

N. VISUAL RESOURCES

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The purpose of this Visual Resource Assessment is to identify areas of significant scenic or aesthetic value within the study area and to evaluate the impact development would have on these visual resources based on a twenty (20) year planning period. Significant scenic and historic sites delineated in the Town of Colonie Land Use Management Program, Technical Report (LUMAC 1988); Albany Pine Bush Preserve: Protection and Project Review Implementation Guidelines and Final Environmental Impact Statement (Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission 1996); and State & National Register for Historic Places have been included in this evaluation.

The methodology used in this Visual Resource Assessment was adapted from *Visual Impact Assessment for Highway Projects* (United States Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration 1981). Evaluation techniques were based upon those found in *Aesthetics and Visual Resource Management for Highways* (Jones & Jones 1977).

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The landscape setting for the study area is characterized by very flat to gently rolling hills. The topography ranges in elevation from approximately 290 feet above mean sea level (AMSL) to approximately 400 feet AMSL. A large portion of the study area has already been developed for residential, commercial, industrial and recreational uses. Hardwoods, mixed forests, open agricultural land and mowed lawns comprise the majority of vegetative cover interspersed throughout these developed areas. Numerous wetlands are located within the study area, particularly within the Lisha Kill floodplain and its

tributaries. Approximately 350 acres of undeveloped land in the study area comprise a unique ecological zone of pitch pine and shrub oak trees which is protected under the Albany Pine Bush Preserve.

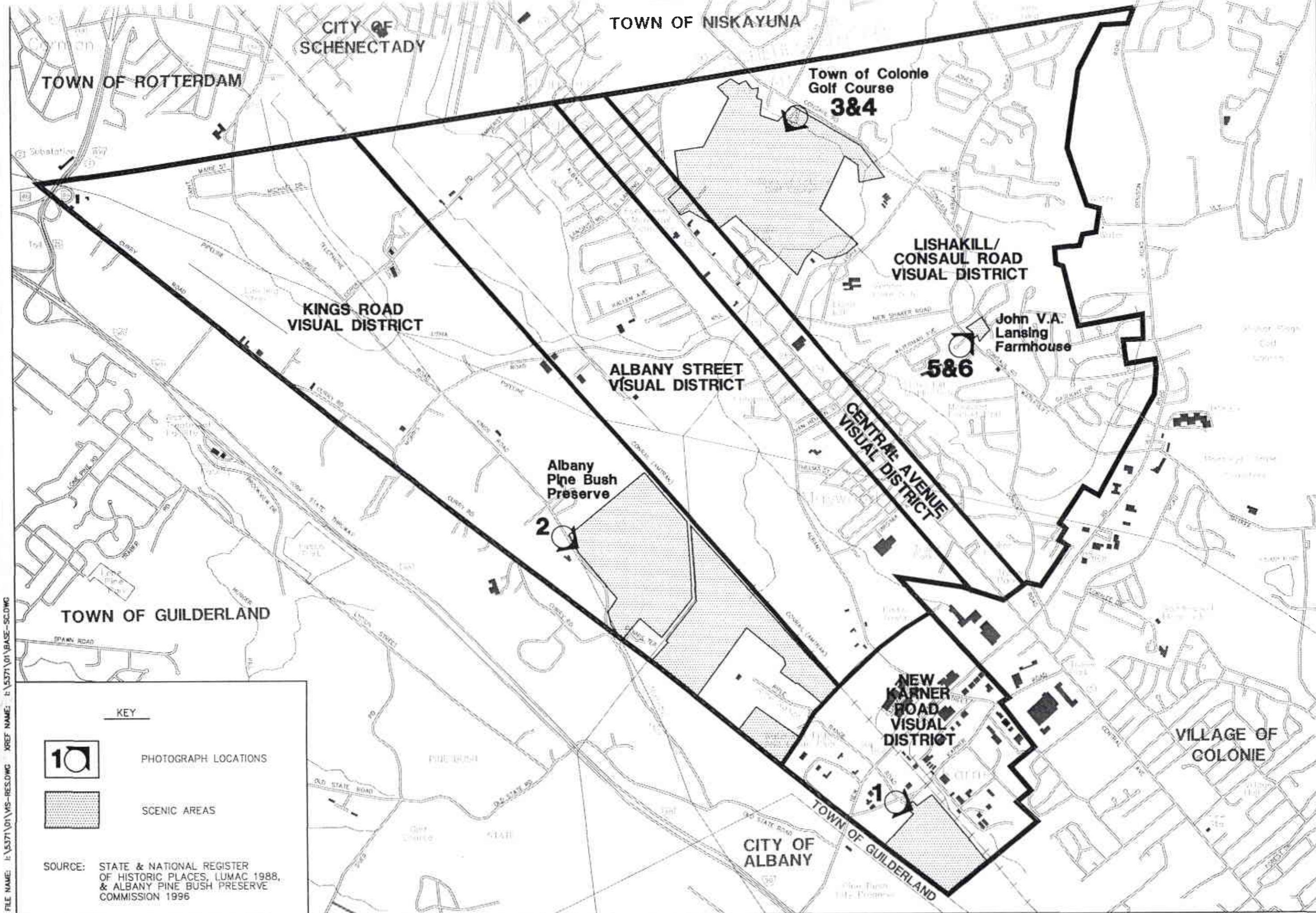
Visual Districts

A Visual District is defined as those parts of the viewshed that have distinctly different visual or spatial character. Five distinct Visual Districts have been identified within the study area based on existing land forms, vegetation, and land use patterns. The Visual Districts are delineated in Figure II-N-1 and are defined briefly as follows:

- Kings Road Corridor - This district is located in the western most portion of the study area and primarily consists of commercial, industrial and open space. Residential land uses are scattered throughout the area, although most residences are found in small pockets in the northern corner of this district.


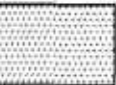
The Albany Pine Bush Preserve and other substantial areas of undeveloped lands are found within this district concentrated along Kings Road. The preserve lands are generally bounded by the railroad corridor to the east and Kings Road. Kings Road is an historic corridor according to the Town of Colonie Environmental Inventory (Town of Colonie 1977).

- New Karner Road Corridor - This district is located in the southern most portion of the study area and primarily consists of commercial and industrial land uses such as warehouses, distribution centers, and



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KEY

-  PHOTOGRAPH LOCATIONS
-  SCENIC AREAS

SOURCE: STATE & NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES, LUMAC 1988, & ALBANY PINE BUSH PRESERVE COMMISSION 1996



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VISUAL RESOURCES

**LISHA KILL - KINGS ROAD AREA
 GENERIC ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

FIGURE NO. II-N-1 SCALE: 1" = 2000'

commercial/office parks. Most of the undeveloped areas especially away from the main roadways consist of nature preserve lands. Limited open space is found in this district.

- Albany Street Corridor - This district is located between the Kings Road Corridor and the Central Avenue Corridor. The area consists primarily of residential and open space land uses. There are several subdivisions within this district, which create smaller interior visual pockets. The areas surrounding the subdivisions consist largely of forest and open space. Other land uses include both commercial and institutional.
- Central Avenue Corridor - This district is located in the center of the study area and generally follows Route 5 or Central Avenue. The area consists of commercial and industrial land uses fronting along Route 5. Over the years, Central Avenue has undergone strip commercial development, which presently dominates the visual environment in this district. However, other, less abundant land uses, such as residential, and open space, are found adjacent to Route 5.
- Lisha Kill/Consaul Road Corridor - This district is located in the eastern most portion of the study area and primarily consists of residential and open space land uses. Street patterns are more curvilinear in nature and help to create a distinct visual boundary.

Significant Viewshed Areas

Within the five Visual Districts mentioned above, three contain viewshed areas identified

as significant. Significant viewshed areas are determined based upon their scenic and aesthetic value. Criterion which determine scenic and aesthetic value include: open or panoramic views undisturbed by manmade structures, unique ecological, geographical or other natural environments, and areas with an historic architectural character or style which remain intact and capture a unique visual environment. These three significant viewshed areas and corresponding photographs are identified in Figure II-N-1 and are defined briefly as follows:

- Albany Pine Bush Preserve - This is a unique ecological zone composed of pitch pine and scrub oak trees. It is known as the Albany Pine Bush Preserve and is located within the Kings Road Visual District and the New Karner Road Visual District. The portion of the Preserve within the study area encompasses approximately 350 acres of dense vegetation. The Pine Bush Preserve is an aesthetic resource according to the Albany Pine Bush Preserve: Protection and Review Implementation Guidelines and Final Environmental Impact Statement (Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission 1996).
- Town of Colonie Golf Course - The Town of Colonie Golf Course is located in the Lisha Kill/Consaul Road Visual District and bounded by Route 5 and Consaul Road. It provides approximately 180 acres of open space within the Town and a challenging 27 hole course. The Town Golf Course is an aesthetic resource according to the Town of Colonie Land Use Management Program, Technical Report (LUMAC 1988).

- John V.A. Lansing Farmhouse - The John V.A. Lansing Farmhouse is located within the Lisha Kill/Consaul Road Visual District. The house, its outbuildings, and the Billsen Cemetery are situated on a four acre wooded lot, which retains part of its original farm like setting. Originally, the farmhouse, its outbuildings and cemetery were located on a 15-acre lot. However, in recent years the area behind the farmhouse has been developed for the Partridge Rub Subdivision. The farmhouse, composed of multi-staged buildings, reflects the changing requirements of the farm, periods of prosperity and the expression of fashions in architecture. The architecture of the main building is representative of the Greek Revival style and was built circa 1830. The John V.A. Lansing Farmhouse is listed on the State and National Register for Historic Places.

IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Development within the twenty (20) year planning period is likely to have an impact on the visual and aesthetic character of the study area. However, with close cooperation between the Town of Colonie and potential developers, the implementation of sensitive design can minimize adverse impacts to the visual environment and the three significant viewshed areas previously identified.

Since the three viewsheds are susceptible to adverse visual impacts resulting from future development, guidelines for protecting and enhancing the aesthetic character of these areas should be developed and specifically tailored to mitigate the visual impacts of project

development under the Projected Growth Development Scenario. General mitigation measures that can be implemented include:

- Limit the number of curb cuts along major highway corridors.
- Encourage vehicular circulation of interior subdivision roadways in residential areas that are designed to follow existing drainage patterns, minimize disturbance to natural vegetation, allow for buffer zones and maximize the existing topography to create more imaginative and sustainable designs.
- Encourage vehicular and pedestrian circulation of interior subdivision roadways that avoid typical grid type layout patterns.
- Encourage cluster type development where appropriate so as to protect existing vegetation, scenic views, open spaces and natural drainage courses.
- Encourage the development of overlay zones, specifically in those three areas delineated as scenic. An overlay district, intended to protect and preserve specific areas within an existing zoning district, include special design considerations and recommendations.
- Encourage the use of buffer zones between residential and commercial land uses and along major roadways. Also encourage the use of natural vegetative cover, as well as additional vegetative cover to enhance existing vegetation in these buffer zones.

- Require all new development to install electric, telephone and cable television utilities underground.
- Require a buffer between streets and parking facilities for commercial and industrial land uses. Where possible, encourage the location of parking lots behind buildings. Additionally, screen parking lots through the use of berms, fencing and landscape materials.
- The use of Design Elements Review by the Planning Board to provide harmony with the natural environment and in keeping with the character of the surrounding neighborhood, as provided for in Site Plan Code Chapter 192.
- Require specific setbacks in commercially zoned corridors so that the general open expanse of the roadway would not be cluttered by visual distractions such as signage, parking lots, and buildings.
- Limit building heights, scale, density, and architectural styles to enhance and compliment the overall character of the various visual districts.

In addition to the mitigation measures mentioned above, some specific mitigation measures in the significant viewshed areas that should be implemented include:

Albany Pine Bush Preserve

This natural and scenic ecological zone is of vital importance to the community for several reasons. It provides the community with a rich fabric of indigenous plant species unique to the region and enhances the overall scenic quality of the landscape. Development around this area should be especially sensitive

to the aesthetic character of the Albany Pine Bush Preserve and its surroundings. Maintaining the appropriate setbacks and vegetative buffer zones would help to maintain the visual integrity of this area.

Street buffers should be required to naturally screen buildings from roadways by retaining a substantial amount of existing vegetation along these roadways. In open space areas or areas that are not densely vegetated, additional vegetative screening should be planted. Preferable vegetative screening would include those species indigenous to the area, especially evergreens which provide year round screening. Building materials and their colors should enhance rather than contrast those of the natural visual environment, including neutrals, blues, greens, brick reds and tans.

Town of Colonie Golf Course

Any development occurring in this viewshed area could have significant visual impacts, if adequate open space preservation techniques are not employed. Development in this area should be located along the roadways and heavily screened with vegetation from any part of the golf course. Residential and other development should not infringe on the visual environment of the golf course, thus hindering the open views of this area. Therefore, clustering any residential lots along Lisha Kill Road or Consaul Road abutting the golf course, and using native vegetation in its landscaping is encouraged. Screening of this facility would minimize the adverse visual impacts to the area. Building heights should not exceed the general tree line.

John V.A. Lansing Farmhouse

The scenic and historic attributes of this four acre parcel play a critical role in maintaining the visual character of landscapes past.

Development in this area should maintain appropriate setbacks, open space, building heights and buffer zones in order to avoid compromising the visual quality of this existing historic landscape. Building heights should not exceed those typical for the area in an effort to retain the historical views from this parcel. Additionally, new development

should not encroach on the visual boundaries of this parcel, thus providing ample vegetative screening and open space. An adequate vegetative screen would include native plant species, especially evergreens which would create a visual barrier.



Photo 1 -View of the Albany Pine Bush Preserve from New Karner Road.



Photo 2 - View of the Albany Pine Bush Preserve from Kings Road.



Photo 3 -View of the Town of Colonie Golf Course from Consaul Road.



Photo 4 - View of the Town of Colonie Golf Course from Consaul Road.



Photo 5 -View of the John V.A. Lansing Farmhouse from Consaul Road.



Photo 6 - View of the John V.A. Lansing Farmhouse from Consaul Road.