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Town of Charlton Draft Comprehensive Plan

**December 2006
Part I**

**Prepared by the Town of Charlton
Comprehensive Plan Steering
Committee**

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Part II

This document contains all supporting information used for Part I and is available at the Town Clerk's office.

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Section 1

Introduction

In the Fall of 2003, the Charlton Town Board began an initiative to develop a strategy to address growth and development issues. This strategy is contained within this Comprehensive Plan. The plan captures the future vision and desires of the citizens of Charlton and outlines a variety of strategies that can be implemented over time to attain that vision.

In order to facilitate the process, the Town Board formed a Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee consisting of individuals representing various parts of the town, businesses, farms, and demographics. The Committee began meeting in early 2004 to begin work on developing a vision and direction for the town. An overview of the various phases in development of the plan is provided below:

- Obtain Public Input to identify issues, concerns, and future direction
- Development of a Vision for Charlton
- Develop recommendations to achieve the Goals and Objectives that, over time, can help Charlton attain that vision
- Development of Action Items and Strategies that when implemented will help Charlton attain that vision

Upon adoption of this plan by the Town Board, the next step involves implementation of the strategies included in the Plan. The general implementation steps will involve:

- Revision to Charlton Zoning Ordinance and other local land use regulations to reflect and be consistent with the goals and strategies contained in this plan
- Implementation of other initiatives as needed to ensure the vision is met
- Review of the plan every five years to ensure that any changes taking place in Charlton are considered and that the plan is kept up-to-date and current
- Amendments to the Plan as needed to reflect those new or changed conditions and desires

What are the Implications of Having a Comprehensive Plan?

A comprehensive plan is a written document that identifies the goals, objectives, principles, guidelines, policies, standards, and strategies for the growth and development of the community. The town is authorized to develop and adopt a comprehensive plan by New York State Town Law Section 272-a. It is designed to answer three critical questions:

- Where are we now?
- Where do we want to be?
- How do we get there?

It is not a law in itself, but New York State statutes require that all land use laws in a municipality be consistent with a comprehensive plan.

New York State considers adoption of a comprehensive plan to be a critical tool to promote the health, safety and general welfare of the people of the town and to consider the needs of the people. A comprehensive plan is the policy foundation upon which communities are built.

Once a comprehensive plan is adopted, there are several implications:

- All government agencies involved in planning capital projects in Charlton must consider this plan before they start that capital project. In other words the Town now has a much larger stake in what other governmental agencies want to do when they are proposing a project in town.
- Community consensus and support can be built on the shared vision, goals, and strategies presented in the plan.
- Programs and regulations may be adopted to implement the plan to protect the town's resources and encourage desired development and growth. In New York State, all land use regulations must be in accordance with a comprehensive plan (Section 272-a). The plan is the basis for regulatory programs. All land use laws should be reviewed, and updated where necessary to be in accordance with this plan.
- Comprehensive plans are also important documents to help the town be successful in obtaining grant monies to implement items contained in the plan.

Town Input and Data Collection

The issues, goals and recommended strategies detailed in this comprehensive plan are based upon studies of information and data gathered throughout the Town of Charlton, as well as from the input of many town residents. During 2004 and 2005, the Town of Charlton surveyed its residents and businesses and conducted planning workshops and focus groups to hear opinions on town needs and people's wishes for the future. Specific

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sources of information used to prepare this plan included (data included in Part II, the Supporting Document):

- Survey sent to each residence in Charlton
- Community image survey
- Farmer/agricultural focus group
- Business focus group
- Teen focus group
- Senior citizen focus group
- Community visioning workshops (two)
- Public meetings and workshops (numerous)
- Survey to gain input on draft vision and goals
- Public hearings

Other studies and analyses were also conducted including:

- Background studies of land use, including a build-out analysis
- Population and demographic profiles
- Existing housing conditions, affordability, and availability
- Community facilities
- Transportation resources
- Recreation and educational resources
- Public safety programs
- Environmental conditions of the town
- Analysis of the regional growth patterns and trends that have affected, and will continue to affect the area's growth

Section 2

Charlton's Vision for the Future

The Town of Charlton's Comprehensive Plan is a reflection of our values, aspirations and our shared vision. Through an extensive planning process, hundreds of citizens expressed their views about Charlton and identified its perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Identification of these community values and aspirations provided a basis for development of a shared vision. The public input process resulted in the identification of broad areas of consensus concerning the future direction for our town. The following vision statement defines these expectations, offers a direction for the future and provides a benchmark that we can use to measure our success.

There was a considerable level of citizen involvement in providing the input needed to develop this vision statement. Over 740 citizens returned the survey forms, 70 people participated in a visioning workshop to discuss our future, four different focus groups (Senior Citizens, Agriculture, Teens, and Businesses) were held to identify specific needs and issues related to those groups, and 56 people participated in a community image survey. In addition, many people from organizations, government agencies, area non-profit groups, and individuals were interviewed on specific topics. From all this input, the following major themes emerged with community consensus:

- ✓Farmland and Open Space
- ✓Management and Growth
- ✓Community Character
- ✓Environmental Quality
- ✓Sense of Community
- ✓Infrastructure Capacity and Public Services
- ✓Recreation
- ✓Housing

The Town of Charlton's vision statement describes the future as we chose it. It is written from the perspective of fifteen years in the future and it expresses what we intend to achieve by this time.

Although not every resident in the town of Charlton has the same opinion on what Charlton should look like in the future, there were many common themes that the majority of this community felt were important. The Vision Statement sets the tone and overall direction the town should take in the future. This Vision Statement answers the "where do we want to be" question.

The themes common to the residents of Charlton were incorporated in the following Vision Statement.

In the Year 2020, the Town of Charlton is recognized as having a high quality of life, exceptional livability, a strong identity, civic pride, and opportunities for all citizens to participate in our community life. We have managed residential and controlled business growth in a way that has retained our essential rural and historic character, a quality environment, and active agriculture. Charlton is a community that sets high standards for protecting and maintaining the quality of our built and natural environment. Charlton remains essentially a farming and rural residential community, and the Hamlet of Charlton serves as the primary focus for community life. Town government provides quality community services and effectively responds to concerns and needs of all citizens. Our infrastructure is consistent with the rural nature of our town, the capacity of our resources, and with our growth management strategies.

Topic Visions

The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee used information from the public to also develop more specific visions for topics of importance to the Town of Charlton. They are:

Farmland and Open Space – Active farms and farmland remain predominant land uses and landscape features of Charlton. The community is farm-friendly and proud of its support for active agriculture and modern agricultural techniques. Policies are in place to assist farm profitability and to reduce pressures for selling productive farmland for non-farm development.

Management of Growth – Charlton effectively uses land use planning tools to promote controlled and managed growth while protecting rural lands from inefficient sprawl, and preserving open spaces and the environment. Business growth is predominated by small, family-owned enterprises and businesses. Home business opportunities are encouraged.

Community Character – Charlton values its rural vistas, historic character, and other irreplaceable natural and scenic views and resources. We celebrate our history by preserving historic sites, buildings and landscapes, by interpreting our rich history for present and future generations, and by ensuring that new development is done in a manner which preserves our historic character. The aesthetic character of Charlton, defined through our rural, natural and historic context, is protected through careful attention to our roadways, streetscapes, scenic views and corridors, residential neighborhoods and small businesses. Our standards for development reflect the citizens desire to maintain our town's special character.

Environmental Quality – Charlton recognizes that environmental quality contributes to our quality of life and effectively balances growth with protection of our forests, streams, wetlands, wildlife habitats, air, water resources and other essential natural resources.

Sense of Community – Our many cultural activities and events are a source of community pride. Charlton invites all citizens to join and participate fully in the life of our community and retains its strong history of citizen involvement, volunteerism, and caring for others. Community facilities and programs are readily available.

Infrastructure Capacity and Public Services – Charlton coordinates infrastructure policies (for roads, water and sewer) with development policies, community character goals, and environmental capacity. Charlton provides an effective transportation system, provides for safe streets, well maintained roads, biking and walking opportunities and public transportation for senior citizens and those with special needs. Town government provides high quality affordable public services, exercises leadership, and effectively communicates with and responds to citizens.

Recreation – Parks, open spaces, walking and biking trails, and diverse programs provide high quality recreational opportunities for all ages.

Housing – Charlton has neighborhoods that meet the needs of all residents and that offer diverse housing opportunities for decent, affordable housing and convenient access to community facilities. Housing needs of senior citizens are met.

With this direction, a number of goals and strategies were developed and if implemented, would help ensure that this vision becomes a reality. These goals and strategies are presented in Section 3 of this document. Section 4 answers the question, “How do we get there?”

Section 3

Goals and Strategies

In order to help ensure that the vision for Charlton's future is realized, six goals are established, which when accomplished, will help make the vision a reality. These goals, like the vision statement, were identified through a comprehensive planning process that included multiple opportunities for public participation.

The goals provide a guide for town leaders and citizens to work with in the future. They offer more specific direction than the vision statement but are consistent with it. Whenever decisions are made by local boards and officials, these goals should be reviewed and the question asked, "Will this decision have the desired effect of taking the town closer towards reaching these goals and hence the vision?" Charlton's goals are:

Goal 1 Agriculture and Farmland: The Town's rural, agricultural, historic and aesthetic character is protected and enhanced. Farmlands are protected and active farms of varying types are economically viable and a major land use in Charlton. Regulatory and non-regulatory land use programs and policies guide development in Charlton to ensure that our Town remains a quality community where future residential, agricultural and business development is consistent with the unique character, environment, and culture of Charlton.

Goal 2 Open Space/Environmental Resources: The Town's environmental resources, particularly groundwater quality, quantity and availability are protected. Open spaces exist to protect the environment, provide recreational benefits and to maintain the unique character of the town.

Goal 3 Historic Buildings and Landmarks: The Historic District serves as a primary location for Town government and cultural activities.

Goal 4 Community Pride and Citizen Involvement: The Town promotes activities that enhance community pride and citizen involvement. Parks, open spaces, walking and biking trails, and diverse programs provide high quality, active and passive recreation, and opportunities for educational and cultural development for all ages.

Goal 5 Roads and Pathways: The Town has quality, aesthetically pleasing, and safe roads and pathways for vehicular traffic, walking and biking. Transportation assistance is available for senior citizens and those with special needs.

Goal 6 Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations Update

For each goal, a set of strategies and action steps has also been developed. These strategies and action steps are short or long term in nature. A number of these actions will require additional input from the citizens of the Town prior to implementation.

Recommendations for achieving the goals of our Comprehensive Land Use Plan:

Goal 1 Agriculture and Farmland

Encouraging farmers to continue working the land is recognized as the most effective and lowest cost method of preserving open space. Our residents rated farms and open space as their top priority to consider in our comprehensive plan.

1. Form an ad hoc agricultural protection task force made up of farmers and Charlton government officials with the responsibility of implementing measures and conducting educational programs to protect farming and open space. Items for this task force to consider should not be limited to the items in this plan. Examples to include in the educational program are: agricultural assessments, farm building exemptions, farmers' school tax credit, forest land exemption, historic barn preservation assistance, orchard replanting, sales tax exemption, Agricultural Environmental Management, Agricultural Management Assistance, Conservation Security, Environmental Quality Incentive, Forest Land Enhancement, Conservation Reserve, Debt for Nature, Wetland Reserve and Wildlife Habitat Incentives and others as appropriate.
2. Follow Charlton's Right-To-Farm law and the NYS Agriculture and Markets Agricultural District Law. Charlton is included in Saratoga County Agricultural District #2. Provisions of special interest are: upholding right-to-farm, requiring notification and agricultural data statements for proposed land use changes, including horse boarding operations as farm operations, removing unreasonably restrictive local laws and including agricultural values for real property taxes.¹
3. Encourage appropriate town staff to become familiar with the exemption of agricultural buildings in the State Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code effective January 1, 2003, and the ten-year exemption of new agricultural buildings.
4. Evaluate and implement if feasible further reductions in agricultural assessments from the State Agricultural assessment program coupled with comparable penalties for converting to non-farm use. These would generally be referred to as tax-abatement programs.
5. Allow tax advantages to non-farm owners of land being used by farmers eligible for the agricultural exemptions. These tax advantages should be comparable to farmers' benefits when following a conservation plan. This would include support land and woodland in addition to the land actually being used.

¹ This topic is also discussed in the section entitled "Recommendations for Zoning and Subdivision Regulations.

6. Allow agricultural values on farmland (not residences or farm buildings) for fire, ambulance and other special districts for which a benefit assessment or special ad valorem levy exists.
7. Consider establishing a Purchase of Development Rights program where appropriate, and make use of state, county and other programs to minimize local costs. See also Goal 2, Item 12.

Goal 2 Open Space/Environmental Resources

Groundwater, streams, wetlands and parks are valuable assets to preserve.

1. Place more emphasis on siting new buildings to include: minimal clearing of vegetation, retaining stonewalls and hedgerows, placing buildings and roads along tree lines or edges of open fields, and setbacks from streams and wetlands. This information should be provided to prospective builders at the initial stages of approval.
2. Assure lands subject to flooding comply with Federal Emergency Management Agency regulations.
3. Assure storm water management programs comply with all local and NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) regulations.
4. Provide adequate training to town highway and other officials regarding management of stormwater, road building and maintenance. Implement best management practices immediately after such construction and maintenance.
5. Encourage best management practices on farms and other non-farm open areas via participation in the Agricultural Environmental Management program.
6. Incorporate ecological areas and wildlife habitat in site plan reviews.
7. Ask for conservation designs at the initial stage of site plan reviews to assure open areas, wildlife habitat protection and best use of natural resources. Consistent with Planned Unit Development (PUD) requirements, density bonuses may be offered on larger subdivisions. Consider the use of large diameter cul-de-sacs to minimize road cuts and better use of conservation designs for subdivisions.²
8. Encourage landowner participation in state and federal programs such as those sponsored by the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to conserve natural resources.

² This topic is also discussed in the section entitled "Recommendations for Zoning and Subdivision Regulations.

9. Encourage purchase of development rights and conservation easement programs for open space and natural resources similar to those used for agriculture and historical sites or structures.
10. Coordinate any trail systems with the Saratoga County green infrastructure plan.
11. Encourage expansion of our park system as determined by increased utilization.
12. Set up an “Open Space Acquisition” fund in the Town budget using funds not needed for higher priority items. Increasing Town taxes to support this fund will require Town residents to authorize such action. The fund would be used to acquire land through conservation easements, lease arrangements, management agreements, mutual covenants, fee simple sales, or donations from willing landowners. This also includes seeking funding for the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) programs to develop local sources of dedicated funds for PDR and other open space conservation activities. Establish a requirement that developers pay a fee per lot to support this fund.
13. For parcels of 25 acres or more, provide tax and other incentives to private landowners who conserve open space.

Goal 3 Historic Buildings and Landmarks

Charlton has an historic hamlet as its’ town center and many other buildings and landmarks worthy of preservation adding value and charm to our community.

1. Form an Historic Building and Landmarks Committee of three to five knowledgeable residents of the community to identify, research and describe sites of importance in the Town of Charlton. A working inventory of these sites will be established to form a Town Register of Historic Sites. This committee will work with the Office of the Town Historian and the Charlton Historic District Commission.
2. Form an advisory committee of volunteers with expertise in architectural, legal and restoration projects to assist the Historic Buildings and Landmarks Committee, Historic District Commission, and Office of the Town Historian with questions on conservation, preservation, and restoration of historic sites important to the town. These sites begin with the Charlton Historic District and Scotch Church Historic Site already on the New York State and National Historic Registers.
3. Encourage use of a tax abatement program similar to agriculture and open space for historic preservation.
4. Provide information and assistance to landowners wishing to apply to the local, state and national historic registers for historic buildings and sites.

5. Establish buffer zones around burial sites to protect them from future development.

Goal 4 Community Pride and Citizen Involvement

Encourage programs and activities that continue to support responsive town government and keep Charlton an enjoyable place to live.

1. Form a Charlton Community Pride task force to assess current programs related to civic pride and involvement. Identify and publicize projects using such methods as the town newsletter, brochures, town website, e-mail discussion groups, board meetings, teen forums and community bulletin board.
2. Request this task force to work to engage all sectors of the community including youth to implement such projects as public recognition programs, landowner conferences, artwork and photo displays, environmental cleanup projects, flower and tree plantings and recreational enhancements.
3. Place special emphasis on senior citizens programs emphasizing affordable assisted living and transportation. Make effective use of county programs and others directed towards seniors.
4. Seek grants to enhance community pride programs when possible.

Goal 5 Roads and Pathways

Safe and effective roads are an asset to all residents.

1. Include roads in the scheduled capital projects for future improvements to accommodate current highway uses, safety issues and upgrading the road system.
2. Minimize road cuts by use of conservation designs and early site plan reviews of subdivisions, and state standards.

3. Assure adequate dimensions of cul-de-sacs for maintenance and safety.
4. Consider the benefits trees and vegetation have to offer to visual enhancement and to serve as buffers before removal or trimming.
5. Assure proper lighting by using downward-shielded luminaries for new streetlights, and consider safety and appropriate signage in keeping with the community.
6. Include bicycle routes and separate pedestrian roadways on appropriate town roads.

Goal 6 Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations

Land use programs and policies guide development to ensure Charlton remains a quality community where future residential, agricultural and business development is consistent with the unique character, environment and culture of Charlton. Actions to improve these regulations and guidance are given below and in some of the other recommendations in this Plan. Some of the actions defined below are recommended for adoption while others are recommended for study and possible action.

Items Recommended for Action

1. Allow the use of Planned Unit Developments (PUD) to provide for conservation subdivisions designed to protect farmland, environmental resources and open spaces. PUD's may be used only when suitable conditions exist for wells (public water, if available, should be used in lieu of wells) and septic leach fields. Developers should be required to pay the cost of all reports/studies required to support the PUD. Developers should also share the burden of development by paying fees and providing mandatory dedication of open space, road upgrades, etc. Incentives may be offered to developers to encourage open space and recreation development through density bonuses or other programs as put forth in other recommendations in this Plan. Approval of a PUD is not to set a precedent for future applications.
2. Amend zoning and/or Subdivision regulations to require that developers must submit with their subdivision application, information on how they will assure the availability of sufficient water, and water quality on the property to be developed and on surrounding occupied properties.
3. Amend zoning to include the latest New York State regulations on the separation distances between wells and septic systems.

4. Amend zoning to comply with provisions in the NYS Agriculture and Markets Agricultural District Law regarding the distinction between horse boarding operations and riding academies.

5. Educate (via newsletter, website or brochure) landowners to help them recognize that septic systems must be maintained in order to be effective. Have the Zoning Administrative Officer hand out a brochure when he issues a Certificate of Occupancy. Use the town newsletter to inform residents that brochures are available at the Town Clerk's Office.

Items Recommended for Study and Possible Action

1. Amend zoning to require evidence of an adequate water supply before a building permit can be issued for a residence.

2. Amend zoning to define and regulate common uses not currently in the zoning ordinance such as a convenience store with a gas station and senior housing.

3. Develop language to control "change of uses" so that this is not a loophole in zoning review.

4. Improve the existing sign regulations by:

a. Identifying style of signs allowed (free standing, ground mounted, projecting, wall, awning, sandwich, etc.)

b. Identifying height of sign(s) allowed and placement of sign(s).

c. Identifying how many signs per parcel will be allowed.

d. Clarify lighting requirements for signs. Consider prohibiting all forms of internally lighted signs.

5. Develop dimensional requirements for the Historic District with regulations such as lot sizes, set backs, frontages consistent with existing residential development within the district.

6. De-emphasize minimum lot size and use a density measurement of dwellings per acre to regulate the overall density of development. Separation of lot size from density can provide more flexibility than relying on minimum lot size.

7. Specify acreage requirements for horse boarding operations and for pasture horses.

8. Current zoning minimum lot sizes of 50 acres for dairy, 25 acres for livestock and 5 acres of crops for farms should be reviewed to determine if they are unduly restrictive.

9. The 5% maximum percentage of lot occupancy for farms, the provisions in current zoning of Page 29L (5) and Page 31 (4), and all dimensions required for farms in Table IV-2 of the Zoning Ordinance should be reviewed to determine if they are too restrictive.
10. Review Table IV-2 of the Zoning Ordinance to be sure that customary accessory uses for farms include roadside stands.
11. Consider whether there should be definitions for “major” and “small” farm stands and whether major farm stands should contain a special use permit including site plan review. Smaller farm stand operations should be exempt from getting a special use permit.
12. Reconsider the existing restriction (pages 29 and 31 (6) and (5)) that states that roadside stands are limited to selling agricultural produce which has been grown on the same premises where the stand is located.
13. Review the types of housing allowed in the Zoning Law. Clarify a distinction between two-family and multi-family housing.
14. Review the different types of senior housing (assisted living, retirement, nursing homes, etc.), and evaluate which ones to recommend in Charlton. Review definitions of “dwellings” in the Zoning Ordinance. Re-examine the Town’s policy on “duplexes” or two-family houses.
15. Consider relaxing the special exception standards for multi-family dwellings that require at least 5 acres and 30,000 sq. ft. per dwelling to allow expanded housing opportunities. Consider adding a requirement that multi-family houses should be designed to fit in with the rural and/or historical design appearance of Charlton. Limit the numbers of dwellings that can be attached to maintain the character and to fit the water and septic capabilities in the area.
16. Consider modifying subdivision regulations to allow large diameter cul-de-sacs to minimize road cuts and to provide better use of conservation design for subdivisions.
17. Consider modifying subdivision regulations to place more emphasis on the building envelope where the house and disturbed land is contained and located strategically on a parcel. Subdivision plans should identify suitable building envelopes that meet the objectives of this plan.
18. Consider developing voluntary siting guidelines. This could be accomplished by developing a rural siting guideline to be handed out with building permit applications so that builders of new homes will have some knowledge of expectations of the community. At a minimum, new development should be encouraged to incorporate the following site layout elements to protect rural character:

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- a. Minimal clearing of vegetation. Where forested vegetation currently exists along the road, consider leaving this vegetation to form a visual buffer between the new houses and road.
- b. Retention of stone walls, hedgerows, and other rural elements.
- c. Placement of buildings and access roads in treelines or along the edges of fields in order to avoid construction in open fields or on ridgelines. The important aspect is that the placement of new homes should respect the rural character of the site.
- d. Provision for setbacks from streams, lakes, and wetlands to protect water quality.
- e. Re-use farm roads or country lanes whenever possible, rather than constructing new wide roads.

19. Consider expanding the PUD procedure to include combined residential/commercial areas (e.g. hamlet) and a variety of housing types. Commercial uses should be limited to those listed in the Special Use Permit section of the Zoning Ordinance.

See also Part II, Supporting Document for other action items that could be considered in the future.

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Section 4

Action Plan

This section summarizes the specific actions recommended to achieve the goals and objectives presented in Section 3 and assigns responsibility for implementing each of the recommendations. A chart summarizing the recommendations and assigning responsibility for implementation and indicating the time frame for implementation follows. Short term actions (S) can be implemented within 3 years of adoption of the plan and intermediate (I) action items will require a longer time frame for implementation, perhaps 4 to 8 years. Other actions will be ongoing (O) in nature. It is important to realize that the time frames presented are somewhat arbitrary in nature and should be adjusted as situations change and opportunities arise.

Some of the recommendations included in this Plan involve revision of zoning regulations, which can dramatically influence how development occurs within the Town. For this reason, it is recommended that all zoning changes be considered a priority task to be accomplished in the short term.

The Town Board has appointed a Zoning Ordinance Review Committee (ZORC) to translate the options and guidelines presented in the plan into specific language needed for local laws and programs. The Town Board should use the plan to prioritize the strategies so that they can direct implementation efforts and review progress on an annual basis. The whole plan should be reviewed and updated by the Town Board, the Planning Board or a special "Ad-Hoc" committee every five years.

The following table outlines the recommended action steps for the Town of Charlton to implement over the life of the plan (10 to 15 years).

S= Actions to be implemented in the short term of 0-3 years after adoption of plan.

I= Actions to be implemented in the intermediate term of 4-8 years after adoption of plan.

O= Actions that are ongoing throughout the life of the plan.

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Action	Type	Time Frame	Group Responsible for Completing Action Step ³
Agriculture and Farmland			
1. Form an ad hoc agricultural protection task force.	Program	S	Town Board
2. Follow Charlton’s Right to Farm Law and NYS Agriculture and Markets District Laws.	Enforcement	O	Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Building Inspector, Town Board
3. Require appropriate town staff to become familiar with the exemption of agricultural buildings from the NYS building codes.	Program	O	Town Assessor
4. Allow further reductions in agricultural assessments.	Policy/Program	S	Town Board, Town Assessor
5. Allow the same tax advantages for non-farm owners of lands used for active agriculture as farmers receive (support land).	Policy/Program	S	Town Board, Town Assessor
6. Allow same agricultural values on farmland in special assessment districts.	Policy/Program	S	Town Board, Town Assessor
7. Allow for a Purchase of Development Rights program where appropriate.	Program	I	Town Board

S= Actions to be implemented in the short term of 0-3 years after adoption of plan.

I= Actions to be implemented in the intermediate term of 4-8 years after adoption of plan.

O= Actions that are ongoing throughout the life of the plan.

³ The Town Board is the “owner” of the plan and is responsible for implementing the various action steps over time. All steps taken to implement the plan should be initiated and/or approved by the Town Board.

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Action	Type	Time Frame	Group Responsible for Completing Action Step
Open Space/Environmental Resources			
1. Place more emphasis on siting buildings in relationship to open space and the environment.	Policy/ Regulatory	O	Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Building Inspector
2. Comply with all FEMA regulations.	Enforcement	O	Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Building Inspector
3. Comply with all local and DEC stormwater management programs.	Enforcement	O	Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Building Inspector
4. Provide adequate training for town and other officials regarding stormwater and road management and use Best Management Practices.	Education	O	Town Board, Highway Department, Building Inspector
5. Encourage Best Management Practices via participation in the Agricultural Environmental Management program.	Policy/Program	O	Town Board, Ad Hoc Committee for Agriculture (mentioned above)
6. Ask for conservation designs early in the review process to protect natural areas. Offer density bonuses on larger subdivisions consistent with PUD requirements.	Regulatory	S	Town Board, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals
7. Encourage landowner participation in state and federal conservation programs.	Program	O	Town Board, Ad Hoc Committee for Agriculture (mentioned above)
8. Encourage use of development rights and easement programs.	Program	I	Town Board, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals
9. Coordinate any trail system with Saratoga County.	Program	O	Town Board
10. Encourage expansion of parks as needed.	Program/Funding	I	Town Board
11. Setup an "Open Space Acquisition Fund".	Policy/Program/ Funding	S	Town Board
12. Provide tax and other incentives to private landowners on parcels 25 acres or larger.	Policy/Program	S	Town Board, Tax Assessor

S= Actions to be implemented in the short term of 0-3 years after adoption of plan.

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O= Actions that are ongoing throughout the life of the plan.

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Action	Type	Time Frame	Group Responsible for Completing Action Step
Historic Buildings and Landmarks			
1. Form an advisory committee to assist current historic commission to study sites worthy of preservation.	Program	S	Town Board, Historic Commission
2. Encourage use of a tax abatement program for historic preservation.	Policy/Program	S	Town Board, Tax Assessor
3. Assist landowners in their applications for listing properties with the National Historic Register.	Program	O	Town Board, Historic Commission, Advisory Committee, mentioned in this goal
4. Establish buffer zones around burial sites.	Regulatory	S	Town Board

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Action	Type	Time Frame	Group Responsible for Completing Action Step
Community Pride and Citizen Involvement			
1. Form a Charlton Community Pride Task Force.	Program	S	Town Board
2. The Task Force should engage all sectors of community to implement projects.	Program	O	Task Force
3. Make effective use of county programs directed at senior citizens.	Program	O	Town Board, Task Force
4. Seek grants to enhance community pride programs.	Program/Funding	I	Town Board, Task Force

S= Actions to be implemented in the short term of 0-3 years after adoption of plan.

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Action	Type	Time Frame	Group Responsible for Completing Action Step
Roads and Pathways			
1. Include roads in scheduled capital improvement projects.	Policy/Program	O	Highway Department, Town Board
2. Use conservation designs and early site plan reviews to minimize road cuts.	Regulatory	S	Town Board, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, ZORC
3. Assure adequate dimensions of cul-de-sac's.	Regulatory	S	Town Board, Highway Department, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, ZORC
4. Consider benefits of trees and vegetation for visual enhancement along roads.	Policy/Program	O	Highway Department, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, ZORC
5. Use shielded light fixtures along new streets and consider safety and appropriate signage in keeping with the community.	Regulatory	S	Town Board, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, ZORC
6. Include bike routes and separate pedestrian paths on appropriate town roads and incorporate them into the county system.	Program	I	Town Board, Highway Department

S= Actions to be implemented in the short term of 0-3 years after adoption of plan.

I= Actions to be implemented in the intermediate term of 4-8 years after adoption of plan.

O= Actions that are ongoing throughout the life of the plan.

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Action	Type	Time Frame	Group Responsible for Completing Action Step
Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations			
1. Allow use of Planned Unit Developments to provide for conservation subdivision designs to protect farmland, environmental resources, and open spaces.	Regulatory	S	Town Board, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, ZORC
2. Require that developers will provide for sufficient water and maintenance of water quality on their and surrounding properties.	Regulatory	S	Town Board, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, ZORC
3. Zoning should include the latest NYS requirements related to well and septic separation distances.	Regulatory	S	Town Board, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, ZORC
4. Zoning should comply with NYS Ag and Markets requirements related to horse boarding and riding academies.	Regulatory	S	Town Board, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, ZORC, Ag Ad Hoc Committee
5. Educate landowners on proper maintenance of septic systems.	Education	O	Building Inspector
6. Set up mechanisms to study and take action on the other recommended zoning changes.	Program/ Regulatory	S	Town Board, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, ZORC

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Section 5

Items for consideration for future Comprehensive Plan updates

Objective 1: Enhanced design guidelines are included in zoning requirements for commercial land uses.

1. Amend zoning to expand the existing building design standards for special exception uses. In addition to the language in the zoning, it would be preferable to develop a companion illustrated brochure showing these concepts in drawings or pictures.

Suggested standards to be included in zoning include:

- a. Roof pitch and style
- b. Parking lot placement, lighting and landscaping
- c. Monotonous facades or large expanses of windowless walls.
- d. Trademarked architecture
- e. Lighting
- f. Drive-through facilities
- g. Tree preservation and planting
- h. Sidewalks
- i. Curb cuts, curbs, gutters, driveways
- j. Screening of roof equipment

Objective 2: Implement a program to identify and evaluate scenic resources in Charlton.

1. Organize a program to identify and evaluate scenic resources by assembling a work group of local government officials and landowners, setting a timetable for action, and setting up procedures for conducting the study. Steps this work group could take are as follows:

- a. Consider using the Town's environmental committee or use the authority under New York State Environmental Conservation Law appoint a voluntary Conservation Advisory Council to undertake this role for the town.
- b. Gather resources such as the GIS maps, which include scenic views identified in the 1971 Comprehensive Planning Program, this plan, information from groups such as Scenic America including publications such as "O, Say, Can You See: A Visual Awareness Tool Kit for Communities, the Visual Resource Inventory and Assessment Methodology for Adirondack Road Corridors (published by the APA), or "Views from the Road: A Community Guide for Assessing Rural Historic Landscapes" by David Copps. Compile other existing information such as resources from the town historian, historic maps and atlases.
- c. Decide if a scenic road windshield inventory program will be undertaken, and if so, use the recording form developed by the New York Scenic Roads Program.
- d. Identify a preliminary working definition of "Scenic".

2. Review GIS maps from Town and identify major “districts” based on natural boundaries like watersheds or major landforms. Map smaller “districts” that have distinct visual character and record features and document community interest in each. Conduct the windshield survey, if necessary, and correlate this information with these maps.
3. Involve the public and specific landowners along scenic roads to review data and maps. Establish a program to ask the public to identify what makes a resource valuable, what features are important and why. Work to understand priorities.
4. Evaluate the overall significance of roads or public spaces where scenic resources are present. Choose evaluation criteria and develop a rating scale. The criteria may include historic value, scenic value, educational value, threats to resource, distinctiveness, magnitude and intactness of resource. Rank the criteria and assign values.
5. Use GIS to map updated results, if possible.
6. Report results to public and landowners and seek common ground to accomplish scenic resource protection.

Objective 3: Establish non-regulatory programs to enhance and protect Charlton’s scenic resources

1. Establish educational initiatives such as developing a Charlton Landscape Field Guide illustrating and describing the component parts of the towns rural landscape, developing an interpretive tour guide for local roads, and developing roadside viewing pull offs.
2. Develop a property owner’s guide that provides information to people who own land with scenic resources on how to make changes to their property in keeping with the visual character of the area. This guide could contain information on planting, paving, clearing vegetation, fencing, etc.
3. Develop a citizen educational program to inform citizens about the importance of scenic vistas and viewsheds and to encourage voluntary protection. This could include community walks or drives, photographic exhibitions, or slide shows.
4. Consider protecting critical viewsheds by purchasing those lands (fee simple) from willing sellers.
5. Consider protecting critical viewsheds by purchasing or acquiring donated conservation easements from willing landowners.
6. Consider protecting critical viewsheds by obtaining view easements from willing landowners for this purpose

7. Consider protecting critical viewsheds by using a leaseback arrangement where the land is purchased by the town from a willing landowner and then leased back, subject to certain restrictions for management of the scenic (or other) resources.
8. Develop a set of recommended voluntary design and siting guidelines for new residential development that includes tools to protect scenic views. This should include a discussion of use of setbacks, screening (or lack of), land clearing, and alternate layouts of new homes using clustering or conservation subdivision design so that new landowners are aware of these resources and issues.
9. Consider use of a recognition program: a plaque or award to a landowner can encourage protection.
10. Consider use of non-binding agreements. These are agreements that are negotiated privately with the landowner which stipulate long-term protection measures for the property. The agreement is voluntary, and based on mutual trust and pride in the resource.
11. Consider use of binding agreements. These are similar to a non-binding agreement except that they are legally binding for a specific period of time and are between the town and willing landowners.
12. Consider use of monetary incentives through use of tax abatement programs, assistance through grants and loans, a density bonus, or reimbursement for expenses to accomplish 7 and 8, above.
13. Designate local roads as “Scenic”. The goal of having one or more scenic roads is to educate the public, protect and enhance the resources, and enhance opportunities for recreation. Designation without other controls through zoning could help accomplish the educational and recreational goals most effectively. Designation without further controls is considered to be a good place to start as it can help achieve a strong base of community support.
14. Evaluate the character of the entrances to the Town and the existing sign entrance signs and update if needed.
15. Consider use of a density bonus as an incentive to protect important viewsheds or other environmental resources.
16. The Planning Board should be required to visit and view each property before any Planning Board decision is made regarding that property and area. This should be incorporated into the review procedures of the Planning Board.

Objective 4: Identify areas to be protected as open space

1. Create a detailed open space map using the existing GIS data so that the programs and policies of this plan can be targeted to specific areas. This effort could also include the

following steps: a threat-of-loss analysis (to identify those existing areas most at threat of being lost as open space); mapping of significant resource areas, potential open spaces, parks, and greenways to connect these areas; and developing a system to rank these areas relevant to their importance as open spaces. (This last step can assist with identifying lands that might be acquired or conservation easements sought, etc.)

Objective 5: Increase the amount of land preserved as open space.

1. Create an open space overlay district. The overlay district could incorporate specific standards and criteria to protect open spaces. In order to effectively delineate an open space overlay district, open space features would need identification and mapping.

Objective 6: All community facilities and programs are readily accessible and open to all residents.

1. Establish a committee that would explore and find ways to address issues of accessibility. Consider establishing an ad hoc group to explore and identify barriers to accessibility of public buildings and programs in town and develop a town policy and plan to address any issues.
2. For all municipal buildings and programs, conduct a facility or program assessment that would identify barriers to access. Evaluate components that affect accessibility including physical, architectural, informational, communications, attitudes, technological and policy attributes. The items below outline some examples of these.
 - a. Physical (example of situation to avoid: A door knob that cannot be operated by an elderly person with limited upper-body mobility and strength)
 - b. Architectural (example of situation to avoid: A hallway or door that is too narrow for a wheelchair or scooter)
 - c. Informational (example of situation to avoid: Typefaces that are too small to be read by a person with low vision)
 - d. Communicational (example of situation to avoid: No speakers or microphones used in public meetings that make it hard for the hearing impaired)
 - e. Technological (example of situation to avoid: Information exists on a municipal Web site, which cannot be accessed by a person who is blind who has reading software for a computer)
 - f. Policy/Practice (example of a situation to avoid: A practice of announcing important messages in a meeting only)

Objective 7: Effectively manage local roads through development of capital improvement planning.

1. Expand existing capital improvement planning to develop a full Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). This could be done by establishing a formal CIP process (adopting a resolution to create and empower a CIP committee). It coordinates community planning, financial capacity and physical development. A capital improvements program is composed of two parts -- **a capital budget** and **a capital program**. The capital budget is the upcoming year's spending plan for capital items (tangible assets or projects that cost at least \$10,000 and have a useful life of at least five years). The capital program is a plan for capital expenditures that extends five years beyond the capital budget. Coordinating the comprehensive capital budget with the operating budget should give Charlton more insight into long range planning. The following outline the major steps needed to effectively develop a CIP:

- a. Prepare and inventory of existing facilities
- b. Determine the status of previously approved projects
- c. Assess the Town's financial capacity
- d. Solicit, compile and evaluate project and budget requests
- e. Establish project priority
- f. Develop a CIP financing plan
- g. Adopt a capital improvement program
- h. Monitor approved projects
- i. Update the capital program annually