CHAPTER 2 EXTERNAL INFLUENCES — REGIONAL CONTEXT

2.1 External Influences – Regional Context

The Village of Rye Brook is part of a region, connected in many ways with its neighboring municipalities in Westchester and Connecticut, part of a complex transportation network – roads, rails, trails and an airport, part of a natural region of watersheds and wildlife and part of the economy of the tri-state region. Map 2-1, Regional Map, identifies Rye Brook in the region. Several regional topics are discussed in other chapters of this report. For instance, a proposed off-road pathway along the Hutchinson River Parkway, part of the East Coast Greenway bicycle and pedestrian pathway running along the full length of the east coast, is discussed in the Parks, Recreation and Open Space chapter. A discussion of the regionally important Westchester County Airport is included in the Transportation chapter. Discussions on water quality, stormwater and flooding are discussed in the Natural Resources chapter. Regional fair and affordable housing needs are discussed in the Residential Development chapter.

The following is a summary of several other important regional issues, projects and planning efforts impacting the region and Rye Brook’s future. Also included is a discussion of Westchester 2025: Plan Together, the County’s long-range land use planning policies, as well as a brief description of the communities surrounding Rye Brook and the status of their recent planning efforts.
2.2 Westchester 2025: Plan Together
The Rye Brook’s Planning Base Studies effort is part of Westchester 2025: Plan Together, the County’s web-based, long-range land use planning policies and “toolbox.” The Base Studies help communities more easily develop local comprehensive plans which, in turn, help the County better plan for the future of Westchester County.

Another tool of Westchester 2025 is the “Zoning Build-Out Analysis,” developed by the Westchester County Department of Planning in cooperation with Village staff. It provides an understanding of local zoning that is not only an important tool for the Village, but is also an important tool for the County to understand existing and potential density county-wide and the many infrastructure issues related to future land development and densities.

For more information on Westchester 2025, its array of tools, data, services and efforts to bring our communities together to envision our future, go to the website at: westchester2025.westchestergov.com.

2.3 Surrounding Communities and Their Plans
While planning the future of Rye Brook, it is important to understand surrounding communities, their characteristics and plans for the future. Most Rye Brook residents visit outside communities regularly – for work, shopping, recreation, etc. Development near the Village’s borders may directly impact properties, infrastructure and views within the Village. Here is brief information on the four communities directly adjacent to Rye Brook.

Port Chester-Rye Brook-Rye Town Chamber of Commerce
Rye Brook and Port Chester share a Chamber of Commerce. The chamber works to promote a positive business environment in both Villages. As stated on its website, the “chamber is the leading advocate for business and promotes its members by focusing on fostering a positive business environment and continual economic development. The chamber provides its members with a strong legislative voice and cost-effective programs and services.” Background on the Villages and their business environment, links to important government agencies and events are found on their website.

As municipalities, including Rye Brook, work to retain and attract businesses within their borders and within Westchester County, several other important business related groups can be found at:

- Westchester County Office of Economic Development
- Westchester County Industrial Development Agency (IDA)
- Westchester County Association
- The Business Council of Westchester
A. Village of Port Chester
Rye Brook and Port Chester are linked in many ways. A portion of Rye Brook shares its schools with Port Chester (see the Public Facilities chapter). As detailed in Chapter 8, the two Villages share some services, such as fire, library and EMS services. The border between the Villages is unseen, cutting through moderately dense neighborhoods of single, two and multi-family homes and businesses. In addition to downtown Rye City, many Rye Brook residents frequent the shops and restaurants in Port Chester and utilize the Metro-North train station.

The past decade has seen a major retail and restaurant complex developed in the center of Port Chester’s downtown, adjacent to its waterfront. Several multi-family developments have been constructed and the area around Main Street continues to grow as a dining destination. The Village of Port Chester has been working to conclude an update of their 1968 Comprehensive Plan. As of March, 2012, a planning consultant has been retained to conclude the drafting of the plan to help guide the Village on future uses and densities in its downtown and along the Route 1 commercial corridor. Proposals for the redevelopment of the former United Hospital site will also be an important issue in the new plan. For more information on Port Chester’s planning efforts, click here.

B. Town/Village of Harrison
Rye Brook’s western boundary, running along Blind Brook, is entirely shared with the Town/Village of Harrison. Along the northern

Figure 2-1. Village of Port Chester Photos

Source: Westchester County Department of Planning
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Source: Westchester County Department of Planning
half of this boundary are several large, low density uses – the Westchester County Airport, the SUNY Purchase college campus and Pepsico corporate headquarters office campus. Along the southern half of this boundary are primarily neighborhoods of noticeably lower density than Rye Brook, including the Purchase area. Several office campus developments in Harrison are also adjacent to Rye Brook along the I-287 corridor. The Blind Brook also presents some flooding challenges to both municipalities.

While not as directly linked to Harrison’s downtown, which is located in the southern portion of Harrison, office developments in Harrison are a nearby employment source for Rye Brook. Rye Brook’s access to I-287 is also primarily through Harrison.

As of March, 2012, the Town/Village of Harrison is considering retaining a consultant to initiate the development of a new comprehensive plan update. The plan update may focus on downtown Harrison near the Metro-North train station as well as the substantial office campus parks along the I-287 corridor, known as the “Platinum Mile.” Recent high office vacancy rates in Harrison and elsewhere in the County has spurred interest in the reuse and redevelopment of some of these office parks, including for uses other than traditional single-occupant corporate tenants. Two recent
new “non traditional” tenants in the area include the new 62,000 square foot Fordham University campus and the 209,000 square foot Lifetime Fitness facility on the site of the former Journal News office building.

C. City of Rye
The City of Rye shares a small boundary at the southern tip of Rye Brook. Rye serves as a nearby downtown for residents of Rye Brook for shopping and dining. The City’s Metro-North train station, also in downtown Rye, serves Rye Brook residents. The past decade has seen growth in boutique shops and restaurants in the very walkable downtown of Rye. Outside of Rye’s downtown are low and medium density residential neighborhoods, many of which are walkable to either the downtown and train station or are walking distance to Long Island Sound. The City of Rye last updated their comprehensive plan in 1985. No update is known to be in progress. Other planning efforts have included flood mitigations studies near Bowman Avenue, 2007-2008 studies and report on a proposed “road diet” along Route 1, or Boston Post Road, in the southern section of the city, a 2005 study on neighborhood business districts and a 2003 study regarding the size and bulk of new homes. For more information on these efforts, click here.

As discussed in the Parks, Recreation and Open Space chapter, Rye Town Park is located on Long Island Sound, adjacent to Westchester County’s Playland Amusement Park. The beach at Rye Town Park is open to the general public, but residents of Rye Brook, Rye City, Port Chester, and Rye Neck may purchase seasonal permits with discounts for parking and beach access. Non-residents can also purchase seasonal permits for higher fees. This park is governed by a board of representatives from the Town of Rye, City of Rye and Villages of Port Chester and Rye Brook.

D. Town of North Castle
The Town of North Castle shares a small border with Rye Brook, along Blind Brook, north of the main terminal of the Westchester County Airport. The Town of North Castle stretches from low-density, semi-rural areas in the eastern parts of the town, to the low density residential areas and corporate office parks around the hamlet of Armonk, to open spaces around the Kensico Reservoir just west of the Airport and to the higher density neighborhoods, Metro-North train station and commercial district in North White Plains near the town’s southern boundary with the City of White Plains. Rye Brook residents in the northern portions of the Village may travel to the shops and restaurants around Armonk or may be employed in the one of the office developments near Armonk. The

Figure 2-4. Rye City Hall

Source: Westchester County Department of Planning

Figure 2-5. Rye Playland

Source: Westchester County Department of Planning

Figure 2-6. Armonk, New York

Source: Westchester County Department of Planning
Town last updated its comprehensive plan in 1996. For more information on planning efforts and development projects, [click here](#).

**E. Town of Greenwich, Connecticut**

Rye Brook is bounded to the east by the Town of Greenwich in Connecticut. This area of Greenwich is primarily low or moderate density single-family neighborhoods. To the east of the Westchester County Airport on King Street is the Brunswick School, which has been substantially expanded in the past decade with residences, ball fields and school buildings. The Glenville area of east King Street near Rye Brook Village Hall has a small commercial area that attracts Rye Brook residents. Other parts of interest for Rye Brook residents include shopping at nearby Greenwich Avenue and use of the Greenwich library. Higher density commercial areas are south and east of Port Chester. For planning efforts for the Town of Greenwich, including its 2009 Plan of Conservation and Development, [click here](#).
2.4 Interstate 287 and the Tappan Zee Bridge

I-287, the major east-west transportation corridor within Westchester County, runs through the Village near its southernmost boundary. Access to I-287 is in nearby Harrison, Rye and Port Chester. Recent plans for the replacement of the Tappan Zee Bridge over the Hudson River included transit alternatives across the 30-mile corridor between Port Chester and Suffern in Rockland County. A potential Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system included a station near the South Ridge Street crossing of I-287. In October, 2011, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transportation Administration published a Notice of Intent to rescind the Tappan Zee Bridge/I-287 Corridor Project, thereby concluding the environmental review process for a combined study of bridge, highway and transit along the corridor. FHWA published a new Notice of Intent for the Tappan Zee Hudson River Crossing Project to examine alternatives for an improved Hudson River crossing between Rockland and Westchester Counties. As of March, 2012, an expedited environmental review process is ongo-
ing. Design and construction of the new bridge may begin as early as 2012 or 2013. As this process proceeds, it will become clearer if, and what kind of, transit may come to the corridor and Rye Brook. As one of the eight municipalities in Westchester along the corridor, Rye Brook has an interest in the impacts of this project. For more information on the Tappan Zee Hudson River Crossing Project, click here.

Two web pages maintained by the Westchester County Department of Planning with further information on the Tappan Zee Bridge and I-287 planning efforts may also be helpful to understanding impacts upon Rye Brook and surrounding communities.

- The County’s “Tappan Zee Bridge and I-287 Corridor” page provides background on the project’s history and other helpful links and contact information.

- The “Route and Station Ideas” page provides detailed overview of alternative Bus Rapid Transit routes and station locations in 10 ten segment plans, including Rye Brook, developed independently of the New York State Tappan Zee Study Team. These schematic descriptions were intended to elicit community dialogue regarding station placement, service catchments areas, etcetera, click here. The Rye Brook segment can be viewed as a PDF.

Access to Employment Centers Study

In March, 2010, the Westchester County Department of Planning and the South Western Regional Planning Agency (SWRPA), the official regional planning organization for eight municipalities in lower Fairfield County, Connecticut, co-released the Access to Employment Centers Study. The study, funded by the United States Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration's Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WIRED) initiative, focused on the transportation corridors of I-287, I-95, the Hutchinson River Parkway and the Merritt Parkway. The Study analyzed existing barriers to regional mobility and their negative economic consequences. The study measured levels of congestion on existing roadways and identified congestion “hot spots” and disconnected residential areas. This study worked to identify the most effective locations for housing that is affordable, or “attainable” to workers in the study area, including areas near transit and areas with potential for adaptive reuse of properties. For more information, click here.
2.5 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 provides a collaborative planning forum to address transportation-related issues from a regional perspective, undertakes studies for transportation improvements, forecasts future conditions and needs, pools the resources and expertise of its member agencies to plan for transportation and development in the region and makes decisions on the use of Federal transportation funds.

Staff of the Westchester County Departments of Planning and Public Works and Transportation (WCDPWT) represents Westchester’s communities and their transportation needs at NYMTC. For more information, go to the website.

Map 2-2. NYMTC Region

2.6 New York - Connecticut Sustainable Communities
A bi-state collaboration of cities, counties and regional planning organizations has recently been funded with a $3.5 million U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant to integrate housing, economic development, transportation and environmental planning. The NY-CT Sustainable Communities Consortium’s primary focus is to leverage the region’s robust transit system by developing livable communities with mixed-income housing and employment at key nodes along the region’s rail lines.
In Westchester, three planning efforts have begun through the efforts of the Consortium:

- **I-287/Tappan Zee Bridge Corridor Action Plan** — The City of White Plains, in collaboration with NYMTC, and in consultation with other I-287 corridor communities, will define sustainable communities issues and planning needs in the Tappan Zee Bridge/I-287 Corridor, including connections to railway and other transit hubs, existing and planned. A corridor profile will be developed for use in the development of NYMTC’s next Regional Transportation Plan.

- **New Rochelle Smart Growth Initiative** — New Rochelle will implement a comprehensive strategy to promote commercial and residential development in proximity to the New Rochelle Transit Center.

- **Cross County Parkway Corridor Action Plan** — The cities of Yonkers, Mount Vernon and New Rochelle, in collaboration with NYMTC, will define sustainable communities issues and planning needs in the east-west Cross County Parkway corridor. For more information, click here.
2.7 Hudson River Valley Greenway/National Heritage Area

The Hudson River Valley Greenway was created to continue and advance the State’s commitment to the preservation, enhancement and development of the world-renowned scenic, natural, historic, cultural and recreational resources of the Hudson River Valley while continuing to emphasize economic development activities and remaining consistent with the tradition of municipal home rule. The Greenway includes most municipalities of Westchester County, including Rye Brook.

The Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area includes 250 communities in ten counties bordering the Hudson River for 154 miles of tidal estuary. This area is approximately three million acres of Hudson Highlands, Catskill Mountains, rolling farmland and compact villages, small cities and hamlets. The region extends from the confluence of the Mohawk and Hudson Rivers, south to the northern border of New York City.

By Local Law No. 18 of the Year 2006, the Village of Rye Brook adopted the Westchester County Greenway Compact Plan. The Plan includes a statement of policies, principles, and guides to supplement other established land use policies in the village. Actions by the village should take into consideration the statement of policies, principles and guides, as appropriate.

The 1991 act established the Greenway Council, a New York State Agency, to:

- Work with local government to enhance local land use planning
- Create a voluntary regional planning compact for the Hudson River Valley
- Provide community planning grants, compact grants and technical assistance to help communities develop a vision for their future

For more information, go to the Greenway’s website [click here](#).