
MASTER PLAN

TOWN AND VILLAGE OF MORRIS

OTSEGO COUNTY

STATE OF NEW YORK

October 2, 1987

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SECTION ONE: ENACTMENT, TITLE, AND PURPOSE

Section 1.1 Enactment: The Planning Board of the Town and Village of Morris in the County of Otsego on this day of , 1987, under the authority of Section 272a of Article 16 of Chapter 62 of the Consolidated Laws of the State of New York, hereby adopts the following Master Plan for the Town and Village of Morris.

Section 1.2 Title: This document shall be known as THE TOWN AND VILLAGE OF MORRIS MASTER PLAN.

Section 1.3 Purposes in View: This Master Plan is intended to summarize the natural and historic assets of the Town and Village of Morris, to define its essentially rural and agricultural character, to provide guidelines for the preservation of the Town's and Village's natural and historic assets in a manner compatible with orderly economic growth, and to provide a basis for a detailed Land Use Ordinance to guide the future development of the Town and Village.

SECTION TWO: INTRODUCTION

Section 2.1: The Town and Village of Morris has as assets, its natural beauty, rural setting and historical character. This beauty, setting, and character make the Town and Village of Morris an attractive place to live.

Section 2.2 Pressures on the Town and Village of Morris: The natural and historic assets of the Town and Village of Morris are fragile resources and the influx of new residents threatens the very qualities that make them special places. Without effective regulation of land use through local control, and taking into account their special qualities, growth is likely to occur in an indiscriminate, haphazard manner, marring natural beauty, diminishing historical character, straining local resources, and polluting the environment. As growth occurs, measures must be taken to maintain air, water, and soil quality, to insure proper waste disposal, to minimize traffic hazards and congestion, and to protect historic and esthetic values.

Section 2.3 Property Values: Further, the Town and Village of Morris is an economic resource, especially to its property owners. Indiscriminate development and poor planning damages the environment and lowers the quality of life and thus, is a direct threat to property value. New residential and commercial projects can increase congestion, crowd the schools, stress the environment, raise taxes, and make the area less, rather than more, attractive. An aim of an effective Land Use Ordinance -- one that balances personal freedom with community responsibility -- is to protect property values, while maintaining reasonable tax rates.

SECTION THREE: THE TOWN AND VILLAGE OF MORRIS

Section 3.1 Importance of the Village to the Town: Residents of the Town of Morris will, for the foreseeable future, depend on the Village of Morris for essential facilities and services and in some cases, economic health. Examples of facilities and services located within the Village would include: Morris Central School, Butternut Valley Health Center, places of worship, retail stores, bank, professional services, Kenyon Free Library, places of business and employment, and recreational and cultural centers, such as the Butternut Valley Arts and Crafts Center, Morris Community Park and Otsego Country Fairgrounds. In addition, emergency service and fire protection centers are located in the Village.

Section 3.2 Pressures from the Village: A variety of businesses in the Town, outside the Village, depend on the tourist trade. Since there is limited potential for expansion within the Village of Morris, increasing pressures for development in the Town of Morris, for both commercial and residential purposes, seem to be inevitable. Locations especially sensitive to such pressures include the areas along Route 23, East and West of the Village, and Route 51, North and South of the Village. The patterns of development in these areas require special attention in order to minimize pollution of ground and surface water, traffic congestion, and visual blight.

SECTION FOUR: POPULATION DENSITY AND LAND USE

Section 4.1 Density and Stability: Part of the essential character of the Town surrounding the Village of Morris is its relatively low density of population (approximately 45.8 persons per square mile, per the 1980 Census). This character is further enhanced by the relative stability of the populations of both the Village and Town of Morris, ie:

1. a) Total Inhabitants: 1856 = 2038
b) Total Horses: 1856 = 501
(From survey by C. & R. C. Gates of Philadelphia)
2. a) Total Inhabitants: 1980 = 2461
(Town = 1780; Village = 681)
b) Total Horses: 1980 = Unknown
(From 1980 Census)
3. a) Total Inhabitants: July, 1984 = 2566
(Town = 1824; Village = 742)

Density and stability can be regulated directly by establishing minimum allowable lot sizes, and indirectly by other devices such as Transferred Development Rights (TDRs), and lot size averaging within a parcel, to maintain desirable populations densities.

Section 4.2 Land Use: Wherever possible, existing patterns of land use in hamlets and rural areas should be respected, to preserve the integrity of the Town and Village of Morris. For example, land removed from use as farmland or woodland cannot easily be returned to such use. Uses consistent with existing patterns should be encouraged when compatible with the characteristics of the land, in terms of factors such as drainage, erosion control, water supply, sewage, waste disposal and accessibility.

Section 4.3 Special Regulations: The 1790 Census showed few people in the present Morris Township; however, the next few decades brought an influx of people from New England and France, to settle Louisville (now Morris). As the Town and Village prepare for the next influx, land use regulations should protect the historical and natural character of the Town and Village, through sign regulation, recognition of historical districts, buildings, and uses, protection of scenic vistas, screening around unsightly commercial and industrial lots, etc. These aims can be achieved by admitting commercial, institutional, and multiresidential uses through a Planned Development Unit (PDU) process under strict local control, designed to protect the essential character of the area in which any such use is proposed. A sense of historic and esthetic continuity is maintained by the use of traditional styles and materials, by the adaptation or renovation of existing older buildings, and by the preservation of natural features, such as woodlands, cultivated fields, and pastures.

Section 4.4 Public Spaces: There exists at present, publicly-owned recreational land in the form of a village park, county forest, and state land in the Town of Morris. The present status of this land should be maintained.

SECTION FIVE: TRANSPORTATION

Section 5.1 Roads: The Town and Village of Morris is presently served by a network of State, County and Town roads appropriate to its geography and rural character. These roads provide access to all areas of the Town and Village. This network, if suitably maintained and improved, should be adequate for the needs of the Town for the foreseeable future.

Section 5.2 Congestion: Numerous Town and Village roads, especially those which traverse steep terrain, are not suitable for handling the traffic flow associated with intensive development. Low population densities should be maintained in areas served by such roads, to minimize traffic congestion and hazardous driving conditions.

Section 5.3 Strip Development: Strip development along the major arteries in the Town and Village of Morris, in addition to creating traffic hazards and congestion, could seriously diminish the attractiveness of the Town and Village; therefore, commercial and industrial multiunit residential development along the highways should be carefully planned. Well-planned clusters, interspersed with low-density, residential, agricultural and conservation areas, will be preferred.

SECTION SIX: ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC HEALTH

Section 6.1 Introduction: A major objective of the Town and Village of Morris should be to maintain the natural environment so that it may be used and enjoyed by all the citizens of the Town and Village. Residents and visitors have the right to a clean and safe environment. The cost of cleaning contaminated water, air, or soil is many times greater than the cost of keeping the environment clean from the start. Some contaminants cannot be removed from the water or soil at all. The cost of preventing pollution should be borne by the businesses, institutions or individuals who generated it. Restoring a resource to a usable condition should not become the burden of the taxpayers.

Section 6.2 Sewage Treatment Plant: The Town does not plan to build a municipal water supply or sewage treatment plant. Such expensive public works should not be necessary as long as adequate on-site sewage disposal facilities and water systems are required. The Village does maintain a public water supply, but further development may tax the existing system.

Section 6.3 Lot Sizes: Lot sizes must be sufficient, given their soil types, to provide on-site sewage treatment, and in the case of the town, a water supply for the proposed use in question. The Land Use Ordinance must require enough land so that each lot can safely contain its own sewage disposal system, and in the Town, a well, without adversely impacting neighboring properties. Poorly-drained and impervious soils in many areas of the Town and Village require larger lot sizes than would be necessary in locations with more favorable soil conditions.

Section 6.4 Erosion: Erosion and siltation damage farmland and destroy habitats for fish and game. A Land Use Ordinance should stipulate practices designed to minimize runoff and erosion. Building on steep slopes or clearcutting woodlands should be discouraged.

Section 6.5 Wetlands: Groundwater, streams, ponds, bogs, marshes, swamps and other wetlands should be protected.

Section 6.6 Discharges: State and Federal laws prohibiting many kinds of discharges into surface and ground water or into the air are often inadequate for local conditions. Local ordinances should prohibit pollution of water, air, or soil by toxic and noxious materials or conditions. Enforcement and penalties should be local as well as State and Federal responsibilities.

Section 6.7 Natural Features: Valuable natural features, including scenic vistas, should be protected wherever possible.

Section 6.8 Environmental Review: All applications to the Town and Village for approval of actions which have the potential for significant threats to the environment should be subject to thorough environmental review in accordance with the procedures prescribed in the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQR).