

# TOWN OF TUSTEN



COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
2007

Cover photograph taken and generously donated by Linda Slocum



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# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR TUSTEN, NY

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**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR TUSTEN, NY**

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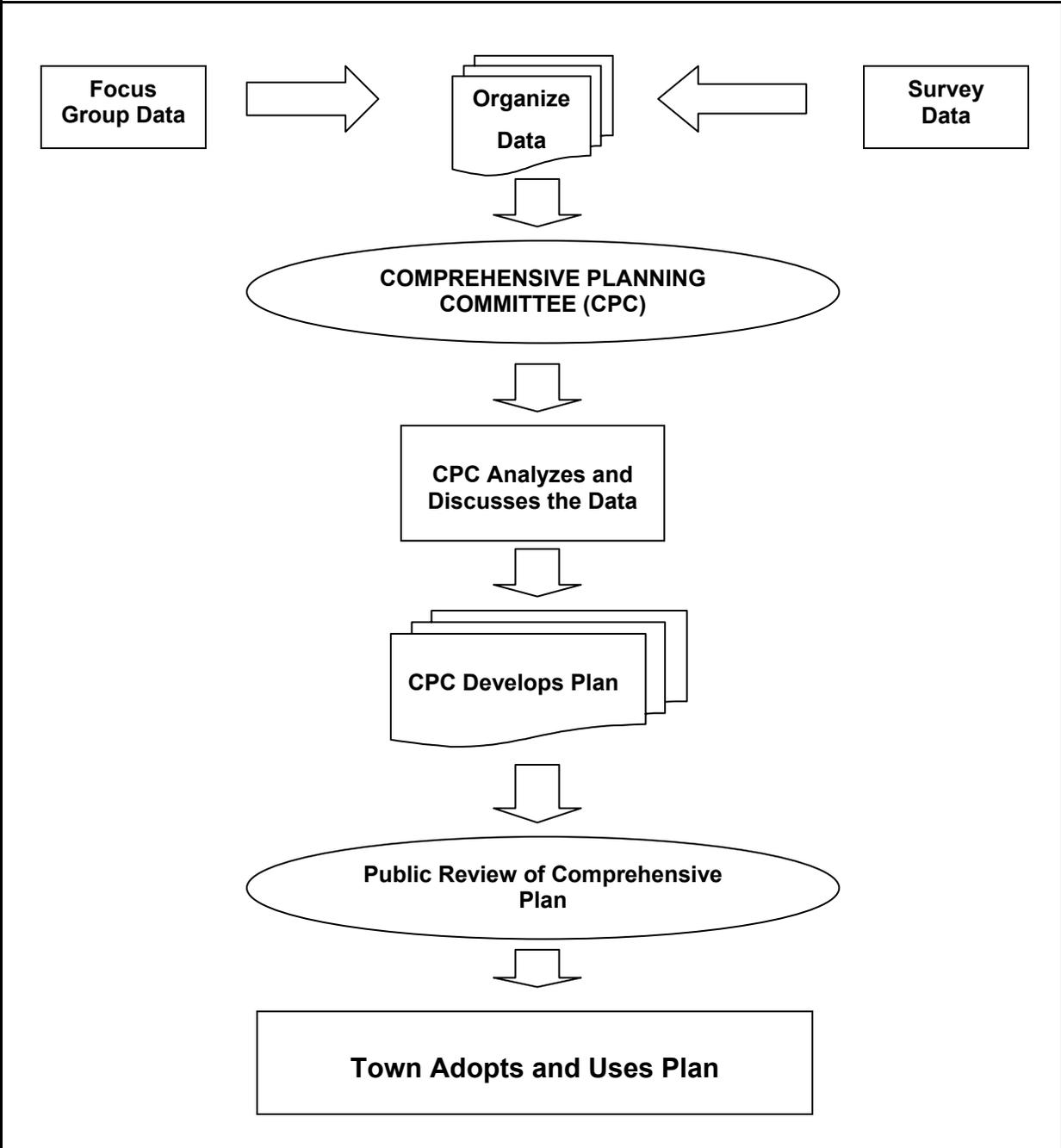
## VISION STATEMENT

**“We see our community growing in a balanced, diverse manner that protects its rural character by building on our strengths and historic roots.”**

The above was written by a group of Town of Tusten residents during a public outreach event held at the beginning of the comprehensive planning process for this document. It succinctly states the sentiments we received from the public through surveys and other outreach events. This document attempts to lay a foundation and maps out a route that we hope will help the Town achieve this vision.

This plan has been done in accordance with New York State Town Law § 272-a. Town Comprehensive Plan.

**OVERVIEW OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PROCESS**





## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A comprehensive plan is an official document adopted by a local government that identifies the goals, objectives, principles, guidelines, policies, standards, and strategies for the growth and development of the community. It serves as a blueprint for the community when setting policies such as zoning and building codes. It also recommends ways to achieve the community's desires. It should be inclusive, long-range, and easy to use.

### B. The Process

Since the Comprehensive Plan should be a vision of what a community is to be in the future, the process of developing this plan should be a community-wide effort. All interest groups should have a part in determining what this vision should be. The Town of Tusten government appointed a group of concerned citizens, Planning Board members and Zoning Board of Appeals members to sit on the Comprehensive Planning Committee, and engaged the Sullivan County Division of Planning and Environmental Management to help develop this Comprehensive Plan.

The first phase of the process consisted of collecting available data on the social and physical aspects of the Town while engaging citizen participation. After analyzing all existing data and taking input from the citizenry into consideration, goals and objectives were developed. These goals and objectives form the foundation of the Plan.

To achieve the public input, the Committee used a mail survey and held several focus groups at the Town Hall.

## ***The Survey***

The Town mailed out a survey to residents to gather opinions on various issues. A copy of the survey, as well as a full analysis of the results, can be found in Appendices A and B. The survey's questions were aimed at obtaining information regarding residents' level of satisfaction with the current state of the Town, what the residents would like to see for their community in the future, and existing concerns that need to be addressed. The survey was sent to 900 registered voters and property owners in the Town of Tusten. A total of 321 completed surveys were returned for an overall response rate of 35.7 percent.

## ***Focus Groups***

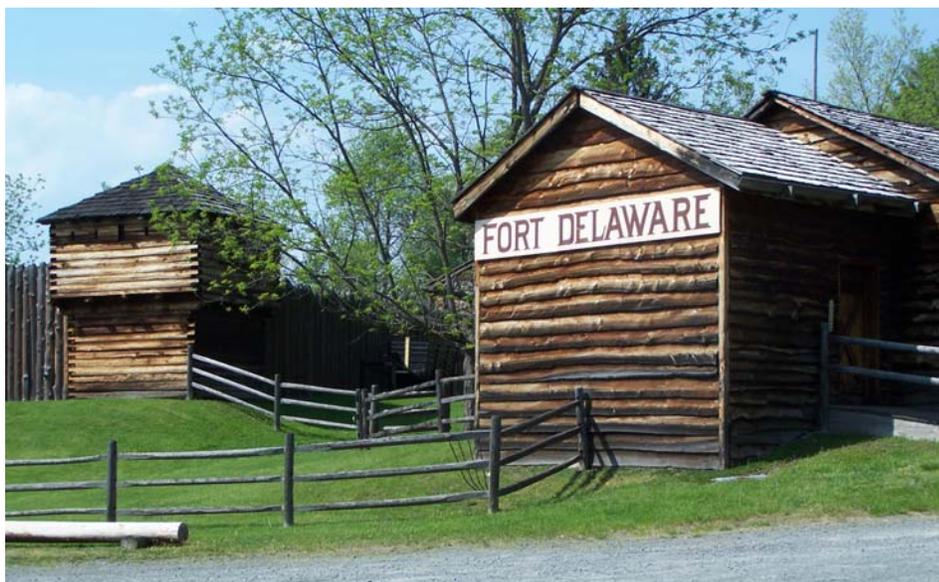
The Committee hosted three focus groups, each with a different activity to promote discussion about the Town's issues and goals. While participation was light, approximately 10 to 20 residents showing for each event, the results were valuable and supported the results from the Survey. Full descriptions, results and analysis of this process can be found in Appendix B.

## ***Developing the Plan***

The County assembled all of the data into a workbook for the Committee (See Appendix B for a copy of the workbook). The Committee was then charged with analyzing the information and creating the Plan. With the County's help, the Committee organized the information and developed this Plan.

## ***Adopting and Implementing the Plan***

Upon completion of a draft, there will be public review and input. The document may be revised based on the review and feedback. Once the Town Board adopts a final Comprehensive Plan, the process continues with implementation of the recommendations.



## II. BACKGROUND

### A. Brief History of The Town of Tusten

[The following is a redaction of Tusten's history as written by Town Historian Art Hawker. The full text can be found in Appendix D.]

The Town of Tusten's history and commerce has been greatly shaped by the Delaware River and the Erie-Lackawana Railroad.

Before the first European settlement, the Delaware River Valley was inhabited by the Lenni Lenape Indians, an Indian nation formed of many tribes, clans, and families. Earliest white explorers to the river valley were said to be Dutch traders, who had come down river via the Hudson and Mohawk rivers, and Swedes, who had reportedly sailed upriver in 1638. Ten Mile River, or Tusten, as it is now known, was settled in 1757.

As the population increased, so did river commerce and bluestone quarrying. Naturally, harvesting and transporting lumber became an industry, which gave rise to hotels that provided places for food and rest. Rope and later cable ferries plied the river at choice locations.

In 1835, due to concessions made in a re-organization of the Erie Railroad's Delaware Division, the railway was changed to enter Pennsylvania just north of Sparrowbush and return to New York at Tusten, which resulted in the hamlet of Narrowsburg being on the line. From this point, the Erie Railroad contributed greatly to the Town's development.

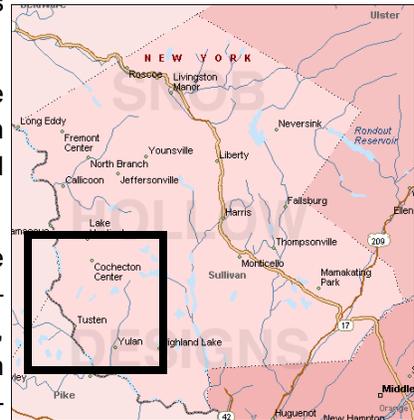
In 1911, another transportation route was developed when New York Governor John Dix signed a bill authorizing construction of the Delaware River Highway, Route 3A, which was eventually completed and dedicated in 1939 as Route 97.

A decade of building began in Tusten in 1920, which included the construction of St. Francis Xavier Church, the Narrowsburg School and Community Hall. The New York City Boy Scout Council purchased large tracts of Tusten land in 1927, establishing their extensive network of summer camps.

The Depression Era in Tusten saw the vicinity being promoted as an economical and accessible vacation destination to Metropolitan New York, with small hotels and burgeoning boarding houses catering to



*New York State with Sullivan County highlighted in red.*



*Sullivan County with Tusten highlighted*



## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR TUSTEN, NY

summertime visitors. During the 1940s, Tusten began to be well represented at the New York City Sportsmen's Show and advertised as not only a summer getaway location, but a year-round vacation spot and retirement community.

The Town of Tusten Centennial in 1953 was reportedly the largest gathering in the Town's history to date. A week-long event was planned from July 26th to August 1st and events were scheduled daily. The capstone of the week's events was the grand parade held on Saturday, at which a crowd was estimated by the New York State Police to be 20,000 people and 9,000 vehicles jammed into Narrowsburg and created an eight-mile traffic jam on Route 97.

In 1966, the last train with passenger service passed through Narrowsburg on the Erie-Lackawana Line.

Tusten celebrated the nation's bicentennial by forming a 26-member commission in March 1975. Among the many events held throughout that year were a Bicentennial Ball; an "instant museum;" and a re-enactment of the town's rafting history by several men who constructed a raft and floated down the Delaware River with Philadelphia as their goal. The 1970s also saw the establishment of **The River Reporter** and the formation of the Delaware Valley Arts Alliance (DVAA).

In 1980, the National Park Service came to the Town as a result of the 1978 Congressional Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and the designation of the Upper Delaware as a National Scenic and Recreational River. In that same year, construction began on a municipal sewer system for Narrowsburg, which was finished the following year. In 1983, the DVAA put the Arlington Hotel on the federal and state lists of historic places. This began a movement to restore Main Street in Narrowsburg, and with the leadership of DVAA, the tone was set for today's strong artistic community.

In the 1990s, the Tusten Theatre (former Park Theater) was renovated to accommodate live music and theatre and the Tusten-Cochecton Library was built adjacent to it.

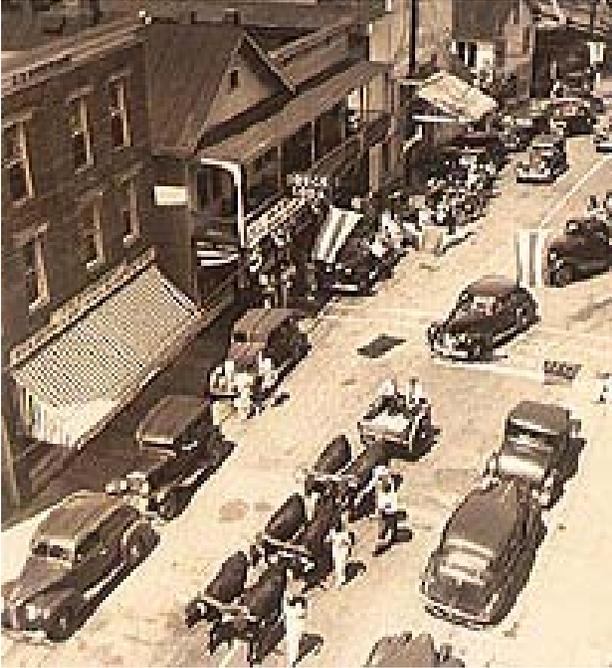
With an eye to the future and a desire to preserve the past, a local history group of dedicated volunteers was formed, which continues to record local history so that residents might draw upon the examples of Town ancestors to improve the future. (See Appendix D for a full history of Tusten)



Cutting ice on Fox Lake, Beaver Brook, Sullivan County, N. Y.



# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR TUSTEN, NY



*Team of oxen in celebration of Tusten's 1953 Centennial parade down Main Street in Narrowsburg.*

*Main Street in Narrowsburg in 2007*

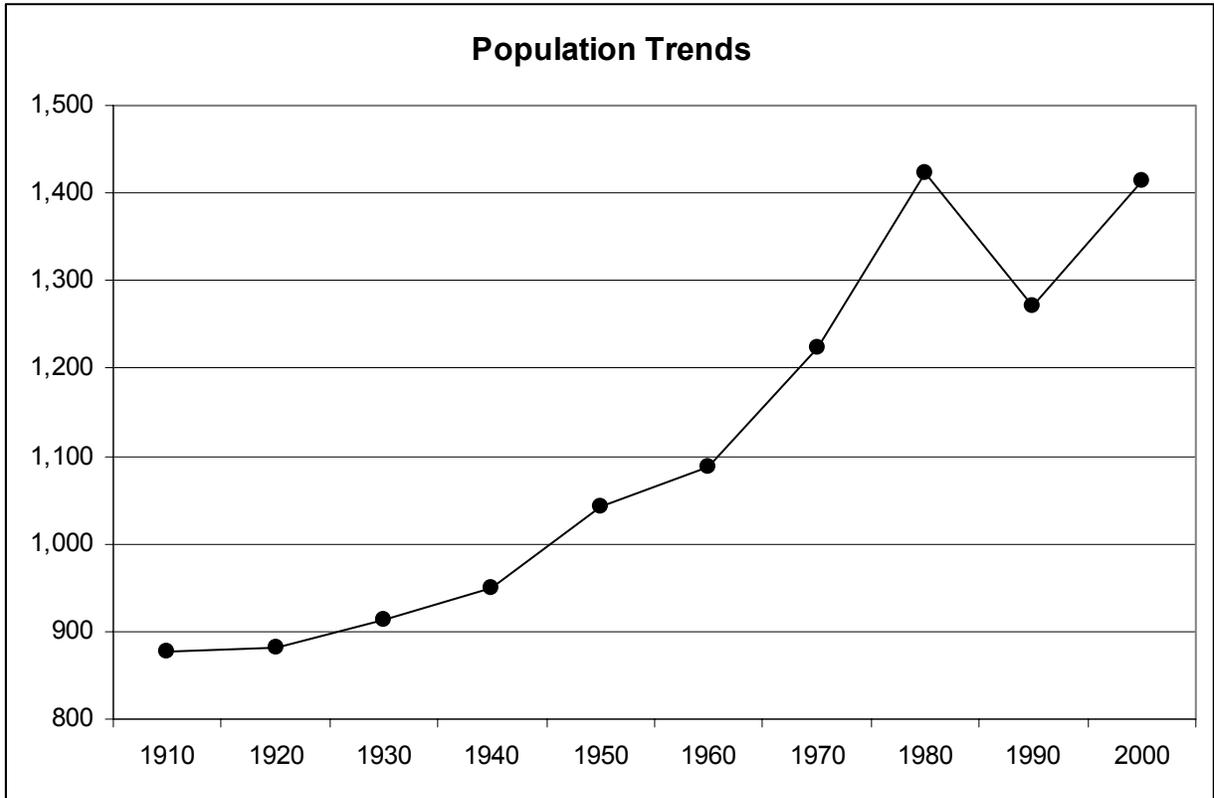


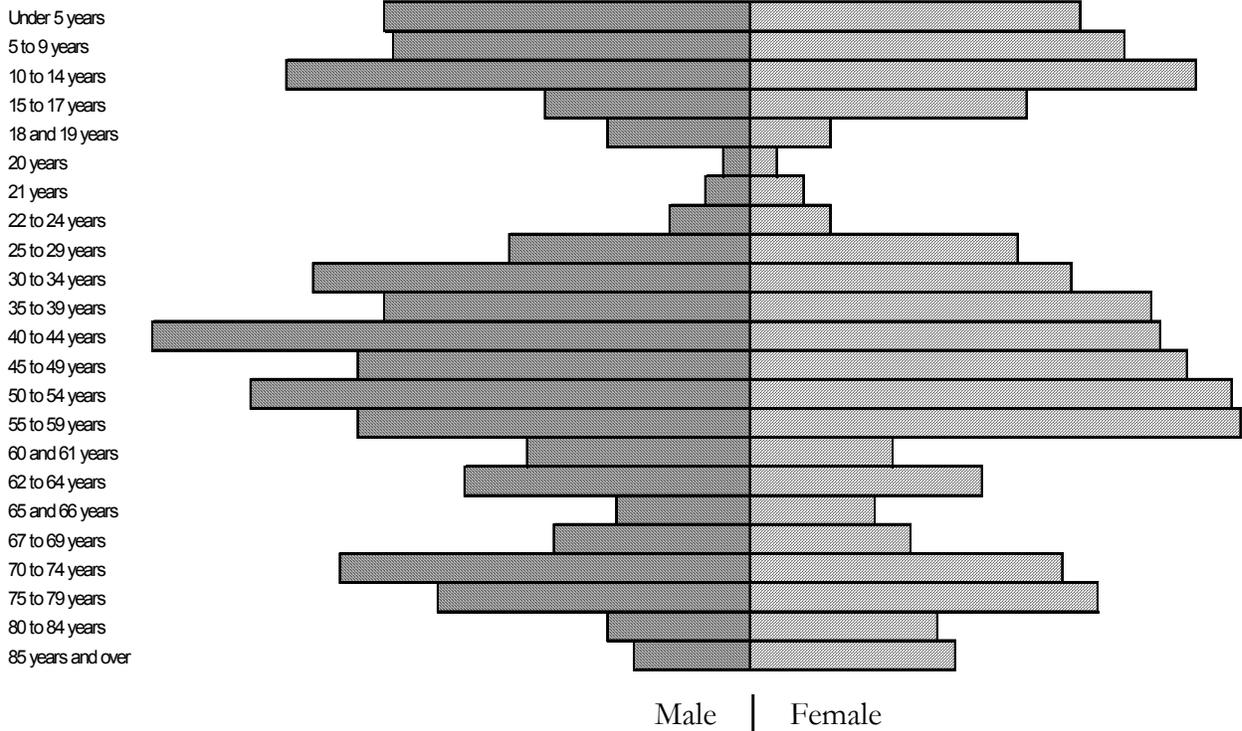
# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR TUSTEN, NY

Total Population	1980	1990	2000	1990 – 2000 Change	1980 – 2000 Change
Tusten Town	1,424	1,271	1,415	11.3%	-0.6%
Sullivan County	65,155	69,277	73,966	6.8%	13.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

## Town of Tusten





**B. Summary of Town Statistics**

**Population**

According to the 2000 Census, the total population of the Town of Tusten is 1,415 persons. This is only an 11.3% increase from the 1990 Census that recorded 1,271 and a surprising .6% decline in population from the 1980 Census that recorded the population at 1,424 people. The Town of Tusten makes up 1.9% of the entire Sullivan County population, 73,966 persons, as stated in the 2000 Census. As part of the 2000 Census, Narrowsburg was designated as a CDP (Census Designated Place), and demographics specifically for the hamlet of Narrowsburg were gathered for the defined area. The population for the Narrowsburg CDP was recorded as 414, 29.3% of the total town population. Historically, the population in the Town has gradually increased. It increased significantly from 1940 and has experienced one major decline in population occurring in 1990. (See chart, “Population Trends”, page 9)

Almost ninety percent (89.1%) of the Town is recorded as being of white race, while almost seven percent (6.9%) is recorded as black or African-American.

Almost seventy-eight percent (77.7%) of the Town population is over the age of 18, while only two-and-a-half percent (2.5%) of the population falls within the 20- to 24-year-old bracket. Additionally, persons aged 18- to 19-years-old account for four percent (4.2%) of the 18- to 24-year-old population. The age structure of the Town of Tusten reiterates a common problem that the entire county faces, once children graduate from high school they move away. Presumably, many of these children move away to attend college, and with no colleges located in the Town, there is no way to keep or attract this population. However the age distribution picks up again in the 25-to 29-year old range, showing that although people move away after graduation a percentage do return or new people in those age ranges move to the area.

## Housing

The total number of housing units recorded in the 2000 Census is 1,008 for the entire Town of Tusten. Seventy-nine percent (79.2%) of total housing units in the Town are owner occupied. The average household size for the Town is 2.3, which is below the County average of 2.5. The total number of households in the Town as recorded in the 2000 Census is 583, a 16.6% increase from the 1990 Census.

Of the specified owner-occupied housing units, the median dollar value was \$92,600 for the Town in the 2000 Census. Almost sixty percent (59.9%) of the owners carry a mortgage with an average monthly mortgage payment of \$1,032. For renter occupied units, the average monthly rent was recorded as \$554 in the 2000 Census.

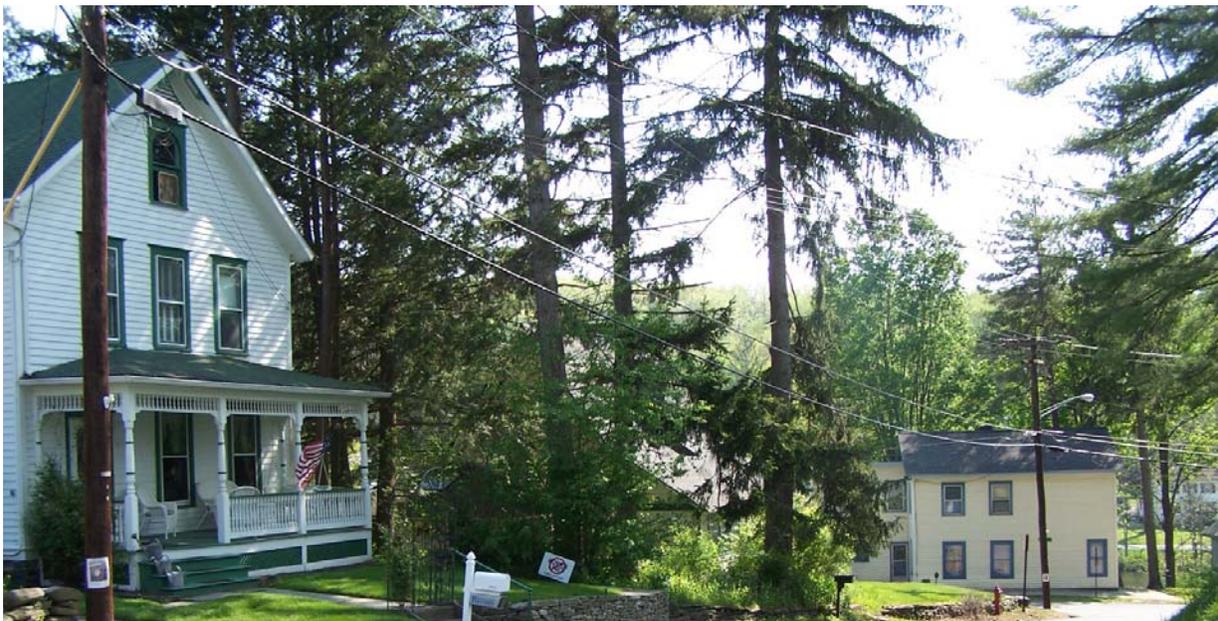
Eighty-five percent (84.8%) of the total housing units for the Town were built prior to 1990.

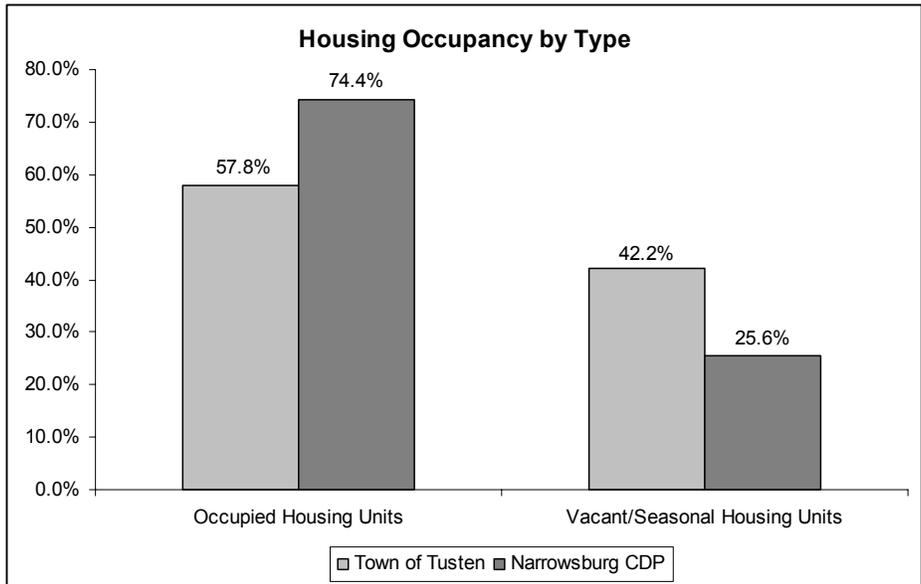
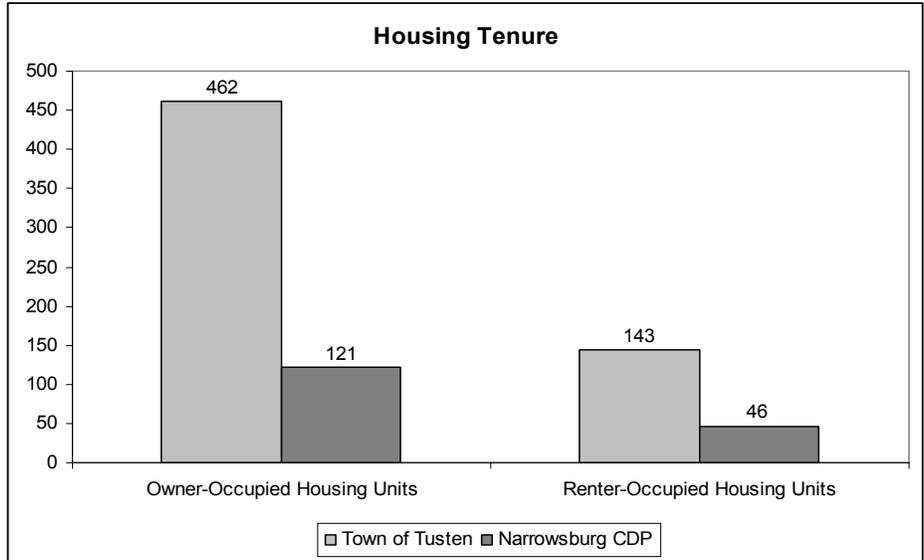
For Narrowsburg Census Designated Place, the total number of housing units recorded was 254. Twenty-five percent (25.2%) of all housing units in the Town are located within the Narrowsburg CDP. This is an 11-percent (11.2%) increase from the 1990 Census (1,276) numbers and a 31.5% increase from the 1980 Census (1,079) numbers. Seventy-six percent (75.7%) of the total housing units in the Narrowsburg CDP are owner occupied.

The average household size for Narrowsburg is 2.2, which is, like the entire Town, below the County average of 2.5.

Of the specified owner-occupied housing units, the median dollar value was \$86,600 for Narrowsburg CDP in the 2000 Census. Fifty-four percent (53.7%) of owner-occupied units in the Narrowsburg CDP carry a mortgage with an average monthly payment of \$975. For renter occupied units, the average monthly rent was recorded as \$660 in the 2000 Census.

Over ninety percent (90.8%) of the total housing units for the Narrowsburg CDP were built prior to 1990.







### Employment & Income

Sixty-three percent (63.4%) of the entire Town population is in the labor force, while only fifty-eight percent (58.3%) of Narrowsburg CDP is in the labor force. Three percent (3.2%) of Narrowsburg CDP is unemployed and nine and a half percent (9.5%) of the entire town is unemployed.

The median household income recorded in the 2000 Census for the Town and Narrowsburg CDP was \$38,824 and \$35,694 respectively. The median family income for the Town was \$46,250 and \$44,688 for Narrowsburg.

Only five percent (5.3%) of families in the Narrowsburg CDP are below the poverty level, while seven (6.8%) of the families in the Town are below the poverty level. One hundred-twenty-nine (129) individuals or nine percent (9.2%) are below the poverty level.



*Above: The hamlet of Narrowsburg has several small eateries, including the Main Street Café.*

*Left: Narrowsburg Feed and Grain supplies a variety of feed to the agricultural community.*

Photo courtesy of Stephen Morse

### III. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND FACILITIES PLANNING

#### A. Existing

##### ***Town of Tusten Senior Services***

The Town of Tusten is sorely lacking in senior citizen services. Senior housing is primarily single-family residences that have served their residents during much of their life or as a former vacation/weekend home. As the residents age, they struggle to hold on to their home because there is nothing else available and attractive to them in the immediate area. There are no senior housing facilities for persons with income, mobility or other age-related problems.



*The Tusten Town Hall is home to the Tusten Theater, which is managed by the Delaware Valley Arts Alliance.*

The Town's senior facilities are currently limited to Sullivan County Office for the Aging's Meals on Wheels and nutrition site activities. The Tusten Senior Citizen Club is currently at a period of low activity with many of the formerly involved seniors now incapacitated or deceased. The main facility currently available for the club is the Community Hall located under the Tusten Theater. The Community Hall does not provide many amenities; other senior centers have comfortable and inviting decors that better accommodate groups that meet to relax, have exercise classes, play cards, bingo or other games.

##### ***Youth Services***

Tusten currently has a youth commission. The Tusten Youth Commission is underutilized, but does plan several events over the course of the year. These events have included trips to the circus and participation in parades and festivals. There is a need to expand the multigenerational participation in this Commission.

Youth facilities currently include a ballpark, a basketball court, and a children's playground. There are some sports leagues active in the Town. The library has a large children's section.

##### ***Town Government***

Town government is accessible to all interested citizens. The meetings are covered in the local newspaper and there is interest in them. The Town Board, Planning Board, and Zoning Board of Appeals comply with the open meeting laws and residents have the opportunity to comment on proceedings.

##### ***Town Hall***

The Town of Tusten government is located at the Town Hall on Bridge Street in Narrowsburg. The first and second floors hold Town offices and the lower level holds the Community Hall. The Community

Hall is used for Town meetings, dances, dinners, and other functions including social events, and serves as a nutrition site and emergency shelter. The Town building also houses the Tusten Theater, a venue for cultural programs, including concerts and plays, which is managed by the Delaware Valley Arts Alliance. With the exception of the theater, the building has seen no major renovation in decades.

### ***Ambulance, Police and Fire Services***

In 1969, a volunteer ambulance service was formed to provide medical assistance to the township. Currently, the Tusten Volunteer Ambulance Service (TVAS) is located in its own facility along Route 97, just north of the intersection with Bridge Street. This facility was built by ambulance corps members, Town residents and businesses. It was built over a period of time in the mid 1980s, after having previously been housed in the Town Hall in one of the old Narrowsburg Fire Department bays. (That bay is currently home to the Town Clerk and Assessor). The Service currently operates two ambulances for calls in the Town of Tusten and also to Wayne and Pike counties in Pennsylvania. The TVAS contracts with the Town of Tusten for service. This contract, along with fundraisers and grants, allows TVAS to meet its financial obligations.

In 2001, the TVAS approved the construction of an addition to the building for the purpose of renting space to the New York State Police, who were then stationed in a two-room apartment just north of the ambulance building. That addition was completed by September of that year by a volunteer force from all segments of the community. Currently, the Town of Tusten pays rent to the TVAS for the NY State Police to staff the station with four troopers. The Town of Tusten is also served by the Sullivan County Sheriff's office, which is located in Monticello, NY.

Fire protection is provided through the Tusten Protection District and the Narrowsburg Fire District, which are served by the Lava Volunteer Fire Department and the Narrowsburg Volunteer Fire Department, respectively. These departments are staffed by volunteer members who rely on special district contracts with the Town of Tusten for funding, along with fundraising activities and grants to round out financial support.

The Narrowsburg Fire Department was formed in 1902 by "concerned citizens who wanted to protect Narrowsburg and vicinity." In 1903, the Narrowsburg Fire District was formed and the Department built their first building in 1904. In 1926, a new building was constructed to house the Fire Department and Community Hall. This building was later sold to the Town of Tusten (the sale was approved in 1975) and the department moved into its current quarters, which previously held a Chevrolet garage. The Department currently owns property along the Delaware River on DeMauro Lane, starting just before the NYS DEC boat access and includes land leased by Landers Campground. This property, which had been an active airport, was purchased in 1954. It was home to the Narrowsburg Fire Department's Fourth of July celebration in past years, and is currently utilized for that same purpose today.

The Lava Volunteer Fire Department was formed in 1929 and incorporated in 1938. The Tusten Protection District was formed in 1945. The Lava VFD is located along CR-111 in the original quarters put up by the Department. In 1994, due to volunteer constraints, it was made policy that both departments, Lava and Narrowsburg, would be on automatic response to the Narrowsburg Fire District or Tusten Protection District.

## **Fort Delaware**

Fort Delaware is a replica depiction of the life of the Delaware Company Pioneers, who settled in the Upper Delaware Valley in 1754. It is chartered by the NYS Education Department as a museum. In 2006, its budget was cut by Sullivan County and it remained closed for several weekends before being opened and run by a group of volunteers. A small budget has been allocated for 2007. The Comprehensive Plan Committee is investigating opportunities to further develop the Fort as a cultural resource.

## **Schools**

Located on the corner of Bridge Street and Erie Road is the Narrowsburg Rural School building. It is one of the three parcels of property owned by the Sullivan West Central School District within the Town of Tusten. The other two are a small bus garage and a ball field, both within walking distance to Main Street in Narrowsburg. All of these facilities were closed in 2005 due to decreased student enrollment and fiscal budget concerns of the district. The survey results point to numerous concerns about the school building being closed and the desire to have it reopened in some capacity. As of 2007, there are no plans by the District to reopen the school building. Numerous ideas have been discussed about the future of this space and the desire to see the school building be used for education, utilized in such a way to enhance services and/or shopping, or converted to a senior residence or facility.



*The Tusten Library and parking lot.*

## **Rest Rooms**

Currently there are no public restrooms in Narrowsburg. Tourists and residents alike enjoy spending time on Main Street, and there is a lack of facilities that would enable people to browse and enjoy the shops and galleries for a longer period of time.

## **Library**

The Narrowsburg-Cochecton branch began as an inspired storefront reading center 14 years ago on Main Street. The branch has since grown into a bustling community center that is the heart of the river town. It is now part of the Western Sullivan Library system, which, in turn, is part of the regional Ramapo Catskill Library System. The library provides Internet access and designated areas for new

books, magazines and daily papers. The Library has many popular community programs. Within its increasingly cramped quarters, the library also houses the Tusten Historical Society and their collections.

## **B. Survey and Focus Group Results**

The survey and focus group results showed the Town's desire to enhance and develop services and opportunities for youth and senior populations. There was interest in investing in enhanced code enforcement. There was also dissatisfaction with the Town's tax rates, with focus groups recommending finding solutions to help lower taxes and reduce the amount of land that is tax exempt.

One of the focus groups recommended a town museum as part of a historic preservation program. Others were concerned about the future of the school building in Narrowsburg.

## **C. Recommendations**

### ***Senior Facilities***

1. Research opportunities for senior housing. This housing should probably be a non-profit corporation undertaking with various stages of assisted-living facilities of one bedroom or studio apartments with activity centers, dining room and transportation facilities. A location in or near Narrowsburg is prime with two churches potentially within walking distance as well as Peck's Plaza. A shuttle bus could easily be arranged for people who have mobility impairment.

For example, the Narrowsburg School campus would make an excellent senior housing and facilities unit. With some innovative thinking and a little effort, the school could become a wonderful asset to the aged residents of Tusten. A task force should be set up with members from the Town and the School District to research the feasibility of converting the school for another use, with senior facilities as one of the choices. There are examples of this type of conversion in Appendix E.

### ***Youth Services and Facilities***

1. The Youth Commission needs more outreach to increase participation and involvement from residents of the Town. Fundraising should become an increased priority. Ample opportunities exist at local events, such as EagleFest, RiverFest, and July 4th.
2. The Town would benefit from public access to the river in the form of a beach. There is also interest in developing a swimming pool, skate park and ice skating rink. A task force, in conjunction with a reinvigorated Youth Commission, should research feasibility and site selection for these facilities. It is important to involve the youth of the Town in this process.
3. Under the tutelage of an expanded Youth Commission, the youth should be engaged in activities to fund and support youth initiatives.

### ***Town Government***

1. Utilize citizenry for specialized task forces to plan and implement specific projects.
2. Promote educational workshops for "how your government works" and post basics on the website including why "home rule" is significant.
3. Create and post an organizational chart.



*The firehouse in Lava*

4. Encourage citizens to access Town information at the website [www.Tusten-Narrowsburg.org](http://www.Tusten-Narrowsburg.org).
5. Work with the local schools to have a Government Day for students to “shadow” government officials.

**Rest Rooms**

1. The Town should contract for service with a portable toilet company to place portable toilets in the municipal parking lot during the months of July and August. These facilities can be added to the existing ones in the De Mauro Baseball Field. The efficacy of the toilets should be evaluated after a year.

**Library**

1. Expand the current facility to create more space for the community and for the collection.

IV. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



*This drawing and generalized site plan were taken from the Waterfront Revitalization Study prepared by the Shepstone Management Corporation in 1996. They present ideas of what could be done to link Main Street Narrowsburg to the Delaware River.*

**A. Existing**

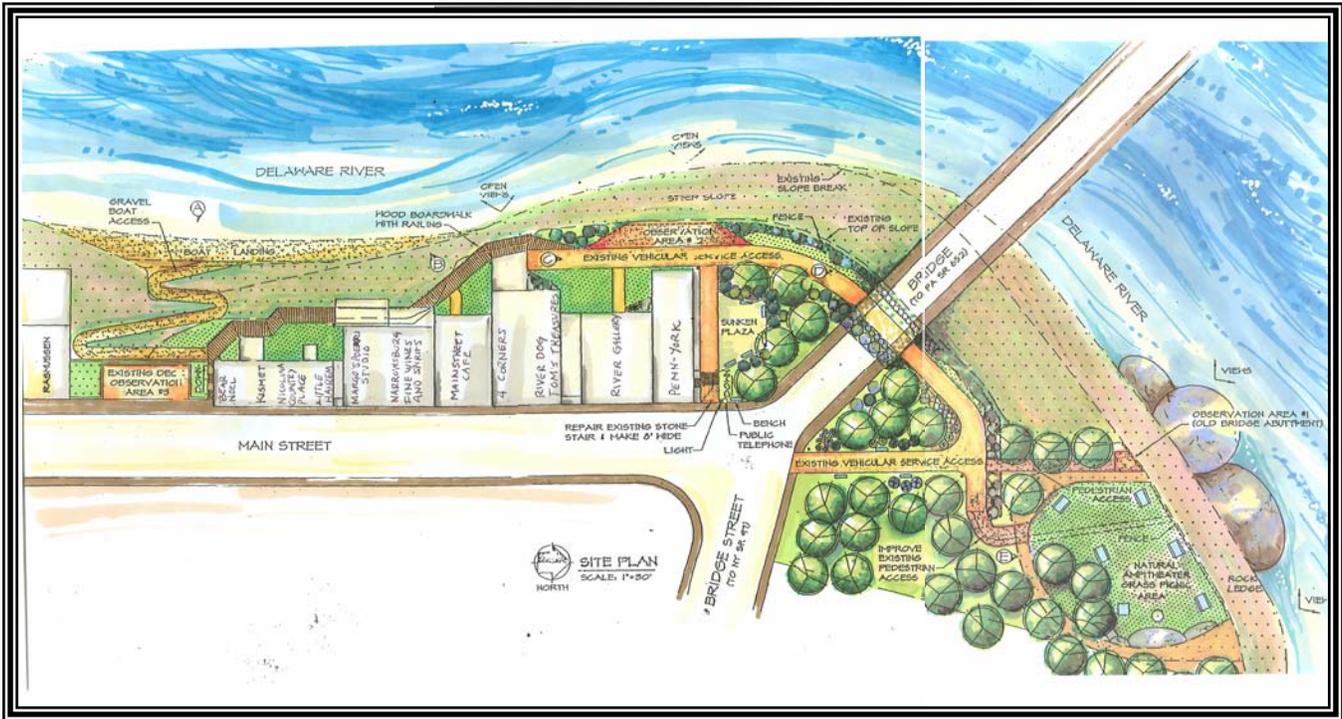
Tusten’s economic base revolves around tourism, single owner or family businesses, the second home industry and small agri-businesses (see list of business types in Appendix F). Current businesses fall into three primary categories: service (restaurants, auto repair, banks etc.), recreation and entertainment (canoeing, theatre, galleries, etc.), and building and agri-business (lumber company and feed mill). Many home (cottage) businesses, owned by artists, designers, writers, filmmakers, etc. have also emerged in Tusten over the last dozen years. There have been numerous changes in the last 10 years including the growth of box stores (Wal-Mart, Home Depot) within easy driving distance, and the closing of the Narrowsburg Elementary School.

**B. Survey and Focus Group Results**

In focusing on the vision, “We see our community growing in a balanced, diverse manner that protects its rural character by building on our strengths and historic roots,” residents identified the following goals:

1. Growth of diverse businesses that support tourism in the historic tradition, technologically based work and jobs, renewable energy, the arts and research and development.

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2. Provide strong infrastructure to support goal #1, such as sewer, water, wireless technology and transportation.

“We see our community committed to waterfront revitalization and preserving its rural character.” was another vision statement written during a focus group. It reiterates the same sentiments as the first.

The vote results from Focus Group 1 showed the top five goals for Business & Economic Development as:

Build on existing cultural and recreational resources - 13 votes

Identify and recruit businesses to attract and satisfy full time population - 4 votes

Rooms — 3 votes

From the results of the public input, the County recommended creating an economic development niche plan for Tusten, which could include the following steps:

1. Plan ways to develop Narrowsburg as an environmental, artistic, cultural, tourist destination and an area that will attract and keep college graduates
2. Develop creative commercial uses for cottage industry
3. Increase the sewer capacity for the hamlet

## C. Recommendations

(Also see Identified Areas of Need in Appendix F)

### *Waterfront Development — River Access*

1. Develop natural “stairway” at the foot of Main Street near the last storefront adjacent to the Interstate Bridge so that access to gazebo can be reached on foot without crossing the road intersection and commercial space on the river side of buildings can be accessed
2. Develop access to the flats below DeMauro Lane for occasional public events
3. Develop a market for a high-end RV Park at the river
4. Develop water recreation area for Tusten residents

### *Tourism/Recreation*

1. Promote Narrowsburg in NY metro area as a “No car needed” community. Bus in on Friday, B&B within walking (or pick up) distance; walk to theater, restaurants, galleries
2. Develop Fort Delaware as an Information Center and Services exchange point for travelers and the Tusten Theatre as a destination
3. Develop 12-month per year audiences such as special tourism weekends that include room, dinner, shopping and theatre or community events or festivals
4. Redevelop the Red Dot hiking trail

### *Stores/Services*

1. Work with Sullivan County and Narrowsburg Chambers to recruit and/or attract:
  - ◇ B&B's or small hotels
  - ◇ printing services
  - ◇ dry cleaning services
  - ◇ medical services
  - ◇ general merchandise businesses

### *Industry*

1. Encourage more cottage industries, such as artists studios or software developers. Those that already exist (12) are harmonious with rural character.
2. Encourage other light industry

### *Information/Communications*

1. Develop wireless & cell service
2. Include public access TV in Time Warner's contract terms
3. Develop a media center

## V. INFRASTRUCTURE



### A. Existing

The Town of Tusten's infrastructure includes roads and highways, and the municipal water and sewer service. Infrastructure accounts for approximately three-fourths of the total Town of Tusten's yearly operating budget.

#### ***Roads and Highways***

The Town of Tusten is served by a network of state, county and town-maintained roads totaling 85 miles. Of these, approximately 13.25 miles are state highways, approximately 11 are county highways, and the remaining 61 miles are Town owned and maintained.

With few exceptions, Town of Tusten roads serve primarily as local roads with relatively low volumes of traffic. In general, they connect rural residences with the state and county systems. Approximately 28 miles or 46% of the 61 miles of Town-maintained roads are oil and stone surface treated or paved roads. The other 33 miles of road are gravel and dirt, a below average number for rural upstate towns.

Historically, many Town of Tusten roads were originally horse and buggy trails. Most were accepted by the Town without meeting any standard engineering design specifications. Engineering road standards are as critical to the life and safety of a road as standard building codes are essential to the life of a home. The Town's highway maintenance budget reflects the expense of maintaining these gravel/dirt roads.

The miles of new roads have been minimal over the past 10 years. The most recent being Mathias Weiden Road, totaling 2.3 miles through the Weiden Lake Estates. This road was the first to be accepted after the town Planning Board required the developer to meet the Town engineering road standards.

For operation and maintenance of Town roads, the Highway Department has equipment and a crew. Equipment assets include 1 tandem-axle truck, 1 single-axle truck, 2-Ford 550 1-ton trucks, bulldozer, Grade All, street sweeper, roller, 5 snow-removal wings, 6 plows, and 1 Ford 350 pick-up truck, totaling approximately \$500,000. Personnel assets include an elected Highway Superintendent, 5 full-time highway crew members and one part-time clerk. The Highway crew members are individuals who maintain a CDL class drivers license, maintain a clean drivers license and are classified as Heavy Equipment Motor Operators. The current crew has on average 20 years of experience per employee.

For the Town economically, it is more cost effective to maintain and operate asphalt roads compared to gravel/dirt. The Town Board could give possible consideration to adopting a proactive long-term maintenance and improvement schedule to develop appropriate gravel and dirt roads to engineering standards, and to

pave them where appropriate. This investment in the highway system can promote the use of available roads by making them more useable.

For subdividing within the Town of Tusten, lot requirements currently are 3 acres minimum with at least 300 feet of road frontage per lot. Actual linear footage of roads may increase due to this frontage requirement, thereby increasing operation and maintenance of these roads if and when adopted by the Town. The Town Board could give possible consideration to conservation subdivision as roads and services may be reduced since building is concentrated in specific residential areas.

### ***Water and Sewer Service***

With a total population of approximately 1,200 residents, about 350 people within the Town of Tusten are served by municipal water and sewer services. The hamlet of Narrowsburg is served by the water district with a small outcropping south of Route 97 to Hunts Corner. The Town Municipal Sewer District provides service to the hamlet of Narrowsburg.

The municipal water systems is comprised of three wells. The water is pumped out of the wellhead, tested, adjusted for pH and chlorinated prior to delivery to customers of the water district. Several years ago, the Town's wells tested out-of-range for salt. The Town has successfully brought those levels down to acceptable range by using a "No Salt" snow removal method in the Flats and School Street area. General maintenance of the water system includes repair of existing pumps, pipes, valves, meters and water quality testing. Testing is mandated by the NYS Department of Health standards.

The municipal sewer system consists of the delivery system from homes and businesses to settling tanks, filtering beds and discharge to the Delaware River. The Town maintains a NYS SPDES permit that mandates final water quality standards for discharge into a body of water. The system is approximately 30 years old.

Assets for both municipal water and sewer districts include 2 trucks and the system itself. The current system would cost approximately four million dollars to replace. The water and sewer systems are operated and maintained by two full-time employees with mandated licenses.

To provide for growth and protection of the environment, the Town Board could give consideration to expansion of the water and sewer district. With consideration of conservation subdivisions within the expanded district, water and sewer infrastructure may be concentrated in a smaller area as compared to current typical land development. Typically, the expense of this expansion is paid for by the developer. Environmentally, an expanded sewer district would also protect bodies of water from the potential of septic system failure.

### ***Telecommunications***

Currently, there is no operating cell tower in the Town of Tusten. While one has been approved, private development has been slow. However, outside of Tusten, service has been improved with the siting and operation of a tower in the hamlet of Barryville.

There is also a need for a public telephone in Narrowsburg. Previous public phones have been destroyed by vandals, and motor vehicles.

## **B. Survey and Focus Group Results**

In terms of infrastructure, respondents desire to maintain rural character along the roads and highways. To achieve this goal, grading plans for all projects and new roads could be reviewed for preservation of natural topography and existing tree cover. It would be beneficial to review site plans for setbacks, open space usage, landscaping, and parking to ensure that new development complements, rather than overwhelms, natural landscapes and rural character. Lastly, there is an existing sign ordinance, however, to maintain a certain aesthetic, design guidelines for the Route 97 corridor could be created to minimize confusing, unattractive signage clutter.

The public also emphasized their desire for the road system to be developed in a way that aids driver safety and minimizes maintenance costs. In the future, developers could be encouraged to provide and maintain roads on a private basis subject to standards and procedures that protect the Town from having to accept substandard roads. More specifically, roads could be built to American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials standards. For current roads, those with an inadequate soil base could remain gravel as the poor soil base leads to frost heaves and pot holes, if paved. Safety could be addressed at intersections without the use of traffic lights. "Share the Road" traffic signs could be installed to alert motorists to the potential bicyclists on the roads. Finally, development plans could require wider shoulders, bike lanes and/or multi use paths to accommodate hiker, bikers and walkers.

Close to 60% of respondents expressed their wish for increased high-tech infrastructure "to enable people to work from their homes and help attract creative entrepreneurs that would enable individuals to telecommute and experience a dynamic rural lifestyle."

## **C. Recommendations**

1. Encourage conservation subdivision so that roads and services are reduced and building is concentrated in specific residential areas (See Appendix G)
2. Adopt a proactive long-term maintenance and improvement schedule to develop appropriate gravel and dirt roads to engineering standards and, to pave where appropriate
3. Expand the water and sewer districts to protect water resources and provide financial support by development
4. Look at developing sidewalks on Kirk Road and Bridge Street
5. Develop a parking evaluation to determine parking needs and opportunities
6. Develop signage to promote existing parking, such as the municipal lot on Main Street
7. Redesign the existing municipal parking lot to use the space more efficiently. This might include turning the grassy areas into overflow parking using pervious paving
8. Find a site for a public pay telephone in Narrowsburg. One option is the mews between Narrowsburg Roasters and Nest
9. The Town should make provisions to be able to exert control over private sewer plants

## VI. OPEN SPACE AND NATURAL RESOURCES



### A. Existing

#### *Overall Background*

The Town of Tusten contains significant open space and natural resources. Its western border is defined by approximately 14 miles of shoreline along the Delaware River. Tusten shares this border river with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The Town has a traditional rural setting with a landscape that is mostly wooded, with some areas of open fields, lakes, small rivers and streams. A clear delineation between hamlets and rural areas define the Town as well as neighboring towns, providing scenic beauty and a rural atmosphere that attracts many visitors, second homeowners, and full-time residents to the area.

The Town's natural resources have historically provided residents and visitors many opportunities for recreation, outdoor education, relief from city heat, fresh air and clean waters, and spiritual renewal. The trend continues to do so today. People value living in or visiting the Town of Tusten because its natural resources offer them clean water to drink, swim and fish in; woods to go hiking and hunting in; scenic roads to walk, bike or drive on; dark skies at night and quiet spaces to reflect and regenerate.

These traditional open spaces and natural resources have up to now been protected, in part, by zoning and in part by the economics of the Sullivan County area. Zoning has preserved the urban/rural distinction in the Town by designating commercial and industrial development areas and defining how and where residential development takes place. The decline of the resort industry of the Catskills in the '80s and '90s fueled an economic depression that limited the amount of new development in Sullivan County. However, since then rising housing costs in neighboring counties, changing demographics since 9/11 and rural access to the Internet are putting new development pressures on the area and the Town.

## ***Natural Resources***

The Town of Tusten is, in many ways, defined by its proximity to the Upper Delaware River, a nationally designated Wild and Scenic River, and that a section of the Town is within the designated River Corridor. The Town's zoning reflects the significance of this with two special zoning districts designated "Scenic River" and "Recreational River." Further, the Town follows the Federal River Management Plan guidelines. The River's importance as an economic and recreational force cannot be underestimated. It brings thousands of visitors and outdoor enthusiasts to the Town every year, as well as attracts a sizable number of second homeowners into the area. These visitors and second homeowners shop in local stores, frequent food and drink establishments, and provide business for local construction trade.

As one moves away from the River, the Town is characterized by a mountainous terrain with hills and dales that are largely wooded. In addition to the Delaware River, Tusten has a number of smaller rivers and tributaries, including Ten Mile River, East Branch of Ten Mile River, Grassy Swamp Brook and Beaver Brook. Numerous lakes also dot the landscape including Weiden Lake, Rock Lake, Davis Pond and Turnpike Pond. NYS Route 97, the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway, a State designated Scenic Byway and State Bike Route, travels north to south more or less parallel to the Delaware River. Other major roads include NYS Route 52 and County Route 23 and 26. As with the Delaware River, the rural and natural atmosphere of these woods, streams, lakes and roads attracts visitors and contributes greatly to the local economy.

Outside of the more urban area of Narrowsburg there exists an abundance of privately owned undeveloped land. Several large tracts of land, totaling around 12,000 acres, belong to the Boy Scouts of America, Greater New York Council. A number of hunting clubs also own significant parcels of land, in the Town's interior and along the Delaware River. Several newer subdivisions have come on the market in the last 20 to 30 years, including Perry Pond Road, Weiden Lake Estates, and Eagle's Nest Estates.

The hamlet of Narrowsburg provides town sewer and water for residential and commercial lots located within the hamlet proper. The remainder of the Town relies on septic tanks and well water as a means to deal with wastewater and provide drinking water for other business and residential areas. As development continues, the Town is beginning to look at the possibility of extending central sewer services and town water to areas outside of the current water and sewer district.

No protected land or parks currently exist outside of Narrowsburg and the Town currently has no Natural Resources Inventory or Open Space Plan. While the current zoning provides for special protection in areas along the Delaware River, it also allows sprawl to take place, as only low-density residential development is prescribed both inside and outside the River Corridor. Identifying areas worthy of protecting and encouraging creative zoning solutions, such as conservation subdivisions, are important tools in shaping the future landscape of the Town.

The natural resources of the Town provide important ecological and biological functions that are critical to the Town's economy, health, safety, welfare, and quality of life. These functions include:

- Purification of air and water
- Mitigation of floods and droughts
- Recharge of aquifers
- Detoxification and decomposition of wastes
- Generation and renewal of soil fertility

- Pollination of crops
- Maintenance of biodiversity for human needs
- Climate moderation
- Aesthetic beauty and intellectual stimulation
- Recreation opportunities for residents and visitors
- Local food sources
- Scenic views

These ecological functions are often treated as amenities—functions that are nice to have, but that are not necessary, and functions that should be protected if the time or money can be found. As developed areas have discovered, these functions provide countless benefits that are costly to replace or recreate and the lack of which contribute to an overall decrease in quality of life and economy in an area.

It is clear that the Town is rich in open space and natural resources and that it relies on the many ecological functions provided by the natural environment within the Town. It is also clear that the influx of new residents and additional development pressures will reach a point where people, houses, cars and roads will begin to tip the scale away from this abundance. How the Town should proceed in the next 10 years in terms of zoning and subdivision ordinances and in identifying and protecting the Town's natural and ecological resources will be crucial to the success and vitality of the Town in the future.

## **B. Survey and Focus Group Results**

In the Town survey conducted in the spring of 2006, residents set a high priority on open space and natural resources. Of the list of "Top Reasons to Live in the Town of Tusten," spanning areas such as Open Space/Scenery, Housing, and Cultural Opportunities, the top four reasons were:

- Small Town Atmosphere – 73.4%
- Open Space/Scenery – 72.2 %
- Clean Water/Air - 58.5%
- Close to Delaware River – 55.1%

When residents were asked to prioritize town initiatives, the following scored high on the list of priorities, with only Build/Install Cell Towers scoring higher (58.7%):

- Preserve Forestland – 50.30%
- Zoning/Minimize Sprawl – 49.4%
- Biking/Hiking/Walking – 47.8%
- Open Space/Farm Preservation – 45.5%
- Renewable Energy – 43.6%

Areas such as Preserve Land/Parks, Prohibit Floodplain Development, and Ridgeline Development Guidelines scored somewhat lower at 35.7%, 31.5%, and 26.1% respectively (it is important to note that this survey took place before the flood of June 2006.)

When asked about their satisfaction with the Rural Atmosphere and Open Space in the Town of Tusten, 74% of residents stated they were “very satisfied.” However, only 30% of residents were very satisfied with the recreational opportunities and 46% were somewhat satisfied. The survey also showed that residents are less than satisfied with the Town’s zoning regulations with only 8.4% saying they were very satisfied and 56.6% saying they were somewhat satisfied. The survey’s open-ended questions suggest that this, in part, stems from the concern that the current zoning lacks a conservation subdivision provision to protect open space, that more must be done to reduce sprawl and avoid overdevelopment, and that the Town lacks laws and enforcement policies to eliminate burn barrels.

In two of three focus groups held, Town residents created goals for the Town that they saw as the most important and then voted on the various goals. In Focus Group 1, the protection of the River Corridor and the Town’s ridgelines received some of the highest votes overall and the highest votes in the Open Space and the Environment category. Other important goals listed in this category were to protect open space and farmland, promote recreation and support environmentally friendly cottage industries.

In Focus Group 2, participants were split into two groups and asked to create a vision statement for the Town and then identify goals for the Town to set to achieve this vision. Both vision statements emphasized preserving the Town’s rural character. A number of goals that supported this vision and received high votes included emphasis on cultural and recreational resources, growth in the renewable energy research and development sector, and protection of the environment and rural character through zoning and building codes.

Both the survey and the focus groups held that there is a clear mandate from the Town residents to protect the Town’s open space and natural resources; to maintain the Town’s rural atmosphere; to build and expand on the Town’s recreational resources; and to support and encourage both businesses and building practices that emphasize renewable energy and energy efficiency. The challenge is how best to achieve these goals, maximize limited Town staff and financial resources, and at the same time balance growth and other goals within the Town.

## **C. Recommendations**

To protect the Open Space and Natural Resources in the Town of Tusten, to protect the economic value provided by natural resources and ecological functions, to prepare for future growth and development, and most importantly to carry out the wishes of the residents of the Town of Tusten, the following recommendations should be implemented and acted on by the Town Board, Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals.

### **1. Create an Open Space Plan for the Town of Tusten**

If when a municipality doesn’t identify important elements of open space, how will it know how to move forward? How will it know that it is protecting the elements it wants to protect? An Open Space Plan will allow the Town to identify such elements as ecologically sensitive areas, important greenways or wildlife corridors, areas where soils are poor and ground water protection is of higher importance, and areas of recreational and scenic importance.

According to the NY State Local Open Space Planning Guide:

*“New York’s natural and cultural resources are finite; they are exhaustible and vulnerable. People have the power to conserve these resources or to destroy them. How well the residents of New York plan for and provide open land while providing space for homes, commercial and industrial places and community and transportation facilities, will have a profound impact on future*

*generations. The community level is the most important place for open space planning to happen. If it isn't done there, it may not be done at all".*

The Sullivan County Division of Planning and Environmental Management is currently working on a county-wide open-space plan that the Town can use as a tool in the process to create their own plan or a multi-town plan. With potential grant funding from perhaps the Upper Delaware Council's Technical Assistance Grants Program and other funding sources, the creation of an Open Space Plan for the Town by the Spring of 2008 is an important goal.

It is further recommended that an Open Space Committee be created to set goals for and oversee the creation and implementation of this Plan. This committee should consist of Town officials and a cross section of interested local residents.

## 2. Active Integration of Conservation Subdivisions into Town Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances

Conservation Subdivisions are probably one of the most important and least costly ways to protect open space and natural resources. They can work in conjunction with a town's open space plan providing stream and wetland buffers, aquifer protection, links to important wildlife areas, preservation of scenic views and ridgelines, and offer recreational benefits. Other benefits include savings on services such as road maintenance and snow removal.

In order to accommodate a variety of Conservation Subdivisions, the Town's subdivision and zoning ordinances should be updated to allow for the use of smaller lot sizes and clustering of lots; allow for a mixture of residential development such as townhouses and single family homes; permit the placement of septic systems outside of the individual lots; and perhaps provide for a density bonus for a certain number of acres protected. These changes are only for cases where a Conservation Subdivision design is used. It should further be required that all subdivision proposals submit plans using a Conservation Subdivision design in addition to a conventional design and that at least fifty percent of the land in the Conservation Design is set aside as green space and is permanently protected with a Conservation Easement.

Due to the fact that Conservation Subdivisions are often misunderstood or thought to be undesirable, it is recommended that a workshop be held for residents and Town officials to clarify the benefits and flexibility of these types of subdivisions.

Shohola and Lackawaxen have an excellent example of Conservation Subdivision regulations that should be considered for inclusion in Tusten's subdivision regulations. (See Appendix G)

## 3. Energy and Energy Efficiency and Reduce Environmental Impact of New Development

In light of the global warming threat, the use of energy resources is an important issue that have both local and global implications. It is recommended that the building codes are reviewed for efficiency and conservation of energy resources and encourage the use of renewable technologies where possible. This should be done in consultation with experts in the field or be based on other towns' newly updated codes that are based on the newest and best technology available. (See Appendix H)

It is also recommended that the Town require sewage, storm water management and erosion/sedimentation control in both site plan and subdivision reviews.

## 4. Revisit ridgeline preservation.

The benefits of the Town's scenic vistas are many and are highly valued by residents, visitors and tour-

ist-based businesses. Once developed, the Town's ridgelines can never go back to being unbroken expanses of tree cover and scenic vistas. The challenge lies in the fact that a ridgeline is also a desirable place for people to build their houses and enjoy their own scenic and expansive view.

To accommodate the homeowner and preserve the ridgeline, it is important to promulgate and implement a ridgeline ordinance using the model ordinance and Shawangunk Ridge guidelines (Located in Appendix I) The Town should create an Environmental Council to work with the Town Board, Planning Board and Zoning Board to help create and monitor the ridgeline regulations, as well as assist these boards with environmental issues. This ordinance can work in conjunction with the Open Space Plan, placing stricter regulations on development in areas that are identified as having scenic or ecological importance while allowing for more flexibility in other areas.

### 5. Promote Awareness and Enforcement of the Local Burn Barrel Law

As awareness grows regarding the issues of pollution created by the use of back yard burn barrels, it seems the time is ripe to create a local law that bans or severely restricts the use of burn barrels. This issue was raised by residents on the town survey, has been written about in the local newspaper and was recently brought up in a letter to the Town Board. Due to the fact that residents do not have a way to prevent or protect themselves against the burning of garbage that contain harmful or toxic substances, it seems prudent to pass a law that protects the safety and well being of people and environs.

### 6. Outdoor furnaces

As more residents consider outdoor furnaces, it would be prudent to promulgate a law to regulate location and design of outdoor furnaces to prevent conflicts with neighboring uses. Examples of such laws are located in Appendix J.



*Big Eddy from near the Narrowsburg Bridge*

## VIII. LAND USE AND ZONING

### A. Existing

The Town of Tusten Zoning Law has gone through three updates since being adopted in 1982 with regard to the responsibilities of the office of the Zoning Board of Appeals, Planning Board and Code Enforcement Officer.

Many of the responsibilities of the Tusten Code is taken from New York State Town Law and its statutes.

The last update to the Town of Tusten Code took place in late 1998 by a committee comprised of the Chairs of both the Planning and Zoning Boards, the Town Supervisor, Vice Supervisor, Code Enforcement Officer and an independent paid professional planner /consultant.

Currently the Town of Tusten is comprised of seven districts:

SR – Scenic River District

RR – Recreational River District

R-1 – Rural Residential District

R-2 – Rural Development District

GR – General Residential District

RB – Roadside Business District

DB – Downtown Business District

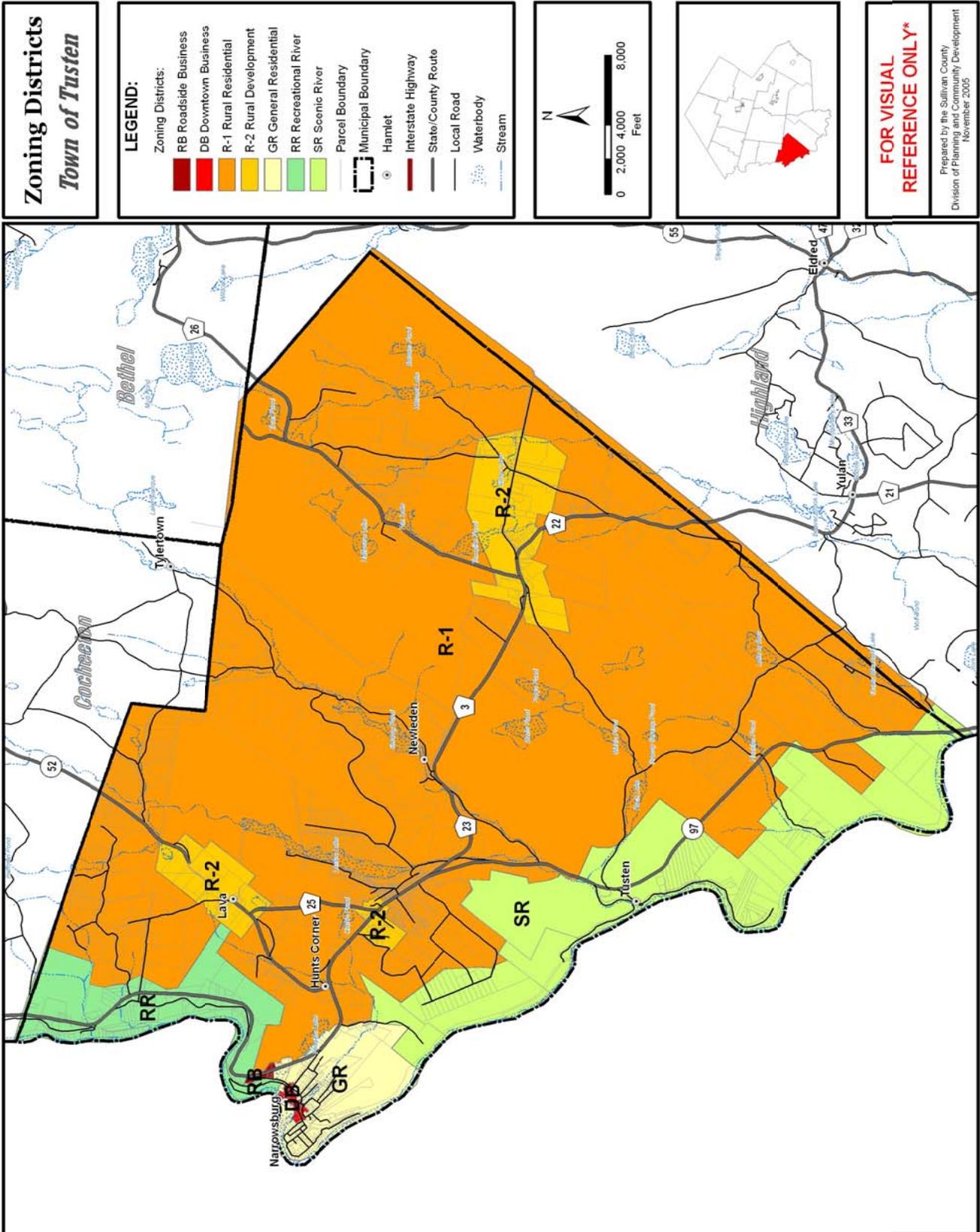
For the most part, these districts and current Town Code reflects the existing land uses. The Town is rural, with it's western border located within the Scenic and Recreational Upper Delaware River. The business center within the township is the hamlet of Narrowsburg, which is located in the western part of the township and adjoins the river. Retail merchants, restaurants, gas stations / convenience stores, canoe liveries, galleries and theatres all make Narrowsburg the hub of Tusten.

What currently distinguishes the hamlet of Narrowsburg from the rest of Tusten is that two distinct areas of commerce have evolved that play off its historical attributes. Main Street embraces the history, architecture, river and open vistas and many of the shops reflect the charm of a small river town. The other commercial area of Narrowsburg is Peck's Plaza along Kirk Road. That area has a supermarket and bank and other retail shops. In addition, there are additional conveniences on the other side of Kirk Road. The Town Code has allowed for these two distinct business districts within the hamlet, which are: RB [Roadside Business] which includes the area from the traffic light at the former school and Narrowsburg Inn to the intersection of New York State Route 97 traversing Kirk Road. Along with DB [Downtown Business] which is the historic Main Street proper that has many retail stores, restaurants, a bank, post office and galleries.

A fair percentage of the population base of Tusten resides in the residential areas of the hamlet of Narrowsburg in two populated areas:

The Flats – An area which borders the river to its west and for the most is open and flat. This area was mostly developed during the post-war period of the 1950s and 1960s.

# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR TUSTEN, NY



## Zoning Districts *Town of Tusten*

**LEGEND:**

Zoning Districts:

- RB Roadside Business
- DB Downtown Business
- R-1 Rural Residential
- R-2 Rural Development
- GR General Residential
- RR Recreational River
- SR Scenic River
- Parcel Boundary
- Municipal Boundary
- Hamlet
- Interstate Highway
- State/County Route
- Local Road
- Waterbody
- Stream

N

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Feet



**FOR VISUAL  
REFERENCE ONLY\***

Prepared by the Sullivan County  
Division of Planning and Community Development  
November 2005

*Existing Zoning*

The Old Neighborhood District – This is the area surrounding Little Lake Erie up to Irish Hill and encompassing School, Lake, Grove, Erie and Oak Streets. The majority of these homes are pre-war structures or lots where pre-war homes once stood. In addition, most of the houses of worship in Narrowsburg are in this district.

The majority of the parcels in the General Residential District of Narrowsburg are sized from 75 feet by 100 feet to 150 feet by 100 feet – the average size lot runs from a quarter acre to three quarters of an acre in size.

Current development standards in Tusten take into consideration the close proximity of homeowners with prudent setback requirements. In addition, current regulations also protect the use of this area by allowing for single and two-family dwellings with no commercial enterprises allowed except for home based businesses. Examples might include a seamstress, tutor or accountant. Enclosed manufacturing establishments, along with light industrial enterprises, are addressed in the Tusten Zoning Code to be placed in rural districts – such as the R-1 District.

Within the rest of the Town, there are no other areas, with the exception of a service station in Beaver Brook and a motel near Ten Mile River, where there are retail enterprises open to the general public.

### ***Other Special Districts***

Two special districts have been created to protect and conserve both the beauty and the resource known as the Scenic and Recreational Upper Delaware River and its valley; they are the Scenic River [SR] District and the Recreational River District [RD].

The Scenic River District [SR] begins two miles south of Narrowsburg and parallels the river and New York State Route 97 to the Town of Highland border.

Minimum lot size area is five acres and the road frontage is required to be 300 feet at minimum. These requirements insure stability in property values and help to combat any sprawl in the coming years, as more people plan for retirement with second homes in our region. The principal permitted use in both the Scenic River [SR] and Recreational River Districts [RD] is, for the most part, single family homes.

Lastly, the area which encompasses the majority of land mass in Tusten is called the R-1 District – or the Rural Residential [RR] District of Tusten.

An average lot size runs from a pre-existing (prior to 1982 zoning) two-acre minimums to large tracts of one-hundred acres or more.

These large parcels include farms with open fields and meadows, as well as hunting clubs with wooded and open areas.

Many of the latter have been subdivided and were developed in the last 20 years for the second-home market. Royale Oaks, Perry Pond and Weiden Lake Estates are examples of subdivisions in which many of the lots are 5 to 20 acres.

**B. Survey and Focus Group Results**

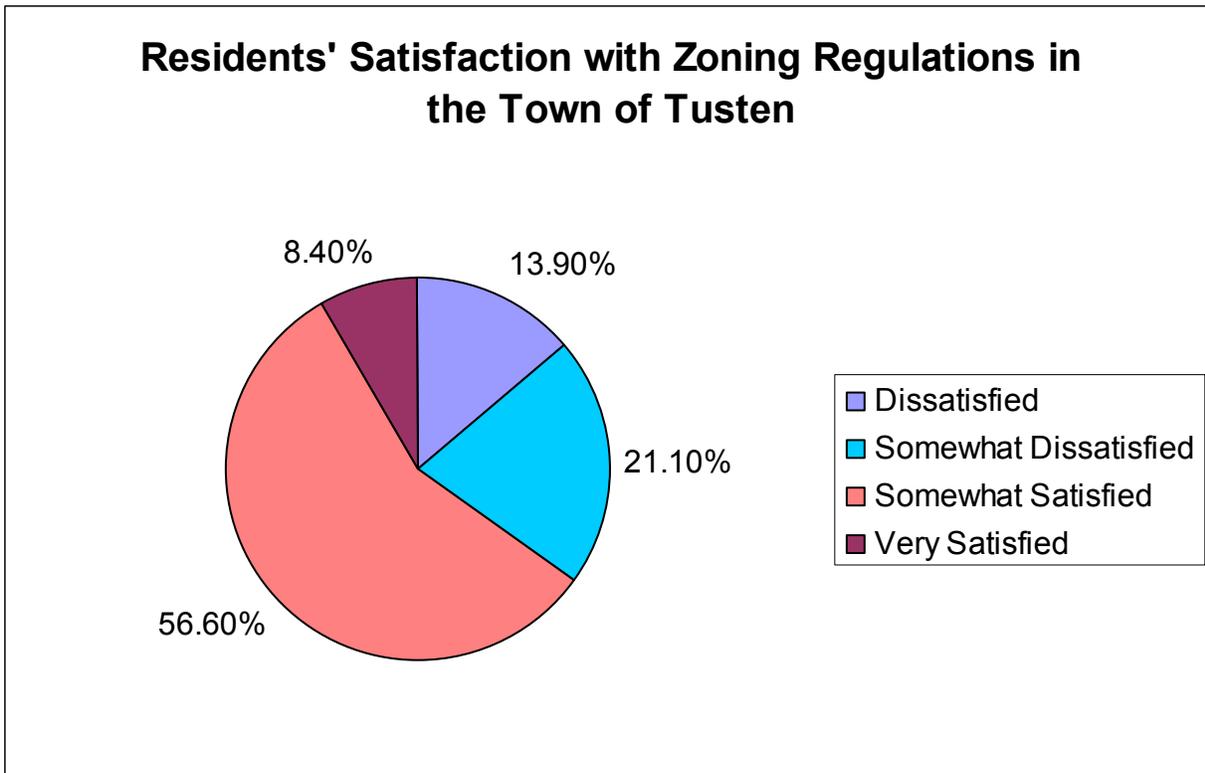
The data for these findings with regard to the public’s response to zoning and land-use topics were gathered from the Tusten survey.

The most popular reason that people choose to live in Tusten is its small town atmosphere, with 73.4% of those selecting it as one of their top five reasons. “Rural atmosphere was followed by open space and scenery, with 72.2% of the respondents placing it in their top five. Clean water and air, and the proximity to the Delaware River were also highly ranked, with over half of the respondents (55.1%) embracing this natural attribute.

That the public has chosen these features seems to give the Town the directive that commercial zones should continue to be concentrated in areas that already exist for those uses – namely the DB and RB Districts of the hamlet of Narrowsburg.

Furthermore, owners of buildings in commercial zones should be encouraged to achieve the fullest and best use out of their buildings and not allow them to stay vacant and deserted. Trying to achieve full occupancy through retail tenants – and not letting building and properties become derelict – should be one of the primary goals that the Town should try to achieve by working closely with developers and owners of existing structures.

Many of the respondents queried were dissatisfied (13.9%), or somewhat dissatisfied (21.1%) However, most residents (56.6%) were somewhat satisfied with the zoning regulations in Tusten.



A review of the open-ended questions indicates that dissatisfaction with zoning regulations stems from three factors:

The first is a concern that the town's zoning lacks a Conservation Subdivision provision to protect open space.

The second factor is the concern that there needs to be better enforcement with regard to unlicensed and unregistered vehicles, illegal signs, eye sore buildings and "junk" accumulating in yards.

A third issue is better enforcement to keep burn barrels to a minimum.

Lastly, the public expressed that they want a Comprehensive Plan that is not driven by developers, but controlled by the Planning and Zoning Boards because the strength of the Town is in its natural beauty and rural feel.

## **C. Recommendations**

Owners of buildings in commercial zones should be encouraged to achieve the fullest and best use out of their buildings and not allow them to stay vacant and deserted. Trying to achieve full occupancy through retail tenants – and not letting building and properties become derelict – should be one of the primary goals that the town should try to achieve by working closely with developers and owners of existing structures.

1. Extend the Roadside Business District in Narrowsburg to connect it with the Downtown Business District. Amend the Roadside Business District to remove residential properties at the edge. See Proposed Zoning Map.
2. Revisit the Narrowsburg Waterfront Plan, which was tabled about 10 years ago. It is possible that the new owners of the waterfront buildings on Main Street would welcome this project. If so, possibly a written proposal should be drafted by a coalition of both Town officials and representatives from businesses on Main Street seeking Main Street revitalization grants through Sullivan County, New York State or Sullivan Renaissance.
3. Coordinate a dialogue between Town officials and future developers with regard to any future Conservation Subdivisions in the Town of Tusten. Research financial abatements for the development if these methods are sought to enhance open space. Require two plans from developers, one a traditional subdivision the other a conservation subdivision. See Open Space and Natural Resources for further recommendations.
4. Have an annual seminar – or presentation - held at the Tusten Library with a few members from each of the three Boards of Town government that would provide the audience a brief overview of what the roles of the Town Boards are and to answer any questions from the public.
5. Re-evaluate the floodplain and overlay protection zones to protect water. FEMA is working on redrawing these maps. Tusten needs to stay involved in this process to ensure accuracy of the new maps. New development regulations may be created to prohibit development in hazard-

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR TUSTEN, NY

ous areas. These issues are not only about health and safety, but also consumer protection and liability.

6. Research acreage requirements in the floodplain based on FEMA engineering guidelines.
7. Develop a non-conforming lot law based on the New York State Department of Health standards for healthy and safe septic and well systems.
8. Create an overlay district for the well-head protection area.
9. Coordinate a dialogue between town officials and any future developers/investors with regards to any commercial properties [DB and RB] within the hamlet of Narrowsburg. Before coming to the Planning Board, any investor / developer' should have a well thought out plan and sketch - in writing - with regards to the time frame of the project, budget, scope, and site plan(s) so as not to purchase commercial property and leave it vacant or neglected for many years. In addition, research the legal ramifications that if a commercial property within Narrowsburg is left vacant, unattended and/or neglected for over one year from date of purchase - can the town impose a fee or surcharge to the owner(s) of said commercial property so as to encourage that a commercial project will be completed within a reasonable time frame. Developers should be encouraged to try to work with the town and to attain the highest and best use for their commercial property within Narrowsburg.



*Examples of roadside business  
(above) and downtown business  
(right) in Narrowsburg.*



## VII. HOUSING

### A. Existing

Tusten's total number of housing units, as taken from the 2000 census, is 1008. This is a slight increase from 1990, in which there were 998 units. The majority (79.7%) of houses in the Town are comprised of one-unit detached structures. There is a smaller number (14.3%) of homes that are classified as mobile homes. Of the houses in the Town, seventy-nine percent (79.2%) are owner occupied and twenty percent (20.8%) are rental properties. Fifty-five percent (55.2%) of the homes were built before 1969, which may reflect the aging condition of homes in Tusten. Sixty percent (60%) of homeowners have a mortgage with the majority paying \$700-\$1500 per month. The household make-up of homeowners is sixty three percent (63%) families and thirty seven percent (37%) non-family. Thirty-two percent (32%) of the non-family homeowners live alone and eighteen percent (17.8% for a total of 104 people) are over the age of 65. The cost of rental units averages about \$554. Typically renters pay at least 25% of their income towards rent. Thirty-seven percent (37.4%) of renters pay less than 25% of their income toward rent and thirty-five percent (34.6%) pay more than 35% of their income toward rent.

### B. Survey and Focus Group Results

The 2006 Tusten survey revealed that the availability, quality and condition of housing was of concern. The availability of rental property was not perceived as a problem, although, it was recommended that the number of moderate rentals increase. During the public meetings, a desire to free up housing by providing quality senior housing was suggested. Balancing workforce and second homes seemed a priority in that the Town needs to have a solid base of full-time homeowners. From both the public meetings and the Survey, the goal for housing in the Town of Tusten would be to increase housing opportunities for all income levels.

### C. Recommendations

In order to increase housing opportunities, the Town must make it easier for first-time homeowners by:

1. Providing training through existing home ownership programs to educate first-time homebuyers on finding, financing and maintaining a home.
2. Make new coding available and be sure all residents are aware of the rules regarding property maintenance and appearance. Consider changing the process by which violations are prosecuted. Allow Town Judges to waive fines if violations are fixed within a given time frame.
3. Promote mixed income housing development. Michigan Land Use Institute has issued an article outlining many ways of achieving this. (See Appendix K) Opportunities to develop prefabricated affordable homes in park-like settings can add to the mixed housing stock. An element of economic development could be achieved if creative manufacturing of such units could be done within the Town (See Appendix).
4. Reward or encourage home providers to go with the LEED program. It could also be used to promote affordable housing by encouraging smaller, more efficient building. It could also establish requirements for site selection compatible with the LEED requirements.



5. Look at incorporating "greenpoints" based on LEED into the zoning regulations and building codes. See Appendix H for further information.

*LEED=Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design*

*This is an organization which provides consulting services to builders to build environmentally sound or "green" homes. They do this through the use of providers (who "provide" the service on behalf of LEED) who come from the LEED organization. The builder must sign a contract with them and pays a fee (\$150) to join. Certification is for new construction only, not renovations.*

*They have set up a table, which is very detailed, to evaluate the "greenness" of homes by assigning points to each phase of construction. There are eight areas they consider. It includes everything from site selection to education of the homeowner on how to get the most out of the home's operation. Each of the 8 areas has 4 levels of compliance, or points. Points can be "traded off" to make the program more flexible, but it is still a number-rated system*

*They have enforcement power, like the Code Enforcement Officer, to enforce the terms of their agreement. The Provider hires a rater to inspect and work out all the points according to their system.*

*The builder begins the process by going to the website and locating a LEED provider. The provider works with a design team assembled by the builder (like subs). Then the provider hires a rater to inspect and certify each phase of the project.*

*Why would a builder sign up voluntarily for another level of regulation and inspection and certification especially if it increased his cost?*

*It is supposed to be market driven, meaning that the public would pay extra and choose to buy a LEED certified "green" home over a common one. They might do this because of environmental conscience or because the "green" homes should be cheaper to operate and maintain, especially for energy and water consumption. The provider also provides assistance to the builder in marketing and selling the homes.*

*The cheaper operating costs and the smaller size of LEED building makes it compatible with the idea of affordable housing. There are tables of how big a home can be for a certain number of people in a unit.*

## VIII. IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation is the most important part of this document. For any of the ideas and goals expressed here to become a reality, action must be taken. To make this easier, all of the recommendations from each of the chapters has been placed in tables labeled "Implementation." For easier reference, the sections from which the recommendations came is shown, as well as who needs to be taking the action, and a rough timeframe for when the action should be taken.

Since these tables represent a tremendous effort that must be undertaken by all different entities from the Town, the Comprehensive Planning Committee has separated out a priority list. This is a list of the actions that at this point in time are most crucial for the Town to implement.

APPENDIX

- A. Survey
- B. Survey Results and Workbook
- C. Focus Groups
- D. Town History
- E. School Conversions
- F. Economic Development Needs Assessment and Survey of Existing Businesses
- G. Conservation Subdivisions
- H. Low Impact Development; LEED; Greenpoints
- I. Ridgeline Protection
- J. Wood Boilers
- K. Affordable Housing Resources
- L. Maps

