45	38.2
Race			
	White (%)	94.70%	88.90%
	All Others (%)	5.30%	11.10%
Average Family Size			
		2.82	3.03
Housing			
	Total Units	2,668	77,656
	Occupied (%)	54.90%	86.90%
	Vacant Seasonal (%)	29.50%	6.70%
	Owner Occupied (%)	72.10%	68%

Total population in Shandaken in the year 2000 exceeded the population in 1900 for the first time in 100 years. From a peak of 3,053 in 1900, population declined steadily to a low of 1,875 in 1940. It has risen slowly since then to its current 3,235 residents according to the 2000 Census data. Recent population estimates through 2002 are also shown to be consistent with past trends.

A summary of population and housing statistics from the 2000 census is set forth in **Table 1** which also includes Countywide data. The data shows comparable population growth in the Town as compared to the County. The data emphasizes the older age profile of Shandaken. The median age and the population over 65 are notably higher than the County median.

The census data indicates a growing disconnect between the cost of housing and the ability of local wage earners to afford a place to live. Community impacts associated with a gap in affordability are substantial and include difficulty in attracting new businesses and lack of labor availability for existing businesses. Transportation impacts associated with an increase in county-to-county commutation also occur, as families chase affordable housing or higher wages.

Here are some other detailed social characteristics of the Shandaken population:

Housing

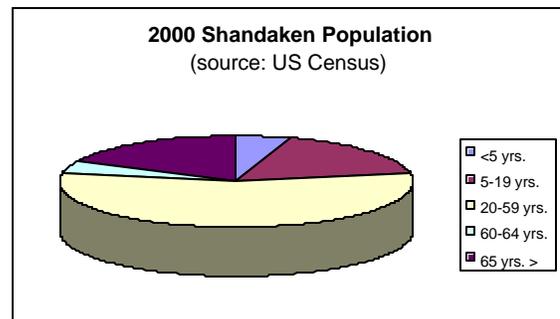
- Of the 2,668 housing units in Shandaken, 45% (1,203 units) are owned by part-time residents.
- 80% of the 2,668 housing units in Shandaken are one-unit, detached structures (single-family). The next largest category (8%) consists of mobile homes.
- Of the 1,463 households, 57% (830) are family households and 43% (633) are non-family households.
- 55% (1,463 units) of the housing units are owned by full-time residents.

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- 53% of full time residents in Shandaken moved into their current residence between 1990-2000.
- Vacancy rate for homeowners is 4.8% and the rental vacancy rate is 16.2%.
- Approximately 62% of housing structures are over 45 years old.
- 5.8% of the Shandaken homes were built since 1990.
- Over 91% of full time residents have one or more vehicles.
- Self-declared housing value has remained constant at \$91,500 since 1990, which is far below the Ulster County average of \$113,100.
- Over 75% of the current single family homes are considered affordable; less than 25% are considered above the affordability threshold.
- Seasonal units decreased by 320 and total occupied units grew by 383. This, coupled with the new construction, tends to confirm the conclusion that second homes are now being utilized more on a full time basis.
- Homeownership rate increased from 70.4% to 72.1% (1990-2000), while the county rate dropped from 69.2% to 68.0%.
- 45.1% of the renters pay over 35% of their income for housing (36% and over is considered rent-burdened), as compared to 36.2% for the County.
- Between the years 1998 and 2004, housing prices in Ulster County have nearly doubled. In the Town of Shandaken, the average prices have nearly tripled to \$210,000, increasing at a rate of 19.5% per year.
- Household income has only increased at a rate of 1.5% to 3% per year over that same period.
- In 2004, only 28% of the home sales were affordable to households with incomes at or below the Ulster County median, which was \$63,995.

Population & Education

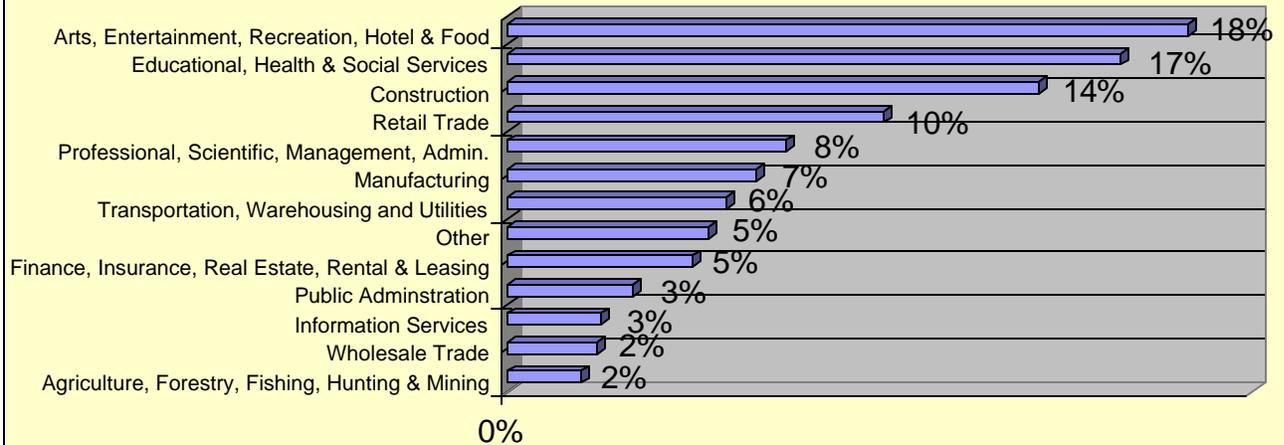
- Population growth is stable at less than 1% per year since the 1990 Census.
- The median age in Shandaken is 45 years versus 38 years in Ulster County.
- The >65 population segment, which comprises 17.4% of the Shandaken population, is five times greater than the Ulster Co. rate.
- 84.2% of full time residents have attained a high school degree or higher education. This is an increase from 70.9% in 1990.
- 26.6% of full time residents have a bachelors degree or higher, versus 16% in 1990.



Income & Employment

- Town ranked last out of the 21 towns and villages in Ulster County in household and family median income in 1990 and 2000.
- However, Shandaken experienced the greatest median income increase (+15%) in the county.
- Average per capita income is \$21,121 - higher than the Ulster County average.
- The median family income is \$40,927, versus \$25,216 in 1990.
- Family income over \$75,000 has increased to 20.8% versus 3.1% in 1990.
- Largest industry (18%): arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, food service.
- 18.7% are self-employed, versus 9.2% in Ulster County.

Employment of Shandaken Full-Time Residents



B. Land Use & Development Limitations

The present land use pattern has been influenced by the historic pattern of hamlet development, highway-oriented transportation and state land ownership. The Town includes 12 hamlets (six delineated areas), each with a distinct character. Roadside development often includes older dwellings and tourist-oriented businesses, such as motels and restaurants, interspersed with real estate offices and businesses/services that address the needs of local residents. Small pockets of resource-related industries (sawmills and bluestone) still exist, but are not the economic factor that they were a century ago. The Forest Preserve lands stretch across the corridor in a patchwork pattern. Figure 2 shows the current land use patterns. Figure 3 shows the current Town Zoning. It should be noted that a concurrent effort is underway to update and amend the Zoning map and regulations; however, it is not complete at this time for incorporation into this plan.

In order to provide opportunity for economic development, the Watershed Protection Plan allowed Towns to delineate hamlet areas in which New York City can not acquire additional land. Shandaken designated eligible hamlet areas - Mt. Tremper, Phoenicia, Shandaken/Allaben, Big Indian, Pine Hill and Chichester - and delineated a total additional area of almost 600 acres. This designation also serves the additional purpose of enabling a landowner within the designated area to be exempt from the regulatory prohibition on the creation of new impervious surfaces within 100 feet of a watercourse. Based on available information, some designated Hamlet areas, however, do not appear to correspond to what are generally considered the Hamlet boundaries (Figures 4a-4g). This is discussed further in Section H. "Non-matching", in Figures 4a-4g, indicates that the parcel numbers are not an exact match (they may have been subsequently subdivided), but are likely included. In addition, there are several parcel numbers which do not appear to exist, according to Town records.

Figure 2 – Existing Land Use (source: Ulster County – parcel data)

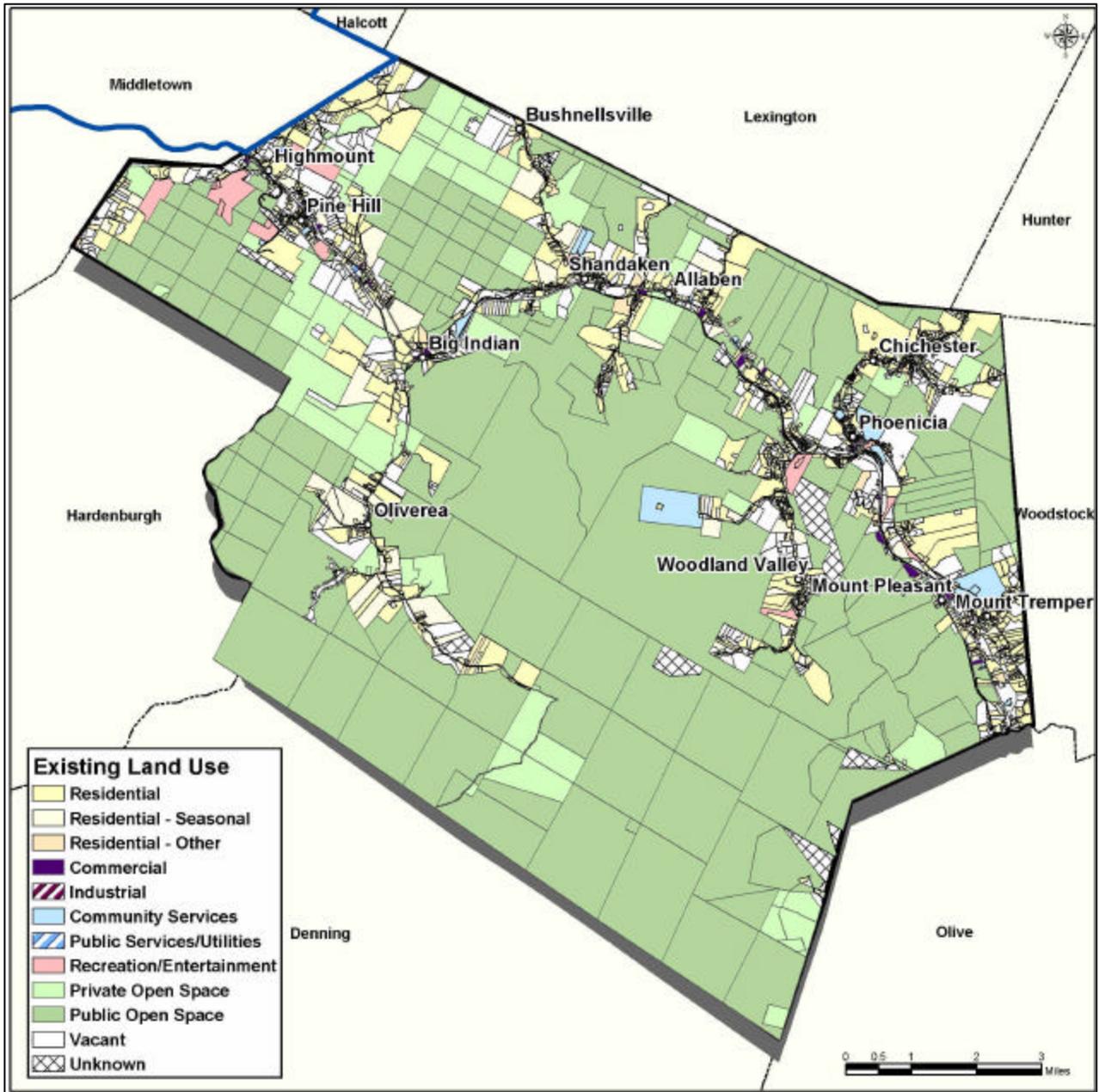


Figure 3 – Existing Zoning (source: Ulster County – zoning)

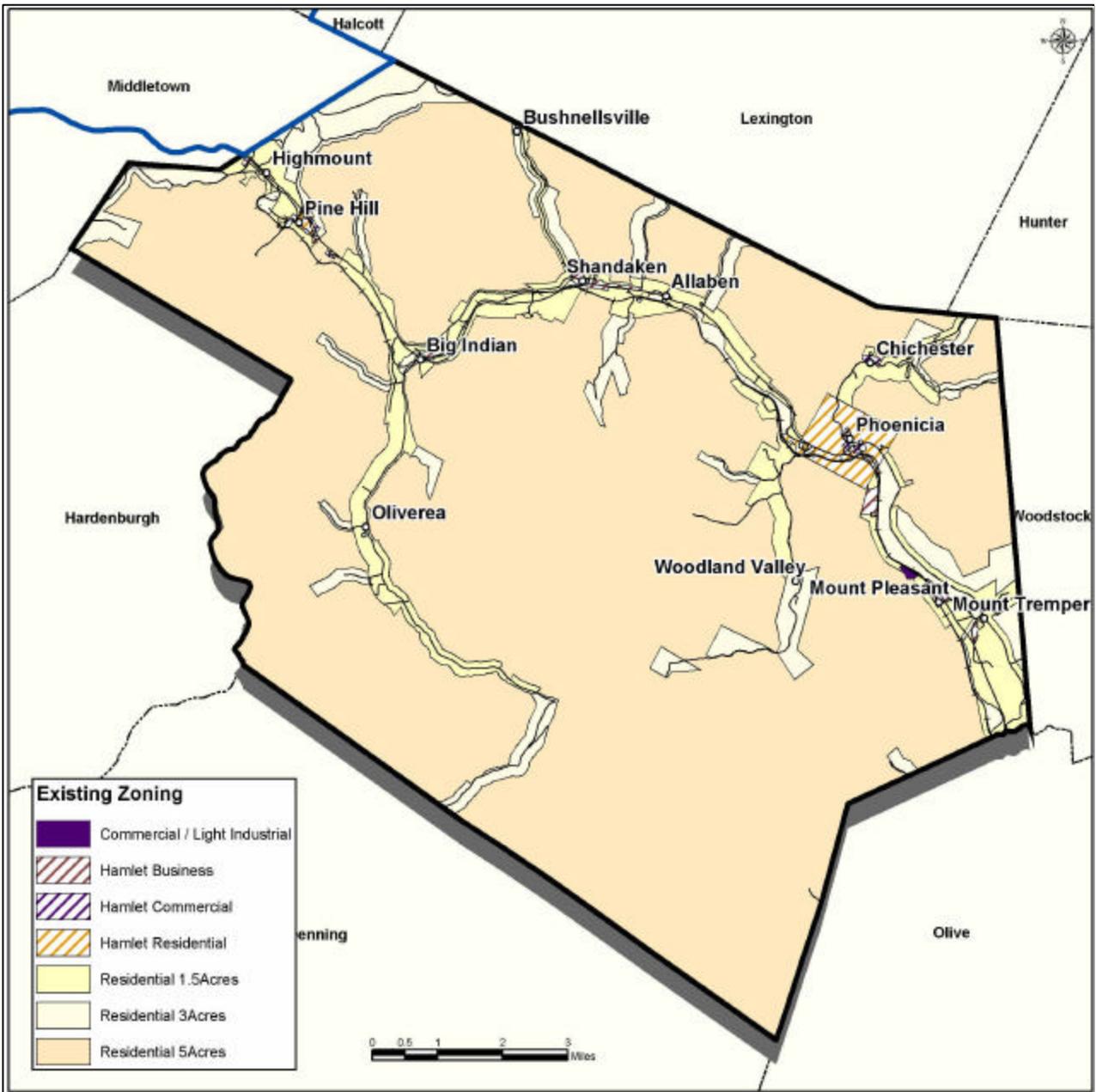


Figure 4a – Pine Hill Designated Hamlet Areas (source: NYCDEP)

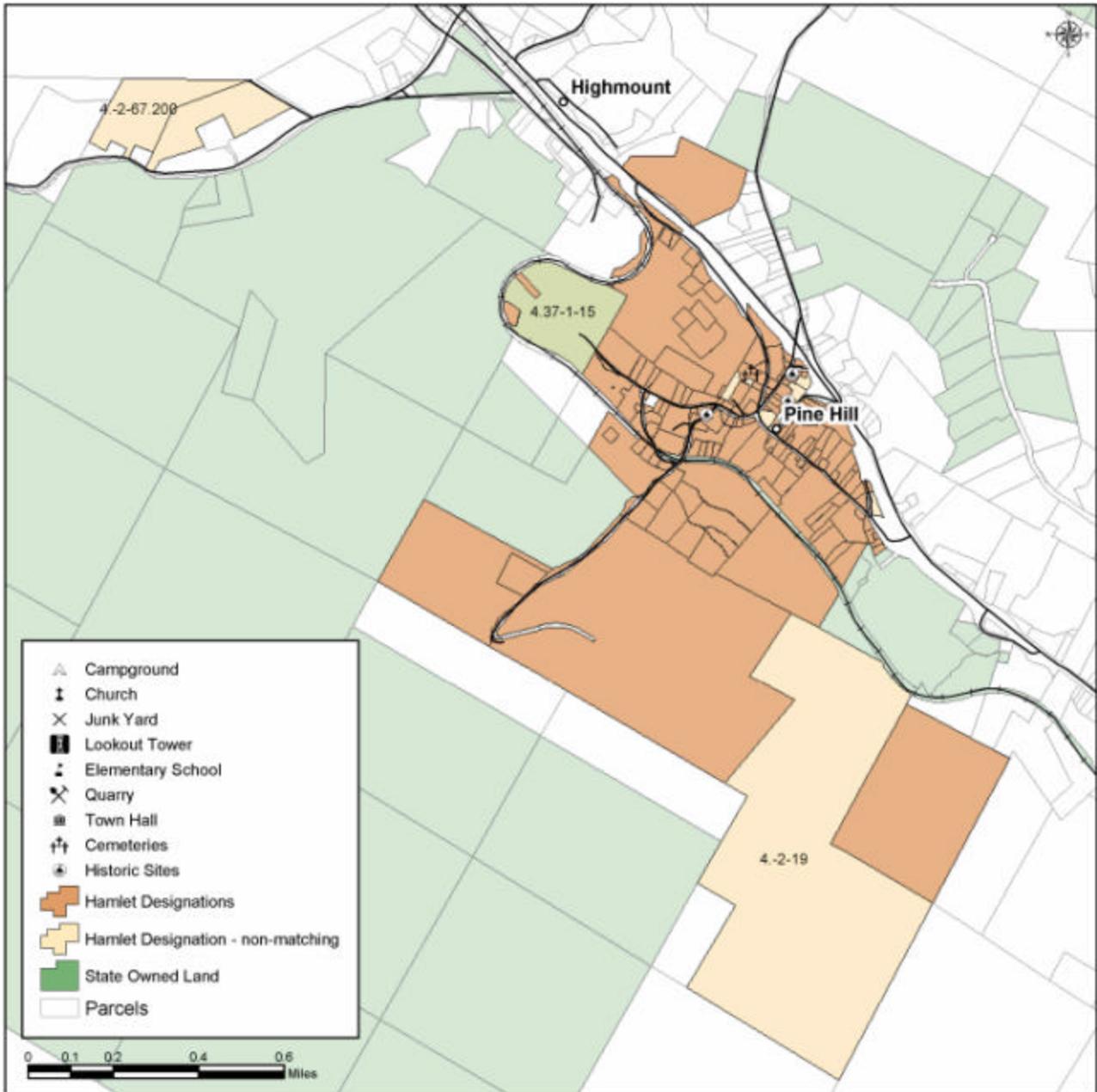


Figure 4b – Big Indian Designated Hamlet Areas (source: NYCDEP)

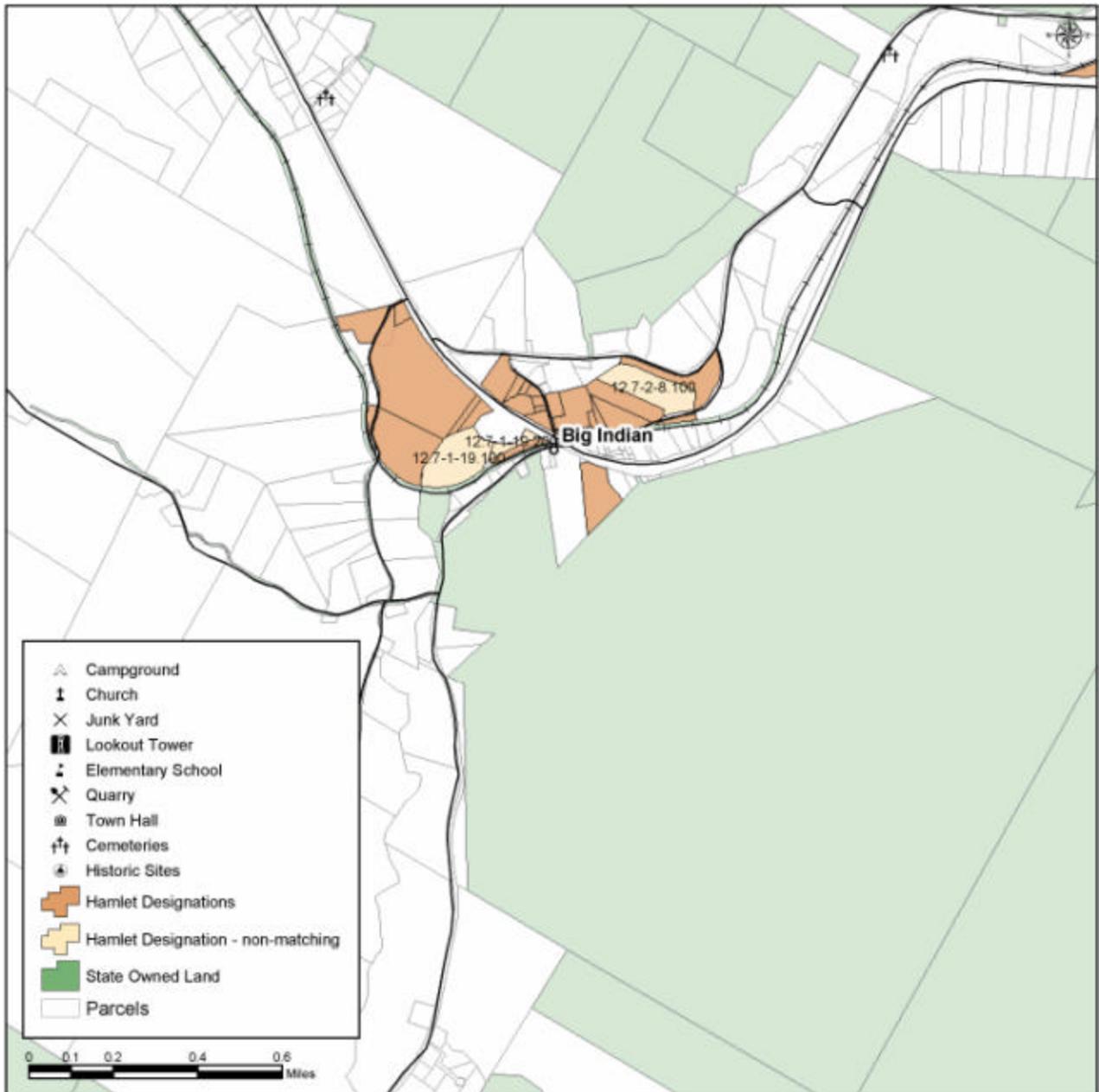


Figure 4c - Shandaken Designated Hamlet Areas (source: NYCDEP)

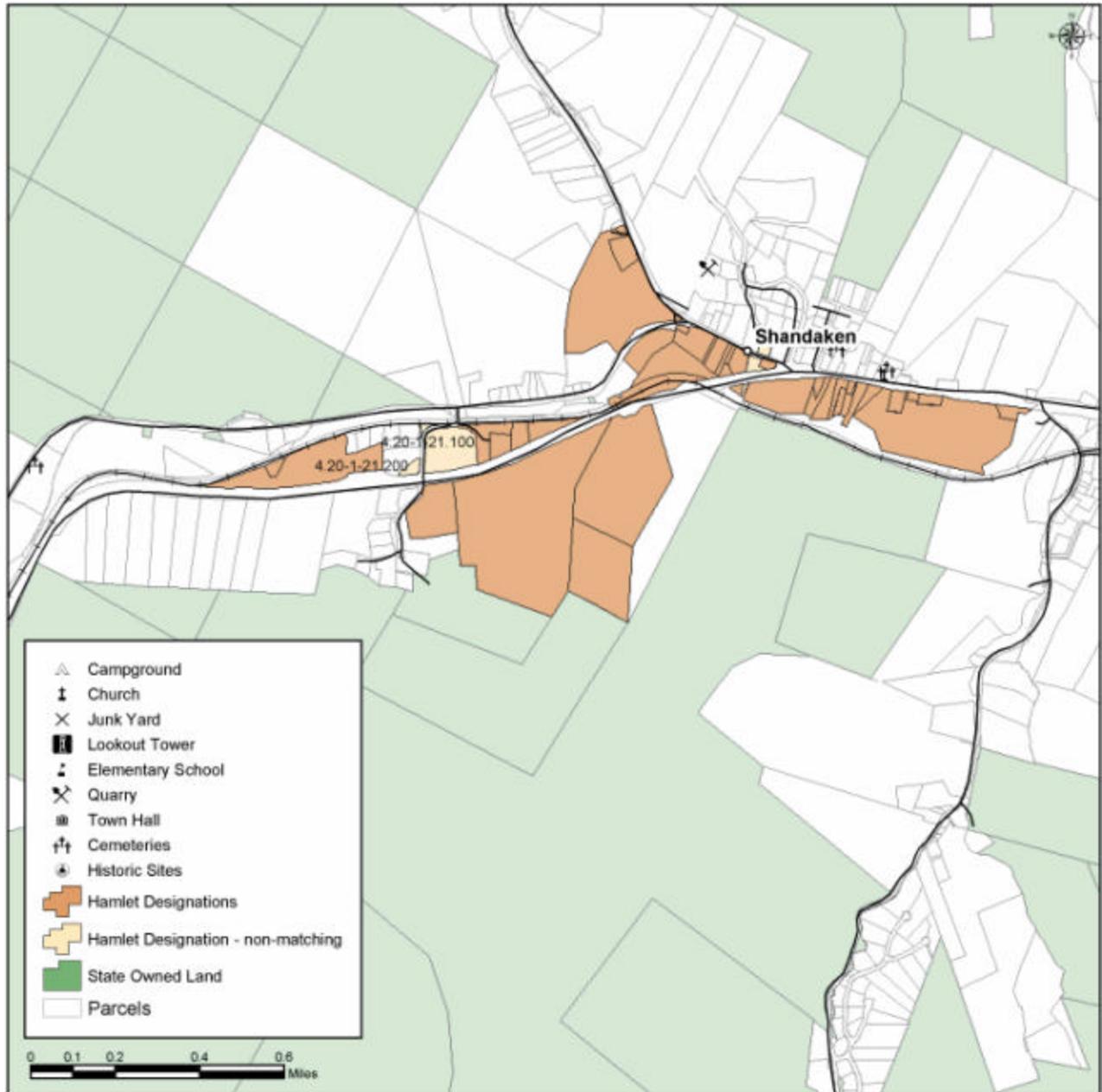


Figure 4d - Allaben Designated Hamlet Areas (source: NYCDEP)



Figure 4e - Phoenicia Designated Hamlet Areas (source: NYCDEP)

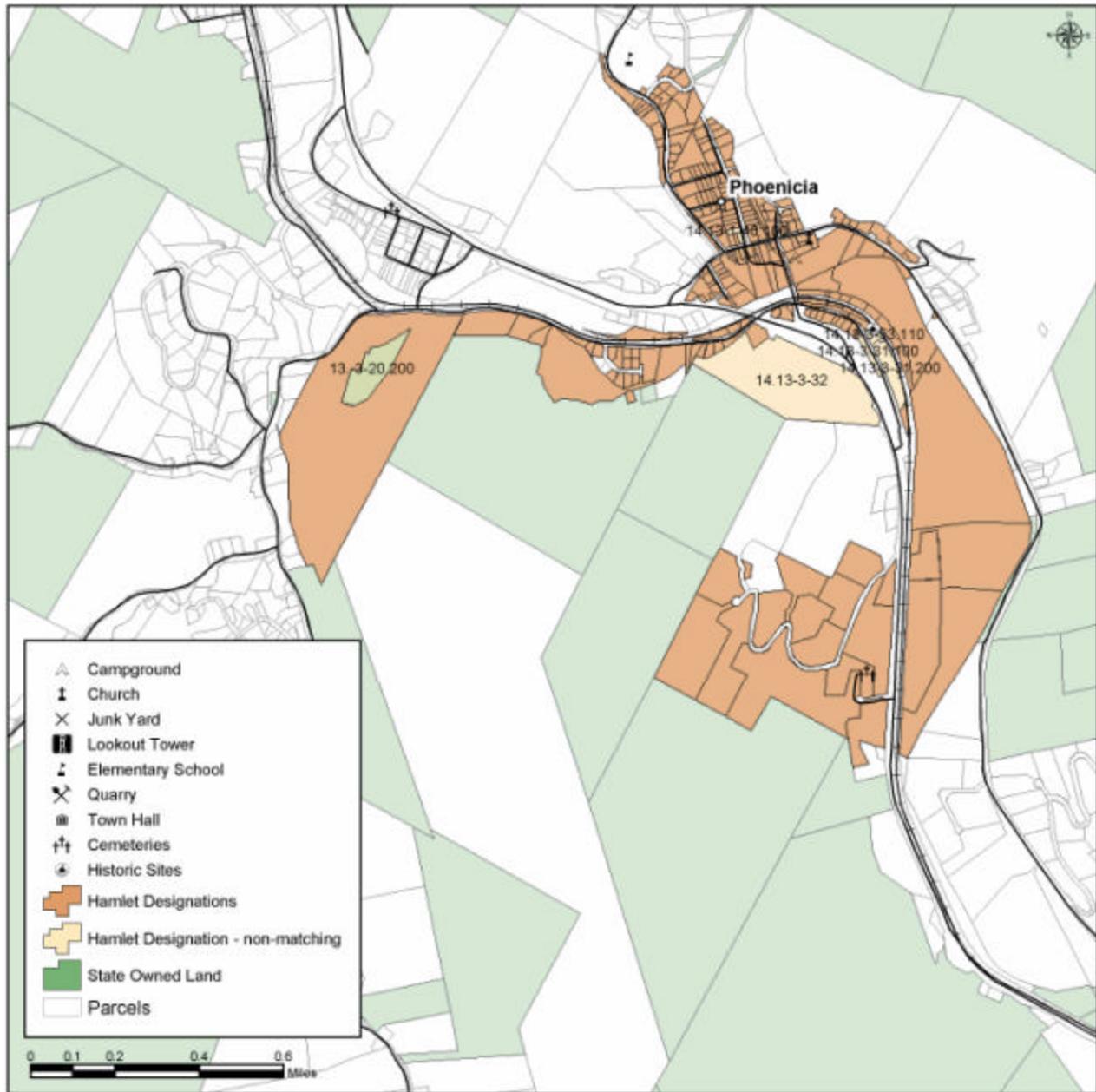


Figure 4f - Chichester Designated Hamlet Areas (source: NYCDEP)

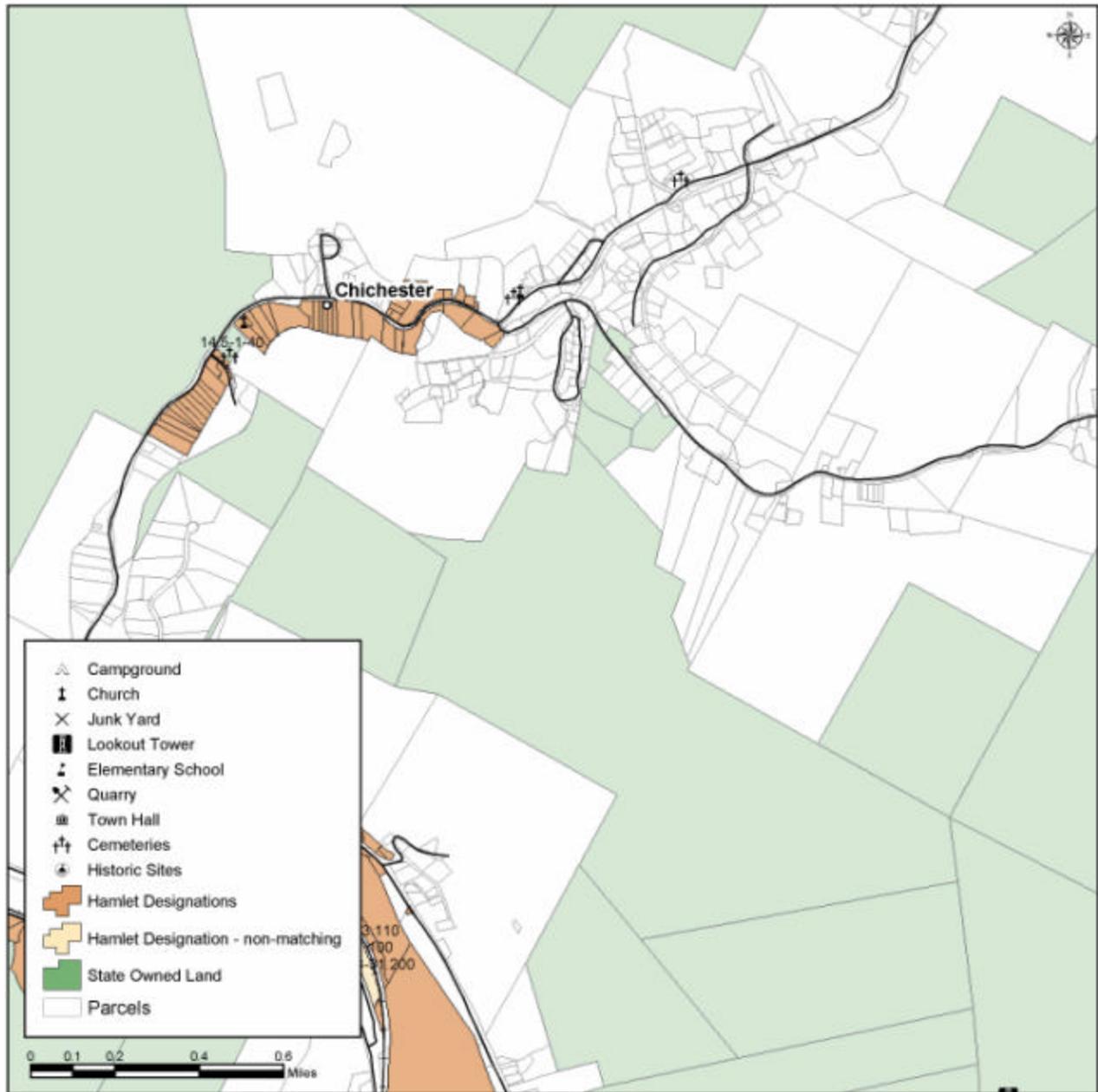
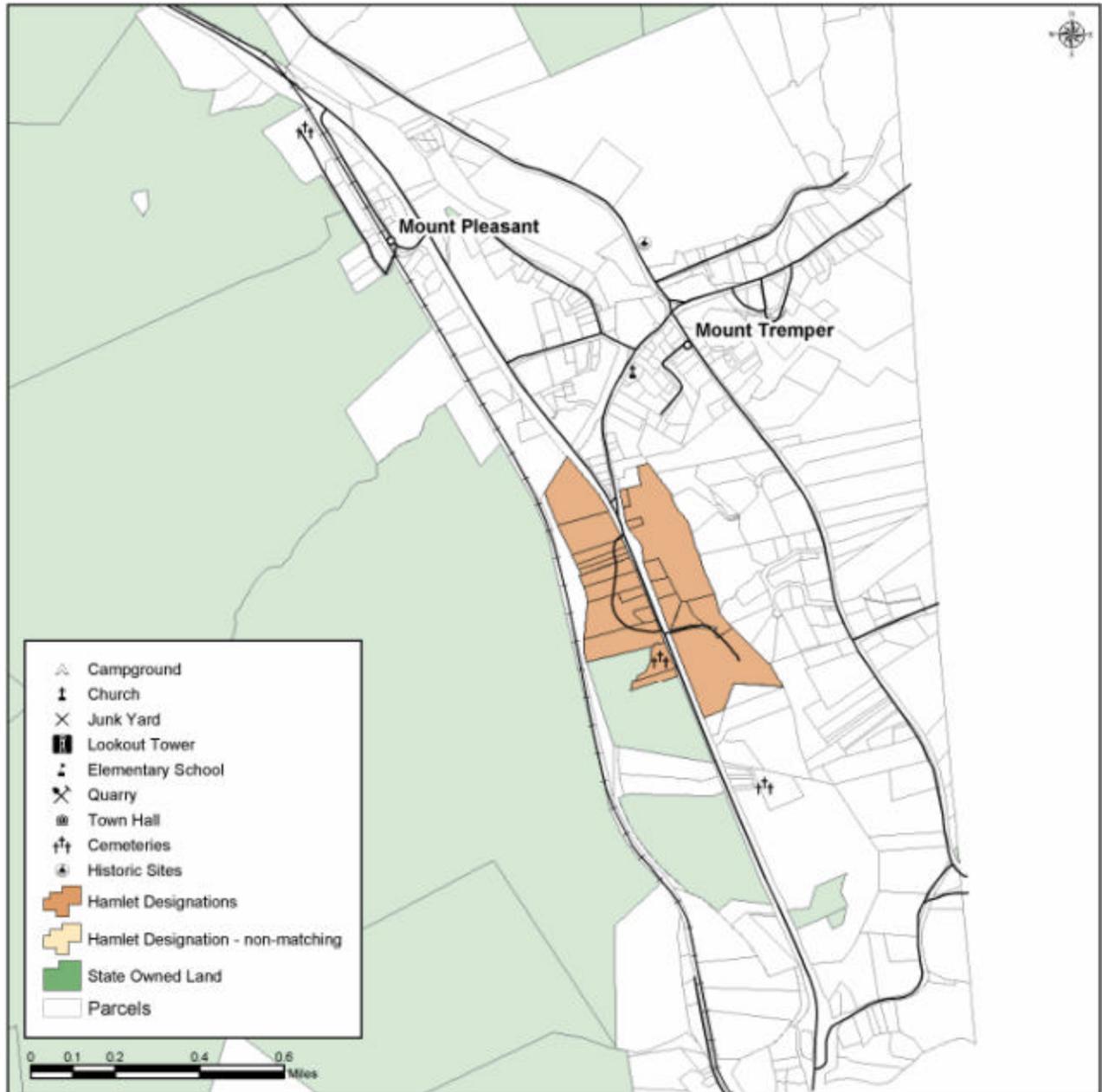


Figure 4g – Mount Tremper Designated Hamlet Areas (source: NYCDEP)



More recently, other factors, such as floodplains, environmental legislations, land acquisitions by the NYCDEP, etc., in addition to the scenic natural terrain characteristics that define the Town of Shandaken, have notably affected and limited development. A quick assessment of the current developable land (excluding state owned lands) would suggest that only approximately 4% (3,300 acres) of the available vacant or private open space could be developed, once adjustments for wetlands, water bodies, floodplain and slopes of greater than 20% are accounted for. This could lead to an increased pressure to develop on the sides of the mountains, which leads to conflict with environmental goals and regulations.

Another development opportunity is the intensification of currently used land. For example, a 20 acre parcel could be subdivided according to zoning to produce a higher density development. Adjusting for wetlands, water bodies, floodplain and steep slopes, an additional 1,460 acres (1.8%) could be available for development through subdivision.

In summary, approximately 6% of the Town of Shandaken (4,760 acres) has potential for future development, or put another way, 94% of the town is developed, has significant development limitations, or is highly regulated. The Town of Shandaken is comprised of approximately 79,200 acres. The following provides an approximate general breakdown of land use:

- 66% of this land is currently under public ownership and designated as public open space;
- 14% comprises of residential land uses;
- 9% of private open space;
- 7% vacant land;
- 4% miscellaneous

C. Economy & Tourism

Despite its natural amenities, the Town of Shandaken has faced a continuing struggle to provide a stable economy for its residents, as evident through the demographic trends discussed earlier in this plan. Historically, similar weak economic challenges have been faced by this community, as documented in previous economic strategy reports performed for the Route 28 corridor and through trends contained in the “West of Hudson Economic Development Study.” Shandaken specifically is experiencing trends of an aging population, highly educated work force, rise in self-employed business owners, the lowest family and household average income in the county, with few amenities or opportunities to sustain or improve these trends.

The natural resources of the Catskill region and its proximity to 15 million people within a 150 mile radius, makes it a clear potential for importing and harnessing the tourism market. As a year-round destination within two hours driving time of 15 million people, the region’s potential to attract tourists is substantial. Shandaken was a major destination in its early history and has the



Annual Fall Festival at Belleayre



Tubing on the Esopus Creek

makings of revitalization with the following tourist destinations: Belleayre Ski Center, Pine Hill Lake Day Use Area, the Catskill Park, the Catskill Forest Preserve and State developed campsites in and near Shandaken, including Devil's Tombstone, Kenneth Wilson and Woodland Valley, which contribute to the tourist economy. In addition, several other local (some private) attractions support and augment the state parks including a tourist railroad and the Empire State Railway Museum in Phoenicia. A myriad of available recreational activities includes hiking, biking, fishing, hunting, skiing, kayaking, tubing and sightseeing. Privately owned camping facilities, hotels, bed and breakfast inns, restaurants, art galleries, antique shops and specialty shops compliment these amenities. Local businesses that serve residents, seasonal residents and visitors include, but are not limited to food markets, hardware stores, service stations, liquor stores, hair salons and eateries, such as delis and ice cream shops. Many artists and craftspeople live and work in the Town and sell their work locally and throughout the country.

Tourist railroad trains provide sightseeing service along the scenic Esopus Creek. Itineraries include a 6-mile round trip on the Esopus Creek Shuttle, creek users riding one way, or a 14-mile round trip on the scenic train through the beautiful Catskill Mountains.



Catskill Mountain Railroad

D. Historic Resources

Shandaken has seven sites, which are listed on the National Register of Historic places:

- Camp Wapanachki (currently Zen Mountain Monastery), Mt. Tremper
- Phoenicia Railroad Station, Phoenicia (Empire State Railway Museum)
- District Schoolhouse No. 14, Pine Hill
- Elm Street Stone Bridge, Pine Hill
- Mill Street Stone Bridge, Pine Hill
- Morton Memorial Library, Pine Hill
- Tremper Mountain Fire Tower, Mt. Tremper

Other properties in the Town may be eligible for listing on the National Register. There are properties of local significance that do not meet the National Register requirements. While these properties are not listed, they are acknowledged as important to the Shandaken community. The previous list is limited to only historical places outside of state property. There are other sites of historical significance to the community on state grounds, including:

- John Burroughs Memorial Forest is one of the noted historical resources in the area. This forest consists of White and Norway Spruce plantations established on an abandoned farm site in Rochester Hollow. A concrete marker dedicating the forest to Burroughs is located at the lower elevation near the hairpin turn on the Rochester Hollow access road.
- Shandaken Tunnel, partially built on the Shandaken Wild Forest, was constructed to allow the New York City Board of Water Supply to connect the Schoharie watershed to the Ashokan watershed. The tunnel excavation was completed February 13, 1923.



- Rochester Estate ruins, located in the Shandaken Wild Forest Preserve, was originally named after William Rochester, a retired Colonel who moved to the area and began to purchase small family farms in an attempt to create a large estate. Stone pillars still exist at various locations along the road and are the remnants of the gated entrances to the Rochester Estate.

E. Infrastructure

1. Water & Sewer

Of the Town's larger hamlets, only Pine Hill and Chichester have municipal sewage systems, although a feasibility study is underway in Phoenicia. Sewage services are provided in Pine Hill through the NYC treatment plant in Big Indian (which also serves the Belleayre Ski Center) and a sewage treatment plant has been included in the next phase of the Watershed agreement for Phoenicia. Continued growth in the hamlets is inhibited by this deficiency and lack of developable land. Both Pine Hill and Phoenicia have central water supply systems. Most sewage disposal is through individual septic systems, the large majority of which are subject to regulation by the City of New York.

Most residents in the Town obtain their water from their own wells or streams. Water is provided by municipal water districts in Phoenicia and Pine Hill hamlets. Due to various physical, population density, fiscal and land limitations, water and sewer services may not be feasible in other hamlets and villages.

2. Roads & Bridges

The Town has a network of roads and bridges, some of which are the responsibility of the State, some of the county and some of the Town. According to the New York State Department of Transportation, the Town of Shandaken has a total of 110.83 centerline highway miles. Of these, 64.06 centerline miles are under the Town jurisdiction; 21.11 centerline miles are under Ulster County jurisdiction; and 25.66 centerline miles are owned by the State. The State is responsible for the main highways crossing the Town (Routes 28, 42, 212 and 214). Route 28 is classified by the Department of Transportation as a "rural minor arterial," while the other state roads are considered "rural major collectors". The county is responsible for a number of main secondary roads, including Ulster County Routes 40, 47 and 49A. The town is responsible for the rest of the roads and streets. Figure 5 shows the existing roads in the Town, by jurisdiction. Figure 6 presents daily traffic volumes.

The State highways have a 55 mph speed limit throughout the town and there are no traffic lights or stop signs on Route 28. All roads in the town have two travel lanes (one in each direction).

There are 59 bridges in the town. Bridges on Route 28, Route 42 and Route 214 are controlled and maintained by NYSDOT. None of these bridges are designed for pedestrian traffic. There are several bridges over the Esopus on county roads. One bridge over the Esopus, called "the Green Bridge", connects Mt. Tremper with Mt. Pleasant off Rt. 212, but has been closed for some ten years. Local residents have petitioned to induce the County to open the Green Bridge to pedestrian traffic as a way of joining the two hamlets. There are numerous bridges on town roads in the various valleys. Table 2 lists all of the bridges in the Town.

Figure 5 – Existing Road Jurisdictions (source: Ulster County Transportation Plan)

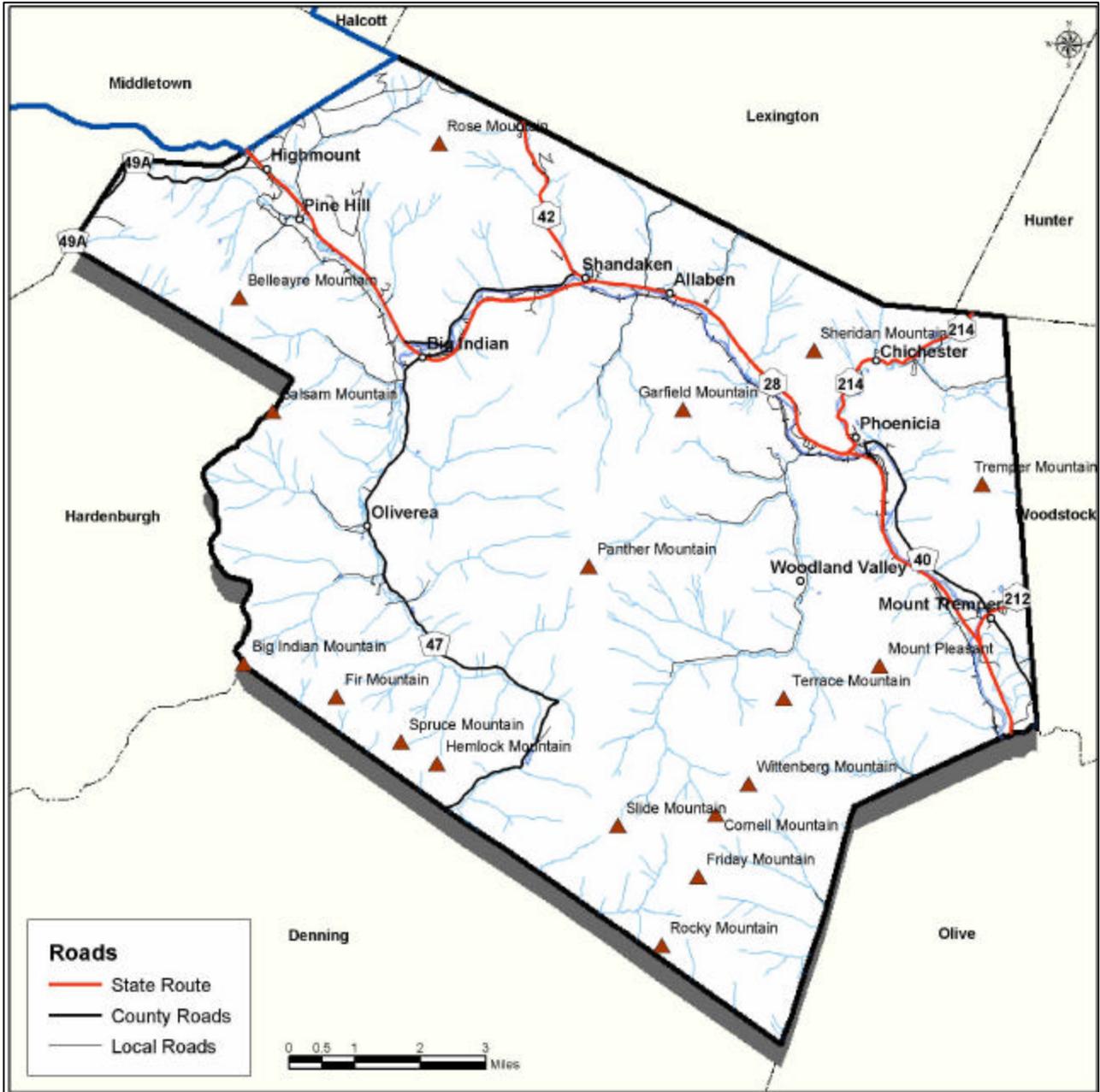
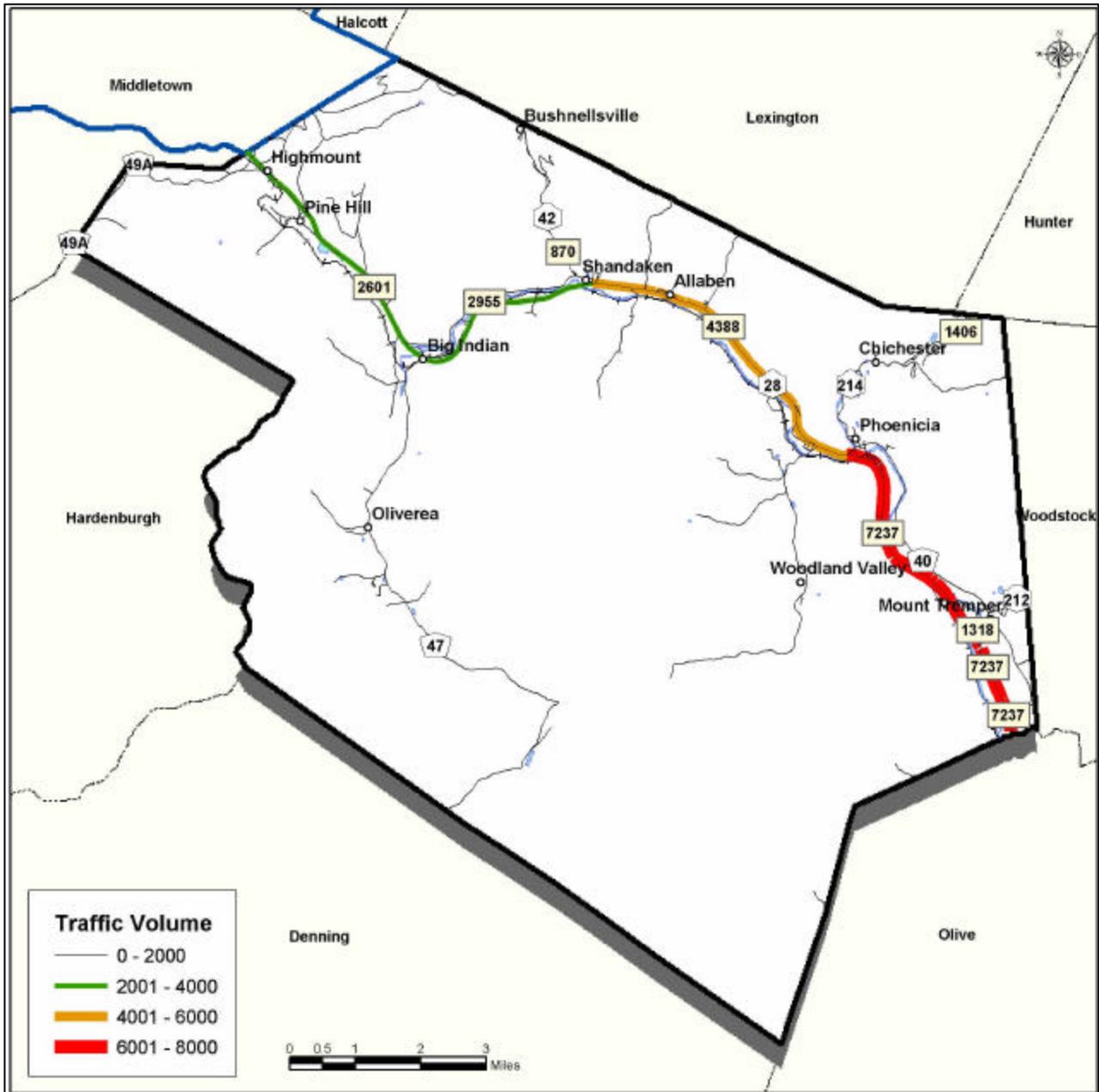


Figure 6 – Existing Traffic Volumes (Daily) (source: NYSDOT)

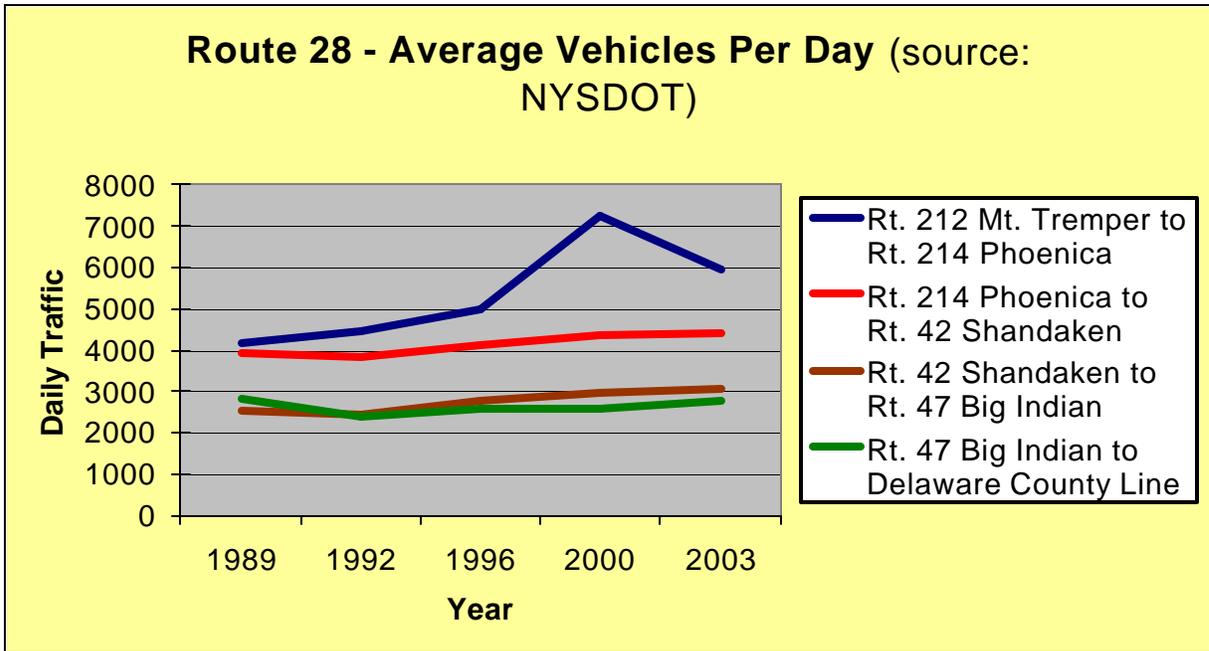


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Table 2 – Bridges (source: NYSDOT)

BIN	Bridge	Over	Jurisdiction
1018780	Route 214	Stony Clove Creek	State - DOT
1019650	Route 28	Broad Street Hollow	State - DOT
1019660	Route 28	Shandaken Tunnel Outlet	State - DOT
1019670	Route 28	Peck Hollow Storm	State - DOT
1019680	Route 28	Esopus Creek	State - DOT
1019700	Route 28	Esopus Creek	State - DOT
1019710	Route 28	Rochester Hollow	State - DOT
1019720	Route 28	Birch Creek Tributary	State - DOT
1019730	Route 28	Academy Street	State - DOT
1025150	Route 42	Bushnellsville Creek	State - DOT
1025160	Route 42	Bushnellsville Creek	State - DOT
1025170	Route 42	Bushnellsville Creek	State - DOT
1025180	Route 42	Bushnellsville Creek	State - DOT
1041240	Route 214	Stony Clove Creek	State - DOT
1078000	Catskill Int. Center	Burns Creek	State - Other Dept.
1091280	Route 28	Romer Mountain Kill	State - DOT
1091290	Route 28	Esopus Creek	State - DOT
1091300	Route 28	Little Beaverkill	State - DOT
1091310	Route 28	CR 121	State - DOT
2224560	Silver Hollow Road	Stony Clove Creek	Town
2224570	Broad St. Hollow Road	Broad Street Hollow	County
2224600	Fawn Hill Road	Woodland Creek	Town
2224620	Eagle Mountain Road	Esopus Creek	Town
2224640	Park Access Road	Birch Creek	State - DEC
2224650	Church Road	Trib. Esopus Creek	Town
2264170	Stoney Clove Road	Stony Clove Creek	Town
2264280	Rose Mountain Road	Rose Mountain St.	Town
2264390	Birch Creek Road	Birch Creek	Town
2264400	Herdman Road	Fox Hollow Brook	Town
2267650	Main Street	Cathedral Glen	Town
2268750	Rossner Bridge Road	Bushnellsville Creek	Town
2269010	Main Street	Birch Creek	Town
3025090	CR 47	Hatchery Hollow	County
3025100	CR 47	Maben Hollow	County
3346420	Woodland Valley Road	Woodland Creek	County
3346670	Fox Hollow Road	Fox Hollow Creek	County
3346710	Broad St. Hollow Road	Broad Street Hollow	County
3347020	Gossoo Road	Bushnellsville Creek	County
3347060	Silver Hollow Road	Warner Creek	County
3347070	Mt. Pleasant	Esopus Creek	County
3347080	Panther Kill Road	Panther Kill	County
3347100	Maben Hollow Road	Esopus Creek	County
3347110	Woodland Valley Road	Panther Kill	County
3347120	Fox Hollow Road	Esopus Creek	County
3347130	McKinley Hollow Road	Esopus Creek	County
3347140	Burnham Hollow Road	Esopus Creek	County
3347170	Woodland Valley Road	Dougherty Brook	County
3347220	Lasher Road	Birch Creek	County
3347250	Stoney Clove Road	Stony Clove Creek	County
3347310	Lost Clove Road	Esopus Creek	County
3347370	Woodland Valley Road	Esopus Creek	County
3347580	CR 47	Esopus Creek	County
3347590	Herdman Road	Woodland Creek	County
3347800	Bridge Street	Esopus Creek	County
3347850	CR 47	Bushnellsville Creek	County
3365200	CR 40	Beaver Kill	County
2346960	Elm Road	Birch Creek	Town
3346760	Bonnieview Road	Cathedral Glen	County
7713410	Railroad	Mill Street	County

The following graph shows the average vehicles per day (for a 24-hour period) on different segments of State Route 28, per information provided by the New York State Department of Transportation. On average, traffic volumes along State Route 28, in its entirety, have increased at a rate of 1% per year from 1989 to 2003. The segment from Mt. Tremper to Phoenicia has seen the greatest increase at 3%/year since 1989. The western segments of State Route 28 have remained relatively constant with little, if any growth.



State Route 28 traverses the Shandaken community as its highest volume road. Current volumes are well below the carrying capacity of the road. The Ulster County Transportation Plan identifies the ratio of volume to capacity (V/C), ordinarily calculated for a single peak hour, as a means of initially identifying locations of concern. The V/C ratio considers one-way volume and capacity defined as the maximum amount of traffic, which can use the road before there are significant declines in flow and speed. A V/C ratio exceeding 0.8 is generally considered unacceptable. State Route 28 through Shandaken is documented in the Ulster County Transportation Plan to be operating with a V/C ratio of <0.5. Traffic volumes and conditions vary throughout the year, considering the seasonal variation in tourist activities in the region.

As a two-lane highway with a posted speed limit of 55 miles per hour and with access from other highways and streets, a number of vehicular accidents have occurred. An increase in traffic volumes may increase the likelihood of accidents, particularly at major intersections entering the hamlets. There are no left turn lanes anywhere in the Town.

The Ulster County Transportation Plan documents the latest accident statistics for the major roads in the town. The average crash rates per million vehicle miles of travel were computed on roadway segments to be 5.50/MVM (million vehicle-miles). Road segments, which experience crash rates above the average, typically need to

be further evaluated for mitigation or monitoring. Routes 28 and Route 212 are experiencing accidents in the range from 1.5 - 3.5 crashes per MVM. Route 214 is experiencing crash rates ranging from 3.5 - 5.5 per MVM and should be monitored as traffic volumes increase. Route 42 is experiencing crash rates in the range of 0 - 1.5 per MVM. This data indicates that currently, these road segments are experiencing crash rates below the statewide average for similar types of roads.

A cursory visual inspection indicates that road conditions in the town vary greatly, from good to poor. There is evidence of pavement damage due to flooding and the annual freeze/thaw cycle, as well as poor conditions due to the age of the pavement. No state roads are currently rated "fair or poor" in the Town; however, two sections of CR 47 (by Big Indian and leading to the Denning town line) fall in this category. No condition rating information is available for Town roads.

3. Trails – Peds/Bikes

Sidewalks and crosswalks are limited primarily to the hamlet settings. A crosswalk has been designated on Route 28 in the area around Mt. Pleasant Road. There are no sidewalks along Route 28.

Considering the rural and natural park setting, there are numerous trails leading to and through the Catskill Park and other State lands. Figure 6 shows the more notable trails currently mapped.

4. Transit

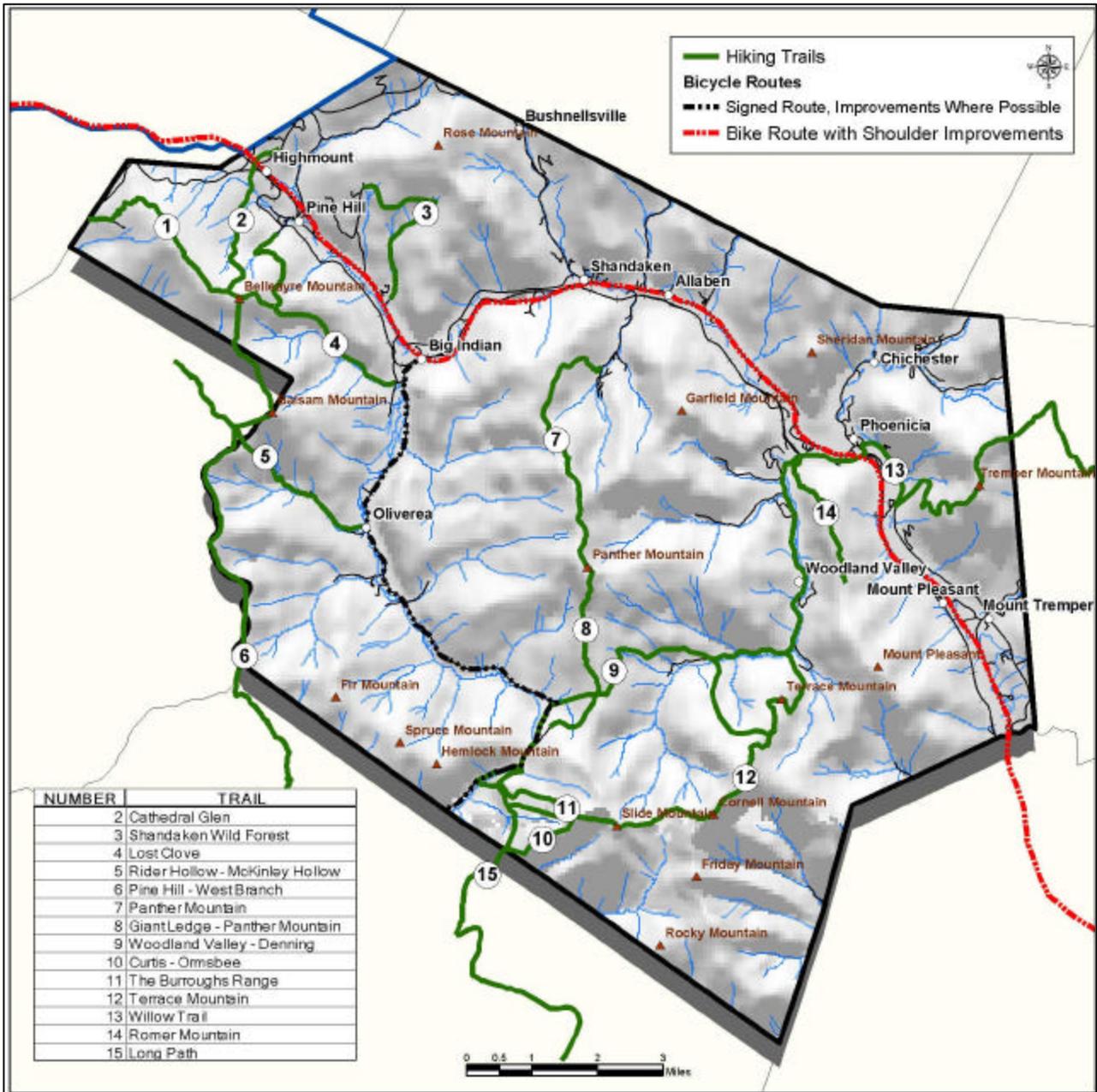
The only municipal transportation services currently in the town consist of the Ulster County Rural Transportation, which provides twice-daily bus service between Highmount and Kingston. One private company is currently providing regularly scheduled bus service into and out of the town. In the summer season, Belleayre provides shuttle service between Belleayre Mountain and the Pine Hill Day Use Area.

5. Telecommunications Services

There are three aspects of telecommunications services: cell towers, high-speed Internet and public telephone services. Each has a unique dimension.

- a. Cell Phone Facilities - The placement of transmission facilities are essential to the operation of wireless telephone services. At present, Shandaken lacks cell transmission facilities, except on Highmount, and as a result, a signal can be obtained only there or on limited mountain tops.
- b. Internet Communication - There are essentially four methods of obtaining high-speed Internet connections: cable modem, satellite, digital subscriber lines (DSL) and wireless. Of these, satellite service and cable modem service are available in the Town. Since local cable systems for television were acquired by a private company, which upgraded its service by building in from its outermost reaches, Shandaken was among the first towns in the region to have high-speed Internet connections. There do not seem to be any plans to provide DSL service and the main telephone switch at Phoenicia is only a T-1 line, which is insufficient to carry high-speed internet service.

Figure 7 – Existing Trail System (source: USGS maps and Ulster County Transportation Plan)



c. Emergency Communication - In the absence of wireless telephone communication, emergency telephone has been by way of pay telephones, maintained in publicly accessible places. Many of the telephones in the Town are slated to be eliminated, on the grounds that they do not produce adequate revenue. This specific need is of critical importance to the emergency service providers, including the five fire houses/companies that serve the Town of Shandaken.

6. Power Supply

Electric power is distributed in the Town by New York State Electric and Gas (NYSEG). All power lines are above ground.

F. Community Services & Facilities

There are a number of different community services as follows:

1. Public Libraries and Other Cultural Amenities

There are public libraries in both Pine Hill (the Morton Memorial Library) and Phoenicia. In addition, there is a Town museum in Pine Hill and the Empire State Railway Museum in Phoenicia. The Shandaken Theater Society has a theater in Phoenicia. The Belleayre Conservatory hosts a weekly summer concert series.

2. Community Centers

There is a community center in Pine Hill that is available for the town. The center hosts various cultural and educational activities.

3. Public and Not-For-Profit Recreation Facilities

The town has public recreation facilities (either owned or leased) in Pine Hill, Big Indian, Glenbrook Park in Shandaken and Phoenicia. Town residents can use the following facilities:

- Belleayre Ski Center (including Pine Hill Lake)
- Gun club in Phoenicia
- Recreational facilities at the Phoenicia Elementary School
- State campground in Woodland Valley

4. Government Services

The town offices are located in Allaben and Shandaken. The Supervisor, Town Board, planning and zoning, assessors and highway departments are located in the municipal facilities in Allaben. The town police and emergency services are located in offices in Shandaken next to Glenbrook Park.

5. Emergency Services

The Town provides emergency medical services. There are five volunteer fire companies and a town police force. These are generally considered adequate for the needs of the town at present.

6. Waste Collection and Recycling

Most residents have waste picked up by one of two private companies serving the town. The town no longer has a transfer station, although it maintains a recycling center at the Town Hall.

7. Public Parking

Parking is a concern in the hamlets. In some of the main recreational and tourist attractions, ample parking is provided. Parking is limited in the villages and hamlets and part of hamlet revitalization has focused on providing more parking spaces to better accommodate the seasonal variations in town population. The Town's zoning regulations make provisions for ensuring adequate parking for new construction. Public parking and rest areas are provided along Route 28.

G. Natural Features

The landforms that make up Shandaken include mountaintops, wooded and steep hillsides, mountain valleys, and significant natural communities of beech, maple, hemlock, ash, oak, other northern hardwoods and conifer forests. There are few relatively flat plateaus, although there are numerous streams feeding the main watercourse - the Esopus Creek, and expanses of relatively flat land and open fields along the Esopus Valley (a.k.a. the Rte. 28 Corridor). Interspersed throughout the natural land features are the Town's hamlets, developed over the years where the terrain was accessible and conducive, mainly in the valleys and along major streams, such as the Esopus Creek, Woodland Valley, Birch Creek and the Stony Clove.

Most of the mountains in Shandaken are protected under the NYS Constitution Forest Preserve, as shown previously, are to be kept "Forever Wild." Within the Town of Shandaken, there are only a few mountaintops not under the Forest Preserve protection. One of them is Belleayre Ski Center that is owned by New York State. Belleayre Ski Center is the town's largest recreational tourist attraction and the only recreational parcel on a mountaintop. Other mountains under private ownership include Highmount, Balsam and Rose Mountain. Any development occurring on the privately owned mountains or sides must consider such items as visibility, erosion control, impacts on wildlife, significant ecological communities, scenic vistas and other sensitive environmental features.

H. Other Significant Issues

Hamlet Designations

Over the years, twelve hamlets have formed in Shandaken, characterized by consolidated residential and commercial buildings (a hamlet is similar to a village though it is not incorporated). Some are found in valleys - Woodland Valley, Oliveria, Chichester, Bushnellsville - others along the Esopus Creek / Route 28 Corridor - Mt. Pleasant, Mt. Tremper, Phoenicia, Shandaken, Allaben, Big Indian, Pine Hill and Highmount. Most of the land development in the Town, including residences, is found in the valleys and along the Esopus Creek/Route 28 corridor.

When the Town worked with NYCDEP to develop a list of parcels that would be "designated hamlets", the intent was to protect all of the lands that are currently thought of as the hamlets from acquisition by the NYCDEP. Outside of these designated Hamlets, the Town was also able to reserved 50 acres of land that is unattainable. NYCDEP has the authority to acquire parcels not part of the designated hamlets or these 50 acres, in accordance with the terms of the MOA. However, each parcel must be at least 10 acres in size and cannot have a habital dwelling on it, in addition to other criteria. If the parcel is in a floodway, they may be able to acquire parcels less than 10 acres, but in all cases, they cannot acquire any land unless the seller is willing to sell it.

A Town Resolution, dated April 29, 1997, listed parcels identified by the Town as “designated hamlets.” These parcels are mapped on Figures 4a-4g. Assuming that there is no missing information, it is clear that the “designated hamlets” boundaries do not correspond to the generally accepted boundaries of these hamlets. However, because of the restrictions on parcels that the NYCDEP can acquire, it appears that all of the lands within the generally accepted Hamlets are protected from acquisition.

Flooding and Other Potential Disasters

The majority of the Town’s development is located in the valleys of Esopus Creek and its tributaries. As such, there is a high potential for significant flood impacts. This has been clearly evident during several significant flood events over the past several years. Residents were displaced, businesses were shut down, roads and creek banks were severely damaged and emergency services were cut off. There is the potential for similar impacts during snowstorms, ice storms or other major weather events.

Environmental Protection vs. Economic Development

Perhaps the most significant issue facing the Town is the growing conflict between three key issues described earlier in this section of the plan:

- The desire to preserve the environment, particularly scenic views and the visibility of the night sky;
- The Watershed Protection Plan, which seeks to acquire as much land as possible to preserve the New York City water supply, including some of the already small number of developable parcels in the Town; and
- Local residents who need additional economic opportunities to sustain their quality of life and the Town, which needs the income to prosper and provide the services that the residents need.

It is important to note that these issues do not necessarily have to be in conflict and are not unique to the Town of Shandaken – they are much more regional in nature. County, State and Federal agencies, NYCDEP, environmental and economic development agencies are all keenly aware of the conflicting issues in the Catskill region. As such, solutions may also need to be developed on a regional level.