

**VILLAGE OF MARGARETVILLE**  
**COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE**  
**AND**  
**ACTION PLAN**

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### I. The Comprehensive Planning Process (or why we are here)

In 2006, the Village of Margaretville, its Mayor and Trustees decided that a comprehensive strategic community planning process should be undertaken in order to provide a framework for future development and to assess community needs in the Village of Margaretville. A Comprehensive Plan is also an important legal document for a community to possess as a legal foundation for the Village's land use laws.

An engaged, enthusiastic and active citizenry participated in the development of the Comprehensive Plan. From the onset, the Village encouraged the participation of all interested groups in the community and invited them to the table throughout the planning process. A Comprehensive Plan Committee was formed from these interest groups and acted as the steering committee for the process, facilitated by a professional planner who provided advice, guidance, direction and writing services. Together they collected existing studies and data, inventoried and analyzed existing conditions, surveyed and interviewed the community, evaluated future trends, and ultimately made recommendations that support a plan of action to move the community forward over a fixed period of time.

#### ***Plan Document***

- ❖ *Sums up the process and results*
- ❖ *Sets an agenda for the Village*
- ❖ *Prioritizes recommendations for the next ten years*
- ❖ *Provides a blueprint of actions that groups can cite in their grant applications*
- ❖ *Provides the legal foundation for the Village's land use laws*

#### ***Comprehensive Planning Process***

- ❖ *Community Inventory*
- ❖ *Citizen Survey*
- ❖ *Public Concerns and Issues*
- ❖ *Existing Conditions, Studies & Reports*
- ❖ *Community Visions*
- ❖ *Analysis and Evaluation*
- ❖ *Recommendations*

The community participated in establishing a vision of the village, providing continual input and review of the draft Plan. Each time public meetings were held, they were well attended. Community members contributed thoughtful comments and suggestions and were very committed to the vision and goals of the process. This is crucial. Scholarly and professional literature suggests that successful community efforts at "follow-through" are built upon a committed, enthusiastic, motivated and engaged citizenry. It is hoped that the community will monitor and help implement the plan of action that can make their vision happen.<sup>64</sup>

### II. A Brief History of Margaretville<sup>81 & 82</sup>

The Village of Margaretville in the Town of Middletown, Delaware County, New York lies in the central region of the Catskill Park. The village's story parallels the history of the early United States as a whole. Hundreds of years before the first European settlers, the Leni Lenape People made perennial encampments in this scenic mountain valley because of the excellent

hunting and fishing resources. Historically all the area's inhabitants owe their fortunes and challenges to its location nestled in the middle valley drained by the Hudson, Delaware and Susquehanna rivers.

The first European settlers were from Holland and arrived in what is now called Margaretville in 1763. They, like the Leni Lenape, saw the beauty of the land and the advantages provided by the rivers and forests. There were many conflicts between the Europeans and American Indians with the native people successfully driving the settlers away until after the Revolution.

Upon their return the settlers quickly made use of the rivers with a water-powered mill established in 1784 on the Delaware River's East Bank. The mill provided a hub around which the community would grow. By the 1840's the village was a small, self-sufficient hamlet with shops, a post office, hotels and a supply depot for the surrounding area and was called Middletown Center. In 1850 the name of the hamlet was changed from Middletown Center to Margaretville in honor of Margaret Lewis, a descendant of one of the earliest European landholders in the Hudson Valley and Catskills, Robert R. Livingston.

The arrival of the Ulster and Delaware Railroad in 1871 strengthened the rural community's connection to the large New York City market by providing another mode of transportation for goods to the city. Soon after, Margaretville became one of the state's leading dairy producing regions, even designated by the state for a time as the most lucrative dairy exporter. Also during the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Margaretville became the center of the cauliflower industry in the Catskill Region. One of the oldest settlements in Delaware County, the village was formally incorporated in 1875.



**Village of Margaretville Circa 1960**  
**Note the amount of tree cover and shade trees in the Village.**  
**Source: Village of Margaretville Comprehensive Plan Committee**

Like all communities, Margaretville must ride the tides of time and nature's whims. Throughout the village's existence the natural beauty and character shaped by the mountains and rivers has lured both annual migrations of visitors as well as weekend getaway tourists. Before the 1950's, when few village economies in Delaware County were doing well, Margaretville was booming. Large hotels dominated the landscape. However things began to change in the 1950's. The designation of the area as part of the New York City watershed and the construction

of the Pepacton Reservoir have had a major impact on the region, flooding major farm lands and

causing the depletion of population and a business bust. The rivers, always an influence, demonstrate their wrath from time to time by damaging the village by flooding, most recently in 1996 and 2006.



Village life can be bucolic and sociable, showcasing nature and the built environment in compatible ways.  
Source: Village of Margaretville Comprehensive Plan Committee.

While the decline in farming at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century necessitated adjustments in the lifestyles, economy and character of rural farming communities, the Catskill Region saw an increase in second-home purchases by residents of New York City and its suburbs seeking rural respite. Because of its natural beauty and character, the Village of Margaretville continues to be a desirable draw. Many of those second-home owners have become full-time and weekend residents; and they have been followed by a growing tourism interest in the Village and surrounding area. Margaretville provides a cultural and business hub for the surrounding towns, villages and hamlets and would like to continue to function as this center. Today, the Village of Margaretville

represents old and new perspectives brought by newcomers and old-timers; the historic and modern in its buildings, people, community and character. It carries off this balanced role with panache and grace.

### III. Community Profile<sup>85</sup>

To understand a community's sense of place, familiarity with its history is vital. To retain the character and qualities unique to the Village of Margaretville, the conditions present in the community need to be examined. A starting point is the Community Profile summarized in this section and detailed in the appendices with supporting documentation.

#### Demographic Trends

The most remarkable trends in population in the Village of Margaretville are the increasing numbers of older residents and the decline of the 18-34 age groups<sup>84</sup>. According to the 2000 United States Census, the median age in Margaretville is 50 years old and there is a significant number of residents 75 years and older<sup>84</sup>. Further supporting the Census data, the Waverly Market Study's<sup>9</sup> findings indicated the portion of the population with the most rapid growth is residents 85 years and older. Twelve percent of the population of the United States is 65 years and older, while that age group makes up 34.8% of the Margaretville population, according to the Catskill Water Discovery Center Report of 2006<sup>61</sup>.

Another interesting trend in the Village of Margaretville is that a higher proportion of grandparents are primary caregivers than in most of New York State<sup>84</sup>. Out of 16 families who had grandparents in residence with children under the age of 18, 13 families consisted of grandparents who were the primary providers.<sup>84</sup> This trend in the number of aging residents and the increasing importance of their roles as caregivers in households with children may underscore the necessity of awareness of the needs for access to healthcare, assisted living facilities, nursing homes and organizations for fitness and social interaction. Conversely, the decline of the 18-34 age group must be kept in mind to see what needs are not being met, such as the possible lack of sustaining employment for young people after high school and college.

In the United States there has been a decline in household size since 1960.<sup>84</sup> This is due to sociological factors such as the trend for smaller families, fewer extended families, greater numbers of divorces and single parents, increased longevity yielding more elderly, and one and two person households.<sup>9 & 61</sup> While Margaretville is not an exception in the size of households, the Catskill Water Discover Center Report estimates the number of households will increase by 2.7% in five years. The Report's authors postulate that this increase is "*indicative of the increase in second homes or retirement homes, as well as the overall decrease in household size due to empty nesters.*"<sup>61</sup> The Delaware County Health Department reports the Town of Middletown's, (in which Margaretville is located) growth rate increased by 18.9 percent in the period between 1990 and 2000. This is in comparison to Delaware County's rate of 1.8 percent and indicates significant growth, housing turnover, migration and changes in demographics.<sup>87</sup>

Our community has full-time residents, weekend residents who run the gamut from splitting time between here and another location, winter weekenders, full-time summer residents, "snow birds" who go south for the winter, and regular and occasional tourists. This diversity strengthens and challenges the community. It also challenges us to collect data that would be helpful for balancing the needs and values of newcomers and long-time residents in regards to the character of their village.

The diversity of the population is changing because of in-migration of various ethnicities into the region. Margaretville Central School reports an increase in the Latino population from 9.8 percent in 1999-2000 to 14.2 percent in 2001-2002.<sup>87</sup> Margaretville Central School's dramatic change in racial composition and rate is distinctive in Delaware County.<sup>87</sup> The cultural and ethnic landscape of Margaretville is rapidly changing.

## **Education**

In keeping with Margaretville's role as a hub for the area, Margaretville Central School serves the Villages of Fleishmanns and Margaretville and the Town of Middletown, as well as parts of the Towns of Andes, Bovina, Roxbury, Lexington, Halcott, Hardenburgh and Shandaken. The School provides a full complement of courses, including college courses from SUNY Delhi as well as college courses in English, U.S. History, Pre-calculus and Calculus and Science, taught by the staff. Students are engaged in community projects. The school is involved with the Empire State Partnership and the Open Eye Theater, a local theater arts group. There is a large art curriculum.

Margaretville Central School is well integrated in the community, which turns out to support the sports teams, arts and other activities. The School and community also work together in the CROP Summer and Afterschool Enrichment Program. In keeping with the community's goals for general well being, the school currently focuses on wellness through nutrition, awareness, physical fitness and healthy lifestyles.<sup>69</sup> It interacts with the community and the nation for events. For example, Margaretville Central School participated in a nationwide event to support after school programs by holding fundraisers such as Movie Day. In true community involvement, the movies were donated by a local video store.

The United States Census shows that 75.5% of the residents have obtained their High School diploma or a higher educational degree, 11% have completed an Associate Degree and 5.4% a Bachelor's Degree.<sup>84</sup> For high school graduates who are wishing to continue their education there are many colleges and universities located within a 60 mile radius of the Village of Margaretville, including SUNY campuses, private colleges and community colleges.

### **Well Being and Social Capital**

Some of the most difficult components of a community to measure, and the most abstract, are the conditions that make life, happiness, and satisfaction possible. Beyond the more tangible possession of material goods, the availability for social interaction plays important roles for the happiness and satisfaction of individuals and thus a happier community. Social interaction through events, organizations and resources blends both "Well Being" and "Social Capital". Social Capital refers to the strength of shared values in a community. That strength comes from trust between the residents, neighbors and their community resources. Ideas, experiences and even differences can be shared at community events and organizations, building trust and common values.

The Village of Margaretville has numerous opportunities for social gatherings through the variety of churches, organizations such as the Rotary, Catskill Women's Network, Boy and Girl Scouts, the American Legion, youth soccer and community-wide events such as the Cauliflower Festival, the Margaretville Fire Department Field Day, Street Fair and the Margaretville Memorial Hospital Antiques and Flea Market.

Community-wide events celebrate, educate and provide opportunities for interaction between the generations, which is particularly important considering the trends in age groups. These events promote Margaretville's small town appeal and concern for the protection of its natural amenities, helping to bring the community together and preventing the exclusion of outsiders. The Village has a variety of venues for public events, including the newly built Margaretville Village Pavilion and the Amphitheater, but these venues are underused.

In another means of measuring quality of life, two sociologists at Cornell University suggest that happiness and satisfaction are tied to longevity and access to healthcare facilities. These factors can be indicated by percentages of doctors and nurses, death rates (aggregate) and crime rates (homicide). The numbers of medical doctors per 10,000 residents in Delaware County is 10.6 and number of nurses is 90.9, compared to a very urban area, such as Kings

County in New York City, which has 16.1 doctors and 58.5 nurses. The numbers of homicides per 100,000 residents in Delaware County is 0 and deaths (aggregate) are 590.3, compared to Kings County with 10.8 homicides and 444.1 deaths. In the absence of other measurable indicators, when compared to an urban area, rural Delaware County measures very well with respect to measures of quality of life, such as percentage of nurses, homicide rate and death rates, indicating that by the Cornell approach, Margaretville is doing rather well.

## Health

Available healthcare is an indicator of well being, an important public service and driver of the local economy. The Village of Margaretville again is a hub for the local area. The Margaretville Memorial Hospital “is the doorway through which communities in the western Catskill Region gain access to quality healthcare.”<sup>71</sup> The Hospital provides medical and some surgical services, 24 hour ambulance service, an acute care and emergency room, family health care centers, visiting specialists, state-of-the-art imaging services and others. Long-term care is available through the sister facility, Mountainside Residential Care Facility. As the demographics of the region continue to change; population age, seasonal and weekenders retire or spend additional time in the Margaretville area, there will be implications for the health care delivery system. According to the Delaware County Health Department, a survey of second home owners indicated that one-third of respondents intended to retire to their vacation homes. As a result, demand for fire, emergency medical, public health, human and primary/acute health care services will dramatically increase.<sup>87</sup>

The Catskill Connection for Health and Wellness found there was enough interest to publish and distribute a guide to holistic and natural health practitioners in the Margaretville area. The guide directs people to the closest services such as natural food stores, practitioners of acupuncture, chiropractic and traditional Chinese (herbal) medicine, as well as yoga and meditation classes.



Buildings such as this give Margaretville its authentic and unique flair.  
Source: M-ARK

#### **IV. One Vision for the Village of Margaretville**

*The Village of Margaretville*

*is a charming*

*commercial, social and cultural hub*

*for the surrounding areas.*

*Its full-time and part-time residents care deeply*

*about each other and*

*honor the tradition of welcoming visitors.*

*The Village of Margaretville*

*offers ample opportunities for*

*healthy, peaceful living*

*in a quiet but vital country setting*

*that we are*

*all proud to call home.*