

2. REGIONAL CONTEXT

2.1 TOWN HISTORY

The area that is today the Town of North Castle was originally settled by the Native American tribe the Siwanoy, who were part of the Wappinger Confederacy. Europeans began settling the area around 1640 through a combination of British land grants and the purchase of large parcels from the Native American chiefs. Settlers from the Massachusetts and Connecticut areas moved into the eastern part of the area and Quakers from Long Island and nearby Rye, New York, inhabited the area known today as Armonk. The name “North Castle” stems from an old Indian fortification that was located on the hill where the IBM corporate headquarters now resides.

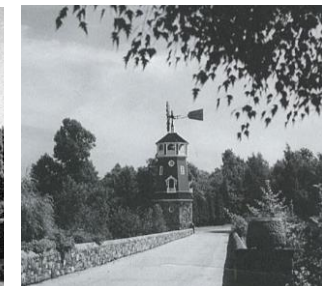
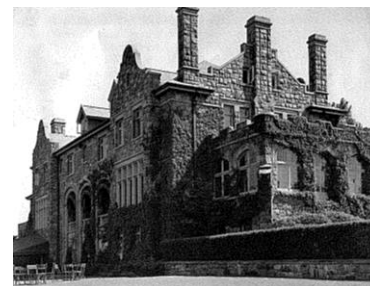
During the American Revolution, George Washington established his headquarters in 1776, 1778 and 1781 at the Miller House – still located on Virginia Road in North White Plains – and the Battle of White Plains was fought in 1779 in that area. The hills of North Castle created a strategic advantage for the American troops, who would fire down at the British Army. The battle marked a turning point in the Revolution, as bitter weather helped Washington’s troops halt the British advance.

In 1788, North Castle officially became a town of New York when the State passed an act that divided its counties into multiple towns. The town was originally much larger than it is today and included the current Town of New Castle, which was created three years later. Though the location of Town meetings in the early years is unknown, from 1791 to 1855, they were held in Smith’s Tavern on Bedford Road in Armonk, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and serves as the home of the North Castle Historical Society.

Through the mid-19th century, most of North Castle’s residents were farmers, focused on produce (especially potatoes and

apples) and dairy products. From 1850 to 1880, the Town was a center of shoemaking, which ultimately employed some 300 households in North Castle. In the latter part of the century, shoemaking was taken over by factories, and the Town shed much of its population, decreasing from a high of 2,800 during the Civil War to 1,200 in 1910 – roughly the size at its founding.

In the early 20th century, wealthy New York City business people discovered North Castle as an ideal location for country estates, with its rural setting and rail connection to Manhattan, and these estates provided jobs for local residents.



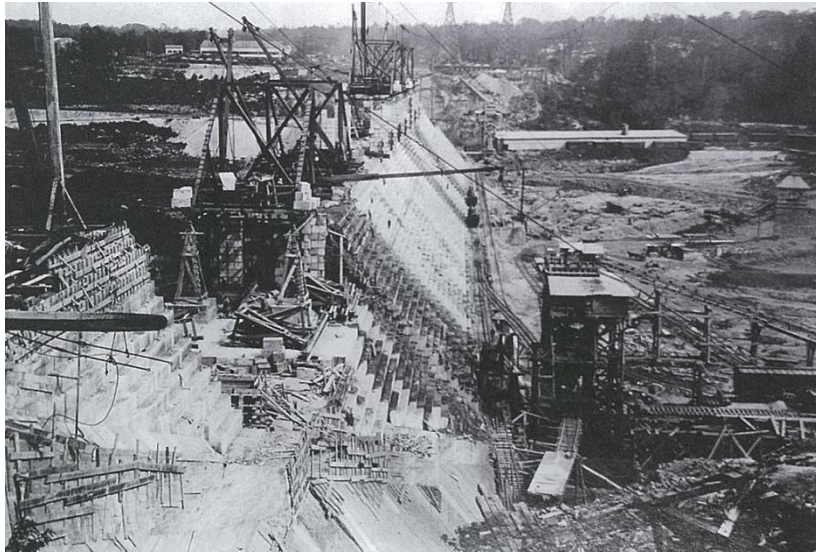
The Wampus Estate (top), former Watkins Estate (later Westchester Embassy Club, bottom left), and Windmill Farm (bottom right).

Source: Images of America: North Castle, Sharon Tomback and the North Castle Historical Society.

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From 1909 to 1917, the Kensico Dam and Reservoir were built in the location of the hamlet of Kensico, to provide fresh water to New York City. The construction brought in many immigrants from Europe – particularly Italy – who specialized in masonry and settled in North White Plains.

After World War II, North Castle's population grew substantially, and the arrival of IBM in 1964 heralded further growth, and the Town began to resemble its modern form. The completion in 1968 of I-684 between White Plains and Armonk created additional demand for both office and residential uses.¹



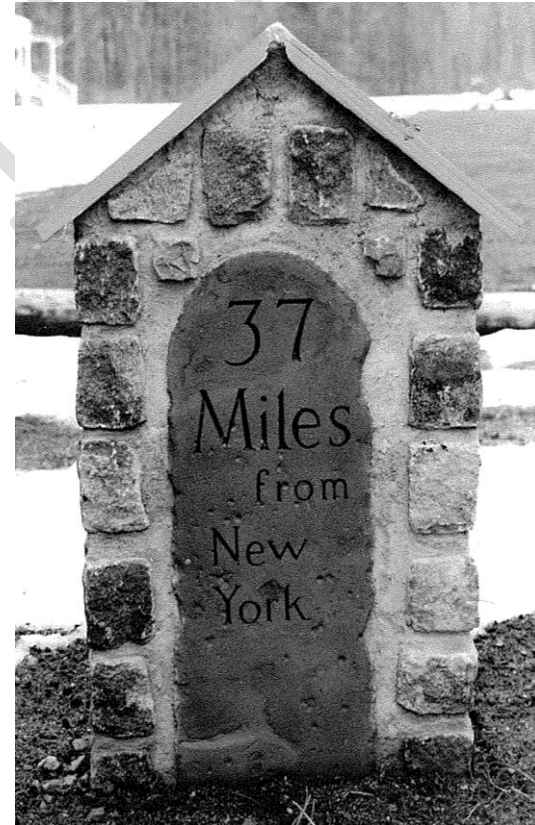
Kensico Dam Construction between 1913 and 1917.

Source: *Images of America: North Castle*, Sharon Tomback and the North Castle Historical Society.

¹ Derived from "From Smith's Tavern to I.B.M.: North Castle Celebrates 250 Years" (*New York Times*, Betsy Brown, June 1, 1986); North Castle 1996 Comprehensive Plan Update; and 2016 North Castle Planning Base Studies.

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North Castle comprises approximately 26 square miles in area and is located in the east-central Westchester County (see Figure 1). The Town is divided geographically by the Kensico Reservoir, with most of its area lying north of the reservoir, but the most densely populated area found to the south.



Historic mile marker 37, located at Smith's Tavern on Bedford Road.

Source: *Images of America: North Castle*, Sharon Tomback and the North Castle Historical Society.

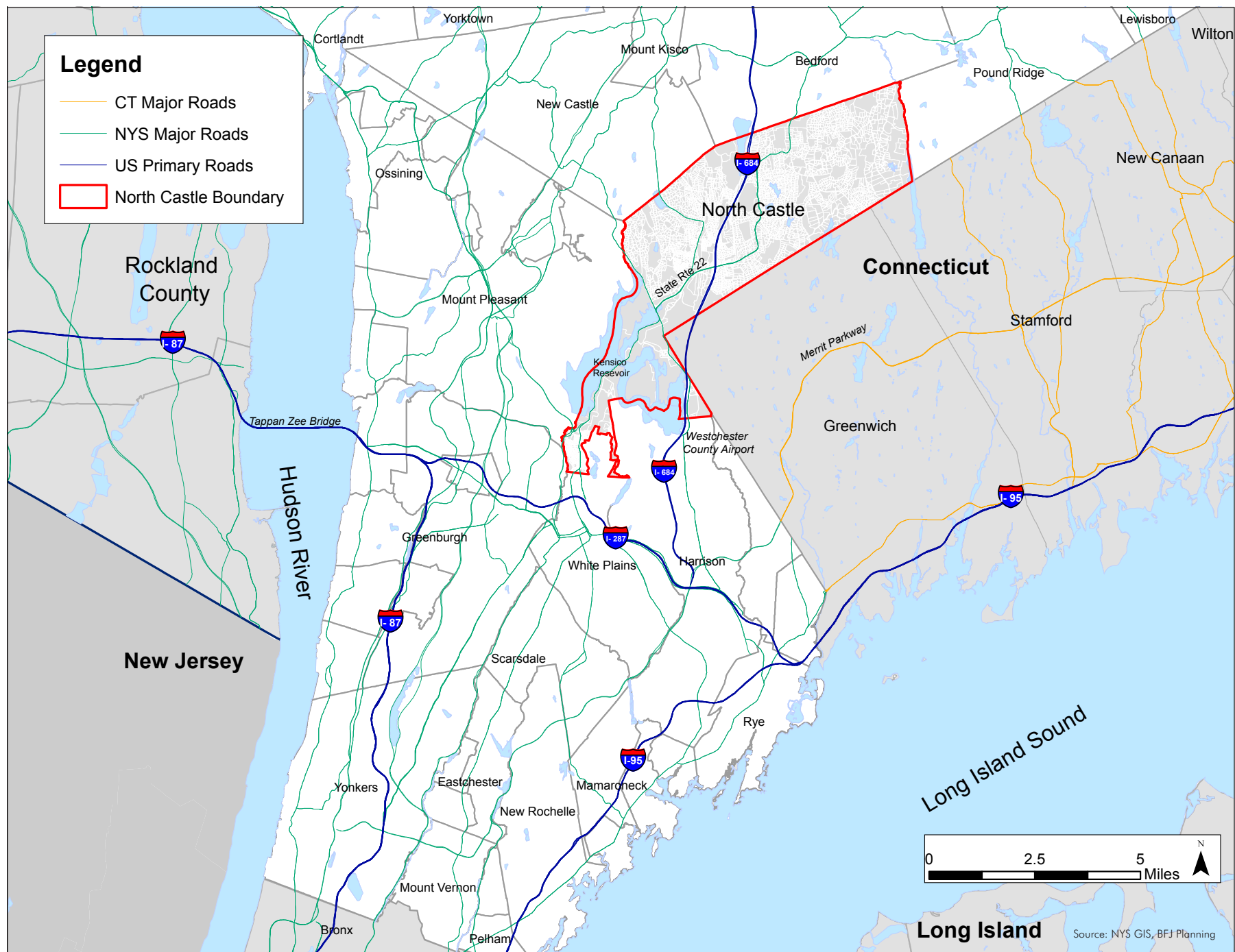


Figure 1: Regional Location Map

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The Town is bordered by 10 other municipalities. The City of White Plains is to the south, the Towns of Greenburgh and Mount Pleasant are to the west, the Town of New Castle is to the northwest, the Town of Bedford is to the northwest; the Town of Pound Ridge is to the northeast, the Town/Village of Harrison and the Village of Rye Brook are to the south; and in Connecticut, the Town of Greenwich and City of Stamford are to the southeast.

North Castle is well-served by two regional north-south roadways: New York State Route 22, which links to White Plains to the south and to Bedford to the north, and I-684, which terminates south of North Castle at I-287/Hutchinson River Parkway and extends north to I-84 at Brewster in Putnam County. A small portion of the Bronx River Parkway connects North White Plains to I-287 at the Kensico Dam.

The closest commuter rail access is Metro-North's North White Plains station just west of Haarlem Avenue in White Plains.

2.3 LOCAL CONTEXT

North Castle's character is largely derived from its three hamlet areas: North White Plains and Armonk in the western portion, and Banksville and surrounding rural areas to the east (see Figure 2).

North White Plains

Located in the southwest corner of the Town, North White Plains is the most dense and semi-urban portion of North Castle. Well-established residential neighborhoods are served by water and sewer in North White Plains and public sewer in the small residential area of Quarry Heights. The Town is exploring

installing public water service along Old Orchard Street with the Town/Village of Harrison. An industrial zone along Lafayette Avenue and Virginia Road has a variety of commercial businesses, while a mix of retail establishments are found along Route 22 into the City of White Plains. North White Plains is physically separated from the rest of North Castle by the Kensico Reservoir and New York City Watershed lands. Due to its geography and history, the area is at times more associated with neighboring White Plains, the nearby Metro-North railroad station and the hamlet of Valhalla in Mount Pleasant.

Armonk

The central portion of North Castle, stretching north from the New York City Watershed lands, includes areas near the Westchester County Airport; the mixed-use hamlet of Armonk, office and commercial areas close to the hamlet; and the surrounding residential developments, subdivisions and open spaces. Armonk benefits from its access to I-684 and the widened section of Route 22 between Route 120 and I-684, which has led to the development of several large office parks and commercial developments. The immediate "downtown" area is served by water and sewer infrastructure. The recent completion of the Armonk Square developed has created a central focus for the hamlet.

Banksville (Eastern District)

The far eastern portion of the Town is characterized by low-density residential development, large undeveloped areas zoned for rural residential development and various protected open spaces in the form of nature preserves and watershed properties. Several commercial uses are clustered along Bedford-Banksville Road, but the area is not served by water or sewer. Banksville is split between New York and Connecticut; the area's shopping center is across the state line in Greenwich.

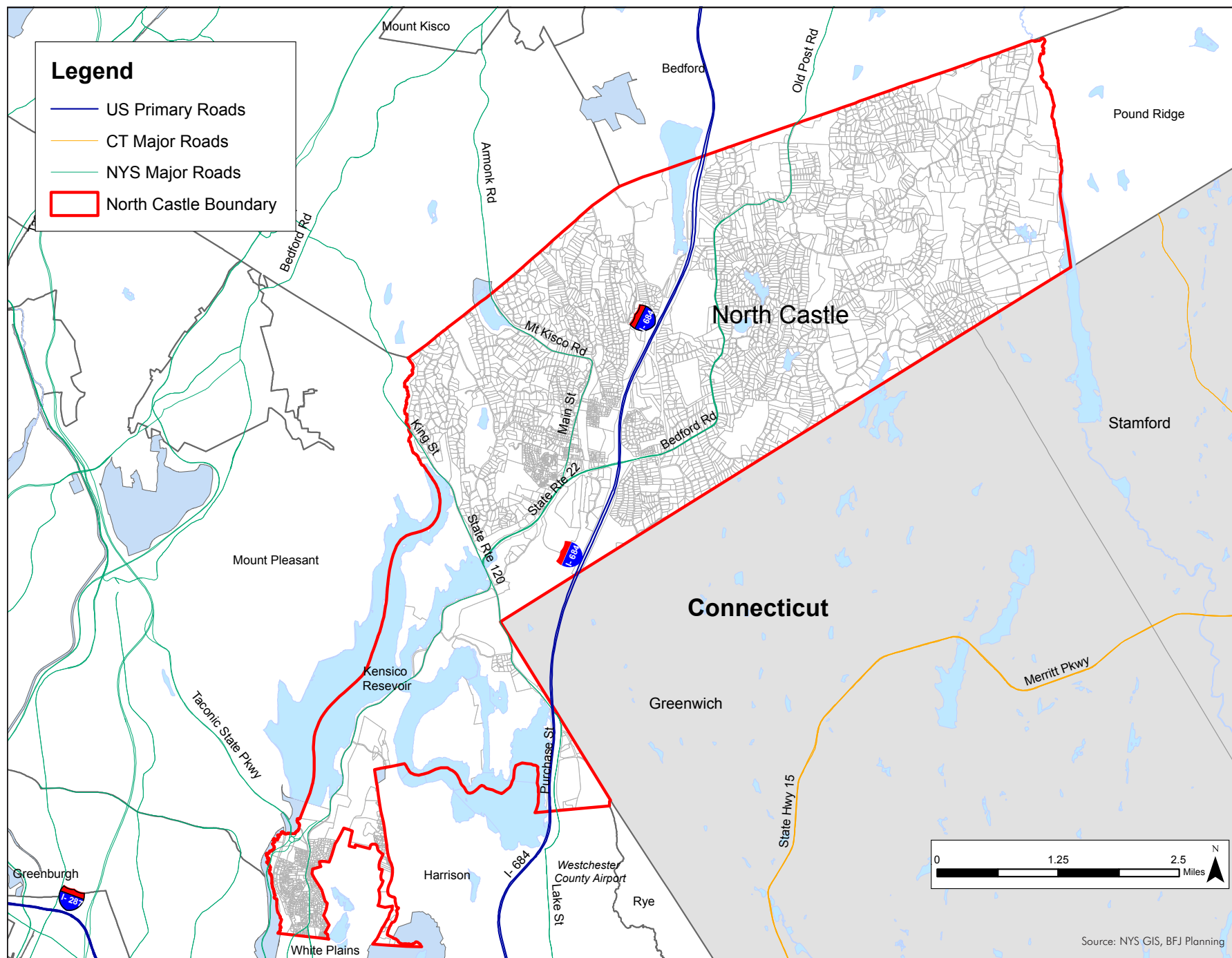


Figure 2: Local Context

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2.4 PLANNING CONTEXT

Relevant Regional Plans and Policies

A community's growth and development patterns are shaped most directly by the land-use and planning decisions made by its local government and by the tax rates and budget actions. However, many local concerns, such as air and water quality, traffic conditions and economic growth, have impacts that reach beyond municipal boundaries. These can be most effectively addressed when the regional context is taken into consideration. This broader outlook for growth and development is provided by vision and comprehensive plans issued by county and other municipal governments, and sometimes inter-municipal agreements. For North Castle, a number of plans developed at a regional and municipal level are relevant, including the following:

Westchester 2025: Plan Together

In 2006, the Westchester County Planning Board created *Westchester 2025*, a Web-based strategy framework for long-range planning. *Westchester 2025* is meant to help create a single regional vision, and to assist the County planning board in advising on capital spending and incorporating the County's perspective in municipal planning and zoning referrals. For North Castle, a key tool of *Westchester 2025* is the zoning build-out analysis developed by the Westchester County Department of Planning, which



provides an important understanding of potential development and density. The North Castle Planning Base Studies effort that preceded preparation of this Comprehensive Plan was also a part of *Westchester 2025*.

The County's 1996 plan, *Patterns for Westchester: The Land and the People*, organizes the county's municipalities, transportation network and natural environment as centers, corridors and open spaces, respectively. The premise of *Patterns* is that existing centers, if nurtured by necessary infrastructure, can support commercial and residential growth, and that existing strip development along corridors can be reshaped to capture some benefits of centers. *Patterns* identifies both Armonk and North White Plains as local centers, and Banksville as a hamlet center.

Regional Transportation Planning

The New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC) is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for New York City, Long Island and the lower Hudson Valley. NYMTC undertakes studies for transportation improvements in the region, forecasts future conditions and needs and makes decisions on the use of federal transportation funds.

NYMTC's 2014-2040 Regional Transportation Plan, *A Shared Vision for a Sustainable Region*, adopted in 2013, includes several projects relevant to North Castle. The most significant of these relate to the I-287 improvements connected with the Tappan Zee Bridge replacement; various improvements to I-684 and I-84 north of the Town; and infrastructure improvements along the Metro-North Harlem Line, with planned station improvements including at the North White Plains station).

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Regional Watershed Planning

North Castle's natural and built environment is largely defined by its surface water patterns, including rivers, lakes and reservoirs. The most significant of these is the Kensico Reservoir system, which encompasses much of the southwestern portion of the Town and separates the North White Plains hamlet from the rest of North Castle. The reservoir provides water for New York City, as well as a portion of North Castle, and development within the City's watershed lands is under the jurisdiction of the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (NYCDEP).

Most of North Castle lies within either the Bronx River or Inland Long Island Sound watersheds, which encompass 31% and 67%, respectively, of the Town's land area. Significant study has been undertaken in recent years in these watershed areas.

In 2007, the Westchester County Department of Planning released a watershed plan, the *Bronx River Watershed Assessment and Management Report*, which focused on improving water quality in the Bronx River and its tributaries by controlling the volume of polluted stormwater runoff. In 2011, the Byram Watershed Coalition published the *Byram River Watershed Management Plan* to identify strategies that address issues facing this sub-watershed of the Inland Long Island Sound watershed, including non-point source pollution, flooding and habitat degradation.

More recently, in 2016, the Mianus River Gorge advocacy group commissioned a study, the *Mianus River Upper Watershed Analysis*, to outline recommendations for management of groundwater resources in this part of the Inland Long Island Sound watershed.

Finally, the East of Hudson Watershed Corporation, a local development corporation established by the municipalities of northern Westchester, Putnam and Dutchess Counties within the New York City watershed, implements projects to reduce the levels of phosphorous in stormwater runoff in the portion of the City's watershed east of the Hudson River. The corporation's efforts are aimed at achieving compliance with the requirements for phosphorous reduction and stormwater management established by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC).

Each of these plans, studies and strategies recognizes that drainage patterns cross municipal boundaries, and that localized planning decisions can have impacts on water resources throughout the region. Recommendations from each are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

Hudson River Valley Greenway

The Hudson River Valley Greenway was created to advance New York's commitment to the preservation, enhancement and development of the scenic, natural, historic, cultural and recreational resources of the Hudson River Valley. The Greenway covers most municipalities of Westchester County, including North Castle.

By Local Law No. 10 of 2006, the Town of North Castle adopted the Westchester County Greenway Compact Plan, establishing it as a Greenway Community. Participating communities agree to ensure that local laws are consistent with regional planning efforts, and in turn are eligible for grants and other funding.

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Local Planning

Through the years, the Town of North Castle has prepared and adopted plans and studies on land use planning, infrastructure, natural resources and open space. Several of the more recent and significant of these efforts are summarized below.

North Castle Comprehensive Plan Update (1996)

This extensive document represented the first time the Town had undertaken a comprehensive plan in more than 20 years. The 1996 Plan incorporated a detailed set of baseline analyses and a Development Plan outlining proposed land uses for the Town, largely reflecting the then-existing land-use pattern. Key changes from the prior (1974) plan included reducing residential development potential, linking trails and bikeways and creating design standards for the hamlets. The Town Board has periodically revised the Plan to reflect changes to existing and recommended land uses.

Armonk Main Street Planning and Design Study (2001)

This study aimed to address a range of issues affecting Main Street in Armonk, including a need for more parking, impacts of future anticipated development, traffic and pedestrian circulation and community character. Recommendations included reconfiguring on-street parking and adding off-street parking, implementing parking management strategies, roadway and intersection improvements, enhancing pedestrian connections to adjacent residential areas and increasing floor area ratio (FAR) to accommodate two-story development.

Open Space Study Committee Report (2003)

This report identified protection of water resources (groundwater, aquifers and reservoirs) as the most important goal for future open space preservation in North Castle. Based on an inventory and ranking of major (10+ acres) open space

resources in the Town, the report recommended further efforts to assure some level of protection for undesignated spaces.

Hamlet Design Guidelines (2011)

This report provides design standards and recommendations for North Castle's three hamlet areas: North White Plains, Armonk and Banksville, in order to maintain their character and aesthetics. The guidelines were proposed to be incorporated into a new Hamlet Overlay District that would encourage mixed-use development and design elements to create a sense of place. The overlay district has not been established.

Planning in Neighboring Municipalities

Several of North Castle's adjacent municipalities have engaged in comprehensive planning efforts in the past decade, while other plans have not been updated in some time:

- White Plains (2006)
- Greenburgh (2016)
- Mount Pleasant (1987)
- New Castle (update in process)
- Town of Bedford (2002)
- Pound Ridge (2010)
- Harrison (2013)
- Rye Brook (2014)
- Greenwich, CT (2009)
- Stamford, CT (2014)

Although the issues and opportunities examined in each of these plans differ based on local priorities, some common themes emerge. Some of these include strengthening downtown and hamlet areas through smart growth and transit-oriented development (TOD) policies; facilitating the reuse of

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obsolete corporate campuses; providing for a greater diversity of housing options to serve people of varied incomes and ages; and preserving and highlighting residential, cultural and historic community assets. Many of these planning strategies developed by North Castle's neighbors may be considered to address some of the Town's issues as well.

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