

CHAPTER 5: OUR BUILT ENVIRONMENT



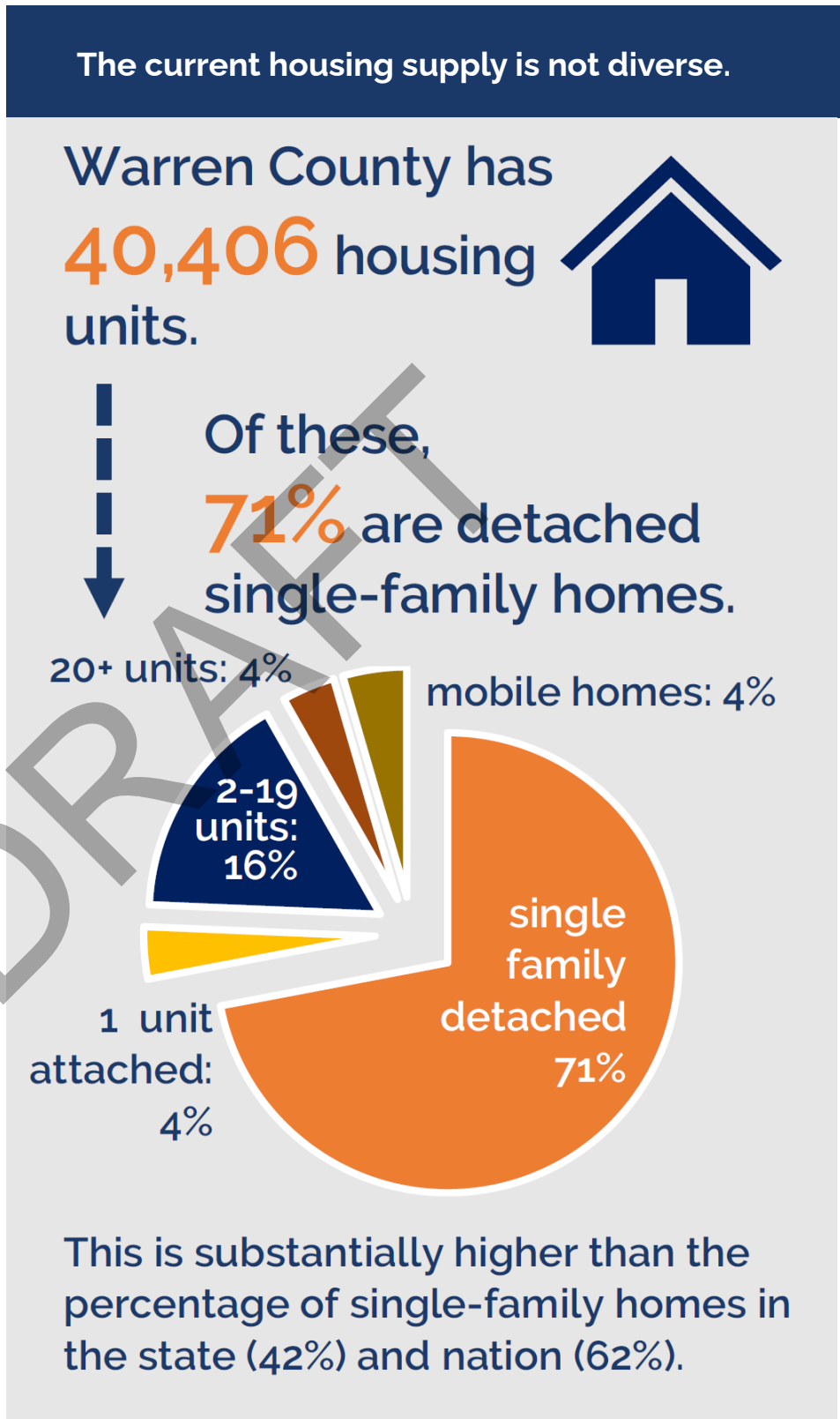
Our Built Environment is organized into three sections: Housing, Infrastructure, and Transportation. These three facets of the built environment go a long way towards determining where people will live, where businesses can locate or expand, and how residents and visitors will move across the County.

HOUSING

Housing is currently a central focus of community conversations at the Federal, State, and local levels. Warren County and the city, village, and towns within the County have invested in understanding current housing conditions, the existing and future gaps in its housing offerings, and the steps that can be taken to fill those gaps to create safe, affordable, and desirable housing for current and future residents.

HOUSING SUPPLY

According to the 2023 Housing Needs Study of Warren County, NY, the County has 40,406 housing units. The current housing supply of Warren County is not diverse: 71 percent of housing is comprised of detached single-family homes. This is substantially higher than the percentage of single-family homes in the State (42 percent) and nation (62 percent). Most occupied housing units are also owner-occupied. As of 2022, approximately 70.2 percent of occupied housing units in Warren County were owner-occupied, above the national average of 64.6 percent. Glens Falls is the only city/town located within the County where there is a fairly even distribution of renter and owner households (among the general population).



WHAT IS THE ROLE OF WARREN COUNTY GOVERNMENT IN HOUSING?

Warren County currently plays a limited role in housing today. Recent housing-related initiatives undertaken by Warren County Planning have included adopting a new Fair Housing Plan in 2022 and completing the Housing Needs Study in 2023. Also falling within the purview of Warren County is the Warren County Countryside Adult Home in Warrensburg. This 48-bed public, non-profit, Adult Residential Care Facility is licensed by the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) and falls under the direction of Warren County's Department of Social Services (DSS). Fifty percent of the facility's funding comes from the County, with the remainder coming from the State through reimbursements. The County is currently in the process of evaluating how and via what mechanisms to engage in addressing housing needs. This is a priority that has been identified by the Board of Supervisors as an important next step following completion of the 2023 Housing Needs Study.

Previously, the County played a larger role in home rehabilitation. From 1977 through 2010, the County Planning Department administered approximately \$15.5 million of awards to rehabilitate owner-occupied housing or to assist first time home buyers. These programs assisted 1,954 individual residences and provided an additional 66 units of new construction for lower income home buyers. Before ending the program in 2010, the new home ownership programs leveraged \$3.3 million of private financing and \$1.8 million of grant funding.

Nearly a third of the housing stock in all of Warren County was built prior to 1950, and 63 percent of homes in Glens Falls were built before 1950. This is generally similar to other counties in the region and State but is substantially older than that of the nation (16.5 percent built pre-1950). Homes built prior to 1950 are likely at or beyond their lifespan absent substantial repair. Since 2010, the County has added 1,680 new housing units, an increase of 4.3 percent. This is above the North Country region (2.4 percent), but below the Capital Region (6.4 percent), State (5.9 percent), and national (9.2 percent) increases. Looking ahead, most planned development in Bolton and Queensbury is owner-occupied homes, while proposed development in Glens Falls and Lake George is primarily for renter units. Minimal activity is in the pipeline in the northern part of the County.

APA regulations limit the areas within which new development can occur; however, there are ways to increase housing opportunities within areas under local land use control. Most of Warren County is within the Adirondack Park. Within the Park, development potential is generally limited outside of the hamlets, due to State ownership and APA land use regulations; within the hamlets, communities have control over local land use regulations and the APA encourages increasing density. The Warren County Planning Department has begun evaluating zoning and infrastructure limitations for properties in the County's hamlets within the Park and communities outside the blue line to better understand development potential.

Local resistance to change can also be a hinderance to housing development. Recent housing development proposals in the region have not come without controversy. This community pushback against housing projects creates additional delays and can deter developers.

KEY HOUSING PARTNERS

Rural Housing Coalition of New York: The Rural Housing Coalition is a statewide organization dedicated to revitalizing rural New York by strengthening housing and community development providers through organizational capacity development, raising public awareness and advocacy, and training and technical assistance.

Warren-Washington IDA: The Warren-Washington IDA, noted as a key partner in Chapter 3, has supported several major housing developments in recent years, including the Sun Valley and Fowler Square developments.

Glens Falls Housing Authority (GFHA): Established in 1966, the GFHA operates three low-income apartment buildings in Glens Falls (including two senior buildings, and one family complex) and one low-income senior housing building in Washington County. The Housing Authority also operates the federally funded Housing Choice Voucher rental subsidy and First Time Homeowners programs.

Adirondack Community Housing Trust (ACHT): ACHT was created to keep Adirondack Park homes affordable for them to purchase. ACHT utilizes the

Community Land Trust (CLT) model to reduce the cost of home purchases for families making up to 120 percent of AMI. While staffed by the Essex County-based Adirondack Roots, the ACHT covers the entirety of the Adirondack Park.

City of Glens Falls' Office of Community Development: The Glens Falls Office of Community Development offers housing rehabilitation grants and loans for low- and moderate-income homeowners across the County and administers a home buyer assistance program for families interested in purchasing a home in Warren County.

North Country Rural Development Coalition: A non-profit organization established in 1984 for the purpose of connecting and enhancing the community through housing restoration, downtown revitalization, historic preservation, and community development programs. PRIDE's Tri-County HOME Program funds owner-occupied home rehabilitation and lead-based paint abatement for low to moderate-income residents of Essex, Washington, and Warren counties. Their Tri-County RESTORE Program funds owner-occupied home emergency home repairs for residents 60 years old and above in Essex, Washington, and Warren counties.



The new housing that is constructed does not match up with household demographic trends.

HOUSEHOLD TRENDS

As noted in Chapter 2, "Who We Are," as of 2022, the average household size in Warren County was 2.2 persons per household and is projected to decrease through 2027.

New housing that is constructed does not align with demographic shifts of those in need of housing. For example, 59 percent of Warren County's housing units have 3 or more bedrooms. The only housing unit type to have statistically grown since 2016 is units with 5 or more bedrooms, increasing from 4.1 percent to 5.5 percent of the County's housing stock. Compared with New York State, Warren County has ten percent more 3+bedroom units and 13 percent fewer studio and one-bedroom units. With rental units, two-bedroom units are the most widely available rental unit type, although nearly half of the County's overall renter households and over 75 percent of senior renter households are one-person. With an increasing senior population, the housing needs of this population must also be planned for. As of 2022 there are 28,802 households and 9,779 senior (65+) households in Warren County. While the number of all households in the County is projected to remain stable through 2027, the number of senior households is projected to grow: Warren County is projected to add 633 senior owner-occupied units and 254 senior renter-occupied units by 2027.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

While average household spending on housing is generally considered within affordable categories, current home prices are generally unattainable for the local market. On average, households in Warren County spend 26 percent of their income on housing costs. This percentage is in line with our neighboring counties and is considered affordable. However, home sale prices in the County have also been on an upward trend. According to the Southern Adirondack Realtors Association, from 2019 to 2022, County median sale prices for all homes increase by \$70,000, from \$210,000 to \$280,000, which is considered unaffordable for the median household income of \$67,244. This disconnect is especially marked in the Town of Bolton, which was the largest contributor to the Countywide home price increases. Homes sold in 2022 in the Town of Bolton exceeded affordability for the median income earner by nearly \$350,000. Renters in Warren County are also considered housing cost burdened. With 47 percent of all renter households paying more than 30 percent of their income on rent.

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HOUSING DEMAND

Demand for housing has increased substantially in recent years, driven in part by the area's abundant natural amenities, such as forests, lakes, trails, and wildlife, which attract both tourists and new residents. From 2018 to 2023, the median days from listing to pending sale in Warren County decreased from 84 to just 13, far outpacing the 38 percent national decrease over the same period.

Many who choose to relocate to Warren County first experience it as tourists, creating a positive feedback loop where increased interest fosters new businesses and services, further enhancing the area's appeal. However, this growth brings significant challenges, including housing shortages: Warren County's current overall housing vacancy rate is 3.6 percent, which is below the national average of 3.8 percent. The current vacancy rate in the rental market is 0.4 percent. Vacancy rates below five percent typically indicate a housing shortage.

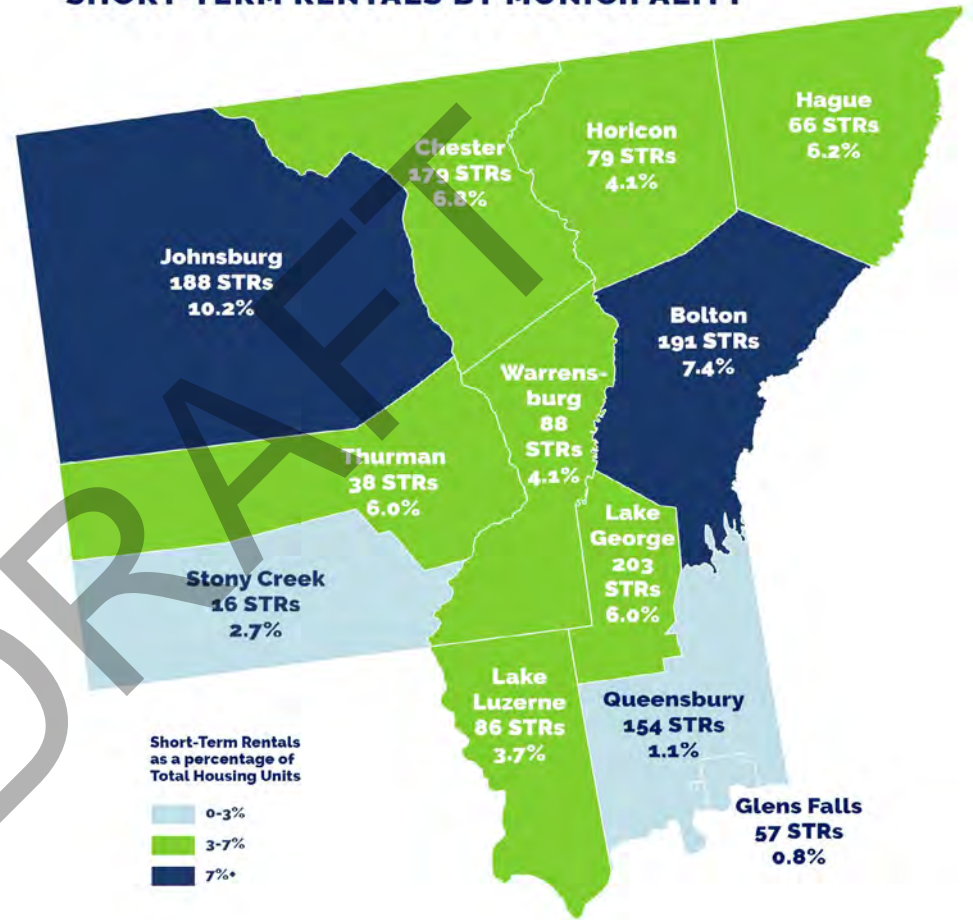
This dynamic illustrates the "amenity trap," where the very qualities that make a place desirable can also lead to issues like rising home prices and infrastructure stress, requiring careful planning to balance growth with sustainability.

TOURISM AND SEASONAL HOUSING IMPACTS & NEEDS

The Warren County housing market is significantly impacted by tourism, in terms of both seasonal homes and short-term rentals (STRs). Over the past 20 years, the number of non-locally owned homes in the County increased at three times the rate of locally-owned homes. Today, 22 percent of Warren County's housing units are seasonal. As of November 2024, Warren County has 1,345 registered short-term rentals. Distribution of seasonal housing and STRs varies, with the least in Glens Falls, where less than one percent of housing is seasonal and STRs make up less than one percent of the housing stock. In contrast, 42 percent of the housing stock in Johnsburg is seasonal and STRs represent over ten percent of the housing stock.

In addition to the impacts of tourists and visitors on the housing market, the significant increase in the local workforce in the summer seasonal is another complicating factor in the local housing market. Communities like Lake George rely on a seasonable workforce that are finding it increasingly difficult to secure housing. The 2023 Town & Village of Lake George Workforce Housing Market Study estimated that there is a seasonal worker housing demand potential of 1,375 beds (workers) in the combined Town and Village of Lake George over the next five years. The demand is estimated to include 550-687 beds in "dormitory-style units," as well as 687-825 beds in private units.

SHORT-TERM RENTALS BY MUNICIPALITY



INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure, including water, wastewater, and communications infrastructure, are essential components to support current residents and businesses and future economic growth. Beyond the economy, ensuring the adequacy of wastewater and stormwater infrastructure is also paramount to preserving the quality of Warren County's natural environment, and particularly its water resources.

WATER

In Warren County, water is provided from various facilities as a public service or through private supplies, such as wells. There are ten municipal water districts located within the County. In addition, the City of Glens Falls supplies water to its residents (and adjacent municipalities) and the Village of Lake George to Village residents. The County also has numerous smaller community water systems managed by private homeowners' associations and other entities. The County does not own or maintain any water infrastructure, and unlike some counties, is not involved with monitoring public water supply sources.

In total, of the parcels in the County that have water, approximately 54 percent are served by public water. Within the Adirondack Park, some of the hamlets are not fully served by public water and sewer, limiting their development potential. Eight of the County's 17 hamlets have public water serving limited areas; however, only one hamlet is fully served by public water (Bolton Landing). Four of the County's hamlets are served by public sewer (Bolton Landing, Hague, Lake George, and Warrensburg); however, in all four hamlets, not all parcels are connected to the public sewer system.

The unserved areas represent an opportunity – these are areas that are under APA regulations and can accommodate additional density, however, absent adequate infrastructure development and investment is stymied.

Much of the public water infrastructure in the County is aging and in need of upgrades or replacements. Based on information provided by municipalities to County Planning to-date, in total there are 36 drinking water improvement projects totaling \$53.2 million across the County.

Additional upgrades to water systems are needed to ensure compliance with the 2021 federal Lead and Copper Rule Revisions (LCRR), which requires water systems to conduct and maintain LSL inventories, as well as develop LSL replacement programs. Many systems do not have accurate records of where LSLs are located, and insufficient tools to conduct

34% of survey respondents that said Infrastructure Maintenance should be the County's top priority – the highest response rate.

thorough inventories. As of October 16, 2024, every water system, with no exception, is required to develop an initial service line material inventory that includes all LSLs regardless of ownership and submit the inventory to its local health department. Systems must update their inventory annually or triennially depending on their monitoring frequency. Warren County GIS has taken on a lead role in meeting this deadline, assisting municipalities with their data collection.

PUBLICLY MANAGED WATER SYSTEMS IN WARREN COUNTY, INCLUDING APPROXIMATE POPULATION SERVED:

- Bolton Water District: 1,800
- City of Glens Falls: 14,000
- Chestertown Water District: 750
- Diamond Point Water District (Town of Lake George): 493
- Hudson Grove Water District (Town of Lake Luzerne): 345
- Lake George Village: 1,800
- Lake Luzerne Water District: 2,500
- North Creek Water District: 1,100
- Pottersville Water District: 300
- Queensbury Water District: 21,200
- Shore Colony Water District (Town of Queensbury): 100
- Warrensburg Water District: 3,600



SEWER

Warren County has ten publicly owned sewer districts, half of which are in the Town of Queensbury. In addition, public sewer is provided by the City of Glens Falls to its residents (and the Town of Queensbury) and Village of Lake George to its residents as well as portions of the Town of Lake George. A much smaller percentage of the County has public sewer than public water.

There is a growing interest in septic system inspections, and funding is available for replacements in priority areas.

In addition to the public systems, there are several small community wastewater systems managed by homeowners' associations and other entities. The County does not own or maintain any sewer infrastructure. Approximately 73 percent of the land parcels in Warren County are not located within a sewer district. Developed properties that do not have public sewer or community wastewater systems have on-site septic systems. When properly designed, these systems can be effective at protecting public health and the environment. However, poor routine maintenance, excessive density of systems, and undersized and overused systems can all lead to on-site system failure and water quality impacts. The County has evaluated establishing a septic inspection on transfer law, but it was not adopted and would require additional resources to implement.

Much of the public sewer infrastructure in the County is aging and in need of upgrades or replacements. Based on information provided by municipalities to Warren County Planning to-date, in total there are 59 stormwater and sewer improvement projects totaling \$44.2 million. In addition, there are future capacity concerns at local W/WTPs associated with increased volumes from septage haulers, as more Warren County properties modernize their septic systems and implement more rigorous upkeep practices.

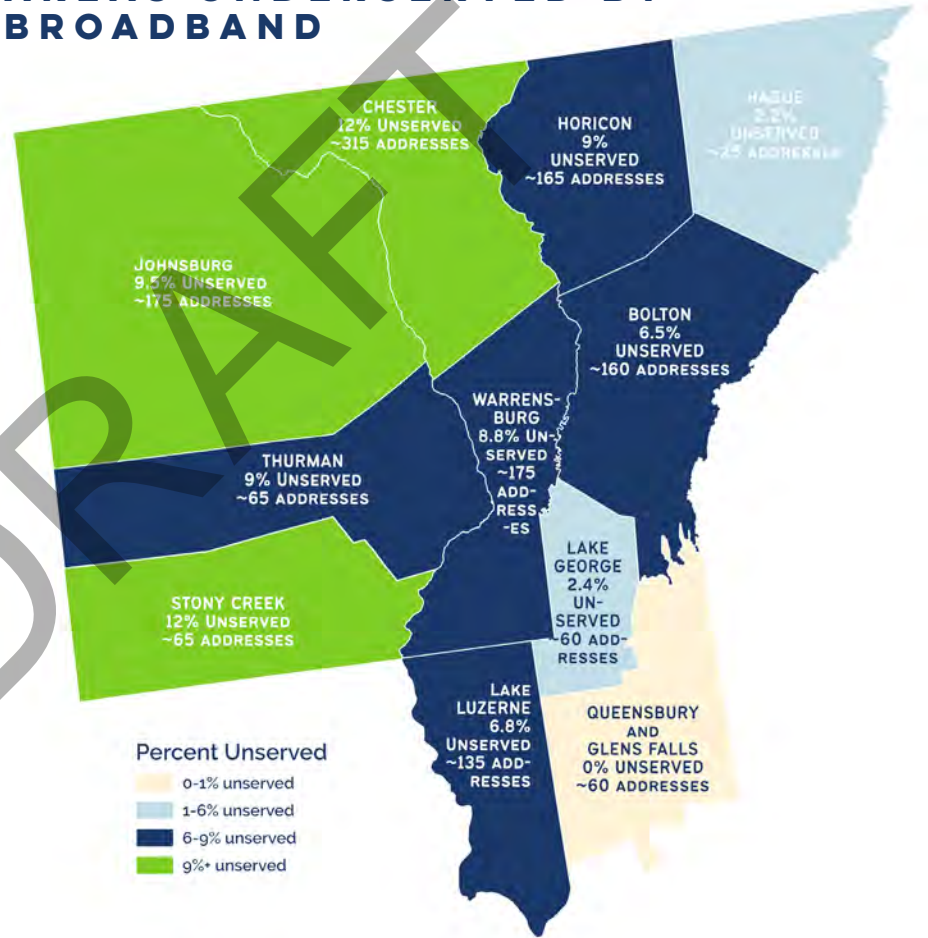
BROADBAND

Broadband access remains a critical infrastructure need in Warren County, as 5.3 percent of residents still lack access to reliable internet despite ongoing efforts. This gap has significant implications for the community's future, given the growing recognition that internet access is no longer optional—it is essential for education, healthcare, and economic resilience.

In response, the County and its partners, including the LCLGRP and Warren County GIS, have worked to improve the accuracy of broadband access data, successfully challenging the FCC's 2022 broadband map to produce a more accurate 2023 version. Building on this, the LCLGRP is now developing a broadband deployment plan to address remaining gaps and challenges. However, funding remains a key obstacle to progress. The urgency of this issue is underscored by its wide-ranging impacts. As school enrollments decline and education increasingly relies on online resources for communication, coordination, and classwork, students and families without broadband access are at a disadvantage. Similarly, as the population ages, particularly in rural areas, telemedicine has become vital for healthcare delivery, enabling residents to access medical care without traveling long distances. Addressing broadband access is not just about connectivity—it is about ensuring equal opportunities and services for all residents, safeguarding the County's future.

The County and its partners are working to address broadband access gaps.

AREAS UNDERSERVED BY BROADBAND



KEY TRANSPORTATION PARTNERS

In addition to the A/GFTC, noted in Chapter 3, "What We Do and How we Collaborate," other key Warren County transportation partners include:

CDTA: In May 2023, the Warren County Board of Supervisors voted to merge Greater Glens Falls Transit (GGFT) with the Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA), a public benefit corporation created in 1970 that provides regional transportation services. Warren County is funding the merger through annual contributions.

Adirondack Cycling Advocates is a non-profit organization whose mission is to promote safe and quality bicycling in the southeastern region of the Adirondacks.

TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY

Transportation infrastructure connects residences, places of work, and places of leisure. It touches nearly all of people's daily activities. Access to a variety of transportation alternatives has health, environmental, and economic benefits. The transportation and mobility sub-section looks at the roads, transit, and bike and pedestrian infrastructure that serve Warren County residents and visitors.

TRANSPORTATION MODES

The primary mode of transportation in Warren County is the automobile. While most Warren County residents drive to work, the fact that a large number work within the County and/or within a short distance of the home, offers the potential to expand alternative transportation opportunities. Eighty-one percent of Warren County workers over age 16 travel to work by private automobile. Less than three percent of Warren County workers walk to work, with all other modes of transportation making up less than one percent each. Despite the high reliance on private automobiles, 70 percent of County residents work in the County, and approximately one-quarter have a total commute time of less than ten minutes. Exploring opportunities to decrease reliance on private automobile use represents an opportunity.

ROADWAYS

I-87 runs through Warren County, connecting the County to key nodes and contributing to easy tourism access. Based on 2019 NYS DOT data, daily traffic volumes on the Northway range from a low of 9,861 in the northern end of Warren County to a high of 47,620 vehicles a day at the southern end of the County. The accessibility that the Northway provides to residents to

Improving roadway safety is a priority for residents of the region.

access points within and outside of the County was frequently cited as an asset for the County during stakeholder outreach. Looking ahead, as the Capital Region continues to grow, access to the Northway will continue to be a driver of development.

The County Department of Public Works (DPW) services include maintenance of County roads, bridges, and culverts. Increased investments in road maintenance over the last three to five years has allowed the County to catch up on deferred maintenance and reduce the number of poor-quality roads. However, securing State and Federal funding for roadway improvements in Warren County remains a challenge. The County competes against much more urban areas for transportation funding. Warren County is located within NYS Department of Transportation (DOT) Region 1, which encompasses eight counties, including Albany, Schenectady, and Rensselaer. Projects within the Region are often competing for the same funds; Warren County's more rural nature often times make it more difficult to show the need for the funding. Many of the County's smaller communities also lack the information or capacity to administer Federally funded transportation projects.

The 243 miles of Warren County roads represent a component of the transportation network that the County has direct influence over. Warren County owns 78 roads distributed throughout the County; there are no County-owned roads within the City of Glens Falls.

Several of these roads do fall within the County's denser, more walkable hamlets. However, not all roadways have pedestrian infrastructure. Of the 35 County road segments within the hamlets, 11 (one-third) have no sidewalks and nine (one-quarter) have only partial sidewalks. The County does not have a Complete Streets policy or any specific plans to ensure that provisions for non-motorized transportation are incorporated into planned upgrades. Improving roadway safety is a priority for residents of the region. In 2022, the number of fatal crashes in Warren County was at a ten-year high (11). A 2023 study conducted by the A/GFTC found that safety was the biggest transportation priority for survey respondents.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

In May 2023, the Warren County Board of Supervisors approved the merger of Greater Glens Falls Transit (GGFT), which began operation in the Glens Falls area in 1984, and the Capital District Transit Agency (CDTA), a larger transit agency that was founded in 1970 and transports more than 55,000 customers each weekday. CDTA began operation of the former GGFT routes in January 2024. The routes span portions of Warren, Washington, and Saratoga counties and include Glens Falls, Queensbury, South Glens Falls, Lake George, Hudson Falls, Kingsbury, Fort Edward, and Moreau. Routes operate year-round, Monday through Friday from 6:30am – 9:45pm and on Saturdays from 8:00am–6:00pm.

The recent merger of GGFT and the CDTA represents an opportunity for improved transit service.

After initially taking over the existing GGFT routes, the CDTA is now exploring new or changed routes, including opportunities to connect the Warren County routes to the rest of the system and potential on-demand models.

The dispersed, rural population distribution of much of the County makes the traditional approaches to public transportation difficult to implement. GGFT periodically studied and considered various scheduled transit services to the rural area of Warren (and Washington) County but has consistently found insufficient demand to justify the local financial support required to make them feasible.

Two County agencies also provide limited transportation services: the Warren-Hamilton Counties Office for the Aging (WHCOFA) and the Warren County Veterans' Services Agency. WHCOFA provides transportation to medical appointments, with the costs shared between counties by operations managed within Warren County. There has been an increase in demand for this service that has not been matched with increased availability of volunteer drivers. The result is that the County may need to step into transportation services for some seniors. Veterans' Services provides transportation to and from the Albany Veterans' Administration Medical Center on a daily basis.

Consideration of the long-term future of the Warren County Railway is needed.

RAIL

Amtrak does not provide direct service to Warren County. The nearest Amtrak stop is located in Ft Edward, Washington County.

The County purchased in the Warren County Railway with the assistance of \$1.6 million in grant funding. Since then, the County has been successful in securing over \$18 million in grant funds for needed repairs and upgrades. Previous efforts to use the railway for tourism purposes have not been fruitful. New ownership in the northern portions of the route may impact the long-term utility of the corridor, and consideration of the long-term future of the Warren County Railway is needed. Any significant repairs of bridges will need to be engineered to the type of future use planned for the railway. The desired type of use will determine the quality/strength of replacement bridges, and the scope of potential uses, including commercial, industrial, and recreational, must be considered.



BICYCLE INFRASTRUCTURE

The Warren County Bikeway is a paved 9.4-mile multi-use trail for bicycling, walking and running. The bikeway begins at Platt Street in downtown Glens Falls and continues north with rolling hills to Ft. George Road in Lake George. Where a separate trail was not possible, the trail intersects with local roads and shares the shoulder of the road. The origin of the bikeway is a branch of the Delaware & Hudson Railroad line. The bikeway was constructed in four phases. The first section was established in 1978, with the final section of the bikeway (from Leonard Street to Platt Street, in downtown Glens Falls) constructed in 2000, completing the 9.4-mile bikeway.

In addition to the Bikeway, the multi-use Feeder Canal Park Heritage Trail is also located within Warren County (in the Town of Queensbury and the City of Glens Falls) and provides a connection to the Champlain Canal

Trail and larger Empire State Trail System via Fort Edward in Washington County. The nine-mile Feeder Canal Park Heritage Trail provides a separate bicycle path with a smooth, crushed stone surface, with long-term plans to build a connecting path to the Rush Pond Trail in Queensbury. Warren County is currently undertaking the Modernization and Connectivity Plan for Multi-Use Trails, which is examining enhancements and connections to both the Feeder Canal Trail and the Warren County Bikeway.

In terms of on-road facilities, while there are on-road bike facilities along some roadways in the County, there are no NYS Bike routes in Warren County and the existing bicycle network remains disjointed. Opportunities to address gaps and improve connections along the Warren County Bikeway are currently being explored by Warren County Planning.

AIRPORTS

Floyd Bennett Memorial Airport is located in the Town of Queensbury, owned by the County, and maintained by DPW. The airport is open for corporate, private, and recreational aviation; the airport is not served by commercial aviation. Previous plans to expand the airport in 2010 were met with opposition, and in 2019, the FAA rejected as unnecessary the expansion plans, eliminating any potential for Federal funding for the project. Since then, the airport has seen changes in operations that have brought it from a \$800,000 deficit six years ago to only a \$200,000 planned deficit for this year. In terms of current utilization, the airport had 23,359 aircraft operations in 2022, and the FAA does not project a major uptick in airport utilization in their 2050 Terminal Area Forecast.