

# **VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

**for the  
Chester Hill Holding Mine  
Black Meadow Road property  
Town of Chester  
Orange County, New York**

**Prepared for:**

**Chester Hill Holding  
PO Box 1351  
Greenwood Lake, NY 10925**

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**May 25, 2012**

Visual Impact Assessment  
Chester Hill Holding  
Black Meadow Road Property  
Town of Chester, Orange County

1.0. INTRODUCTION

This report is submitted in support of the application for a Mined Land Reclamation Permit for property owned by Chester Hill Holding in the Town of Chester. This visual assessment has been prepared to evaluate the visibility of the property and potential visual impacts of development of a quarry. The entrance to the property is from Black Meadow Road (see *Mining Map*). Preparation of this report was authorized by Mr. Frank Lotito, Partner.

The assessment has been prepared in accordance with NYSDEC *Program Policy Memorandum* #DEP-00-02 (PPM), *Assessing and Mitigating Visual Impacts*. The PPM provides for use of photographs and simple, line-of-sight profiles; this methodology was employed for this project.

The site is located in a commercial/industrial district in the Town, south of the Village of Chester. Industrial parks adjoin the property on the west and north. Undeveloped upland and wetlands border the property on the south and southwest. The subject property and nearby properties were formerly mined for sand and gravel. A Conrail rail spur borders the property on the east. The premises are currently vacant woods and brushy meadow. See *Visual Resources Map* for locations of the referenced sites.

2.0. INVENTORY OF AESTHETIC RESOURCES

An inventory of aesthetic resources within proximity of the project area has been compiled. The following categories were assessed, as suggested by the PPM:

- 1) A PROPERTY ON OR ELIGIBLE FOR INCLUSION IN THE NATIONAL- OR STATE-REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES. Three properties on the national register were identified within one mile of the subject property. These include:

First Presbyterian Church – located on State Route 94, north of Route 17, in the Village of Chester, one mile north of proposed mine. \

Fury Brook Farm – located on the west side of County Route 13,  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile south of proposed mine.

Yelverton Inn and Store – located one mile north of proposed mine on State Route 94, at a busy intersection in the business district in the Village of Chester.

Descriptions of the historic sites are located in Section 8.0; photographs are in Section 9.0. Potential significant impacts on the sites from the mining operation are assessed in Section 4.2.

- 2) STATE PARKS. Goosepond Mountain State Park is located approximately 1¼ miles east of the proposed mine, at its closest point. According to the State Park website (nysparks.com): “Goosepond Mountain State Park is 1,558 acres of undeveloped open space. Almost completely wooded, the park is open to hikers and horseback riders”. Potential significant impacts on the park from the proposed mining operation are assessed in Section 4.2.
- 3) URBAN CULTURAL PARKS. No Urban Cultural Parks were identified within proximity to the project.
- 4) STATE FOREST PRESERVE. No State Forest Preserves were identified within proximity to the project
- 5) NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE. No National Wildlife Refuges were identified within proximity to the project.
- 6) NATIONAL NATURAL LANDMARKS. No National Natural Areas were identified within proximity to the project.
- 7) THE NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM, RECREATIONAL AREAS, SEASHORES, FORESTS. No units of these Federal lands were identified within proximity to the project.
- 8) RIVERS DESIGNATED AS NATIONAL OR STATE WILD, SCENIC, OR RECREATIONAL. No rivers so designated were identified within proximity to the project.
- 9) A SITE, AREA, RESERVOIR, OR HIGHWAY DESIGNATED OR ELIGIBLE FOR DESIGNATION AS SCENIC. No such areas were identified within proximity to the project.
- 10) SCENIC AREAS OF STATEWIDE SIGNIFICANCE. No such areas were identified within proximity to the project.
- 11) A STATE OR FEDERALLY-DESIGNATED TRAIL, OR ONE PROPOSED FOR DESIGNATION. The Heritage Trail, operated by Orange County, has been developed along a former rail bed, paralleling Route 17, between Goshen and Monroe. It is about 1.5 miles from the proposed mine, at its closest point, where it passes through the Village of Chester. Potential significant impacts on the trail from the proposed mining operation are assessed in Section 4.2.
- 12) ADIRONDACK PARK SCENIC VISTAS. No such areas were identified within proximity to the project
- 13) STATE NATURE AND HISTORIC PRESERVE AREAS. No such areas were identified within proximity to the project
- 14) PALISADES PARK. Goosepond Mountain State Park is administered by the Palisades Park Commission. Potential significant impacts on the park from the proposed mining operation are assessed in Section 4.2.
- 15) BOND ACT PROPERTIES PURCHASED UNDER EXCEPTIONAL SCENIC BEAUTY OR OPEN SPACE CATEGORY. No such areas were identified within proximity to the project
- 16) HUDSON RIVER. No portion of the River was identified within proximity to the project

Other sites of local importance not identified as specific aesthetic resources in the NYSDEC *Program Policy Memorandum* #DEP-00-02 (PPM), *Assessing and Mitigating Visual Impacts* include:

#### Town of Chester Recreation and Open Space Plan

- Chester Commons Park – a 24 acre park located adjacent to the Town’s Highway garage. The park offers a playground for children, a concession stand, barbeque grills, and picnic tables, an events pavilion, and restrooms. “Unstriped and unsigned, the park’s primary parking area can accommodate an undetermined number of vehicles”. “While the tall trees and bushes contribute to a rustic feel, it also lends itself to a secluded environment, which some resident may find too isolated”.
- Knapp’s View Park (aka “Town of Chester Open Space for Public Use” and “Broadview Estates”) – “Former farmland, the 91-acre parcel was up for development when the Town opted to acquire it for open space and recreation. An unpaved, uneven roadway provides access to the site, which currently is characterized by rolling hills”. The Plan further states “At present, the Town does not have a master plan to develop the site”.
- Hamlet of Sugar Loaf – late 18<sup>th</sup> C to early 20<sup>th</sup> C. farming community. Became a crafts village in the late 20<sup>th</sup> C. according to the Sugar Loaf Historical Society website ([www.sugarloafhistoricalsociety.com](http://www.sugarloafhistoricalsociety.com)).

### 3.0. VISUAL ASSESSMENT

#### 3.1 Profiles

A visual assessment was performed to evaluate the visibility of the project. Line-of-sight profiles were constructed, as per the *PPM*. The profiles were constructed to the nearest potential visual receptors: Section A – residences along Black Meadow Road southwest of site; Section B – industrial areas on Black Meadow Road west of the site as well as the closest residence to the south. Knapp’s View Park, Fury Brook Farm, and Sugar Loaf lie beyond that residence, and Section C – Town Library and Town Hall, east of the site. Community Commons Park is about ½ mile to the northeast of the library; Goosepond Mountain Park, at its closest point, is about 1 mile to the east of the library

#### 3.2 Photographs

Photographs were taken from potential key view points at or in the vicinity of aesthetic resources listed in Section 2.0 and from other sites of local importance not identified on the inventory (see Section 9.0). Photographs from the subject property were used to evaluate on-site topographic and vegetative screening elements. The photographs were also used to confirm the cross-sectional analysis.

### 4.0. SIGNIFICANCE

#### 4.1 Guidelines

NYSDEC *PPM Assessing and Mitigating Visual Impacts* defines impacts as follows:

**Aesthetic impact:** Aesthetic impact occurs when there is a detrimental effect on the perceived beauty of a place or structure. Mere visibility, even startling visibility of a project proposal, should not be a threshold for decision making. Instead a project, by virtue of its visibility, must clearly interfere with or reduce the public's enjoyment and/or appreciation of the appearance of an inventoried resource.



**Visual impact:** Visual impact occurs when the mitigating effects of perspective do not reduce the visibility of an object to insignificant levels. Beauty plays no role in this concept. A visual impact may also be considered in the context of contrast. For instance, all other things being equal, a blue object seen against an orange background has greater visual impact than a blue object seen against the same colored blue background. Again, beauty plays no role in this concept.

The “mitigating effects of perspective” include:

**Atmospheric perspective:** Even on the clearest of days, the sky is not entirely transparent because of the presence of atmospheric particulate matter. The light scattering effect of these particles causes atmospheric or aerial perspective, the second important form of perspective. In this form of perspective there is a reduction in the intensity of colors and the contrast between light and dark as the distance of objects from the observer increases. Contrast depends upon the position of the sun and the reflectance of the object, among other items. The net effect is that objects appear “washed out” over great distances.

**Scientific Perspective:** Scientific, linear, or size perspective is the reduction in the apparent size of objects as the distance from the observer increases. An object appears smaller and smaller as an observer moves further and further from it. At some distance, depending upon the size and degree of contrast between the object and its surroundings, the object may not be a point of interest for most people. At this hypothetical distance it can be argued that the object has little impact on the composition of the landscape of which it is a tiny part. Eventually, at even greater distances, the human eye is incapable of seeing the object at all.

#### 4.2 Specific Conditions

An assessment of the aesthetic inventory identified no elements within proximity of the proposed project, as itemized in Section 2.0. Specific conditions associated with each resource are:

First Presbyterian Church – located on State Route 94, north of Route 17, in the Village of Chester, one mile north of proposed mine. The subject property is not visible from the historic site (see photograph); the business district of the Village, several State Highways, and the Chester Industrial Park are located between the Church and the proposed mine.

Fury Brook Farm – located on the east side of County Route 13,  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile south of proposed mine (see photograph from Knapp’s View Park, adjacent to the farm). The skyline profile of Durland Hill will be changed by removal of rock at the subject mine, although the highest portion of the hill will not be affected.

Yelverton Inn and Store – located on State Route 94, north of Route 17, in the Village of Chester, one mile north of proposed mine (see photograph). The subject property is not visible from the historic site; the business district of the Village, several State Highways, and the Chester Industrial Park are located between the inn and the proposed mine.

Heritage Trail – the former railbed is north of and parallels NYS Route 17.

Commercial and residential portions of the Village and Town, several State highways, and the Chester Industrial Park are located between the trail and the proposed mine. Portions of the trail were walked for this assessment; no views of the proposed mine site were identified.

Goosepond Mountain Park – the undeveloped public land, located about 1¼ miles east of the subject property, is screened from the mine site by the bulk of Durland Hill. Excavation and processing activities will not be visible from the park.

Specific conditions associated with other sites of local importance not identified as specific aesthetic resources in the NYSDEC *Program Policy Memorandum* #DEP-00-02 (PPM), *Assessing and Mitigating Visual Impacts* include:

- Chester Commons Park – views of Durland Hill are available during leaf-off conditions (see photograph). The skyline profile of the hill may be changed by removal of rock at the subject mine, although the highest portion of the hill will not be affected. Scientific perspective, intervening vegetation, and contrasting elements in the foreground will reduce the impacts of these changes. Excavation and processing activities will not be visible from the park.
- Knapp's View Park (aka "Town of Chester Open Space for Public Use" and "Broadview Estates"; see photograph) – the skyline profile of Durland Hill will be changed by removal of rock at the subject mine, although the highest portion of the hill will not be affected. Excavation and processing activities will not be visible from the park.
- Hamlet of Sugar Loaf – the subject site is not visible from the historic commercial district of Sugar Loaf (see photograph), although views may be available from outlying areas. Changes in the skyline profile of Durland Hill may be visible, but the effects will be greatly diminished due to atmospheric perspective. Excavation and processing activities will not be visible from the hamlet.

## 5.0 MINING MITIGATION

Several mitigating factors will reduce the visual impacts of a mine within the site. These factors and measures could include:

1. The Chester Hill Holding property is screened by the bulk of Durland Hill from most inventoried aesthetic resources.
2. The mine will be most visible from the industrial parks to the west and north of the site.
3. The mine has been designed to utilize existing topography and vegetation to the maximum extent practicable as a visual screen.

4. Overburden will be stored in berms along the mine perimeter with immediate establishment of a vegetative cover (trees and grasses), as per the *Reclamation Plan*.
5. Sequential mining and reclamation will limit the size of the area affected at a time.
6. The benches will be reclaimed using indigenous trees and shrubs to mitigate long-term visual impacts.

#### 6.0. CONCLUSIONS

A *Visual Impact Assessment* has been prepared in accordance with the NYSDEC *Program Policy Memorandum on Assessing and Mitigating Visual Impacts*. The following conclusions have been reached:

- 1) The position of the mine in the northwest flank of Durland Hill will screen excavation and processing activities from all identified aesthetic resources.
- 2) Changes in the skyline profile will be discernable from several local recreational sites and from Fury Brook Farm historic site.
- 3) The mine will not be visible from the First Presbyterian Church and Yelverton Inn historic sites or the Heritage Trail in the Village of Chester.
- 4) The mine will be most visible from viewers along Black Meadow Road and in the industrial parks to the west and north.
- 5) Mitigation measures will screen activities on the mine floor from nearby viewers to the west and northwest.
- 6) Reclamation of the benches will mitigate long-term visual impacts from more distant viewers to the west and northwest.

## 7.0 Figures

**8.0 Historic Sites, Parks, and other features specifically identified by the Town of Chester of as of local importance.**

Sites on the National Register of Historic Places  
(from [www.nationalregisterofhistoricplaces.com](http://www.nationalregisterofhistoricplaces.com)).

**First Presbyterian Church of Chester** (added 1998 - - #97001622)

106-108 Main St., Chester

Historic Significance: Architecture/Engineering

Architectural Style: Greek Revival

Area of Significance: Architecture

Period of 1925-1949, 1900-1924, 1875-1899, 1850-  
Significance: 1874

Owner: Private

Historic Function: Religion

Historic Sub-function: Religious Structure

Current Function: Religion

Current Sub-function: Religious Structure

**Fury Brook Farm** (added 2004 - - #04000995)

Also known as **Bairdlea Farm**

Kings Highway, Sugar Loaf

Historic Significance: Event, Architecture/Engineering

Architectural Style: Greek Revival

Area of Significance: Exploration/Settlement, Architecture, Agriculture

Period of 1950-1974, 1925-1949, 1900-1924, 1875-1899, 1850-1874, 1825-1849, 1800-  
Significance: 1824

Owner: Local

Historic Function: Agriculture/Subsistence, Domestic

Historic Sub-function: Agricultural Outbuildings, Single Dwelling, Storage

Current Function: Domestic

**Yelverton Inn and Store** (added 1980 - - #80002733)

**Orange County** - 112-116 Main St., Chester

(18 acres, 4 buildings)

Historic Significance: Event, Architecture/Engineering

Architect, builder, or engineer: Yelverton, James

Architectural Style: Greek Revival

Area of Significance: Politics/Government, Architecture,  
Commerce

Period of Significance: 1825-1849, 1750-1799

Owner: Private

Historic Function: Commerce/Trade, Domestic

Historic Sub-function: Department Store, Hotel

Current Function: Domestic, Vacant/Not In Use

Current Sub-function: Single Dwelling

### 3. EXISTING PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) recommends identifying a park system's strengths and weaknesses early on in the process by conducting an "environmental scan." As part of the inventory and analysis phase, an environmental scan was conducted at each of Chester's parks. To assist the consultant team evaluate the park system, an Individual Park Inventory Form was completed for each park. A blank copy of this form is included in the Park Analysis Appendix. As Chester's parks were evaluated according to park standards identified in the New York State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), as described in the following chapter, the parks have been classified according to categories established in the SCORP (See Table 10 in Chapter 4). In some instances, appropriate classifications did not exist in the SCORP. *Natural Resource Areas* and *School Parks* were classified according to NRPA standards.

#### 3.2 TOWN OWNED PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

The following sections describe the Town of Chester's five parks, which total approximately 136.6 acres. Of the five, Chester Commons, Pulvrent Field, Broadview Estates, and Oak Drive Park are located within the Town, while Chester Community Carpenter Park is located in the Village. All but Oak Drive Park and Community Carpenter Park are on lands owned by the Town of Chester. Oak Drive Park was developed on lands owned by the Town Water Board, while the Village and Town own Community Carpenter Park jointly.

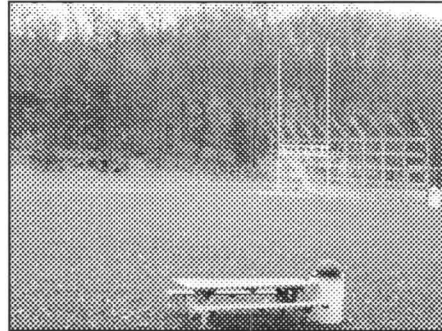
Table 8: Park Acreage Summary Table		
Park Name	Parcel ID	Park Use Acres
Developed Parks (Community Parks)		
Chester Commons	4-1-8.2 (34.1 acre parcel)	28
Carpenter Community Park	108-3-18	11.1
<i>Total Community Parks</i>		<i>39.1</i>
Developed Parks (Pocket Parks)		
Pulvrent Field	1-1-1.12	1.4
Oak Drive Park	8-1-24	3.1
<i>Total Pocket Parks</i>		<i>4.5</i>
<i>Total Developed Park Lands</i>		<i>43.6</i>
Natural Resource Areas		
Broadview Estates	7-1-45.11 (91.3 acre parcel)	91.3
Wilson Road cluster lands	28-3-12	7.7
Wilson Road cluster lands	28-2-6	2.5
<i>Total Natural Resources Area</i>		<i>101.5</i>

### 3.2.1 Chester Commons

Chester Commons is located south of the Village, off Laroe Road. The 24-acre park is adjacent to the Town's highway garage in a primarily residential area. While roadside signs direct patrons to the park, the entrance itself lacks any signage. This is due to the fact that the Town owns a very narrow segment of road frontage, and has been unable to obtain an easement that would allow for an appropriately sized park entrance sign.

The park offers a variety of recreational opportunities, including two multi-station play sets for children, a swing set, a 15' by 15' concession stand, barbeque grills, and horseshoe pits. There are several picnic tables dispersed throughout the park. League users are able to store athletic equipment in two storage sheds located adjacent to the concession stand.

In addition to the dispersed tables, there is a picnic or event pavilion that is located on a slight hill, overlooking the playground and concession stand. The pavilion area contains a concrete floor, tables, exterior lighting, and two horseshoe pits. A concrete building adjacent to the pavilion houses the park's only restroom facility. The restrooms are well fed throughout the season. A leachfield is located downhill from the facility, uphill from the playground. The septic system, which was installed when the park was first developed 25 – 30 years ago, was pumped several years ago. However, it is not pumped or serviced on a regular schedule.



The park's premier resource is the 210' by 420' combination football/soccer field, which is home to the Chester Soccer Club, open to both residents and non-residents. The field currently accommodates 24 teams with 334 players, with games often scheduled all day on weekends. There are two benches on the field for team use and one small set of bleachers in front of the concession stand provides spectator seating. Permits are required for use of the park facilities.

The football/soccer field has lighting to accommodate night games. The pavilion and the restrooms have light fixtures both outside and inside. Although the paved roadway that leads up the hill, providing access to both the restrooms and the pavilion, has a light pole, the illumination provided may be inadequate for guiding one's way up the hill at dusk or later. Floodlights provide lighting for the concession stand.

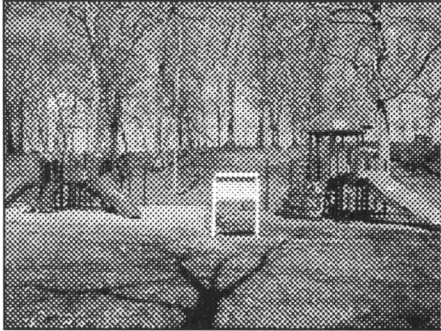
With a mixed terrain, the park is hilly by the pavilion, horseshoes and restrooms, but is flat by the parking area, field and playground. Aside from the field, the park has a substantial amount of tree cover.

Unstriped and unsigned, the park's primary parking area can accommodate an undetermined number of vehicles. There are two striped spaces reserved for those with disabilities located in front of the playground area. There is an unpaved lot that provides additional parking located just



off the main entrance road. A recurrent problem indicated by the Town RPC is the fact that people often park their cars along the park's access road, which is adjacent to the playground.

Chester Commons Park is used for the community's annual Easter Egg Hunt, Cub Scout camp, and concerts. The Easter Egg Hunt has become an area draw, attracting non-residents as well as



residents and ranging in size from 300 to more than 1,000. Police detail is often arranged to assist with such large events. The all-purpose field accommodates a mix of users including Pop Warner football, and recreational and travel soccer, with players aged from kindergarten to 10<sup>th</sup> grade. About 30 local groups regularly rent out the pavilion for special events and picnics throughout the season.

The playground equipment appears to be new and in relatively good condition. The park's pavement is intact, and trashcans are strategically placed around the park. During the spring of 2005, several new steel and plastic picnic table/bench sets were installed in the pavilion to replace several aged and worn sets. A new table set was also placed near the playground.

There are, however, a number of randomly placed safety hazards located throughout the park. These metal posts, poles, and tree branches are at ground level, easily accessible to younger children. In addition, there is a noticeable drainage problem to the right of the entrance just before the field. The ground level dips, allowing water to pool next to the small rock wall.

Beyond the two designated parking spaces, little else is done to make the park compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). For example, not only is the pathway that provides access to the restroom facility not ADA-compliant, but it is also uphill, making accessing the facilities difficult for the elderly and individuals with disabilities. [It should be noted that as of August 2005, the Town was allocated \$25,000 in State funds for the expansion of the concession stand located at the base of the hill to include men's and women's restrooms.]

Finally, while the park provides soccer and football users with a space to play, the park lacks basketball, skating facilities, and a number of other recreational amenities. Aside from the picnic tables in the pavilion and some seating around the soccer/football field, the park lacks benches and other casual seating areas. In addition, the park could benefit substantially from improved landscaping. While the tall trees and bushes contribute to a rustic feel, it also lends itself to a secluded environment, which some residents may find away too isolated.<sup>3</sup>

The 2002 Comprehensive Plan recommended conducting an analysis of the site's topography around the parking area and field to determine if the development of additional fields is possible. As a result of these recommendations, the Town has been proceeding on a plan to develop a

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<sup>3</sup> In a recent study described in the December 2005 issue of "Planning," the American Planning Association identified that people generally prefer "Olmstedian" landscapes in their parks. That is, landscapes that are "covered with scattered trees, smooth ground covers, water, and visual depth."

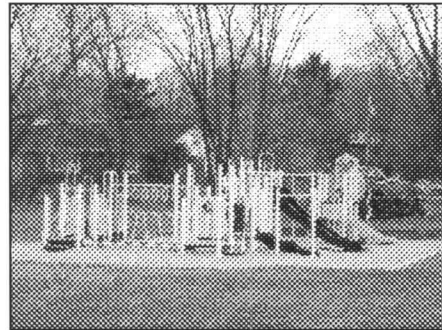
second, smaller non-regulation sized) 200' by 165' combination field. The plan also recommended extending the park's existing paved drive to connect to a future park to the rear of the site, on an adjacent property, identified as the McNeil property. This proposed park extension would allow for a continuous park/greenway connection between Chester Commons and Goosepond Mountain State Park.

This park is owned by the Town of Chester and has been jointly maintained by the Town Highway Department and Parks and Recreation Department. This park is classified as a *Community Park* under SCORP classifications.

### 3.2.2 Chester Community Carpenter Park

Chester Community Carpenter Park is located in the heart of the Village at the end of Vadella Road, directly adjacent to an onion field. The only park in the Village, this 16.4-acre park is close to the Village's commercial district and is within walking distance of several residential neighborhoods. Butch's Field is located near the park's entrance. In addition to the league games, other events held in this park are tennis camp and little league all-stars games.

This park offers a number of amenities including two baseball/softball fields, four tennis courts, a bocce ball court, two multi-station play structures and one swing set. In addition, the park offers a concrete court that has two basketball hoops and is used for ice-skating in the winter. This park also has a September 11th tribute and memorial. Several of the park's amenities are lit for nighttime use. These include one baseball field, the ice rink/basketball court, the parking lot, and the concessions/restroom building. Non-lit facilities include the tennis courts and the playground. There are several picnic tables and trash receptacles located throughout the park. The lighting around the concessions/restroom building is inadequate.



There are two regulation ball fields located at one end of the park. One is a little league field, while the other is a senior league field. Only one of these fields is irrigated. Each field has two enclosed dugouts and two sets of bleachers. Recently, windscreens were installed along the ball fields to protect game spectators. The fields themselves appear to be in good condition.

The field dugouts are in poor condition, posing a safety hazard to users. The dugouts' flat roofs and the inadequate drainage of the surrounding areas have resulted in significant water damage along the dugout walls. In addition, segments of the fields' metal fencing has rusted.

The ice rink/basketball court's concrete floor is in need of repair, and the basket hoops are in poor condition. The multi-use nature of the facility is problematic, as the floor curbing necessary to pool water for the ice rink, presents a hazard when the facility is being used as a basketball court. This is especially true of the edge of the court/rink that lies adjacent to the onion field, where the

topography changes drastically, culminating with a steep drop. The tennis courts, too, could use some rehabilitation.



The playground structures are relatively new and the parks department takes care in ensuring their maintenance, cleaning and painting when necessary. However, the playground does lack lighting and sufficient seating.

The park's primary parking area, which is unstriped, can accommodate an undetermined number of vehicles. The former Chester Union Free Elementary School, located within close proximity to the park, is used for overflow parking during special events. As the parking lot is located in the center of the park, this lack of clearly delineated pedestrian ways poses a threat to pedestrian safety. The park also lacks attractive

landscaping for the passive enjoyment of the park.

Jointly owned by the Town and Village, the Village turned over maintenance of this facility to the Town. The Town's Highway Department and Parks and Recreation Department have jointly maintained the park. About 5.3 acres of the property are presently being used for onion farming and a fenced-in mulching area, leaving about 11.1 acres for park uses. This park is classified as a *Community Park* under SCORP classifications.

### 3.2.3 Pulvrent Field

Pulvrent Field is located just outside the Village on Park Drive. Park Drive is in the northern section of Town off of Route 94. This park is only 1.4 acres and is one of the smallest parks in Chester. Surrounded by a residential neighborhood known as Surrey Meadows, the park is sometimes referred to as "Surrey Meadows" by residents. The park is surrounded partially by publicly owned lands, as several fenced-in municipal wells are located behind the field's backstop. An unpaved roadway extends through the wooded area to a town owned water treatment facility.



This park contains only one baseball/softball field. There is some open space adjacent to the field. The field is in good condition with a set of bleachers for game spectators. There is one portable toilet facility and one trash receptacle. The field lacks lights and has limited parking.

Behind the outfield fence there is a drop that leads to a small creek. This creek flows on to the edge of the property. This creek and other water bodies located nearby leads to a particularly severe mosquito infestation during the summer months.

While the field is in relatively good condition, the park is not ADA-compliant. It is not suitable for night games as it lacks lighting. The entrance is not well marked or signed, nor is the parking area well signed. There is also indication from community residents that parking for the field is insufficient, as park-goers often park their vehicles too close to residences, often on neighboring lawns or too close to driveways, hindering homeowners' ability to pull out of their driveways.

This park is owned by the Town of Chester and has been maintained jointly by the Town Highway Department and the Parks and Recreation Department. This park is classified as a *Pocket Park* under SCORP classifications.

### 3.2.4 Broadview Estates

Broadview Estates, located on Kings Highway roughly in the center of Town, is Chester's most recent addition to its park and recreation lands. Former farmland, the 91-acre parcel was up for development when the Town opted to acquire it for open space and recreation uses in 2005 at a cost of \$4 million.



An unpaved, uneven roadway provides access to the site, which, currently, is characterized by rolling hills. A small old cemetery is located at the site. At present, the Town does not have a master plan to develop the site.

During the fall of 2005, the Town Parks and Recreation Commission reallocated \$10,000 to provide for a wintertime recreational activities at Broadview. To facilitate snowboarding, cross country skiing, tubing, and sleigh-riding, road and drainage work was done and parking was developed. Portable fencing, rented portable restrooms, and an emergency call box were installed.

This parcel is owned by the Town of Chester and is not presently maintained. As it is primarily undeveloped, this land presently qualifies as a *Natural Resource Area* under the NRPA classification guidelines. Given its size, central location, and accessibility, it would make an optimal site for a Large Urban or Large Community Park, a park designed to serve the entire community.

### 3.2.5 Oak Drive Park

This park, located on Oak Drive in the southeast tip of Town, is about 3 acres. However, much of this land is unimproved forestland. Owned by the Town's Water Department, a non-regulation basketball court was constructed a number of years ago. A small paved area provides limited parking. Although recently cleaned up with the help of local Eagle Scouts, for a long time this park was strewn with debris, old furniture, tires, rusted bicycles, and the like. In October a new

entrance sign was ordered for the park. The previous sign identified the park as “Chester Commons” and was likely just an extra sign placed at the site for the purpose of posting the Town’s park regulations.

The basketball court serves its purpose and appears to be used regularly by local teens. Recently resurfaced, the court is in good condition, while the fence and backboard were recently repainted. The court’s previously torn nets have been replaced with new nets. Although there is a plan to remove them, unenclosed water department tanks and structures remain onsite. The court itself is only partially fenced in, with trees and a slight drop off presenting a potentially dangerous situation. A trash receptacle and bench were recently placed in the park. There are no restroom facilities at the park, nor is the site ADA-compliant.



This park is owned by the Town of Chester Water Department and has been maintained by the Town Highway Department. This park is classified as a *Pocket Park* under SCORP classifications.

### 3.2.6 Lake Hill Farms Cluster Land

This parkland includes two parcels --one is 2.5 acres, while the other is 7.7 acres. These lands were deeded to the Town as permanent open space when the Lake Hill Farms residential subdivision was developed off Lake Road. The two parcels are accessible via Wilson Road and Tyler Place, respectively. Covered with waterbodies and wetlands, these parcels are unusable for the development of active recreational resources. However, they may be usable for passive recreation uses.

The Town of Chester owns this park. This park has been identified as a *Natural Resource Area* under the NRPA classification guidelines.

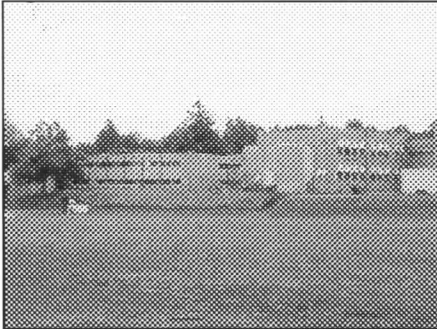
## 3.3 SCHOOL OWNED PROPERTIES

The Chester Union School District owns several sizable recreational facilities in Chester. This includes facilities located at the existing Chester school and at the former high school in the Village. Many of the classrooms in the former high school are presently being leased to the local BOCES. The former high school houses a gymnasium as well as several outdoor fields. Unfenced, the fields are open to the general public for “pick up” games, but organized leagues must get permits from the School District.

### 3.3.1 Chester Union Free Elementary School

The Chester Union Free Elementary School is located on Herbert Drive off of Surrey Road in the Town. Just outside the Village, the school is near the Goshen Town boundary. This school is

surrounded by residential neighborhoods. While the school site is 33.7 acres, not all this land is dedicated to park and recreation uses.



There is a large ball field that is used for general field purposes and baseball/softball games. Adjacent to the field there is a small playground that contains one multi-station play structure and three spring animals. On the opposite side of the school building, there are two multi-station play structures and a round climbing apparatus. The field and the playground both lacked lighting.

Overall, the condition of the park area was very good. The playground equipment was in very good condition, while there were no visible problems with the spring animals.

This park is owned and maintained by the Chester Union Free School District. This park has been identified as a *School Park* under the NRPA classification guidelines.

### 3.3.2 Chester Academy High School

The Chester Academy High School is located on Hambletonian Avenue in the Town, southwest of the elementary school. Although recently developed, the high school lacks many recreational amenities that have generally come to be regarded as standard, including a running and cross-country track as well as a football field. The School District uses Chester Commons' soccer field for football, while the Town uses the Chester Academy building to house its summer camp program. The school also uses the tennis courts at Chester Community Carpenter Park for throwing and conditioning several times throughout the year.

These facilities are owned and maintained by the Chester Union Free School District. This park has been identified as a *School Park* under the NRPA classification guidelines.



### 3.3.3 Butch's Field

Owned by the Chester Union Free School District, this field is located in the Village to the rear of the former high school building. The field is located within close proximity to the Chester Community Carpenter Park, and has one regulation-sized field that is used for girls' softball.



The Chester Union Free School District maintains the field. This park has been identified as a *Pocket Park* under the NRPA guidelines.

### 3.3.4 Former High School Field

Adjacent to Butch's Field is another field owned by the School District. Although it lacks lights and a concession stand, this field is used to accommodate soccer contests, as well as varsity and junior varsity sports.

The Chester Union Free School District maintains the field. This park has been identified as a *Pocket Park* under the NRPA guidelines.

## 3.4 OTHER PUBLICLY OWNED PROPERTIES

Orange County and New York State both own properties in the Town of Chester that function as recreation and open space resources. More information on these resources follow.

### 3.4.1 Black Meadow Creek Reservoir

Orange County owns a 459-acre parcel of land in the western section of the Town, by its shared boundary with the Town of Warwick's Village of Florida. This land surrounds Glenmere Lake and encompasses County-owned reservoir lands. The property is classified in the 2004 Orange County Open Space Plan as temporarily protected open space.

The Town's 2002 Comprehensive Plan recommended that the land, if it is not to be used for reservoir purposes in the imminent future, it should be opened for hiking trails, fishing and other passive recreational uses. If the land is no longer withheld for reservoir purposes, Orange County should develop it for active parkland and recreational use.

There has been recent discussion between the Town of Chester and Orange County to develop a portion of these lands as a waterfront park for Chester residents. This land would be used for cartop boating access and picnicking.

These lands that are located in the Town of Chester continue to be owned by Orange County and are maintained by the County. This land has been identified as a *Natural Resource Area* under the NRPA classification guidelines.

### 3.4.2 Goosepond Mountain State Park

Goosepond Mountain State Park is located in Chester, south of Route 17M and north of Route 45 in the eastern portion of the Town. The 1,471.5-acre State Park maintained by the Palisades Interstate Park Commission (PIPC), a steward of more than 100,000 acres of parkland in New York and New Jersey, including seven parks located in Orange County. The land was acquired in the 1960s, through the use of a Legislative Bond Act.

According to Chester's 2002 Comprehensive Plan, the park was intended to have extensive active and passive recreational activities. However, money was never allocated to develop these facilities. The park does house the Hudson Highlands Trail, a former road, that runs 2.5 miles from Laroe Road to Route 17M. This is the park's only official trail although equestrians ride along several other unofficial trails. The main trail varies in surface between asphalt, gravel, sand, and hard pack, with sections washed out from heavy rains in the fall of 2005.

The Orange County Open Space Plan states that Goosepond Mountain State Park is specifically designated as a "passive park" due to its size and location. According to the County, Goosepond Mountain State Park is used by area residents for passive activities such as fishing, hiking, horseback riding, bird-watching, and model airplane flying. According to the Park Ranger, there has been some illegal camping, mountain bike trail blazing, and ATV use in the park. The park does not have a trail register to count hikers, although they do provide "guesstimates" to the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation.



Goosepond Mountain State Park is currently undeveloped except for an area directly off of Route 17M. This area includes walking paths that run through an area of mitigated wetlands. These wetlands were developed to compensate for wetlands that were filled in to develop the Route 6 & NYS Route 17 interchange. There is a small gravel path that provides access to a wooden boardwalk that also functions as a scenic overlook. This overlook provides onlookers with a view of wetlands that extend far into the state park. There are small information signs describing the park's vegetation and wildlife.

NYS Department of Transportation constructed a small parking area as part of the mitigation project. Another parking area is located across 17M from the entrance, near Craigsville Road (formerly Oxford Depot Road). According to the park ranger, these parking areas generally accommodate between 1-2 vehicles for the smaller lot and 2-3 vehicles for the larger lot. The only times the lots may get crowded is when there are several horse trailers.



The park does not have picnic areas or restrooms. The park stewards do not want visitors using the park for anything other than what it is currently permitted, because they do not have the resources allocated for such activities. Several years ago, an illegal campfire resulted in the loss of about two and a half acres. Illegally painted blue mountain bike trail blazes had to be removed. There is known to be illegal ATV use in the park, presenting a potential hazard to wildlife and other park visitors.

This park is owned and maintained by the PIPC. This park has been identified as a *Natural Resource Area* under the NRPA classification guidelines.

### 3.5 PRIVATELY OWNED PROPERTIES

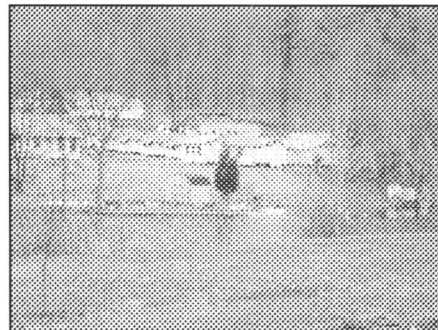
There are several privately owned properties in Chester that should be noted as existing or potential recreation resources. Each of these properties has been identified previously for the contribution they make or for the contribution they would make to Chester's park system if they were to be acquired for public use.

#### 3.5.1 *Camp Monroe*

The 147-acre Camp Monroe, located off Trout Brook Road, served many years as a private religiously affiliated summer camp. Recently sold for development, there has been an ongoing discussion to develop approximately 2/3 of the site (about 97 acres) as a public park. Actively used to accommodate approximately 300 campers as recently as the summer of 2005, the 147.7-acre camp houses a number of outdoor as well as indoor facilities, that are regarded as being in good to excellent condition.

Camp Monroe's facilities include several tennis courts, several ball fields, two indoor gymnasiums, and a swimming pool. The site can also accommodate a neighborhood park and picnic facilities, as well as hiking areas along the stream and up the hillsides to the west. There is also a lake that is used for swimming and boating. Acquisition of the camp would greatly enhance the Town's existing recreational offerings.

This facility continues to be privately owned and is presently not open to the public. As of summer 2005, it no longer functions as a camp. If it continues to be a privately owned recreational facility but is open to the public, then it would be classified as a *Private Park/Recreation Facility* under the NRPA classification guidelines. However, if the Town acquires the site or portions of the site, these facilities could be developed as a *Special Use Park*.



### ***3.5.2 Windridge Condominium Lands***

This property includes six parcels that total approximately 85 acres. These parcels, at the Town's southernmost tip adjacent to the 17.4-acre Appalachian Trail parcel, are presently owned by OMAT, Inc., a company based out of Tuxedo Park, New York. Similar to the Lake Hill Farms Cluster Land, these lands were left undeveloped in exchange for the higher densities permitted when the 300-unit Windridge Condominium development was constructed. The lands should have been turned over to the Windridge Condominium Homeowner Association upon completion of the multi-phase development in 2000, but instead the lands were transferred to OMAT, Inc.

### ***3.5.3 McNeil Property***

The 160-acre McNeil property lies at the end of Goosepond Mountain Road. During the development of the Town's most recent Comprehensive Plan (in 2003), this site was envisioned as a link between Chester Commons and Goosepond Mountain State Park. That plan recommended acquiring this site to develop and expand both active and passive recreation activities for the Town. The plan recommended acquiring the property via a combination of grants and funds from the town's recreation impact fees; or using Transferable Development Rights (TDR) or through the use of a different zoning incentive.

### ***3.5.4 Monroe-Chester Rod and Gun Club***

The Monroe-Chester Rod and Gun Club is located in Chester on Sugar Loaf Mountain Road. According to the Town of Chester assessor, the property is comprised of three parcels totally 138 acres. The land is maintained as wild and undeveloped for hunting. There is a NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (480[a]) term easement over the property that runs in perpetuity as long as the owners of the facility choose to maintain it as a hunting facility and continue to renew the easement.

### ***3.5.5 Privately Protected Open Space Parcels***

According to the Orange County 2004 Open Space Plan, there are two privately protected open space parcels in the Town of Chester. The 30-acre Gunz property is part of a residential lot on Kings Highway, located not far from Town Hall. Privately owned, the easement on this land mandates that the property cannot be subdivided for further residential development. It is not open to the public.

The second private easement is located at the corner of Bellvale Road and Kings Highway. This parcel consists of two land areas: one totals about 29.7 acres while the second is about 21.3 acres. This property is owned by the Orange County Citizens Foundation.

### ***3.5.6 Sugar Loaf Community Areas***

The 2004 *The Art of Planning: A Healthy Infrastructure Plan for Sugar Loaf* identified a number of properties in the Sugar Loaf hamlet that, while privately owned, were open to the public for

their passive recreational enjoyment. As identified in that study, these properties include the following:

- Lycian Center. This facility has installed public benches along Creamery Pond.
- Bertoni Sculpture Garden. This art studio has a publicly accessible open space complete with sculptures. This space, as the plan indicates, presents a safer pedestrian alternative to walking along the shoulder of King's Highway at a dangerous bend in the road.
- Methodist Church. This church constructed a stairway at the rear of their parking lot that provides pedestrians with easy access between the Creamery Pond neighborhood and the Sugar Loaf business district.
- The Scott's Meadow Complex. This retail area includes a large outdoor gathering space with several tables and chairs.
- Endico Water Color. This studio constructed a small patio with several benches outside their building.

### **3.6 PUBLIC AND PRIVATE TRAILS**

The Town of Chester houses a variety of trails through its hillsides and ridges. These trails include both publicly owned and maintained facilities as well as private facilities that are not open to the general public. The facilities range from multi-use converted rail right-of-ways to pedestrian only nature hikes through sensitive ridge areas.

#### **3.6.1 Orange Heritage Trail**

The 9-mile Heritage Trail connects the Town of Goshen, west of Chester, with the Town of Monroe, located east of Chester. This paved "rail trail," located primarily off road, has a hill index of 1.6 and is considered "gentle." Scenic and safe, the trail is ideal for family biking and is also regarded as suitable for inline skates, roller skates, wheelchairs, or walking with a stroller. Navigating several high-speed road and driveway crossings requires care. These are principally located along the segment that runs between Goshen and Chester. Financed by the Rails to Trails program, proposed expansions will extend the trail along the former Erie Mainline out to Middletown and Harriman.



Chester's trail entrance is located on Main Street at the Village's Erie Railroad Station. The 1915 building, known now as the Chester Depot Museum, was restored in 1999 and currently houses exhibits of local and historical interest. The Chester Historical Society has their monthly meetings at the museum and space is available to local groups. The museum itself is open Saturday mornings six months of the year, or by appointment.

## **9.0 Photographs**

Photograph Captions  
Chester Hill Holdings Property  
Town of Chester, Orange County  
Taken February 21, 2012  
Locations shown on the *Visual Resource Map*

Photograph 1 – Entrance road into subject property. Quarry will occupy field and wooded hillside in left-middle ground. Waste transfer station is visible to right. View to south from Black Meadow Road.

Photograph 2 – Industrial/commercial area north of Chester Hill Holding property and southeast of Black Meadow Road. View to north from subject property.

Photograph 3 – Industrial/commercial area northwest of Chester Hill Holding property. View to northwest from field on subject property.

Photograph 4 - Building area at waste transfer station to northwest of Chester Hill Holding property. View to northeast from subject property.

Photograph 5 - Truck parking area at waste transfer station to northwest of Chester Hill Holding property. View to northeast from subject property.

Photograph 6 – View to north from residential area on Black Meadow, southwest of subject property. Industrial area visible to left; highest point of Durland Hill (about ½ mile away) on right. Proposed quarry to occupy lower part of hill, in center of photograph.

Photograph 7 – View to north along Kings Highway from hamlet of Sugar Loaf. Durland Hill (not visible), about 1¼ mile to north, is screened by vegetation and intervening topography.

Photograph 8 – View to north along Kings Highway from entrance to Knapp's View Park (aka Town of Chester Open Space for Public Use and "Broadview Estates). Fury Brook Farm is behind photographer. High point of Durland Hill, about ¾ mile to north, is visible in center of photograph; Quarry area is to left, partially hidden by intervening topography.

Photograph 9 – Durland Hill from Chester Town Hall. Quarry will be screened by hill. View to west; Kings Highway passes through middle ground of photograph.

Photograph 10 – Durland Hill (about ½ mile away) from gravel parking area in Chester Commons Park. View to southwest.

Photograph 11 – Business district in Village of Chester, one mile north of proposed mine. Yelverton Inn on right; First Presbyterian Church behind photographer. View to south along State Route 94. High point of Durland Hill is screened by vegetation and buildings.



**Photograph 1**



**Photograph 2**



**Photograph 3**





**Photograph 4**



**Photograph 5**





**Photograph 6**



**Photograph 7**



**Photograph 8**



**Photograph 9**



**Photograph 10**



**Photograph 11**