

**EXPANDED ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FORM****Brethren Gospel Hall  
VILLAGE OF CHESTNUT RIDGE****1.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION***Introduction*

The Environmental Assessment Form (EAF) examines the construction of a Gospel Hall proposed by Foster Church, Inc. (the "project sponsor") on property located on South Pascack Road, in the Village of Chestnut Ridge, Rockland County, New York (referred to herein as "the proposed action"). The proposed action includes the consolidation and re-subdivision of two adjoining lots to create a lot to construct the church and a lot for a future single family residence. The subject property covers a total of 6.09 acres. Upon completion of the action the proposed church lot would be 5.12 acres and the single family lot would be 0.78 acres. The remainder of the lot area (0.19 acres) would be used for a road widening dedication to improve a portion of South Pascack Road along the site frontage. There are two existing residential structures and associated out buildings on the subject site which would be removed as part of the proposed action. On the church site, the proposed action would include construction disturbance of approximately 4.07 acres of land, a portion of which is currently either developed or disturbed by prior development/improvements. The site will be serviced by municipal water and sewer.

EAF Parts 1, 2 and 3 have been prepared to describe the potential environmental effects of the proposed action. EAF Part 3 includes appendices that evaluate the relevant issues of concern identified in Part 2 and identify appropriate mitigation measures for areas of potential impact. This Environmental Assessment Form and accompanying documentation is provided to support a determination of non-significance.

This EAF has been prepared in accordance with Section 8-0101 of New York State Environmental Conservation Law and the regulations promulgated by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation thereunder which appear at 6 NYCRR Part 617 (known as the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act, "SEQRA", or "SEQR"). The purpose of this document is to assist the Village of Chestnut Ridge Planning Board and other potential regulatory agencies (SEQR "involved agencies") in making a determination whether the proposed action would likely result in potential environmental significance. While some of the information and graphics in this document is conceptual in nature, the analyses, illustrations, and maps provided herein have been advanced in sufficient detail to assess the extent of potential environmental impacts.

**1.1 Description of the Proposed Action**

As shown on Figure 1, Foster Church Inc. intends to construct a 16,100 square foot Gospel Hall, and 165 parking spaces on the subject 5.12-acre site with access from South Pascack Road in the Village of Chestnut Ridge. The development plan conforms to the requirements of the Village's R-35 zoning regulations with certain variances as listed on the site plan. As can be seen on Figure 2, this property currently consists of two single family structures which are to be removed as part of this action.

As illustrated in the Aerial photo shown in Figure 3, the project is located on the west side of South Pascack Road, east of the NYS Thruway and south of Convent Road. The meeting hall has been sited near the northern center of the site, where the subject site is level. The proposed meeting hall structure is a one story building with no spire or steeple structure. The design of the building is similar to other Foster Church buildings throughout the world, and as such, the design is a known element.

The project site is an irregularly shaped lot which is to be predominantly used for the Gospel Hall and associated parking and stormwater management facilities. There is a stormwater management pond located in the northern portion of the property. Drainage of the stormwater pond will be via a proposed drainage to the Pascack Brook. The proposed easement agreement is included as Appendix G. Parking utilization at any particular time will depend upon the proposed event. A new access point is proposed near the center of the site frontage on South Pascack Road. In addition, there is one single family structure and driveway proposed on its own lot in the southeast corner of the site. Stormwater management and quality structures are proposed for the northeastern portion of the lot. This location eliminates the need for underground stormwater detention, and provides a large landscaping opportunity along South Pascack Road.

The proposed site development provides a total of 165 parking spaces, including 7 handicapped spaces. The zoning requirement specifies the greater of 1 space per 200 feet of square foot area, or 1 space per every 5 seats. The Gospel Hall covers 16,100 square feet and will contain 780 seats. Thus the required parking is 1 space per 5 seats or 156 required spaces.

The primary site entrance is located off South Pascack Road and provides access to the main parking areas and the entrance plaza in front of the main doors to the Gospel Hall. At the request of the Chestnut Ridge Planning Board, a secondary access has also been provided to South Pascack Road approximately 100 feet west of the main entrance. This emergency access will remain gated to restrict access to only emergency circumstances.

In accordance with the International guidelines of the Brethren Church, the property will be surrounded by a metal fence. Along the road frontage there will be a decorative metal picket fence. The frontage along South Pascack Road will include landscaping designed to provide aesthetically pleasing buffering from the public road and nearby residences. As shown on the landscape plan a series of street trees and ancillary shrubs will line South Pascack Road along the site frontage. A traditional wrought iron style fence and gate will further delineate the site frontage in keeping with the residential character of South Pascack Road. A six foot high black chain link fence will be placed along the side and rear property boundaries to delineate the church use area and to limit disturbance to the surrounding residential neighborhood. The building is set back on the site to reduce its visual presence from the road.

## **1.2 Description of the Proposed Church Operation**

### *Building Design*

Figure 4 shows a typical building exterior. Although the building follows a standard architectural appearance, the external design obviously needs to respond to other influences that may impact the site, thus the detailed siting and design and external building appearance needs to respond to its contextual setting. There are five components to the proposed building: the assembly hall itself; the main entry foyer; the exterior forecourt; amenity areas; and building service areas. In order to provide visual interest a tiered gable roof divided into two main forms is proposed, with a canopy over the main southern entry. Other than the provision of glazing to doors and the northern wall there are no windows in any other elevation, as they are unnecessary. The proposed internal arrangement of the building follows a format which is used by the Brethren at all of its meeting halls of this type and scale. Refer to Figure 5 which shows a typical building interior.

There are no “priests” or “pastors” as occurs in other Christian faiths who have primary responsibility for conducting and orchestrating services. Many people may speak at a service. Therefore the conventional Christian Church layout of an altar at one end of a long building facing two rows of pews separated by a central walkway and perhaps rows of pews on both sides of an altar is a layout which does not suit this particular practice. The Brethren Church uses a seating layout that allows attendees to sit facing each other to accommodate members speaking to one another. The Church’s experience is that this is best facilitated by a concentric, octagonal bench seating pattern. Accompanied by a slight fall in grade of the floor from the perimeter of the meeting hall down to its center by approximately four feet.

The primary access into the building is from the southern entry. An entry foyer is provided between the entry and the hall which provides the opportunity for social interaction between attendees prior to and after a service. A secondary entry point is provided in the eastern wall given that the primary on-site car parking is also proposed to the east of the building. The foyer opens up into an outdoor forecourt which also provides the opportunity for social interaction.

There is no food preparation or food service area within the building, nor is the hall used for wedding receptions, and the like. None of these ancillary activities and facilities are required by this church.

At the northern end within the building there is an equipment and storage area. An air-conditioning plant area is proposed outside of the building near its northwest corner.

As shown on Figure 4, external building materials include brick, clapboard-style and stucco finishes. Roof materials will be of a natural earth tone color to minimize visual impacts.

Stormwater will be conveyed to the stormwater retention basin proposed in the north eastern corner of the site.

### *Car Parking*

A total of 165 parking spaces are proposed in three areas. An area directly adjacent to the entry on the east side of the building provides 83 spaces including 4 handicapped spaces. A parking area providing an additional 11 car parking spaces will be provided to the north of the meeting hall. An additional 71 spaces, including an additional 2 handicapped spaces will be provided in an area further west as overflow parking. All attendees visiting the church will be parked on-site at all times. There will be no parking along South Pascack Road.

There is an annual Special Event when associated Brethren Churches convene. During this annual event, members of the congregation from outside the area would arrive by coach bus and be dropped off. Buses would park at an off site location until the Church services were complete. The site plan has been configured to accommodate the turning radius of the Coach buses. A sample Special Event Traffic and Parking Management Plan is provided in Appendix F. An event specific plan similar to this is prepared for each event to facilitate orderly traffic management. Similar to normal operations there will be no parking along South Pascack Road.

### *Access*

The three existing single family driveway access points to South Pascack Road will be removed. A new access point will be provided in the central portion of the South Pascack Road frontage. In addition, an emergency access point will be installed approximately 100 feet further to the west.

### *Operational Details*

The Brethren Church is a Christian faith and most of its activities occur on Sundays. The following list details the anticipated Brethren Church operations:

- Lord's Supper: There is a Sunday morning 6:00 a.m. commencement of a 1 hour service that occurs every Sunday and involves an approximate maximum of 50 people (12-15 households). This service is known as the Lord's Supper, limited by the size of the cup used for communion, and is normally for 25 to 35 people. There is limited social interaction outside of the church either before or after this service.
- Interchange Gathering: This gathering is held biweekly typically on Sunday, but occasionally on Saturday, for approximately one hour between 7:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.: This service involves the general congregation (the regular users or "parishioners" of the proposed Chestnut Ridge facility which is presently 185 persons) or it may involve a combined congregation, including the general congregation as well as visitors invited from other facilities, usually from the tri-state metropolitan area (NY, NJ and CT). Although up to 780 persons could be accommodated, typical attendance is approximately 325 persons. The interchange gatherings will not typically commence before 8:00 a.m. Typical conditions at an Interchange Gathering would involve outdoor social interaction prior to, and after the service.
- Gospel preaching: This gathering is held weekly on Sunday afternoons, typically between 3:00 and 5:00 p.m. for approximately one hour. This service involves the general congregation of approximately 185 persons, although up to 780 persons could be accommodated. Typical conditions at a Gospel Preaching would involve outdoor

social interaction prior to the service and social interaction for more than 15 minutes after the service.

- Weekday activities - These would include evening prayer meetings or bible teaching, and may also involve a wedding service or funeral service during the day. Typical operating hours are 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. Normal attendance is approximately 185 persons with a maximum of 780 persons on site. The actual hours of operation and number of attendees will usually be considerably less.
- On not more than five days per year, the Gospel Hall will be used for Special Events. Attendance at a Special Event is by invitation only, and will usually include the regular attendees at this venue but may also include any combination of visitors from other Brethren Churches throughout the metropolitan area, the greater regional area, interstate and overseas. These events utilize the maximum seating capacity of 780 persons. These special events will normally occur during daylight hours (that is, between 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.) and will usually last 2-4 hours per day.

It is envisaged that the site would be open for use for not more than 20 hours in any one week, except in weeks when Special Event gatherings occur. On those weeks, it would operate up to 30 hours. It would remain closed at all other times. Other than the five Special Event days, the maximum number of persons permitted on the site will be 780 persons. Typical attendance is up to 200 persons. According to the precepts of the Church, families are to travel to Church together. Thus, the trip generation for a services would range from 40 to 80 vehicles.

### **1.3 Tax Benefit**

As a result of a request for subdivision, the total subject property will consist of two lots, the proposed lot for construction of the Brethren Gospel Hall and an adjacent single family lot. The single family house will be owned as a private residence and will increase the taxable assessed value of the Village of Chestnut Ridge by approximately \$50,000.

### **1.4 Conformance to Planning and Zoning and Applicable Federal and State Law**

The Zoning Regulations of the Village of Chestnut Ridge were adopted in the interest, protection and promotion of the public health, safety and general welfare of the Village. Among other things the regulations state that the impacts of growth must be controlled to maintain the rural, semi rural, and suburban character of the Village consistent with the ability of the Village to provide facilities and services. The regulations further state that the protection and enhancement of environmental, human and community resources must be fully respected.

Consistent with the goals cited in the zoning, the proposed project is well situated at the confluence of several major highways that provide regional access with minimal disturbance or impact to the local traffic network. The proposed project will provide a place of worship that respects the character of the surrounding community while preserving the environmentally sensitive steep slope wooded areas in the western portion of the site.

This project has been designed to conform to the zoning regulations applicable to the property. A tabulation of the bulk requirements specified for the R-35 district and the proposed project is provided in the accompanying zoning table. (Table 2)

Under New York State law, schools and religious institutions are entitled to favored zoning

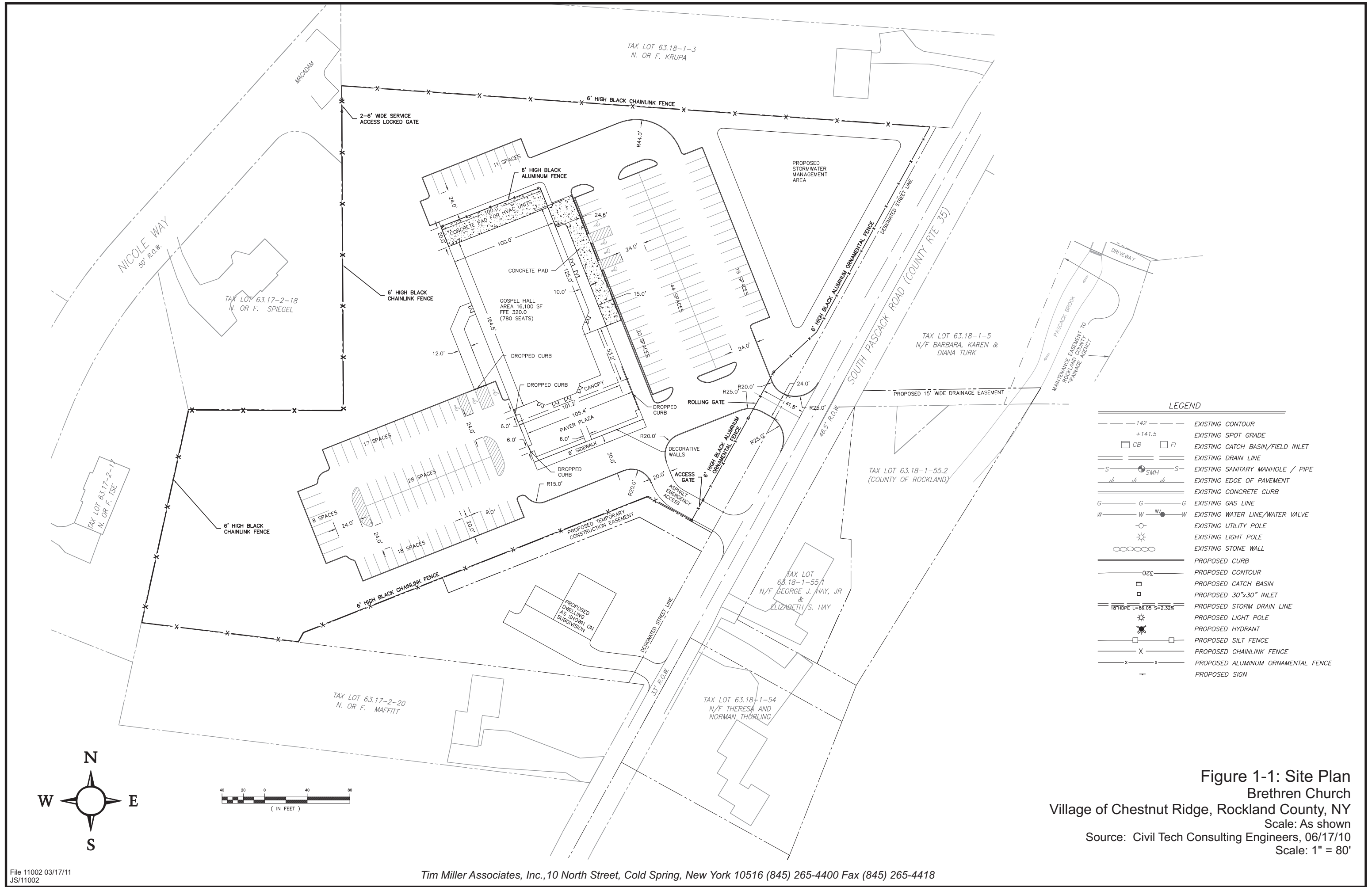
treatment. New York courts have long held that all schools and religious institutions are beneficial to the public welfare, and, to the extent that zoning laws are valid only if they are reasonably related to the public health, safety, morals or welfare, restrictions on schools and religious institutions are difficult to support. 1 New York Zoning Law and Practice, § 11.08; see, *Concordia Collegiate Institute v. Miller*, 301 N.Y.189 (1950); *New York Institute of Technology, Inc. v. Ruckgaber*, 65 Misc.2d 241, 317 N.Y.S.2d 89 (Sup. Ct. 1970).

In addition, Federal law provides additional protections for religious institutions. It prohibits the imposition or implementation of land use regulations that impose a “substantial burden” on religious exercise unless the government can show that the regulation serves a “compelling governmental interest” and is the “least restrictive means” of furthering that interest. 42 U.S.C. 2000cc(a)(1). Federal law also requires that governments implement land use regulations equally among religious and nonreligious institutions. 42 U.S.C. 2000cc(b).

### **1.5 Public Benefits**

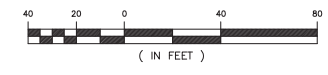
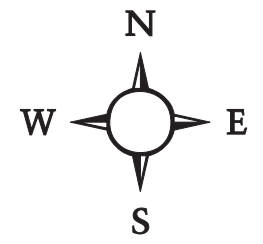
The applicant believes this is a plan that accomplishes the mutual goals of the Applicant and the Village in providing a place of worship that is sensitive to and fits into the existing character along South Pascack Road. The project makes a commitment to environmentally responsible building designs, and preservation of important Village resources such as steep slopes and the Pascack Brook, while protecting quality of life issues such as traffic management and visual considerations. The Brethren Gospel Hall project will include the following non-site-related, infrastructure improvements to benefit the community:

- Provisions for widening of South Pascack Road via a land dedication along the site frontage
- Landscape improvements along Site frontage on South Pascack Road.



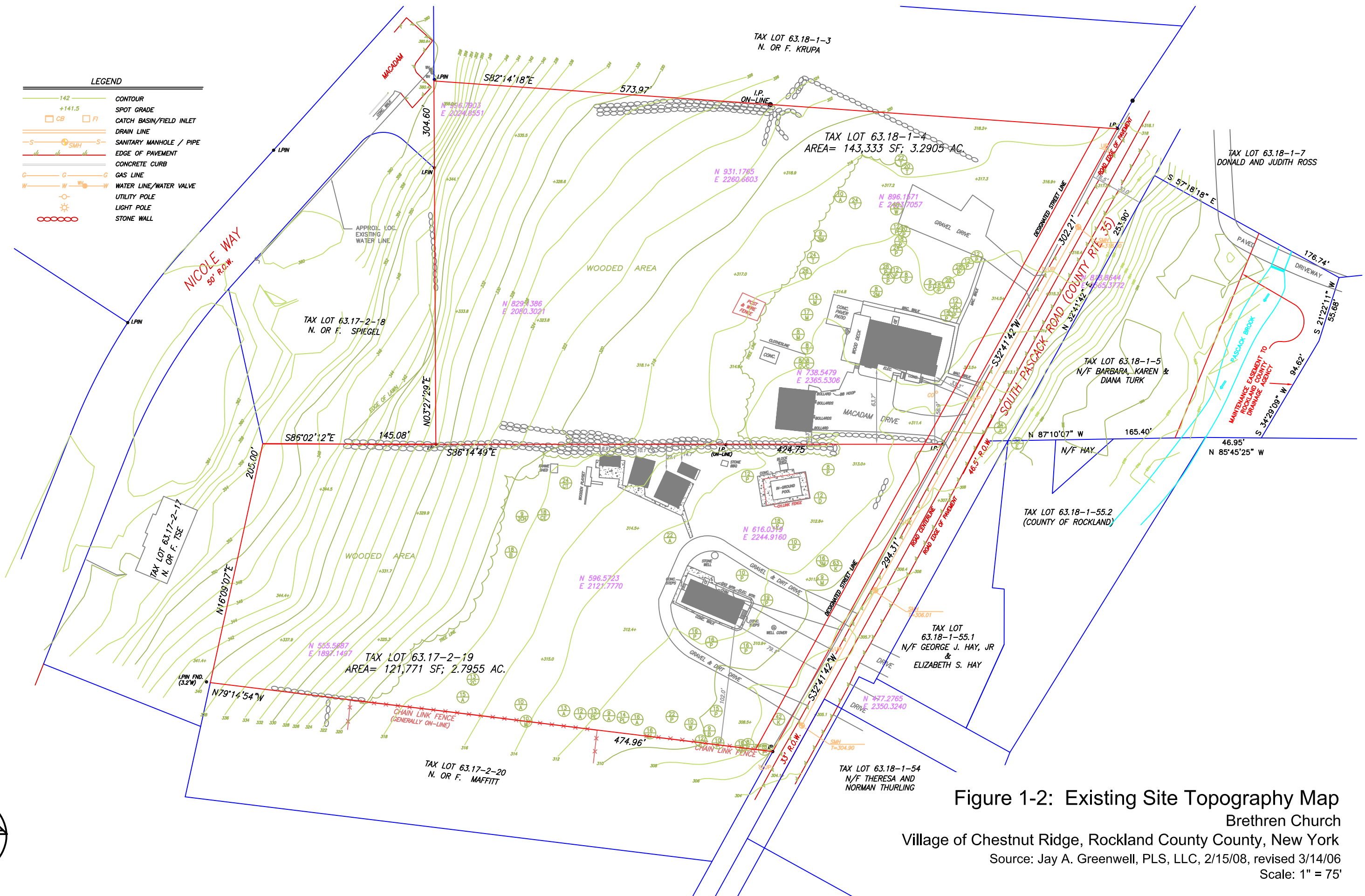
**LEGEND**

— 142 —	EXISTING CONTOUR
+141.5	EXISTING SPOT GRADE
CB	EXISTING CATCH BASIN/FIELD INLET
FI	EXISTING DRAIN LINE
S — SMH — S	EXISTING SANITARY MANHOLE / PIPE
	EXISTING EDGE OF PAVEMENT
—	EXISTING CONCRETE CURB
G — G — G	EXISTING GAS LINE
W — W — W	EXISTING WATER LINE/WATER VALVE
○	EXISTING UTILITY POLE
⊙	EXISTING LIGHT POLE
○○○○	EXISTING STONE WALL
—	PROPOSED CURB
—	PROPOSED CONTOUR
□	PROPOSED CATCH BASIN
□	PROPOSED 30"x30" INLET
18" HDPE L=86.05 S=2.32%	PROPOSED STORM DRAIN LINE
⊙	PROPOSED LIGHT POLE
⊙	PROPOSED HYDRANT
□	PROPOSED SILT FENCE
X	PROPOSED CHAINLINK FENCE
x	PROPOSED ALUMINUM ORNAMENTAL FENCE
+	PROPOSED SIGN



**Figure 1-1: Site Plan**  
**Brethren Church**  
 Village of Chestnut Ridge, Rockland County, NY  
 Scale: As shown  
 Source: Civil Tech Consulting Engineers, 06/17/10  
 Scale: 1" = 80'

LEGEND	
	CONTOUR
	SPOT GRADE
	CATCH BASIN/FIELD INLET
	DRAIN LINE
	SANITARY MANHOLE / PIPE
	EDGE OF PAVEMENT
	CONCRETE CURB
	GAS LINE
	WATER LINE/WATER VALVE
	UTILITY POLE
	LIGHT POLE
	STONE WALL



**Figure 1-2: Existing Site Topography Map**  
 Brethren Church  
 Village of Chestnut Ridge, Rockland County County, New York  
 Source: Jay A. Greenwell, PLS, LLC, 2/15/08, revised 3/14/06  
 Scale: 1" = 75'



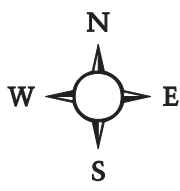


Figure 1-3: Project Site on Aerial Photo  
 Brethren Church  
 Village of Chestnut Ridge, Rockland County, NY  
 Approx. Scale: 1" = 400'  
 Base Photo: Google Maps



Figure 1-4: Hall Exterior  
Brethren Church  
Village of Chestnut Ridge, Rockland County, NY  
Source: Focus Distributors, 10/07



Figure 1-5: Gospel Hall Interior  
Brethren Church  
Village of Chestnut Ridge, Rockland County, NY  
Source: Focus Distributors, 10/07