

3.19 Community Character

The proposed project consists of a resort community on 670± acres in the Town of Amenia, NY that will include 328 townhouses, 41 single-family houses, and a resort hotel with a total of up to 320 rooms. The project site is located in the north central portion of the Town of Amenia along NYS Route 22, to the southwest of the hamlet of Amenia.

Community character is typically defined by building types and the architecture, scale, and height of the existing structures. In addition, the pattern and density of development, open space areas that exist, topography, and the surrounding natural environment also influence community character.

3.19.1 Existing Conditions

The project site is located within the Town of Amenia, a rural community with open farm fields and horse, sheep and bull farms located throughout the Town. By contrast, the nearby hamlet of Amenia is the more densely settled area within the Town and is the downtown activity center of Amenia. The natural environment of the Town is characterized by open fields with pockets of forested areas, often on hillsides. Topography is varied, with rolling hills and expansive valleys.

Project Site

The project site consists of a valley surrounded by forested hillsides to the west and north (see Photo 1). Within the valley lie the open greenways of the golf course and the clubhouse, reminiscent of the farms with open fields located throughout Amenia.



Photo 1. Silo Ridge County Club

Deep Hollow Road



Photo 2. Deep Hollow Road

To the west of the project site and on either side of Deep Hollow Road, which essentially parallels Wassaic Creek, are hillsides covered by forest (see Photo 2). Some of this land is within Tamarack Preserve, a 2,400 acre wildlife preserve offering hunting and sporting opportunities. In the vicinity of the project site along Deep Hollow Road, there are a few sparsely dispersed clearings developed with residences. The style of the homes varies and includes log cabin-style

homes, A-frame houses, and long driveways leading to homes not visible from the road.

Hamlet of Amenia



Photo 3. Hamlet of Amenia

To the north and east of the project site is the hamlet of Amenia. There is a mix of businesses that front directly along the sidewalks and roadways within the hamlet (see Photo 3). Most of the buildings are one to three stories in height and constructed of a combination of brick and wood in historic styles. There are a few businesses set back

from the roadway by parking lot areas. The businesses within the hamlet include small professional offices, restaurants, retail stores, gas stations and a few larger businesses including a hardware store with a two-story barn and warehouse appearance. There are also a number of residences located within the hamlet, including two- to three-story Victorian-style and Colonial-style homes that are further setback from the roadway (see Photo 4).



Photo 4. Hamlet of Amenia

Lake Amenia Road and Broadway Avenue Neighborhoods



Photo 5. Residential Neighborhoods

Situated between the project site and the center of the hamlet, are the Lake Amenia Road and Broadway Avenues residential neighborhoods (see Photo 5). These neighborhoods are fairly densely settled, with single-family homes of various styles including contemporary, ranch and colonial, which range in height from one- to 2½ - stories.

Route 44 West



Photo 6. Route 44 West

North of the project site, the community character is rural with vistas from Route 44 of horse farms and open fields surrounding single-family houses. Along Route 44, as you approach the hamlet, there are pockets of densely settled ranch and farmhouse style single-family homes mixed with businesses (see Photos 6 and 7). The residences are one- to two-stories in height and smaller in scale. The businesses are either in buildings that resemble the residences or in warehouse-style buildings that are larger in scale. Similar patterns exist along Route 22 directly south of the hamlet.

Route 22 South

South of the project site, along Route 22, the roadway is lined by open fields with single-family houses sparsely settled (see Photo 8). Further south, there is a sand and gravel pit operation, additional open farm fields, and a Metro-North Train



Photo 8. Route 22 South



Photo 7. Route 44 West

station. The sand and gravel operation is set back from the road, but the exposed earth pit is clearly visible from the roadway. The train station is set back from the road by a small grass strip and the train tracks. The station contains a small open platform with a roof that is equivalent in height to a one-story building. To the north of the platform, in a fenced in area, are office and maintenance buildings for the train station. The buildings include two manufactured trailer-like buildings connected by a peaked roof, open breezeway, and a smaller shed-like building.

3.19.2 Potential Impacts

The proposed project will introduce single-family homes and townhomes onto the project site. Residential development in the Town generally consists of single-family homes; townhomes are not a common residential form in Amenia. However, given that the site is generally self-contained and set among varying topography, the individual residences and buildings will not be highly visible to where they would seem out of character with other existing homes in the immediate area. In addition, the anticipated seasonal use of the proposed residences is in keeping with the long tradition of seasonal residency in Amenia. As described below, the architectural details and site layout of the proposed project have been designed to fit in with Amenia's existing rural character and natural beauty.

The architectural style of the proposed hotel, houses, and townhouses will be similar throughout the project site and natural materials will be used for the exterior of the buildings as much as possible. This would allow the buildings to blend with the surrounding natural environment and be less visibly obtrusive.

The scale and height of the buildings within the proposed project will vary. The hotel buildings will extend up to four stories in height, but due to the placement of the buildings within the topography of the site, only three stories will be visible from the front entrance. In addition to the natural materials used in the design of

the building, the numerous windows will be a prominent characteristic of the hotel buildings.

The single-family houses will be located on the main site along the western edge of the valley near the base of the hillside and within the tree line. This placement will reduce the visibility of these structures. The overall architectural style of the project will be carried through to the design of the single-family homes with the use of natural materials and architectural details. The houses will extend to 2½ stories in height with square footage ranging from approximately 3,000 sq ft to 5,000 sq ft.

The townhouse units will be located throughout the project site in clusters. On the main site, the townhouse units will be located along the eastern side of the golf course and to the north of the golf course near Route 44. Additional townhouse clusters will be located on the portion of the project site located to the north of Route 44. Units will have an average size of 2,000 sq ft and a height of 2 to 3 stories.

Due to the design and placement of all of the buildings on the project site, the buildings will not have an adverse impact on community character. The natural materials used to construct the buildings will blend with the surrounding natural environment. The placement of the buildings utilizes the existing topography of the hillsides surrounding the valley as well as the rolling hills within the valley to minimize the visibility and perceived scale of the buildings and blend with the open space character of the area. In addition, decorative landscaping and screening will be installed within the developed areas of the project site to reduce the visibility of the proposed project from surrounding areas.

Upon completion of the project, large areas of the project site will remain largely forested or as open fields similar to much of the surrounding area, including the 230-acre hillside and ridge in the western portion of the site.

3.19.3 Proposed Mitigation Measures

The proposed project has been designed to be in harmony with the landscape. To the extent possible, existing topography is utilized to minimize the visibility of the proposed project. This helps to maintain consistency with the existing character of the area. The extensive open space areas preserved on the project site are consistent with the surrounding community character as well. In addition, the materials used for construction of the buildings will be specially selected to allow the buildings to be visually unobtrusive, in harmony with the surrounding wooded hillsides and open space character of the community.