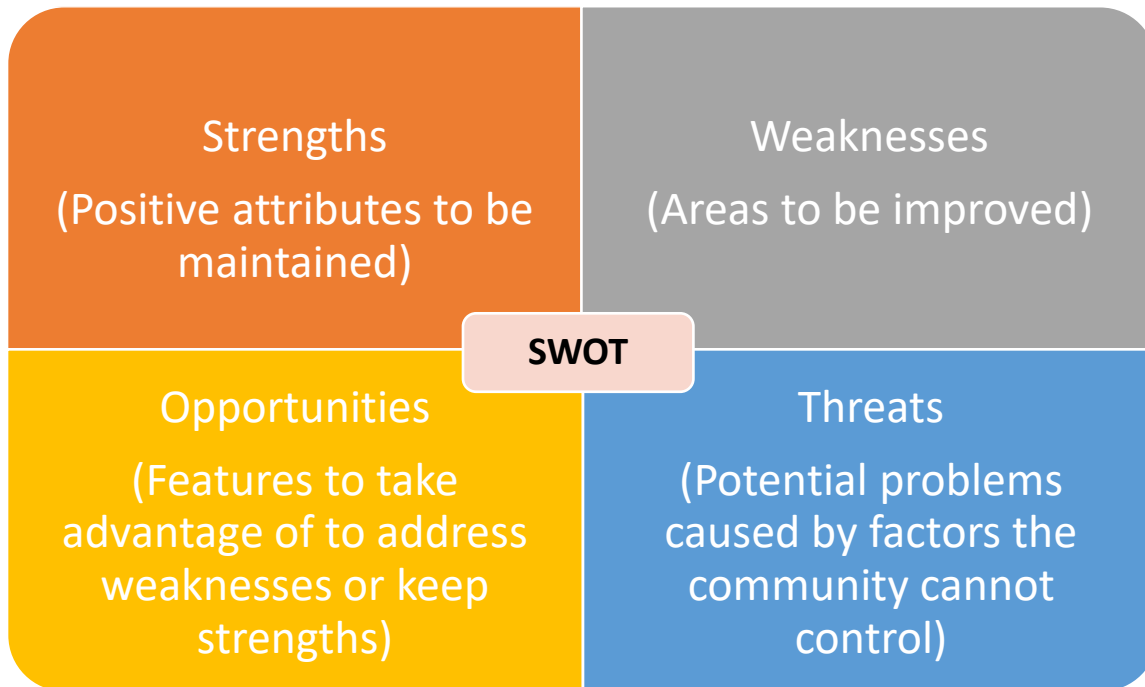


## **Town of North East/Village of Millerton**

### **Comprehensive List of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats**

An evaluation of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (“SWOT”) facing the Town of North East and Village of Millerton form an important part of this Plan. Public input and analysis of current conditions in the Town and Village helped identify the SWOT features. The features included in the SWOT are those to be addressed in this Plan. Organizing the information by this SWOT also helps the Town and Village focus on methods to maintain its strengths, fix its weaknesses, take advantage of opportunities, and prevent threats from occurring.



The following SWOTs have been identified as significant features and issues and are based on public input and research about the Town and Village. It has been compiled from public input received from the many efforts completed as part of the outreach for this Plan. This includes: Focus Group; Interviews; Public Workshop; input from Committee Members; and a public survey as follows:

Focus Groups and Interviews included:

- Artists & Musicians
- Conservation Advisory Council
- Emergency Services
- Farmers
- Farmers Market
- General Public
- Latina Mothers
- Dick Hermans
- Millerton Business Association
- NECC Staff
- NE Millerton Library
- Nutrition Center
- Oblong Valley Indivisible Group
- Real Estate Agents and Mortgage Bankers
- Recreation Committee
- Sam Buselle
- Webutuck Senior Class
- Weekender Focus Group

Workshop: 75 attended

Survey Participants: 343 participants

## Strengths

The following features have been identified by North East and Millerton residents, landowners, and businesses as community strengths. These are features desired to be maintained or protected.

The features included in the highlighted boxes are those features identified in the various public input as priority (survey question) or based on number of times the topic was mentioned (focus group and workshop). Those items not highlighted below are not necessarily included in the list of priority topics but remain as identified strengths.

<b>Positive Feature from Public input</b>
Rural, rural feeling, open spaces, beauty of area, rural charm, small town atmosphere, quaint, bucolic, main street character in Village, historic character in Village
Small community, small town flavor plus diversity, village character has small town feel, tight knit, charming community, lots of community spirit, sense of belonging, good sense of community, strong sense of civic involvement, volunteer base, friendly and community spirit, neighborliness, people care, welcoming, agricultural charm
Farming, local food, farm landscape, contribution of farms
Municipal services – roads, library, sidewalks, water in Village
In Village, movie theater and local businesses, diversity of shops, no chain stores, decent hospital, great bookstore, grocery store, restaurants, vibrant, good small business environment, we are magnet for area especially with movie theater and rail trail, night life, shops, antique stores, and wonderful small and local businesses
Rail trail, outdoor activities, Taconic State Park, access to mountain, Rudd Pond
In Village, walkable community, walking scale of town and vibrant downtown
Environmental quality, biodiversity, people care about the protecting the environment, open spaces
Historic village center, main street character

Positive Feature from Public input
Socio-economic diversity, diverse demographics
Vibrant culturally, proximity to arts and culture, artists in area, music, arts culture, a large, diverse and active arts and music scene in both the Village and the Town, in addition to the surrounding cultural institutions/events, large and small, from NYC to the Berkshires and CT, the ability to both play music and exhibit art on the street, as well as in galleries and other indoor spaces, .a willingness on the part of building owners to allow pop up shows in spaces for rent or sale, Spring for Sound Festival, Fall for Art, UnGallery, other venues
Close to Metro North stop, location and crossroads of 3 states, proximity to NYC, proximity to urban areas for agricultural markets
Functioning farms, farm to table, farmers market, Ag resources and farmers market, ag lands with prime soils, quality soils
NECC, community nonprofits and support
Local architecture
Views, viewsheds, scenery
Abundant water supply even during droughts
Attractive to tourists and weekenders
Authenticity of Village, trendy and quaint
Breadth of activities
Chain store free
Family ties
Friendly local government and services, accessible stores
Good neighbors who are mostly accepting of agricultural activities
Healthy air
Inland, therefore reduced coastal climate change threats
Landowners are willing to work with farmers on fair leases
Level of education in area
Library
Low taxes
Many people have ideas
Millerton has an edge, is a little gritty and that appeals to visitors
Millerton news
No gated communities
No traffic
Parking
Private schools available
Right to farm law
Roads - good job with snow plowing keeps people safe and commercial going
Safe community, no violence, safe place to raise children
Supportive
The mixture of refinement as well as naturally rustic community
The people

Positive Feature from Public input
Vacation spot
Webutuck teachers help with children’s homework and offers interpreters to help parents communicate with their child’s teachers
Young people
Abundant water supply even during droughts
Attractive to tourists and weekenders
Authenticity of Village, trendy and quaint

## Weaknesses

The following features have been identified by North East and Millerton residents, landowners, and businesses as weaknesses, issues or concerns in the community. These are those features that need to be enhanced, improved, or otherwise alleviated as a negative.

The features included in the highlighted boxes below are those features identified in the various public input as priority (survey question) or based on number of times the topic was mentioned (focus group and workshop). Those items not highlighted below are not necessarily included in the list of priority topics but remain as identified strengths.

Feature from Workshop, Interviews, Focus Groups, Joint Town/Village Meeting
Lack of sewers, critical for development and for economy
Lack of affordable housing, workforce housing unaffordable, insufficient housing affordable to young families, Housing Limited by lack of sewer, Aging population, need to address veteran housing needs, Lack of senior affordable housing, poor quality of what is here, rent is unaffordable
Lack of employment, lack of businesses catering to local residents, lack of diversity in businesses, economic development needed especially more jobs for young people, more poverty, we no longer have major employers here, with the closing of the 2 state institutions; no repurposing yet of old State buildings...could be an opportunity, some development in the area, like Silo Ridge, could create jobs, but primarily service jobs - we need professions that provide a living wage or support entrepreneurship, For technology businesses, pulling in [qualified] talent can be an issue, lack of grocery store options, Lack of business in town center, need more diversity in businesses, businesses cater to tourism – need clothing and supermarket
Zoning is inadequate, lack of progressive zoning laws, lack of larger business centers, no plan for what businesses we need, zoning all over the place, zoning doesn't provide tools to ensure town remains rural, need more defined zones in Millerton. Businesses go from ZBA to PB and don't know if they will be permitted, zoning out of date, lack of enforcement, inconsistent definitions, outdated list of uses; zoning

<b>Feature from Workshop, Interviews, Focus Groups, Joint Town/Village Meeting</b>
doesn't address today's projects, no mention of modern techniques like conservation subdivision, lack of flow chart makes for inefficiencies, zoning needs to incorporate adaptive reuse of existing structures, zoning does not take into consideration Hudsonia plan/maps, lacks clarity in definitions
Lack public transportation, need for a local bus service to connect to the train and the LOOP Bus, Bus to Webutuck summer school only leaves from the Millerton Fire House which makes for long walk for those living on north Rte. 22 with no car
Loss of farming operations and farmland
High taxes
Less neighborliness of late, more animosity, lousy communication between town and residents, community divisiveness, locals vs weekenders, need for better understanding of one another by members of community, antagonism, perception that art is for weekenders or outsiders, weekend population creates an imbalance that affects how businesses operate during the week, on prices, what products are sold, lack businesses that support locals, affects land uses and values overall, businesses need to support local (full-time) residents and our aging population, affects how public services are used when they are offered 24/7 but not used 24/7
Lack investment in and funding for infrastructure, capital projects, roads and sidewalks, sidewalks poor, poor lighting, aging infrastructure, Highway garage needed, need an ADA compliant Town Hall, Unable to share services with communities just over the border in CT – e.g., transfer station, several culverts are major projects and need work
Lack of broadband and fiber optic infrastructure
Lack of shared recreation, lack of recreational facilities for young people and adults, Lack of or insufficient recreation for kids and teens, Need to update existing recreation facility at Eddie Collins Field, Rudd Pond, Rudd Pond not used enough, need well maintained public tennis courts, Rudd Pond hours are limited, Eddie Collins also underutilized, recreation opportunities are declining as they had to close pool; Rudd Pond is suffering, and the gym facility at the school closed
Need better school system and training programs for local businesses and courses for adults, need to improve public school system perhaps with consolidation with other districts, lack local educational opportunities
Losing amenities to keep locals here
Need sustainable agriculture as component of our economy, loss of farmland, Concern over fewer local agricultural support services to choose from, Uncertainty given legal status of many farm workers, fewer agricultural support vendors and services available in the area, no Future Farms of America (FFA) classes at Webetuck, problematic relations between farmers and landowners The greying of farmers, tension between older, larger farms and small new ones (hobby farms), hobby farms flooding the local markets, local products compete with lower cost alternatives from non-local sources, loss of farm income, Agricultural support services for farmers Lack of parking, need to develop parking and delineate parking areas with landscaping, lighting and signage, parking in village, better parking info, parking generally lacking, solve rail trail users from parking on Main and South Center St. Lack access to information on activities and services. Most information comes from Webutuck and Astor Head Start, especially when children are in the lower grades, Need better local communications, lack of shared town and village communications platform, lack of access to information and services, Communication about local activities, services and events Lack of shared services, eliminate village government, need more efficient use of tax dollar,

<b>Feature from Workshop, Interviews, Focus Groups, Joint Town/Village Meeting</b>
Lack of volunteers for fire and EMT, expensive ambulance service, Community relies on volunteers for ambulance and firefighting, but they're aging out... what to do? Need to retain young people, Mandated training discourages some volunteers
Attractive street lamps needed and more lighting, especially at cross walks
Aware the new Village Pedestrian Plan is largely unfunded
Be more aesthetically pleasing (re: Gilmore Glass building), maintain character of Village
Both Town and Village are digitally challenged
Commercial rents are all over the map resulting in vacancies where rents are unrealistic
Conservancy easements are permanent and can reduce affordable housing options significantly
Decreasing school district enrollment
Difficult to attract and keep help
Disconnect with Village government as most merchants and building owners do not live here
Do we grow or maintain status? Resolve Town/Village conflict, growth or no growth issues
Don't want to lose the mix of people that makes Millerton special
Duplication of town and village services
Empty railroad buildings
Empty storefronts, congestion on main road
Experiencing generational transitions. Good business models ending because family is not interested.
Few commercial services for those at home
Improve walkability of Town and Village
Insufficient support from County and State to area
Invasive plant species, especially in unfarmed areas
Junk to be addressed in neighbor's yard
Lack of awareness of climate change,
Lack of diversity
lack of interest on the part of both Village and Town governments, leading to no funding or official support for events
Lack of medical and business attractions
Lack of overnight lodging
Lack of senior services
Lack of small industry
Lack of stores that sell Spanish food ingredients. Need to hire a taxi to go to Dover or Poughkeepsie.
Lack of thinking regionally
Lack of transfer station
Lack of young people, we offer little to excite those aged 8-18
Large area agriculture removes hedge rows and other buffers that support birds and wildlife
Loss of buffers along streams leads to erosion
Loss of farmland and open space
Loss of views due to tree growth
Need a laundromat
Need for a certified day care center
Need for more training in trades
No more strip mall type of development. Second fire house out of place architecturally

No slaughterhouse facility
Noise from gun club and motorcycles
Not enough cultural and artistic activities - want more events, no sizeable all-weather venue
Not enough people to support businesses
NYS's support of solar, wind and other renewable energy sources vs preservation of prime soils
Opioid epidemic
Overhead wires on Main Street need to be put underground
Police need more training with elderly issues
Precluded from ordering on line at the Library as they do not have credit cards.
Preservation of historic structures
Protection of natural resources such as wetlands, floodplains and streams
Rents - business rents high with only 3-5 business days, super high rents for both residential and commercial
Rethink boulevard district
Snow on sidewalks
Taxes too high, especially for agriculture and long-time residents, bloated school system contributes
Too many people moving in
Too much emphasis on Weekenders
Too much police overlap, Millerton Police Department, too much political influence on police force
Too much truck traffic, trucks on main street, trucks too fast, bad corner Terni's, traffic congestion
Upgrade needed for supermarket
Upkeep of downtown buildings
Water system, groundwater problems, development affecting water tables especially at higher elevations, aquifers and streams need to be protected, surface water and aquifer contamination, local ponds suffer from invasive plant species
Young people not in government, lack of volunteers

## Opportunities

The opportunities offered below represent programs, projects, regulations, policies, or other actions that could be implemented to maintain the strengths or address the weaknesses. These ideas form the basis for the strategies recommended in this Plan. Opportunities are organized into the same topic/themes as the goals. **(NOTE FROM NAN – IF YOU REORGANIZE THE GOALS TO BE IN PRIORITY ORDER, THEN THESE SHOULD/COULD BE ORGANIZED SAME WAY.)**

### Community Character and Scenic Beauty

- Develop more businesses in central business zone to maintain open spaces, farms and rural character by investing in central sewer
- Prevent gravel pits and mining
- Encourage conservation easements, through incentives to developers – purchase of development rights through farmers
- Zoning updates that address rural and community character
- Land conservancy – work with local farmers, controlled local farming
- Preserve agriculture

- Ridgeline preservation
- Maintain affordability of property and/or housing to keep diversity of population
- Protect ag land, use conservation easements
- Encourage landowners to donate for public parks
- Work with assessor and farmers to resolve tax issues – no ag valuation for free taxes
- Allow for smaller lots to encourage affordable housing
- Discourage sprawl, concentrate growth around village
- Work with Dutchess Land Conservancy
- Scenic view protection
- Better oversight of building design
- Better planning in Town adjacent to Village
- Clearer understanding of what zones someone is in and what they can do
- Adaptive reuse an opportunity in both the Town and Village
  - Buildings may be zoned for one thing, but can no longer be used for that – example of agricultural structures and zoning prevents those buildings being used for something else
  - Better to allow the structure to be used for something else than to let it decay
  - Current zoning may not allow it, but it's hard to get a use variance
  - Need more flexibility and opportunities
  - Ag buildings are not going to be used again for ag – needs to be able to be adaptively used. Can we use barns for housing – this would help keep landscape and keep buildings with a new purpose. We have had ideas like this but no way to allow it.

### **Farming/Agriculture**

- Farmers should get tax benefits as well as the landowners
- Create Ag exemptions in the Fire District taxes
- Provide school tax relief for farmers
- Bring FFA back to Webutuck
- Implement the 'Town of North East Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan', 2010.
- Revive the Agricultural Advisory Committee in the Town
- Change zoning to allow reuse of farm buildings
- Take farm equipment into consideration when doing road work
- Reduce speed limits
- As many existing farms have no succession plans, encourage new blood and young people to return to farming
- Town and County need to find ways to protect undocumented farm workers

### **Environment/Ecosystems/Open Space**

- Climate smart community
- Proposal for LEED certification for smart growth communities
- Expand pedestrian access to natural resources
- Use clustering to protect open space
- Don't chop up parcels
- To maintain village character, have proper zoning, tighten up and be more specific.
- Have long term direction and goals, with strategies and implementation of actions



- Create appropriate zoning to protect open space
- Village water system is vulnerable and its highway garage needs to be moved
- Town garage current location is beside a trout stream and needs to be moved
- Create a Utility co-op focused on renewable energy
- Create a volunteer composting project
- Make green and renewable energy use economically rewarding
- Become a green community

#### **Village Character and Role in the Community**

- Reclaim the town green – with fountain
- Claim railroad plaza under eminent domain
- Campaign to open railroad plaza
- Need to solve Main Street Parking
- - With sewer and improved water, we could attract more retail and restaurants
- - Maintain zoning and building requirements to preserve the integrity of our small town (i.e. NO big box stores)
- Cohesive business district in center of Town
- Regulations promoting small businesses and constraints on chains and franchises

#### **Business/Economic Development**

- More parking
- Support businesses
- Community oriented pricing
- Continue to be magnet for area
- Promote arts
- Increase affordable housing
- Community sponsored events
- Support local magnets like rail trail, moviehouse, and shops
- Bring back shuttle from Town station, make stops
- Promote on farm slaughterhouse and businesses that support ag
- Have a more robust association with County
- More walking trails
- Bring together marque business owners and tell their stories – Harney, Irving, Oblong, Movie
- Small business incubator
- Promote events
- Movie house – appreciation of Sadlons (couldn't read)
- Go to movies more often
- Support businesses
- Marketing reboot
- Store like old Ames
- Promote arts
- Endowment for the arts
- Town marketing – single promotional website
- Tax and other incentives to attract businesses and non-profit startups
- Zoning exceptions/considerations while new ones drafted
- Focus on rail trail

- Youth job fairs
- Expand downtown Br center
- Pilot plan for businesses who want to come in
- Payment in Lieu of Taxes – tax break
- No chains (Applebees, Lowes)
- Promote tourism industry
- Seek out kinds of businesses we with to come to the Town
- Encourage small businesses in concrete ways.
- Identify what businesses can provide jobs to keep people here
- Identify businesses that meet needs of residents – regular people
- More practical type of business like Sapersteins
- Good grocery that serves as an outlet for local farms
- Small craft businesses – grow a business, carpentry, knitting, quilting, classes and materials
- Review land use policies with employment opportunities in mind
- Develop access to high speed broadband
- Build on existing business of ag/farming, retail and small businesses
- Set up creative zoning
- Hipster hotel
- Less emphasis on touris businesses, promote businesses that meet local needs
- Less expensive supermarket
- Develop events to draw people – festival with PR
- Encourage small businesses in concrete ways – ie shared community kitchen
- Bike rentals and sales or town bikes to use
- Open a laundromat
- jobs for young people, better economic opportunities, create positive environment for economic development

### **Housing**

- Town/Village can solicit groups to repair aging housing
- Create small houses/tiny houses
- Cluster development/apartment units and buildings
- People who live in attractive, neat, clean housing
- Need sewer to provide more affordable housing
- Assessment and develop action plan
- Review zoning law to increase opportunities
- Look to other communities that have done this
- Have housing affordable to employers
- Allow accessory apartments (over garages)
- Allow small units on properties
- Develop a goal of how many units needed
- Do a local housing study
- Have a real estate consortium
- Grants available for Hudson River Housing to help rehab housing that can be offered affordably
- Create a program to encourage seniors in the Village to rent rooms
- - Allow multi use buildings for business and housing
- - Workforce housing that also meets the needs of seniors and is handicap accessible

### **Transportation/Communication/Utilities**

- Implement boulevard plan/walkability plan
- Public transport from Metro North
- Repair existing sidewalks
- Public transportation
- Expand tax base beyond property taxes – have a more balanced tax base – could benefit services and infrastructure
- better pedestrian/infrastructure
- better broadband
- Transfer station, have swap tent
- Do away with police
- Merchants to clear sidewalks
- Prevent trucks on main street, reduce truck traffic
- Upgrade water mains
- More street lights

### **Central Sewer**

- Grants for seeking out money to fund a sewer both private and public funds
- Explore alternatives for less expensive sewer construction
- Work with nonprofit groups to facilitate effort
- Traditional central sewer is costly. Update water infrastructure while working on sewer system
- Regenerative design – eco-friendly solutions
- Village owns lowest point.
- Seek state and federal funding
- Have shovel ready plan to move when funding is available
- Conduct educational campaign to demonstrate value of system
- Start planning
- Be shovel ready
- Have it addressed in good comp plan
- Form a committee with a strong chair who will take responsibility for the effort
- Apply for grants and repair to water main
- Build a sewer system – get grants to do it
- Sewers – we don't have them because they are too expensive. Hope for infrastructure bill to help cost, need technological advances

### **Historic Character**

- Underground power lines
- Beautification, townscape
- Maintain village green (gazebo)
- Landmark status for buildings of historical significance

### **Recreation/ Cultural Resources/Education**

- Rail Trail, finish extension north to Chatham and connection to Taconic State Park
- Make rail trail more bike friendly
- Lobby for Rudd Pond – community event at Rudd Pond

- Trail connecting Lakeville and Salisbury
- Eddie Collins Field
- Raise awareness that arts, culture and quality of life are positive for the area and all residents
- Create new events (artistic kite flying, public art auction fundraisers, more music in the parks, combination farm/food/art/music street fairs, etc)
- Arcade (small business or non-profit) or some other “fun and games” experience-oriented space in the center of Millerton. Creating an indoor space for the community to gather in all seasons and share an experience rather than just shop – that’s what the center of Millerton needs, in my opinion. Spaces that are not fancy and are welcoming to a very broad audience
- Offer Mommy & Me type classes for parents with young children
- Bring back Eddie Collins field pool and other athletic fields
- Would like English classes offered for adults
- The Railroad Station needs to be used for as a public space

### **Civic Involvement/Volunteerism/Sense of Community**

- Make elected officials accountable and responsive
- Mechanisms to integrate all parts of the diverse community
- Include Spanish speakers
- More Town/Village collaboration at board levels
- Provide additional services and classes for seniors
- Encourage volunteerism
- More community meetings to improve communication
- More frugal and efficient government use of tax dollars, better control of funds
- Seek more funding for needed projects
- More transparency in government
- One website
- Support ag community
- Access needs of immigrant community
- Affordable housing
- Invite younger members of community to become engaged
- More communication for community engagement
- Combine Town/Village resources/website
- Encourage young members to join fire department
- Better communications – look at Ancram and Copake – Town Website and blast email list
- Creation of formal arts & culture committees by Town & Village governments
- Comprehensive events calendar that is frequently updated and easily accessed
- Urge merchants to attend Village board meetings
- Combine town and village resources, shared services, coordinate planning and policy
- Finding way to overcome old/new conflicts and learning to appreciate one another
- Decrease overlap of taxes village, county, town
- Enhanced intersectionality
- Figure out what direction the Town wants to go – progressive or not
- Focus on the have nots – elderly, poor, unemployed

## Threats

Threats are potential issues or problems caused by factors the community cannot control – usually because they are regional, state, or national issues, or because they are larger environmental or economic trends that affect areas beyond the Town and Village.

- Climate change
- Poor national dairy economy stressing area dairy farms
- Changing demographics, including an aging population and loss of young adults and young families
- Lack of funding
- Real estate market that influences affordability
- Social and cultural divisiveness
- (OTHERS FROM COMMITTEE?)