

9.0 CULTURAL RESOURCES COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

9.1 Visual Resources

Pursuant to the Town zoning amendments adopted in December 2005, a visual assessment analyzing the potential visual impacts of the FEIS Conservation Plan was conducted, with particular regard to two areas identified as "Scenic Viewshed Overlay Districts," according to the new Town of Blooming Grove Zoning Map.

The revised FEIS Conservation Plan was developed with full consideration of the potential visual effects of the project, and designed to conserve the scenic viewsheds to the extent possible. The design addresses visual impacts by: 1) preserving areas of existing trees and wooded buffers, 2) locating the roadway network and residences to conform to the existing topography, and 3) providing landscaping and planting to supplement existing vegetation and provide enhanced visual buffers.

A visual analysis of the project site was completed for the Lake Blooming Grove DEIS (April 1, 2004). This visual analysis remains applicable to the project site since existing conditions in the vicinity of the site have not substantially changed. The analysis described herein utilizes the information and findings of the 2004 analysis and updates it with respect to the Scenic Viewshed Overlay areas identified by the Town in 2005 and the revised site plan layout for the FEIS Conservation Plan. This updated visual analysis was submitted to the Planning Board on April 4, 2007 as part of the zoning review for the Site Plan Analysis. The modified plan presented in this FEIS is substantially the same as the plan shown in the 2007 analysis. The design and placement of the stormwater basin along Lake Road has been modified, and its potential visual impact is described in the discussion of the revised site layout below.

Existing Visual Conditions

The project site is located on the west side of Lake Road, in the northeast corner of the Town of Blooming Grove. The site is located in a setting of rolling topography and rural development, where views are generally limited by nearby hills, vegetation, and curving roadway corridors. The low density residential developments that exist in the immediate vicinity of the site -- primarily single family residences on Lake Road to the east and Station Road to the west -- all have limited views of the site due to the existing vegetation and topography. An aerial photograph of the project site and environs is provided as Figure 9-1.

Methods of Visual Survey

A visual resources field survey was conducted from local roads in the project area in November 2003, and again in April, 2006 to identify locations where the project site may be visible from roads and properties with public access. At the time of the two surveys, no leaves were present on the trees and maximum visual exposure could be assessed. During times of year when trees are in full leaf, the project site would be less visible, and visible from shorter distances than discussed in this analysis.

As described in the DEIS, the extent of the field survey was initially determined by inspection of US Geological Survey (USGS) topographic maps with the aid of 3D viewing computer software (Terrain Navigator Pro), which reveal the potential visibility of the project site based on topography. Thus, the survey established the *potential viewshed* of the proposed project. The

field survey refined this assessment, and evaluated the actual visibility of the site, accounting for topography, vegetation, and buildings. The field survey identified the *actual viewshed* of specific locations in the site vicinity where the site (and potentially the proposed project) were visible.

The field survey included identification of any prominent land forms, land cover types, and the visual character of the site and local area. The survey also identified natural areas of significant scenic value and structures of significant architectural design in the vicinity of the project. The survey completed in April, 2006 also evaluated the visibility of the Scenic Viewshed Overlay areas mapped on the site.

Visibility of the Project Site

Currently, the majority of the site is wooded with a mix of large deciduous trees and a mixed understory of small trees and herbaceous cover. Several areas in the central portion of the site contain cultivated field crops of corn and hay. In general, topography on the site slopes from a low point near the southwestern property corner to a high point of approximately 476 feet at the center of the northerly property line. Wooded wetlands with lower relative elevations are located in the southern portion of the site. Topography rises approximately 150 feet across the site, and continues to rise to the north of the site. A small knoll (elevation 418) is located in the northeastern portion of the site, bordering Lake Road.

Elevations of the many hilltops in the site vicinity are similar to the hill upon which the site is situated. The project site character is not unlike that of other lands in the project vicinity. Beaverdam Lake, a manmade lake located to the east of the site, and Schunemunk Mountain located some 3.2 miles to the south, provides topographic contrast to the local setting. The topography of the local environs allows views of the site from only points relatively close to the property along a portion of Lake Road to the east and southeast of the site and from points along the east shore of Beaverdam Lake.

Views From Lake Road - Views into the eastern portions of the site from Lake Road are limited by both topography and vegetation. Views from Lake Road are generally limited to less than 500 feet into the site due to topography and the winding nature of the road. The topography slopes up into the site as viewed from Lake Road, with the greatest visual *potential* (not accounting for tree cover) from the southeastern property corner looking northwest (see Figure 9-2). The modern house that exists in an "outparcel" located on the knoll on the eastern property line is a prominent feature as one travels north on Lake Road. This house is visible at the right of Figure 9-2. The northeastern side of this knoll is visible as one travels south on Lake Road, as shown in Figure 9-3.

Views from Station Road - The project site is obscured from view from points on Station Road due to intervening woods vegetation (Figure 9-1). Potential views from Lasser Park, a Town park located off of Station Road to the southwest of the site were also investigated. A cross section from Lasser Park was completed for the visual analysis in the DEIS. Given the distance (almost one-half mile) and the intervening vegetation, no portion of the project site is visible from Lasser Park, including the highest elevations on the property, or the upper Scenic Viewshed Overlay area.

Views from the East - The site can be seen from points east of Beaverdam Lake (in the Town of Cornwall) along Shore Drive and from Waterview Terrace, a local cul-de-sac road. From

these points, the modern house that is located on the knoll on the eastern property line is visible. The higher elevations on the project site are also visible to some extent from these local roads in the Town of Cornwall, over a distance of about one-half mile. None of the property is visible from points north of the site itself (in the Town of New Windsor) due to intervening topography.

Scenic Viewshed Overlay Districts

The Town of Blooming Grove Zoning Map – Overlay Districts identifies two areas of Scenic Viewshed Overlay Districts on the project site: 1) the first area includes lower woods and wetlands in the southeast corner of the site and straddles Lake Road and 2) the second occupies a hilltop in the north central portion of the site. These Scenic Viewshed areas are shown on the aerial photo in Figure 9-1. A copy of the Town Zoning Map showing the Overlay Districts is provided as Figure 9-4.

The lower Scenic Viewshed area currently consists of woods and wetlands bordering Lake Road. At the northern edge of the Viewshed area, views along Lake Road open to fields on the Lake Blooming Grove site and to views of Beaverdam Lake and residences on the east side of Lake Road. The upper Scenic Viewshed area currently consists of a mix of established woods and open fields near the crest of a knoll in the north-central portion of the site.

Views of the lower Scenic Viewshed Area

The lower Scenic Viewshed Overlay area, as mapped on the Zoning Map, is only visible from a limited portion of Lake Road. The Viewshed Overlay area occupies approximately 500 feet of frontage on Lake Road and on the project site consists of fairly dense woods associated with a wetland. A photograph of the lower Viewshed Overlay area is provided in Figure 9-5. This Viewshed Overlay area is visible for both northbound and southbound drivers on Lake Road. Since this Viewshed Overlay area consists of lower elevations compared to nearby and surrounding land, the area is not visible from any public routes (roads, footpaths, hiking trails), or activity points (residential areas, parks, open spaces), other than Lake Road and the approximately seven existing residences which border the area. The lower Scenic Viewshed Area will not be affected by the proposed project and no development or alteration of the Viewshed area is proposed, as further described below.

Views of the upper Scenic Viewshed Area

The upper Scenic Viewshed area is not visible from Lake Road either for northbound drivers looking northwest into the site or for southbound drivers looking southwest. As shown in a photograph from Lake Road (Figure 9-2), the upper Scenic Viewshed Overlay area is obscured by knoll and hillside closest to Lake Road. This photo shows only treetops of a treeline at the edge of the pasture bordering Lake Road (see Figure 9-1 - Aerial Photograph). Southbound drivers on Lake Road also have views of the knoll and hillside closest to Lake Road and the more distant higher elevations of the Scenic Overlay area are obscured by the hillside (see Figure 9-3).

The visual analysis completed for the DEIS included three cross sections which are directly applicable to an assessment of views of the upper Scenic Viewshed Overlay area. The cross sections, described above, indicated that the upper Scenic Viewshed area is only partially

visible from the east side of Beaverdam Lake, (in the Town of Cornwall) along Shore Drive and from Waterview Terrace, a local cul-de-sac road.

Therefore, based upon an analysis of views into the property from nearby public and residential areas, the upper Scenic Viewshed Overlay area is not readily visible from local roads, parks and other public vantage points.

Potential Project Visual Impacts

The proposed FEIS Conservation Plan layout is provided in Figure 9-6 Proposed Visual Features. The lower and upper Scenic Viewshed Overlay areas are shown on the figure. As described above, no development is proposed for the lower Viewshed Overlay area, along Lake Road. Therefore, the proposed project will not have visual impacts to the lower Scenic Viewshed Overlay area.

The upper Scenic Viewshed Overlay area is only partially visible from distant (over one-half mile) vantage points west of the site such as Waterview Terrace and is not visible from Lake Road. Therefore, homes constructed within the upper Viewshed Overlay area will not be visible from Lake Road. Rooflines and the upper floors of future homes may be visible during winter months from more distant vantage points such as Shore Drive and Waterview Terrace, in the Town of Cornwall.

Drivers on Lake Road looking into the site will see the two project entrances and new residences on the Hillside and knoll, located adjacent to Lake Road. Northbound drivers will view the southern entrance and approximately four residences for a short section of Lake Road directly north of the lower Scenic Overlay Area (see Figure 9-1 and Figure 9-4). Southbound drivers will view the northern project entrance and approximately three residences will be visible on the hillside looking southwest into the site (See Figure 9-1 and Figure 9-4).

Revised Site Plan Layout

The FEIS Conservation Plan layout was designed, in part, to lessen or minimize the visual and aesthetic impact of the new residential development for drivers on Lake Road and nearby residences with views of the site. Figure 9-6 Proposed Visual Features, provides a summary of design elements that are intended to mitigate the visual effects of the project and allow the project to be compatible with the rural character of nearby and adjoining land.

Key features of the revised site plan are described below:

- Project Perimeter - Existing hedgerows and trees will be preserved to the extent practicable along the perimeter of the project site to buffer the project from existing residences near the site. New trees will be planted in the rear of new lots which may have limited existing trees.
- Proposed Entrance Areas - The two proposed entrances will each have a stone wall entrance feature and will be landscaped to provide an attractive entrance to the project site. Shade trees will be added to supplement the existing natural buffers on Lake Road. The stormwater management facilities on the site will be landscaped with plants appropriate to a wetland habitat and will appear similar to the existing wetlands in the project vicinity.

Cultural Resources

July 23, 2008

- Lake Road Corridor - Stone walls will be constructed or reconstructed along Lake Road at project entrances and trees will be planted to enhance the rural streetscape. New residences will have neutral or earthtone exteriors in order to soften the appearance of new residences from Lake Road.
- Lower Scenic Overlay District - All existing vegetation will be preserved in the Lower Scenic Overlay area, adjacent to Lake Road.
- Interior Roads and Areas - Street trees will be planted on both sides of the interior roads, with spacing to be approximately every 60 feet. The street trees will enhance views from Lake Road into the site and for future residents. An existing grove of trees at the center of the loop road will be preserved, again to enhance the views into the site from Lake Road as well as from distant vantage points (east side of Beaverdam Lake).
- Upper Scenic Overlay Area - The highest point of the upper Scenic Overlay area, located along the northern property line, will be preserved and left undeveloped. This area was formerly a pasture with a hedgerow of trees at the northern edge of the field. This open field will be allowed to revert to woods. Homes and the roadway network in the Upper Scenic Overlay area are located to follow the natural contours of the lower portion of the knoll. Existing trees in this area will be preserved wherever possible and street tree plantings will enhance the streetscape. Again, the upper Scenic Overlay area is not visible from Lake Road, but the above design elements will soften views of the site from distant vantage points on the east side of Beaverdam Lake.

In summary, the project site is not readily visible from surrounding or nearby public roads, vantage points, and residential areas, with the exception of portions of Lake Road, and distant views from the east side of Beaverdam Lake. The proposed FEIS Conservation Plan layout was designed to maintain the rural visual character of Lake Road and the project site, through the preservation of existing trees, hedgerows, and vegetative buffers and the addition of stone walls, and street tree and buffer plantings. The FEIS Conservation Plan has been designed to be consistent with the goals of the new zoning and the existing rural setting of the project.

Comments and Responses

Comment 9-1 (Letter #11, Review Letter, Patrick F. Brady, Town Planning Board Engineer, June 25, 2007): I have reviewed the visual Assessment prepared by Tim Miller Associates, Inc. and find that the potential visual impacts are addressed through the proposed subdivision layout and other proposed visual features specified in Figure 5 of the assessment. These visual features should be included in the proposed subdivision plans.

Response 9-1: *As part of the re-submission of the revised preliminary subdivision application, the layout of the site plan will include the proposed visual features specified in Figure 5 of the Visual Assessment, provided here as Figure 9-6. During the preliminary subdivision review, the Board will again have the opportunity to review the site plan layout in relation to the site grading and geometry.*



Figure 9-1: Aerial Photograph--Site Environs and Scenic Overlay Districts
Lake Blooming Grove
Town of Blooming Grove, Orange County, New York
Date: 04/2008

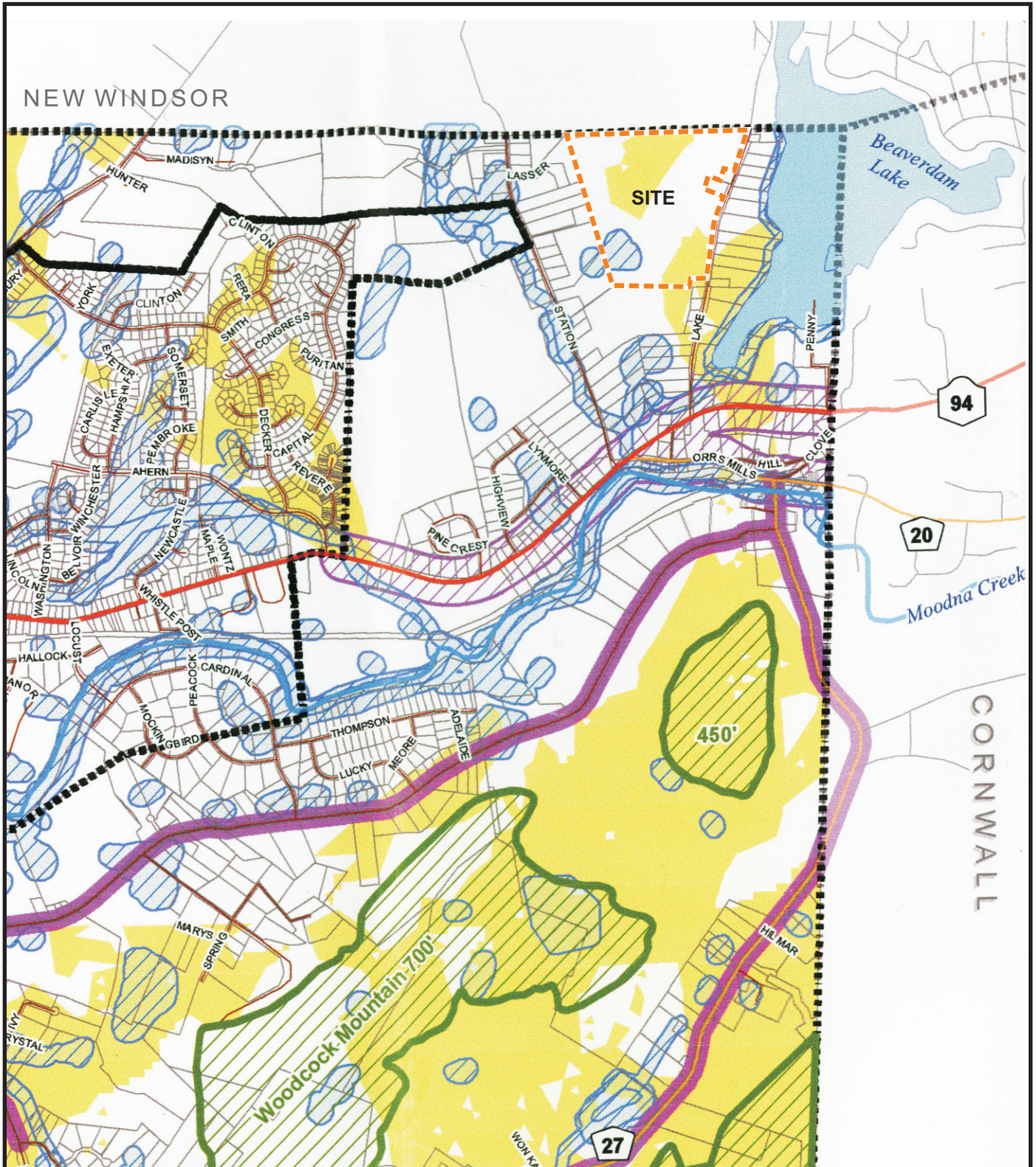




Figure 9-2: Lake Road View Towards the Northwest
Lake Blooming Grove
Town of Blooming Grove, Orange County, NY
Date: 03/2006



Figure 9-3: Lake Road View Towards the Southwest
Lake Blooming Grove
Town of Blooming Grove, Orange County, NY
Date: 03/2006



NEW WINDSOR

SITE

Beaverdam Lake

94

20

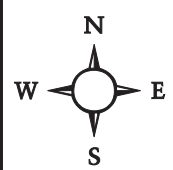
Moodna Creek

450'

CORNWALL

Woodcock Mountain 700'

27



LEGEND

 Site Property Boundary

Figure 9-4: Zoning Map -
Overlay Districts in Project Vicinity
Lake Blooming Grove

Town of Blooming Grove, Orange County, New York

Source: Town of Blooming Grove Zoning Map, Feb. 27, 2006

Scale: 1" = 2,000'



Figure 9-5: Lake Road View Towards the North
Lower Viewshed Overlay Area
Lake Blooming Grove
Town of Blooming Grove, Orange County, NY
Date: 03/2006

Proposed for Project Perimeter

- preserve existing hedgerows and trees along entire property line (some of these are the edges of existing open fields)
- add trees along rear perimeter of new lots (within a 30' minimum buffer)
- select plant species suitable for wildlife food and cover

Proposed for Upper Scenic Overlay Area

- preserve existing tree cover where possible
- place homes and streets to follow the natural contour
- plant street trees to soften the streetscape
- preserve existing open field and knoll
- this area is out of view from Lake Road (refer to photos from Lake Road)

Proposed for Interior Areas

- add shade tree "hedgerows" between proposed lots on hillside
- preserve existing tree grove

Proposed for Interior Roads

- plant street trees on both sides of all interior roads
- street tree spacing to be approx. 60 feet o.c.

Proposed for Entrance Areas

- create landscaped entrance road with ornamental trees
- add stone wall entrance feature
- add trees to supplement natural buffers for Lake Road views

Proposed in Lower Scenic Overlay Area

- preserve all existing vegetation in Scenic Overlay Area

Lake Road Corridor

Proposed to enhance the rural streetscape:

- build stone wall along frontage at entrance roads
- add street tree planting along frontage
- all homes will be neutral, earhttone exteriors



Figure 9-6: Proposed Visual Features
Lake Blooming Grove
Town of Blooming Grove, Orange County, New York
Scale: 1" = 300'

04/24/06 Revised 4/7/08
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