



# **Orange County Greenway Compact**

Approved by the Hudson River Valley Greenway Communities Council , June 12, 2013



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**ORANGE COUNTY**  
NEW YORK



# Introduction

Since 1970, Orange County has pursued planning policies that reinforce community character and preserve open space. These policies are embedded in the County's planning documents, including the Orange County Open Space Plan, the Orange County Water Master Plan, and most importantly, the County's Comprehensive Plan, Strategies for Quality Communities. Most recently, Orange County developed an award-winning Design Manual which illustrates how the best practices called for in the County plans can be implemented on the ground.

The County has successfully led by example. As part of the Greenway Compact initiative, a detailed audit was conducted of the comprehensive plans of the forty-two municipalities within Orange County, which control land use decisions independent of the County under the auspices of municipal home rule. The audit found that the vast majority of municipal comprehensive plans County comport with these same policies.

Since planning policies at both the County and municipal levels closely mirror the principles of the Hudson River Valley Greenway program, the County has decided to become a Greenway Compact Community. The Greenway Compact is an innovative state-sponsored program created to facilitate the development of a regional strategy for preserving scenic, natural, historic, cultural and recreational resources while encouraging compatible economic development and maintaining the tradition of home rule for making land use decisions. By becoming a Greenway Compact Community, the County can take advantage of the many benefits offered by the program, including compliance at the state level for siting facilities; favorable status for competitive state-funded programs, and direct grants for capital and planning projects. There is an equally important, if intangible benefit to the Greenway program: through the creation and adoption of this Compact, and through the increased communication and understanding that it fosters, the citizens of Orange County can renew their commitment to planning for a better future.

## **The Orange County Greenway Compact**

This Greenway Compact Plan is designed to clearly illustrate the ways in which the County's planning policies, specifically the County's Comprehensive Plan and Design Manual, align with the Greenway Principles. It is also designed to highlight the ways in which the comprehensive plans of individual municipalities within the County align with the Greenway.

The design of the document makes it accessible to as broad an audience as possible. This Compact is seen as a way to reintroduce to the citizens of Orange County to the Comprehensive Plan, Strategies for Quality Communities, by summarizing that document without technical jargon, presenting the concepts through illustrations.

Part I of the document is organized around the five core principles of the Greenway program. There is an explanation of how both the County Comprehensive Plan and the Design Manual support each of the five core principles, and summarized in each case by a map on that theme.

Part II of the document summarizes the County's Comprehensive Plan. With a few exceptions, no more than a single page is devoted to each of the recommendations in the Plan, providing an easy-to-read summary. Color-coded bars in the margins of the pages help the reader navigate between the sections of the Comprehensive Plan.

In order to integrate the Design Manual, each of these pages is illustrated with images taken from the Manual. Through this image, the reader is directed to the relevant section of the full Design Manual which is incorporated into this Compact by reference.

Part III is a short section that introduces the reader to the structure and content of the Design Manual.

## **Looking Forward**

In some ways, the region is catching up to the ideas pioneered by Orange County beginning in the 1970s. Most recently these include the Mid-Hudson Regional Sustainability Plan, funded by NYSERDA and organized by Orange County as the co-chair of the Mid-Hudson Planning Consortium. The Regional Sustainability Plan is a regional-scale stakeholder-driven process to extend the principles of smart growth into a geography that incorporated the southern half of the Hudson Valley Greenway. Despite the scale of this enterprise, the future of Orange County will continue to be shaped by a myriad of incremental decisions, most of them made by citizens at the local level. This document is meant to help guide those decisions by promoting an informed citizenry, by explaining best practices, and by creating the larger County and regional context on which success at the local level depends. This Greenway Compact should continue to be a strategic reference document for communities that want a prosperous, equitable and sustainable future.

# The Greenway Compact Program

## What is the Compact?

One of the major objectives of the New York State Hudson River Valley Greenway Act is the development and implementation of a regional strategy called the Greenway Compact. The Greenway Compact is a voluntary regional planning vision developed in a partnership among a county, its local communities and the Hudson River Valley Greenway Communities Council. The Greenway Compact differs from a typical comprehensive plan in that it specifically promotes the Greenway criteria, actively encourages regional cooperation and provides financial and other benefits for participating communities. The Greenway Compact is not intended to supersede local regulations but to complement them, and to serve as a model for regional growth.

The Greenway has designated the counties as the basic planning areas for the development of the Greenway Compact. However, the development of the Greenway Compact Plan is still a grassroots process. Public and community participation in the development of the Greenway Compact is critical to the successful implementation of any compact strategy. Greenway Compacts need to reflect the interests and the concerns of local communities and provide a regional context for local planning efforts.

The development of a county comprehensive plan or other special-purpose county plan such as an open space or waterfront redevelopment plan can be compatible with the development of a Greenway Compact and may be developed either in conjunction with a Greenway Compact, or as the Greenway Compact.

## Joining the Compact

A Greenway Community is not the same as a Compact Community. Once a city, town or village has become a Greenway Community by adopting a resolution indicating support for the five Greenway criteria, the municipality is eligible to become a Greenway Compact Community. This step requires the municipality to include a reference to the Orange County Greenway Compact Plan in its zoning ordinance and land development regulations. The language to be added to the local law must state that consideration will be given to the policies, principles and guidance of the Compact Plan, as appropriate. This action ensures that the Greenway criteria and the Orange County Greenway Compact Plan will be given consideration in land use activity and other regular business of the municipality.

Becoming a Greenway Compact Community shall not limit the home rule authority of a municipality under State Law to make local land use and zoning decisions. The local action does not authorize any other entity to supersede the municipality's land use laws and regulations or to impose any requirements on the municipality, nor does it prevent the municipality in its sole discretion from adopting a local law at a later date for the purpose of withdrawing from the Orange County Greenway Compact Plan.

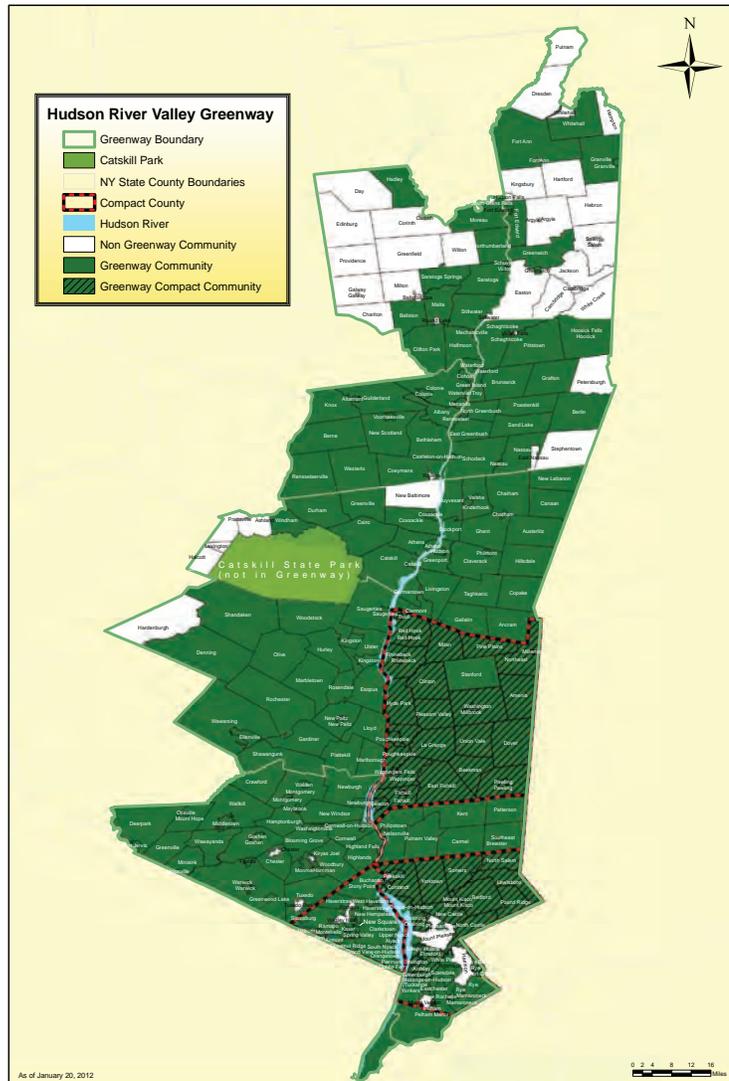
# Part I

## A Greenway Compact for Orange County

### What is the Greenway?

#### Orange County planning and the five Greenway Criteria

The Hudson River Valley Greenway Act describes the “Greenway Criteria” as “the basis for attaining the goal of a Hudson River Valley Greenway”. The Criteria - natural and cultural resource protection, regional planning, economic development, public access and heritage and environmental education - provide the overall vision for voluntary local Greenway programs and projects. The general nature of the Greenway criteria allows communities to develop locally-based projects which address community concerns while contributing to the overall framework of the Hudson River Valley Greenway.



**Hudson River Valley Greenway**



Greenway Compact
1: Resource Protection
2: Economic Development
3: Public Access
4: Regional Planning
5: Heritage and Environment Education

# Greenway Principle 1

## Natural and Cultural Resource Protection

### Greenway Compact

#### 1: Resource Protection

#### 2: Economic Development

#### 3: Public Access

#### 4: Regional Planning

#### 5: Heritage and Environment Education

**Protect, preserve and enhance natural resources including natural communities, open spaces and scenic areas as well as cultural resources including historic places and scenic roads.**

### Strategies for Quality Communities

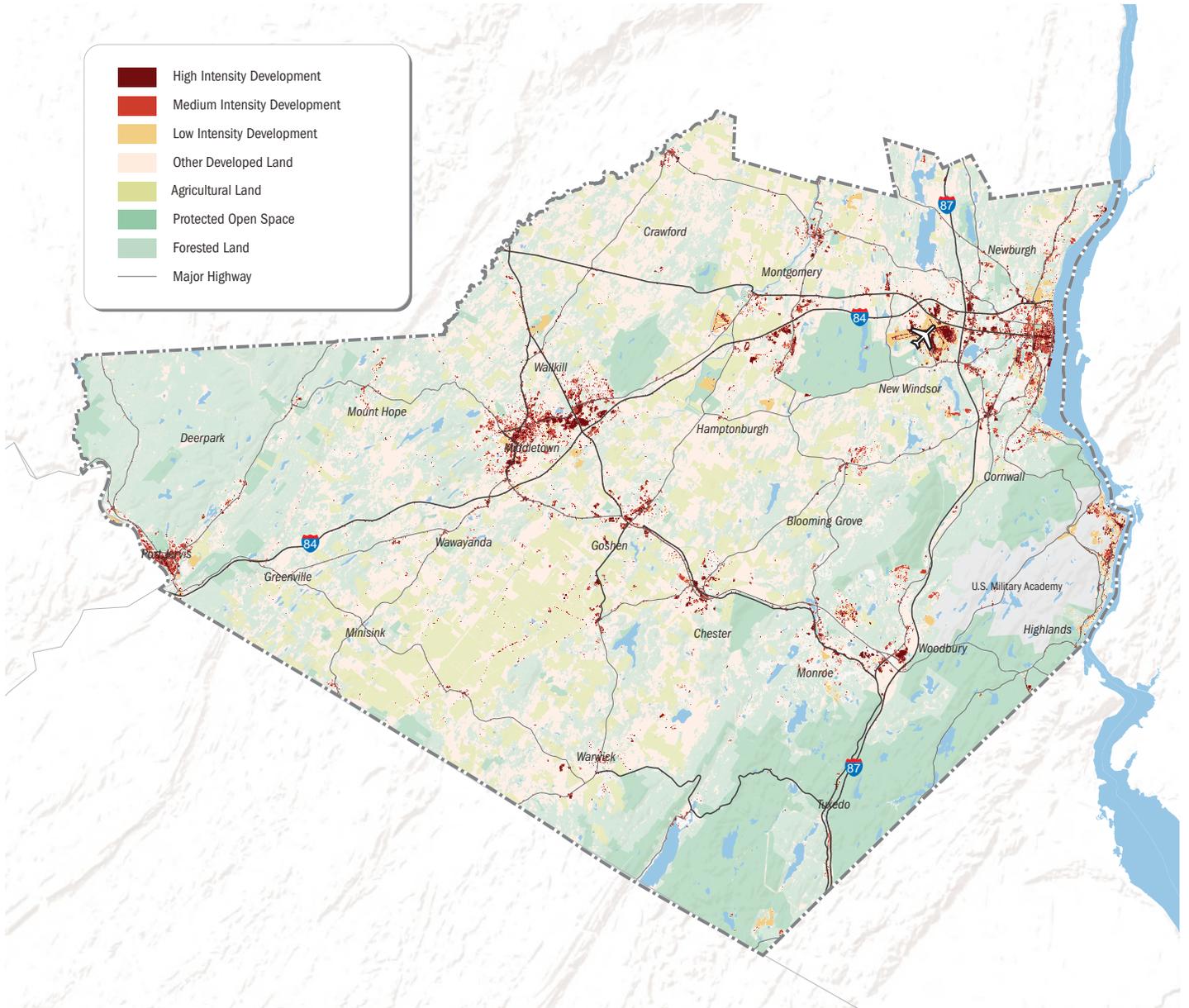
The Orange County Comprehensive Plan is organized around the concept of “Priority Growth Areas”. These are places where the historic settlement patterns and infrastructure can support future development such as local village centers, “crossroads” and commercial corridors. By directing growth to these areas, it is possible to protect natural and cultural resources elsewhere, as well as farmlands and habitat areas. The County's plans also call for protecting the historic and cultural resources, the special landscape features, the scenic byways and the beautiful river corridors that ensure the County's unique sense of place and quality of life.

Conservation efforts are often evaluated in terms of the numbers of acres that have been preserved. But using this measure by itself misses an equal if not more important measure – the degree of fragmentation in the landscape. Natural systems, including animal habitats, rely on continuity and the creation of biotic corridors that link resources. In this way, there is alignment between the idea of the Hudson Valley Greenway and sustainable development practices.

### Design Manual: Places and Nature

In keeping with the concept of Priority Growth Areas, the Design Manual identifies five strategic kinds of Places to direct growth: Downtowns, the Edges of downtowns, Corridors, Crossroads and New Neighborhoods. Both within and outside of these growth areas, strategies and details for protecting resources are presented under the theme of Nature. Nature is thought of as the underlying framework of natural resources and open spaces around which development patterns should be organized in order to protect the environment and preserve the integrity of natural systems. To accomplish this, the Design Manual presents these objectives: to Create the Urban Forest, to Create a Continuous Greensward, and to Protect Natural and Scenic Resources. The design details cover a range of techniques from conservation subdivision design to stormwater management details.

## Existing Orange County Development



# Greenway Principal 2

## Economic Development

Greenway Compact

1: Resource Protection

2: Economic Development

3: Public Access

4: Regional Planning

5: Heritage and Environment Education

**Encourage economic development that is compatible with the preservation and enhancement of natural and cultural resources including agriculture, tourism and the revitalization of established community centers and waterfronts.**

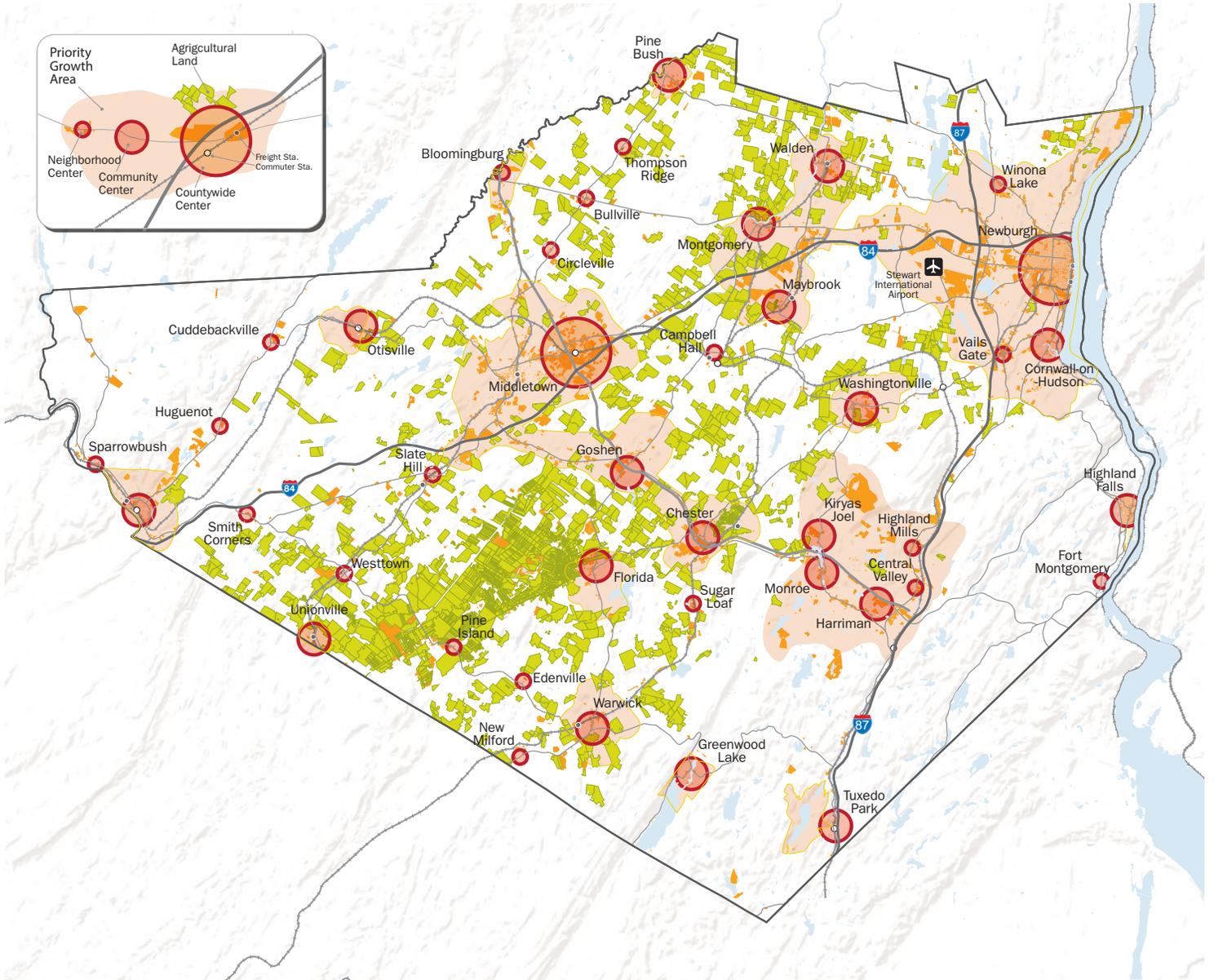
### Strategies for Quality Communities:

One of the guiding principles of the Comprehensive Plan is to insure an equitable future for all residents by balancing economy, community and the environment. In the Built Environments section, the Comprehensive Plan identifies a broad range of potential development areas, from established centers and neighborhoods, to commercial corridors, to industrial and office parks. To insure that this growth is sustainable and compatible with existing natural and cultural resources, the Comprehensive Plan calls for orderly and sustainable growth that balances the provision of adequate utility systems with natural resource demands, as well as best-practice development and design techniques. But economic development is not just about new buildings: agriculture is the foundation of a vital and diverse economy and so the Comprehensive Plan calls for linking environmental and agricultural heritage to sustainable agricultural practices.

### Design Manual: Communities

To insure that economic development is compatible with existing patterns and natural systems, the Design Manual presents strategies under the theme of Communities. Communities are places where, to the greatest extent possible, people can live, work, shop and recreate within walking distances. Building complete communities is essential for reducing dependence on automobiles, for advancing, and for fostering social interaction. To accomplish this, the Design Manual presents these objectives: to Create a Diversity of Land Uses, Beautiful Neighborhoods and Pedestrian-Oriented Commercial Areas. The design details cover a range of techniques from best practice neighborhood design to mixed-use buildings.

# Orange County Economic Development



# Greenway Principal 3

## Public Access

### Greenway Compact

#### 1: Resource Protection

#### 2: Economic Development

#### 3: Public Access

#### 4: Regional Planning

#### 5: Heritage and Environment Education

**Promote increased public access to the Hudson River through the creation of riverside parks and the development of the Hudson River Valley Greenway Trail System.**

### Strategies for Quality Communities:

Orange County promotes mobility of all kinds through several strategies. Enhancement of transit services – commuter rail, but especially bus – is essential to mitigate auto-oriented sprawl and to provide equal access for all of the County’s residents to all of the County’s – and the region’s – natural, cultural and economic resources.

Corridors of all kinds must be context sensitive and designed to support biking and walking so that residents can reach the important places in their communities including schools, stores, parks and transit stops.

Quality Communities also depends on promoting alternative modes – biking and walking. The plan calls for a robust trail network that can link the many cultural and natural resources in the county. Three signature trail networks – the Orange Heritage trail, the D & H Canal trail and the Hudson River Greenway - anchor a robust network of local trails and bike routes that enable people to experience their surroundings. The Hudson Riverfront is a world-class resource, and both the County Comprehensive Plan and the numerous local plans for the abutting municipalities call for enhanced access to the River. But as with the trail network, there are waterfront access opportunities at every scale, including hundreds of smaller lakes, rivers and streams. For this reason, the plan is assertive in promoting both sensible development practices and conservation. By bringing the residents of Orange County into contact with these resources, access creates the knowledge and commitment that are essential to the long-term stewardship of these resources.

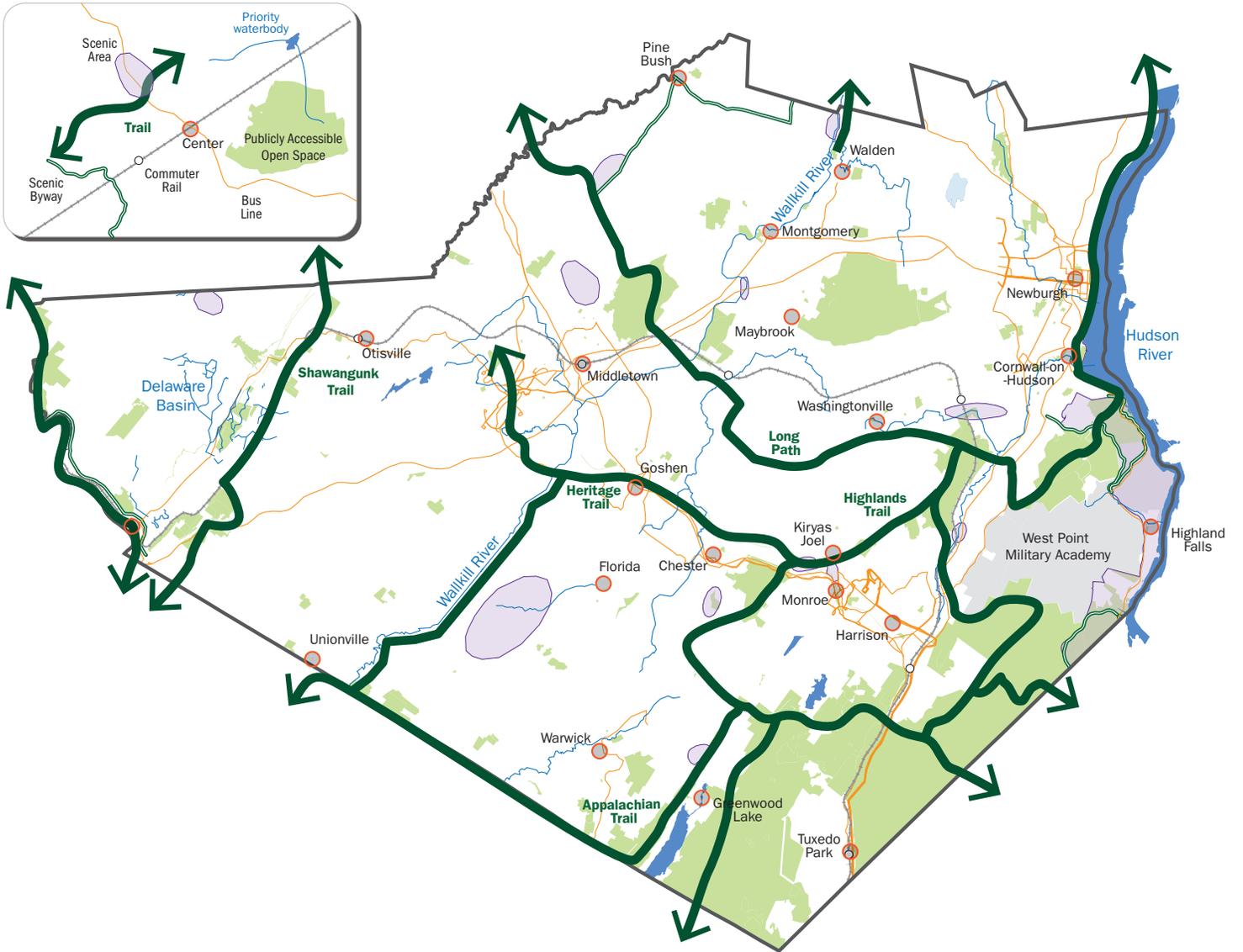
### Design Manual: Links

To promote access and mobility in all of its forms, the Design Manual presents strategies under the theme of Links. Links explains how to connect all aspects of the built and natural environment by creating as fine grained a street and-block network as possible, by promoting new trails and by enabling all forms of mobility to reduce dependence on the automobile. To accomplish this, the Design Manual presents these objectives: Maximize Connectivity, Design Streets for People, and Manage the Automobile. The design details address connections and mobility, such as multi-modal roadway design, parking design, and trail networks.

### Hudson River Valley Greenway

The National Water Trails System is a network of water trails—recreational routes on waterways with a network of public access points—that have been established to protect and restore America’s rivers, shorelines and waterways, conserve natural areas along waterways, and increase access to outdoor recreation on shorelines and waterways. The Hudson River Greenway Water Trail, part of the National Water Trails System network, was established on Earth Day 2001, and is managed by the Hudson River Valley Greenway Communities Council. Within Orange County, there are four sites identified as part of the Hudson River Greenway Water Trail; car-top boat launches in Newburgh, Cornwall, and at Kowawese Unique Area in New Windsor, as well as a day use site at Fort Montgomery.

# Orange County Recreational Trails



# Greenway Principal 4

## Regional Planning

### Greenway Compact

#### 1: Resource Protection

#### 2: Economic Development

#### 3: Public Access

#### 4: Regional Planning

#### 5: Heritage and Environment Education

**Communities can work together to develop mutually beneficial regional strategies for natural and cultural resource protection, economic development (including necessary public facilities and infrastructure), public access and heritage and environmental education**

### Strategies for Quality Communities

The Comprehensive Plan was created with the full participation of public agencies, community leaders and local organizations. Issue-based community forums were convened and comments were solicited from regional and state agencies to provide regional perspectives on transportation, agricultural, recreational and utility systems.

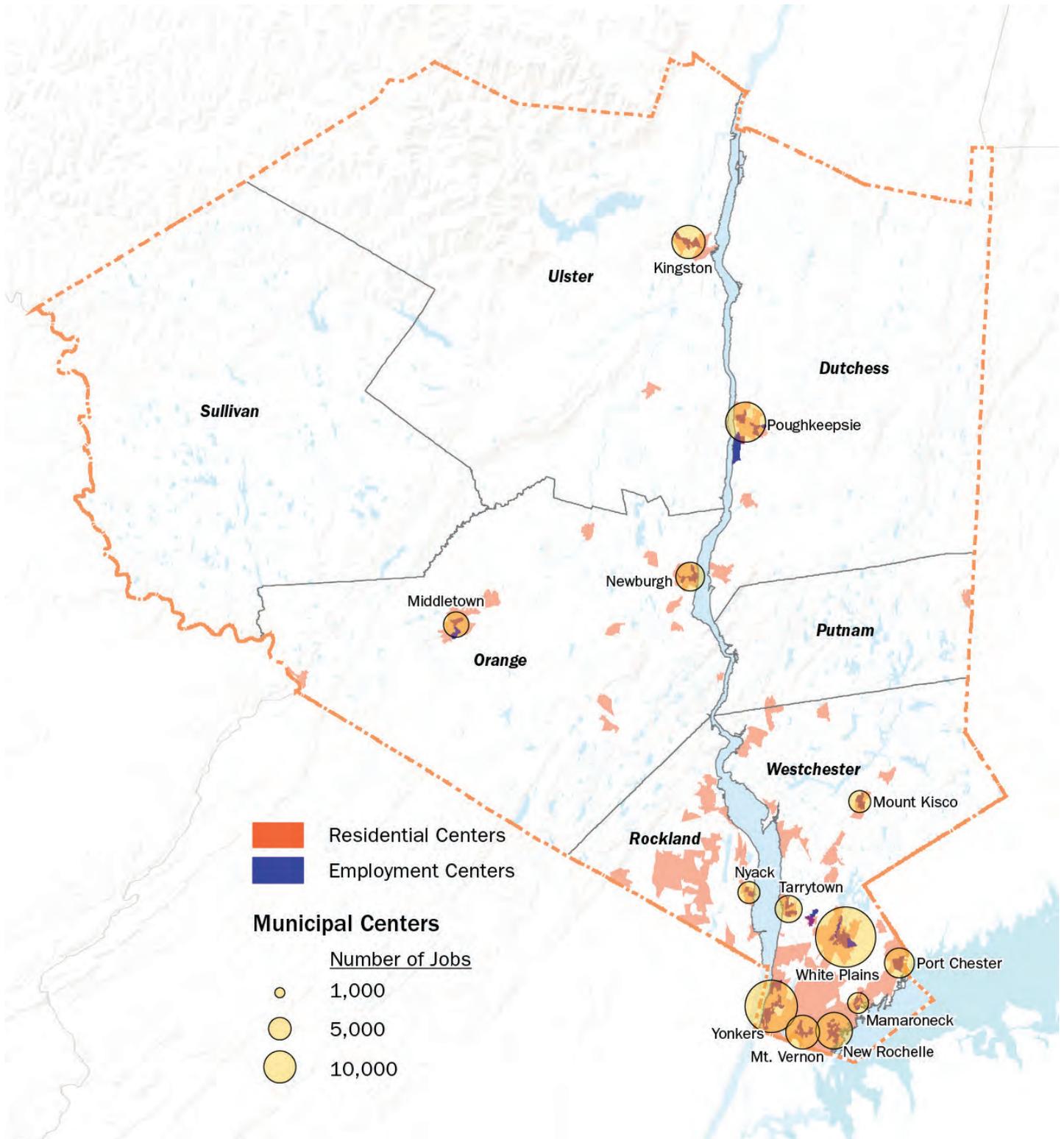
Orange County has always recognized the importance of inter-municipal planning. In fact, although each municipality controls their own planning, zoning and land use activity in accordance with New York State home rule principles, planning in Orange County is organized around several larger sub-areas. Each of these sub-areas is comprised of multiple municipalities with shared interests that extend beyond their individual boundaries: Southeast Orange County (SEOC), Mid-County and the Greater Newburgh Urbanized Area. Over the last several years, Orange County has sponsored smart growth planning initiatives in each of these sub-areas.

The Comprehensive Plan calls for continued efforts along these lines. In fact, two of the seven Quality Communities Principles speak directly to regional planning: Concurrency – defining a regional context for the County’s future by insuring that county, municipal and private sector efforts communicate and share goals; and Partnership -working together among all levels of government and with all civic and community interests.

### Design Manual

The material in the Design Manual derives from several initiatives in the larger planning sub-areas described above. In fact, the five Place types for priority growth in the Manual were based on settlement patterns in these larger sub-regional planning areas. While most of the material in the Manual is at the scale of these individual Place types such as Downtowns, Corridors and New Neighborhoods, the Manual also recognizes that there are numerous objectives that can only be accomplished through regional cooperation. For example, one of the important objectives in the Manual is the protection of watersheds, which rarely conform to the boundaries of a single municipality or county. Similarly, the objective of maximizing connectivity implies extension beyond municipal boundaries. The Manual explains how best practice stormwater details can be deployed to accomplish protection of water resources and also provides details for trails and greenways.

The Manual also includes a section on how to direct growth across the larger landscape and implementation tools that operate at the inter-municipal scale. These include transfer of development rights (TDR), designation of critical environmental areas and resource-specific plans.



The Primary Regional Centers on this map were identified by mapping the coincidence of these features: 1) well -designed street grids of good connectivity as measured by density of road intersections; 2) good access to transit - either within 5-mile road distance to a rail station or with good local bus services; 3) schools that are located in walkable urban settings, and; 4) medium or high transit scores that indicate suitability for transit investments. Transit score is an indicator developed by NJT and DVRPC that is a composite measurement of population, employment, and 0-car household densities.

The location of Primary Regional Centers throughout the seven-county Regional Planning Consortium provides opportunities for cooperation on matters of regional interest, such as protection of the Hudson River Estuary, expansion and cohesive development of the Hudson River Greenway Water Trail, and roadway and trail connections throughout the region to maximize tourism opportunities.

# Greenway Principal 5

## Heritage and Environment Education

Greenway Compact

1: Resource Protection

2: Economic Development

3: Public Access

4: Regional Planning

**5: Heritage and Environment Education**

**Promote awareness among residents and visitors about the Valley's natural, cultural, scenic and historic resources.**

**Strategies for Quality Communities:**

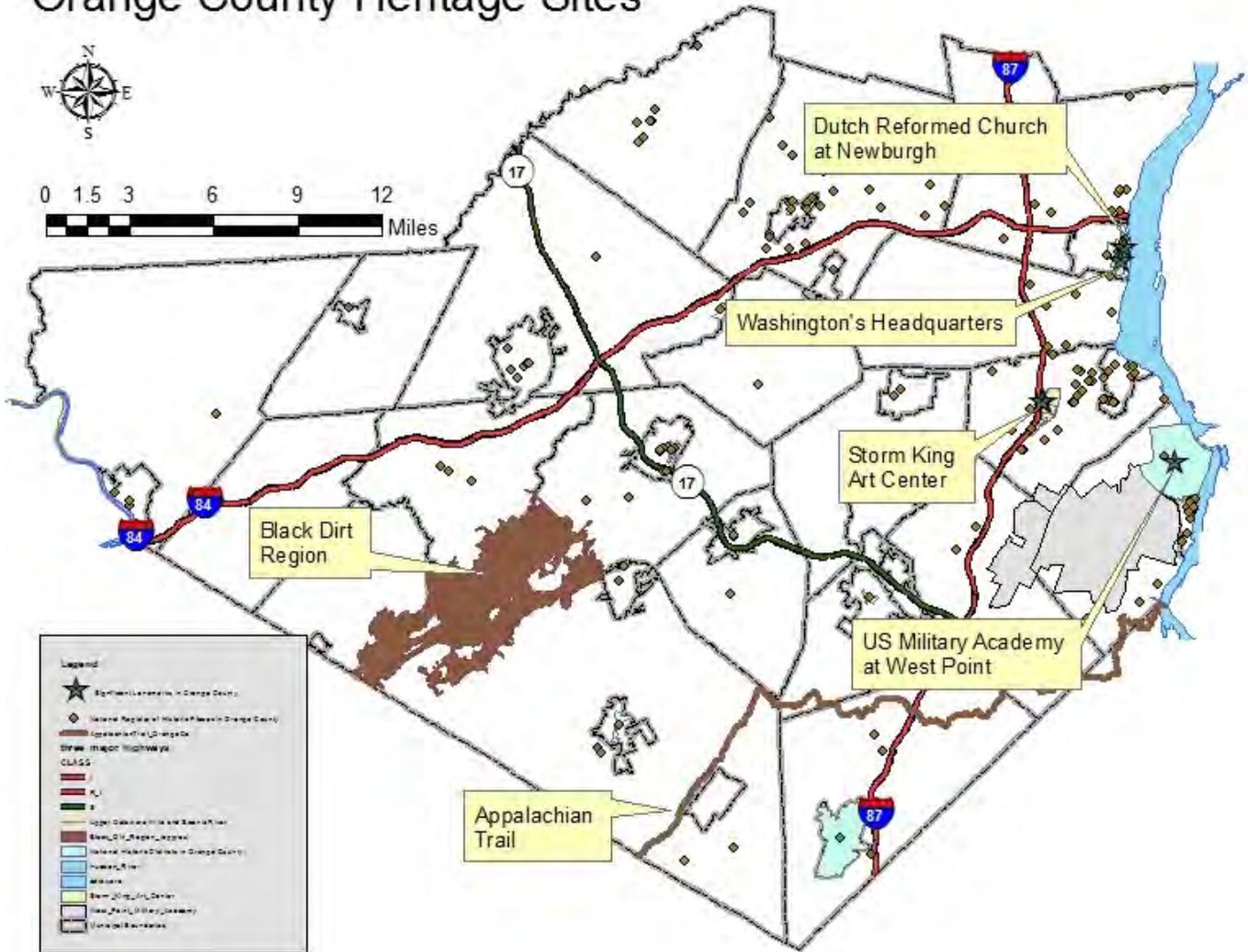
Orange County has a wealth of historic and cultural resources set in a beautiful landscape. Complementing the rich natural and agricultural landscape is a cultural landscape that includes everything from scenic views to historic downtowns and village centers. There are museums and performing arts centers as well as institutions of higher learning and other special destinations such as the Storm King Art Center. Historic sites abound throughout the County, many of them dating to the Revolutionary War, as well as sites depicting the roles of agriculture and industry in the County's growth and history. The County has a great opportunity to capitalize on the larger Hudson River Valley as a world-class cultural, historical and educational destination.

The Comprehensive Plan is clear that this is not merely a matter of protection, but of education and promotion. There are explicit policies of the plan to promote these resources and to ensure that cultural and higher educational resources are provided for current and future residents. Environmental stewardship is part of that advocacy and educational agenda.

**Design Manual**

The Design Manual is clear that creating "complete communities" means locating neighborhood and civic uses in places where they are accessible and complementary to their surroundings. Physical integration is an essential complementary strategy to integrating school programs with the cultural and natural heritage of the County.

# Orange County Heritage Sites



Data on this map has been provided by the National Register of Historic Places (National Register Sites, National Historic Districts and Significant Landmarks), the National Park Services (Wild and Scenic Rivers, Appalachian Trail), and the Orange County Planning Department (Agricultural Regions, Municipal Boundaries, Major Highways). For a full listing of National Historic Sites and Districts in Orange County, please visit [www.nps.gov/nr/](http://www.nps.gov/nr/).