

3.12 Visual Resources

3.12.1 Existing Conditions

Introduction and Methodology

The visual assessment presented below was conducted according to the NYSDEC¹ guidelines relating to the assessment and mitigation of visual impacts. Viewshed is defined as the geographic area from which a project may be seen. An aesthetic resource is a formally designated place visited by the public for the purpose of enjoying its beauty. For the purpose of this assessment, that resource may be designated by a local jurisdiction, a state agency, or a federal agency. Additionally, other scenic features may be considered significant aesthetic resources for the purposes of the visual assessment based on their unique characteristics.

Designated scenic and aesthetic resources considered by NYSDEC guidelines to be significant potentially within the Lost Lake Resort site vicinity include:

- Neversink River Unique Area, a New York State Nature Preserve; and
- Mongaup Valley Wildlife Management Area, a NYS WMA.

Potential Significant Aesthetic Resources

There are no National Register or State Register properties in proximity to the project site or in the Town of Forestburgh from which the site can be viewed. The Philwold Lodge, which is listed as part of the Town of Forestburgh's 1988 Historic Resources Inventory (Appendix II of the Comprehensive Plan, 2006), is about one-half mile from the site's eastern boundary. However, Philwold is not locally designated. A review of aerial photographs and topographic maps indicates the Lost Lake Resort site will not be visible from Philwold because of intervening vegetation and topography.

The Mongaup Valley Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is a local recreational resource available for public use, including bird watching, hunting, fishing, boating and hiking with certain prohibitions. Although this is a large WMA (nearly 12,000 acres), its closest boundary is over three miles from the project site. A review of aerial photography and topographic surveys indicates the site will not be visible from the Mongaup WMA because of the distance from the site and due to intervening vegetation and topography.

The Neversink River Unique Area (UA) is a New York State Nature Preserve located on the east side of Cold Spring Road (Sullivan County Route 101) with small areas of the UA between the road and the old railroad grade on the eastern property boundary. The Neversink UA is at points adjacent to the project site. This New York State-owned natural area consists of the UA and the associated Wolf Brook Multiple Use Area (MUA), which cover 5,400 acres of land to the east of the project site. Limited public uses include hunting, fishing, trapping, hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, wildlife observation and bird watching. Camping is permitted in the MUA. UA forest roads are also available for forest management activities.

There are high points along old wood roads in the Neversink UA from which the southeastern slope of the project site would be visible if there were significant cleared areas on the UA and the site. However, the UA is heavily wooded as part of NYSDEC's Unit Management Plan and

¹ NYSDEC Program Policy, *Assessing and Mitigating Visual Impacts*, 2000.

thus does not afford any view of the project site from any existing trail or similar vantage point. Even though topography would allow a view from the adjoining portions of the UA, the intervening vegetation (wooded areas) limits views of the project site, thus, these views of the site will not be considered significant. The potential visual impacts of the site after development are discussed below.

No other formally designated resources are identified in the project viewshed. This visual assessment reviews potential visibility from a few state and county roads and settlement areas from which the public will have the possibility of seeing the project site.

Visual Assessment Methodology

A visual assessment is an analytical technique that determines the viewshed of a particular project, identifies aesthetic resources within the viewshed, determines the potential impact of the project on aesthetic resources, and identifies strategies to avoid, eliminate or reduce such impacts.

Variables associated with the actual visual experience are often presented in a visual analysis, such as the distance of a scenic viewpoint from a project; the effect of intervening vegetation and topography; and the presence of nearby development. It is noted that mere visibility of a development, even startling visibility, does not automatically mean it has a visual impact. An impact occurs when there is a demonstrated detrimental effect on the public enjoyment of an aesthetic resource and when design-oriented strategies, or the mitigating effects of perspective, do not adequately reduce the visibility of a development to an insignificant level.

Existing Visual Character

The Lost Lake Resort site is located in the Town of Forestburgh on both the north and south sides of St. Joseph's Road (Sullivan County Route 108) and to the west of Cold Spring Road. The character of the project vicinity is rural residential, with three identifiable residential settlements, recreational and forest uses. The site's undulating topography is covered almost entirely with forest, and contains a 50-acre lake (known as Lost Lake or Trout Lake) in the northeastern portion of the property. The project site is generally bisected by a lowland/wetland corridor oriented in a NW/SE direction containing an unnamed stream.

The eastern side of the site, which runs along an old railroad grade, is at an elevation of approximately 1,300 to 1,400 feet. The varied topography rises to about 1,500 feet or more at higher points in the central area of the site with Lost Lake at 1,460. The wetland corridor drops down to 1,360 and lower. The highest areas on the site are along the western boundary at elevations of 1,560 to 1,600 feet.

The character of the local surrounding lands is revealed by its landforms, land cover and uses. Cold Spring Road is a rural road carved through a mixed forest landscape that undulates over small knolls and through shallow hollows. Cold Spring Road generally follows the side slopes of a north/south lowland valley containing the Bush Kill and Turner Brook along the eastern side of the Lost Lake property. These watercourses and associated lowlands are largely hidden in the forests along both sides of Cold Spring Road in the site vicinity; clusters of individual single family homes of modest size and design occur on wooded lots at various points along the road, primarily on its western side backing up to the subject site. Several larger home sites are set back out of view from the road and set in the woods on its eastern side. The visual character along this section of Cold Spring Road includes tall evergreen tree groves, groves of deciduous

trees and understory, and open areas that have been cleared and contain meadow or scrub growth, or have natural wetland scrub vegetative cover.

St. Joseph's Road is similar in character, being forested throughout with a cluster of buildings near the eastern property boundary (mid-19th century buildings at Gillman's Station). The road rises over more rugged topography toward the center of the site, then falls to a low point at a stream near the western site boundary. St. Joseph's Road is narrow and winding with the woods edge close to the road and its canopy overhanging over most of the road's length. The visual character along this section of St. Joseph's Road is predominantly deciduous forest, but includes mixed evergreen and deciduous trees and understory, and an open area in the central portion of the site that contains meadow and scrub growth.

Views of the site from public locations such as roads and parks are limited due to intervening topography and woodland vegetation. The site is visible or potentially visible from the locations described below.

Visual Assessment

The visual assessment involved examination of aerial photography and U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) topographic maps of the site and surrounding lands to discern the potential visibility of the project site (see Figure 3.12-1). This analysis of existing topography is done manually by examining topographic high points surrounding the subject site and identifying the limits of potential "sight lines" from the site thereby revealing the extent to which a viewer at an off-site location might view a physical feature on the subject site based on topography alone (assuming no vegetation). This analysis is aided by use of 3D digital modeling capabilities of Terrain Navigator Pro software (by Maptech). This analysis identifies the limits of the potential "viewshed" of the subject site, shown in Figure 3.12-1. Based on this review, the potential viewshed from which the site may be visible extends from less than one mile to one and one-tenth miles to the south and east. On the west side of the project site the potential viewshed ranges from less than one-tenth mile (200 feet) to four-tenths of a mile. During on-leaf conditions, with nearly the entirety of the site and its immediate environs wooded, the existing vegetative cover will limit views of the site generally, and particularly into its interior from nearby locations.

In addition to examination of the effects of topography and vegetation (from mapping and aerial photographs) on the potential visibility of the site, a field visit was undertaken to ascertain actual views from publicly accessible vantage points in the area. Photographs were taken to document the extent of visible bedrock along St. Joseph's Road due to their particular contribution to the local area character. The site photographs along with examination of aerial photographs and topographic maps provide details on the surrounding visual context, including landforms, uses, roads and buildings in the project site area. Further analysis was conducted to construct several cross-sectional views across the property boundaries to demonstrate potential post-development sight lines. These cross sections are presented in figures at the end of this section, drawn to scale using digital terrain modeling technology available from the USGS. Figure 3.12-2 identifies the locations of the four cross sections made, which were located where off-site public vantage points closest to the subject property are available.

Based on this visual assessment, the project site is potentially partially or fully visible from:

- St. Joseph's Road;

- Melody Lake Hamlet Area;
- Saint Joseph's Lake;
- Cold Spring Road/Neversink River Unique Area.

However, the site is not visible from the Saint Joseph's hamlet area, NYS Route 42, Merriewold Park or Hartwood Road (County Route 48). Existing topography and tree cover in the area effectively limit views from these and other locations.

Existing Views from St. Joseph's Road (County Route 108)

The proposed Lost Lake Resort site is traversed by and is therefore visible from the St. Joseph's Road. The entire length of the site's road frontage is wooded punctuated by rock outcrops, small clearings and a stream crossing. Since these viewpoints are directly adjacent to the site, the site's terrain that is next to the road is wholly visible. However, at all points along the road, the heavy tree cover, other woodland vegetation and undulating topography limit the distance of views into the site. Over much of the frontage existing tree cover provides a canopy that overhangs the narrow roadway. Appendix F includes several photographs taken along the road frontage.

Traveling along St. Joseph's Road from the site's eastern boundary, forest vegetation and land sloping either gently up to the south or gently down to the north from the edge of the road obscures views into the site as shown in Appendix F, Photos 1, 4, 7 and 8. Additionally, rock outcroppings, some of which present significant vertical faces, block views further into the site.

The road levels at high points in the center of the site and then continues downhill to the western boundary. Although the terrain along this center stretch is relatively flat to rolling, the land is forested or densely brushy and does not afford views beyond the edge of the road right-of-way. At a low point near the western side of the site, a stream running to the south of the road allows limited views briefly in this direction.

Existing Views from Melody Lake Hamlet Area

Initial study identified a potential view of the site from the hillside hamlet of Melody Lake. No sight lines were identified from the lake itself. The residential settlement is located on a southwest facing slope with potential views toward the northeastern corner of the Lost Lake site. The northeast corner of the subject site is located closest to the Melody Lake Hamlet, potentially viewed from a distance of 1,000 feet or more (about a quarter of a mile). Further study of existing conditions in this area, however, shows most of this distance is covered by forest cover through which visibility of the proposed main entrance will be largely obscured.

Existing Views from Saint Joseph's Lake

Although initial study indicated there might be a limited view of the site from a short stretch of the western shore of St. Joseph's Lake, the existing topography and tree cover immediately east of the lake obscures any view into the project site, which is nearly half a mile away. Gently sloping wooded land at this part of the eastern shoreline provides a natural screen to views from the lake area.

Existing Views from Cold Spring Road/Neversink River Unique Area

Based on topography alone (without consideration of vegetation), views of the site's eastern-facing slopes in the southeastern quadrant of the subject property are possible from Cold Spring Road (County Route 101) and nearby portions of the Neversink River Unique Area (UA). UA land abuts the Lost Lake property at two locations at the southeastern property line in the vicinity of the Bush Kill (the Site Master Plan identifies the UA land), however at this time there are no known trails or established public access to these parcels. There will be a large number of potential viewers from the county highway as they travel by the site.

However, the UA is a preserve and thus is heavily wooded. Also, this State managed land permits limited uses and access, which reduce the number of people using the UA as compared to a State park with picnicking and camping facilities. There are wood roads available for pedestrians, bikers and certain types of vehicles in the UA. These roads tend to run along low areas such as stream valleys and across low slopes. Therefore, access to high points within the UA, in particular the closest high point some 3,500 feet east of the site property line, are not provided or do not appear on published topographic maps or the NYSDEC UA Management Plan map. Hikers could go off of trails to higher points, however, these will be in heavily wooded areas thus not affording views.

3.12.2 Potential ImpactsProposed Development and Design Guidelines

Construction of Lost Lake Resort will alter views of the site from an undeveloped property with forest and wetlands to a residential and recreational resort development. The gateway to the project will be a single point of access from site frontage on Cold Spring Road in the northeast corner of the property. A land sales office is located off of the entry road tucked in behind trees lining Cold Spring Road.

No direct access is proposed from St. Joseph's Road. The internal road system will include a tunnel under St. Joseph's Road that will provide vehicular, pedestrian, and golf cart access under the existing road.

The Lost Lake Resort master plan lays out 2,557 single-family residential lots, a cluster of 30 single-family cottages, 40 townhouse condominium dwellings and a variety of recreational amenities. The proposed zoning for the site is a Planned Development District (PDD). A variety of additional mixed uses including lodging, restaurant, spa and conference facility open to the public, and open/recreational space. These additional uses are nestled along the west shore of Lost Lake in the center of the northern half of the site.

Many prospective lot owners will purchase lots in order to be members of the resort community and use the onsite lodging for a lengthy period of time before constructing their homes in the resort. The construction of individual single-family residences will be done over time by the lot owners in accordance with strict Design Guidelines so that the community will maintain its quality and aesthetic appeal.

The master plan provides for 50 percent of preserved wooded open space throughout the site. Open space will include wetlands, lakes, streams, trails, golf course, parks and buffers. A minimum 50-foot vegetated buffer is provided along the perimeter of the entire site and a 100-foot buffer along both sides of the St. Joseph's Road right-of-way. Additionally, wooded

wildlife access corridors run between the backyards of the proposed single-family lots running basically parallel to the residential roads.

Lighting on streets, near recreational, community and lodging facilities and related parking areas will be the minimum necessary for safety, security and reasonable enjoyment of these amenities. Street lights will be located at a few key intersections.

All lighting will be properly shielded and directed to the specific areas requiring light to avoid off-site glare and stray light above the site. The Resort's recreational, community and lodging facilities are located in the central area of the northern half of the site. There will be no lighting at the driving range. Tennis court lighting will be timed to go off in the late evening. The potential for off-site glare and stray light above the site will be avoided by the distance of these amenities from the site's boundaries, intervening topography and vegetation.

Lost Lake Resort, Inc., will require strict adherence to its Design Guidelines for construction of new single-family homes. The owner of each lot will be subject to a declaration of exceptions, reservations, covenants, restrictions and conditions for the Lost Lake Resort ("Declaration"). An Architectural Control Committee / Design Review Board will review, approve or disapprove all planned improvements on a lot to regulate conformance with the Resort design theme and architectural guidelines. The draft Declaration includes the following points:

- No further subdivision of any lot will be permitted, however, two or more adjoining lots may be consolidated for a building site.
- Landscaping and vegetative cover for soil stabilization will be required on each lot.
- Removal of any tree in excess of 3 inches in diameter within 20 feet of a front lot line or 10 feet from a rear lot line will be prohibited without the consent of the Committee.

Strict guidelines regarding fencing, walls, exterior lighting, and exterior use areas are also specified. In particular, the Design Guidelines specify that "low-level, concealed source lighting shall be used when necessary at walkways and grade changes. Fixtures should not exceed 24 inches in height and may be activated by a motion sensor. No tree up lighting is allowed."

In relation to potential visual effects of the overall development, single-family home lot development is proposed on all areas of the site yet under specific guidelines. The project sponsor intends to provide a sense that each home will be a retreat into the mountain environment. The following are included in the Design Guidelines for single-family homes:

- Building heights are limited to 35 feet;
- Exterior building materials may include wood, timber, stone and stucco;
- Roof overhangs and recessed windows are suggested to prevent glare;
- Shingles, slate, simulated slate or textured metal are permitted roofing materials with varied rooflines;
- Building colors should match the native landscape including green, brown, grey or black;
- Minimal lighting should be shielded or directed to avoid off-site visibility;
- Maximum site coverage is limited to 50 percent;

- Area of disturbance should be limited to the immediate area necessary for excavation; and
- Landscaping must limit tree removal and removal must be approved.

Changes in Views from St. Joseph's Road (County Route 108)

The proposed Lost Lake Resort development will be traversed by and therefore potentially visible from St. Joseph's Road. The heavily wooded road frontage, rock outcrops and undulating topography limit views into the site. The rock outcrops within 200 feet of St. Joseph's Road, shown in Appendix F, will not be disturbed during the construction of the proposed Lost Lake development. These rock outcrops will be preserved in undisturbed natural areas of the project, and will continue to display the rural character of Forestburgh.

The proposed site development plan provides a 100-foot buffer on each side of St. Joseph's Road to preserve the existing vegetation and natural features in these areas. With the preserved width of vegetation to screen views from either side of the public road, site disturbance will be substantially obscured. The proposed Design Guidelines include requirements for the use of natural building materials and colors that will blend into the natural setting, which will further minimize the effect of any view of new buildings from the road. Overall, views of the developed site from St. Joseph's Road are not expected to have a significant visual impact on aesthetic resources.

Changes in Views from Melody Lake Hamlet Area

The proposed main entrance area for Lost Lake Resort is located closest to the Melody Lake Hamlet. A sight line study of the potential view at Cross Section A-A' (in Figure 3.12-2) is shown in Figure 3.12-3. Existing conditions in this area show that some 1,000 feet of woods will buffer potential views of the project from the residences in the Hamlet. Just as the existing residences are all but obscured from view from Cold Spring Road, the proposed sales building and other, smaller structures proposed at the main entry will be obscured from view from the Hamlet.

The available sight line will be limited to Cold Spring Road immediately in front of the Resort main entrance. With a wooded buffer of 100 feet or more from Cold Spring Road, the proposed one-story sales office will be visible to some extent and situated in a wooded setting not unlike the existing houses in this area. The sales building is proposed approximately 220 feet from the edge of the road and the controlled access building will be approximately 475 feet back from the public road. Since the proposed building architecture is an Adirondack style with siding and roofing materials in earth tones, it is anticipated that the limited view of the entrance area buildings will "fit" into the wooded landscape. Representative examples of the visual character proposed for the main entrance area at Lost Lake Resort are depicted in photographs taken at the main entrance of Eagle Rock Resort, also built by this applicant and shown in Figures 3.12-7 through 3.12-11. (This photos are provided to show the style of the development. It must be noted that the main building at Eagle Rock is significantly larger and is located much closer to the road than is proposed in the wooded setting of the Forestburgh site.)

The closest proposed house site will be located 650 feet from the public road right-of-way, and thus well beyond the view through the trees from Cold Spring Road (as shown in Figure 3.12-5 at Cross Section B3-B4).

Views of the developed site from public vantage points in the northeastern quadrant of the project will not have an adverse visual impact on aesthetic resources of the public road corridor.

Changes in Views from Saint Joseph's Lake

A cross sectional study was prepared to evaluate the potential for a change in the view toward the project site from St. Joseph's Lake, particularly the opposite shoreline where buildings exist. Figure 3.12-2 shows the location of Cross Section B1-B2 where the lake is closest to the site and the edge of the viewshed (based on topography alone). Figure 3.12-4 demonstrates that the potential sight line from the far lake shore will be over the treeline on the Lost Lake property, and well over the rooftops of proposed buildings. Therefore, there will be no visual effect of the developed site from St. Joseph's Lake community.

Changes in Views from Cold Spring Road/Neversink River Unique Area

Another cross sectional study was prepared to evaluate the potential for a change in the view toward the project site from Cold Spring Road and the Neversink River Unique Area (UA) at the southeastern portion of the project site. Figure 3.12-2 shows the location of Cross Section C-C' where Cold Spring Road is closest to the site and UA land abuts the site. Figure 3.12-6 demonstrates the position of the road and the UA land in relation to the developed area of Lost Lake Resort. The UA land is entirely wooded and approximately 1000 feet deep between the road and the subject property.

At the eastern property line is the old railroad grade, and the Bush Kill just west of that. Proposed house lots in Lost Lake Resort will be located approximately 1,175 feet from Cold Spring Road at the closest point on Cross Section C-C', land that will remain wooded to provide a significant visual buffer of any view from the public road into the developed site. As shown in the cross section, the relief along this section line is a relatively gentle rise in elevation from east to west and over a significant distance. (Due to the scale of this section the individual houses on the lots are not shown, nor are the trees that will remain on every lot and in the open space land.) Given the distance through tree cover both on and off the project site over which any potential view line will occur, no views of rooftops within this development will be possible from Cold Spring Road.

From immediately adjoining land in the UA and the area that is proposed to be offered to the Town as parkland (Bushkill Park East), it is possible that glimpses of portions of some houses in the southeastern portion of the resort will be visible, seen through at least 300 feet depth of woods. Roof tops will be well below the tops of trees that will remain on the site and the homes will be required to use siding and roofing materials that blend with the natural environment. Given the very limited visibility of the proposed development from this vantage point, and the limited number of potential viewers that will be expected, the view of the developed site is not expected to have any significant visual impact on aesthetic resources of the UA.

Also shown in Figure 3.12-6, the water tank site selected for Lost Lake Resort is situated on a knoll at the western property line on Cross Section C-C'. The topography continues to rise west of the tank site and no buildings exist on the adjoining land. Given the remote position of the tank site, with the three proposed water tanks rising approximately 77 feet high, these project components will not impact any views into the property. Other utility connections for the development, such as electric power and cable, will be routed from existing facilities on St. Joseph's and Cold Spring roads without the need to clear utility corridors through wooded areas.

The overall effect of the site's 50-foot perimeter buffer; the 100-foot buffer along St. Joseph's Road; tree preservation and retained wooded areas; limitations on disturbance and landscaping requirements for individual lots; and wooded wildlife access corridors between the developed areas of the site is that the project will be minimally visible from surrounding areas and roads.

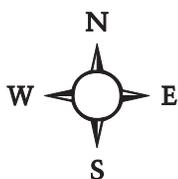
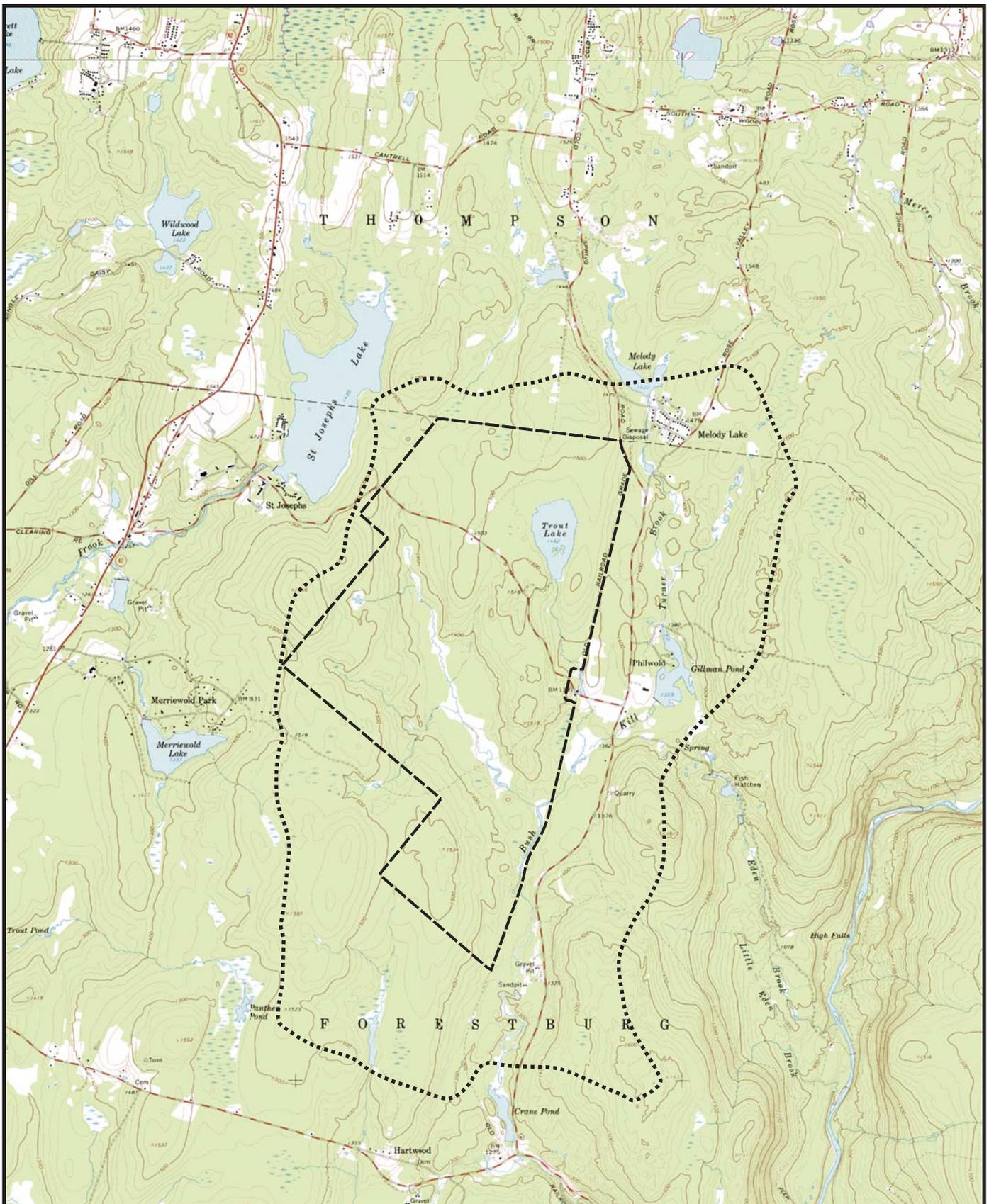
Since the proposed residential siding and roofing materials will be earth tones (green, brown, grey or black), it is anticipated that any limited view of the tops and roofs of homes will blend into the site's wooded slopes. The site's sales office, recreational, community and lodging structures will also be constructed using wood, stone facing and siding and roofing will be in earth tones. It is anticipated that these will also blend into the forested landscape.

Lighting on streets, near recreational, community and lodging facilities and related parking areas will be the minimum necessary for safety, security and reasonable enjoyment of these amenities. All lighting will be properly shielded and directed to avoid off-site glare and stray light above the site. The potential for off-site glare and stray light will be avoided by the distance of the common amenities from the site's boundaries, intervening topography and vegetation.

Therefore, views of the developed site are not expected to have a significant visual impact on aesthetic resources.

3.12.3 Mitigation Measures

The proposed plan incorporates design elements, preserved wooded areas, tree preservation, landscaping and standards for individual lot development such that the view of development from adjoining lands and roads will be very limited or will blend into the wooded landscape. Since no significant visual impacts to aesthetic resources are anticipated, no further mitigation is proposed.



 Site Property Boundary
 Viewshed Boundary

Figure 3.12-1: Potential Viewshed Map
 Lost Lake Resort
 Town of Forestburgh, Sullivan County, New York
 Base: USGS 7.5-minute Topographic Map, Hartwood Quad
 Scale: 1" = 4,000'

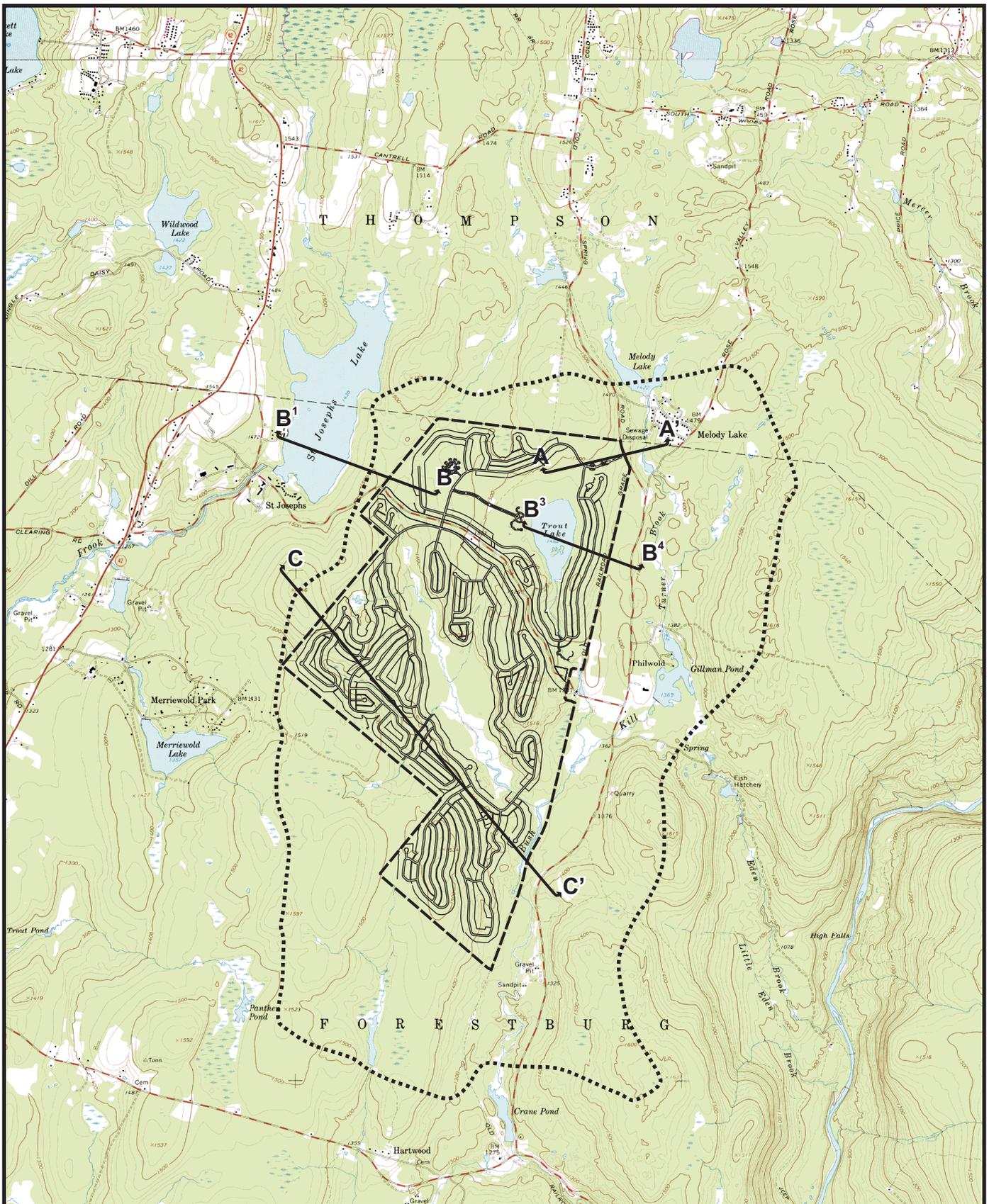


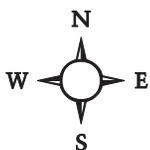
Figure 3.12-2: Line of Sight Cross-Section Key Map

Lost Lake Resort

Town of Forestburgh, Sullivan County, New York

Base: USGS 7.5-minute Topographic Map, Hartwood Quad

Scale: 1" = 4,000'



	Site Property Boundary
	Viewshed Boundary
	Line of Sight Cross-sections

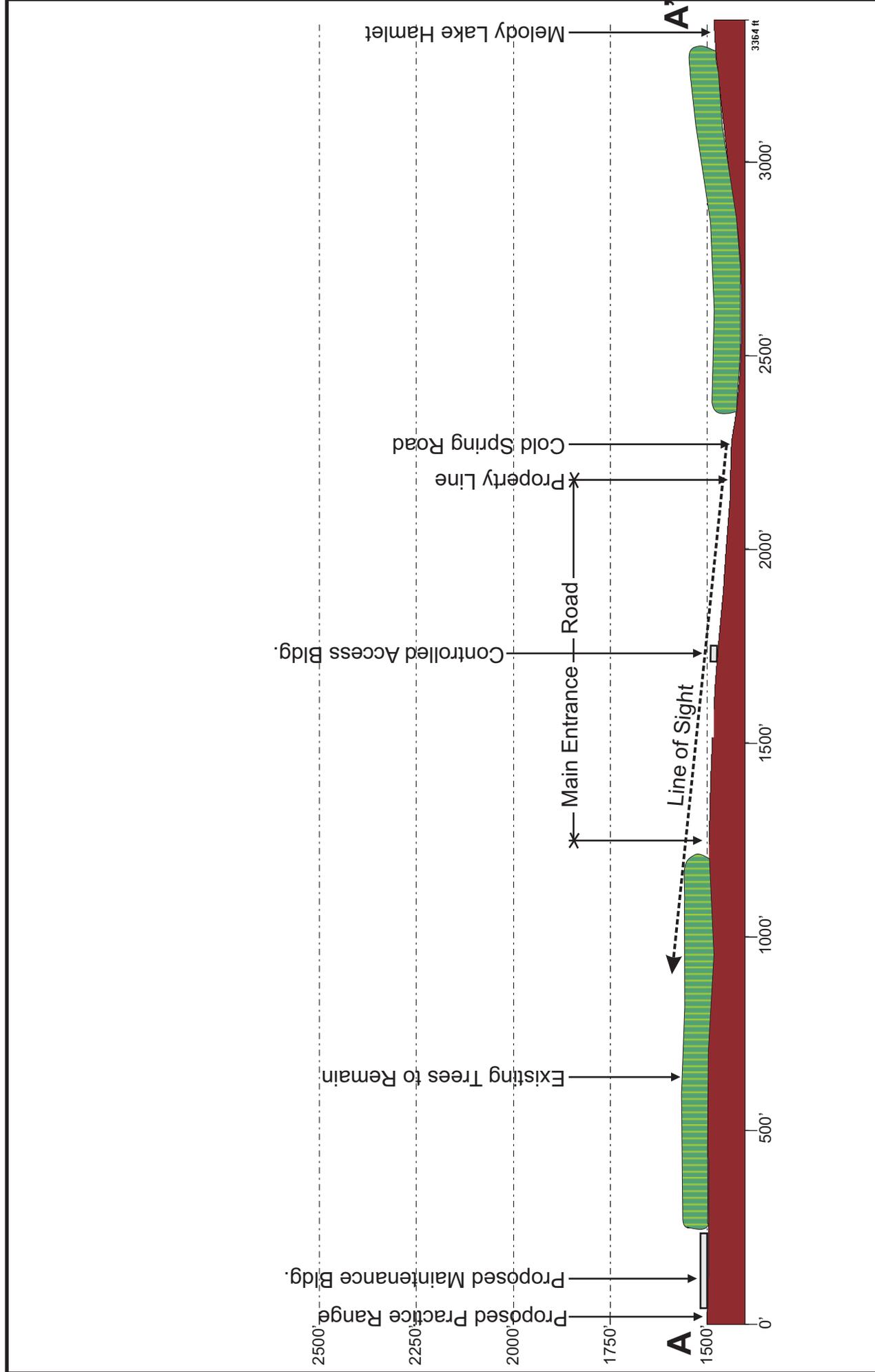


Figure 3.12-3: Cross Section A - A'
 Lost Lake Resort
 Town of Forestburgh, Sullivan County, New York
 Source: USGS National Elevation Dataset
 Scale: 1" = 340'

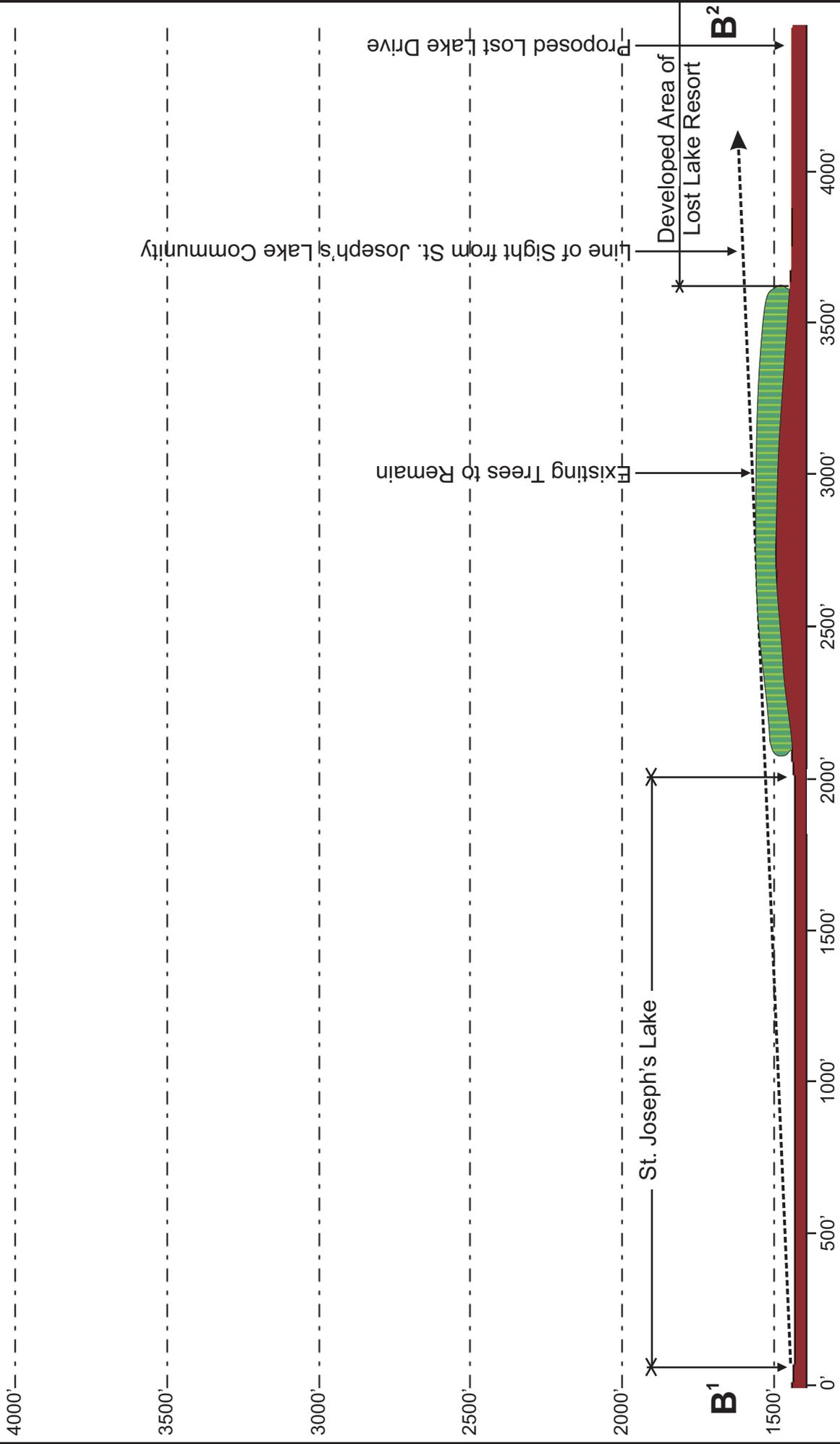


Figure 3.12-4: Cross Section B^1 - B^2
 Lost Lake Resort
 Town of Forestburgh, Sullivan County, New York
 Source: USGS National Elevation Dataset
 Scale: 1" = 450'

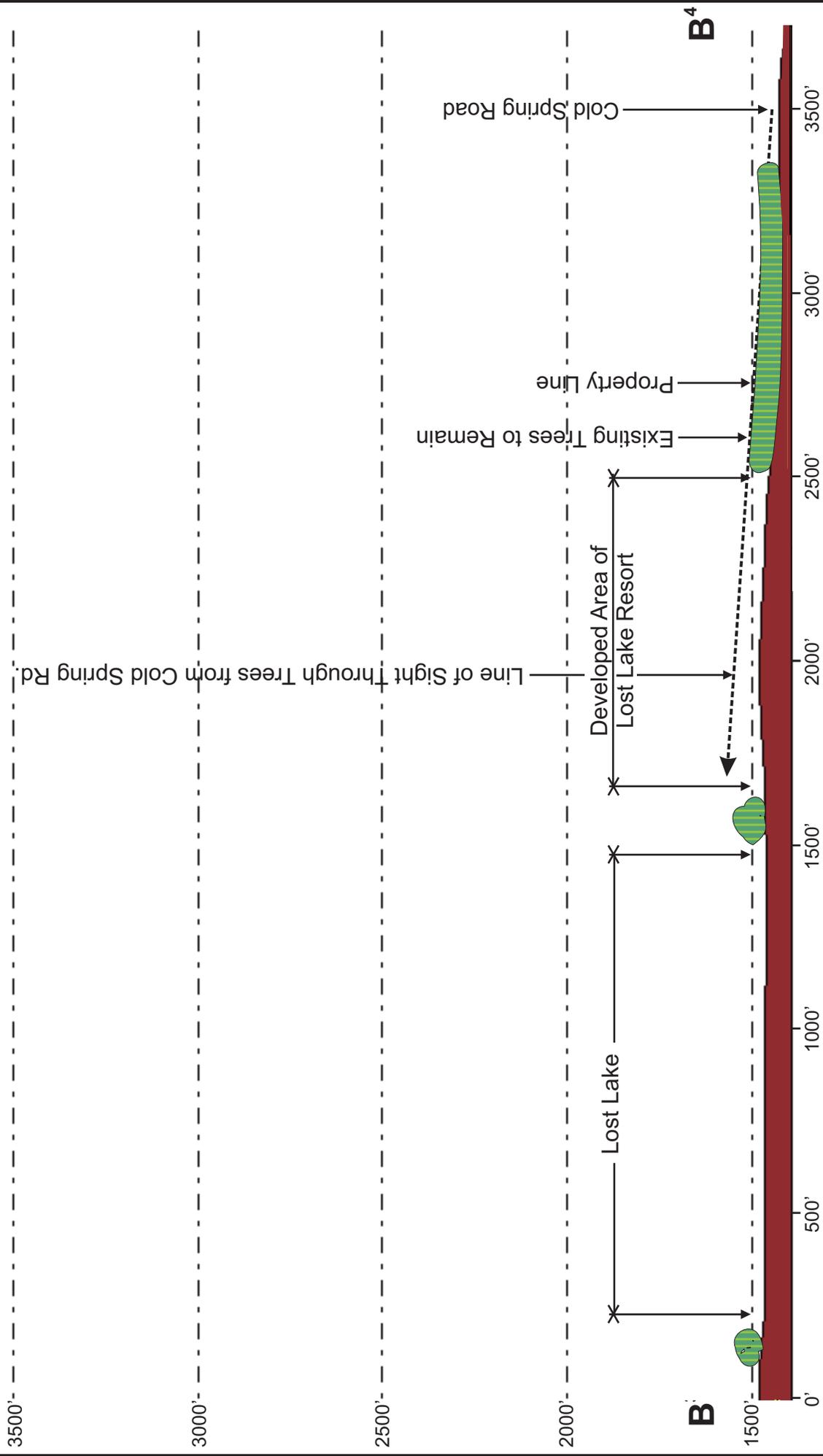


Figure 3.12-5: Cross Section B³ - B⁴
 Lost Lake Resort
 Town of Forestburgh, Sullivan County, New York
 Source: USGS National Elevation Dataset
 Scale: 1" = 380±

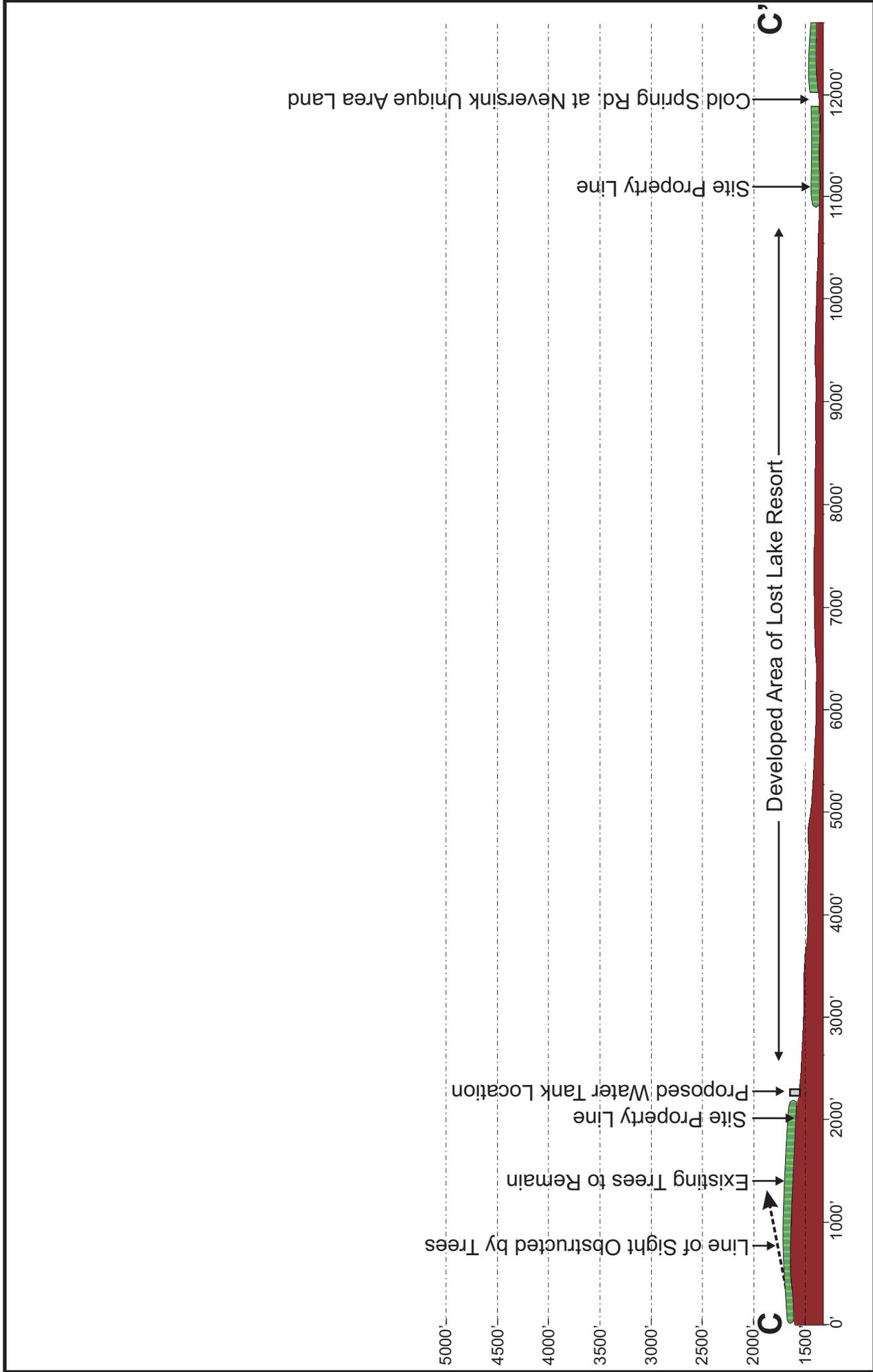


Figure 3.12-6: Cross Section C - C'
 Lost Lake Resort
 Town of Forestburgh, Sullivan County, New York
 Source: USGS National Elevation Dataset
 Scale: 1" = 1280'



Figure 3.12-7: Representative Main Entrance View 1
Lost Lake Resort
Town of Forestburgh, Sullivan County, New York
Source: Eagle Rock Resort, Summer 2009



Figure 3.12-8: Representative Main Entrance View 2
Lost Lake Resort
Town of Forestburgh, Sullivan County, New York
Source: Eagle Rock Resort, Summer 2009



Figure 3.12-9: Representative Main Entrance View 3
Lost Lake Resort
Town of Forestburgh, Sullivan County, New York
Source: Eagle Rock Resort, Winter 2009



Figure 3.12-10: Representative Main Entrance View 4
Lost Lake Resort
Town of Forestburgh, Sullivan County, New York
Source: Eagle Rock Resort, Winter 2009



Figure 3.12-11: Representative Controlled Access View 5
Lost Lake Resort
Town of Forestburgh, Sullivan County, New York
Source: Eagle Rock Resort, Winter 2009