

## Chapter 8 Economic Development Potential

**VISION:** *To improve quality of life, tax base and viability of existing business, the Town will adopt a revised zoning law, a subdivision and site plan review law, consider infrastructure improvements, and ensure adequate enforcement. Local laws will reflect the long term vision for the Town.*

Economic activity in the Town has been limited by the distance from major interstates; this factor is unlikely to change. Other potential factors for development in the Town include continued suburban growth in Chemung County and Marcellus Shale development. Strengthening the economy within the Elmira/Corning areas will be a vital step toward attracting professionals and growing families to live in Veteran.



**Figure 20: Hubbard's Market, Town of Veteran**

The impact of increased 'suburbanization' could be positive for the Town, if all development is enmeshed into the existing Town character. Zoning law and subdivision regulations are the tools available to the Town of Veteran to ensure that future development (residential or otherwise) is consistent with the existing sense of place in Veteran. Gas drilling and ancillary services have the potential for significant changes to the Town, which can be managed with local regulation and enforcement. Any new development in the Town must be thoroughly considered; the benefits and costs must be assessed before the Town takes any planning, zoning, or other development action.

Existing conditions in the community lend themselves to attracting hobby farmers, materials storage, personal care assistance, group living, gravel/soil mining, gas drilling, agri-businesses, and agricultural operations (livestock, field crops, produce, and orchards). By focusing on the development potential of these likely businesses, growth within the Town can be managed appropriately.

Any increased development would trigger changes to the road networks: more curb cuts and new road construction. The density of curb-cuts is a highly visual effect of development that is easily controlled by local regulation. Increased road maintenance costs must be considered as well, before approving any changes to the zoning code. The use and enforcement of road use agreements with industries operating within the Town will help to control the cost, so tax payers are not burdened with the cost.

Given the character of the Town and the distance of the Town to the interstate, it is unlikely that there will be any significant increase in 'economic development' or employment opportunities within the Town. The Town has well defined rural character, rural amenities, and a rural population. Focusing solely on development without regard to the rural quality of life would likely

have a negative impact on the Town and its current residents. Promoting large scale development that does not match the rural characteristic of Veteran would have a negative impact for current and future residents.

### **Tax benefits by land use**

Increased development is not necessarily the best fiscal decision for a community like Veteran. In a rural community each land use has a specific cost of service: tax revenue ratio, cost benefit analysis on land use, and taxation are called Cost of Community Service (COCS) studies. These studies have consistently shown that agricultural, commercial, and industrial land uses are net generators of tax revenue for rural communities. Rural residential land uses are net consumers of tax revenue.

New residential subdivisions would likely enrich some of the large landowners in the Town; new development would likely incur additional costs to the Town of Veteran. With increased residential development, the Town could expect: increased volumes of stormwater, higher traffic volumes, increased need for road maintenance and increased demand for emergency services. The size and location of each subdivision must only be permitted based on the long term benefits to the Town. Therefore it is in the best interest of the Town to permit increased residential development in areas with the least potential negative impacts. Following smart growth principals by encouraging new residential developments to be located close to existing residential developments will be efficient for the Town.

Soil maps of the community indicate that subdivisions in the Town could be relatively small, while still maintaining adequate distances between on-site wells and septic systems. (Soil maps can be found in Chapter 4)

### **Appropriate Economic Development within Veteran**

#### ***Agricultural Operations***

Properly managed farms, even in agricultural districts, adhere to the vision of the Town and generate tax revenue for the Town without requiring Town services. Orchards, livestock, field crops, and produce are all potentially viable agricultural operations within the Town. Inter-generational farm transfers are likely to be successful in the Town of Veteran since non-agricultural development is likely to remain limited in the foreseeable future. Unchecked subdivisions may pose a threat to ongoing farm operations. The Town may consider a subdivision law that keeps existing farm parcels farmable.



**Figure 21: Farm, Middle Road**

#### ***Agri-businesses***

Survey of residents supported the idea of growing agribusiness within the Town. Currently the Town of Veteran has a handful of businesses that are related to agriculture within the Town. The Town is interested in economic development as it relates to their current way of

life. Veteran should encourage growth of agribusiness and small farm stands throughout the Town to maintain the current character of the Town. Should funding be sought for an Agriculture Protection Plan by the Town, through NYS Agriculture and Markets, it is advised that the Town seriously consider economic development within that plan as it relates to their agricultural community. Currently Veteran has one zone throughout the entire Town. With current zoning, agricultural resources may not be protected and agribusiness may not be as strongly encouraged as multiple zones may allow (also see Chapter 6).

### ***Hobby Farms***



**Figure 22: Hobby Beekeeping, Rt. 13**

A peaceful rural way of life is a major selling point for potential residents of the Town. Veteran could become a destination community for several demographic groups: down-shifters, back-to-the-land retirees, cost conscious young families, and telecommuting migrants from large urban areas. By strategically marketing this community to hobby farmers, land

values within the Town can be maintained for current residents, while attracting new 'farm friendly' residents. Encouraging expansion of

high speed internet throughout Veteran will also aid in attracting the telecommuting professionals. Fiber constructed by Southern Tier Network ([www.southerntiernetwork.org](http://www.southerntiernetwork.org)) has already been laid along the length of Rt. 13 throughout the Town.

### ***Home Based Service Businesses***

Opportunities exist for Town residents with marketable skills to operate home based businesses. Home businesses based on skills like tailoring, landscape design,

dog training, home care, maid service, photography, carpentry,

nursery and other business could generate profit for the business owner, while not conflicting with existing land uses or the Town's rural character.



**Figure 23: At home business, Town of Veteran**

### ***Senior Living Community***

There may be potential for a small-scale senior living/rehabilitation facility within the Town. The lack of water and sewer infrastructure would increase the cost of the operation, but by attracting a discerning clientele, there may be an opportunity for profit. A senior living community would place increased demands on the local road/emergency management service systems. Increased buffering between this dense residential development (such as senior living facilities) and the rural residential neighbors would be necessary.



### ***Gravel/soil Mining***

Mining operations, as governed by the Town and the DEC, have long been a part of the rural landscape of the Southern Tier. Local governments have little control over these mines, but are able to require reclamation plans. DEC is responsible for oversight, but lacks the staff to adequately enforce the mining regulations. Open communication between mine operators, DEC, the Town, and neighbors will limit the negative impacts of mining. Furthermore, if properly managed, a reclaimed mine can offer ecological, recreational, and agricultural opportunities to landowners. Timely and appropriate reclamation of all mining operations should be the primary goal of the Town.

### ***Material Storage***

Given the proximity of Veteran to Horseheads and Pennsylvania, there is some potential that land within the Town could be used for storage of materials used for gas drilling. Generally these materials are construction materials, gravel, sand and pipelines. Given the demand for storage space throughout the Southern Tier, if all convenient and available space is occupied, then areas of the Town may be developed for materials storage. While material storage is not a direct conflict with the rural way of life in the Town of Veteran, the local zoning law should define clear limits on the location, density, acceptable building types, and setbacks for a materials storage operation.

### ***Gas Drilling***

There are many existing gas wells within the Town. If additional hydraulic fracturing in the Marcellus Shale is approved by the NYS DOH and DEC, well development in the Town of Veteran is likely. While the legality of local zoning measures to prohibit Marcellus Shale hydraulic fracturing is currently being decided in the State Supreme Court, it is important for the Town to take whatever action it can to minimize the potential negative effects of drilling. Pre-emptive well testing and land-owners coalitions are two of the best ways to increase the awareness of landowners (see Chapter 7).

***POLICY: Businesses within the Town shall enhance the tax base without creating negative impacts on residents or altering the rural quality of life.***

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

- 8a. Require large lot sizes that are easily farmable and leasable for all future subdivisions within the agricultural districts in the Town, to protect agricultural land and to attract hobby farmers.**
- 8b. Clarify zoning law, as it relates to agri-business. For example: are slaughter houses, CAFO's, processing plants permitted? Include definitions for all land uses mentioned within this Comprehensive Plan. Make sure to include these uses within the use table.**
- 8c. Adjust zoning to allow 'parents cottages' and assisted living in compatible parts of the Town. Evaluate zoning law to allow "Hardship" trailer.**

- 8d. Ask landowners to share well-testing results with non-profits and universities. Advise and encourage residents to voluntarily have their private wells tested.
- 8e. Consider creating more than one zone within the Town. Allowing agricultural, residential and agri-business throughout the Town, while limiting other businesses and industry to areas along Route 14 and Route 13.
- 8f. Consider the appropriate location within the Town for senior living facilities and allow the use via Conditional Use Permit in those areas. Either consider an additional zone for denser suburban residential or include within a business zone along Route 14 and Route 13.
- 8g. Review current sign and lighting regulations and revise to equitably allow the identification of local businesses, based on the surrounding land use.

### **Inappropriate Economic Development within the Town**

The proceeding pages have described the types of development that are likely to occur in the Town. It is vital that the Town carefully evaluate types of development that are physically possible but not necessarily in the best interest of the Town. The very core of planning and zoning law is regulating potentially harmful land uses. The Town of Veteran has legal authority to prohibit or regulate these uses even if they might be possible and profitable. This section of the plan will outline which potential types of development conflict with the Town vision and are not ideal from a land use planning perspective. Potentially challenging development within the Town:

#### ***Industrial Development***

Without municipal water and sewer, industrial development is unlikely. Furthermore, the Town is too far from the interstate to attract industrial development (new industrial locations are typically less than 1 mile from an interstate on and off ramp). Conflicts between industrial and rural land uses are detrimental to the Town, and can be prevented by careful zoning. Industrial zoning and land-use regulations are commonly used to mitigate the negative effects of adult businesses, such as adult book stores or nude bars as well.

#### ***Big-box retail***

Big box retail is unlikely in the Town, due to the lack of water and sewer infrastructure, the distance from the interstate, and the lack of a significant population base. Big box retail would fundamentally alter the landscape of the Town, but it can't be prohibited by the zoning law. The zoning law should outline the necessary buffers, setbacks, and parking regulations to mitigate the impacts of large developments within the Town.

***Policy: Protect land value and townspeople by implementing a strong and fair zoning law.***

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

- 8h. Zone for industrial in only the most highly developed areas.
- 8i. Require substantial buffering between incompatible uses.

- 8j. Consider form based zoning for the most intense uses, to ensure that even large developments contribute to the Town's sense of place.
  
- 8k. Explore the legality of adopting a retail square footage law; limiting the square footage of retail space to better match the character of the Town. This law should only be adopted after strong zoning defining the character of the Town has been adopted and is fully enforced.

DRAFT