



# Imagine Canaan

Draft Town of Canaan Comprehensive Plan

Nan Stolzenburg

[11/13/25 12/3/25](#)

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## Mission Statement for the Town of Canaan Comprehensive Plan

A mission statement defines the purpose of the plan, serving as a foundation for goals, policies, and actions. It answers what are the current conditions and perspectives in Town, what do we want for our future, and how will we reach that future.

The mission of the Town of Canaan Comprehensive Plan is to guide the future of the community with foresight and respect for its unique character. This plan seeks to protect Canaan’s natural beauty, rural identity, and sense of place while thoughtfully addressing the needs of current and future generations.

Through inclusive community engagement and careful planning, the Comprehensive Plan provides a framework to support a range of housing choices, environmental stewardship, economic vitality, and civic connection. It is a roadmap for preserving what makes Canaan special—while fostering a vibrant, resilient, and welcoming community for all.



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**List of Abbreviations Used in this Plan**

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- [ADU – Accessory Dwelling Unit](#)
- [AMI - Area Median Income](#)
- [AML – New York State Agriculture & Market Law](#)
- [BESS – Battery Energy Storage Systems](#)
- [C-1/C-2/C-3 – Commercial Zoning Districts](#)
- [CSC – Climate Smart Communities](#)
- [DEC/NYDEC – New York State Department of Environmental Conservation](#)
- [DU – Dwelling Units](#)
- [EV – Electric Vehicle](#)
- [GHG – Greenhouse Gas](#)
- [GIS – Geographic Information System](#)
- [MW – Megawatt \(Energy Capacity\)](#)
- [NRI - Natural Resource Inventory](#)
- [NYCRR – New York Code, Rules and Regulations](#)

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[RA-1/RA-2/RA-3/RA-4 – Residential-Agricultural Zoning Districts](#)  
[SEQRA – State Environmental Quality Review Act](#)  
[SWOT – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats](#)  
[SWPP – Source Water Protection Plan](#)  
[ZBA – Zoning Board of Appeals](#)

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## Acknowledgements

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### Town Board

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David Patzwahl, Town Councilperson  
Ginny Nightingale, Town Councilperson  
Brian Lifsec, Town Councilperson  
Will Powers, Town Councilperson

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### Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee

Brenda Adams, Town Board Liaison  
Kate Childs-Jones  
Ashley Garrett  
Mary Keegan  
Monshin Paul Naamon  
Thomas Platten  
Carrie Whiteman

### Climate Smart Committee

Nicolas Adams  
Marion Bolonesi  
Elyse Mason  
Becky Meier  
Victoria Mills, Chairperson  
Thomas Potter

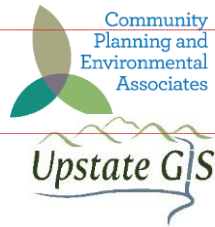
### Consultants

#### Community Planning & Environmental Associates

Nan Stolzenburg FAICP CEP  
Michael Shannon  
Ellen Pemrick

#### Upstate GIS

Rick Lederer-Barnes



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### Other Assistance Provided by:

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## Executive Summary

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This Comprehensive Plan establishes a coordinated, future-oriented framework to guide public and private decision-making over the next 10–15 years. It is designed to serve as a “road map” for how the Town can stimulate growth and manage change while safeguarding its environmental, agricultural, and scenic assets. It sets forth a shared vision, long-range goals, and targeted strategies to enhance quality of life, economic vitality, and community resilience in a way that reflects the values of both full-time and part-time residents.

### **Role of This Plan.**

The Town of Canaan Comprehensive Plan is the community’s long-range roadmap for guiding decisions about land use, housing, infrastructure, natural resources, community facilities, public investments, and local policy. It sets direction and provides the legal and strategic foundation that future zoning updates, capital projects, grant applications, and program decisions should be based on. Its purpose is not to change who Canaan is, but to preserve Canaan’s rural landscape, natural beauty, biodiversity, water resources, and quiet small-town identity while providing realistic tools to meet community needs — especially for housing affordability, community connection, and climate resiliency. The plan balances preservation with thoughtful, small-scale growth in appropriate places so that Canaan stays the peaceful, beautiful, rural community people love.

Latest trends, including increasing seasonal and second-home ownership, rising property values, shifting demographics, and growing interest in environmental protection and recreational opportunities, and Canaan’s fiscal stability and affordability, have prompted the Town to undertake a new Comprehensive Plan. This planning effort also responds to changes in state policy, infrastructure needs, and community expectations that have emerged since the last planning initiatives were completed.

### **Planning Process.**

This process was guided by a Town Board-appointed steering committee and incorporated data analysis, mapping, natural resource inventories, a zoning audit, and robust public engagement between 2024–2025. Throughout the process, the Comprehensive Plan Committee continued to meet regularly to review survey results, workshop outcomes, and draft materials. This ongoing collaboration ensured that the plan evolved through continuous public and stakeholder input rather than in isolation. Engagement included a 400-response community survey, meetings with the steering committee, a joint SWOT workshop, tabling at Community Day, and a public open house in August 2025. Full-time, part-time, long-time, and newer residents all participated. Their input was consistent: protect rural character and natural resources; improve broadband, traffic safety, and civic connection; support farms and small local businesses; and address housing affordability for seniors, young families, and working people. Findings from this community input drove the plan’s Vision, Goals, and themes—and directly shaped the recommendations.

### **Current Conditions & Issues.**

Canaan is a low-density rural town with scenic open land, working landscapes, forests, Queechy Lake, and small hamlets. But Canaan faces several converging issues: an aging population, a declining number of younger families, and sharply rising housing costs. Broadband and cellular service are inconsistent, making remote work and emergency communication difficult. Road safety, limited community gathering spaces, lack of day care, and limited small business services compound daily

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challenges. The zoning audit and buildout analysis show the current zoning promotes a growth pattern that is likely inconsistent with the values expressed for Canaan's future.

Canaan's population has experienced modest change over the past decade, accompanied by an aging demographic profile and seasonal population fluctuations. At the same time, Canaan has benefited from community organizations, active civic participation, and its proximity to employment, cultural, and educational opportunities in the Capital Region and the Berkshires. These dynamics create both opportunities and challenges for how the Town will grow, conserve its natural resources, and maintain its distinctive rural character. Meanwhile, residents share a desire for more community connection, access to reliable information, and improved communication from the local government.

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The Town's Natural Resource Inventory also shows sensitive water, habitat, slope, and other natural resources that would benefit from stronger conservation and siting protections, and the new environmental sensitivities analysis shows that there are many sensitive areas in Town that don't have adequate zoning to protect them.

#### Highlights of Recommendations.

The Comprehensive Plan responds with recommendations that protect what matters to the residents and landowners in Canaan while strategically addressing needs. Major highlights include:

**(1) Modernize zoning** to protect rural character, forests, farmland, scenic views, ridgelines, and water resources, and to prevent strip patterns. ~~Use conservation subdivision, density-based zoning (with 3.5-acre density in the RA 1-3 districts, overlays (agricultural, conservation, scenic, watershed), design standards, and better subdivision review to ensure development fits the landscape. This Plan~~ It recommends consideration of a variety of rural-oriented zoning methods including use of conservation subdivisions for major subdivisions (5+ lot splits), use density-based zoning instead of minimum lot sizes, establish ~~zoning overlays such as agricultural, scenic, ridgeline, or conservation watershed overlays,~~ offer rural siting guidelines, ~~target focus on traditional~~ hamlet-based growth rather than highway strip and rural sprawl patterns, incorporate review of buildable areas in subdivision processes, apply dark sky standards for commercial lighting, and institute groundwater/water quality protections around Queechy Lake and sensitive areas identified in both this Plan and in the Town's Source Water Protection Plan.



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**(2) Expand housing choice** with careful use of accessory dwelling units allowed on smaller lots, and allow for rural-scaled cluster cottage/co-housing models, small multi-unit buildings in existing hamlets, adaptive reuse of older buildings, inclusionary zoning in the Berkshire Farm campus as a new hamlet district, and incentives for affordable units. All health and safety requirements must be met for residential uses.

**(3) Support agriculture and local businesses with** value-added farm enterprises, farm stays, agritourism, sales of local farm products, and co-op or small grocery concepts. This will help; promote local food systems and farm viability. Zoning should enable small-scale commercial uses in some hamlets, or seasonal markets, and coordinate farmland linking programs to support new farmers.

**(4) Continue to invest in needed and other desired services and programs**, including broadband/cell expansion, senior mobility and services, safe walking/biking connections, and safer road/intersection design. Explore senior/youth transportation, upgrade Stoddard Park as Canaan's primary community recreational hub, expanding passive and active recreation, including trail development, and support emergency services sustainability.

**(5) Strengthen climate resilience and community identity** by implementing the Town's Climate Action and Resiliency Plan and Hazard Mitigation Plan actions, support pollinator habitat and forest stewardship, encouraging green energy with appropriate siting (and agrivoltaics where possible for solar facilities), reduce solid waste through composting and recycling initiatives, and work to improve communication, transparency, and civic participation to connect all residents.

**These coordinated strategies work together to protect the rural landscape, address urgent housing needs, support the farm and hamlet economy, strengthen infrastructure and services relied on daily by residents, and prepare Canaan for ecological, demographic, and economic change while retaining the small-town character that defines it.**

The Priority Action and Implementation portion of this Plan translates the Comprehensive Plan's recommendations into a manageable, phased action agenda for the next 3–5 years. This section identifies the highest-value, highest-impact steps the Town should take first, assigns responsibility to specific Town boards/committees, and identifies potential partners at the County, State, and nonprofit levels. The priorities strongly emphasize regulatory modernization (zoning and subdivision updates), protection of natural resources and rural character, and targeted actions to address housing needs. These priority items are designed to be realistic, fundable, and achievable — and to create the enabling conditions needed for future projects.

The action and implementation section of this Plan is intentionally action-oriented: it provides a framework for what gets done first, who is responsible, and what partnerships and resources will be needed. It positions Canaan to move from planning to doing — starting with the foundational work that preserves rural character, protects natural resources, advances housing solutions, strengthens infrastructure, and supports the community's long-term vision.

Together, this Plan provides Canaan with a roadmap that can help keep the town at a rural scale and keep Canaan a beautiful, grounded, resilient place for the next generation.

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## Introduction

### Historical Context of Canaan

The Town of Canaan is within the homelands of the Muh-he-con-ne-ok (Mohican) people, today represented by the Stockbridge-Munsee Community. The Town of Canaan's history spans nearly three centuries and reflects the broader patterns of settlement, agriculture, transportation, and cultural development that shaped rural communities across upstate New York. European settlers began arriving in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, with members of the Ford family establishing homes in Red Rock by 1750. Around the same time, a Baptist church was built on Macedonia Road, serving as an early center of worship and community life. In 1758, investors from Connecticut purchased land from the Stockbridge Indians, and over the next two decades, families from Litchfield County, including the Beebe, Allen, and Lovejoy families, moved into Canaan Mills, taverns, and cemeteries, followed, forming the physical and social infrastructure of a growing rural settlement.

In 1772, the Province of New York established "King's District" as a subdivision of Albany County, laying the groundwork for local governance. Just a few years later, community leaders gathered at William Warner's tavern to express their support for American independence, and local militia under Colonel William Bradford Whiting played a key role in the Battles of Saratoga. After the Revolution, sawmills, grist mills, and churches flourished, supported by abundant water resources from Stony Kill Creek and Queechy Lake. In 1786, Columbia County was created, and by 1788, King's District officially became the Town of Canaan. At the time of the 1790 Census, Canaan was the largest town in the county, with a population of 6,692 residents, including 15 enslaved people.

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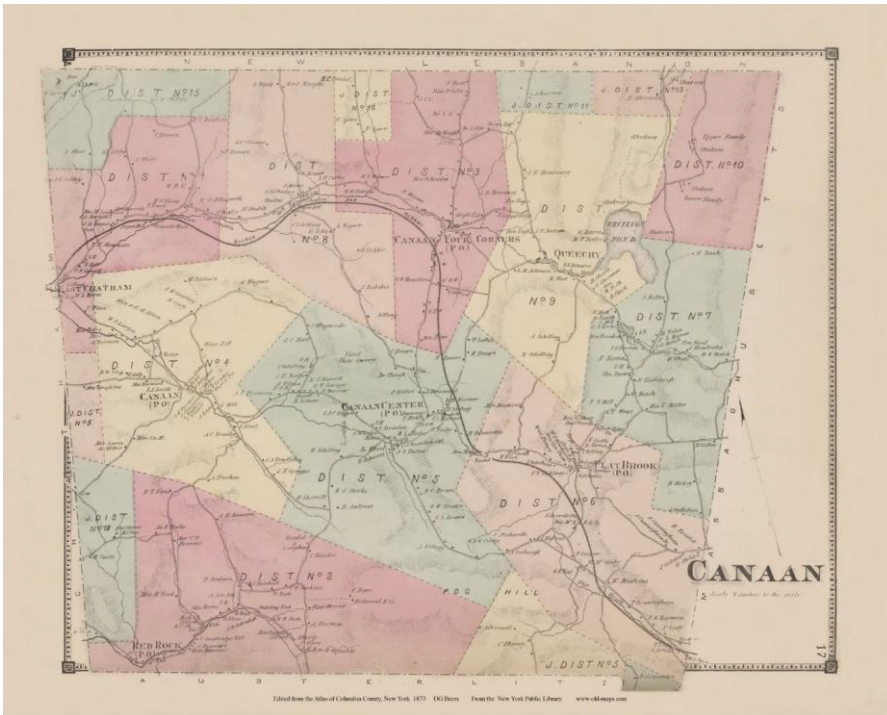
Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Canaan developed as a rural agricultural community with small hamlets, churches, and industrial enterprises tied to emerging transportation networks. Religious institutions, including Congregational, Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Christian churches, were established in hamlets such as Canaan Center, Red Rock, and Flat Brook (see map below). The Union Turnpike (1801) and Hudson and Berkshire Railroad (1838) strengthened connections between Canaan, Hudson, Albany, and Boston, encouraging commercial activity in stores, mills, tanneries, and hotels. Cultural life also flourished. Author Susan Warner, whose family lived in Canaan, achieved national acclaim with her 1850 novel *The Wide, Wide World* and her later work *Queechy* (1852), which helped make Queechy Lake a popular resort destination. The town also contributed significantly to national events, raising funds to support 155 Union Army volunteers during the Civil War.

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**Historic 1873 Map of the Town of Canaan from Columbia County Beers Atlas**

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The late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries brought new recreational and institutional uses to Canaan's landscape. The Winslow Fish Hatchery opened in 1876, and the Berkshire Farm Center, founded in 1885 on former Shaker land, became one of the state's largest youth facilities. Meanwhile, Queechy Lake emerged as a vibrant summer destination, with hotels, boarding houses, and pavilions attracting visitors from across the region. Electricity arrived in 1914, further modernizing the town's infrastructure. Like many rural communities, Canaan experienced population decline during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, reaching a low in 1930, but rebounded in the decades that followed.

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The postwar period marked another period of change. In 1955, Canaan joined the Chatham Central School District, consolidating its one-room schoolhouses. The Berkshire Spur of the New York State Thruway, opened in 1957, reshaped local transportation patterns and increased regional accessibility. Canaan celebrated its bicentennial in 1959 and its 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2009, milestones that reflected the community's enduring sense of history and identity. Recent decades have brought further shifts, including infrastructure modernization, the removal of the B3 Toll Plaza in 2021, and the establishment of annual Community Day celebrations, illustrating the town's ongoing evolution while retaining its rural character and actively preserving its historical assets.

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Today, Canaan’s landscape still reflects its historical development: agricultural lands, scenic views, historic hamlets, and transportation corridors coexist with recreational resources like Queechey Lake and community institutions that have evolved. Understanding this history is essential to planning for the town’s future.

## Past Planning Efforts

### 2003 Strategic Plan

A previously created (not adopted) Strategic Plan was accepted in October 2003. It included background information characterizing the landscape at the time, goals/objectives, plans for preservation of agriculture/open space, economic development, housing, and community services. The plan also contains documents regarding the state of Queechey Lake and its respective club management plan. Established goals from the 2003 plan include:

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- **Historic Preservation:** Continue to preserve and protect historical works within the town with the assistance of residents. Make local history available to the public and establish historical districts for recognition.
- **Agricultural & Open Space Preservation:** Ensure support for the protection of farmers and encourage programs to support the expansion and preservation of agriculture. Similarly, they provide opportunities for landowners to preserve land and establish open areas for hunting, recreation, and wildlife.
- **Environmental Conservation:** To provide the leadership and citizens of Canaan with strategies to protect and promote natural resources that define the “rural character” of our community and enhance our quality of life.
- **Economic Development:** Revitalize organic and niche farming in Canaan while developing around exit B-3 without intrusion on the rural character of Canaan. Develop a designated Canaan Town Center and promote tourism-related businesses.
- **Housing:** Examine the potential for affordable housing in Canaan, but control housing development through mechanisms to preserve the rural character of Canaan.
- **Community Services/Outreach:** Enhance outreach to residents and improve relationships with the town. Overall, enhance community services from both the Town and other organizations, and focus on creating a sense of community.

### Canaan Climate Smart Task Force

In April 2023, Canaan achieved bronze certification through New York State’s Climate Smart Communities (CSC) program, a significant milestone that reflects the town’s commitment to environmental responsibility and resilience. This designation is more than a symbolic gesture; it positions climate action as a core principle of Canaan’s municipal planning and governance, directly influencing land use, infrastructure, and community development decisions.

The Climate Smart Communities program, administered by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, supports local governments in their efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, adapt to a changing climate, and build more sustainable communities. Canaan’s certification recognizes its systematic, measurable steps in areas such as:

- Energy audits and lighting upgrades for public buildings

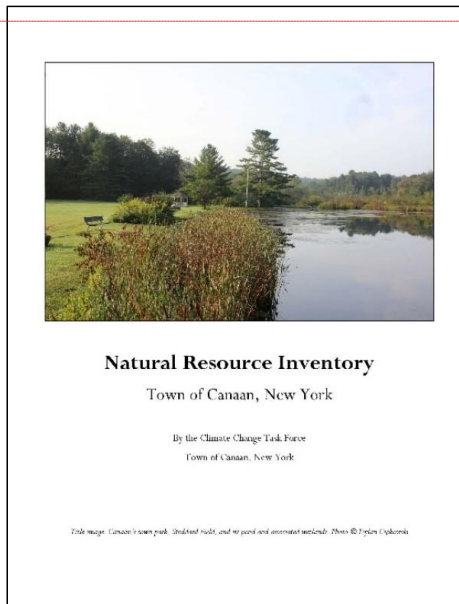
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- Greenhouse gas inventories for municipal operations and the broader community
- Installation of EV charging stations
- Promotion of residential composting and solar adoption
- Public engagement through events and social media
- Natural Resource Inventory (NRI) for informed land use planning

## Natural Resource Inventory

Canaan's Natural Resource Inventory, completed in April 2023 by the Canaan Climate Smart Community Task Force. This volunteer-led effort marked the Town's first comprehensive assessment of its physical and ecological landscape. The NRI documented Canaan's topography, geology, soils, forests, wetlands, streams, aquifers, and wildlife, illustrating how natural systems shape land use patterns and influence resilience to flooding, erosion, and other environmental stressors. It also provided a scientific foundation for local conservation planning by identifying critical habitats, sensitive slopes, and high-value forest and farmland areas.

Developed using data and guidance from the Columbia County Natural Resource Inventory and the Hudson River Estuary Program's "Guide for Communities," the 2023 NRI represents a key milestone in Canaan's environmental planning history. The NRI highlights both the richness of Canaan's natural resources and the environmental challenges that the Town faces, including habitat fragmentation, the spread of invasive species, and the long-term impacts of climate change on local ecosystems. The document's recommendations, such as protecting wetlands and riparian buffers, managing forests for carbon storage, and identifying flood-prone areas, were adopted as priority actions in the Town's climate strategy.



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## Authority to Plan

New York State law grants municipalities the authority to prepare and adopt comprehensive plans as a tool to promote the health, safety, and general welfare of their residents. Specifically, New York State Town Law §272-a provides towns like Canaan with the legal foundation to develop a long-range, community-based plan that guides future growth, conservation, and investment.

A Comprehensive Plan reflects the values and priorities of the community, and once adopted, becomes an official policy document that influences a wide range of local decisions from land use and infrastructure to housing, environment, and economic development. It also establishes the legal basis for adopting and amending local land use regulations, such as subdivision rules, site plan review

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procedures, and zoning, ensuring that these regulations are grounded in a shared vision and consistent policy framework.

Importantly, while the Comprehensive Plan sets policy direction, it is not a regulatory document. Any changes to existing land use laws, or the development of new ones, must follow the formal procedures required by state law, including public hearings, environmental review under SEQRA, and referral to the Columbia County Planning Board. This separation of planning and regulation allows the community to set long-term goals collaboratively, while retaining democratic oversight and transparency in the regulatory process.

### How is the Comprehensive Plan Used?

Once adopted, the Comprehensive Plan serves as a unifying framework for decision-making, coordination, and investment across the Town of Canaan. It is both a strategic guide and a legal reference point, shaping how the Town and outside agencies approach development, infrastructure, and conservation over time.

One of the most important functions of the Comprehensive Plan is to guide capital projects and intergovernmental coordination. Under New York State law, all plans for capital projects undertaken by other governmental agencies on land within the Town must consider the Comprehensive Plan. This gives Canaan a stronger voice when state, county, or regional entities propose initiatives such as road improvements, utility extensions, or environmental restoration projects that could affect local land use, infrastructure, or natural resources. By aligning external projects with community priorities, the Town can help ensure that public investments support, rather than undermine, its long-term vision.

The plan also plays a critical role in supporting funding opportunities. New York State encourages municipalities to maintain up-to-date comprehensive plans as a means of protecting public health, safety, and welfare. Many state and federal grant programs require or prioritize communities with current plans when awarding funds. By having a clear, adopted plan, Canaan strengthens its eligibility for programs that support broadband expansion, infrastructure improvements, farmland protection, climate resilience initiatives, housing programs, and recreational development. The plan helps make the Town “grant-ready,” positioning it to secure resources for projects that align with community needs and aspirations.

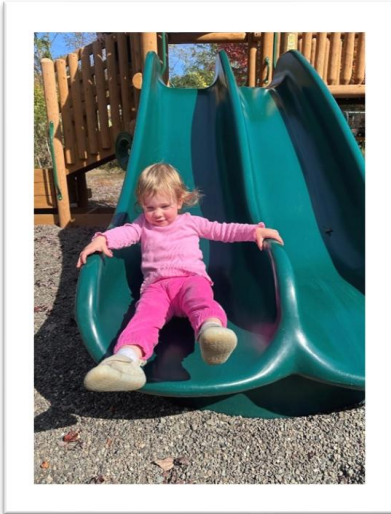
Equally important, the Comprehensive Plan provides the legal foundation for local land use regulations. Once again, under Town Law §272-a, all land use-related laws, including subdivision regulations, site plan review, and any future zoning, must be consistent with the adopted plan. This ensures that regulations are not arbitrary, but rather grounded in a thoughtful, community-driven policy framework. Over time, as the Town’s priorities evolve, these regulations can be updated to reflect the plan’s goals, providing clarity, transparency, and defensibility in land use decisions.

Finally, and most importantly, the plan serves as a strategic roadmap for local decision-makers. It coordinates the actions of the Town Board, Planning Board, Highway Department, and other local bodies, ensuring that decisions on infrastructure, economic development, environmental protection, and community services are made in a coordinated and proactive way. Rather than responding to development pressures on a case-by-case basis, the Town can use the plan to anticipate change, set priorities, and pursue opportunities that align with its shared vision.

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## Community Snapshot

Appendices 1 and 2 offer details about current conditions in the Town of Canaan. This section provides a summary of current conditions and trends for the Town of Canaan. See also the Map section of this Plan to learn more about resources and Town characteristics:



### Population and Demographics (See Resource 2 for more details)

The Town of Canaan is home to an estimated 1,553 residents as of 2024, representing a 13.7% population decline since 2000, compared to a modest 2.4% decline countywide. Population projections indicate a slight further decrease to 1,539 residents by 2029, continuing a gradual trend of decline common among many rural communities in Columbia County. Canaan's median age of 54.0 is notably higher than the county median of 49.0 and the state median of 39.6, reflecting an aging population with implications for future service needs, housing, and community facilities. Only 13.9% of residents are under the age of 18, while 30.7% are 65 or older, underscoring the need to plan for senior housing, mobility, and access to health and social services.

The Town remains predominantly White (89.9%), with growing diversity reflected in residents identifying as two or more races (5.9%) and small but increasing populations identifying as Asian/Pacific Islander (1.2%), Black (1.0%), and Hispanic or Latino (4%). The average household size has declined from 2.35 in 2010 to 2.08 in 2024, consistent with national trends toward smaller households and an increase in single-person homes.

### Housing (See Resource 1 for more details)

Canaan's housing stock reflects its long-established rural and historic character, with a predominance of single-family homes and limited diversity in housing types. Approximately 93% of all homes in the Town are single-family, while 5% are multifamily and fewer than 2% are mobile homes, highlighting the lack of smaller or alternative housing options for residents at different life stages or income levels.

The community's housing is also relatively old, with 72% of homes built before 1980 and nearly half constructed before 1940. While these older structures contribute to the Town's historic and architectural charm, they also pose challenges related to maintenance, energy efficiency, and modernization. Aging housing stock can create financial strain for long-term residents, especially older homeowners or those on fixed incomes who face increasing repair and energy costs.

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Between 2000 and 2020, the total number of housing units in Canaan increased modestly by 12%, but the rental housing supply remained virtually unchanged. This limited rental market constrains opportunities for young adults, families, and lower-income residents to live or remain in the community. The imbalance between ownership and rental housing reflects both market preference and regulatory conditions, but also points to a need for greater housing diversity.

The Town's median assessed home value is \$309,800<sup>1</sup>, below the Columbia County median of \$362,400, yet home sale prices have risen sharply in recent years. The median sale price increased from \$247,900 in 2019 to \$605,000 in 2023, representing more than a 140% increase in just four years<sup>2</sup>. A home's assessed value often differs from its sales price because assessments are made for taxation using mass appraisal methods and may not reflect current market conditions. Sales prices, by contrast, are determined by what buyers are willing to pay at a given time, influenced by demand, location, and property condition. Differences in timing, purpose, and local equalization rates also contribute to the gap. This dramatic escalation in sale prices, largely driven by second-home buyers and pandemic-era migration, has intensified affordability pressures and made it increasingly difficult for residents, especially first-time homebuyers, to enter or remain in the housing market.

#### Housing Affordability (See Resource 1 for more details)

Despite relatively high incomes compared to other parts of the county, Canaan's cost structure places strain on many households. The median household income is \$111,786, which is higher than Columbia County's \$88,335 median. However, income distribution remains uneven: approximately 20% of Canaan households earn less than \$50,000 annually, while 54% earn above \$100,000. For lower- and moderate-income households, rising property sales prices, insurance costs, and energy expenses make maintaining homeownership increasingly difficult.

The imbalance between income and housing costs also affects renters. Although Canaan has a small rental market of less than 7% of the total housing stock, rental rates have increased in parallel with home prices. Households earning below the area median income (AMI) would likely need to spend well over 30% of their income on housing costs, exceeding federal affordability standards. For many residents working locally in education, service, agricultural, or trade sectors, the current housing market presents limited options within their financial means.

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<sup>1</sup> From the American Community Survey (ACS), United States Census Bureau

<sup>2</sup> From the New York State Real Property Tax Department (<https://www.tax.ny.gov/research/property/assess/sales/resmedian.htm>).

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## Economy and Employment (See Resource 1 for more details)

While the Town itself hosts a modest number of local businesses, most residents are employed outside of Canaan, commuting along Interstate 90 and Route 295 to jobs in nearby communities such as Chatham, Hudson, Pittsfield, and Albany.

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Canaan residents enjoy relatively high household incomes compared to the rest of Columbia County. 54% have incomes of \$100,000 or more. However, one in five households in Canaan earns less than \$50,000 annually, and they may have difficulty with the cost of housing in the Town.

Educational attainment levels in Canaan are strong, contributing to a skilled workforce. Approximately 96% of adults have completed high school, and more than half hold a bachelor's degree or higher, exceeding both county and state averages. These education levels support employment in professional, managerial, and remote occupations, while also strengthening the local volunteer and civic base that contributes to community life.

Within the Town, employment opportunities are concentrated in agriculture, trades, small businesses, and tourism-related services. Local farms, home-based enterprises, and small contractors remain important to the community's economy, while Canaan's scenic setting and recreational assets attract seasonal visitors. Second-home and part-time residents contribute significantly to the local economy through property maintenance, retail spending, and patronage of nearby restaurants and services, providing an important source of seasonal revenue.

## Community Character and Resources (See Resource 1 for more details)

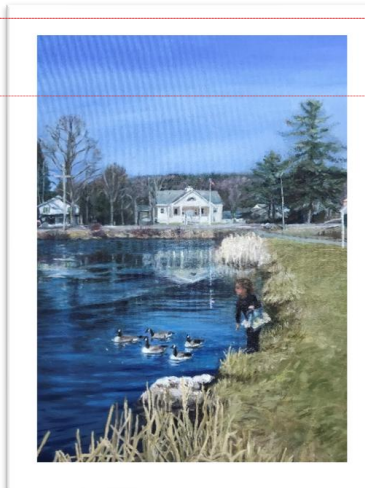
Canaan's rich history is expressed through its well-preserved historic buildings and landmarks, several of which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Notable sites include the Lace House, [Canaan Church](#), the Red Rock Schoolhouse, and the Red Rock Monument, each representing an important chapter in the Town's cultural and architectural legacy. These historic resources, along with traditional hamlets and scenic roadways, contribute to Canaan's distinctive visual and historical character.

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Community life in Canaan is supported by a strong network of local organizations, churches, and conservation clubs, which play an active role in fostering civic engagement and volunteerism. Seasonal and annual events such as the Community Day at Stoddard Field have strengthened local connections and celebrated the Town's small-town spirit. These gatherings, along with community-driven initiatives like the Fire Department breakfasts and dinners, Canaan Biodiversity Project, and volunteer conservation programs, reflect a shared commitment to environmental stewardship and neighborly collaboration.



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Residents and visitors alike enjoy a range of recreational opportunities that highlight the Town’s natural beauty. Canaan offers access to state forest lands, local trails, and park space areas, providing opportunities for hiking, wildlife observation, and outdoor exploration including the Schor Conservancy. The public cartop boat launch at Queechy Lake offers water-based recreation and draws both residents and seasonal visitors to one of the Town’s most treasured natural destinations.

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### Environmental Resources (see Resource 1 for more details)

Canaan’s terrain is defined by rolling uplands, forested ridges, and broad, fertile valleys. These natural features are more than scenic; they create the ecological and hydrological framework that supports local biodiversity and determines the suitability of land for agriculture, forestry, and development. Canaan is home to extensive areas of steep slopes, hydric and prime agricultural soils, and high groundwater recharge zones, which together represent both opportunities and environmental sensitivities.

Water is one of Canaan’s defining resources. The Town contains portions of the Kinderhook Creek and Green River watersheds, both of which feed into the Hudson River basin. These watersheds include numerous headwater streams, ponds, and wetlands that provide essential flood control, groundwater recharge, and water filtration. These wetlands and riparian buffers are particularly sensitive to disturbance, as they help manage stormwater and reduce erosion in steep or flood-prone areas.

At the heart of the community is Queechy Lake, Canaan’s largest surface water body and one of its most cherished natural and recreational assets. The lake supports boating, fishing, and swimming, and serves as a critical habitat for aquatic and migratory species. However, its popularity also presents management challenges. The surrounding area is prone to vulnerabilities such as nutrient loading, shoreline development, and invasive species as key threats to long-term water quality.



Forests cover roughly 70% of Canaan’s land area, forming an extensive network of core habitats and wildlife corridors that sustain the region’s biodiversity. Dominated by northern hardwoods such as maple, birch, beech, and oak, these forests play a vital role in carbon storage, water retention, and air quality. The Canaan Biodiversity Project, launched in partnership with the NRI, has documented nearly 1,000 plant and animal species, including wood turtles, bobcats, and American bitterns, some of which are recognized as species of conservation concern.

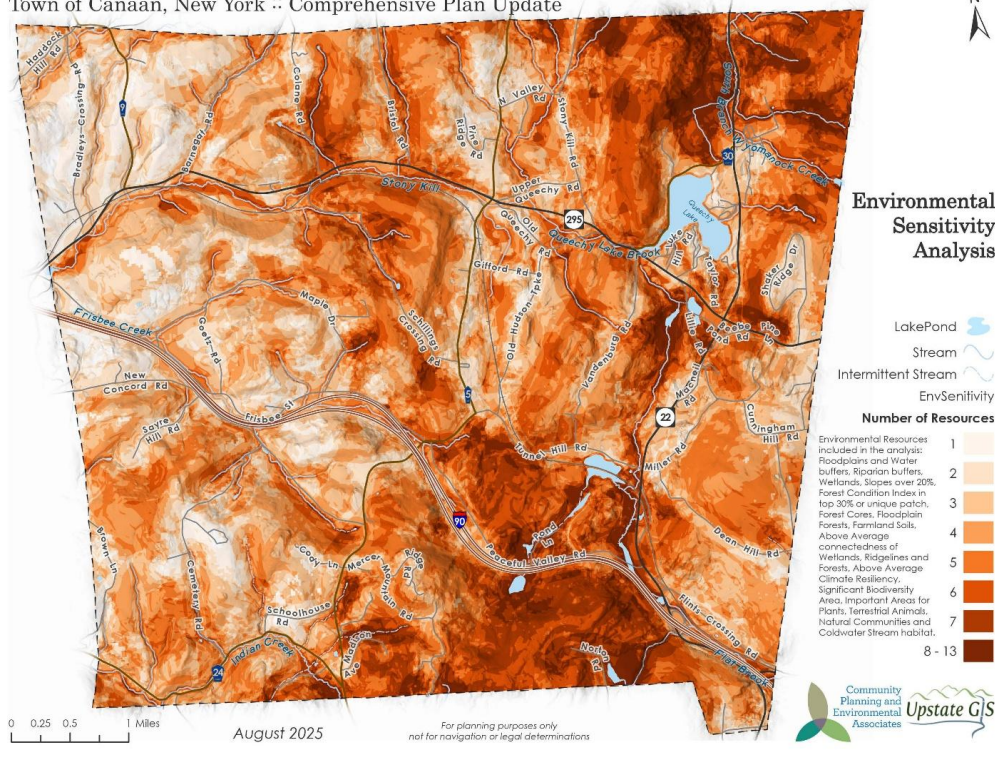
Agriculture remains an equally critical part of the Town’s landscape and environmental system. Over 25% of the local land area is prime or statewide important agricultural soils, concentrated in the lower valleys and open fields along County Routes 5 and 9. These areas provide both scenic value and local economic potential but are vulnerable to conversion from residential development and soil erosion on steep or marginal lands. Sustainable land management, conservation easements, and continued support for working farms are key strategies for protecting these landscapes.

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Canaan's topography and soils create a range of environmental sensitivities that must be carefully considered in land use planning.

- Steep slopes increase erosion risks and reduce suitability for septic systems and road construction.
- Shallow soils and high-water-table areas limit development potential and increase the risk of groundwater contamination.
- Floodplains and hydric soils require special protection to maintain flood resilience and ecological function.

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## Land Use and Development (See Resource 1 for more details)

- Land use is predominantly low-density residential, scattered across rural landscapes and small hamlets (e.g., Red Rock, Queechy Lake).
- No centralized water or sewer systems; most properties rely on wells and septic.
- Land use patterns shaped by natural features, historical settlement, and transportation corridors (I-90, NY 295).
- Zoning law adopted in 2017 provides a framework for subdivision and site plan review but is limited in scope.
- Growth pressures are increasingly tied to second-home ownership and housing market dynamics.
- The zoning law establishes permitted uses, density and site standards, subdivision processes, definitions, review procedures, energy system regulations, and administration/enforcement responsibilities, primarily through the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA), and Zoning Enforcement Officer. It also outlines how variances and amendments are handled and includes appendices such as the zoning map, road standards, and supplemental forms/regulations.
- The zoning audit finds that some of the current law is outdated and not fully aligned with New York State Town law and the goals and direction now being set through this plan. Key issues include a lack of needed definitions, complex density provisions, limited housing options, and subdivision rules that allow too many lots to be created without adequate review or resource protection. The audit recommends modernizing the use table, strengthening protection of rural character and natural resources (including through conservation subdivisions, dark sky lighting, stream buffers, better parking and sign standards), clarifying district purposes, and adjusting subdivision thresholds so environmental review effectively occurs. Overall, targeted updates are needed to make the zoning and subdivision more supportive of housing diversity, smart growth, and the rural character priorities identified in Canaan's new Vision and Goals.
- The buildout analysis illustrates that current zoning would allow a higher density of housing across the Town, which is not fully consistent with the vision and goals established by the community. It is a useful tool that illustrates the potential consequences of current rules if the maximum build-out occurred. It is not a prediction, but a tool to help the Town identify changes in land use regulations and programs that could be implemented to improve consistency between the vision and the land use regulations.

## Public Engagement

To guide this process, the Comprehensive Plan Committee was established by the Town Board, composed of residents and local officials representing a range of interests and perspectives. The committee met monthly throughout 2025 to review data, discuss emerging issues, and shape the vision and goals of the plan.

An early milestone in the engagement process was a joint workshop involving the Comprehensive Plan Committee, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Town Judge, and Building Inspector. Together, these participants developed a SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) to identify key themes related to land use, housing, natural resources, infrastructure, and community character. This collaborative session established a shared understanding of Canaan's challenges and opportunities, forming the foundation for the plan's goals and strategies.

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To broaden public input, a town-wide community survey was conducted, receiving 383 responses from both full-time and part-time residents. The survey provided valuable insight into community priorities such as protecting rural character and open space, addressing housing affordability, maintaining roads and broadband access, and fostering civic connection.



The planning team also hosted in-person engagement opportunities, including an informational table at the annual Canaan Day celebration and a public open house on August 2, 2025. These events allowed residents to review early findings, share feedback, and discuss ideas directly with committee members. Participants provided input on land use priorities, future development areas, and preservation goals.

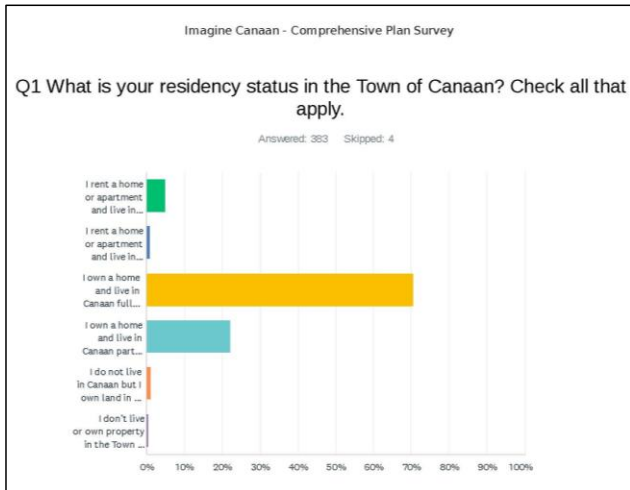
Throughout the process, the Comprehensive Plan Committee continued to meet regularly to review survey results, workshop outcomes, and draft materials. This ongoing collaboration ensured that the plan evolved through continuous public and stakeholder input rather than in isolation.

### Survey Results

Public engagement played a central role in shaping the Town of Canaan Comprehensive Plan. To ensure that the plan reflects the perspectives of all residents, a comprehensive community survey was distributed in early 2025 and later analyzed by both length of residency and residency status and distinguishing between full-time and part-time residents. Nearly 400 residents participated, offering one of the most extensive collections of public input in Canaan’s planning history. The results reveal both the shared values that unite the community and the nuanced differences that reflect their evolving character.

Canaan’s respondents represented a diverse mix of voices. Roughly three-quarters identified as full-time residents, with the remainder as part-time or seasonal homeowners. Just over half had lived in the Town for more than 20 years, while a growing number of newer residents of which many having moved to Canaan within the past decade, have brought fresh perspectives shaped by remote work, regional migration, and second-home ownership. Together, these groups embody a town in transition: one with deep local roots yet open to new ideas and opportunities.

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Across all groups, there was remarkable consensus on what makes Canaan special. Residents consistently described the Town as rural, peaceful, natural, scenic, and friendly. Whether full-time or seasonal, long-term or new, most agreed that Canaan’s greatest strengths lie in its open landscapes, quiet character, and strong sense of community. The rolling farmland, forested ridges, and scenic roads are not only physical features but part of the Town’s identity and collective pride. This shared appreciation for Canaan’s rural beauty and tranquility forms the

foundation of the community’s vision for the future.

Still, differences emerged in how residents viewed the Town’s most pressing needs. Long-term residents, many of whom have lived in Canaan for several decades, tended to emphasize maintenance and preservation—focusing on issues such as road upkeep, emergency services, tax stability, and farmland protection. For these residents, the priority is safeguarding what already exists: rural quiet, the open space, and the small-town independence that define daily life.

In contrast, newer residents often expressed enthusiasm for modest changes that could enhance connectivity and community life. They were more likely to highlight the need for better broadband access, local gathering spaces, and small-scale businesses, describing these as ways to strengthen Canaan’s year-round vibrancy without compromising its rural character. Some new residents also emphasized expanding recreational opportunities, community events, and civic engagement, and seeking to build connections within a town they see as welcoming but dispersed.

The differences between full-time and part-time residents echoed with similar themes. Full-time residents were more likely to focus on housing affordability, infrastructure maintenance, and long-term livability, especially for seniors and families who depend on local services year-round. Part-time residents, while equally devoted to protecting



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Canaan's natural environment, tended to view the Town through the lens of preservation and quality of life, and placed greater emphasis on environmental stewardship, scenic beauty, and water quality protection. Queechy Lake was a shared focal point, with full-time residents concerned with year-round management and access, and part-time residents focused on conservation and ecological balance.

Despite these subtle differences, both groups were largely consistent in their perspectives and expressed strong agreement that Canaan should remain a low-density, rural community and that large-scale or commercialized development is not appropriate. Instead, residents supported small, locally owned businesses such as cafés, farm stores, and service shops that could enhance convenience while maintaining the Town's small-town scale and aesthetic.

Housing affordability emerged as a universal concern, transcending residency type or length of stay.

Many residents across all backgrounds observed that rising property values, limited housing options, and short-term rentals are making it increasingly difficult for younger adults, families, and long-time residents to remain in Canaan. Many favored exploring small homes, accessory dwelling units (ADUs), and adaptive reuse of existing structures as potential solutions. The sentiment was clear: growth should happen thoughtfully, addressing local needs without disrupting the Town's landscape or sense of place.

The survey also revealed a shared desire for stronger community connection and communication. Long-term residents spoke about encouraging more local participation through events, volunteerism, and better communication from Town leadership. Newer and part-time residents expressed interest in becoming more involved, attending local meetings, and volunteering—but often cited limited awareness of Town initiatives. Respondents frequently mentioned Stoddard Park and Queechy Lake as potential focal points for events and recreation, underscoring the need for gathering places that can bring people together.

Ultimately, the survey data paints a picture of a community with diverse perspectives but deeply aligned values. Residents may differ in how they describe the path forward, but they share a common destination: a Canaan that remains rural, beautiful, and welcoming, while thoughtfully adapting to change. Full-time and part-time residents like this envision a town that supports its people, protects its environment, and nurtures a strong sense of belonging.

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## Strengths, Challenges/Barriers, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)

This section helps the Town identify and assess its strengths (positive attributes that can be leveraged and maintained), weaknesses (limitations or challenges to overcome), opportunities (chance for growth, improvement, or positive change), and threats (external risks or barriers that could negatively affect the Town). In other words, this is information that helps take stock of what is going well, what needs improvement, future possibilities, and what is needed to prepare for future challenges.

Considerable public engagement in the form of interviews, focus groups, public surveys, data collection, mapping, and Advisory Committee input has helped identify these elements.

The SWOT not only provides a snapshot of current conditions in Canaan, but also lays the groundwork for goals, strategies, and actions detailed later in this Plan. The chart below summarizes the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats addressed in this Plan. ~~It is presented alphabetically and does not reflect any kind of priority order.~~ See Resource 2 for the full list of SWOT elements.

~~This Table . It is presented alphabetically and does not reflect any kind of priority order.~~

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Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective and Trusted Town Leadership</li> <li>• Friendly, Welcoming, Neighborly Community</li> <li>• Historic and Quaint Character</li> <li>• Natural Beauty and Scenic Views</li> <li>• Peaceful, Quiet, and Serene Environment</li> <li>• Proximity to the Berkshires, Albany, and Major Corridors</li> <li>• Queechey Lake</li> <li>• Rural Character</li> <li>• Small-Town Feel and Manageability</li> <li>• Strong Volunteerism and Civic Involvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aging Population Needs Unmet</li> <li>• Environmental Threats and Inadequate Protection</li> <li>• Governance Transparency and Inclusion</li> <li>• Lack of Affordable Housing</li> <li>• Lack of Public Gathering Spaces and Youth Programs</li> <li>• Minimal Community Services and Amenities</li> <li>• Poor Broadband and Cell Service</li> <li>• Road Conditions and Maintenance Issues</li> <li>• <del>Short-Term Rentals (STRs)</del> – mitigated by new Local Law</li> <li>• Traffic, Speeding, and Unsafe Intersections</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow Flexible, Balanced Development with Design Standards</li> <li>• Create a Community Center or Gathering Space</li> <li>• Create Transportation Services for Seniors and Youth</li> <li>• Develop Affordable and Diverse Housing Options</li> <li>• Develop Youth Programs and Spaces</li> <li>• Encourage Home-Based and Small Local Businesses</li> <li>• Enhance Road Maintenance and Traffic Safety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child care deficiencies keep younger families away</li> <li>• Climate change and cost of remediating impacts</li> <li>• Flat or declining Town revenues</li> <li>• Lack of youth activities/aging community</li> <li>• Long travel to get to medical care, lack of primary care services (also contributes to rising costs for all and the municipality)</li> <li>• Rising costs</li> <li>• Small population makes it difficult for Town to attain funding from Fed/State programs</li> </ul>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Expand High-Speed Internet and Cell Service</li><li>• <b>Host More Community Events</b></li><li>• <b>Short Term Rentals offer opportunities to enhance tourism</b></li><li>• Improve Local Government Transparency and Communication</li><li>• Protect Queechy Lake and Natural Resources</li><li>• Revitalize and Improve Stoddard Park</li><li>• Support a Local Grocery Store, Food Co-op, and local farmers markets</li><li>• Support and Promote Local Agriculture</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sustainability of emergency services</li></ul>
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## Defining Community Character

Based on the community-wide survey conducted as part of this comprehensive plan process, the following statement summarizes how the residents and landowners in the Town of Canaan describe their community character (Question 8 of the Survey):



The Town of Canaan is defined by its bucolic rural landscape, scenic open spaces, farmland, and natural beauty. Rolling hills, forests, meadows, and Queechy Lake form the backdrop of a community that values its peaceful, quiet, and low-density environment. Residents cherish the pastoral charm,

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outdoor recreation opportunities, and connection to nature that make Canaan both an idyllic. Its historic identity, agricultural heritage, and lack of overdevelopment give the town a timeless quality that distinguishes it from more suburbanized areas.

Canaan is a close-knit and friendly community where neighbors care for one another and where civic-mindedness, inclusiveness, and independence are valued. The population is a mix of multi-generational families, new residents, and part-time property owners, bringing diversity but also new dynamics. This combination contributes to a rich social fabric while presenting challenges, such as bridging differences between l part-time and year-round residents and addressing the needs of an aging population. The town also faces service and infrastructure limitations, including inadequate broadband and cellular service, a lack of a defined village center, and limited meeting spaces such as a café or coffee shop, which influence both quality of life and future opportunities.

As Canaan looks to the future, it must navigate the tension between preserving its rural, historic, and natural character and adapting to changing demographics, rising housing costs, and development pressures. Residents broadly support a vision of thoughtful, well-managed growth that enhances infrastructure and services while protecting the landscapes, traditions, and sense of community that define Canaan's identity. Above all, the town seeks to remain a peaceful, beautiful, and welcoming place — one that honors its past while preparing thoughtfully for the future.

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## Vision and Goals

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### Vision for Canaan's Future

A vision statement describes our community's values and aspirations and offers a shared image of what people want Canaan to become in the future. The vision statement is based on community input and addresses many elements that contribute to the social, cultural, environmental, and economic fabric of the Town of Canaan.

The Town of Canaan envisions a future where its rural character and identity, natural beauty, and strong sense of community are preserved while it actively addresses challenges it faces. It is a peaceful and welcoming place where nature and neighborliness are valued, and where people of all ages feel a sense of belonging.

The Town seeks to protect these qualities while responding thoughtfully to the needs of residents—young and old, lifelong and new—through programs and policies that promote sustainable growth, support for farms, local businesses and diverse housing choices at a scale compatible with our vision of a rural community. High-speed internet and reliable cell service will connect homes and businesses across the town and beyond to ensure the Town remains a safe and productive environment for everyday living. Residents of all ages will have access to programs, gathering spaces, and opportunities that provide support to keep them rooted in the community. The Town will protect its forests, farmlands, and natural resources, such as Queechy Lake, while guiding thoughtful new development.

The Town will continue to evolve in a way that respects its past, supports its present, and builds a vibrant, resilient future.

## Canaan's Goals & Guiding Principles

Goals provide an observable result that is directly connected to the theme and the overall vision of the Town. Each theme has one or more broad goals established to help the Town reach its long-term vision and address identified needs. The goals are organized to address the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats uncovered during the planning process. To meet the vision presented above for the Town and Village of Canaan, the following goals are established in this Plan. Each goal is further detailed with guiding principles that are strategic guidelines that will help the Town operate and make decisions in the future.

The following goals are not presented in any priority order.

### **B. 1. Promote Diverse and Affordable Housing Choices**

Expand the development of diverse housing types—including smaller homes, accessory dwelling units (ADUs), duplexes, and senior housing and encourage smaller lot size and adaptive reuse of vacant buildings where appropriate to help attract and retain young families, support aging residents, and address rising housing costs, while preserving the town's rural character and landscape.

### **2. Advocate for Expanded Internet and Cell Connectivity**

Increase access to reliable, high-speed broadband and modern cell service across the town is critical to enable remote work, emergency communications, education, and equitable access to services.

### **3. Preserve Rural Character and Natural Resources to Promote Balanced Development**

Protect the town's rural character, its scenic landscapes, farmland, forests, wildlife habitats, water resources, and other environmentally sensitive areas. Allow for well-planned growth in appropriate locations that support the community's needs without compromising the environment or rural character. Advance climate resilience strategies such as water quality protections, renewable energy, and sustainable land use practices.



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#### **4. Enhance Traffic Safety and Accessibility**

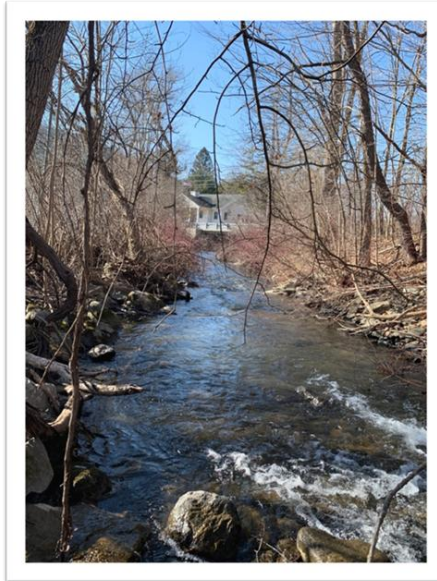
Improve road and intersection safety, address speeding concerns, and explore options for more walking and biking trails. Improve transportation services for seniors and youth to reduce isolation and increase access to local services and events.

#### **5. Senior Services and Aging in Place**

Support seniors through collaboration with organizations that provide transportation, in-home care, and social programs. Explore housing choices that enable aging in place with dignity and connection to the Canaan community.

#### **6. Support Local Businesses and Farms and Promote Sustainable Agriculture**

Attract selective commercial development—small, locally-owned businesses that align with rural character and local needs in appropriate areas: restaurants, cafés, day care, and niche farms, seasonal market spaces, agri-tourism, and programs that link farmers with available land and resources.



#### **7. Foster Broad Participation in Town Government**

Promote open, transparent local government through communication, community engagement, and broad representation on boards and committees. Build connections between full-time and part-time residents, newcomers, and long-timers through welcoming events and other opportunities.

#### **8. Enhance Community Spaces and Social Connections**

Create and enhance community gathering spaces, especially at Stoddard Park, and promote year-round events that foster social connection and civic pride. Develop or collaborate with other organizations to provide recreational spaces and youth-centered programs and services, such as summer camps, and after-school activities to support young families to thrive and stay in the Town.

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## Recommendations

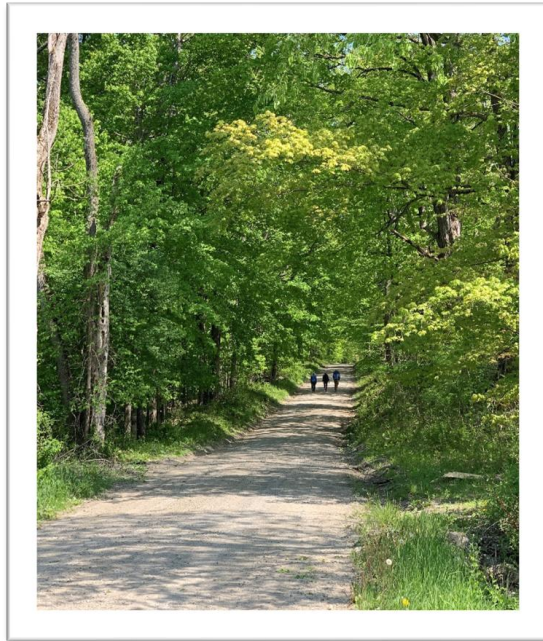
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The following strategies have been drafted to address the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) identified from our data and public engagement. These are organized by the goals that have been established.

These recommendations are organized into similar themes to meet the eight goals established in this Plan and are not presented in any kind of priority order.

### Theme 1. Land Use & Rural Character

**Goal:** Preserve Rural Character and Natural Resources to Promote Balanced Development. Protect the town's rural character, its scenic landscapes, farmland, forests, wildlife habitats, water resources, and other environmentally sensitive areas. Allow for well-planned growth in appropriate locations that support the community's needs without compromising the environment or rural character. Advance climate resilience strategies such as water quality protections, renewable energy, and sustainable land use practices.



Theme 1 Regulatory Strategies

- 1. **Amend zoning and subdivision laws** to incorporate methods that will help balance growth and protect the town’s valuable environmental, cultural, and character resources. See *Consultant’s Town of Canaan Audit of Zoning in Resource 1 for the Town of Canaan* for more details.

**The following are regulatory options the Town could consider to address this recommendation:**

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- a. Adopt **conservation subdivision development** standards. This is a site layout method that does not affect the number of lots or houses a parcel may be eligible for while preserving 50% of the parcel. These subdivisions are usually applied to major subdivisions (5 or greater lots). They allow for smaller lot sizes, offer opportunities for a mix of housing types, and conserve important open spaces on the parcel. It is recommended that all major subdivisions be required to be designed in this manner.



Example of what typical subdivisions look like.

Example of what a conservation subdivision looks like.

- b. Add **new definitions (see recommended list in Consultants Audit in Resource 1) and use illustrations** in the zoning text to increase understanding and clarity for all users.

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Establish a requirement that there be additional **buffer areas between a non-farm use (residence or commercial) and a farm**. These buffers can include larger setbacks, the maintenance of natural vegetation, or the use of topography to separate these uses.

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- c. Add **dark sky lighting standards** to control glare and light pollution that may be associated with commercial uses.

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d. Establish a **stream corridor buffer** that would serve to protect the 'riparian' area along streams from development. A stream corridor is a designated strip of land along both sides of a stream or river that is intentionally kept in a natural vegetated state to protect water quality, reduce flooding, and preserve important ecological functions that occur there. This could be applied to all streams, only those streams regulated by DEC (Class C(t) and higher streams), or certain streams designated by the Town.

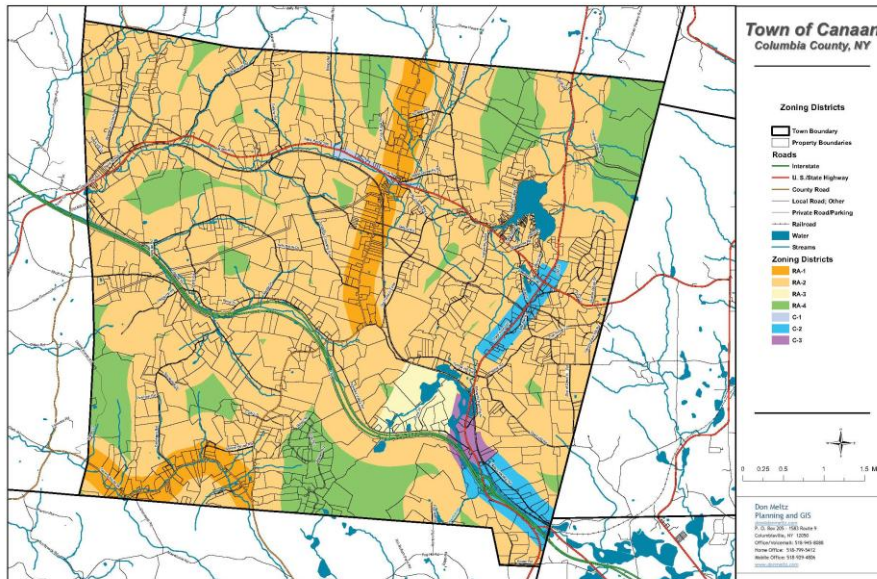
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e. Establish **steep slope and ridgeline development standards** to reduce erosion, protect water quality, and maintain scenic landscapes. Zoning can address this via an overlay district designed just for these areas, and/or through the use of incentives that promote best management practices. Controlling building on slopes > 15% includes careful siting of building envelopes away from steep slopes, limiting tree cutting, requiring engineered stormwater controls, or using other design standards (setbacks, driveway placement, building placement, buildable area requirements). Ridgeline best management practices include, but are not limited to, siting buildings so the roofline of the structure is below the ridgetop, limiting tree cutting, and using neutral colors to blend buildings into the hillside.

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f. Amend the Residential Agricultural (RA-4 shown in green on the above map) district to enhance its effectiveness. The current RA-4 district allows for the lowest density in Town

(a 10-acre ~~minimum lot size zone~~). Its stated purpose is to protect areas having agricultural and environmental sensitivities. However, the Town's Current RA-4 locations do not coincide well with either NYS Ag Districts, currently farmed areas, or all the locations having environmental sensitivity. Continue to support sustainable agricultural activities through farm-friendly zoning practices that protect farmlands from residential sprawl, support landowners' voluntary use of conservation easements, and support soil health programs and pollinator-friendly initiatives. Further protection of agriculture and highly environmentally sensitive areas can be accomplished in several ways.

1. To further support the Town's agricultural activity, work to protect prime farmland for agricultural uses. Canaan should recognize agriculture and agritourism as important economic resources and support the preservation and enhancement of these resources. The following options can serve to assist in the promotion and attraction of agriculture-related services and industries to develop and maintain agriculture as a viable business.
  - i. **Consider establishing an agricultural overlay** to promote sustainable agriculture.
  - ii. **The agricultural overlay should include development standards** such as (but not limited to) adjusting residential density, requiring clustering of new subdivisions, limiting non-farm businesses, and setting standards to allow those non-farm uses to be small in scale to limit conversion of critical farmlands.
  - iii. **Consider adding an agricultural** representative to existing boards to guide the Town as it implements agriculture-related portions of this plan related to farming.
  
2. **Consider expanding the RA-4 district locations so they align better with the environmentally sensitive locations** (as shown on that map). In the expanded RA4 District, consider using a density of 1 dwelling per 10 acres instead of a minimum lot size of 10 acres ([See Resource 4 for more information about density vs lot size](#)). This will allow Canaan to maintain the existing very low density while allowing some flexibility in lot sizes. Use of a density measurement allows lot sizes to be averaged, which in turn, allows for a variety of lot sizes to be created, provided they all average the required 10-acre density. Ensure that these regulations continue to allow for accessory dwelling units, farmworker housing, and other accessory uses without being counted towards the density measurement.

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3. In addition to, or as an alternative to the RA-4 District, Canaan can further protect critical environmental features by establishing **a conservation overlay**. Such an overlay can include lower density and additional development requirements designed to protect important natural, scenic, or cultural resources.

**More About a Conservation Overlay**

An overlay district sits on top of the regular zoning district. It does not change underlying land uses (residential, commercial, etc.) but adds additional development standards to address specific resource needs, such as protecting steep slopes or ridgelines. It is not an easement, that prevents further development.

4. To protect the freshwater source and water quality of Queechy Lake, one of the cleanest lakes in New York State, consider use of a conservation overlay applied on the western and southern sides of Queechy Lake, as well as the town's forested slopes and ridgetops – all of which contribute to the rural character of Canaan. (See the NY Rural Water Association Canaan Source Water Protection Plan for the Town (2020) to see the watershed zones around Queechy Lake (Figure 16)). A watershed protection overlay could be developed for the Queechy Lake area to protect water quality.

Note that the area around Loves is also an area that has groundwater and other significant environmental sensitivities. This could be a major area where a conservation overlay would ensure that any new commercial development in that location (zoned Commercial -2, or C-2) is done appropriately. Given the sensitivity of that area, the Town should also review the C-2 Use Table to ensure that uses that have a high risk of environmental impact are either not allowed or have development standards that help avoid significant environmental impacts.

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d.g. Add a **purpose statement** to the zoning that describes what each zoning district is designed to accomplish.

Establish general **design standards** for commercial development along I-90, Route 22 & 295 to avoid strip-style growth, to balance growth, and maintain community character. Reasonable rural design and siting guidelines can be set to effectively guide the siting of new commercial uses. Among other methods, consider having a range of building square footage for commercial buildings by district **and keep building heights to two stories** to ensure they are of the scale and intensity consistent with the goals of the Town. These could be incorporated into zoning regulations as required standards.

Some Examples Of Design Standards
These include requiring sloped roofs, placing parking to the side or rear of the building, cluster buildings near the road to maintain a compact hamlet form, limit height to 2 stories, break up larger buildings with façade and roof breaks, design should reflect the vernacular of the Town, have signs that are modest in size and integrated into the building architecture, use dark sky certified lighting fixtures, use native plants for landscaping, preserve existing mature trees, and encourage porches, awnings, or overhangs along the streetscape.

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h. Similarly, the zoning can include **rural siting guidelines** or standards oriented towards siting new residential uses to maintain the environment and rural character, and hamlet design guidelines targeted towards those unique locations. These should work to protect rural and scenic character along roads.

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i. When zoning is updated, ensure that **existing lots and uses are grandfathered**.

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**j. Consider rethinking all the residential agricultural (RA) district zoning that currently allows for 2-acre minimum lot sizes extending to a depth of 450' from the centerline of a road, and then a 5-acre minimum lot size beyond that area.** Over time, this pattern moves higher density to line all roads (see Map \_\_\_\_\_), while forcing flag lot development to the rear of lots. 'Strip style' type of development is more of a suburban pattern.

This can also be inefficient because it creates interior lands that are fragmented or become inaccessible for farming, forestry, or even effective conservation. Since most of Canaan's rural character comes from views from roads, over time, filling roadside areas with houses on 2-acre lots can obscure views of fields and hillsides.

k. Other unintended impacts of this are that it creates roads with multiple driveways that make it harder to snowplow, can cause drainage issues, and impact rural character. Other tools to address residential development in rural areas include:

**Rural Siting Guidelines that Work to Protect Rural and Scenic Character from Roads**

- i. Roadside tree preservation program;
- ii. Rural siting standards and context-sensitive road design that maintains the quality of rural roads without unnecessary widening;
- iii. Use of a scenic overlay district;
- iv. Careful siting of buildings in a conservation subdivision to protect views;
- v. Best practices to reduce light pollution.

Consider using density instead of minimum lot sizes to control the number of new homes allowed. Evaluate the current 2-acre/5-acre split and consider removing the 2-acre/5-acre split and apply one density rule for making all parcels in the residential districts ( RA-1, RA-2, and RA-3). This will avoid splitting parcels with two development requirements and avoid concentration of development along roads. This Plan offers density scenarios to consider showing the potential build out under current zoning, and others at 2-acre, 3.5 acre, and 5-acre a 3.5-acre density that is applied throughout the whole parcel. When density is used, updated zoning should add language that allows At the same time, allowing existing parcels that are less than the required density 7 acres in size to be 'grandfathered' in and subdivided once provided well and septic regulations can be met. In this way, existing small lots are not penalized with a zoning change. See also Resource 4 for more information on density vs lot size.

- l. Cluster new houses along interior roads or grouped in nodes to leave frontage open.
- m. Use rural siting guidelines to help development fit better into the rural landscape, protect visual character.
- n. Use density (recommended at 1 dwelling per 3.5 acres) instead of a minimum lot size to allow for more flexibility and smaller lots at the same time.
- o. In determining the appropriate places for new building envelopes, the many places identified as highly sensitive hydrogeologic locations (see NY Rural Water Association

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Canaan Source Water Protection Plan, 2020) should be considered. Map 15 from that Water Protection Plan shows high sensitivity to water pollution due to geological features along NY 295, Barnegat Road, Peaceful Valley Road/I-90, Old Hudson Turnpike, Co Rt 5 to Stoney Kill Road area, and in the valley along Route 22. Small lots here should be carefully planned so that septic systems do not adversely affect water supplies. See also zoning option (p), below.

**o. Consider promoting nodal development patterns (Hamlets) instead of corridors (strips along the highway).** (See Figure below and historic map above for names and locations of the traditional hamlet locations in Canaan). Currently, the commercial districts (C1, C2, and C3) are designed to result in strip development. And there is no distinction between the residential districts (RA-1, RA-2, and RA-3), where all require the 2-acre/5-acre minimum lot size. The buildout over time using this pattern will be spread out and not focused – something that can erode rural character over time. Some residential agricultural districts (RA-10 are mapped as a corridor, which may result in eroding rural character by spreading development along roads.

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**f. Canaan's traditional hamlets (Canaan Center, Red Rock, Flat Brook, Queechey, Canaan Four Corners, Canaan and East Chatham) are n**Nodes that show ~~are more~~ traditional styles of development and contribute to the ruralness of a place. These areas were and could be locations where hamlet-style development would be appropriate. Some are four-corner type nodes, while others, like Red Rock, are corridors. The RA-1 area at Red Rock is already designated as a district and is a appropriate corridor from the western Town boundary along Route 24 through Red Rock that matches the traditional layout of that area of Town. Otherwise, hamlet nodes can allow for clustered commercial centers at selected crossroads ~~or hamlet areas that that can~~ keep larger stretches of roads free. Hamlet nNodes also improve traffic safety, support stronger business environments (businesses like to be near other businesses), reduce future infrastructure costs, and can protect farmland, natural resources, and rural character. The hamlet areas offer opportunities for hamlet districts to be established and with allowing for smaller lots, and in some (such as Canaan Four Corners), mixed uses.

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e.g. Consider **creating Hamlet Zoning Districts around Canaan's historical hamlet locations**. These include Flat Brook, Town Center, Red Rock, Canaan Four Corners, and East Chatham. These areas form the traditional nodes that could support new, focused, hamlet-style development having a mix of uses. These hamlet areas can support smaller lots, mixed-use, and in some cases, multifamily dwellings. Maintain the 2-acre minimum lot sizes in these locations. Each of these hamlet areas should have targeted design standards to ensure that new development is designed and sited to be consistent with what is there.



- a. A unique opportunity to promote hamlet development is in the campus area of the Berkshire Farm. Consider establishing a new zoning district in that area instead of being zoned RA2. This area has unique opportunities in Town because it has water, sewer, and other infrastructure already in place. To meet housing needs, zoning in this new hamlet district should require that a percentage (15 to 20%) of all new residential units built be required to be deeded as affordable units (below market

price). This method is called inclusionary zoning and would guarantee long-term affordable housing.

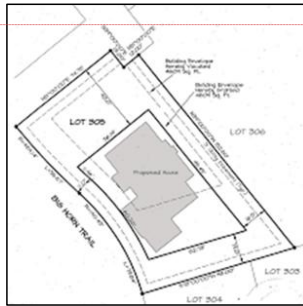
- b. Consider changing the names of C1, C2, and C3 districts to something that allows more recognition as mixed-use hamlets.

p-g. Couple the use of a density measurement (dwelling units per acre) with also allowing for **averaging lot sizes**. This zoning approach offers a flexible alternative to conventional “minimum lot size” zoning. Instead of requiring every lot in a subdivision to meet a fixed minimum size (e.g., 2 acres each), it requires that the average of all lots created meet the zoning standard. Benefits include increased flexibility, more opportunities for preservation of natural and scenic resources, better road layout, and creation of smaller lots that would be potentially more affordable. Average lot sizes work with the use of siting building envelopes when applied to small subdivisions, which would be useful along rural road corridors and in mixed-use areas.

**Consider the NY Rural Water Association’s Source Water Protection Plan recommendations to protect water quality in Canaan.** It is recommended that these be incorporated into the subdivisions, site plan, and zoning laws as per that study. These include new water-related information to be reviewed by the Planning Board. For subdivision, these include identification of well locations, a completed hydrogeological study for large subdivisions, water supply suitability, and evaluation of impact requirements. For zoning, these include additional information to be submitted for site plans and special use permits, and a hydrogeological study for uses that have groundwater withdrawals or sewage disposal flows of 1,000 to 2,000 gallons per day.

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r. Consider updating the subdivision regulations to emphasize the **review and approval of the actual building envelope** (house, driveway, and septic system) instead of just boundary lines. The benefits of doing this include better protection of natural and scenic resources, better determination of where buildable lots actually are, confirmation of safe driveway placement and access, enhanced coordination of stormwater management features, and increased compatibility with neighborhood character. Approved building envelopes become part of the recorded subdivision plan, giving clear expectations to future buyers, builders, and neighbors.



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s. In the subdivision law, consider **removing the exemption for when 2 and 3 lots** are split. Currently, a parcel can be subdivided into 2 or 3 parcels with no subdivision review. Not only is this inconsistent with New York State Town Law 276 and with 6 NYCRR Part 617

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(SEQR), but this means that the most common form of land development activities taking place in the Town is not reviewed. It is recommended that all subdivisions go through the review process.

**s.t.** Bring zoning and subdivision laws into alignment with NYS Town Law that authorizes subdivision, site plan, and special use processes. Consider updating the subdivision law to be fully **consistent with the timelines and procedures of NYS law 276**.

**u.** **Consider adding a floating business zoning district.** This can be a useful and flexible tool. It is a zoning district written into the zoning law but not mapped anywhere initially. It “floats” in the code until a landowner petitions to apply that district to a specific location that meets set criteria. Floating business districts offer the Town flexibility but clearly identified development standards and performance expectations. It can target economic development without over-zoning, can prevent open spaces and farmland from being prematurely converted, help cluster commercial growth to suitable locations, allow a case-by-case review with set site design, and support economic flexibility.

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**v.** **Update the Town’s solar law** to be compliant with NYS policy, to address battery energy storage systems (BESS), and to establish policy as to where and what < 25 MW development standards are to accomplish both renewable energy needs and maintenance of the Town’s character and environment. This update should address the protection of farmland and rural areas, enhance definitions, and include best management practices for siting solar (including those on farms). Consider stricter screening requirements and codify remediation requirements. Consider removing commercial solar facilities as an allowed use in Hamlet Business and Village Business zoning districts and establish regulatory controls and development standards for battery storage. Consider incorporating the use of agrivoltaics, where farming can take place under the panels.

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**w.** **Prohibit data centers and crypto mining** as a land use not compatible with Canaan’s goals or vision.

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**x.** Support **adaptive reuse** of vacant, older buildings for housing or mixed-use. Zoning, along with the use of incentives, grants, marketing, and partnerships with economic development organizations/agencies and others, are important elements to finding ways to support this. See also Housing Recommendations.

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2. Update Canaan’s 1987 Flood Damage Prevention Law. Work with NYSDEC, the Climate Smart Community Task Force, and the highway department to review and update the existing local law where needed.

Theme 1 Programmatic Strategies

3. **Work with the town historian and local historical societies** to collect stories, photos, and oral histories. Encourage rehabilitation of historic buildings through participation in NYS and federal Historic Tax Credit programs or local grant programs. Promote the Town’s heritage with interpretive signage, a town booklet, or an online archive. Collaborate regionally on county-wide heritage programs or tourism networks. Encourage new construction that is context-sensitive near historic resources and in hamlet areas.

4. Launch **community composting, recycling improvements, and waste cleanup days**.

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5. Ensure **stormwater management** occurs with all development.

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6. Promote both **forest tree preservation and pollinator habitats** for climate resilience and maintenance of rural character **and the environment**. This can be accomplished in many ways, including:

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- a. Require pollinator-friendly plantings under any solar farm that may be developed in Canaan.
- b. Shift roadside maintenance practices to allow for wildflower meadows instead of frequent mowing.
- b-c. **Maintain roadside trees when building takes place and limit the number of curb cuts to serve that parcel.**
- d. **Develop standards or a permit system for logging to control clearcutting and adverse impacts that may be associated with it (removal of trees for agricultural activities should not be limited though).**
- e-e. Convert the land behind Town Hall or in other town-owned lands to create a pollinator garden or managed wildflower meadow.
- f-f. Do a public awareness campaign about the importance of pollinators.
- g-g. Promote ‘pollinator trails’ or ‘wildflower drives’ as an eco-tourist activity.

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7. Support **regenerative and sustainable farming practices**.

8. **Adopt the New York State Stretch Energy Code**. This is a minimum building standard for energy efficiency, applicable to new construction and renovation of commercial and residential buildings in New York State. The Energy Code is a complex document and one of nine building codes in New York State, making implementation and enforcement complex and time-consuming.

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9. Relocate Veterans Monument to Stoddard Park.



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**5.10. Implement the recommendations of the Town of Canaan’s Climate Action and**

**Resiliency Plan (CARP)** and the Columbia County Hazard Mitigation Plan to address climate change and its impacts. Apply for Silver Status in the NYS DEC Climate Smart Community program. This plan and help Canaan meet its Climate Smart Communities Program Requirements.

As per the New York State Climate Smart Communities webpage (<https://climatesmart.ny.gov/actions-certification>), “the Climate Smart Communities (CSC) Certification program provides local governments with a robust framework to guide their climate action and recognizes high-performing communities for their leadership. Participation is free and voluntary. Designed around the ten CSC pledge elements, the certification program recognizes communities for their accomplishments through a rating system leading to three levels of award: bronze, silver, and gold.” The Town of Canaan is currently a Bronze Certified Community and is working towards reaching the Silver level.

This Comprehensive Plan assists the Town in attaining that Silver status by meeting the required and optional actions. It does this by including a number of actions that meet the PE6 Actions (Comprehensive Plan with Sustainability Elements. Development of this plan is wholly consistent with the CSC-recommended steps. This included baseline assessment (See Resource 1), public outreach and engagement (See Resource 2), developing goals (See Vision and Goals Section), identifying and evaluating strategies and actions (See Recommendations Section), and integration (See Implementation Plan Section).

Points are awarded according to the number of point-based elements that are part of the plan, over and above the five required elements. At minimum, the plan must include all of the sustainability elements listed below as required and at least one point-based element from the list; such a plan would be eligible for the lowest tier of three points.

Action	Possible Points	Corresponding Actions in This Plan
Support alternative modes of transportation (including strategies for bicycles, pedestrians, public transit, and electric vehicles)	Required	Themes 1, 3 Theme 4, Item 1,2,14 Theme 5, item 9
Promote smart growth principles in land-use policies	Required	Theme 1 and Theme 2
Conserve natural areas (including strategies to designate open space and protect it from development)	Required	All of Theme 1
Promote a healthy and safe community	Required	Themes 4 and 5
Foster equity (including strategies for housing, schools, transportation, recreation, food, and environmental exposures)	Required	All Themes

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Action	Possible Points	Corresponding Actions in This Plan
Foster green economic development	3	Theme 3, Item 2, 5, 10, 11
Decrease dependence on fossil fuels and support energy efficiency and renewable energy production	3	Theme 1, Item 1, 12 Theme 3, Item 8
Foster the efficient use of natural resources (e.g., water conservation)	3	Theme 1, all items
Promote the development of (or the conservation of) local food systems	3	Theme 3, Item 1
Minimize solid waste (including strategies to promote recycling and composting or anaerobic digestion of organic materials)	3	Theme 1, Item 4, 12
Protect drinking water sources from pollution	3	Theme 1, Item 1, 11 Theme 3, Item 18 Theme 5, Item 18
Promote adaptation to climate change (including strategies related to land use and public education, and engagement)	3	All of Theme 1

11. Promote **best practices for energy-efficient building** that:

- a. Conserve water;
- b. Minimize solid waste;
- c. Decrease dependence on fossil fuels; and
- d. Support structures that incorporate individual renewable energy systems.

12. Promote **sustainable solid waste management** in Canaan, through strategies including:

- a. Improving the transfer station experience for residents by making aesthetic improvements (e.g., tree planting) and implementing good neighbor guidelines on noise, dust, litter, and road surface.
- b. A community waste reduction campaign led by the Communications Committee and Climate Smart Task Force. Promote solid waste reduction, recycling, and composting to minimize trash sent to the transfer station.

## Theme 2. Housing

**Goal:** Promote Diverse and Affordable Housing Choices. Expand the development of diverse housing types— including smaller homes, accessory dwelling units (ADUs), duplexes, and senior housing and encourage smaller lot size and adaptive reuse of vacant buildings where appropriate to help attract and retain young families, support aging residents, and address rising housing costs, while preserving the town’s rural character and landscape

### Theme 2 Regulatory Strategies

**The following are regulatory options the Town could consider to address this Theme:**

1. Current zoning allows accessory dwelling units in all zoning districts within a single-family dwelling, or a detached accessory building, provided it is between 300 square feet and 1500 square feet in size, with a separate entrance, adequate water and septic, and on a lot having at least 5 acres. **Consider removing the 5-acre minimum lot size requirement for ADUs.** The reasons for this recommendation include:
  - a. All the 2-acre lots created in the Town (ALL the RA districts) will not qualify. This eliminates ADUs as a meaningful tool for creating affordable housing. It also means that homeowners with small lots are unfairly excluded from creating multi-generational housing, even if they have space.
  - b. Restricting ADUs to large lots makes them accessible only to wealthier landowners.
  - c. Prevents small infill in hamlets or areas already showing nodal development.
  - d. Conflicts with New York State housing initiatives that encourage ADUs as part of housing affordability solutions.
2. Update zoning to allow for more styles of housing in more locations. Current zoning does not allow two-family dwellings anywhere and allows multi-family dwellings only in the commercial districts. It is recommended that **two-family homes, tiny homes (as defined by New York State), and co-housing/cottage housing** (a type of residential community where people live in private homes but share common spaces, facilities, and responsibilities. It blends the privacy of individual households with the social and economic benefits of collective living and could be allowed as permitted housing types in all districts. Two-family and tiny homes can be defined and allowed without Planning Board approval, like single-family homes. Co-housing should be reviewed and approved with a site plan review.

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Update zoning to allow for **small multifamily structures and townhouses (limited to no more than 6 units per structure), dedicated senior housing, and mixed-use structures** (a mix of residential and business use) in hamlets, commercial nodes, or other designated



growth areas in Town. Structures designed in a single-family architectural style, having 3 or 4 units, could be a new housing type allowed in zoning. These housing types should be allowed with a special use permit and with design and siting standards to ensure they are compatible with the location. They are not appropriate for roadside strip development, scattered on large lots outside hamlets or concentrated areas, or on environmentally sensitive lands. However, larger developments designed using the conservation subdivision method could include a mix of

housing types. Use design guidelines so new housing fits the rural character.

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3. Encourage the **reuse and rehabilitation of underutilized or abandoned existing structures** for senior and workforce housing. ~~Evaluate existing structures such as the vacant old schools house, Queechey Lake Hotel, and Historical Society Building or structures able to be converted~~ for new uses, including housing. ~~At the same time, ensure that all such rehabilitations meet all health and safety requirements for residential uses.~~

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4. Since manufactured homes tend to be more affordable options, **consider allowing manufactured homes in more locations**. Currently, mobile homes are allowed only in the RA-3 District. Revisit the use of where and allow for the use of manufactured homes could be used in Canaan as a more affordable housing style. Change zoning's definition to reflect that mobile homes are legally defined as a factory-built, transportable dwelling unit built pre-1976. Manufactured homes are ones built after 1976. As per New York State laws, manufactured homes are treated as any other single-family home. NY courts have ruled that exclusionary zoning against HUD-certified manufactured homes can be unlawful. Local governments can regulate where manufactured homes are allowed, but they cannot ban manufactured homes outright if single-family dwellings are otherwise permitted.

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5. Provide for a 10-15% **density bonus in the zoning to incentivize the provision of affordable housing units** in new development. This would allow someone to gain additional housing units in exchange for a stated percentage of the new units being affordable.

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3-6. **Establish hamlet zoning districts** that allow mixed uses, a mix of housing types, and higher density (where sufficient water and septic can be provided for).

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- a. Given the existing structures and infrastructure at the **Berkshire Farm campus**, change the zoning district designation there from RA-2 to Hamlet. This area is envisioned as a mixed-use, higher-density hamlet center for a variety of residential and small business uses.

4.7. As an alternative to some of the recommendations above for allowing more zoning districts to have multi-family housing, consider the establishment of a **multi-family and senior citizen housing overlay district** that would focus this type of development in an appropriate area.

Theme 2 Programmatic Strategies

5.8. **Continue the Housing Committee** with appointees from within, as well as other stakeholders who are uniquely positioned to assist with the creation of diverse housing.

**Partner with appropriate Columbia County, state, or non-governmental agencies to help homeowners repair and upgrade older housing stock and to help them acquire, rehab, or provide financing for affordable housing.** Efforts should explore creating a Canaan-centric affordable housing program that may include leveraging funds for:

- Rental Security Deposit assistance;
- Down payment assistance for qualified home buyers; and
- Property rehabilitation assistance.

9. Promote awareness of flood risk to specific properties that are vulnerable, so that residents buy flood insurance. Coordinate community outreach between the Communications Committee and Climate Smart Task Force.

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### Theme 3. Economic Development

**Goal:** Support Local Businesses and Farms and Promote Sustainable Agriculture. Attract selective commercial development- small, locally-owned businesses that align with rural character and local needs in appropriate areas: restaurants, cafés, day care, and niche farms, seasonal market spaces, agri-tourism, and programs that link farmers with available land and resources.

#### Theme 3 Regulatory Strategies

**The following are regulatory options the Town could consider to address this Theme:**

1. **Promote agricultural activities.** This can be accomplished by:
  - a. Promote **farm stays, agritourism, wineries, roadside stands, and co-op groceries as value-added agricultural activities** by ensuring that zoning defines and specifically allows for agritourism, on-farm sales and processing, farm stays, and mobile markets.
  - b. Establish a **farm link program** to connect landowners with new farmers.
  - c. **Change regulations related to farmworker housing.** Remove the 50-acre farm size required to have a mobile home for a farmworker. This would only allow farm workers to live on large farms, but many niche farms are small and need staff to assist. This is an unnecessary burden to farmers and is inconsistent with NYS guidance for farms in a NYS agricultural district.

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- d. **Allow food trucks and pop-up markets** in the Use Table.
  - e. **Allow for wineries, cideries, distilleries, and tasting rooms.**
2. Revitalize and **promote hamlet development** with mixed uses that encourage small buildings and residential uses. Zoning should allow for this type of development.

3. **Ensure that zoning offers the opportunity for incubator and maker spaces**, as shared facilities for artisans, craft people, start-ups, **cooperative business models, creative studios, and artisan shops**. Allow for **small-scale lodging and dining** that complements rural character.

4. Consider **removing allowance for large hotels** (16 rooms or larger) in the Use Table as they may not be consistent with Canaan’s vision and goals.

5. Support the **rehabilitation of existing buildings** in appropriate locations to be used for small business and artisan use.

**6. Establish commercial design standards in zoning.** Improve the aesthetics of commercial zones (including Exit B3 of Interstate 90) to attract additional businesses and improve walkability and community connection and that align with rural character. Link local residents to job opportunities within business districts.

**Examples of Commercial Design Standards**

These could include limitations on allowable square footage, general architectural design standards, prohibition of franchise architecture, lighting standards, parking lot design, landscaping, and signage that ensures the style and scale of use Canaan hopes for.

6. **Work regionally** to market Canaan’s assets, coordinate tourism efforts, and share infrastructure costs where feasible.

7. In the Commercial districts, where commercial use is desired and a priority, **limit the requirement for businesses to obtain a special use permit and concentrate planning reviews on site plans**. In those districts, and with appropriate design and performance expectations, site plan review and approval would be adequate. Reserve the use of SP (Special Permit) for those businesses that have some characteristics that would make it harder to fit into an area. Many small businesses (such as professional service offices, small retail shops or galleries, small café, or bakery in a commercial zone should not need special use permits. Auto-related businesses, intensive uses such as wedding venues, quarries or sawmills, campgrounds, RV parks, or renewable energy facilities are examples of uses that should have special use permits.

8. Ensure that zoning adequately allows for small business development in appropriate locations. Ensure it allows for mixed-use developments in the hamlet and business areas and home businesses. Ensure that zoning is ‘farm-friendly’ and allows for direct sales, agritourism, and multiple farm businesses on a farm operation. Perform a regular review of the Use Table to update Special Use permits and site plan review requirements.

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**Theme 3 Programmatic Strategies**

**3-9. Facilitate formation of a local business association** (including for home businesses).

Some of the programmatic ideas for this association to implement include:

- a. Work with area farms, businesses, and home occupations to create a **youth mentorship program** to give local youth new opportunities to explore careers.
- b. **Promote adventure-based, cultural tourism and rural health and wellness tourism** (hiking, mountain biking, glamping, yoga, outdoor recreation and healing, etc.). These types of businesses build on Canaan’s assets and are a strength to attract small businesses that fit into Canaan.
- c. Seek funding to evaluate the **feasibility of converting the old school appropriate spaces** into a co-working space.
- d. Create a central farmers market/community market space as a hub for local products.
- e. **Partner with Hudson Valley Agricultural Development Corporation** (Columbia County funds them) to explore ways Canaan can enhance existing or attract new agribusinesses. They offer technical assistance, agribusiness loans and grants, marketing and tourism, and food rescue and donation programs.
- f. **Partner with Columbia County IDA.**

**g. Develop a ‘Welcome to Canaan’**

packet for new residents that includes information on services, events, organization of the Town government, etc. To accomplish this, partner with location organizations such as the religious institutions and local businesses and build capacity for carrying out this project (people and funding). This packet could



include a resource guide designed to help young and new families learn about the Town and to navigate the building permit, planning, and zoning, and common zoning-related questions that can help newcomers.

**h. Do an inventory of local businesses, including home-based businesses. Conducting an inventory will help provide an understanding of Canaan’s economic strengths, gaps, and opportunities. It also creates a baseline for tracking growth, supporting targeted support programs, and strengthening the local economy through better coordination and communication.**

**4-10.** Work with local organizations such as religious institutions, businesses, and families to find ways to attract day care center businesses to support new economic development in Town.

**11. Publish a resource guide and improve communication about services.**

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12. Enable small business development that offers quality employment and revenue opportunities in a manner that protects the environment and rural character of Canaan.

13. Explore other grant programs that could be used to provide financial incentives and support for small businesses.

14. Ensure that the commercial districts and uses are designed to protect water quality and sensitive ecological areas.

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## Theme 4. Community Life & Recreation

**Goal:** Enhance Community Spaces and Social Connections. Create and enhance community gathering spaces, especially at Stoddard Park, and promote year-round events that foster social connection and civic pride. Develop or collaborate with other organizations to provide recreational spaces and youth-centered programs and services such as summer camps, and after-school activities to support young families to thrive and stay in the Town.

## Theme 4 Programmatic Strategies

**The following are regulatory options the Town could consider to address this Theme:**



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1. Consider **broadening the funding and mission of the Recreation committee** to expand recreational opportunities for Town residents of all ages in the community. Consider a sub-committee that includes youth to plan for expanding options for summer camp and after-school.
2. **Review the adequacy of the Town's existing recreational facilities. Evaluate the need for** walking trails, youth activities, pickleball courts, swimming, biking, athletic fields, activities for children and teens, fishing access, picnic areas, and senior citizen activities, and seek ways for improvement. In conjunction with this review, consider surveying full and part-time families to create a baseline needs assessment that identifies gaps and opportunities.
3. Many ideas for enhancing recreation were identified by the community and are presented below.
4. Map and identify new walking and bike trails.
5. Promote or facilitate seasonal festivals, concerts, as well as organize walking, book, and knitting groups that are intergenerational and appeal across many population groups.
6. Identify space(s) for a **community center** for events, senior services, and multigenerational activities.
7. Host more **seasonal festivals, concerts, and cultural events, and shared community meals** to connect newcomers and long-timers, and more specifically oriented to youth.

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8. Partner with the schools serving Canaan, religious institutions, the fire companies, land conservancy, and other local organizations to provide **after-school programs**, tutoring, in addition to summer programs.
9. Consider creating new partnerships to develop and offer **intergenerational programs** pairing services with young families (mentorship, skills-sharing) and encourage the development of places for residents to greet each other and to gather spontaneously (e.g., a small shopping center with a coffee shop and/or a country store).
10. Reinvest in **Stoddard Park** with ADA perimeter paths, a dog park, shaded seating, and upgraded facilities, including a playground, ball courts. Provide **more walking areas around the town** and in the vicinity of the town hall to create a sense of a village green where people can gather.
11. Establishing an **official town Community Center** is a long-term goal but continue discussions to establish a working relationship with the Congregational Church to extend use of its facility for other community uses, e.g., a respite center, and adding more regular uses to existing regular events (square dancing) and other impromptu/one-time events. Consider ways to reach out to the community to find out what the perceived needs are.
12. **Identify an existing space** that could be used as a community center, including considering opening up Town Hall on weekends or other times for an indoor space that can be used by the community.
13. Advertise existing **senior support services** (resource guide, caregiver registry, volunteer assistance) so seniors are aware of these resources. Identify gaps in service needs and build capacity and partnerships to fill these needs, such as a drop-in respite program for caregivers.
14. Update the Town website to become a high functioning 'go to website' for activities, events, as well as continuing current uses-town newsletters, town board work, and other governance/committee updates. Add sections on or links to recreation opportunities: festivals and local markets, events. Include maps of local trails in Canaan and links to CCC and nearby Berkshire County, walking and biking trail guides.
15. Long-term, consider working with CCE and other organizations to provide **emergency planning for seniors, such as a senior resource guide**.
16. **Increase public access to Queechy Lake**. Explore options to secure access to the beach permanently, including acquiring the beach area, as it is vulnerable to loss if its current land ownership changes. When the opportunity arises, consider a new role for the Town in relation to Queechy Lake as long-term lessor or permanent owner of the land currently under the ownership of the Berkshire Farm. Consider ways to increase public access to the lake.
17. **Work with the town historian** to increase community knowledge of Canaan and its history. Consider adding a history section to the Canaan website.

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### Theme 5. Infrastructure & Services

**Goal:** Advocate for Expanded Internet and Cell Connectivity. Increasing access to reliable, high-speed broadband and modern cell service across the town is critical to enable remote work, emergency communications, education, and equitable access to services.

**Goal:** Enhance Traffic Safety and Accessibility. Improve road and intersection safety, address speeding concerns, and explore options for more walking and biking trails. Improve transportation services for seniors and youth to reduce isolation and increase access to local services and events.

**Goal:** Senior Services and Aging in Place. Support seniors through collaboration with organizations that provide transportation, in-home care, and social programs. Explore housing choices that enable aging in place with dignity and connection to the Canaan community.

### Theme 5 Programmatic Strategies

1. Expand **broadband and cell coverage** via municipal options or public-private partnerships.
2. Provide **public Wi-Fi zones** in the town center and gathering spaces.
3. Connect residents to existing **volunteer driver networks. Promote senior access to the North East Transportation Loop (a regional transportation cooperative)** for seniors.
4. Improve **road safety and maintenance** (intersections, potholes, dust control, signage). Install speed monitors and intersection upgrades in hamlet areas to slow traffic in the hamlet area to slow traffic. Require the Town Highway Superintendent to review new curb cuts when building takes place on Town roads. **Maintain the Town's dirt roads** as an important element contributing to rural character. However, continue to maintain these and provide dust control.

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5. Improve **communications** between the Town and residents/landowners with newsletters, kiosks, website upgrades, and welcome packets for newcomers. Advertise the Canaan updated website when completed.

6. Develop a **5-year capital improvement plan** to create a budget and operations management plan for road maintenance and highway department needs, Stoddard Park and other Town properties.

7. To **increase emergency service volunteerism**, develop recruitment strategies (community awareness campaign and targeted outreach), offer payment for training, community recognition, work regionally to share services, and public education about the importance of volunteering for these services.

8. Promote the availability of the existing **senior service home maintenance and errands** program available through the County and not-for-profits.

9. Publish a **senior resource guide** and improve communication about services.

10. Provide quality infrastructure, including **supporting alternative modes of transportation** (pedestrians, bicyclists, etc.) while retaining the rural character of the town. Coordinate with Columbia County and NYSDOT for regional pedestrian and bicycle networks.

11. Continue to **implement measures to slow traffic** ~~calming measures~~ consistent with the **Town's rural character and** New York State Department of Transportation design standards through planning and zoning efforts. Encourage traffic ~~slowing-calming~~ designs and improved street lighting in the village and at rural intersections. Use radar traffic speed monitoring devices to enforce speed limits, and work with law enforcement to monitor and enforce traffic laws.

12. Ensure **adequate staff, training, and equipment** are available to maintain a safe town road system.



Slowing traffic in rural areas can include use of speeding monitoring signs, tree-lined streets, landscaping that narrows the visual field, pavement markings, or even mini-

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13. Seek **funding for and leverage County and State-level opportunities** to ensure the Town receives all available funding and studies best practices for providing alternative transportation in Canaan.

14. **Improve visibility and signage** for areas with frequent rural transportation activity.

15. Continue to **implement road-related climate smart watershed activities** and work with funding partners, e.g., Trout Unlimited culvert replacement program.



16. Promote **best practices to manage stormwater runoff** by using natural hydrologic processes.

17. Promote existing County-level services such as Head Start, weatherization assistance, energy audits through organizations such as Columbia Opportunities and Community Action.

18. When zoning is updated, also review and update code enforcement procedures and building permit time lines.

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## Theme 6. Governance & Implementation

**Goal:** Foster Broad Participation in Town Government. Promote open, transparent local government through communication, community engagement, and broad representation on boards and committees. Build connections between full-time and part-time residents, newcomers, and long-timers through welcoming events and other opportunities.

### Theme 6 Programmatic Strategies

1. Host **listening sessions, forums, and workshops** to build trust and civility in local discourse. Ensure that local government communicates effectively and remains responsive, fiscally responsible, and forward-thinking in meeting the needs and safety of Canaan residents.

Explore **shared services with neighboring towns** for emergency coverage and cost efficiency.

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2. **Continue to stream and record board meetings** so residents can watch them on their own time, and use **text and social media alerts** (Facebook, Instagram, Nextdoor, or services such as Granicus), and to **publicize these services**.

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3. Consider holding an **annual Town Hall meeting** to involve community members.

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4. **Create a Communications Committee** that includes representatives of youth and seniors to improve dialogue between the board and residents. Support and enhance public communication through the website, social media, etc. This could include coordination to enable the town community and volunteer organizations to advertise events, volunteer needs, donations, etc., on the Town's social media platforms and promote the dissemination of information to the community at large.

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5. **Review and revise policies and procedures within the Town.** Update the Policy and Procedures manual, post it online, and make it available to all employees, elected officials, appointees, and volunteers. Establish a regular process for updates.

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6. Continue to **provide support to the Fire and EMS services** contracted with the Town. Implement and staff the Town's Emergency Management Plan.

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7. **Feature local farmers at Community Day.**

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8. **Maintain and staff the current Town of Canaan Emergency Management Plan.** Include promoting access to heating and cooling centers.

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9. *Ensure that all Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals members complete their New York State required 4 hours per year training. Take advantage of existing training activities sponsored by the New York State Department of State, Columbia County, and others for these efforts.*

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## Priority Actions and Implementation Steps

The Implementation Section translates Canaan’s vision and goals into achievable actions. It defines who will lead, who will partner, and how progress will be measured. By identifying implementation steps, regional partners, and mechanisms for monitoring, this section ensures that the Comprehensive Plan remains both practical and proactive—helping the Town of Canaan make informed, coordinated, and forward-looking decisions over the next decade and beyond.

The Implementation Section is one of the most critical components of the Comprehensive Plan. It transforms the plan from a visionary document into a practical, action-oriented guide for the Town’s future. While earlier chapters identify the community’s vision, goals, and recommended strategies, the implementation section answers the question:

*“How do we make these ideas happen?”*

This section lays out specific steps, responsibilities, partners, and timeframes to move the plan’s recommendations into action. It serves as a bridge between planning and doing—helping Town officials, residents, and partner organizations understand their roles in achieving Canaan’s long-term goals.

This Section is intended to be a working guide for the Town Board, Planning Board, committees, and partner organizations. It should be referenced regularly, especially during annual goal-setting, budgeting, and grant application processes, to ensure that day-to-day decisions align with the community’s long-term vision. By using this section as a living management tool—rather than a static chapter—the Town of Canaan can maintain focus, accountability, and measurable progress toward achieving its shared vision for the future.

**As per New York State Town Law 272-a, the Town should conduct a broader review of the Comprehensive Plan to ensure that strategies remain relevant and effective every five years.**

### Overall Implementation Steps

The following Implementation Steps are recommended to successfully carry out this Plan’s goals and strategies. These actions ensure the plan moves from vision to measurable outcomes over the next 10–15 years.

1. Ensure that Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Town Board, and Climate Smart Committee members, and Town staff have paper or digital copies of the plan and understand the role the Plan plays in the Town.
2. Post the plan and all its components on a dedicated page within the Town’s website in a manner that provides easy access to the document, its resources, and its maps.

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3. Establish an oversight and organization framework to build success in Plan implementation.

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2-4. Form a Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee (or broaden the role of an existing body like the Planning Board or Climate Smart Task Force) to coordinate implementation, track progress, and report semi-annually to the Town Board.

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3-5. Assign champions or lead entities to each goal area (e.g., land use, housing, economic development, recreation, infrastructure) to ensure accountability.

4-6. Establish a Housing Committee and begin work with the Columbia County Housing Task Force.

7. Establish a Zoning Review Committee to begin work to amend the zoning and subdivision laws.

5-8. Form a Communications Committee to improve outreach and transparency.



9. Prioritize Immediate Actions to be implemented. This Section offers details on the Comprehensive Plan Committee’s recommendations for priority actions. The Town Board should review these, edit or add to these, and assign specific tasks to appropriate committees or individuals.

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6-10. Begin implementation with “early wins” to build momentum and public support. See the chart below for details on these priorities.

11. Strengthen Intergovernmental and Regional Partnerships to work with the Town as needed.

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7-12. Coordinate with potential partners (see chart below). Work to find common goals among these organizations and cooperate to share expertise and resources.

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13. ~~7-~~ Enhance the Town’s capacity and funding to implement the actions. The Town Board should have implementing committees, staff, individuals, and partners identifying funding needs.

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8-14. Work with a grant writer or team to pursue implementation funds.

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9-15. Apply for grants to fund actions (e.g., NYS Climate Smart Communities, NYS CDBG, DOS, DEC Water Quality Improvement Projects, Parks, Ag & Markets Farmland Protection Implementation Grants).

10-16. Seek technical assistance where needed.

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~~43-15.~~ Establish an ongoing monitoring and reporting process to promote transparency and to maintain the momentum for the projects.

- Ask all those involved to provide Semi-Annual Progress Reports to be presented to the Town Board that summarize actions completed, achievements, budget and funding obtained and needed, and obstacles and course corrections that may be required.
- Work towards a Year 5 review of the full plan and its achievements, and a full Plan update in Year 10.
- Hold at least one public forum annually to gather feedback and highlight progress.
- Use the Town’s website to keep the public informed and engaged.

### Potential Partners

Successful implementation of the Town of Canaan Comprehensive Plan depends not only on local commitment but also on the strength of the partnerships that the Town cultivates. Planning is, by nature, a collaborative process—one that extends beyond the boundaries of any single level of government. The goals outlined in this Plan touch on many interconnected issues such as land use, housing, agriculture, recreation, transportation, infrastructure, and environmental protection. Achieving these objectives requires coordinated action among a wide network of partners who bring complementary expertise, resources, and authority.

Why are partnerships important? They allow the Town to leverage technical expertise and funding that would otherwise be difficult to access. County, regional, and state agencies can offer specialized knowledge. Working together allows communities to address challenges that cross town lines—such as watershed management, broadband expansion, and emergency services—while also coordinating tourism, agriculture, and open space initiatives that benefit the region as a whole. By participating in countywide and intermunicipal partnerships, Canaan ensures that its voice is represented in larger policy discussions and funding decisions. Collaboration among the Town Board, committees, residents, and local institutions helps ensure that initiatives remain grounded in community values and that implementation benefits from broad participation, transparency, and fostering of civic pride and inclusion. Ultimately, partnerships make the Comprehensive Plan achievable and enduring.

#### Potential Partners Include:

Goal Area	Partner / Organization	Role & Potential Contribution	Type
Land Use & Rural Character	Town Board, Planning Board & ZBA	Local land use regulation updates, SEQR review, plan consistency, oversight	Local
	Columbia County Planning Dept.	Technical assistance for zoning, mapping, SEQR coordination	County

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Goal Area	Partner / Organization	Role & Potential Contribution	Type
	NYS DEC, DOS, Rural Water Association	NRI implementation, stream corridor protection, floodplain & wetlands guidance	State
	Columbia Land Conservancy, Scenic Hudson	Conservation easements, trail creation, farmland, and open space protection	Nonprofit
Housing	Housing Committee (Proposed)	Oversee affordable housing strategies and implementation.	Local
	Columbia County Housing Task Force	Technical assistance and coordination for affordable housing.	County
	NYS Homes & Community Renewal (HCR)	Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and Main Street grants; rehabilitation programs.	State
	Habitat for Humanity, Land Trusts	Affordable housing and rehab programs.	Nonprofit
	Columbia Opportunities and Community Action	They help solve poverty-related problems in Columbia County, including emergency assistance, tax preparation, education and early literacy, and energy assistance.	
Economic Development & Agriculture	HV Agribusiness Dev. Corp (HVADC)	Technical assistance, marketing, and loans for farms & food businesses.	Regional
	Columbia County IDA / CEDC	Small business support, incentives, and infrastructure funding.	County
	CCE, Ag & Markets	Ag education, soil health, and farmland protection programs.	State/Nonprofit
	Local Farms & Markets	On-the-ground implementation of agritourism and local food programs	Local/Private
	Columbia-Greene Workforce, NY (Community Partners)	Job seeker services, training, disability resources, business services, community partners, youth resources.	
Community Life & Recreation	Recreation Committee	Expand programs, events, and park management.	Local
	Local Churches & Civic Groups	Host programs, volunteer engagement, and intergenerational activities.	Local
	NYS OPRHP, Tourism Office	Park development grants, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) upgrades, and historic resource funding.	State/County
	Columbia Land Conservancy, Historical Societies	Trails, preservation of historical assets, Canaan history projects, and heritage tourism.	Nonprofit

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Goal Area	Partner / Organization	Role & Potential Contribution	Type
	Adjacent Municipalities	Trails, and recreational opportunities that would benefit and cross over town boundaries	Local Government
Infrastructure & Services	Highway Dept., Emergency Services  Local Fire Depts.	Road safety, maintenance, and capital planning, and fire safety.	Local
	Columbia County DPW, Office for Aging	Coordination for County road improvements and senior transportation.	County
	NYS DOT, DPS, NYSERDA	Traffic safety, broadband, and renewable energy funding.	State
	Trout Unlimited, ISPs, Utilities	Stream restoration, broadband, and energy projects.	Nonprofit/Private
Governance & Engagement	Town Board, Committees, Task Force	Policy leadership, coordination, and communications.	Local
	County Climate Smart Coalition	Regional coordination on sustainability and grant programs.	County/Regional
	NYS DOS (Shared Services Grants)	Local government efficiency and shared services funding.	State
	Nonprofits & Volunteer Groups	Civic engagement, community events, and outreach.	Local/Nonprofit

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## Priority Actions

In addition to the overall steps outlined above, the Comprehensive Plan Committee has recommended several specific actions considered to be priorities. Those priorities are listed below in the following table, along with identification of the responsible party and key partners to help implement them. These represent early priorities and “quick wins” that can build momentum and demonstrate visible progress. Other actions included in this plan may require additional planning, funding, or coordination with regional or state agencies and will move up in importance as the implementation process continues.

For each topic, additional space is included for the Town Board to add additional priority actions it has identified.

Topic	Priority Action Recommended by the Comprehensive Plan Committee	Lead Responsibility With Town Board	Key Partners
<b>Land Use &amp; Rural Character</b>			
Item 1 and Item 1 in Housing, below	Amend zoning and subdivision laws. Phase these amendments with Phase 1 being oriented to compliance and consistency with NYS Town Law. Phase 2 should include consideration of the options outlined in #1, a – aa. Of critical importance for Phase 2 is <b>consideration of</b> the establishment of the proposed new Hamlet at the Berkshire Farms campus area, the use of conservation subdivisions, the use of conservation and agricultural overlays, <b>address deforestation of land especially on steep grades and in floodzones</b> , and updates to the Zoning code’s Use Table and Dimensions Table to address housing needs.	Zoning Rewrite Committee	Town Attorney, other consultants
Item 8	<b>Consider use of the Adopt the</b> New York State Stretch Energy Code.	Town Board	Code Enforcement Officer, Planning Board, Town Attorney, and other consultants
Item 10	Implement recommendations from the Town’s Climate Smart Action and Resiliency Plan (CARP).	Town Board	Climate Smart Committee
Item 1 u	<b>Consider updating Update</b> the Town’s Solar Law and include regulations for battery storage facilities	Town Board	Planning Board, Town Attorney, other consultants
Other Priorities			

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Topic	Priority Action Recommended by the Comprehensive Plan Committee	Lead Responsibility With Town Board	Key Partners
<b>Housing</b>			
Item 1	Consider updating <del>Update</del> zoning to remove the 5-acre requirement for having accessory dwelling units.	Planning Board or Zoning Rewrite Committee	Town Attorney, other consultants
Item 4	Encourage the reuse of underutilized existing structures for new housing opportunities.	Housing Committee	Economic Development Group, Area Real Estate Agents
Items 2, 5, and 8  Strategies related to emphasis on hamlet and mixed uses meet Economic Development Needs	Update zoning to <del>incorporate address</del> housing-oriented land use policies, including <del>consideration to</del> allowing for more housing types, clarifying that manufactured houses <del>shouldare to</del> be treated the same as all single-family houses, and establishing hamlet districts (including the Berkshire Farm Hamlet District) with hamlet-style mixed uses and <del>higher density</del> smaller lots to promote housing opportunities.	Rewrite Committee	Planning Board, Town Attorney, other consultants
Other Priorities			
<b>Economic Development &amp; Agriculture</b>			
Item 4 and 6	Update zoning <del>and consider to</del> removing allowance for large hotels (greater than 16 rooms) in the Use Table; update to establish commercial design standards.	Town Board	Planning Board, Town Attorney, other consultants
Item 1	Promote agricultural activities as suggested in items 1a – e.		
Other Priorities			
<b>Community Life &amp; Recreation</b>			
Item 1 and Item 2	Broaden the mission of the Recreation Committee and expand recreational offerings. Review the adequacy of the Town's recreational facilities and establish opportunities for improvements.	Recreation Committee and Town Board	Senior Citizens Group  Youth Group  Church

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Topic	Priority Action Recommended by the Comprehensive Plan Committee	Lead Responsibility With Town Board	Key Partners
Item 2	Reinvest in Stoddard Park with enhanced offerings and facilities.	Recreation Committee and Town Board	Highway Department Community orgs
Item 8	<b>Increase Address</b> public access to Queechy Lake.	Town Board	Recreation Committee
Item 6	Update the Town’s website to convey more information about recreational opportunities.	Town Board	Website manager
Item 4	Evaluate establishing an official Town Community Center in existing locations.		
Other Priorities			
<b>Infrastructure &amp; Services</b>			
Item 7	Develop a 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan.	Town Board	Highway Department  All other Town departments, boards, and staff  Town Engineer, Consultants as needed
Item 1	Continue to expand broadband and cell coverage	Town Board	Columbia County
Item 3	Connect residents to existing volunteer driver networks and promote the NE Transportation Loop	Town Board	County Senior Services
Item 5	Improve communications between the Town and residents	Town Board	Communications Committee
Other Priorities			
<b>Governance &amp; Implementation</b>			
Item 2	Explore shared services with neighboring towns	Town Board	Columbia County Adjacent Towns
Item 4	Hold an annual Town Hall Meeting to involve the community	Town Board	Town Clerk

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Topic	Priority Action Recommended by the Comprehensive Plan Committee	Lead Responsibility With Town Board	Key Partners
Item 5	Coordinate town, community and volunteer organizations to promote and disseminate information about events, needs, etc.	Town Board	Communications Committee Website manager
Item 6	Review and revise policy and procedure manuals for employees and officials	Town Board	Planning Board Chair ZBA Chair Committee Chairs
Other Priorities			

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## Resources and Documentation Section

This section of the plan contains a variety of resources the Town can use as it implements this Comprehensive Plan. It includes a detailed profile and inventory of the Town, which documents current conditions of features, demographics, economics, housing, infrastructure, services, and other elements of Canaan. The Profile also presents the environmental sensitivity analysis and the buildout analysis that were conducted as part of the planning process to aid in the understanding of current conditions in Canaan. Other resources include a detailed accounting of the public survey results and a full listing of all elements identified in the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats analysis. Finally, a detailed listing of partners the Town can work with is offered for future use.

## Resource 1: A Profile and Inventory of the Town of Canaan

### Regional Setting

The Town of Canaan is located in eastern Columbia County, New York, along the state’s border with Massachusetts. Situated within the Taconic Mountains and the northern Berkshire foothills, Canaan’s landscape is defined by rolling hills, forested ridges, and scenic rural valleys. This topography, combined with a mix of open farmland and woodlands, gives the town a pastoral and natural character that reflects its agricultural roots and low-density settlement patterns.

Canaan occupies a strategic position within the broader northeastern New York and western New England region. It is bisected by major transportation routes, including Interstate 90, which links Albany to the west and the Massachusetts Turnpike to the east. New York State Route 295 also runs through the town, connecting it to neighboring communities such as East Chatham and the village of Chatham to the west, and continuing eastward to the Massachusetts state line. This makes Canaan a gateway between the Capital District and the Berkshires. The town is bordered by several other rural communities, including New Lebanon to the north, Chatham to the west, Austerlitz to the south, and Hancock, Massachusetts to the east.

Regionally, Canaan is part of the Upper Hudson Valley and lies within commuting distance of Albany and Pittsfield, Massachusetts, offering residents access to broader employment, educational, and cultural opportunities. At the same time, it is within the heart of the Hudson Valley’s second-home and tourism economy, drawing visitors and seasonal residents who are attracted to its quiet landscapes, historical character, and recreational opportunities.

### History of the Town of Canaan

The Town of Canaan has a rich and layered history that stretches back to the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. The area was first settled by Europeans around 1750, when the Ford family established itself in the Red Rock section of what would become Canaan. The same year saw the founding of a Baptist church on Macedonia Road, highlighting the early religious foundation.

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In 1758, Native American land transactions significantly shaped the region’s development. The Stockbridge Indians of Connecticut conveyed a six-mile-square tract of land to settlers, led by Asa Douglas. This transfer was formalized in 1759 with New York colonial authorities, and the name “New Canaan” began to appear in records, a nod to Canaan, Connecticut—the settlers’ place of origin.

The area grew steadily through the 1760s and 1770s with an influx of families from Connecticut and the establishment of key infrastructure like mills, taverns, and cemeteries. In 1772, Canaan was officially organized as the “King’s District,” a subdivision of Albany County. Revolutionary fervor was strong; on June 24, 1776, local leaders met at William Warner’s home and voted unanimously to support American independence from Great Britain.

After the Revolution, Canaan continued to grow. In 1786, the New York State Legislature created Columbia County, incorporating the King’s District, and in 1788, the district was officially renamed the

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Town of Canaan. The town quickly became the most populous in Columbia County, with the 1790 census recording 6,692 residents.

Throughout the 1<sup>st</sup> century, Canaan developed as a rural hub of commerce, religion, and education. Numerous churches were founded, including Baptist, Congregational, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Christian congregations. The town also took an early interest in public education, forming several school districts by the late 1700s. In 1838, the Hudson and Berkshire Railroad brought new economic opportunities and connected Canaan more directly with surrounding regions.

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Canaan's contribution to American history includes cultural milestones as well. Susan Warner, a Canaan resident, authored *The Wide, Wide World* in 1850, America's first best-selling novel, and *Queechey* in 1852, bringing about Queechey Lake as a tourist destination. She also wrote the lyrics to the well-known hymn "Jesus Loves Me."

The 2<sup>nd</sup> century brought continued evolution. Canaan became a summer destination, especially around Queechey Lake, where hotels, pavilions, and summer cottages served vacationers during the 1920s. Infrastructure development included the creation of the Canaan Fire Protective Association in 1913 and the arrival of electricity in 1914. The Berkshire Spur of the New York State Thruway opened in 1957, following traditional east-west travel routes through town and marking Canaan's integration into the state's modern transportation network.

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As the town modernized, it retained its historical legacy. The Canaan Historical Society was chartered in 1963, and events like the town's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2009 and annual Community Days at Stoddard Field (beginning in 2023) continue to celebrate its heritage.

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## Planning Efforts in Canaan

### 2003 Strategic Plan

A previously adopted Strategic Plan was accepted but not approved in October 2003. It included background information characterizing the landscape at the time, goals/objectives, plans for preservation of agriculture/open space, economic development, housing, and community services. The plan also contains documents regarding the state of Queechey Lake and its respective club management plan. Established goals from the 2003 plan include:

**Historic Preservation:** Continue to preserve and protect historical works within the town with the assistance of residents. Make local history available to the public and establish historical districts for recognition.

**Agricultural & Open Space Preservation:** Ensure support for the protection of farmers and encourage programs to support the expansion and preservation of agriculture. Similarly, they provide opportunities for landowners to preserve land and establish open areas for hunting, recreation, and wildlife.

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**Environmental Conservation:** To provide the leadership and citizens of Canaan with strategies to protect and promote natural resources that define the “rural character” of our community and enhance our quality of life.

**Economic Development:** Revitalize organic and niche farming in Canaan while developing around exit B-3 without intrusion on the rural character of Canaan. Develop a designated Canaan Town Center and promote tourism-related businesses.

**Housing:** Examine the potential for affordable housing in Canaan but altogether control housing development through mechanisms to preserve the rural character of Canaan,

**Community Services/Outreach:** Enhance outreach to residents and improve relationships with the town. Overall, enhance community services from both the Town and other organizations and focus on creating a sense of community.

### Canaan Climate Smart Task Force

In April 2023, the Town of Canaan, NY, achieved Bronze certification through New York State’s *Climate Smart Communities (CSC)* program, a significant milestone that reflects the town’s commitment to environmental responsibility and resilience. This designation is more than a symbolic gesture; it positions climate action as a core principle of Canaan’s municipal planning and governance, directly influencing land use, infrastructure, and community development decisions.

The *Climate Smart Communities* program, administered by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, supports local governments in their efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, adapt to a changing climate, and build more sustainable communities. Canaan’s certification recognizes its systematic, measurable steps in areas such as:

- Energy audits and lighting upgrades for public buildings
- Greenhouse gas inventories for municipal operations and the broader community
- Installation of EV charging stations
- Promotion of residential composting and solar adoption
- Public engagement through events and social media
- Natural Resource Inventory (NRI) for informed land use planning

### Demographics

Demographic and socioeconomic data are critical to a comprehensive plan. Demographics provide information about the people who live in the community and help to identify needs that can be addressed in the plan.

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## Population

As of 2024, an estimated 1,553 residents lived in the Town of Canaan (**Table 1**). With peak growth occurring in the 1960s and '70s, the Town's population has followed a downward trend over the last 25 years. In 1860, Canaan's population was 2,197, and Columbia County's was 47,172. According to the decennial Census, the number of residents in Canaan declined 13.7% between 2000 and 2020. Columbia County also lost population, but at a much lower rate (2.4%). Of neighboring townships, Austerlitz and New Lebanon experienced increases of 11.8% and 2.4%, respectively, while Chatham's population declined 2.4% over the 20-year period.

**Canaan's population has declined 15% over the last 25 years**

	Town of Canaan		Columbia County	
	Count	% Change	Count	% Change
1960	1,272	-	47,322	
1970	1,472	15.7%	51,519	8.9%
1980	1,654	12.4%	59,487	15.5%
1990	1,773	7.2%	62,982	5.9%
2000	1,820	2.7%	63,094	0.2%
2010	1,710	-6.0%	63,096	0.0%
2020	1,570	-8.2%	61,570	-2.4%
Net Change, 2000-20	250	-13.7%	-1,524	-2.4%
2024 (estimate)	1,553		61,209	
2029 (projection)	1,539	-0.9%	60,660	-0.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau and ESRI Business Analyst (estimates and projections)

## Race/Ethnicity

**Canaan residents are predominantly white and non-Hispanic**

Canaan has a high level of homogeneity; 89.9% of residents are white. Other races are much less common, with individuals of two or more races comprising 5.9% of the population, Asian/Pacific Islander residents comprising 1.2%, and Black/African American making up 1.0%. About 4% of people in Canaan and 6% of those in Columbia County are of Hispanic origin, who may be of any race.

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## Household Size

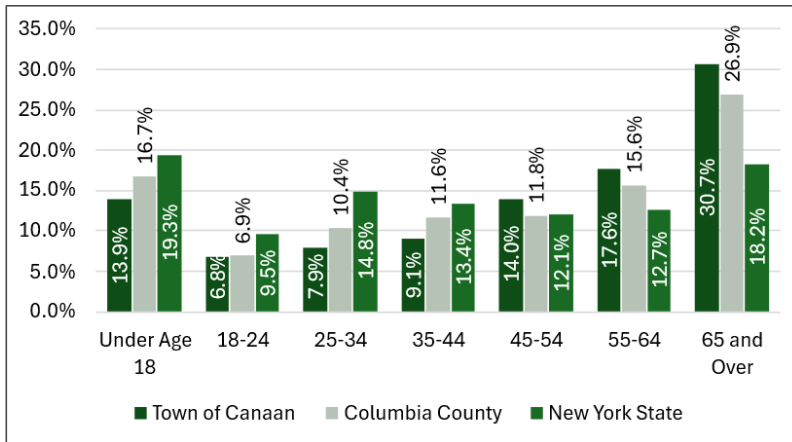
Despite the loss of population, the number of households in the Town of Canaan has increased somewhat due to a reduction in the size of households. Household sizes have been shrinking for decades, a consequence of growth in single-parent households and people living alone. As **Table 2** shows, the average household in Canaan in 2024 was 2.08 persons, lower than the averages in Columbia County (2.21) and New York State (2.51). Smaller household sizes could translate into greater demand for smaller homes and the need for rental housing suitable for older residents who no longer want or need a large family home.

	Town of Canaan	Columbia County	New York State
2010	2.35	2.35	2.57
2020	2.15	2.25	2.54
2024 (est)	2.08	2.21	2.51
2029 (proj.)	2.01	2.15	2.47
Change, 2010-20	-8.5%	-4.3%	-1.2%
Change, 2024-29	-3.4%	-1.7%	-1.6%

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau and ESRI Business Analyst (estimates and projections)*

## Age Distribution

With a median age of 54.0, Canaan’s population is substantially older than that of Columbia County (49.0) and New York State (39.6). The difference is driven by the relatively small proportion (13.9%) of children under age 18, combined with a comparatively large share of residents (30.7%) in the 65-and-older age cohort in the Town (**Figure 1**). Implications could include lower school enrollments and increasing demand for senior housing, assisted living, home health care, and medical care.



**Figure 1. Population by Age Cohort, 2024 Estimates**

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

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Another issue: Canaan has very small share (and number) of residents in the 25-34 and 35-44 age cohorts, possibly due to the lack of affordable housing options. This could lead to a long-term decline in population unless the Town is able to attract new residents from the younger generations (e.g., Millennials, born 1981 to 1998).

### Income

The median household income in Canaan is estimated at \$111,786, compared to \$88,335 in Columbia County. Approximately 54% of households in the Town have incomes of \$100,000 or more (**Figure 2**), a much larger proportion than in the County (44.9%) or state (42.9%). Nevertheless, one in five households in Canaan earns less than \$50,000 annually, and they may have difficulty with the cost of housing in the Town (see Housing chapter).

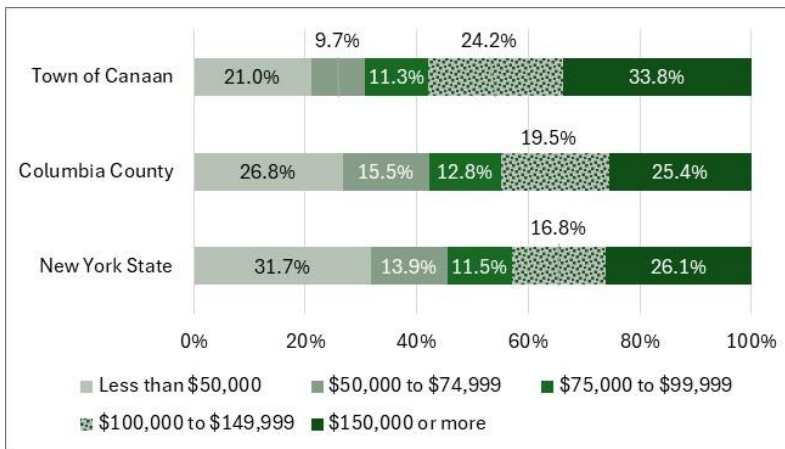


Figure 2. Households by Income, 2024 Estimates

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

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## Educational Attainment

Canaan residents overall are much more educated than those in Columbia County and New York State. Approximately 96% of individuals aged 25 and older have graduated from school or earned a GED, while 50.4% have earned a bachelor's degree or higher; nearly 30% have a graduate or professional degree.

**50% of Canaan residents aged 25 and over have a bachelor's degree or higher**

## Housing

A diverse, high-quality housing stock is necessary to meet the needs of existing and new residents and employees in a community. Diversity can be viewed in terms of building type, cost, and tenure (ownership and rental), among other characteristics. Housing should be available for people of all income ranges and in all stages of life.

**Table 3** below shows the total number of housing units in the Town of Canaan over a 20-year period. Between 2000 and 2020, the overall supply of housing in the town increased by 12%, with a net gain of 116 units. Most of these additional units were owner-occupied; in fact, the number of rental units in Canaan hardly changed at all.

**The rental housing supply in Canaan has not grown in recent years**

The number of vacant housing units reported in the decennial census increased sharply from 2000 to 2010 but receded during the subsequent decade. In 2020, the Census Bureau classified more than three-quarters of the vacant units in Canaan as seasonal.

	2000		2010		2020	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>Total Housing Units</b>	<b>970</b>		<b>1,120</b>		<b>1,086</b>	
Occupied Units	643	66.3%	673	60.1%	730	67.2%
Owner-Occupied	534	83.0%	570	84.7%	624	85.5%
Renter-Occupied	109	17.0%	103	15.3%	106	14.5%
Vacant Units	327	33.7%	447	39.9%	356	32.8%

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census.*

## Housing Characteristics

Detailed data on housing in the Town of Canaan is available from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS). According to the latest five-year estimates (2019-23) from the ACS, 84% of households in Canaan own their homes, while 16% are renters.

**93% of all housing units in the Town are single-family homes**

Housing options in Canaan are relatively limited. Most of the housing supply is comprised of single-family dwellings, which account for 93% of all units in the Town (**Figure 3**). Multifamily structures account for about 5%, while mobile homes make up less than 2% of the units. Compared to Canaan, Columbia County has a much larger proportion of multifamily housing (16.5%), with most of these units in smaller,

two- to four-family residences. Multifamily housing tends to be more affordable to recent entrants to the labor force and young families. It is also a good alternative for seniors looking to downsize.

About 72% of the housing stock in Canaan was built before 1980. The median year of construction for housing is 1951 in the Town and 1965 in the County. Over 46% of housing units in Canaan are in buildings constructed prior to 1940. Because older homes are generally more costly to maintain and require significant capital investments to update, they do not appeal to all buyers.

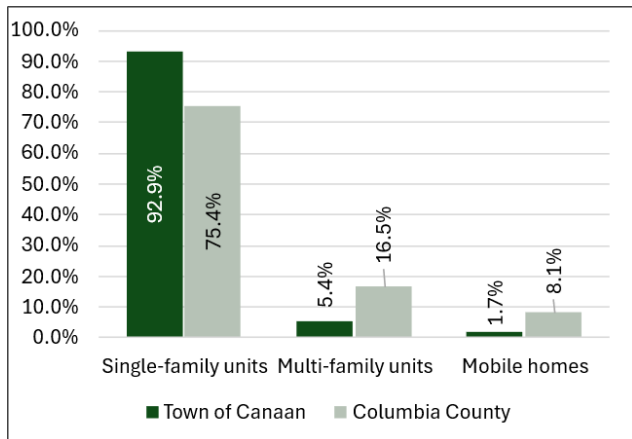


Figure 2. Housing Units by Type

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2019-23 Five-Year Estimates

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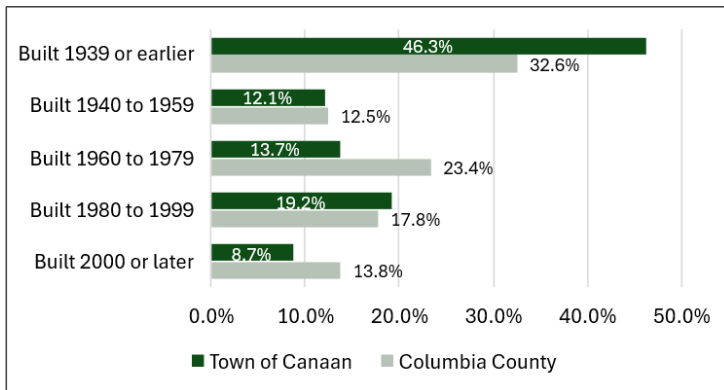


Figure 3. Housing Units by Year Structure Built

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2019-23 Five-Year Estimates

### Housing Values

Housing values generally reflect both the age and condition of housing. The ACS estimated median value of owner-occupied housing in the Town of Canaan is \$309,800, well below the County median of \$362,400. About 17% of the homes in Canaan, compared to 25% of homes in the County, are valued at less than \$200,000 (Figure 5).

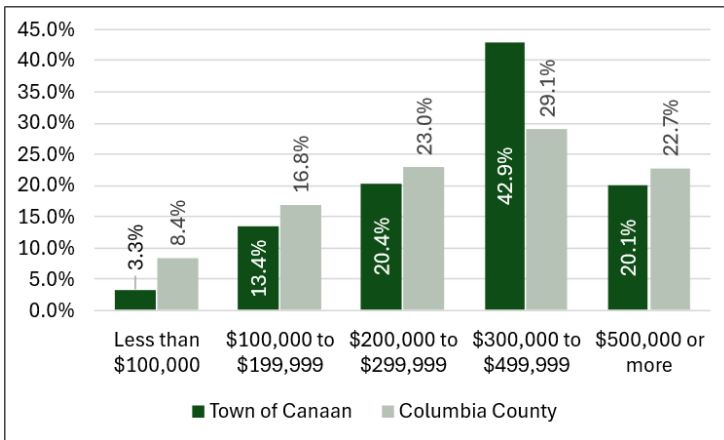


Figure 4. Owner-Occupied Housing Units by Estimated Value

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Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2019-23 Five-Year Estimates

It is important to note that the ACS housing value is an estimate of what the home would sell for if it were for sale. Residential sale prices are a more accurate measure of market values. Data on the median prices associated with the arm’s length home sales from 2019 through 2024 is presented in **Figure 6**. (“Arm’s length” refers to real estate transactions in which buyers and sellers act independently and in their own interest, without undue pressure on either party.)

According to the data, 203 homes in Canaan changed hands over the period, with a total sales volume of \$115.6 million. Sales transactions peaked in 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic caused people to flee densely populated urban locations. This resulted in upward pressure on the cost of housing. The median selling price of a home in Canaan over the five-year period was \$405,000, but on an annual basis, the median rose from \$247,900 in 2019 to \$605,000 in 2023, declining slightly to \$590,000 the following year. The median price was higher in the Town than countywide in each of the years except 2019.

More than half of the homebuyers listed addresses in Canaan, East Chatham, and other locations within Columbia County. Notably, 18.2% of the buyers were from New York City, while 16.3% had out-of-state addresses, suggesting that the Town of Canaan is a popular second home location (although some of these buyers may have purchased a home in Canaan as a primary residence). The remaining buyers listed addresses in other communities in New York State.

**Nearly 35% of Canaan homebuyers between 2019 and 2024 were from New York City or out of state**

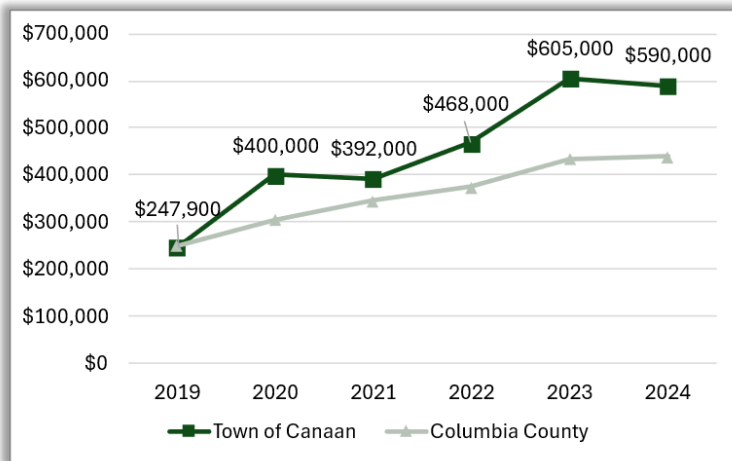


Figure 5. Median Home Sales Prices, 2019-24

Source: NYS Office of Real Property Tax Services, Salesweb

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## Housing Affordability

A standard measure of affordability looks at how much households spend on housing relative to their income. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines a household that spends more than 30% of its gross income on monthly housing expenses as *cost burdened*. The greater the proportion of income spent on housing costs, the less households have available for other necessities like food, childcare, and transportation.

**33% of renter households in Canaan spend more than 30% of their income on monthly housing expenses**

The Census Bureau defines the gross rent as the contract rent for the unit plus the estimated average monthly cost of utilities (electricity, natural gas, water, sewer) and fuel if the renter pays these. According to the ACS, the median gross rent in Canaan is \$1,438, well above the Columbia County median of \$1,199. This could be attributed to the limited number of rental units in the Town; rent levels in the County may be more competitive because it has a much larger supply of apartments. About a third of all

renter households in the Town of Canaan are characterized as cost burdened.

Homeowners tend to experience affordability challenges less than renters; this is because most lenders will not issue a mortgage that consumes more than 30% of the borrower's income. Nevertheless, the ACS data show that about a quarter of Canaan homeowners are cost burdened.

## Residential Building Permits

Data from the U.S. Census Bureau's Building Permits Survey indicates that there has not been much housing construction in the Town of Canaan in recent years (**Figure 7**). Between 2013 and 2023, the Town issued residential permits for the construction of 24 housing units, all of which were single-family structures. No new multifamily housing has been built in Canaan since 2009. It is important to note that while the number of approved building permits is an indicator of future construction, not all permits result in new development.

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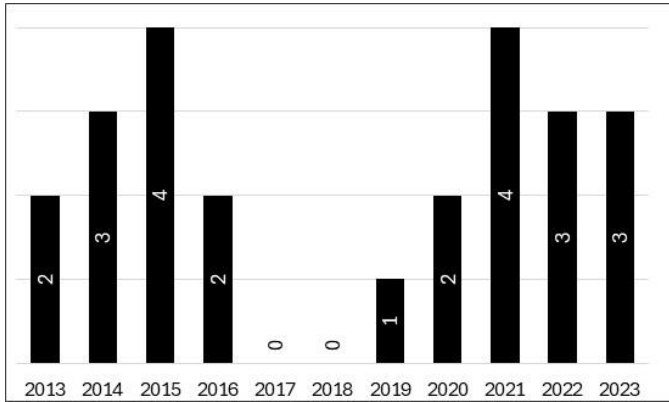


Figure 7. Residential Building Permits Issued, 2013-23

Source: HUD User SOCDS Building Permits Database

### Economic Characteristics

The Town of Canaan is in the northeastern part of Columbia County adjacent to the Massachusetts state line. It is predominantly a residential community, with some commercial establishments (e.g., restaurants, gas stations, a bed-and-breakfast, small retail and service businesses). From an economic standpoint, one of Canaan’s key assets is its location along I-90 corridor, which provides easy access to and from the Capital Region and western Massachusetts via the NYS Thruway and Massachusetts Turnpike. In addition, the Taconic State Parkway, whose northern terminus is in the neighboring Town of Chatham, connects residents, workers, and visitors with the Hudson Valley to the south.

**Canaan’s location along I-90 is an economic asset**

### Resident Workforce

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**25% of residents are employed in the Albany MSA, many in state government**

The Census Bureau’s Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) Program documented a total of 685 Town of Canaan residents who held jobs as of 2022, the most recent year for which data are available. Of these residents, 10.2% also worked in Canaan, while 20.3% worked elsewhere in Columbia County. Nearly 25% were employed in the Albany-Schenectady-Troy Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), especially in Albany County, where many state offices are

located; government, in fact, employed almost 20% of Canaan residents participating in the workforce. Approximately 14.5% of Canaan residents crossed the Massachusetts state line to reach jobs in Berkshire County.

According to the 2019-23 ACS, about 64% of employed workers who live in Canaan drive to work. Nearly 30% work from home, a trend that has grown substantially since the pandemic. The ACS does not differentiate between people who work from home full-time and those who go to their workplaces a few days a week.

Some individuals who work from home are self-employed. Approximately 17% of all households in Canaan reportedly had income from self-employment in the last 12 months, earning an average of \$35,370.

**17% of households in Canaan earn income from self-employment**

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## Employment

The LEHD program reported 362 jobs located in the Town of Canaan in 2022. As shown in **Table 4**, the industries with the highest levels of employment were health care and social assistance (36.5%), construction (24.6%), and retail trade (14.9%). Employment in Canaan is concentrated in the eastern half of the Town along Route 22 and I-90, particularly at the B-3 interchange, as reflected in the map below (**Figure 8**).

Table 4. Employment by Industry in the Town of Canaan	
	Share
Health Care and Social Assistance	36.5%
Construction	24.6%
Retail Trade	14.9%
Manufacturing	6.9%
Government	4.1%
Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation	3.9%
Personal and Repair Services	2.8%
All Other Industries	6.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics

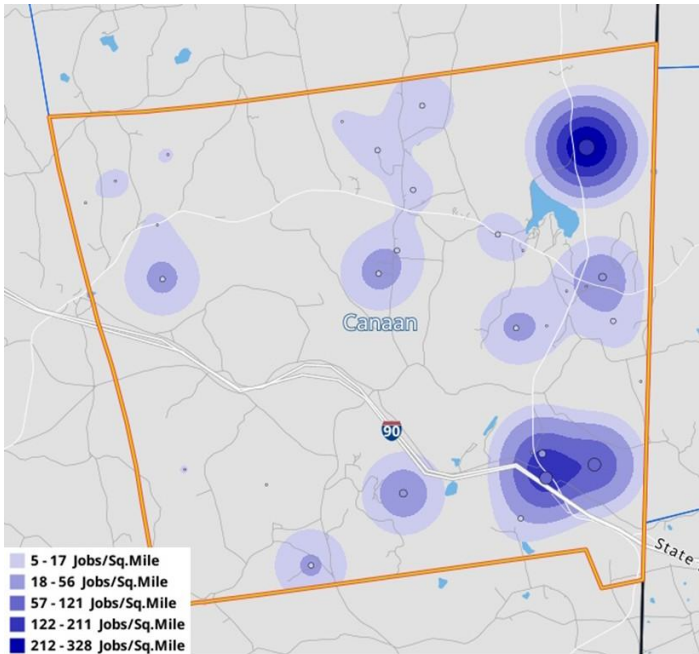


Figure 8. Private Sector Jobs in the Town of Canaan

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-

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Of individuals employed in Canaan, 19.3% also lived in the Town. About 22% of the workers commuted from the counties that comprise the Albany MSA, led by Rensselaer County (10.2%); 20.2% commuted from locations in Columbia County outside of Canaan, and 9.7% from Berkshire County in Massachusetts. The remaining workers came from other counties, which each made up less than 2% or less of commuters.

As a largely residential community, the Town of Canaan experiences a considerable net *outflow* of workers every day (Table 5). Almost 90% of employed residents either commute to workplaces – or work remotely for employers – located outside Canaan. The number of workers that do commute to jobs in the Town (292) is less than half the number that leave (615).

	Count	Share
Employed in Canaan	362	100.0%
Employed in Canaan, but living outside it	292	80.7%
Employed and living in Canaan	70	19.3%
Living in Canaan	685	100.0%
Living in Canaan, but employed outside it	615	89.8%
Living and employed in Canaan	70	10.2%
<b>NET OUTFLOW OF LABOR</b>		<b>-323</b>
<i>Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics</i>		

**There is a mismatch between the types of jobs available locally and the skills and qualifications of residents**

These dynamics suggest a mismatch between the types of jobs that are available locally and the skills and qualifications of residents. Indeed, Census data indicate high levels of educational attainment among the population aged 25 and over in Canaan, with 50.4% having a bachelor’s degree or higher and 29.7% having a graduate or professional degree. (In Columbia County, those figures are 38.0% and 18.0%, respectively, similar to the statewide proportions.) Efforts to diversify the Town’s employment base by creating more professional, higher-wage jobs might help the Town of Canaan retain more workers, reduce the impacts of commuter traffic on area roads, and grow its tax base.

## Environmental Resources and Conditions

### Bedrock Geology

Canaan’s bedrock geology tells a story dating back hundreds of millions of years. Three primary bedrock types dominate the town’s subsurface structure: slate, phyllite, and marble. These rocks formed through intense geological processes, including sedimentation, burial, and metamorphism.

The most abundant of these, comprising about 43% of the town’s bedrock, is a fine-grained metamorphic rock known as Owl Slate. This rock underlies much of western Canaan, including Bristol Hill and The Knobit. Due to its ability to split into thin slabs, slate has historically been valued for roofing and paving materials.

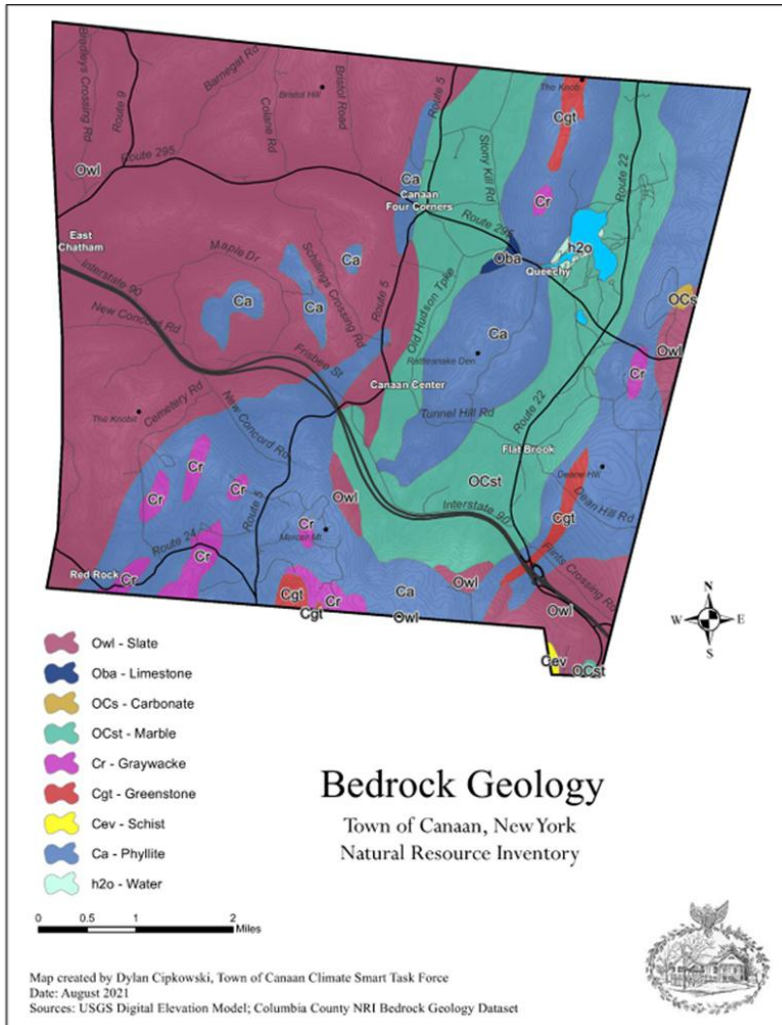
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The second most prevalent rock type, Austerlitz Phyllite, accounts for roughly 33% of Canaan's bedrock. This fine-grained, metamorphic rock forms from the transformation of shale and is intermediate in hardness and density between slate and schist. Both slate and phyllite are relatively acidic in chemistry, influencing the types of vegetation that can grow in areas underlain by them.

In contrast, the Stockbridge Marble, which makes up about 20% of the town's bedrock, is rich in calcium carbonate and originates from ancient sea beds composed of the remains of marine organisms. This marble weathers into nutrient-rich soils with neutral pH, creating ideal conditions for rare and ecologically significant plant communities. The "U"-shaped distribution of Stockbridge Marble in Canaan coincides with the presence of maple-basswood mesic forests and plants like Walking Fern and American Basswood. These communities are generally absent in areas with more acidic bedrock.

Stockbridge Marble also supports the formation of karst landscapes, including caves. These caves provide essential hibernation habitat for bat species of conservation concern and shelter for other wildlife such as porcupines. However, karst aquifers formed in this type of bedrock are vulnerable to contamination, presenting challenges for water quality management.

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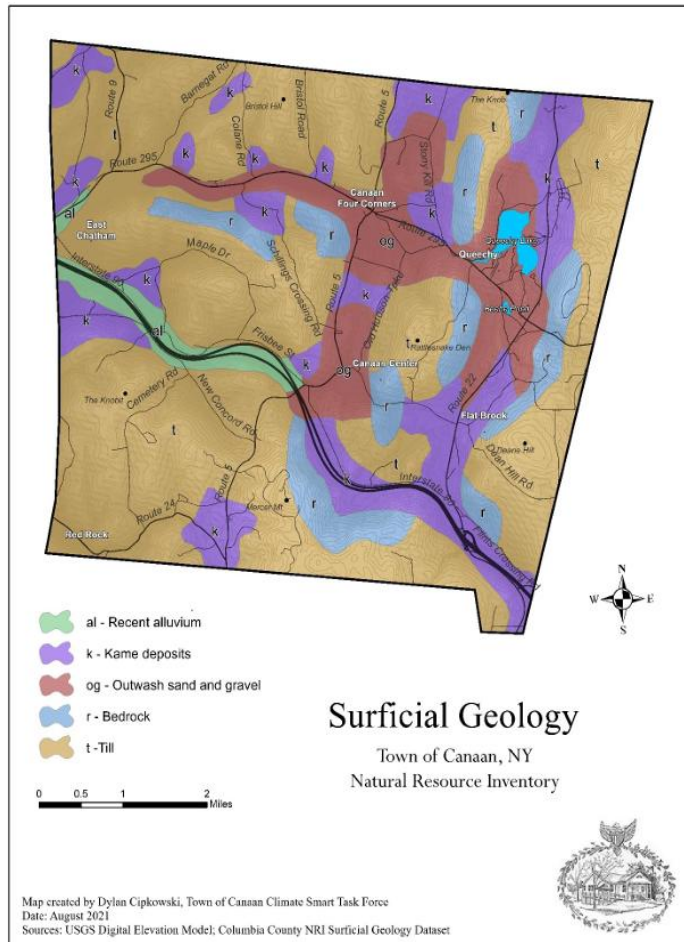
## Surficial Geology

The materials that lie above the bedrock—known as surficial geology—have been largely shaped by glacial activity. Around 17,000–18,000 years ago, the Laurentide Ice Sheet retreated from the region, depositing an unsorted mixture of rocks, gravel, and sediments called glacial till, which now dominates much of the town.

Other glacial features include kame deposits, which formed from meltwater streams within the ice sheet, and glacial outwash, found in valleys such as those surrounding Queechy Lake and Beebe Pond. Outwash consists of well-sorted sands and gravel deposited by glacial meltwater streams. These outwash plains contrast with alluvial deposits—sorted silts, sands, and gravels deposited by post-glacial streams—found in low-lying areas, particularly along I-90 and Route 295. These deposits contribute to the town's most fertile agricultural soils.

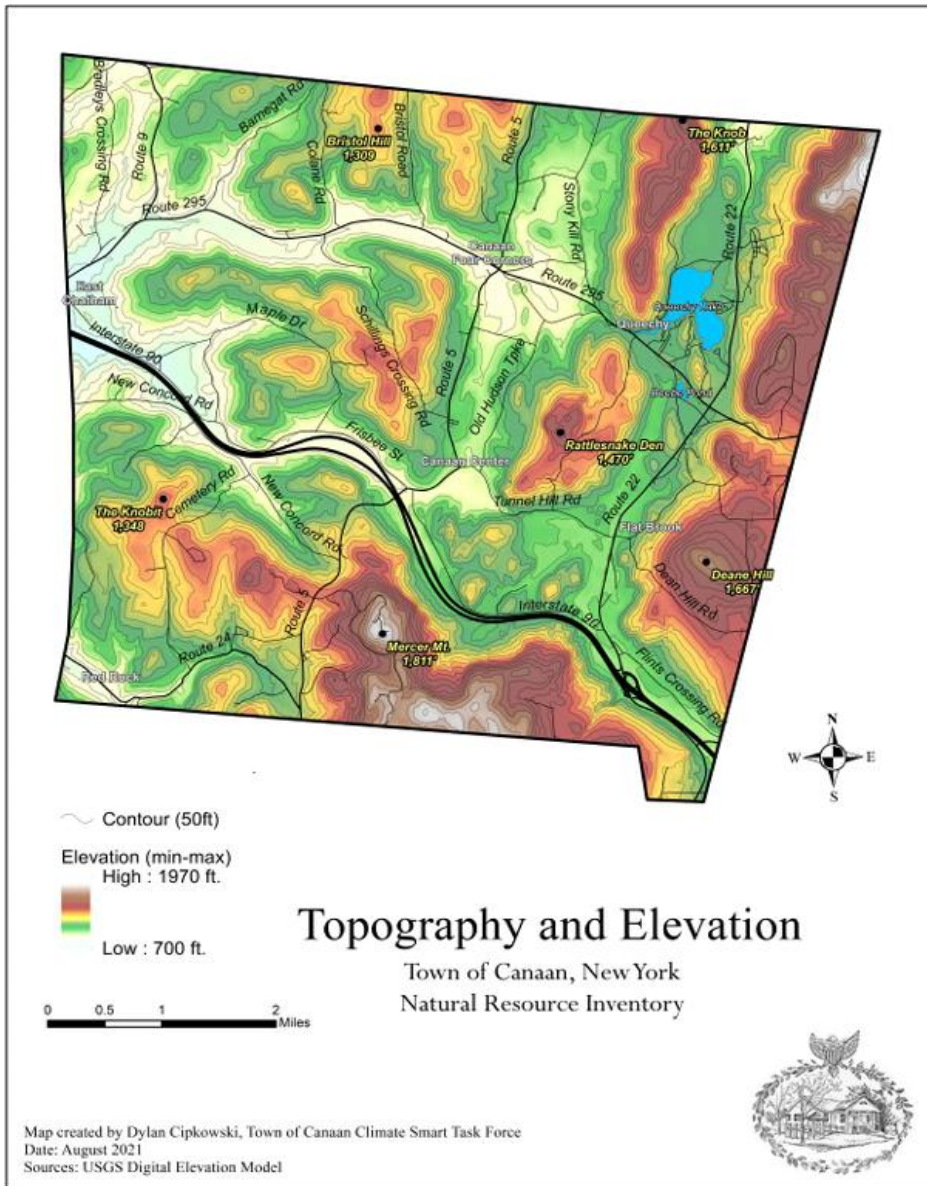
## Topography

Canaan lies within the Taconic Mountains and their associated Slate Hills—an extension of the greater Appalachian Range that runs north-south through eastern New York. The town's eastern boundary is crowned by a high ridge that includes the shoulder of Perry Peak, which rises to 1,970 feet, making it one of the highest elevations in Columbia County. Other named hills—Mercer Mountain (1,811'), The Knob (1,611'), Rattlesnake Den (1,470'), and Bristol Hill (1,309')—are scattered across the town's southern and western portions, beautifying the landscape with rises and offering expansive views of the surrounding



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countryside. These elevation changes shape Canaan's vistas and rural character, where forested highlands fall away into rolling valleys and wetlands. The town's topography isn't just scenic, it has



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functional and ecological consequences, influencing water flow, soil stability, biodiversity, and development patterns.

### Historical Land Use

In the 1<sup>9</sup>th century, when Canaan was at its agricultural peak, the topography played a major role in determining how the land was used. The steep, rocky hillsides were often unsuitable for crops but ideal for sheep grazing, which supported the booming wool industry of the time. As a result, stone walls—still visible in today’s forests—crisscross the hillsides, remnants of pastures and field divisions long reclaimed by forest.

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Lowlands and valleys, with gentler slopes and deeper soils, were used for hayfields, cropland, and homesteads. Many of these areas remain open or are still farmed today, reflecting how topography continues to guide land-use decisions.

### Elevation and Ecology

Topography directly influences the distribution of natural communities and sensitive habitats in Canaan. For example, one of the town’s ridgelines is home to a beech-maple mesic forest, a forest type typically found in cooler, northern climates. Its presence in Canaan is unusual and ecologically significant, made possible by the high elevation, north-facing slopes, and specific climatic conditions found on The Knob and its surrounding ridge.

Steep slopes—defined as having a gradient of 15% or more—are another critical topographic feature. These slopes affect where roads, buildings, and infrastructure can be safely developed. Improper disturbance of steep slopes can lead to soil erosion, stream sedimentation, and instability, with lasting impacts on both ecosystems and neighboring properties. Additionally, the disruption of these slopes can degrade scenic views and rural character, which are key qualities of life in Canaan.

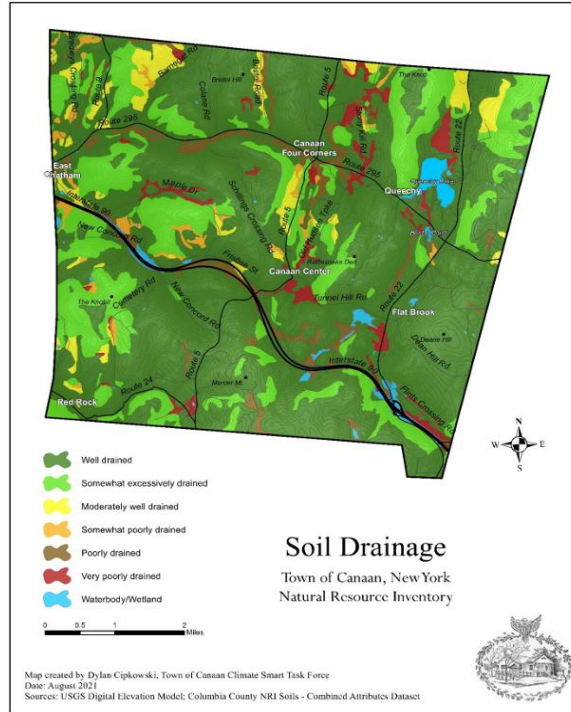
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## Soils

### Drainage and Land Suitability

Soil drainage is one of the most important characteristics for both ecological health and land-use planning. In Canaan, drainage varies widely depending on slope, parent material, and elevation. On steep ridges and upper slopes, soils tend to be well-drained, thin, and prone to erosion if disturbed. These areas support northern hardwood forests and are generally unsuitable for intensive agriculture or development without significant modification.

In valleys and lowlands, soils are often poorly or very poorly drained, particularly near wetlands, streams, and floodplains. These soils retain water for longer periods, making them ecologically rich but challenging for construction or conventional farming. Such areas are important for wetland habitats, groundwater recharge, and flood mitigation—functions that make them valuable not only ecologically but also for climate resilience.



Despite its hilly terrain, Canaan has pockets of prime agricultural soil, particularly where glacial outwash and alluvial deposits are found. These areas are located in the western and central valleys, including parts of East Chatham and the corridor along Route 295 have deeper, fertile soils ideal for growing crops and hay or for grazing livestock. Historically, these were the heart of Canaan’s farming community, and they continue to be important for local agriculture today.

The Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) process, used by Columbia County’s Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan, has identified several parcels in Canaan as “priority farmland” based on soil

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quality, water access, and historical significance. Protecting these soils from development is critical for maintaining the town's agricultural heritage and food security.

Understanding Canaan's soil types is critical for sustainable development, septic system siting, stormwater management, and forest management. Poorly drained soils, for instance, are more prone to flooding and may be unsuitable for septic systems or building foundations. Shallow soils on slopes are vulnerable to erosion if cleared or developed. Planning tools that incorporate soil data help prevent costly mistakes and environmental degradation.

Moreover, soil health is an indicator of broader ecological well-being. Healthy soils store carbon, filter pollutants, and support plant and animal life. In this way, they are essential allies in the face of climate change, especially as the region experiences more intense rainfall and unpredictable weather patterns.

## Water Resources

### Watersheds

Canaan sits at the divide between two major regional watersheds: the Hudson River Watershed, which drains the majority of the town, and the Housatonic River Watershed, which captures runoff from the southeastern corner. [Beebe Pond feeds the Housatonic River.](#) These drainage systems shape the town's hydrology, determining how water moves across the landscape, where it collects, and how it ultimately enters larger river systems that connect Canaan to broader regional ecosystems.

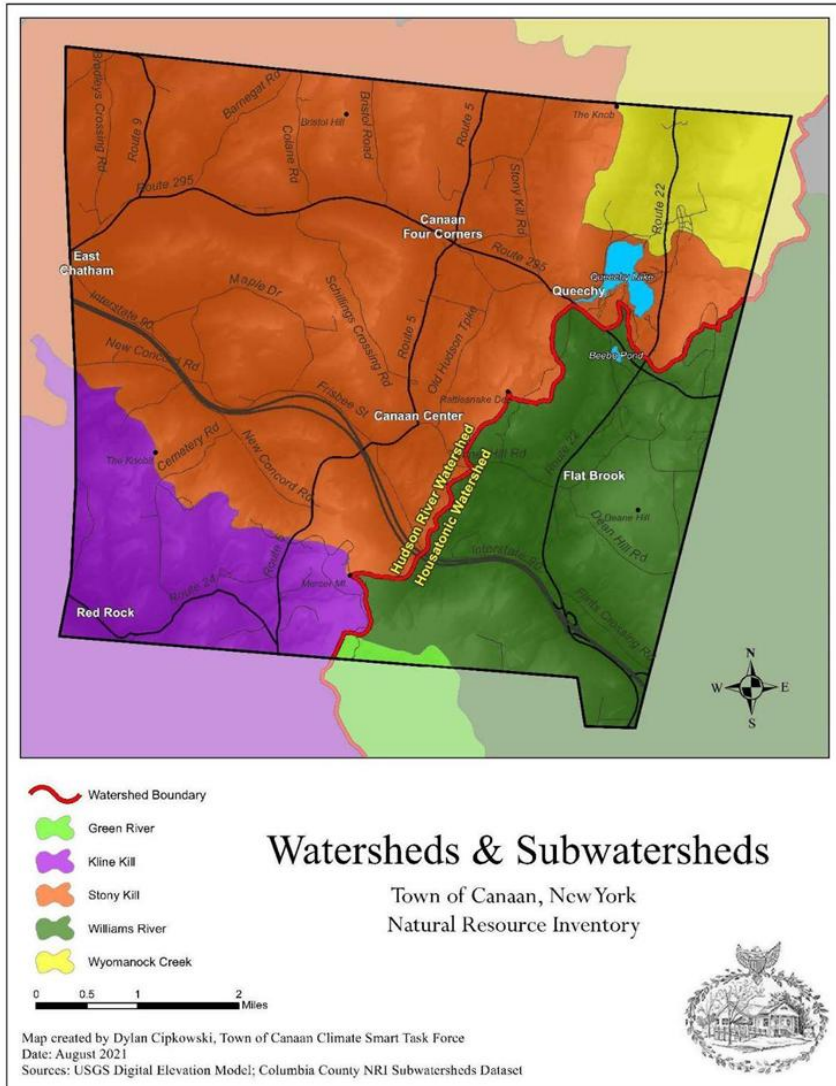
Within these major watersheds, Canaan is further divided into subwatersheds that define more localized hydrological zones:

- **Stony Kill Subwatershed:** The largest in Canaan, encompassing much of the central and northwestern parts of the town. It includes Queechy Lake and its outlet stream.
- **Kline Kill and Wyomanock Creek Subwatersheds:** Located in the western part of town, these also drain into the Hudson River.
- **Williams River Subwatershed:** The second-largest in Canaan and part of the Housatonic Watershed.

**Green River Subwatershed:** A smaller subwatershed near the border with Austerlitz, also draining eastward into the Housatonic system.

These subwatersheds help determine flood zones, stream health, and water quality dynamics across the town.

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### Lakes and Streams

Among Canaan's most well-known water bodies is Queechy Lake, a 140-acre lake located near the hamlet of Queechy. The lake is accessible via a New York State DEC cartop boat launch and is bordered

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by seasonal and year-round residences. Queechey Lake supports both warm and cold-water fisheries, including annually stocked non-native trout species such as Brown and Rainbow Trout. Historical records suggest the lake once supported native Lake Trout (*Salvelinus namaycush*), but these no longer occur naturally. According to 2018 data from the Citizens Statewide Lake Assessment Program (CSLAP), Queechey Lake’s water quality is considered relatively good compared to other area lakes.

In addition to Queechey Lake, Canaan is home to several important cold-water streams that flow down from higher elevations. Notable examples include:

- Stony Kill
- Frisbee Creek
- Indian Creek
- Flat Brook
- South Branch of Wyomanock Creek

These streams support sensitive aquatic species, including Brook Trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*) and the Southern Pygmy Clubtail dragonfly (*Lanthis vernalis*)—a critically imperiled species in New York. Many of Canaan’s streams are recognized by the New York Natural Heritage Program (NYNHP) as “Important Areas – Cold Water Stream Habitat,” capable of supporting naturally reproducing trout populations without the need for stocking.

Forested stream buffers play a crucial ecological role. Trees and other riparian vegetation shade streams, regulate water temperatures, and filter runoff before it enters aquatic systems. These buffers are essential for maintaining the cold-water conditions required by certain fish and invertebrates and should be protected from development to preserve water quality and biodiversity.

## Wetlands

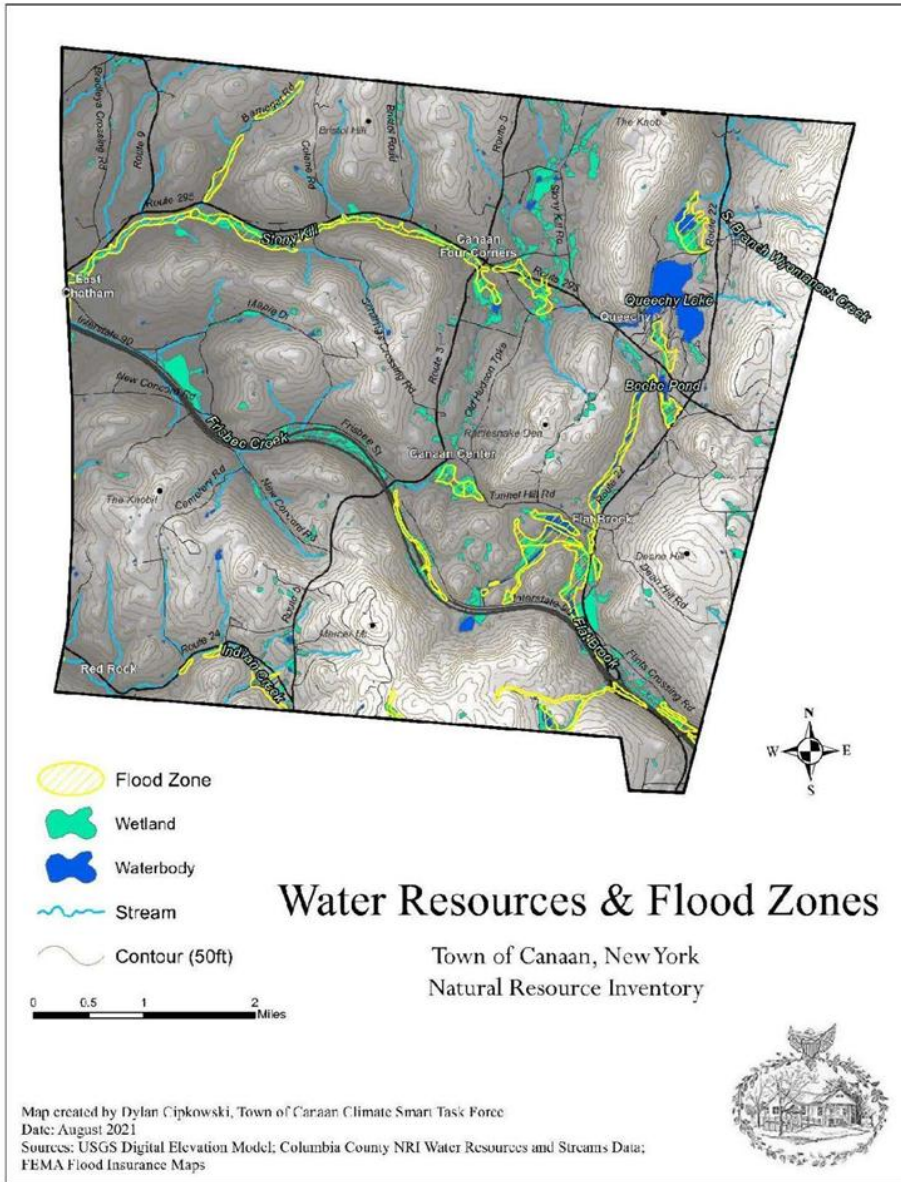
Canaan’s wetlands are widespread and especially prominent in the valleys and low-lying areas of the town. Some of the largest wetland systems are associated with:

- Stony Kill (along Route 295)
- Frisbee Creek (adjacent to I-90)
- Flat Brook (following Route 22 and Tunnel Hill Road)

Wetlands in Canaan support an abundance of wildlife, including rare plant species and migratory birds. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency describes wetlands as “biological supermarkets” due to their high productivity and ecological importance. Many contain native shrubs like dogwoods (*Cornus* spp.) and viburnums (*Viburnum* spp.), which are crucial food sources for birds and mammals.

In addition to their ecological significance, wetlands provide important climate resilience functions. They absorb stormwater during heavy rainfall events and gradually release it over time, reducing the severity of floods and protecting downstream properties from erosion and damage. Several of Canaan’s wetlands have been identified by NYNHP as “Significant Areas” due to the presence of rare or threatened species.

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### Land Coverage

As of the most recent inventory, Canaan is predominantly forested, with forests covering approximately 72% of the town's 36.5 square miles. This extensive tree cover is one of Canaan's most defining environmental and visual features, offering habitat for wildlife, storing carbon, and supporting local water quality. The remainder of the land is a combination of agriculture (11%), developed areas (9.6%), wetlands (3.2%), and open water features such as lakes and streams (3.3%).

<b>Table 6. Land Cover Type</b>	<b>Percent Cover</b>
Forest	72.1%
Agriculture	11.0%
Developed Areas	9.6%
Wetland	3.2%
Pond/Lake/Stream	3.3%
Other	0.7%

These percentages, mapped in the Natural Resource Inventory (below), provide a framework for understanding how land use contributes to the town's ecological function and cultural identity.



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## Forestland

Canaan’s forests are primarily composed of northern hardwood species, such as Sugar Maple, American Beech, White Ash, Yellow Birch, and Eastern Hemlock. These forests thrive across a range of elevations and microclimates and are part of a broader 254,000-acre intact forest region that spans several northeastern states along the Taconic Mountains. This region is considered a “Significant Biodiversity Area” by the New York Natural Heritage Program (NYNHP) due to its ecological integrity and connectivity.

Forests in Canaan provide essential services, including:

- Carbon sequestration (trees store carbon dioxide, helping mitigate climate change)
- Stream shading, which helps regulate water temperature for cold-water species
- Wildlife habitat, supporting species such as the Fisher, Red Squirrel, and migratory birds

*[The Nature of the Place: A History of Living with the Land in Columbia County, NY – authored by Conrad Vispo offers additional information on the area’s floodplain forests, the plant and animal diversity of Columbia County, and more. Natural resource descriptions, ecological and biodiversity surveys, habitat mapping, and agroecological context related to farming in the area also are provided.](#)* Climate change, however, threatens to shift the composition of these forests. As temperatures rise and precipitation patterns change, cold-adapted species may decline while warmer-climate species, such as oaks and hickories, become more common.

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## Agriculture

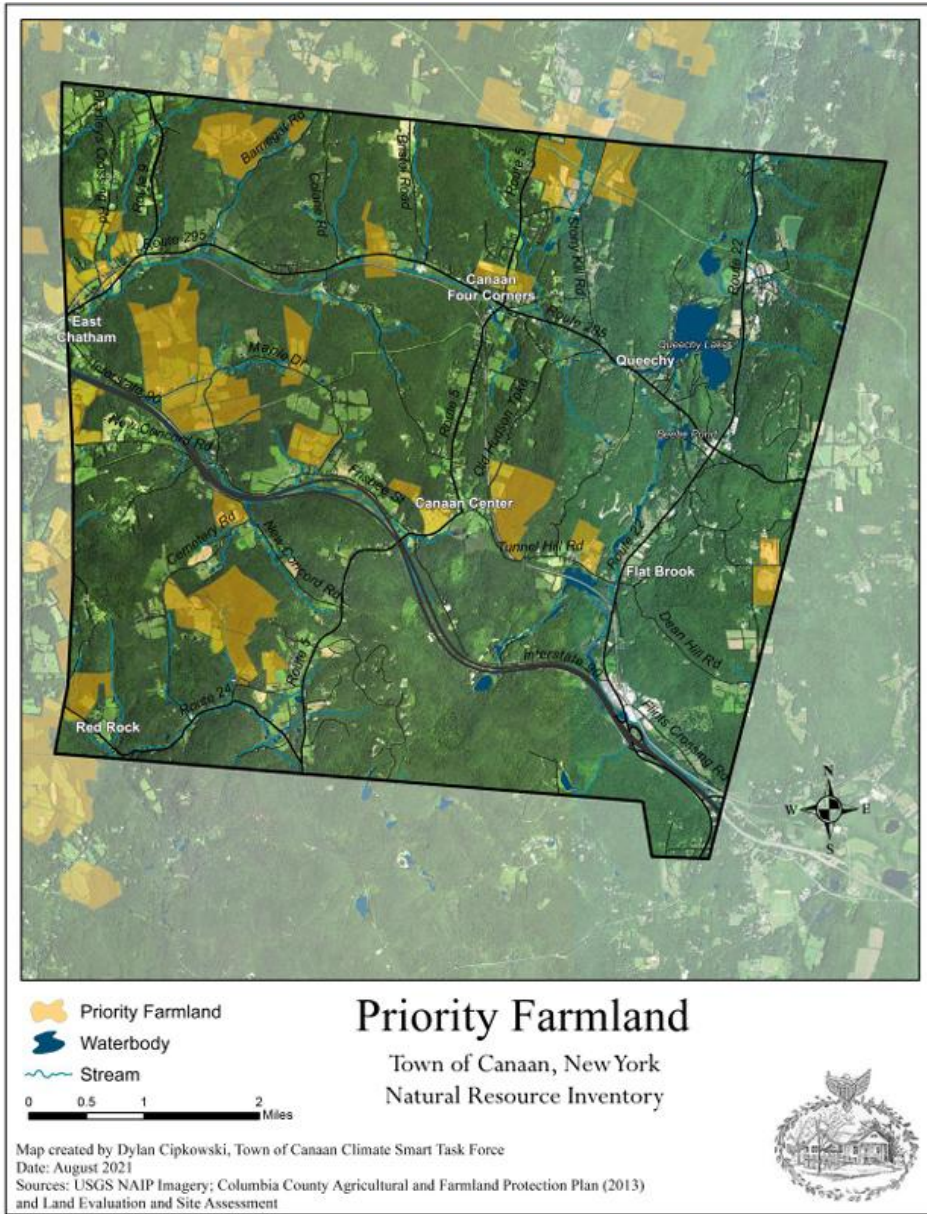
Although covering a smaller proportion of the town today, agriculture remains an important part of Canaan’s land use and rural identity. Roughly 11% of the town is classified as agricultural land, including hayfields, pastures, cropland, and open meadows. These lands offer not only local food production and economic opportunity, but also critical habitat for grassland species such as the Bobolink, which is in decline across much of its range.

Historically, agriculture was central to Canaan’s economy. In 1875, the town boasted 200 farms, collectively generating \$84,000 in products—a significant figure at the time. Much of this agriculture took place on now-reforested hillsides that were once cleared for sheep grazing during the peak of the 1<sup>st</sup>-century wool industry. The stone walls that crisscross today’s forests are remnants of this period.

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Today, the Columbia County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan identifies “priority farmland” in Canaan—parcels that have high-quality soils, reliable water access, historical significance, or ecological value. Preserving these parcels from conversion to development is critical to maintaining the viability of local agriculture and rural character.

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## Land Use

Table 7 below details all the different land uses in Canaan. Out of 22,524 total acres, about half of the land area is classified as being residential. It is the largest land use in the Town. Vacant land takes up about 32% of the Town's land base. About 1,052 acres are permanently conserved, 157 acres are partially conserved, totaling about 1,209.9 acres of preserved land in the Town.

<b>Table 7. Land Use</b>	<b>Parcels</b>	<b>Acres</b>
Agricultural	6	166.0
Residential with Agriculture	6	558.6
Single-Family Residential	936	10,966.8
2-Family Residential	19	83.2
3-Family Residential	2	19.6
Multiple Residences	23	1,126.9
Seasonal Residential	4	27.1
Apartments	3	3.2
Commercial	29	231.5
Industrial	1	2.2
Recreation and Entertainment	8	362.0
Community Services	16	760.7
Public Services	9	159.8
Private Forest	2	104.7
Parks and Preserves	6	805.6
Unknown	4	25.7
Vacant	393	7,120.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>1467</b>	<b>22,524</b>
<b>Conservation Easement Parcels</b>	<b>Parcels</b>	<b>Acres</b>
Agricultural	1	17.2
Residential with Agriculture	1	33.4
Single-Family Residential	8	240.0
Vacant	15	761.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>1,052.5</b>
<b>Partially Conserved Parcels</b>	<b>Parcels</b>	<b>Acres Conserved</b>
Single-Family Residential	2	128.9
Vacant	1	28.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>157.5</b>
<b>Total Easement Area</b>		<b>1209.9</b>

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## Summary of Current Zoning

The Town of Canaan Zoning Law was originally adopted in 1985. In 2017, a consolidated law was created that now includes all components of zoning, as well as the subdivision regulations. Previously, the subdivision law, sign and poster control, wind energy conversion systems, and solar energy equipment were all adopted as separate laws.

The Town of Canaan Zoning Law is a regulatory document that guides land use, development, and subdivision within the town. Below is a summary of its key components:

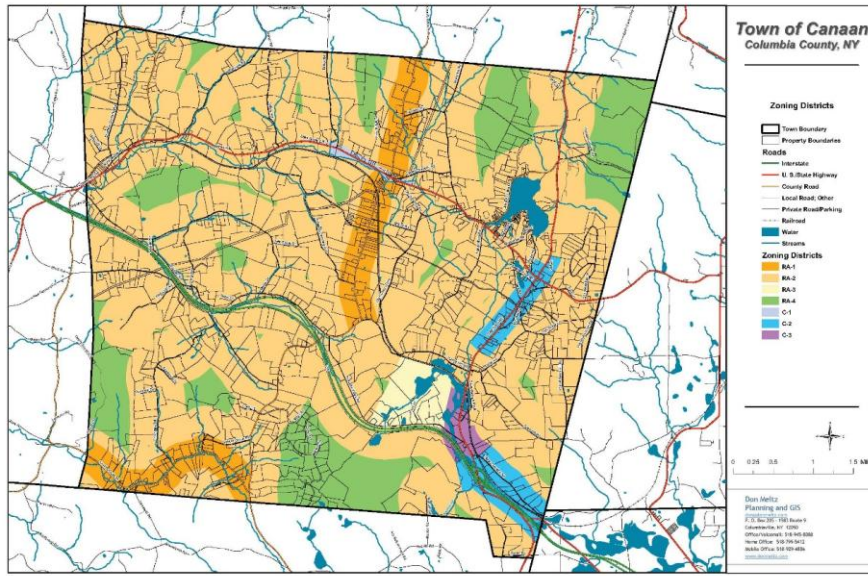
**Purpose and Legal Basis:** The law is enacted under the authority of New York State Town Law to promote public health, safety, and welfare, and it is based on a comprehensive plan. It emphasizes preserving rural character, protecting natural resources, supporting agriculture, and guiding orderly development. Its purpose statements reflect the values of Canaan related to agriculture, open space, the environment and community character.

**Districts and Zoning Map:** The town is divided into several zoning districts, including:

Residential-Agricultural (RA-1 to RA-4): Varying by density (2–10 acre lots).

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Commercial and Industrial (C-1, C-2, C-3): Ranging from general business to light industrial.



A Zoning Map delineates these district boundaries. The different sections of the Law include the following:

Land Use Regulations (Article V):

- Use Regulations: Define permitted, accessory, and special permitted uses by district.
- Density Standards: Set minimum lot sizes and density limits.
- Site Standards: Include regulations on setbacks, off-street parking/loading, signage, septic systems, and renewable energy systems (wind and solar).
- Nonconforming Uses: Address existing uses that don't comply with new regulations.

Subdivision Regulations (Article IV): Covers land division into parcels:

- Major Subdivisions: 7 or more lots; requires detailed review and public hearings.
- Minor Subdivisions: 4-6 lots; streamlined process.
- Exempt Subdivisions: 3 or fewer lots; simplified review.
- Includes standards for roads, lot layout, drainage, and compliance with SEQRA.

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Definitions (Article II): A glossary clarifies key terms (e.g., dwelling types, farm operations, home occupations, accessory uses, solar installations, etc.).

## Special Uses and Site Plan Review (Articles VII–IX)

- Planning Board: Oversees site plan reviews, subdivisions and boundary line adjustments.
- Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA): Handles variances and appeals, and special use permits.
- Special Use Permits: Required for uses with greater impact (e.g., telecommunications, renewable energy, certain commercial uses). Site Plan review and approval is also required for uses that need special use permits.

## Energy Systems

- Solar and Wind Energy: Specific regulations for residential, non-residential, and prohibited large-scale solar systems.
- Performance standards address size, placement, screening, and impacts.

## Administration and Enforcement (Article X)

- Zoning Enforcement Officer (ZEO): Issues permits, enforces compliance.
- Includes penalties, fees, procedures for certificates of occupancy, and interpretation of the law.

## Amendments, Relief, and Validity (Articles XI–XIV): Details procedures for:

- Variances (area and use)
- Relief from decisions
- Replacing previous zoning laws
- Law effectiveness and validity clauses

## Appendices Include

- Zoning Map
- Subdivision Road Specifications
- Supplemental regulations and forms

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## Buildout Analysis

In a comprehensive plan, a buildout analysis is a powerful “reality check” that a community can do. A buildout analysis estimates HOW MUCH development could occur in the community if every parcel were developed to the maximum allowed under current zoning and other relevant land-use rules (lot size, density, setbacks, wetlands constraints, etc.). It creates a picture of the “full entitlement” future. The role of build-out analysis is not to PREDICT the future — it is to illustrate the CONSEQUENCES of current rules.

It answers questions like:

- If zoning stays the same, how many new houses could be built?
- How much farmland/forest/open space would be converted?
- Would that “max build-out” still align with the community’s vision?

### How it is used in a comprehensive plan

The buildout analysis:

1. It shows whether current regulations will produce the future character people want, or something different.
2. If the resulting densities are inconsistent with the community’s vision for rural character, farmland protection, hamlet centers, or infrastructure limits, it signals where zoning updates could align vision and zoning.
3. Data from buildout supports decisions on lowering or shifting density, directing growth to hamlets and serviced areas. Comparing it to environmental sensitivities can help the community decide what areas need to have less density.
4. It helps communicate tradeoffs with the public, and maps and visualizations of full build-out are often an effective public education tool that turns zoning (an abstract text) into something visible and understandable.

### Buildout Analysis Procedure

A digital Geographic Information System was used to conduct this analysis. It started with understanding the current lot dimensions, width, frontage, setbacks, and other zoning standards from the current law. It then:

1. Removed developed parcels that are less than 2x the allowed parcel size, and conservation land so that the analysis was targeted to parcels of land that are actually buildable.
2. Split buildable parcels by districts and include the 450’ buffers from roads in the RA-1, 2, and 3 districts as currently required.
3. Calculated the number of permitted residential units based on acreage divided by min lot size, rounded down to a whole number.
4. Identified what buildout is actually possible. To do that, possible buildable areas were identified by removing unbuildable features, including:
  - Surface water
  - DEC regulated wetlands

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- 100-year floodplain area
  - Slopes (for this analysis a very conservative >30% slope was used)
  - 50' buffer area of existing 800+ sq ft structures
  - Average setback area for district
5. Identified other non-buildable areas that included other wetland areas, slopes >20%, and land for driveways, roads and future infrastructure.
  6. Calculated the potential number of new units for each zoning district.
  7. Further calculated scenarios if the minimum lot size was changed.

Buildout Results

The following table illustrates the results of the buildout analysis of current zoning rules:

District	Permitted SF Unit	Possible SF Units	Feasible SF Units	Total Feasible w/MF
C-1	75	44	16	75
C-2	165	159	133	165
C-3	56	53	41	56
RA-1	242	242	228	228
RA-2	3,371	3,352	3,037	3,037
RA-3	80	80	75	75
RA-4	184	184	166	166
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,173</b>	<b>4,114</b>	<b>3,696</b>	<b>3,802</b>

Additionally, ~~three~~ **two** development scenarios were also evaluated: what would the buildout be if all lots in the RA districts were required to have a 2-acre minimum lot size, **3.5 acres and with a 5-acre and** what would the buildout be if all lots in the RA districts were required to have a 5-acre minimum lot size. **Note: An additional scenario using the proposed 3.5 density will be prepared for the final Plan.**

The following tables illustrate these results:

If RA-1, 2 and 3 all required 2-acre zoning				
District	Permitted SF Unit	Possible SF Units	Feasible SF Units	Total Feasible w/MF
C-1	75	44	16	75
C-2	165	159	133	165
C-3	56	53	41	56
RA-1	446	414	414	414
RA-2	7283	6450	6384	6384
RA-3	177	157	157	157
RA-4	184	184	166	166

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<b>Total</b>	<b>8,386</b>	<b>7,461</b>	<b>7,311</b>	<b>7,417</b>
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A second scenario was evaluated to show what the result would be if all RA districts were required to have a 3.5-acre minimum size. The following table illustrates these results:

<b>RA-1, 2 and 3 all 3.5-acre zoning</b>					
<b>District</b>	<b>Existing Units</b>	<b>Permitted SF Unit</b>	<b>Possible SF Units</b>	<b>Feasible SF Units</b>	<b>Total Feasible w/MF (new units)</b>
C-1	24	75	44	16	75
C-2	43	165	159	133	165
C-3	3	56	53	41	56
RA-1	159	202	192	192	192
RA-2	720	3786	3415	3350	3350
RA-3	12	94	84	84	84
RA-4	21	184	184	166	166
<b>Total</b>	<b>982</b>	<b>4,562</b>	<b>4,131</b>	<b>3,982</b>	<b>4,088</b>

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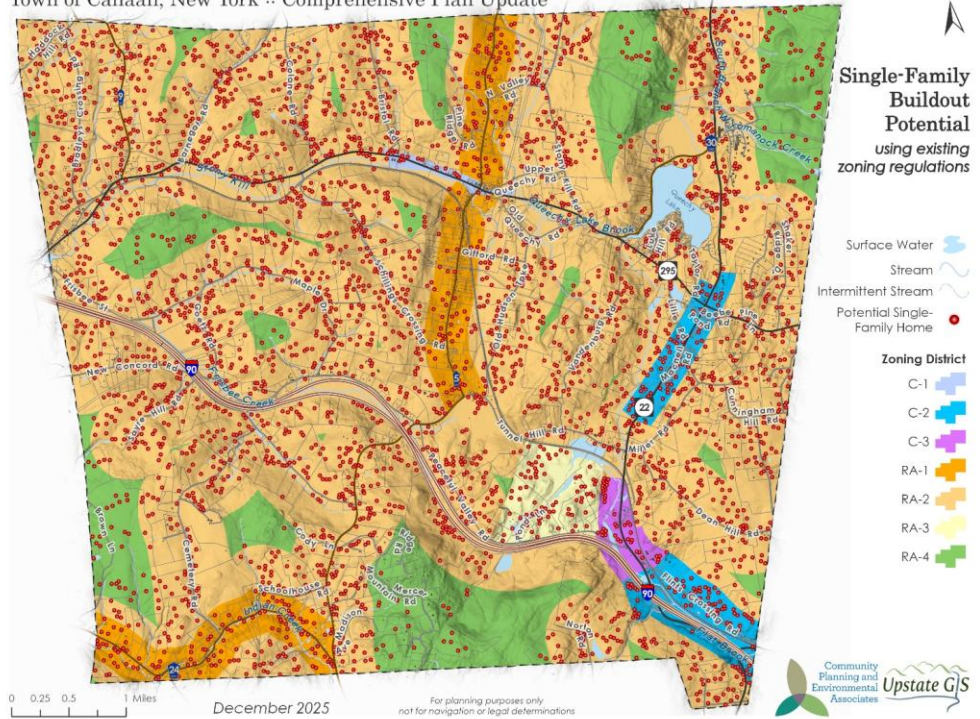
A third scenario was evaluated to show what the result would be if all RA districts were required to have a 5-acre minimum lot size. The following tables illustrate these results:

<b>If RA-1, 2 and 3 all required 5-acre zoning</b>				
<b>District</b>	<b>Permitted SF Unit</b>	<b>Possible SF Units</b>	<b>Feasible SF Units</b>	<b>Total Feasible w/MF</b>
C-1	75	44	16	75
C-2	165	159	133	165
C-3	56	53	41	56
RA-1	113	109	109	109
RA-2	2480	2264	2252	2252
RA-3	61	56	56	56
RA-4	184	184	166	166
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,134</b>	<b>2,869</b>	<b>2,773</b>	<b>2,879</b>

The series of maps that follow illustrate these results in mapped form:

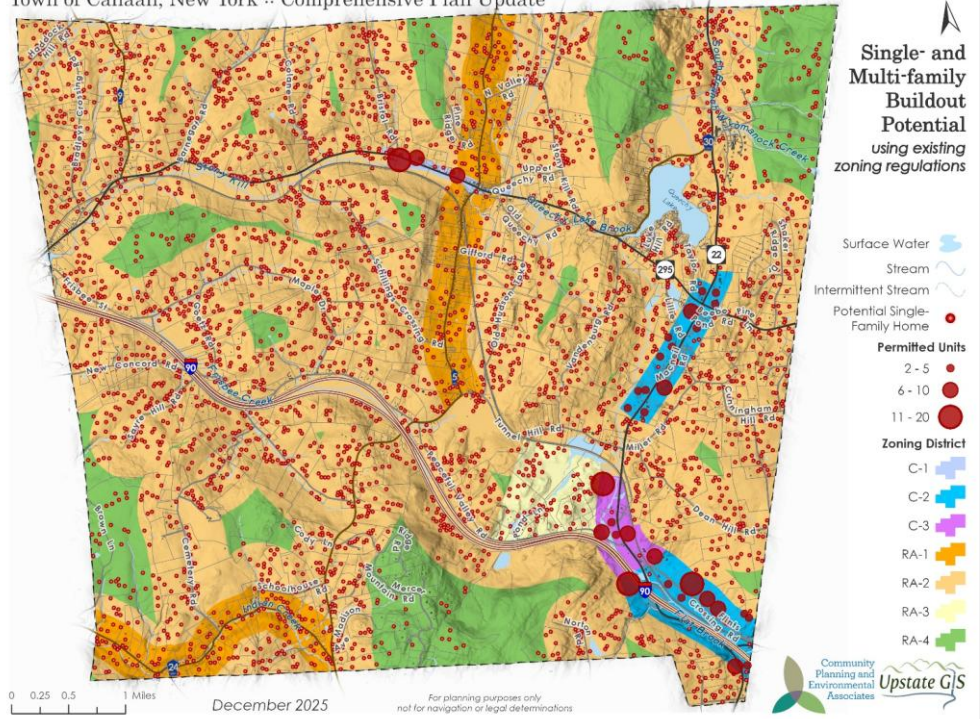
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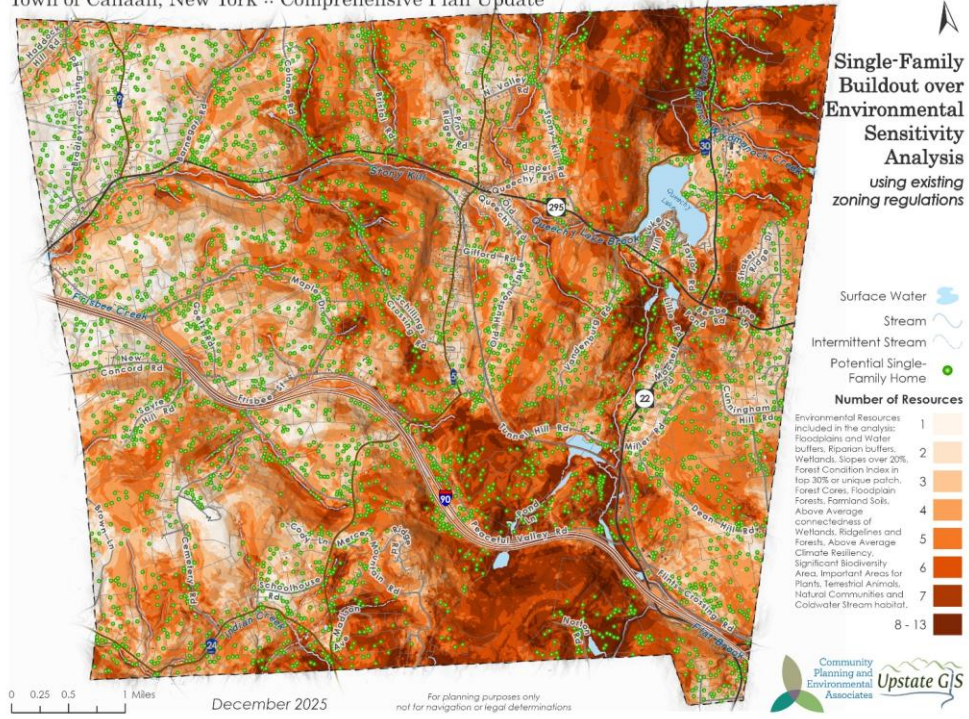
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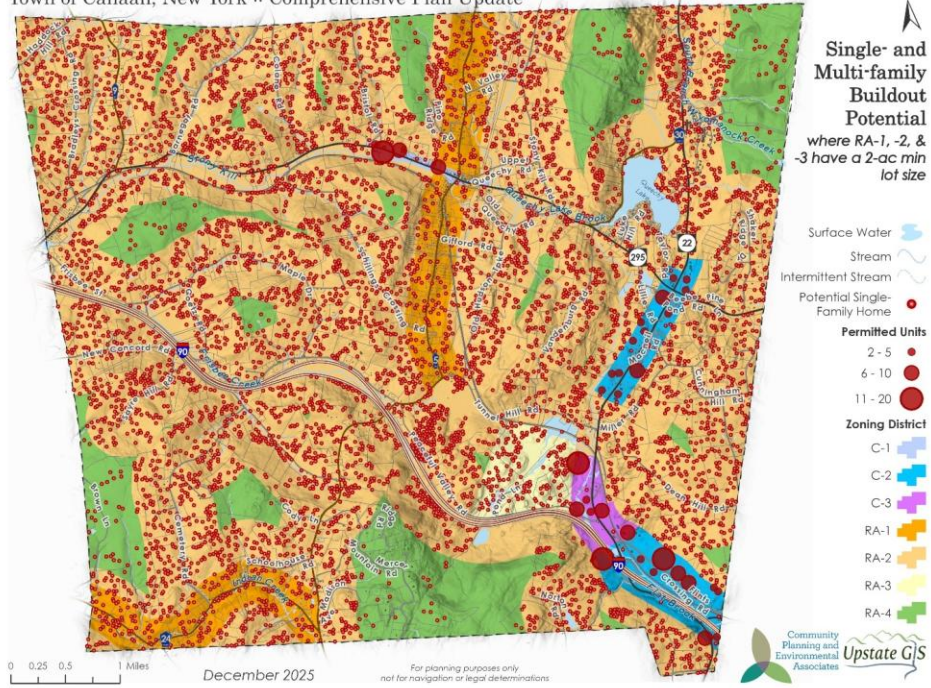
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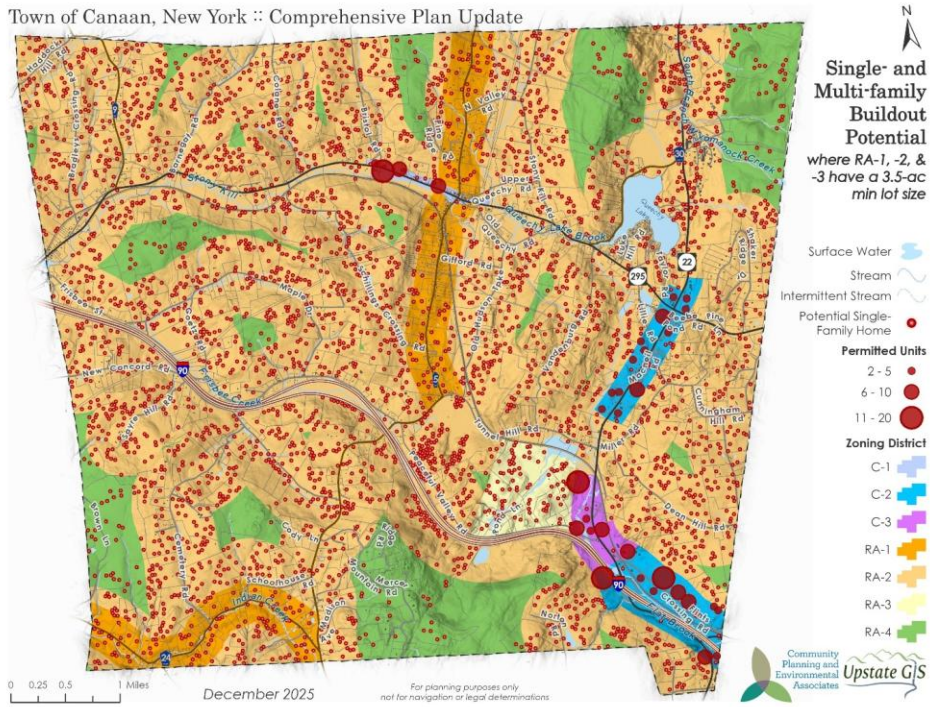
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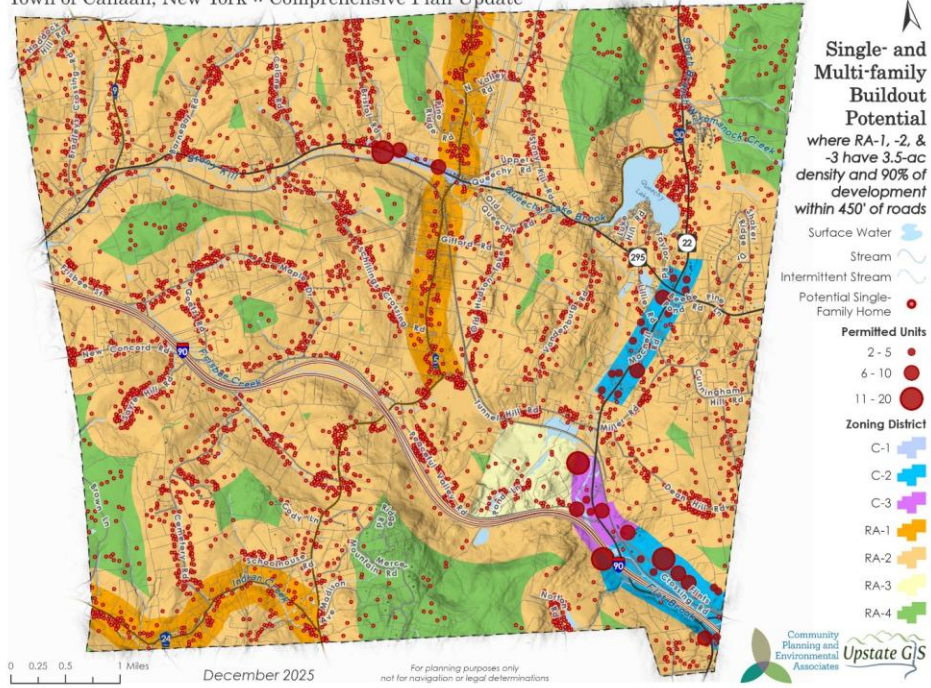
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## Audit of Existing Zoning for the Town of Canaan

A zoning audit plays a critical role in a comprehensive plan by evaluating whether the municipality's current zoning regulations align with the community's vision, goals, and priorities as established in the plan. It helps identify:

- Inconsistencies between existing zoning and desired land use patterns, such as where zoning may hinder goals like housing diversity, farmland protection, or Main Street revitalization.
- Barriers in the law that may prevent implementation of key policies and desired direction.
- Opportunities for updates to meet the Town's goals in accordance with the comprehensive plan.

Ultimately, the zoning audit provides a roadmap for targeted zoning amendments needed to implement the plan effectively and legally.

### Observations

1. Article 1 Purposes – these statements touch on the same aspects and policy direction established in the Vision and Goals.

Article 2 Definitions – there are some terms that are missing, and the definitions section would benefit from additions of words that are used but not defined. These include (but are not limited to):

2.
  - Change of use
  - Density
  - Comprehensive Plan
  - Complete application
  - Farmworker housing
  - Glare
  - Permitted by right
  - Retail
  - Road, private
  - Special Use Permit
  - Stream
  - Wetland
  - Other significant features

3. Article 2 Other Comments:
  - a. Definitions related to agriculture and farm operation: It is unclear why this definition has two parts – one for a parcel within a NYS Certified Agricultural District and one for parcels not in the NYS Ag District. Without the history behind why this was developed, it is uncertain, but it is recommended that to be fully farm-friendly, agriculture and farm operation definitions be fully consistent with those used by NYS in AML 25-aa Section 308.
  - b. The definition for “dwelling” does not include mobile homes – thus, mobile homes are treated as a separate kind of housing. As per federal and New York State regulations, mobile homes are more properly defined as a manufactured dwelling made prior to the 1976 HUD certification regulations. Further, State rules work to consider mobile homes as any other kind of single-family dwelling. There is no definition of manufactured housing, which is a more inclusive term. Since manufactured housing of all types from tiny homes to

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modular and panelized homes, is an important component of the housing toolbox, it is recommended that the manufactured home/mobile home definitions be updated.

- c. Many definitions include substantial regulations within them (for instance, parcels that are newly developed need to be 5 acres in order to have an accessory dwelling.) It is better to have specific sections within the zoning law articulate these regulations rather than tying them to the definition.
- d. Any updated zoning that incorporates new land use tools and methods should also have new definitions to go along with them.
- e. There are many terms reflecting new tools that the Town could consider including in the zoning law to further the vision and goals of Canaan. These will be further discussed below, but include

- Affordable housing
- Agritourism
- Average lot size
- Buffer
- Building envelope
- Consistent in size and scale
- Dark skies
- Environmental constraints
- Rural character
- Density bonus
- Commercial design standards
- Conservation subdivision
- Flood-related terms
- Glare
- Historic character
- Impervious surfaces
- Mixed use
- Public utility
- Slope/steep slope
- Special event venue
- Short term rental
- Tiny house
- Dwelling, two-family

- 4. Farms need to be 50 acres in size in order to be allowed to have a mobile home used for farmworker housing. This seems excessive and is not likely consistent with NYS AML 25-aa (Agricultural Districts). While farming is not a large land use in Canaan, why restrict this in this way?

Article 3 – Districts and Zoning Map. While in practice, the Planning Board, ZBA, CEO/ZEO, and others in town probably know how to interpret the language that establishes density in each of the districts, it is not easy to understand. For instance, the RA-1 district is designed for a 2-acre/ 5-acre density. What does this 2 acre/5 acre really result in? It is not explained in either the text of the dimensions table. This should be clarified further.

5.

The RA-4 district is described as important for priority farmland, yet those locations do not match up with the priority farmland map included in the Town’s NRI. This should be clarified.

6.

The zoning would benefit greatly by having purpose statements that articulate the role/goal of each of the zoning districts so that the differences between the regulations can be put into context.

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Article IV – Subdivision.

8.
  - a. This section exempts from subdivision approval proposals for a 2 or 3-lot split. Minor subdivisions are classified as 4-6 lot splits, and major subdivisions are 7 or more splits. It is likely that most of the subdivision activity in Town has been small subdivisions, which, if exempt, means that most do not go through the normal review process. This is important because the Town runs the risk of ‘death by a thousand cuts,’ – meaning that a few small subdivisions on their own aren’t that impactful, but many over the whole town mean that little gets the review needed to meet the Town’s character and environmental goals. Further problems with this are that NYS 6 NYCRR Part 617 (SEQR) requires an environmental review for all discretionary actions – so if small subdivisions are determined to be exempt (that is, discretionary), and thus the Town is not adequately doing the SEQR process. More broadly, it is good practice to ensure that each subdivision creates a buildable lot and that there is adequate review to ensure that no significant environmental features are not addressed in future building. I recommend that minor subdivisions be 2 to 6 lots and majors be 7 or more.
  - b. The process for subdivisions should closely follow NYS Town Law 276. The process, timelines and filing requirements are basically presented in this section, but without some of the important details normally included in such a law. I recommend a review of this Article and updates to make it fully consistent with 276. For instance, it doesn’t discuss the public hearing requirement, referral to the County Planning Board, or the fact that minor subdivisions require SEQR.
  - c. The list of submissions that are part of a subdivision application could be enhanced to make sure that the rural character and environmental resources in Town are adequately addressed and planned for when future development occurs. This can, in part, be accomplished by updating the list of information to be submitted to the Planning Board. The basics are in the law, but do not convey or emphasize the desire to protect the character and environment of the Town.
  - d. Item F in this Article indicates that the Planning Board can issue both waivers and variances. That is not correct. The Planning Board can issue waivers (provided they are well articulated as to why they are needed), but only the ZBA can issue variances.
  - e. The subdivision law would benefit by including the conservation subdivision method. This is applied to major subdivisions and results in strategically placed homes or clustered homes in a way that also preserves 50% of the parcel. It is recommended that all major subdivisions be required to be designed as a conservation subdivision.
9. Article V – Use Table: This controls what uses are allowed where. Overall, accessory dwellings, single-family dwellings (not mobile homes), and farms are allowed in all locations.
  - a. Since one of the goals of the Town is to enhance housing opportunities, a look at the Use Table is an important step to identify challenges and barriers to housing. Some barriers include:
    - i. Limited locations where multifamily housing is allowed (only in the C1 and C2 districts). Further, the zoning has minimum sizes required for dwelling units within a multifamily structure, which may not be realistic or affordable.
    - ii. No two-family houses are allowed anywhere in Town.

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- iii. Mobile homes are allowed only for farm workers, in the RA3 district (which is quite limited in size), or in a Mobile Home Park in the RA-3 District.
  - iv. While modular homes are allowed, no other type of manufactured home is allowed, including double-wide homes. That would exclude a variety of types of homes, including tiny homes (not on wheels), panelized homes, triple-wide wide and multi-section homes. To address the housing needs in Town, it is recommended that a wider variety of manufactured homes be allowed.
  - v. A subset of multifamily homes could work well in Canaan – three and four-plex homes. These are structures that expand housing options while preserving rural character as they resemble large single-family homes in design, support aging in place and multigenerational living, can help attract and retain workers, make efficient use of infrastructure, have minimal visual impacts, can be effectively used for infill and revitalization in hamlets, and lower per-unit construction costs. It is recommended that the zoning be updated to allow for three and four-plex residential units in the RA districts.
  - vi. There are no definitions for or accommodations for building senior housing. It is recommended that the zoning be updated to accommodate small, well-designed buildings or complexes for the area’s seniors. Three and four-plex homes can also provide senior housing. Larger developments should be required to use a conservation design method to balance development with rural character and environmental needs.
  - vii. Roadside stands require a special use permit to operate. This could be burdensome to farmers and a barrier to niche/direct sale farm operations. It is recommended that roadside stands be permitted as of right in all RA districts, or if some review is needed, create a modified site plan process for them.
- b. Density Requirements Table.
- i. I find this table confusing. I don’t know what the first row means (minimum acreage per use) that shows 2\*\*5. The text refers to a 2-acre zone or a 5-acre zone, but what does that mean? How does one know if they need 2 acres or 5 acres? And there is no difference in density or dimension requirements between RA1 (Medium Density), RA2 (Rural Density, or RA3 (Mobile Homes).
  - ii. Similarly, the table has a row for the minimum lot width of 200’ 350’. Is that a minimum and maximum? What is applied where?
    - 1. There are other ways to allow for development while controlling density and protecting rural character. The Town could consider using Average Lot Size together with Density – this could set a maximum density (e.g., 1 dwelling unit per 5 acres) but allow the various lots to be created in a subdivision to be different sizes, provided they average 5 acres. This allows control of density but flexibility to create smaller, more affordable lots.
  - iii. The zoning map may not fully reflect smart growth opportunities. Some alternative zoning districts could include:
    - 1. Hamlet district that would allow for mixed-use and denser housing. A hamlet district, instead of commercial districts, are very consistent with the language and rural character in Canaan and conveys something different than a ‘commercial’ district.

- 2. Agricultural district that would be centered around farmland.
- 3. Conservation district or conservation overlay – that would establish setbacks, buffers, density, and other use and dimension standards designed to protect important natural resources such as streams, stream riparian areas, important habitats, steep slopes, etc. Use of the NRI maps and this Plan’s environmental sensitivities map can help the Town identify where these could or should be.

10. The parking regulations would benefit from added language that requires landscaping, screening, lighting, or access standards to ensure that parking lots for new businesses are developed in the right location and don’t adversely affect community character. Large areas of parking between the road and the commercial building should be controlled so that the streetscape involves buildings and not parking lots.

11. The Town could consider using commercial design standards to make sure that exteriors of new commercial buildings reflect the character of the Town. These do not have to be overly prescriptive but should ensure that new buildings fit into the landscape and character of Canaan.

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12. The zoning should add dark sky lighting standards to prevent glare and light pollution.

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13. The sign section should be updated because, as per US Supreme Court rulings, local municipalities cannot regulate sign content (which Canaan’s currently does). A more important aspect of the current sign section is that it allows really huge and tall signs. It is strongly suggested that new sign standards that are lower in size and height, and address landscaping and lighting, be included. It is my opinion that no sign should be allowed to be more than 32 square feet in size. You have a sign overlay district that allows for 120 square feet of sign that is 50’ high. This does not seem consistent with the desire to maintain your rural character.

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14. Some other zoning concepts to consider adding to the zoning include:

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- a. Use of stream buffers.
- b. Requirement that new non-farm development adjacent to farm development needs additional buffer space to prevent farm/non-farm issues.
- c. Consider requiring building envelopes to be shown on subdivision plats and ensure that the Planning Board reviews and approves those building locations. Building locations are what impact the view, character, landscape, and environment, not boundary lines, so more emphasis should be placed on building locations.
- d. Ensure that all submissions, reviews, and approvals identify, evaluate, and offer protection of areas on a parcel that have environmental constraints. Be sure to also define what those constraints are (wetlands, streams, riparian areas, steep slopes, areas with exposed bedrock, habitats of threatened and endangered species, etc.)

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- e. Allow for mixed uses (in the new hamlet districts described above), or at least in the commercial districts. These are buildings that allow for different residential and commercial uses together and in separate buildings. This is the traditional hamlet-style of building, rather than a commercial strip. I am concerned that your commercial districts could result in strip-style commercial development.
- f. Consider adding regulations addressing ~~short-term rentals and~~ special event venues.

## NYSDEC Permits and Registrations

### Transfer Facilities

The Canaan Transfer Station is operated by the town and situated off State Route 22; the facility is a designated drop-off site where local residents can dispose of household waste, recyclables, and other materials. It is not a landfill but a transfer point—waste collected here is temporarily held before being hauled to regional processing or disposal facilities.

This station sees an average of 150.96 tons per day and took in 39248.55 tons throughout 2023-2024. The peak usage is typically May through August and hits a low point in February.

Most recent authorization was issued on 2/12/24 and expires on 2/11/34

### Multi-Sector General Permits

Taconic Yards is an active logging site located at 72 Flints Crossing Rd, it is subject to the SPDES General Permit for Stormwater Discharges from Construction Activity (GP-0-20-001), administered by the NYSDEC.

The site operator filed a Notice of Intent (NOI), thereby obtaining coverage under the general permit. However, the facility failed to meet ongoing compliance requirements associated with that coverage.

### Specific Violations

1. Failure to Submit Discharge Monitoring Reports (DMRs):  
The SPDES general permit requires periodic reporting of site inspections, stormwater discharge monitoring, and any observed pollutant discharges.
2. Failure to Submit Annual Certification Report (ACR):  
The ACR is a required document that certifies continued compliance with the SWPPP and SPDES permit conditions.

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### Petroleum Bulk Storage Facilities

Petroleum bulk storage (PBS) facilities are regulated under the NYSDEC Petroleum Bulk Storage Program, which governs the safe handling, storage, and monitoring of petroleum products to protect public health and the environment.

Several small-scale PBS facilities exist in Canaan, typically associated with commercial operations, municipal properties, or agricultural uses. These include aboveground and underground storage tanks used for heating oil, gasoline, or diesel fuel. Facilities with a combined storage capacity of more than 1,100 gallons are required to register with the NYSDEC and must comply with regulations concerning tank integrity, secondary containment, spill prevention, and leak detection.

Table 8. NYS DEC Permitted Petroleum Bulk Storage Facilities in Canaan.

Facility Name	Address	Zip Code	Facility Status	Expiration Date
Town Of Canaan	Rt 295	12029	Unregulated/Closed	12/02/1996
Berkshire Farm Ctr & Svs	Lila Wallace Rt 22	12029	Unregulated/Closed	12/02/1991
Berkshire Farm Ctr & Svs	13640 Route 22	12029	Active	12/02/2026
Eco/Transportation Services, Llc	21 Flint's Crossing Road	12029	Active	11/16/2025
Dania Food Mart	12737 Ny Route 22	12060	Active	09/20/2026
Onvo Travel Plaza - Canaan	12816 Route 22	12029	Active	03/31/2026
Bar-Ken Service Center Inc	13375 Route 22	12029	Unregulated/Closed	03/24/2002
Stephen Gardner-Mary Voce	County Rd 5	12029	Unregulated/Closed	07/10/1992
Berkshire Spur Motel	Rt.22 At I-90	12029	Unregulated/Closed	08/30/2016
Canaan Corner Deli	13366 Rt. 22	12029	Unregulated/Closed	09/19/2029
Gokay Residence	Stoney Kill Rd.	12029	Unregulated/Closed	10/27/1999
Berkshire Spur Motel	12703 Route 22	12029	Unregulated/Closed	10/22/2004
Abenavoli Residence	144 Peaceful Valley Rd.	12029	Active	07/16/2022
Bervy Excavation Corp.	61 Flints Crossing Road	12029	Active	04/22/2030
Former Berkshire Station	12857 State Route 22	12029	Unregulated/Closed	07/31/2017

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Facility Name	Address	Zip Code	Facility Status	Expiration Date
Love's Travel Stop # 611	12845 Route 22	12029	Active	03/23/2030
Redline Engineering	13 Post Road	12029	Active	10/25/2024

Source: NYS DEC Bulk Storage Database

### Chemical Bulk Storage Facilities

Chemical bulk storage (CBS) facilities are regulated under the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) Chemical Bulk Storage Program, which is designed to ensure the safe storage and handling of hazardous chemicals that could pose risks to human health and the environment. There is only one facility located in Canaan, owned by Redline Engineering at 13 Post Rd. This facility is currently unregulated/closed as its permits expired as of 04/12/2009.

### Permitted and Reclaimed Mines

Throughout much of Canaan's history, there have been a number of mines opened and operated in the Town. Many of these mines historically were used to extract sand and gravel for use in the construction industry. Today, only one mine is still in operation, with another being reclaimed following state standards. Below is a small table detailing both mines:

Table 9. NYS DEC Permitted Mines in Canaan.

Mine Name	Permittee Name	Commodity	Status	Maximum Acreage Affected
Arrighi Farm Pit	Anderson, Steven	Sand and Gravel	Reclaimed	15.00
Adams Mine Site	Brenda, Adams	Sand and Gravel	Permitted	9.00

### Water Withdrawal Annual Reports

The Berkshire Farm Center and Services for Youth operates its own private water supply system to serve the needs of its residential and educational campus. As a facility that withdraws large volumes of groundwater, Berkshire Farm is subject to oversight under the NYSDEC Water Withdrawal Program.

Under state regulations, any facility that has the capacity to withdraw 100,000 gallons or more per day is required to register and report annual water usage. This facility does fall under that category as the two groundwater wells located on site withdraw an average of 33,000 gallons per day but have a maximum capacity of 151,000 gallons (2024 report).

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## Wells

In Canaan, a significant number of residents and properties rely on private domestic wells for their drinking water supply. These wells tap into the region’s groundwater aquifers and are typically installed and maintained by individual homeowners or property owners.

Unlike public water systems, domestic wells are not regulated by the New York State Department of Health or the DEC for routine water quality monitoring or reporting. There is no requirement for annual reporting of water withdrawals from domestic wells, and most are unmetered.

## Dams

Table 10. NYS DEC Permitted Dams in Canaan.

Name	Dam Height (ft)	Construction Type	Hazard Rating
Berkshire Farm for Boys Dam	15	Earth	Low Hazard
Queechy Lake Dam	5	Earth / Masonry	Low Hazard
Kosmider Lake Dam	14	Earth	Low Hazard
Korobchuk Pond Dam	12	Earth	Low Hazard

## Boat Launch Sites

There is only one boat launch located in Canaan. The Queechy Lake Boat Launch is a small, [cartop-only](#) state-owned water access site located in the Town of Canaan, New York, providing public entry to Queechy Lake, a 141-acre recreational lake known for its scenic beauty, fishing, and quiet boating opportunities. There is no trailer capacity available at the site; all boats must be [hand-carried](#) to the water.

## Infrastructure, Schools and Municipal Budget

### Traffic

All of the following is measured in Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) from NYS DOT.

- Traffic has increased in the following areas between 2014 and 2023
  - Sayre Hill Rd/Frisbee St Overlap

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- State Rt 22/ State Rt 295
- State Rt 295/ Taconic Pkwy
- Traffic decreased in the following areas between 2014 and 2023
  - Old Queechy Road from NY 295 to NY 295
  - County Rt 5/ Peaceful Valley Rd Overlap
  - State Rt 22
  - Post Road from NY 295 to CR 5
- Traffic has remained steady in the following areas between 2014 and 2023
  - Miller Rd
  - Peaceful Valley Rd
  - I-90
  - At NY/Massachusetts Border

**Police, Fire and other Emergency Services**

- Canaan Fire District
- Canaan, East Chatham & Red Rock Fire companies serve the town
- The Chatham Rescue Squad supplies the vast majority of service to the town with support/backup from CC Emergency Management Services
- Columbia County Sheriff & Chatham Police Dept

**Schools**

The Town of Canaan does not have its own central school district and instead sends students to two separate school districts. These include:

- Chatham Central School District
- New Lebanon Central School District

**K-12 Enrollment**

Overall, public school enrollment in Columbia County, like much of New York State, has decreased over the past 10 years by a rate of ~8%. Rates for two of Canaan’s school districts, Chatham and New Lebanon, have decreased by 7.35% and 9.3%, respectively.

Table11: K-12 Enrollment, comparing school years 2013-2014 and 2023-2024

<b>Location</b>	<b>2013/2014</b>	<b>2023/2024</b>	<b>Percent Change</b>
Chatham CSD	1,160	853	-7.35%
New Lebanon CSD	422	393	-9.3%
Columbia County	7,300	5,849	-8%

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New York State	2,652,283	2,418,513	-8.81%
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Source: New York State Report Card at <https://data.nysed.gov/>

### English Language Learners

All of Canaan's school districts, Columbia County, and New York State are experiencing an increase in the amount of ELL resources that are needed due to an increase in the number of students that need them. The number of students in need of ELL services in Columbia County has increased by 42.24% between 2013-2024. While New Lebanon CSD has largely been insulated from this rapid growth, Chatham CSD ELL student population has increased by 177.77% which is significantly higher than the state average increase of 21.88%.

Table 12: English-language learners, comparing 2013-2014 and 2023-2024

Location	2013/2014	2023/2024	Percent Change
Chatham CSD	9 (1%)	25 (3%)	+177.77%
New Lebanon CSD	0 (0%)	6 (2%)	N/A
Columbia County	232 (3%)	330 (6%)	42.24%
New York State	213,178 (8%)	259,829 (11%)	21.88%

Source: New York State Report Card at <https://data.nysed.gov/>

### Students With Disabilities

Similar to trends related to students in need of ELL, the number of students in need of disability services has also seen an increase over the last 10 years. New Lebanon CSD has had a 64.28% increase, and Chatham CSD has had a 14.56% increase between 2013 and 2024. At the same time, looking at all schools in Columbia County, there has been an overall decrease in students with disabilities, while New York State as a whole has seen a 7.4% increase. Thus, both the Chatham and New Lebanon CSDs have a higher population of students with disabilities.

Table 13: Students with Disabilities, comparing school years 2013-2014 and 2023-2024

Location	2013/2014	2023/2024	Percent Change
Chatham CSD	151 (13%)	173 (20%)	+14.56%
New Lebanon CSD	42 (10%)	69 (18%)	+64.28%
Columbia County	1,199 (16%)	998 (17%)	-16.76%

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New York State	428,063 (16%)	459,771 (19%)	+7.4%
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Source: New York State Report Card at <https://data.nysed.gov/>

### Economically Disadvantaged Students

According to the New York State Department of Education, a student is considered “Economically Disadvantaged” is defined as a “*Student who participates in, or whose family participates in, economic assistance programs, such as the Free or Reduced-Price Lunch Programs; Social Security Insurance (SSI); Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); Foster Care; Refugee Assistance (cash or medical assistance); Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC); Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP); Safety Net Assistance (SNA); Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA); or Family Assistance: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). If one student in a family is identified as low income, all students from that household (economic unit) may be identified as low income.*”

Over the past 10 years, while New York has seen a slight increase in economically disadvantaged students (2.34%), the number of these students in Columbia County has decreased (11.19%). Both Chatham and New Lebanon CSD have seen rather significant increases at 10.05% and 14.9%, respectively.

Table 14: Economically Disadvantaged students, comparing school years 2013-2014 and 2023-2024

Location	2013/2014	2023/2024	Percent Change
Chatham CSD	348 (30%)	394 (46%)	+10.05%
New Lebanon CSD	161 (38%)	185 (47%)	+14.9%
Columbia County	3,402 (47%)	3,021 (52%)	-11.19%
New York State	1,400,573 (53%)	1,433,313 (59%)	+2.33%

Source: New York State Report Card at <https://data.nysed.gov/>

### Graduation Rates

Overall, graduation rates are on the rise across the board. Chatham and New Lebanon are already higher than average, so their percentage increases aren't as large compared to Columbia County.

Table 15: Graduation Rates, comparing school years 2013-2014 and 2023-2024

Location	2013/2014	2023/2024	Percent Change
Chatham CSD	89%	90%	+1.12%

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New Lebanon CSD	97%	100%	+3.09%
Columbia County	82%	87%	+6.09%
New York State	79%	86%	+13.15%

Source: New York State Report Card at <https://data.nysed.gov/>

### High School Dropout Rates

Overall, high school dropout rates across New York State have decreased. However, within Columbia County and within Canaan, these results are mixed. While Columbia County has seen a decrease in the number of high school dropouts, Chatham CSD has seen an increase of 50%. There has been no change in dropout rates in New Lebanon. All of Chatham's dropout rates are more significant than New York State's 5% dropout rate. It is important to note that many of these percentages in change are so high because of the small number of students who go to these schools in the first place.

Table 16. High School Dropout Rates, comparing school years 2013-2014 and 2023-2024

Location	2013/2014	2023/2024	Percent Change
Chatham CSD	4%	6%	+50%
New Lebanon CSD	0%	0%	N/A
Columbia County	8%	6%	-25%
New York State	7%	5%	-28.57%

Source: New York State Report Card at <https://data.nysed.gov/>

### Town Of Canaan Budgets

#### General Fund

General Fund appropriations rose from \$682,490 in 2022 to \$786,004 in 2025 — a 15.2% increase. Over this same period, revenue sources other than taxes (such as fees, interest, and state aid) fluctuated, dipping slightly from \$262,398 in 2022 to \$258,030 in 2023, before rebounding significantly to \$351,525 in 2025. This rebound is largely due to increased revenue from items such as mortgage tax and the reallocation of appropriated fund balance.

Despite these shifts, the amount raised by taxes for the General Fund rose only modestly from \$420,092 in 2022 to \$434,479 in 2025, reflecting a 3.4% increase over three years.

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## Highway Fund

The Highway Fund experienced notable growth in appropriations, increasing from \$797,350 in 2022 to \$906,549 in 2025, or about a 13.7% rise. Revenue for the Highway Fund grew from \$645,000 in 2022 to \$745,836 in 2025. Taxes raised for the Highway Fund remained at \$152,350 between 2022 and 2023, increasing slightly to \$160,713 in 2025, another modest 5.5% rise over three years.

The highway budget increases likely stem from rising personnel costs, inflationary pressures on materials and fuel, and expanded maintenance or capital improvements, particularly in response to increasing state aid through CHIPS and other programs.

## Fire Districts

Canaan has three fire districts: Canaan, East Chatham, and Red Rock. The total combined amount raised by taxes for these districts grew slightly over the past three years.

- Canaan Fire District increased from \$147,275 in 2022 to \$150,220 in 2023, and to \$159,671 by 2025. This 8.4% increase over three years likely reflects rising equipment, training, or operational costs.
- East Chatham Fire District remained stable between 2022 and 2023, with a slight decrease from \$68,940 to \$68,757, before dropping marginally again to \$67,934 in 2025. This reflects a small overall decline of about 1.5%, indicating minimal change in demand or expenditures in that district.
- Red Rock Fire District grew from \$30,906 in 2022 to \$31,215 in 2023 and slightly decreased to \$30,218 in 2025 — effectively flatlining over the three-year period.

Overall, fire district budgets appear to be relatively stable, with small increases or decreases that likely align with capital replacement schedules or shifts in local needs. The most notable increase was seen in the Canaan Fire District, suggesting it may be experiencing higher costs.

## Lighting Districts

Canaan also has three lighting districts: Canaan, East Chatham, and the Richmond Hill Association. These districts fund public street lighting, and their budgeted amounts are notably small but have seen slight changes over time.

- Canaan Lighting District remained flat at \$4,000 in 2022 and 2023, before increasing to \$5,500 in 2025 — a 37.5% increase. This jump may reflect energy cost increases or the addition or upgrade of lighting infrastructure.
- East Chatham Lighting District rose from \$900 in 2022 to \$1,100 in 2023, then to \$1,225 in 2025 — a cumulative increase of 36%. Again, this likely reflects higher utility rates or equipment improvements.
- Richmond Hill Association increased slightly from \$160 in 2022 to \$180 in 2023, and to \$200 by 2025 — small, but consistent with overall inflation.

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These lighting district changes suggest that while the financial burden is low, there has been a conscious effort to keep pace with utility costs and maintain basic infrastructure standards.

### Total Town Budget

Total appropriations across all funds rose from approximately \$1.48 million in 2022 to \$1.69 million in 2025 — a 14.3% increase. At the same time, total revenues (excluding taxes) grew from \$907,398 to \$1,097,361 — an increase of about 20.9%. This indicates that Canaan has diversified its funding sources and relied on state aid, fees, and fund balances to absorb most of the budgetary expansion.

Importantly, the total amount raised by taxes increased only slightly from \$572,442 in 2022 to \$595,192 in 2025, a rise of just under 4%. This suggests that while the town's budget has grown, there hasn't been a significant impact on taxpayers' wallets.

## Historical Resources

### National Register of Historic Places

The Lace House— also known as the Uriah Edwards House— is a listed property on the National Register of Historic Places within Canaan. Designed in 1806 by the Fuller Brothers, it was built for Uriah Edwards, a local entrepreneur and civic leader. Its elegantly ornamented façade—complete with a delicate, lace-like porch featuring fluted pillars, dentils, and medallions—earned it the enduring nickname “Lace House” soon after its construction. Edwards, originally from Massachusetts, opened a store in Flatbrook before building this house. Beyond his business pursuits, he served in multiple public roles—town supervisor, justice, and state assemblyman—until his death in 1851.

In 1983, the Bruschi family undertook a sensitive restoration, upgrading essentials while adding a rear portico inspired by the original design. Their efforts culminated in the house being listed on the National Register of Historic Places on February 21, 1985.

Red Rock Schoolhouse was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2022. It is a historic, restored one-room schoolhouse located in the Red Rock hamlet of Canaan, NY, on County Route 24. It was added to the National and New York State Historic Registers in 2022 and is the subject of a restoration project by the Red Rock Historical Society (RRHS), with recent interior and exterior work completed. The schoolhouse served the community and was a forum for discussions, including those that led to the hamlet being named Red Rock after a prominent red-hued boulder.

Red Rock Monument is on the New York State Register and is currently being reviewed for National Register Listing. It is a historic site in the hamlet of Red Rock, Town of Canaan, dedicated on September 14, 1860, to commemorate the 1790 founding of the hamlet. It features a 12-foot-tall obelisk made of Stockbridge marble, placed atop a large 250-ton red rock boulder, which is the origin of the hamlet's name. The monument was fully restored in 2021 and serves as a symbol of community pride.

### Undetermined Projects:

- Albany and West Stockbridge R.R. Tunnel
- Daniel Warner House

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- Canaan Cemetery
- 117 Smith Lane

Closed Consultation Projects:

- Town of Ghent Telecom Project

Open Consultation Projects:

- Barn Tax Credit at 98 Goetz Rd
- Various Bridges throughout Hudson Valley (25PR05426)

### Other Local Historical Sites

The Donnelly House was officially recognized for its historical and architectural significance when it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on August 2, 2000. This designation highlights the home's importance as a well-preserved example of mid-18<sup>th</sup>-century Colonial architecture in upstate New York and cements its status within the region's cultural heritage. Dating back to circa 1760, this saltbox-style residence features a steeply pitched roof, symmetrical three-bay façade, and a central chimney anchoring its center-hall plan. Set on roughly 24 – 25 acres alongside a gently running creek, the property includes two small barns and retains its original fieldstone foundation and narrow frame siding.

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### Recreational Opportunities

The Town of Canaan, NY, offers a variety of recreational opportunities that reflect its rural character and community life. Queechey Lake is a major recreational asset, offering swimming, boating, and fishing access. The lake is home to the Adams Point Beach Association and the Queechey Lake Club, both of which support local recreation and community events. A public [cartop only](#) boat launch, managed by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), provides access for residents and visitors alike to enjoy [small boats and](#) the lake's beauty.

Stoddard Field Park serves as a central hub for outdoor activity, with open space for sports, picnics, and community gatherings. For those seeking hiking and nature exploration, the Schor Conservation Area, Beebe Hill, and Harvey Mountain State Forest lands offer trails, scenic overlooks, and opportunities for wildlife observation.

Canaan's cultural and historical resources also offer unique experiences. The Canaan and Red Rock Historical Societies maintain local landmarks and host educational programs, and work to preserve the town's rural heritage. Additionally, the Tendai Buddhist Center, located in East Chatham, offers a unique spiritual and contemplative space that is open to the public for events, meditation, and learning.

- Queechey Lake (Adams Point Beach Association, Queechey Lake Club, DEC [cartop](#) boat launch)
- Stoddard Field Park
- Schor Conservation Area
- NYS State Forest

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- Canaan Historical Society
- Red Rock Historical Society
- Red Rock Schoolhouse
- Tendai Buddhist Center

## Community Organizations and Programs

The Town of Canaan, NY, is home to a variety of active community organizations and local programs that contribute to the town's sense of identity and neighborly engagement. Historical societies in the area work to preserve and promote Canaan's rich heritage, while groups such as the Conservation and Rifle Clubs offer opportunities for residents to connect through outdoor and sporting interests. The Columbia Land Conservancy also plays a role in protecting the town's natural resources and encouraging land stewardship through outreach and collaboration.

Local churches provide a foundation for many year-round programs that are open not only to their congregants but to the broader community, serving as gathering places and support networks. The Town of Canaan itself sponsors several inclusive programs, including a weekly Senior Lunch in partnership with the Columbia County Office for the Aging, which offers a social outlet and meal service for older residents. For younger families, the town operates a Learn to Swim Program each summer, helping children build confidence and safety in the water.

Canaan's small local library branch, connected to the Chatham Public Library, provides a range of educational opportunities, including a summer reading program for children, helping to keep young minds active during school breaks. Each June, the town hosts a Community Day celebration that brings residents together to enjoy and support local artists, businesses, and organizations. This annual event reflects Canaan's commitment to fostering civic pride and strengthening community ties across all ages and interests.

- Organizations and programs in Canaan include:
  - Community organizations such as the historical societies
  - Conservation and Rifle Clubs
  - Columbia Land Conservancy
  - Local churches and temples offer various year-round programs for their members and the wider community.
  - The Town hosts a weekly Senior Lunch program in partnership with the CC Office of the Aging.
  - The Town also provides a Learn to Swim Program for local children during the summer.
  - The Town library is a small branch of the Chatham Library and hosts a smaller number of their programs, including a children's Summer reading Program.
  - The Town hosts a Community Day each June to showcase local artists, businesses and community groups and to engage the community.

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## Resource 2: Public Involvement Record

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### Community Survey Results

There were 388 total surveys received. The following details the results of all 388 respondents. The Committee was interested in learning whether there are differences in answers between part-time and full-time residents, or between residents (Q3) who are newcomers compared to people who have lived in Canaan a long time (Q2). This is noted below.

#### **Q1. What is your residency status?**

71% are full-time owners; 22% are part-time owners; 6% are renters (mostly full-time)

#### **Q2. Length of residency in Town?**

54% >20 years; 16% <5 years; 14% 5 to 10 years, 18% 11- 20 years

#### **Q3. Full-time or part-time residency?**

76% full-time; 22% part-time

#### **Q4. Age?**

34% 65-75; 31% 50 to 64 years; 17% 75 years+; 15% 31-49 years; 2% 18 to 30 years.

#### **Q5. Do you have children under 18 years old living in Town?**

88% do not have young children living in Town; 12% do have children living in Town

#### **Q6. Do you work from home in any way?**

34% No work or Retired; 30% work remotely and at another location; 11% have a home business; 10% work entirely remotely; 21% none of the choices

There are many more part-time residents who work from home.

For those who have home-based businesses, the types of home based businesses are:

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#### **Creative & Artistic Work**

- Artists, painters, and illustrators
- Custom art prints, jewelry design, book editing
- Cake bakery
- Freelance alpaca fiber dyeing, Etsy sticker shop
- Art/craft skill teaching

#### **Health, Wellness & Coaching**

- Psychotherapists and mental health professionals
- Leadership coaching, yoga, embodiment practices
- Sound healing, plant medicine, astro-cartography
- Recovery coaching
- Medical transcriptionist

#### **Farming & Landscaping**

- Multiple respondents run small or working farms
- Landscaping and lawn care services
- One respondent is starting a farm to operate full-time in retirement

#### **Consulting & Professional Services**

- UX design, technology, business, nonprofit, and strategic branding consultants
- Law practice, architect, administration, and translation services
- Freelance writing and editing
- Voice acting
- Digital teacher resource design
- Occasional or semi-retired consultants

#### **Sales & Rentals**

- Short-term rental (STR) hosts to support mortgage/tax payments
- Reselling vintage clothes, eBay sales
- Secondhand bookstore
- Real estate services
- Property management

#### **Q7. How important is it for the Town to consider community character in future policy and development?**

60% said this is extremely important; 37% said it is important; 1% had no opinion

#### **Q8. What three words or phrases describe the current character of the Town today?**

##### **◆ Top Positive Themes**

a. **4. Rural & Natural** “Rural” was by far the most common descriptor (used dozens of times).

- Other related words: *bucolic, peaceful, quiet, scenic, natural beauty, open spaces, wooded, rustic, farmland, outdoor, lake, hills, undeveloped.*

**2. Friendly & Community-Oriented** -*Friendly, neighborly, welcoming, supportive, close-knit, community-oriented, cooperative.*

**3. Historic & Quaint** -*Historic, quaint, charming, Mayberryesque, homey, traditional.*

**4. Peaceful & Serene** -*Peaceful, calm, quiet, serene, relaxed, safe.*

**5. Strategic Location** -*Close to Berkshires, proximity to Chatham, accessible, convenient.*

**6. Sleepy/Slow-Paced** -*Sleepy, quiet, mellow, relaxed, slow, uneventful.*

**7. Economically Diverse** -*Mixed wealth, socioeconomically mixed, economic disparity*

**8. In Transition** -*Changing, evolving, transitioning, on the brink.*

**9. Isolated or Disconnected** -*Remote, isolated, dispersed, not cohesive, no clear center.*

◆ **Critical or Concerned Themes**

**1. Aging & Declining** -*Aging population, decaying, run-down, stagnant, declining services.*

**2. Development Pressure & Housing Costs** -*Expensive, unaffordable housing, second-home owners, vacant land disappearing, vulnerable to developers, middle of nowhere.*

**3. Poor Infrastructure or Services** -*Bad internet/cell service, high taxes, scarce services, and underserved.*

**4. Lacking Identity or Center** -*No town center, lacking main street, lacking community pride or cohesion.*

**5. Negative Social Dynamics** -*Cliquey, not welcoming, disconnected from part-time residents, passive-aggressive, hostile, suspicious of change.*

**Q9 Of topics from the 2003 Plan, what are most important to you?**

All topics mentioned were important to the majority of participants. In order, the results were preserve and protect open spaces, protect natural resources and preserve environmentally sensitive areas, support farmers and conservation/expansion of agricultural lands, promote volunteerism, meet the needs of an aging population, address housing needs in a way that preserves the character of the town, protect the historic character, and address business

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infrastructure. Of all the topics, addressing business infrastructure was felt to be important by 36% (compared to 69% for open spaces).

Other Topics of Importance (140 written answers summarized)

◆ Top Issues & Priorities

Affordable & Diverse Housing is a major concern—especially for *young families, local workers, and seniors*.

- Rising short-term rentals are driving up housing costs and removing long-term rentals from the market.
- Suggestions include cooperative housing models and revisiting zoning laws to allow for more flexible density.

Rural Character & Land Use — There is strong support for preserving the town’s rural and natural character, but also recognition that growth is necessary.

- Some want to balance open space protection with sensible development, such as restaurants or public spaces near existing travel corridors.
- Some expressed concern over overregulation of solar panels and housing density.

Infrastructure Needs — High-speed internet and better cell service are repeated and urgent concerns. Residents report being underserved, especially those working remotely or seeking access to online resources.

- Traffic & Transportation -Speeding, dangerous intersections, and truck traffic on Routes 295 and 22 are major safety issues.
- Requests for *lower speed limits*, better enforcement, bike lanes, and public transit options, especially for seniors.

Civic Engagement & Governance – people expressed a need for transparency, accountability, and inclusive leadership from the Town Board and a desire for more nonpartisan, respectful, and welcoming community dialogue.

Support for Local Businesses & Farmers

- Residents want to attract new businesses like cafes, grocery stores, and services that locals can use, not just second-home owners.
- Emphasis on supporting home-based businesses and local farmers through land conservation and local markets.
- Requests for gathering spaces, such as community centers, playgrounds, and cultural venues.
- Interest in events that build connections, particularly between full-time residents and weekenders.

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Environmental Concerns— Protecting Queechy Lake, reducing road salt, managing trash and runoff, and climate resilience are top priorities. People mentioned concerns about deforestation, impacts of truck stops, and poor recycling options.

Frustrations include issues with gun range noise, visual blight, and dilapidated buildings

Lack of walkability and services, and some are concerned about resistance to change.

#### **Q10 The Top Strengths of the Town include:**

##### Natural Environment

- Natural beauty, scenic views, and rural character are consistently celebrated.
- Residents deeply value open space, woodlands, wildlife, and peaceful surroundings.
- Queechy Lake stands out as a treasured asset, mentioned frequently for recreation, beauty, and community identity.

##### Community Values

- Strong sense of community, volunteerism, and neighborliness.
- Residents feel supported, and many describe the town as friendly, welcoming, and caring.
- There's appreciation for a shared rural identity, a quiet pace of life, and mutual respect.

##### Infrastructure & Services

- Good road maintenance and highway access are noted repeatedly.
- Volunteer fire department, emergency services, and town maintenance are viewed positively.
- Small-town size makes it manageable, responsive, and well-run.

##### Leadership & Governance

- Brenda Adams (Town Supervisor) and the Town Board receive high praise for transparency, leadership, and fiscal responsibility.
- Local government is described as approachable, honest, efficient, and bipartisan.
- Several residents noted appreciation for open communication and a thoughtful planning process, including this survey.

##### Location & Access

- Proximity to the Berkshires, Albany, and major highways is a practical advantage.
- Offers access to culture, nature, and urban centers while maintaining a remote, peaceful feel.

##### Highlighted Phrases (Recurring Keywords)

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- “Natural beauty” – one of the most frequently cited strengths.
- “Queechey Lake” – often repeated and seen as a symbol of community pride.
- “Friendly,” “quiet,” “rural,” “peaceful,” “community,” – defining terms of town character.
- “Well-run,” “leadership,” “supportive,” – common language used to describe town operations and governance.

#### Q11. Identified Needs in Town include:

##### Affordable & Accessible Housing

- Most frequently cited issue across responses.
- Residents mentioned:
  - Affordable housing for young families, working people, and seniors.
  - Solutions such as small-scale housing, accessory dwellings, co-housing, and cluster development.
  - Concerns about rising property taxes, housing prices, and short-term rentals pushing out full-time residents.

##### Broadband & Cell Service Gaps

- Widespread frustration with spotty or nonexistent internet and cellular coverage, which impacts:
  - Emergency communications
  - Students and remote workers
  - Equity in services and access
  - Desire for universal broadband and modern infrastructure investment.

##### Traffic, Speeding & Road Conditions, especially on Routes 295, 22, County Route 5, and Tunnel Hill Road.

- Concerns include:
  - Speeding, unsafe intersections, truck traffic, and lack of enforcement.
  - Poor road maintenance, especially on dirt roads and near the transfer station.
  - Requests for lower speed limits, bike lanes, crosswalks, and **slowing traffic calming measures**.

##### Local Governance & Community Inclusion – there were mixed reviews of the Town Board:

- Some praise strong leadership, others call it opaque, cliquish, or unwelcoming to newcomers. Key issues:
  - Lack of transparency, lack of diverse voices, and perceived exclusion of renters, newer residents, and part-timers.
  - Calls for more inclusive planning, communication, and accountability.

##### Lack of Services & Community Amenities where there is a lack of grocery store, pharmacy, diner, gas station, or community gathering places.

- Interest in:

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- Small, locally owned businesses
- Community centers, parks, a coffee shop, or a general store
- Farmers markets and events that build cohesion

Preservation & Balanced Growth – people had a strong desire to preserve rural character and natural beauty (especially Queechy Lake and mountain views) and avoid “overdevelopment,” suburban sprawl, or infrastructure creep. Comments showed desire to be balanced with support for thoughtful development, small-scale business, and sustainable tourism. Some added warnings against turning Canaan into Hudson or Great Barrington.

Aging Population & Senior Needs include:

- Transportation
- Medical services
- Home maintenance support
- Social programs and community connection

Recurring Key Words/Phrases

- Affordable housing
- Broadband / internet
- Speeding / roads
- Transparency / governance
- Short-term rentals (STRs)
- Queechy Lake
- Community center / gathering space
- Preserve rural character

**Q 12 Ideas Offered to Address Needs Include:**

Affordable & Diverse Housing – this was a strong and repeated theme with a need for more affordable housing for:

- Seniors, young families, and working residents
- Options like cluster housing, accessory dwelling units (ADUs), and co-housing
- Emphasis on retaining rural character while meeting housing needs

High-Speed Internet & Cell Service with calls for

- 100% high-speed internet coverage
- Investment in infrastructure and towers
- Municipal internet options

Community Spaces & Gathering Places include a community center with intergenerational programming, restaurants, cafes, a general store, and library expansion, and more community events: potlucks, concerts, fairs, storytelling, festivals

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Recreation & Trails including walking/biking trails, loop paths, and safe roadside lanes, more amenities at Stoddard Park and Adams Point Beach, dog parks and access to nature

Sustainable Development & Agriculture had much support for

- Local food systems: farm markets, co-ops, roadside stands
- Protection of farmland and natural resources
- Eco-tourism and low-impact recreation
- Climate resilience, including tree preservation and solar support

Governance & Leadership Suggestions included more public engagement, better communication (e.g., newsletters, notices, meeting summaries) and more diverse representation on boards and committees, especially non-legacy residents

Roads, Traffic & Safety included:

- Speeding on Routes 295, 22, and local roads
- Unsafe intersections (especially near Queechy Lake and truck stop)
- Dust and mud season road conditions
- Suggestions included lower speed limits, sidewalks and crosswalks and more regular road maintenance

Community Events & Social Connection suggestions included

- Annual gatherings, like a community day, holiday events, music nights
- Public forums, storytelling, or intergenerational meetups
- Engagement that brings together longtime locals and newer residents

Most Frequently Repeated Ideas (in many forms)

- Affordable housing
- Broadband/internet
- Community center
- Restaurants/general store
- Dog park
- Safer roads
- Recreation trails
- Transparent government
- Term limits
- Support for farms and local business

#### **Q13 How important is it for Town to address environmental threats?**

All were extremely important to important, with addressing water pollution as the threat that had the most importance. Flooding was important, but less so than the others. Regarding thoughts about climate change, more new residents think this is an important issue than

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residents who have been in Canaan longer. More newer residents feel that loss of habitat is important, but even a majority of long-term residents feel that is important.

Written comments on this question include:

### Preservation of Natural Resources

- Queechy Lake: Repeated emphasis on protecting its cleanliness, safety, and access.
- Strong desire to:
  - Preserve forests, wetlands, and open space
  - Restrict clear-cutting, overdevelopment, and solar/wind farms in inappropriate areas
  - Prevent development near sensitive areas like Beebe Pond and Stony Kill wetland

### Wildlife & Ecosystem Protection

- Pollinator support, soil health, and biodiversity
- Controlling invasive species and overpopulation of deer
- Preventing wildlife mortality from roads (e.g., underpasses, signs, tunnels)

### Climate Resilience & Wildfire Readiness

- Vegetation management along roads
- Fire hazard reduction strategies
- County-level wildfire response planning

### Water Quality & Septic Management

- Septic leaching, aging or neglected systems
- Runoff from roads, fertilizer use, and drinking water protection
- Monitoring and testing of groundwater, especially near lakes and wetlands

### Pollution, Waste & Recycling

- Garbage accumulation near the truck stop and transfer station
- Lack of recycling services at the transfer station (especially for cardboard, aluminum)
- Need for community composting, bulk cleanup efforts, and enforcement against littering

### Renewable Energy & Sustainable Practices

- Divided views:
  - Many support rooftop solar, wind power, and renewable energy planning
  - Several call for less restrictive zoning/building codes for solar
  - Some oppose large-scale solar/wind farms due to impact on character and wildlife

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Governance, Zoning & Education --- Residents want the Town to:

- Enforce zoning and land use rules to limit fragmentation of natural areas
- Partner with state/federal agencies to manage pollution, habitat, and wildfires
- Offer community education on recycling, wildlife, and sustainable land care

Most Frequent Issues Mentioned

- Queechey Lake protection
- Wildfire preparation
- Septic and water quality
- Road dust and vehicle emissions
- Noise and light pollution (especially near truck stops)
- Tree cutting and loss of canopy
- Need for more realistic, local environmental planning over abstract climate policy

#### Q14 Types of Businesses Desired included:

Food & Grocery

- Grocery store: Most commonly requested type; residents want:
  - Affordable, healthy options (like Chatham Berry Farm or New Lebanon Farmers Market)
  - Small supermarket, co-op, or general store
- Farm stands / Farmers markets: Strong desire to support local agriculture and access fresh produce
- Pharmacy: Noted gap in basic health services

Community-Oriented Eateries

- Cafés and coffee shops:
  - Seen as vital gathering spaces to foster community connection
  - Calls for cozy, affordable options with Wi-Fi and casual dining
- Restaurants:
  - Emphasis on family-friendly, local, farm-to-table, and sit-down dining
  - Several references to reviving or repurposing Backwater Grille and Lily's Diner
  - Some want ice cream stands, bakeries, and brunch cafes

Convenience & Services

- General and convenience stores (e.g., Stewarts, Cumberland Farms)
- Hardware stores, auto repair, and home service trades (plumbers, electricians, handymen)
- Laundromat and car wash

Community, Arts, and Wellness

- Artisan markets, craft shops, and local artist spaces
- Yoga studios, coworking spaces, and community wellness hubs

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- Cultural venues for performances, art shows, or storytelling events

Lodging & Hospitality

- Boutique inns, bed & breakfasts, and eco-tourism retreats
- Limited support for hotels, with preference for locally owned

Niche or Specialized Requests

- Worker-owned co-ops and community-supported agriculture (CSA)
- Zero-waste cafes and herbal apothecaries
- Gun shops, supply stores, and small manufacturing (minority view)
- Bookstore doubling as a gathering hub
- Diner with “free coffee refills” for community charm

Community Guidance

- Desire for businesses that reflect Canaan’s rural character
- Avoid chain stores, big-box development, or businesses creating light/noise pollution
- Importance of zoning compliance and local ownership

**Q15. Types of Businesses Not Desired**

Big Box & Chain Stores

- Strong opposition to:
  - Big box retailers (Walmart, Dollar General, Stewarts, etc.)
  - Chain restaurants (McDonald’s, Dunkin Donuts, Olive Garden)
  - Corporate/franchise stores
- Concerns:
  - Loss of small-town and rural character
  - Visual blight and generic development
  - Disruption to local economy and local business growth

Truck Stops, Gas Stations, & Auto Repair

- Repeated rejection of:
  - Additional truck stops (especially near Exit B3)
  - More gas stations
  - Auto repair shops, especially those perceived as eyesores
- Issues:
  - Pollution, noise, visual impact
  - Traffic and safety concerns

Cannabis Businesses

- Many oppose:

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- Cannabis dispensaries
- Cannabis farming or outlet stores
- Views vary, but a consistent number see these as inappropriate for the town character

Heavy Industry & Polluting Uses

- Opposed uses include:
  - Factories, warehouses, manufacturing plants, quarries
  - Polluting industries or those that impact air, water, or soil
- Environmental and aesthetic concerns dominate

Short-Term Rentals & AirBnBs

- Airbnb proliferation reducing housing for full-time residents
- Impact on community character, sense of “outsiders”

Additional Frequently Opposed Uses

- Adult Entertainment: strip clubs, bars, casinos, head shops
- Storage Units: seen as a poor use of land and unappealing
- Fast Food: strong preference for avoiding franchises and drive-thrus
- “Luxury” Development: concern over upscale real estate or boutique-only businesses displacing local culture
- Overbuilt Housing: no large developments or “cookie-cutter” subdivisions
- “Noisy” or “disruptive” places: venues with loud music or nightlife

**Q16. Should the Towns zoning allow for expanded opportunities in zoning for more commercial businesses in Town?**

58% said “It Depends”; 19% said “yes”; 18% said “no”; 4% said “no opinion”

More newer residents said “yes” than long-term residents.

Comments about “it Depends and where should commercial uses be located” is summarized as:

Canaan residents expressed a wide spectrum of opinions on commercial development, with most supporting some expansion or flexibility—but only under clear, thoughtful, and protective conditions. There is strong consensus that any new commercial activity must respect Canaan’s rural character, scenic beauty, and the integrity of its neighborhoods.

Location Matters: Many respondents emphasized that commercial businesses should be located along major corridors—Route 22, Route 295, and the I-90 interchange (Exit B3)—where traffic and visibility are

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already high and where existing commercial activity is concentrated. These locations were seen as appropriate for limited growth without disrupting the town's rural setting. A few respondents mentioned the Four Corners intersection or areas near Town Hall as potential hubs for small-scale, community-oriented businesses.

**Type and Scale of Business:** There was overwhelming opposition to big box stores, franchises, or heavy industrial uses. Residents prefer small, locally-owned businesses that serve everyday community needs—such as a deli, coffee shop, local repair services, farmers markets, or retail for locally made goods. Businesses should fit the scale and style of the town, avoid environmental harm, and not generate excessive noise, light, or traffic.

**Preservation and Aesthetic Concerns:** Multiple respondents called for aesthetic standards, green design, and restrictions to protect scenic views, open spaces, natural habitats, and farmland. Businesses should not be allowed to “sprawl” into the countryside or near lakes, including Queechy Lake. Some residents expressed alarm at existing “eyesores” and urged that new commercial zones avoid further visual or environmental degradation.

**Conditional Support:** Support for new commercial uses often came with caveats. Many wrote “it depends”—on the type of business, its size, the specific location, traffic impact, and whether it aligns with the town's values and future goals. Others have urged case-by-case approval or thoughtful planning processes to ensure businesses bring true benefit to the town rather than short-term profit for a few.

**Economic and Community Benefits:** Several residents acknowledged that expanding the commercial tax base could help relieve residential tax burdens and provide job opportunities for locals, especially youth and working families. However, they stressed that these benefits must be weighed against potential downsides and managed through public input and clear zoning criteria.

**Mixed Views:** While many residents were cautious but open to modest commercial expansion, others were more skeptical—warning against over-commercialization or encroachments on quiet rural living. A few respondents firmly opposed any zoning changes, while others expressed concern about short-term rental-related businesses or the lack of zoning enforcement in general.

**Planning Recommendations Echoed in Responses:**

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- Prioritize development in or near existing commercial zones.
- Establish or maintain aesthetic and environmental performance standards.
- Require community notification and input for significant zoning changes.
- Avoid allowing business uses that would disrupt residential quality of life.
- Promote small-scale, homegrown, or craft-oriented business models.

**Q17. How do you feel about allowing or not allowing additional franchised businesses in Town?**

53% said “do not allow”; 28% said “It Depends”, 12% said “allow”; 7% had no opinion.

Comments about why “It Depends”

While a small number of respondents expressed enthusiastic support for added conveniences, most offered conditional or cautious approval, and many voiced strong opposition rooted in a desire to protect the community’s rural identity and local economy that revolved around the following key takeaways:

1. **Location-Sensitive Support**— Many residents indicated that franchise businesses might be acceptable near the I-90 interchange at Exit B3, which is already a commercial corridor with significant traffic. These areas are seen as a buffer zone where necessary services (like fuel, groceries, or coffee) could be offered without disrupting the core character of the town.
2. **Scale, Design, and Character Matter**— Numerous comments stressed that any potential franchise must “fit in” aesthetically—with architectural styles, signage, and lighting designed to reflect the rural and historic charm of Canaan. There’s a call for avoiding garish branding, strip-mall aesthetics, excessive lighting, and homogenized national designs that could erode Canaan’s unique identity.
3. **Strong Preference for Local Businesses**— Many residents expressed a desire to support local, independent, and family-owned businesses over national chains, citing the importance of community investment, job creation, and economic recirculation. Franchises were often described as extractive—bringing outside ownership and profit models that don’t benefit the community in the long run.
4. **Divided Views on Specific Brands** -A few respondents cited specific franchises like Starbucks, Target, or a grocery store as potentially welcome, especially if they address local service gaps (e.g., food, pharmacy, household goods). Others were firmly opposed to fast food chains, big box stores, and Dollar General-type developments, fearing a shift toward commercial sprawl and loss of small-town charm.

Some supported franchises only under strict conditions:

- With design and aesthetic controls
- If scale or location is right
- Located in limited areas (e.g., Exit B3 or along Route 22).
- Subject to community input or polling before approval.
- Demonstrating clear public benefit (jobs, tax revenue, essential goods).
- Required to meet design, environmental, and compatibility standards.

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**Q18. Should residents or homeowners be allowed to operate a home business that includes outdoor activities such as weddings, parties, dining, music, movies, glamping, etc. in residential zones?**

44% said “no”; 41% said “yes”; 14% said “no opinion”

A significant number of newer residents feel it is OK to have these home businesses than long-term residents.

**Q19. How do you feel about short term rentals?**

35% short term rentals were “good for the town”; 32% said they were “not sure”; 27% said they were “bad for the town”; and 7% had no opinion.

Other Comments about Short Term Rentals include noise, traffic, and intensity of use near neighbors. Some activities (like weddings, dining, or events) are more tolerable than others. Zoning should consider lot size, buffering, and neighbor proximity.

Loss of housing stock for full-time residents

- “They drive up housing prices.”
- “Harder for young families to buy or rent.”
- Erosion of community— STRs do not contribute to civic life (e.g., fire department, community events) and lead to frequent turnover leads to “strangers” instead of neighbors.
- Nuisance and safety issues include noise, overcrowding, trash, parking, fireworks, and disruptive guests and concern over absentee landlords and lack of accountability.
- Inconsistent enforcement and rushed regulation including frustration over the recent STR law being passed without broader engagement with requests for revisiting the law with more inclusive input.

Some agree some STRs are okay if:

- Owner-occupied or locally owned
- Limited in number across the town
- Inspected for safety (fire, septic, water)
- Taxed or registered like businesses
- Managed through a permit system with revocation clauses

Themes in Support include promote local entrepreneurship and allow flexibility for home-based income, as well as require review/approval to ensure compatibility with rural and residential character and distinguish between “low-impact” (crafts, home offices) and “high-impact” (venues, food service) uses.

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## Q 20 Do you believe the Town is supportive of Agriculture?

47% said “yes”; 46% said “no opinion” and 7% said “no”

More long-term residents feel that agriculture does not have support than those who are 5-10 year residents.

Ideas to Enhance Agriculture include:

- Most respondents value local agriculture and want to see more support—particularly for small-scale, regenerative, and family-run farms.
- However, many are unsure of what support currently exists or how the Town actively promotes agriculture.

### Direct Sales & Community Markets

- Establish a farmers market or co-op grocery store in Town.
- Promote CSA programs, farm stands, and roadside produce sales.
- Create a central market space at the Town Park or along Route 22/295.

### Support for Farmers

- Expand or improve tax incentives for working farms (beyond NYS ag exemption).
- Provide property tax relief for active agriculture, including homes on farms.
- Offer technical or infrastructure support (e.g., shared equipment, soil improvement, cold storage).

### Access for New & Young Farmers

- Match landowners with aspiring farmers via partnerships (e.g., CLC, NY Young Farmers Coalition).
- Encourage landowners to lease unused farmland.
- Provide housing incentives or reduced rent for farm workers and new farm startups.

### Zoning & Land Use

- Protect agricultural zones from overdevelopment or solar farm sprawl.
- Prevent overregulation of farm-related structures, signage, or operations.
- Permit agritourism, glamping, or farm stays under conditional use (with oversight).
- Limit industrial-scale or unsightly practices (e.g., fur farms, large cannabis operations).

### Education, Promotion, and Culture

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- Host farm tours, ag-education events, or community farming days.
- Promote seed saving, herbal farming, ancestral practices, and 4-H programs.
- Offer workshops on growing food, soil health, composting, and climate-resilient practices.

Sustainability Focus

- Encourage biodynamic, regenerative, and organic farming.
- Explore agrivoltaics (solar + farming) and eco-certification incentives.
- Ban or discourage operations that threaten air/water (e.g., overuse of chemicals, poor animal waste management).

**Q21 Should the Town be proactive to facilitate development of housing to meet the needs of seniors, working families and individuals?**

65% said “yes”; 21% said “no” and 14% had no opinion

More part time residents answer had no opinion than full time residents – more full time residents said “no.”

Other comments include”

- Many residents recognize the need for diverse, affordable, and senior-friendly housing, but want development to align with Canaan’s rural character.
- Opinions vary significantly—from those who strongly oppose any new development to those who advocate for innovative housing solutions.

Suggestions to Meet Housing Needs include

- Rehabilitate existing buildings (e.g., vacant homes, motels, and the former Berkshire Farm campus).
- Allow accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and small homes on existing lots.
- Cluster housing preserves open space and create walkable hubs.
- Encourage multi-family units, duplexes, or senior housing in limited areas.
- Zoning reform to allow smaller lot sizes, more density, or mixed-use housing.
  
- Support for one-level homes, assisted living, or senior apartment clusters.
- Interest in mixed-generational models (e.g., childcare for seniors’ services).
- Desire for transportation services and tax breaks for senior residents.
  
- Allow tiny homes, townhouses, modular homes, and co-housing.
- Promote rent-to-own models or partner with nonprofits like Habitat for Humanity.
- Convert short-term rentals into long-term workforce housing.
- Offer real estate tax incentives for housing serving lower-income residents.

Concerns and Conditions

- Strong opposition to:

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- Large-scale developments
- Big apartment complexes
- Trailer parks in certain locations
- Worries about increased traffic, crime, or infrastructure strain.
- Fears of “urbanizing” or changing the rural charm and “peaceful” character of Canaan.
- Calls for careful site selection, design standards, and transparency.

**Q22. Is there enough housing for younger families and individuals?**

50% said “no”; 33% had no opinion; 17% said “yes”

**Q 23 Do you have a family member that would like to live in Canaan but cannot?**

83% said they do not have a family member in that situation; 18% said yes, they do have family members who would like to live in Canann but cannot. Full time residents significantly feel that there is more need for family seeking housing than part time residents do.

Comments as to why they cannot include:

- Overwhelmingly, respondents said housing is too expensive—to rent or buy.
- Working people, even with good jobs (e.g., nurses, tradespeople), are priced out.
- Some residents noted that even they can only afford to stay in Canaan by living with family.
  
- Lack of Available Housing Options
  
- Very few rentals or starter homes exist in town.
  - Some homes that are available are In disrepair, already bought by investors or cash buyers or they are renovated and turned into expensive rentals or AirBnBs
  
- Even those with mortgages say property taxes have made their homes unaffordable.
- Seniors and working families note that taxes have increased hundreds per month, putting pressure on fixed incomes.
  
- Comments also mentioned:
  - Large minimum lot sizes
  - Complicated subdivision laws
  - Lack of public transportation, services, or housing for single individuals or small families
  - Poor infrastructure for youth and seniors

**Q24 There are different ways to provide housing opportunities in town. Besides single-family housing, are you in favor of seeing any of the following types of housing in town available to any resident?**

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Two-family homes and development that promotes smaller homes like tiny houses were favored (53% and 47%, respectively). Townhouses and small apartments (1-9 units) had mixed opinions but more people who did not favor them (45% and 43% respectively). Large apartment buildings > 10 units were not favored by the majority (76%). More full time residents are in favor of smaller (tiny) homes than part time residents.

For those who answered, "It Depends," comments include:

- Location is everything: Most want new development near the interstate, Route 295, or existing commercial areas.
- Design must reflect rural character: People want small-scale, well-designed, energy-efficient buildings that fit the landscape and "look good."
- Infrastructure is a concern: Support hinges on water, septic, and traffic capacity.
- Accessory dwellings, like in-law units or garage apartments, are broadly supported.
- Many residents are wary of scale and poor placement, citing:
  - Loss of rural charm
  - Impact on water/septic
  - Decrease in property values
  - Fear of poor property management

**Q25 What other concerns do you have regarding Housing in Canaan?**

- Home prices and property taxes are too high for:
  - Young families and first-time buyers
  - Retirees on fixed incomes
  - Long-time residents who want to stay
- Second-home buyers and short-term rentals are driving up costs and limiting availability.
- Residents care about the rural, quiet nature of Canaan.
- There's broad concern about:
  - Overdevelopment
  - Loss of open space
  - "McMansions" and hilltop mega-homes
  - Apartment complexes or trailer parks
- Strong resistance to:
  - Section 8 housing
  - Government-subsidized or large-scale development
  - Any perceived "urbanization" of the rural landscape
- Concerns about crime, property values, and incompatible lifestyles
- Some feel the planning and zoning process lacks transparency and favors outside developers or government agendas.
- Others support flexible zoning to allow:

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- Accessory dwellings (ADUs)
- Cluster development in designated areas
- Renovation of new builds
  
- There's tension between preserving Canaan's character and welcoming:
  - New families
  - Lower-income residents
  - Long-term renters
- Some residents feel the town is becoming exclusive, unaffordable, and isolated from real community needs.
  - Constructive Ideas included adaptive reuse of existing homes and vacant properties, encouraging infill development near commercial corridors, Supporting home-based businesses and historic preservation, promoting housing that's sustainably built, visually consistent and right-sized for Canaan

Additional Recurring Themes:

- Dark sky/light pollution concerns
- Lack of public transportation
- Need for small businesses and services to support residents (e.g., laundromat, food, child care)
- Concerns about volunteer fire/EMS sustainability if young people can't afford to live here

**Q26 Please rate the adequacy of public services.**

All services listed were identified by the majority as "adequate" by the majority. The Town Transfer Station had the lowest number of people, indicating it was not adequate (35%) but 55% said it was adequate. More part time residents have no opinion on most of the public services than full time residents.

Comments on Services include complaints about rutted, muddy, dusty, and poorly maintained roads with potholes. Some called the surfaces at the transfer station "dangerous" and likening them to a "third world" condition. There's also frustration with road priorities, as some feel paved roads receive disproportionate attention compared to heavily used gravel ones. Seasonal issues like mud season and snowplowing were mentioned repeatedly. Several residents advocated dust control measures and calcium treatments, noting that these were once routine but have since lapsed. Others emphasized the importance of keeping Canaan's roads unpaved to retain its rural charm—but still expect higher-quality upkeep.

Residents expressed concern about response times for ambulance and sheriff services. While there is support for local fire and EMT volunteers, some noted that ambulance delays and limited sheriff visibility leave gaps in public safety. Suggestions included more local EMS support, and improving coordination and response capabilities.

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The transfer station drew the most feedback. Residents said:

- Potholes and poor road surfaces leading in and out.
- Lack of recycling options (especially when required to travel to other towns for basic recycling).
- Limited hours of operation.
- Access challenges for seniors and non-truck owners due to the height of dumpsters.
- Perceived loss of promised “free” use in exchange for allowing the facility in town.

Many called for paving the entrance, adding recycling services, accepting compost and e-waste, and improving overall cleanliness and organization. Some supported changes like permit checks and waste limits, while others questioned enforcement and fairness, especially for part-time residents.

Regarding communication with residents:

- Infrequent or inaccessible updates (especially for those without reliable internet).
- A lack of context or clarity around board decisions and proposed laws.
- Poor usability of the town website.
- Distrust in how public input is handled, with some feeling decisions are made without real community engagement.
- Suggestions included regular newsletters, a stronger online presence, and clearer summaries of local laws and proposals rather than referencing only law numbers.

#### **Q27 How adequate are services in Canaan for our senior citizens?**

This question had a lot of “no opinion” (further analysis could pull out those comments from senior citizens to evaluate it more fully.) Long-term residents significantly feel these services are adequate while more newer residents have no opinion. Overall, the services were considered “adequate” by a smaller number of respondents. Transportation (41%) and backup electricity (37%) were considered not adequate. However, more than 50% of all respondents said “no opinion” to this question.

Other Services for Seniors Needed include:

The most consistent concern is the lack of public or senior-specific transportation. Many noted the difficulty seniors face in accessing doctors, groceries, or even social opportunities without a car. Ideas included:

- A local shuttle or weekly bus for errands and appointments.

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- Volunteer driver programs or partnerships with taxi/ride-share services.
- Better road and utility infrastructure to ensure accessibility, especially during outages or emergencies.

Health and Home Support

Residents noted a need for more in-home caregiving support, visiting nurses, and short-term medical care—especially for those aging in place. Several reported difficulty finding nursing services after hospitalization, and others suggested:

- Wellness checks and phone call programs.
- A town-run registry of vetted home care providers.
- Support with home maintenance, yard work, and errands for those with limited mobility.

Social Connection and Mental Wellbeing

Isolation was identified as a risk for seniors. Respondents requested:

- Social and recreational programming, like senior centers, writing groups, movie nights, and intergenerational events.
- Community meals and expanded Meals on Wheels programs.
- Digital literacy programs to help seniors stay connected online.

Communication and Awareness

Many said they were unaware of existing services or unclear on how to access them. Suggestions included:

- A printed resource guide for seniors.
- Town outreach or a designated senior services coordinator.
- Online updates and information sessions.

Equity and Responsibility

Some felt the town should do more to protect seniors on fixed incomes, suggesting:

- Tax relief or protection from rising assessments.
- Better planning for emergency backup power and shelter access.

Conversely, a few felt that rural living inherently requires self-reliance, and the town should not take on more responsibility. However, the dominant sentiment leaned toward strengthening supports, especially for vulnerable or isolated residents.

**Q28. Do you support public swimming at Queechy Lake?**

66% said “yes”; 14% said “no”, 17% said “it depends”; and 4% had no opinion

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Comments from those that said “it Depends” include:

A mix of strong support, cautious openness, and pointed concerns. While many residents affirm the value of shared access to natural resources, others raise serious reservations about safety, overcrowding, maintenance, and preserving the lake’s small-town character.

Some called for:

- Expanded day passes or open membership options.
- Continued or increased access for Canaan and New Lebanon residents.
- Public access as a signal of community vibrancy and welcome for working families and new residents.

Some were not opposed to public access outright, but emphasized the need for:

- Limits on capacity, particularly on busy weekends.
- Rules and enforcement, such as lifeguards, noise control, and litter prevention.
- Fee structures that distinguish between residents, part-time residents, and visitors.
- Designated swimming areas away from boating lanes for safety.
- Maintaining Adams Point Beach with controlled access but possibly expanding services or hours.

#### Concerns and Opposition

A number of respondents expressed concern or opposition to increased or unmanaged public access, especially from non-residents. Key issues included:

- Safety risks, particularly swimmers in boating zones.
- Environmental degradation, including pollution, invasive species, and damage from overuse.
- Overcrowding and noise affecting the lake’s peacefulness and property values.
- Frustration with high costs of access for residents, especially longtime or full-time residents.

Some called for Queechey Lake access to remain exclusive to residents or members, with day pass options limited or eliminated for the general public. A few respondents also expressed dissatisfaction with current management or questioned whether the town could feasibly operate the beach if Adams Point Beach Association did not.

#### **Q29 How important is it for the Town to focus on youth in Canaan?**

37% said “extremely important”; 40% said it was “important”, 6% said it was “not important” and 17% had no opinion.

Other public input regarding youth support in the Town of Canaan includes:

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Recognition that while the number of children and teens in town may be relatively small, youth engagement is a key to attracting and retaining young families, encouraging civic involvement, and building a more connected and resilient community.

- Bring back summer camp, recreation, and after-school programs.
- Provide day trips, sports clinics, and club-based activities in the park and at community venues.
- Offer year-round events, such as movie nights, arts classes, nature clubs, and music nights.
  
- A community center or indoor youth space for cold or rainy weather.
- Public Wi-Fi areas and creative spaces (like skate parks, media labs, or tech and arts workshops).
- Peer-led or youth-advisory boards to shape future events and policies.
  
- Programs focused on trades (carpentry, plumbing, etc.), job training, entrepreneurship, and volunteerism.
- Ideas for intergenerational mentorships, pairing teens with seniors to help with yard work, tech support, or companionship.
- Summer and after-school employment opportunities, including internships with local government or businesses.
  
- Address affordable housing so families with children can live and stay in Canaan.
- Provide transportation to programs in neighboring towns like Chatham or New Lebanon if needed.
- Ensure that costs are not a barrier to participating in activities or accessing spaces like Queechey Lake.
  
- Invest in young people helps build community pride and continuity. Ideas ranged from forming a youth council, to encouraging youth-led initiatives and volunteer events. One comment summed it up.

### Q30. How important is it for the Town government to sponsor community events?

54% said it was “important”; 30% said it was “extremely important”, 10% said “not important”, and 7% had no opinion.

Community feedback on community events include:

#### Strengthening Belonging Through Events

Some respondents emphasized that community events build a sense of place and togetherness, especially in a rural town like Canaan. Seasonal festivals, lake days, concerts, food truck nights, and farmers markets were seen as powerful ways to bridge divides between full-time and part-time residents. A recurring theme was the idea that people don’t need polished events, they just need an invitation to belong.

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#### Expand on What's Already Working

Existing events like Canaan Day, Red Rock Firehouse dinners, and town picnics were praised. Several people said they wanted to see these events expanded or repeated more frequently. Others mentioned that monthly or seasonal events—such as trivia nights, ice cream socials, outdoor movie nights, or craft fairs—could help sustain momentum year-round.

#### Ideas for All-Ages and Multigenerational Gatherings

- Talent shows, storytelling nights, and open mic events.
- Holiday events: bonfires, light displays, caroling, and community Thanksgiving dinners.
- Creative engagement: artist showcases, gardening days, book swaps, and DIY workshops.
- Cultural gatherings: world food festivals, interfaith potlucks, and heritage/history walks.

Many responses highlighted the potential of Stoddard Park as a community gathering space. Some suggested using the town boardroom or town hall for colder-weather events or as a flexible year-round venue. Indoor suggestions included repair cafes, speaker series, movie nights, and skill-sharing events.

Some respondents viewed community events as more than just fun—they are also a way to strengthen civic engagement and pride. Ideas like neighborhood clean-up days, seed or tool swaps, volunteer fairs, and “meet your neighbor” socials were common. A few proposed monthly newsletters, radio drills, or town-wide challenges to foster involvement and preparedness.

There was encouragement to partner with local churches, volunteer groups, fire departments, schools, and nearby towns. Many noted that events don't need to be expensive to be meaningful. Potlucks, tag sales, bonfires, and informal game nights were all seen as high-impact but low-cost ways to bring people together.

#### **Q31. How adequate is the Town's Stoddard Park?**

46% said “adequate”; 13% said “very adequate”, 21% said “not adequate” and 21% had no opinion.

#### Other Comments about Stoddard Park:

Community feedback regarding Stoddard Park revealed a strong appreciation for its potential, but also sentiment that the park is underutilized, outdated, and in need of revitalization to better serve the needs of Canaan's diverse population. Residents expressed gratitude for recent upgrades, especially the new playground equipment, which several noted has made the space more inviting for younger children. Some praised the park's basic “bones” and natural setting, and others mentioned excitement about possible future improvements and community events being hosted there.

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Common Concerns Identified

1. Outdated or Underwhelming Facilities
  - o Many described the park as “run-down,” “sad,” or “underused,” particularly referencing old playground structures, neglected picnic pavilions, and lack of modern amenities.
  - o The bathroom and grill areas were described as poorly maintained, with some calling for complete replacement.
2. Accessibility and Infrastructure Issues
  - o Frequent concerns were raised about insufficient parking, muddy conditions, and lack of paved paths or ADA-compliant infrastructure.
  - o Seniors and families noted the need for more shaded seating, better walkways, and universal design elements to make the space accessible and welcoming for all.
3. Limited Activities and Purpose
  - o Residents want more variety beyond youth sports. Ideas included:
    - Walking trails or fitness paths
    - Botanical gardens, native plantings, or pollinator gardens
    - Dog park, a highly popular suggestion repeated throughout
    - Passive recreation zones for reading, meditation, or senior use
    - Community garden space
  - o Several asked whether the baseball field, tennis courts, and open fields could be better utilized or redesigned to reflect current usage patterns.
4. Geese and Cleanliness
  - o Goose droppings were a major complaint, especially related to the open lawn and field areas. Some suggested that dog activity or strategic landscaping could help deter geese.

Numerous residents called for the park to be better designed, to reflect the changing demographics of the town and better support multigenerational, intergenerational, and year-round use.

Suggestions included:

- A dog park with fencing and modest infrastructure
- More playground features for older kids
- Walking loops, native gardens, and environmental education signage
- Music pavilion or amphitheater space
- Upgraded pavilions with BBQ areas and seating for group events

**Q32. Which of the following are the best ways the Town can communicate with its residents and landowners?**

88% said via “email”, 70% said via the Town’s website; 55% on social media; 27% local paper, and 26% local newspaper (note that these last two categories are the same thing).

Other comments offered include Narrative Summary: Reach a diverse population—including older residents without internet access, part-time homeowners, and younger people who prefer digital platforms. Direct mail, bulletin boards at Stoddard Park, Post Office, Town Hall, use of a community

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kiosk, and use multiple strategies. A few people felt the current Town website is outdated and not user-friendly. Some people do not use or trust social media, while others rely on it entirely. Lack of a central, recognizable community newspaper since the folding of the Echo has made town news harder to find. Suggestions included a “Town Historian” column in newsletters, welcome packets for new residents, and periodic community listening sessions.

### Q33 Other Comments Summarized

Residents of Canaan expressed an appreciation for the town’s rural character, natural beauty, and small-town atmosphere. Many comments reflected a strong desire to preserve what makes Canaan unique—it’s quiet, scenic landscapes, its agricultural traditions, and the sense of peace it offers both full-time and seasonal residents. For many, Canaan is a sanctuary worth protecting.

At the same time, a wide range of voices called for thoughtful progress and greater inclusion. Residents spoke about the need to balance growth with preservation, emphasizing that while they do not want Canaan to become overdeveloped or gentrified, they also don’t want it to stagnate. A key concern was affordability—from housing to lake access to everyday services, which is seen as essential to keeping young families, seniors, and working people in town.

Numerous responses highlighted community connection and transparency as vital areas for improvement. People want to feel more informed and involved in local governance, and many noted concerns about decision-making processes being too insular or opaque. There were repeated calls for better communication—via mailings, online updates, bulletin boards, and even emergency alerts—and for more diverse participation in town committees and boards, including term limits and outreach to new voices.

Infrastructure was another common thread. Residents cited concerns with road conditions, especially during mud season, and the transfer station’s accessibility, maintenance, and function. Several respondents expressed frustration with limited cell service and high-speed internet access, noting that these issues impact both quality of life and the ability to work remotely.

Residents also expressed enthusiasm for revitalizing community life, especially through events, recreation, and spaces that bring people together. Suggestions ranged from seasonal festivals and lake days to potlucks, concerts, repair cafés, and scavenger hunts. Many voiced support for improving Stoddard Park, expanding youth and senior services, and creating more places for intergenerational gathering. Several asked for more inclusive programs and support for seniors, and better transportation and medical access.

Housing was a consistent comment throughout—both the lack of affordable options and the tension between second-home ownership and long-term residency. Some fear rising property values are

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displacing locals and altering the fabric of the town. Others encouraged more flexible zoning to allow for modest housing, accessory dwellings, and sustainable development. A few voiced opposition to any zoning changes, preferring to maintain the status quo.

There were some differences in opinions—particularly regarding short-term rentals, taxes, and growth—but a common message was to keep Canaan's character intact, support its people, ensuring transparency in government, and foster a deeper sense of community belonging.

### Summary of Comparison of Part Time to Full Time Resident Responses

Full Time Compared to Part Time Residents: An analysis was conducted to determine if full time residents have significantly different opinions than part time residents. Overwhelmingly, no statistically significant differences were found between these two groups for most of the answers. Those questions that did have a statistically significant difference were:

- More part time residents have no opinions about whether there is enough housing in Town (Q21) than full time residents.
- More full time residents have family seeking to live in Canaan but cannot than part time residents.
- More full time residents are in favor of using small (tiny) houses than part time residents
- More full time residents feel ambulance services are adequate while more part time residents have no opinion. Similarly, more full time residents feel that emergency services are adequate, and more part time residents have no opinion.
- More full time residents feel that transportation is not adequate, and more part time residents have no opinion.
- More part time residents have no opinion about Stoddard Park compared to full time residents.
- More long-term residents feel that meeting the needs of an aging population is important compared to newer residents.
- More newer residents feel that loss of habitat is more important than long-term residents (but all still feel it is important).
- More newer residents feel that climate change is important than long-term residents.

### Detailed Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT)

**This list is based on input from the Joint Board/Local Government Workshop, Committee Input, and Community Survey Results**

#### Strengths

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- Albany and I-90 interchange
- Appreciation for quiet, slow-paced lifestyle
- Beautiful
- Berkshires and Chatham
- Bipartisan and honest leadership
- Community oriented
- Conservation areas (CLC, state forest)
- Convenient access to both nature and urban areas
- Desire to bring back or expand recreational programs
- Desire to maintain unique rural charm and avoid over-commercialization
- Dirt country roads
- Existing events like Canaan Day and Red Rock Firehouse dinners appreciated
- Fishing
- Forward thinking and open to new ideas
- Friendly and welcoming
- Good road maintenance
- High levels of volunteerism and civic involvement
- Historic
- Historic, quaint, and traditional character valued
- Interest in supporting home-based and small local businesses
- Interest in youth job training, mentorships, and activities
- Location and accessibility
- Manageable town size enabling responsive and efficient governance
- Mixed economically
- More people here after covid

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- Natural beauty and scenic views
- Nature
- Neighborly, friendly, and welcoming atmosphere
- No big commercial centers
- Open spaces
- Part of Berkshire art and culture
- Peaceful
- Peaceful surroundings
- Proximity to:
- Quaint
- Queechy Lake as a beloved natural and recreational resource
- Quiet
- Recognition of the importance of supporting young families and youth engagement
- Reliable emergency services and volunteer fire department
- Residents value self-reliance and entrepreneurship
- Rural character
- Rural character with open space, woodlands, and farmland
- Safe
- Scenic views
- Seasonal and informal gatherings build civic pride
- Sense of community
- Sense of history
- Shared rural identity and lifestyle
- Sleepy
- Slow paced
- Still Canaan
- Stoddard Park

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- Strategic location that combines rural peace with access to culture and services
- Strong interest in events that foster belonging and multigenerational interaction
- Strong sense of community
- Supervisor
- Support for farms, local markets, and co-op grocery concepts
- Supportive and caring community
- Swimming at lake
- Town services generally viewed as adequate
- Town well managed
- Wildlife

**Weaknesses (Challenges and Barriers)**

- Aging population
- Berkshire Farm issue
- Change in community
- Dangerous intersection
- Dangers road cuts and poor site distances
- Deforestation and overdevelopment
- Desire to avoid becoming like Hudson or Great Barrington
- Difficulty attracting needed businesses without compromising character
- Dilapidated buildings
- Disconnection among newer residents and long-timers
- Distrust in how public input is handled
- Dust and mud on dirt roads
- Fear of suburban sprawl and “cookie-cutter” subdivisions
- Few community gathering spaces

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- Few programs or facilities for youth
- Gun Club noise
- Half-finished buildings
- High cost of living makes it hard for young families to stay
- Housing in disrepair or bought up by investors
- Inadequate broadband and cell service
- Inadequate communication methods (outdated website, irregular updates)
- Inadequate recycling services and waste management
- Insufficient transportation, services to meet senior needs
- Isolation and lack of connection between full-time and part-time residents
- Lack of affordable housing for young families, seniors, working individuals
- Lack of children
- Lack of diverse housing
- Lack of ethnic diversity
- Lack of high speed internet in all locations
- Lack of multifamily housing drives people away
- Lack of public transportation contributes to isolation
- Lack of Restaurants
- Lack of smaller homes
- Lack of stores and services for residents
- Lack of volunteer members
- Lack of walkability
- Lake feels congested
- Large lot size requirements encourages McMansions
- Limited activities and spaces for young families
- Limited rental availability and starter homes
- Limited representation of renters, part-timers, and newer residents
- Limited sidewalks, bike lanes, and crosswalks

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- Limited support for local businesses
- Loss of farmers
- Loss of fire department volunteers
- Loss of habitat and biodiversity
- Loss of small businesses
- Lots that can't meet setbacks
- Many seniors are unaware of available resources
- Mud and dirt road management
- Narrow dirt roads
- New groups of people that are not full time
- NIMBYism
- No town center or main street
- Noise and light pollution (e.g., from truck stops and STRs)
- Not enough walking trails
- Overreliance on a small tax base
- People want to bring things from other places such as sewer
- Poor road conditions
- Poor tone of some community interactions
- Proximity to railroad and I-90 – pollution and accidents
- Queechy Lake Hotel vacant building
- Red Rock – clearing a climate change and ecological issue
- Residents feel the town is becoming exclusive and unaffordable
- Rising property taxes and housing prices
- Short-term rentals (STRs) drive up costs and reduce long-term housing stock
- Speeding
- Stoddard Park is underutilized and outdated
- Truck traffic
- Unsafe intersections and speeding (Routes 295, 22, and Tunnel Hill Rd)

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- Water quality threats (e.g., septic leaching, runoff, road salt)
- Zoning and subdivision laws are too restrictive (e.g., large minimum lot sizes)
- Zoning doesn't allow small, attached apartments
- Zoning restrictions hinder new business types

## Opportunities (Ideas)

- Adaptive reuse of old school house into housing
- ~~Adaptive reuse of Queechey Lake Hotel building into housing~~
- Adaptive reuse Use the Historical Society Building
- Add amenities like a coffee shop, general store, and casual dining options
- Add art studios, writers and technical arts
- Allow co-housing, multi-family units, and mixed-use housing in appropriate areas
- Allow farm stays, agri-tourism, and on-farm sales with appropriate oversight
- Allow for accessory dwelling units
- Allow more commercial uses typical in rural areas (restaurants)
- Allow for more farm uses
- Allow for two family and small scale multifamily housing
- Allow limited commercial growth near Routes 22, 295, and Exit B3
- Bring back summer camp, sports clinics, and after-school youth programs
- Cluster housing
- Coffee shop as a place to go and socialize
- Community composting
- Control large scale solar facilities
- Control scale, aesthetics and location of commercial development
- Create a registry of local caregiver and wellness support services
- Create a youth advisory board or council
- Create community composting and organize bulk cleanup days
- Create or enhance community spaces such as a community center or year-round youth facility
- Create programs to match landowners with aspiring farmers
- Day passes and increased access to Queechey Lake
- Develop a central farmers market or community market space in town

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- Develop affordable housing for seniors, young families, and working individuals
- Develop transportation options for seniors, including shuttles and volunteer drivers
  
- Dog park
  
- Encourage diverse community involvement in boards and committees
- Encourage small, locally owned businesses such as cafés, grocery stores, and artisan shops
- Encourage sustainable farming practices like biodynamic and regenerative agriculture
- Enforce zoning to protect environmentally sensitive areas
- Expand walking and biking trails, fitness paths, and loop paths
- Explore cooperative business models and worker-owned enterprises
- Explore municipal broadband options or partnerships with private providers
  
- Farm link program
- Farmers market
- Form a regional transportation cooperative
- Gathering space for community/community center
- Group houses/clustering in hamlet
  
- Host farm tours and educational programs on soil health, composting, and 4-H
- Host seasonal and cultural events including festivals, potlucks, concerts, and storytelling nights
- Implement pollinator and wildlife habitat protection efforts
- Improve road maintenance and address potholes, dust, and seasonal conditions
- Improve town communication through newsletters, website updates, and bulletin boards
- Invest in universal high-speed internet and modern cell service
  
- More access to those places that are conserved
- More deer crossing signs
- More events and activities especially for kids
- More historical information about town, climate and ecology
- More restaurants
- More trails, bike trails, loop paths
- More year-round events
  
- Offer assistance with home maintenance and errands for seniors
- Offer educational forums, community listening sessions, and welcome packets for new residents
- Offer job training, internships, and mentorship programs for youth
- Offer real estate tax incentives for housing serving lower-income residents
- Offer technical and infrastructure support for small farms
  
- Prevent big boxes and franchise businesses
- Prevent light pollution
  
- Promote accessory dwelling units (ADUs), tiny homes, and small-scale housing

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- Promote agrivoltaics for solar facilities
- Promote climate resilience through tree preservation and wildfire readiness
- Promote CSA, s coop grocery store with local products
- Promote eco-tourism, agri-tourism, and low-impact recreational opportunities
- Promote local, rather than big corporation oriented businesses
- Promote niche farming
- Promote small boutique lodging
- Promote small businesses that serve residents
- Promote wineries, farm stands and agritourism
- Protect natural resources including Queechy Lake, forests, wetlands, and scenic views
- Provide social programming and emergency planning resources for seniors
- Provide transportation to youth programs in neighboring towns
- Provide youth events such as movie nights, arts classes, and clubs
- Public wi-fi areas and creative spaces
- Publish a senior resource guide and improve communication about services
- Reform zoning to allow smaller lot sizes and greater housing density
- Relocate Veterans Monument to the Park
- Restore dust control measures and seasonal treatments like calcium chloride
- Reuse existing structures such as vacant homes and [other structures](#) ~~motels~~ for housing
- Small multifamily buildings
- Small scale senior housing
- Smaller lots
- Summer camp and after school programs
- Support cluster development to preserve open space
- Support farmers markets, roadside stands, and local food co-ops
- Support rooftop solar and small-scale renewable energy
- Tax incentives for working farms
- Transportation for seniors
- Upgrade Stoddard Park with features such as a dog park, ADA-compliant paths, and shaded seating
- Use multiple outreach methods including kiosks, direct mail, and email
- Use Planned Development Districts with careful protections building to prevent use variances

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### Threats (External Impacts)

- Land buying and use from large art institutions that do not add to community
- Loss of aesthetics
- Loss of younger population
- Volunteer fire and EMS sustainability threatened if youth can't remain

### August 2025 Community Open House Results

### Comments on Draft Vision

17 "Agree" Stickers: 0 "Disagree" stickers

Comments:

- Clean up the area around Love's. Hold the land owners accountable. Do not build any affordable housing – there is plenty of that in Pittsfield.
- Moratorium on more 'economic development' around Love's. Clean up area around the truck stop. Reduce light pollution in that area. No fast food in Canaan.
- Term limits for Town Board members
- We need more affordable housing to keep and attract working people to the community. This doesn't mean projects; this means thoughtful development is scaled to be described in the vision statement.
- Don't see much about climate change and the risk of natural disasters – i.e., flooding and safety.
- Nice framing of the challenge – preserve rural character AND make it possible for people with diverse income levels to live here.
- Thank you for your work. More attention to playgrounds please.
- No chain stores. No solar farms. No apartment complexes. Dump doesn't work – it is wide open on Sundays with full access. Therefore, please do not implement policies that cost residents more money, but do not work. Require Transfer Station to close access on off hours and when they are closed.
- Very Nice Vision Statement! It would be good to add climate resilience alongside connectivity as needed for safety and productivity.

### Comments on Draft Goals

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1. Promote Diverse and Affordable Housing Choices: 15 “agree” stickers, 4 “disagree” stickers. Comments include Please no smaller lot size, no complexes. More duplexes, multifamily to increase affordability. Have smaller lot sizes in hamlets.
2. Advocate for Expanded Internet and Cell Connectivity: 14 “agree” stickers, 1 “disagree” sticker. Comments include Limit towers. Equitable affordable, access. It may be implicit but I would explicitly state this in the goal.
3. Preserve Rural Character and Natural Resources to Promote Balanced Development: 15 “agree” stickers, 1 “disagree” sticker. Comments include: A plan in the zoning law to provide way to permit new users for ‘white elephant’ protection other than relying on a use variance. Climate adaptation and resilience to extreme weather events is critical. Solar districts to preserve prime farmland. No solar farms. Diesel at Loves pollutes the air.
4. Enhance Traffic Safety and Accessibility: 13 “agree” stickers, 0 “disagree” stickers.
5. Senior Services and Aging in Place: 11 “agree” stickers, 3 “disagree” stickers. Comments include Access to healthcare.
6. Support Local Businesses and Farms and Promote Sustainable Agriculture: 16 “agree” stickers, 1 “disagree” sticker. Comments include: The existing Columbia County Ag Zones should be better publicized and mapped. Also, it appears that once added Ag properties don’t seem to even come off list and often refer to large defunct dairy operations. Ditch chains at Loves and Don’t allow in Town. Limit to Route 22. Don’t turn into Chatham or Valatie or New Lebanon. Stay small.

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## Ranking of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

### Top 10 Strengths (originally identified from survey list)

#### **Natural Beauty and Scenic Views 25**

“Natural beauty” was one of the most frequently repeated phrases; open space, woodlands, and viewsheds were repeatedly emphasized.

#### **Peaceful, Quiet, and Serene Environment 23**

Words like “peaceful,” “quiet,” “calm,” and “safe” appeared regularly to describe the town’s atmosphere.

#### **Queechy Lake 22**

Frequently cited by name as a beloved natural, recreational, and identity-defining feature.

#### **Effective and Trusted Town Leadership 19**

The Town Supervisor and Board were directly named and praised frequently for transparency and good governance.

#### **Proximity to the Berkshires, Albany, and Major Corridors 14**

“Location,” “access,” and “proximity” were noted repeatedly as key advantages.

#### **Rural Character 9**

Rural” was the single most commonly used word to describe the town in open-ended responses.

#### **Friendly, Welcoming, Neighborly Community 8**

Terms like “friendly,” “community,” “neighborly,” and “welcoming” were used dozens of times.

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**Small-Town Feel and Manageability 7**

Appreciated for being “well-run,” “responsive,” and not overwhelmed by bureaucracy.

**Historic and Quaint Character 5**

Descriptions like “historic,” “charming,” and “quaint” appeared regularly when respondents described the town’s visual and cultural appeal.

**Strong Volunteerism and Civic Involvement 3**

Many respondents highlighted the strength of local volunteer efforts and town engagement.

**Top 10 Weaknesses (Challenges and Barriers originally identified from survey list )**

**Poor Broadband and Cell Service 21**

Repeatedly mentioned as a barrier to remote work, education, communication, and public safety.

**Lack of Affordable Housing 12**

The **most frequently cited issue** across the entire survey; affects young families, seniors, and working individuals. STRs and rising prices were commonly blamed.

**Short-Term Rentals (STRs) 12**

Frequently blamed for loss of long-term housing, community erosion, noise, and rising prices.

**Lack of Community Services and Amenities 12**

Absence of basic services like a grocery store, pharmacy, gas station, café, or laundromat mentioned often.

**Lack of Public Gathering Spaces and Youth Programs 11**

Many noted the need for community centers, events, recreation for youth, and more inclusive spaces for all ages.

**Traffic, Speeding, and Unsafe Intersections 10**

Especially on Routes 295, 22, and local roads—mentioned frequently as safety hazards.

**Road Conditions and Maintenance Issues 10**

Dust, potholes, poor grading, especially on dirt roads and near the transfer station, were commonly cited.

**Environmental Threats and Inadequate Protection 9**

Pollution of Queechy Lake, deforestation, noise/light pollution, and weak recycling options appeared often in comments.

**Aging Population Needs Unmet 8**

Lack of senior transportation, medical access, social programs, and infrastructure support was a consistent theme.

**Governance Transparency and Inclusion 2**

Concerns about lack of transparency, exclusion of new voices, unclear decision-making, and poor communication.

**Top 15 Opportunities (identified from survey list)**

**Protect Queechy Lake and Natural Resources 26**

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Strong support for water quality protection, regulated development near sensitive areas, and managing invasive species and pollution.

**Support a Local Grocery Store or Food Co-op 20**

High demand for a small supermarket, general store, or farm-based food outlet that serves full-time residents.

**Establish a Farmers Market 18**

Encouraged as a way to support local farms, increase access to fresh food, and create community connections.

**Enhance Road Maintenance and Traffic Safety 17**

Improve grading, dust control, drainage, and address speeding and unsafe intersections with better signage and enforcement.

**Expand High-Speed Internet and Cell Service 16**

Widespread call for universal broadband access, improved cell coverage, and investment in modern infrastructure.

**Support and Promote Local Agriculture 16**

Ideas included tax relief for farms, community education, land access for new farmers, and encouraging regenerative practices.

**Create Transportation Services for Seniors and Youth 15**

Ideas included local shuttles, volunteer driver programs, and connections to services in nearby towns.

**Develop Affordable and Diverse Housing Options 12**

Support for ADUs, tiny homes, cluster housing, co-housing, and senior-friendly homes to address housing needs while preserving rural character.

**Encourage Home-Based and Small Local Businesses 11**

Promote local entrepreneurship with flexible zoning, especially near existing travel corridors, while avoiding over-commercialization.

**Create a Community Center or Gathering Space 10**

Strong interest in an indoor year-round venue for events, youth programs, seniors, and multigenerational activities.

**Allow Flexible, Balanced Development with Design Standards 7**

Support for growth that respects rural character—like small businesses or mixed-use buildings—especially in designated zones such as near Route 22, Route 295, and Exit B3.

**Revitalize and Improve Stoddard Park 7**

Add amenities like walking paths, a dog park, upgraded pavilions, ADA-compliant access, and better maintenance to turn it into a true community hub.

**Host More Community Events 6**

Potlucks, festivals, concerts, movie nights, and fairs suggested to increase connection among full-time and part-time residents.

**Develop Youth Programs and Spaces 3**

Recreation, job training, internships, clubs, mentorship, and a youth council were proposed to retain and engage younger residents.

**Improve Local Government Transparency and Communication 3**

Suggestions included better newsletters, website updates, community forums, and outreach to diverse voices in governance.

**Other Notes and Comments from Community Participants**

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- Have a senior-kids mixer to engage senior citizens
- Why wasn't Canaan included in the transportation route? -More of a safety/county issue
- Community calendar – does the Town website do this effectively?
- Church would be open to hosting or facilitating programs for seniors to reduce isolation.
- One visitor didn't want the town to spend any more money on services for seniors than they are currently doing.
- Camphill Ghent – explore as a senior community
- Think about phrase “rural character” – potentially loaded/problematic?
- More newer residents say zoning should be expanded for commercial business than long-term residents (but overall, they are the same as feeling “it depends.” More long-term residents do not favor changing zoning for more commercial business.
- More long-term residents feel there is not support in Town compared only to those residents who have been here 5-10 years.
- Regarding adequacy of services, more newer residents have no opinion compared to long-term residents.

## Resource 3. Potential Partners

This Resource includes a comprehensive review and identification of potential implementation partners that the Town could work with to implement this Plan.

### **b. 1. Local & Regional Government Partners**

#### **Town-Level**

- Town Board — Lead decision-making, policy adoption, budgeting, and oversight.
- Planning Board & Zoning Board of Appeals — Key for zoning and subdivision updates, site plan reviews, and ensuring consistency with the Plan.
- Highway Department — Collaborator for infrastructure, road safety, stormwater management, and climate adaptation.
- Climate Smart Communities Task Force — For energy, resilience, and sustainability initiatives.
- Recreation Committee — For Stoddard Park improvements, trail planning, and new recreation programs.
- Communications Committee (proposed) For outreach, digital engagement, and community events.
- Housing Committee (proposed) — To coordinate with County and nonprofits on affordable housing strategies.
- Agricultural Advisory Committee (proposed) — To guide implementation of farm-supportive zoning and agricultural programs.

#### **Neighboring Towns & Regional Cooperation**

- Towns of New Lebanon, Austerlitz, Chatham, Hillsdale, and East Nassau — Potential shared services for fire, EMS, senior transport, recreation, and regional tourism.
- Berkshire Region (MA towns of Hancock, Richmond, and West Stockbridge) For tourism, trail connections, and shared economic and natural resource efforts.

### **c. 2. County-Level Partners**

- Columbia County Planning Department — Technical assistance on zoning, GIS, SEQRA, and consistency with County plans.
- Columbia County Department of Public Works (DPW) — Coordination for road improvements, safety audits, and maintenance.
- Columbia County Board of Supervisors — Advocacy, budget coordination, and countywide program support.
- Columbia County Industrial Development Agency (IDA) Small business incentives, infrastructure grants, and business attraction.
- Columbia County Housing Task Force — Collaboration on affordable housing, rehabilitation, and senior housing initiatives.
- Columbia County Department of Health — Well/septic oversight, public health, aging-in-place programs.
- Columbia County Office for the Aging — Senior transportation, home assistance, and volunteer coordination.

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- Columbia County Emergency Management Office — For emergency preparedness, communications, and resilience planning.
- Columbia County Sheriff’s Office — For road safety enforcement and **slowing traffic-calming** programs.
- Columbia County Tourism & Economic Development Office — Marketing partnerships, heritage tourism, and event promotion.
- Columbia County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) Technical support for stormwater management, farmland protection, and erosion control.
- Columbia Opportunities and the Community Action Program – Through direct services and community partnerships, we offer advocacy and referrals, child care, education, emergency assistance, healthcare, housing services, income supports, and informal counseling to thousands of individuals and families throughout our community.

**d. 3. State Agencies & Programs**

Agency	Potential Role / Relevant Programs
NYS Department of State (DOS)	Comprehensive Plan adoption, zoning law updates, and planning grants (LWRP, Smart Growth).
NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)	Climate Smart Communities, NRI, wetlands/streams protection, water quality, floodplain management, culvert grants.
NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets (Ag & Mkts)	Agricultural Districts, Farmland Protection Implementation Grants (FPIG), PDR program, farm-friendly zoning review.
NYS Energy Research & Development Authority (NYSERDA)	Energy efficiency, Clean Energy Communities, solar/BESS guidance, EV charging station grants.
NYS Department of Transportation (DOT)	Traffic safety improvements, Complete Streets, rural transportation planning, and scenic byway coordination.
NYS Department of Health (DOH)	Septic and drinking water grants; healthy community initiatives.
NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP)	Parks development (Stoddard Park), heritage trail grants, and historic preservation support.
NYS Homes and Community Renewal (HCR)	Affordable housing, CDBG, Main Street programs, home repair funding.
NYS Department of Public Service (DPS)	Broadband and cell service expansion programs.
NYS Department of Labor (DOL)	Workforce development, training programs for youth and local employment initiatives.
NYS Office for the Aging (NYSOFA)	Aging in place initiatives, transportation, and health/safety grants.
NYS Rural Water Association	Water resource protection, hydrogeologic study guidance, Source Water Protection Plan implementation.

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**e. 4. Nonprofit, Academic & Technical Partners**

- Cornell Cooperative Extension of Columbia & Greene Counties (CCE) Agriculture, pollinator and forest management programs, youth programs, emergency planning for seniors.

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- Columbia Land Conservancy (CLC) Farmland protection, trail creation, conservation easements, and outreach for pollinator corridors.
- Trout Unlimited (TU) Stream restoration and culvert replacement projects.
- Hudson Valley Agribusiness Development Corporation (HVADC) Agribusiness financing, market development, food system promotion.
- Berkshire Farm Center and Services for Youth — Collaboration for youth programs, job training, and use of facilities.
- Historic Societies (Canaan Historical Society, Red Rock Schoolhouse) Heritage tourism and preservation projects.
- Columbia Economic Development Corporation (CEDC) Small business assistance, loans, and entrepreneurship support.
- Habitat for Humanity or local Housing Trusts — Housing rehabilitation and affordability initiatives.
- Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDRPC) Technical data support, GIS, and sustainability planning.
- Columbia County Climate Smart Task Force Coalition — Regional coordination on energy and climate programs.
- Scenic Hudson — Open space and scenic resource protection, trail development.
- The Nature Conservancy (TNC) Biodiversity conservation partnerships.
- Local churches and civic groups — Community center partnerships, youth and senior programs.

**f. 5: Private Sector & Utility Partners**

- National Grid / NYSEG — Infrastructure upgrades, energy efficiency programs, EV charger siting.
- Internet Service Providers (Spectrum, Mid-Hudson Cable, Consolidated) Broadband expansion and Wi-Fi initiatives.
- Local contractors, tradespeople, and small business owners — Workforce training, business incubators, housing rehabilitation.
- Local farms and agritourism businesses — Key partners for the Canaan Farm Market, local food initiatives, and “pollinator trails.”
- Real estate professionals — Market studies, adaptive reuse projects, and outreach on housing options.

**g. 6: Regional & Federal Partners**

- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) — Rural Development grants for housing, water/sewer, broadband, and agriculture.
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) — Climate and water quality initiatives.
- HUD (Community Development Block Grant Program) Housing and infrastructure funding.
- NYS & Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Hazard mitigation and flood resilience.
- Capital District Transportation Committee (CDTC) Regional mobility, safety, and multimodal planning support.

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## Resource 4. Explanation of Regulating Housing by Density Instead of Lot Size

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### Density (Dwelling Units per Acre) vs. Minimum Lot Size in Rural Planning

This comprehensive plan recommends zoning updates that prefer the use of density-based zoning and conservation subdivision requirements over simple minimum lot size zoning. This is because density, along with other techniques proposed in this plan, can achieve better farmland preservation, forest protection, lower municipal costs (when clusters are established), better flexibility for landowners, and Minimum lot sizes, by contrast, are ineffective at rural resource protection, are strong contributors to fragmentation, and often create unintended rural sprawl.

This resource chapter describes the difference between lot size and density.

#### **h. 4. What Density Standards Are**

A **density standard** sets how many dwelling units can be built per acre **on average** across a parcel or subdivision.

Examples:

- 1 unit per 2 acres
- 1 unit per 5 acres

#### **Key Characteristics**

- **Flexible:** Landowners can cluster homes on smaller lots as long as the *overall* density limit is met.
- **Compatible with Conservation Subdivisions:** Allows land to be preserved as open space, farmland, or forest.
- **Better for Rural Character:** Roads, septic fields, and buildings can be arranged to minimize fragmentation.

#### **How it Works**

For example, a 50-acre parcel with a density of 1 unit/5 acres = 10 total units allowed. If a 5-acre minimum lot size were required, the entire parcel would be split into 10, 5-acre lots. If density is used instead, those 10 units might be placed on:

- Ten 1-acre lots with 40 acres preserved  
or

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- Five 2-acre lots and three 4-acre lots, and two 16-acre lots, which would conserve more open space, as long as the **total units do not exceed 10**.

### i. 2. What Minimum Lot Size Standards Are

A **minimum lot size** sets the smallest allowable individual parcel that can be created. Examples:

- Minimum lot size = 2 acres
- Minimum lot size = 5 acres

#### Key Characteristics

- **Rigid and prescriptive:** Every new lot must meet the minimum size.
- **Encourages large-lot sprawl:** Development spreads over the landscape and fragments farmland, habitat, and rural scenery.
- **Reduces conservation options:** It prevents clustering unless separate special provisions are included.

#### How it Works

For example, a 50-acre parcel with a 5-acre minimum lot size can be divided into:

- 10 5-acre lots with no mechanism to require that some land stay undeveloped.

### i. 3. Key Differences

Topic	Density (DU/Acre)	Minimum Lot Size
<b>Flexibility</b>	High—design freedom	Low—fixed lot size
<b>Ability to Cluster</b>	Built-in	Typically prohibited unless allowed separately
<b>Impact on Rural Character</b>	Preserves larger contiguous open areas	Encourages fragmentation and spread-out houses
<b>Farmland &amp; Habitat Protection</b>	Strong—the majority of the land can remain intact	Weak—development consumes the entire property
<b>Road/Infrastructure Cost</b>	Lower—shorter roads, smaller footprint	Higher—long, dispersed roads

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<b>Septic/Well Considerations</b>	Requires thoughtful design but is workable	Each lot is designed independently
<b>Visual Impact</b>	More rural-looking results (homes grouped)	Suburban estate-lot pattern

**k. 4. Why the Distinction Matters in Rural Municipalities**

**l. A. Density is an overall development rule**

It controls the amount of development while letting you shape where it goes.  
This allows:

- 11.17. Better rural viewshed protection
- 12.18. Large unbroken farmland parcels
- 13.19. Use of conservation design to place houses on marginal soils
- 14.20. Lower infrastructure burdens (roads, utilities, plowing)

**B. Minimum Lot Size only controls parcel shape—and is not optimal for development intensity**

Minimum lot size:

- Does **not** preserve farmland
- Does **not** protect natural resources
- Does **not** prevent rural sprawl
- Often pushes a municipality toward suburban pattern development, just with bigger lots

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## Resource 5. Glossary

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### **Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)**

A smaller, independent housing unit located on the same lot as a primary dwelling. ADUs may be attached to or detached from the main house and are intended to provide flexible housing options.

### **Affordable Housing**

Housing for which total monthly costs, including rent or mortgage, taxes, insurance, and utilities, do not exceed 30 percent of a household's income. This is often expressed as a percentage of the median household income (for example, an affordable unit is often defined as one that someone having an income of between 80% to 100% of the area's median family income can afford.)

### **Aging in Place**

The ability for residents to remain safely and comfortably in their homes and community as they grow older, with appropriate housing design, services, and accessibility.

### **Agritourism**

Tourism activities that take place on farms or agricultural properties, such as farm stays, pick-your-own operations, farm tours, or on-farm events that supplement farm income.

### **Agrioltaics**

The combined use of land for both agricultural production and solar energy generation, such as growing crops or grazing livestock beneath or around solar panels.

### **Aquifer**

An underground layer of rock or soil that stores and supplies groundwater, often used as a source of drinking water.

### **Average Lot Size**

A subdivision design approach where individual lot sizes may vary, provided the average of all lots meets zoning requirements.

### **Best Management Practices (BMPs)**

Techniques or methods proven to reduce environmental impacts, such as erosion control, stormwater management, and pollution prevention.

### **Buildable Lot**

A parcel of land that meets zoning, health, environmental, and access requirements so that a structure can be legally and safely built.

### **Buildout Analysis**

A planning tool that estimates the amount and location of development that could occur under existing zoning regulations if all land were developed as allowed. It is not a prediction of future growth.

### **Building Envelope / Development Envelope**

The portion of a property within which buildings, driveways, septic systems, and other improvements may be located.

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**Buffer**

A strip of land that is often vegetated and is used to separate different land uses or protect sensitive features such as farms, streams, wetlands, or residential areas from visual, noise, or environmental impacts.

**Capital Projects**

Major public investments such as roads, bridges, buildings, utilities, parks, or other long-term infrastructure improvements.

**Cluster Development**

A development approach that groups homes on part of a property to allow flexible lot layouts and reduce infrastructure impacts. Open space may be left undeveloped but is not necessarily permanently protected.

**Conservation Subdivision**

A subdivision design that clusters homes to permanently protect a significant portion of the land as open space, farmland, or natural resources.

**Density (Dwelling Units per Acre)**

A method of regulating development by limiting the total number of housing units allowed on a parcel rather than requiring a fixed minimum lot size for each lot. (See also Resource 4 of this Plan.)

**Density Bonus**

An incentive that allows additional housing units beyond what zoning normally permits in exchange for public benefits such as affordable housing, open space preservation, or infrastructure improvements.

**Environmental Constraints**

Natural features such as wetlands, floodplains, steep slopes, shallow soils, or groundwater recharge areas that limit where and how development can safely occur.

**Exempt Subdivision**

A very small land division that is exempt from full subdivision review under current regulations; the plan recommends reconsidering this approach.

**Floodplain**

Land adjacent to rivers or streams that is subject to flooding during periods of high water.

**Floating Zoning District**

A zoning district that exists in the zoning law but is not mapped to a specific location until a landowner applies and meets established criteria.

**Grandfathered (Legal Nonconforming)**

A lot, structure, or use that was lawfully established under previous regulations but does not meet current zoning standards and is allowed to continue under specified conditions.

**Groundwater Recharge Area**

Land where rain and snowmelt infiltrate the ground to replenish underground aquifers.

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**Hamlet**

A small settlement area characterized by a concentration of homes, businesses, and civic uses developed at a village-scale pattern.

**Hydric Soils**

Soils that are frequently saturated with water and are typically associated with wetlands.

**Hydrogeologic Study**

A technical study that evaluates groundwater movement, soil and rock conditions, and potential impacts of wells, septic systems, or large water withdrawals.

**Impervious Surfaces**

Surfaces such as pavement, concrete, or rooftops that do not absorb water and increase stormwater runoff.

**Inclusionary Zoning**

A housing policy that requires or encourages a portion of new residential development to be affordable to low- or moderate-income households.

**Lot Size Averaging**

A zoning technique that allows individual lots within a subdivision to vary in size as long as the overall average lot size meets zoning standards.

**Major Subdivision**

A subdivision that creates a larger number of lots (usually 5 or more) and requires a full review process, including environmental review and public hearings.

**Minor Subdivision**

A subdivision creating a limited number of lots (usually 4 or fewer) that typically receives a more streamlined review than a major subdivision.

**Mixed-Use Development**

Development that combines residential, commercial, institutional, or civic uses within the same building or area.

**Multifamily Housing**

Residential buildings containing three or more dwelling units, such as duplexes, triplexes, or small apartment buildings.

**Nonconforming Use**

A land use that was legal when established but does not comply with current zoning regulations.

**Overlay District**

A zoning layer applied over an underlying zoning district to add additional standards for protecting specific resources such as water bodies, farmland, steep slopes, or scenic areas.

**Permitted Use**

A land use allowed by zoning. A permitted use by right means that there is no special approval needed.

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provided all zoning standards are met. Uses requiring a special use permit are also permitted uses, but they require a special process by the Planning Board.

**Public Utility**

A service provider regulated to serve the public, such as electric, gas, water, sewer, or telecommunications utilities.

**Riparian Buffer**

A naturally vegetated area along streams, rivers, or lakes that protects water quality, reduces flooding, and supports habitat.

**Second-Home Ownership**

Residential properties that are not occupied by the owner on a year-round basis.

**Short-Term Rental**

A dwelling unit or portion of a dwelling rented for brief stays, typically fewer than 30 consecutive days.

**Site Plan Review**

A formal municipal review process evaluating the design, layout, access, and environmental impacts of a proposed development.

**Source Water Protection Plan (SWPP)**

A planning document intended to protect drinking-water sources from contamination and long-term degradation.

**Special Event Venue**

A site where events such as weddings, retreats, or performances are regularly hosted and may require special permitting due to traffic, noise, or parking impacts.

**Special Use Permit**

A discretionary approval that allows certain land uses if specific standards are met and additional review is completed.

**Steep Slopes**

Areas of significant incline, beyond 15%, where development may increase erosion, runoff, or environmental degradation.

**Strip Development**

Linear, roadway-oriented development pattern often associated with traffic congestion and loss of rural or scenic character.

**Subdivision**

The division of a parcel of land into two or more lots for sale, development, or transfer of ownership.

**Tiny House**

A very small dwelling, typically 400 square feet or less, designed for full-time living on a permanent or approved foundation.

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**Variance (Area or Use)**

Relief granted by the Zoning Board of Appeals allowing deviation from zoning dimensional requirements (area variance) or permitted uses (use variance).

**Watershed**

The land area that drains water into a particular river, stream, lake, or other water body.

**Zoning Audit**

A systematic review of zoning regulations to identify outdated provisions, internal conflicts, or inconsistencies with community goals.

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