

Chapter III: Community Vision

The foundation of a good comprehensive plan is public input, early and often throughout the planning process

Visualizing the future of the Town of Guilderland is an intensive and very important component of the Comprehensive Plan. It requires the input of Town leaders and residents and the knowledge of Town resources that provide opportunities and constraints on land use and services. Individual visions are biased by personal goals and preferences. To limit these biases, good comprehensive planning seeks public input early in the process. Therefore, it is no coincidence that the first step of the comprehensive planning process is the initiation of a community survey. Survey results provide a clearer picture of community opinion on town-wide services and the quality of life. Recognizing the importance of public involvement, the Town of Guilderland sought methods of community outreach beyond the traditional survey. A Community Outreach Program was initiated with the intent of continuing public involvement throughout the planning process. Combined with the results of the inventory and analysis (opportunities and constraints), the various components of the Community Outreach Program allowed the future picture of the Town to materialize. This was further refined into a vision statement that dictated the goals and objectives and the elements of the Comprehensive Plan.

It is easy to see why "visioning" is such an important component of the Comprehensive Plan. Without it there is no guidance for composing the goals and objectives that ultimately formulate the Plan. The Plan to follow is deep-rooted in community involvement, guided by a well-conceived Community Outreach Program, a Vision Statement that captures the essence of the Town's future form and function, and concise goals and objectives that frame the Plan.

A. Community Outreach

The Community Outreach Program was spearheaded by the Public Participation Subcommittee. Several opportunities for community outreach were identified along with the means by which the outreach programs would be implemented. They included: community surveys, study circles, focus group workshops, neighborhood meetings, Advisory Board/community work sessions, public hearings, and fact-finding outreach. Each are described and discussed below:

A.1 Community Survey

A community survey was distributed to every household in the Town (12,007 mailings). The purpose of the broad distribution was to afford the majority of people in the Town the opportunity to participate in the planning process. It was also a means of informing everyone about the comprehensive plan process, a process that relies on input from the community in order to be successful. In addition to the mailed surveys, a random sample of 100 phone surveys was conducted.

Approximately 3,000 written surveys were returned to the Town, resulting in a return rate of 25 percent. The minimum return for statistical validity is 5 percent. Responses were tabulated and presented in a "Report of Findings" (Fact Finders Nov. 18, 1999).

The telephone survey of 100 residents was structured so that the number of telephone interviews conducted within each of the Town's zip codes was reflective of the approximate proportional differences in population.

The methodology and results of the mail and phone surveys are provided in greater detail in the "Report of Findings." The following provides the highlights of the mail survey.

The overall quality of life in the Town was rated high. When asked how the quality of life rated in comparison with other communities, 59 percent of the respondents rated Guilderland higher. The majority of people (55%) believe that they get good value for their tax dollar. Likewise, the majority of residents (61%) approve of the services provided by the Town, which is probably why the former response is positive.

The survey questioned residents' attitudes towards growth. Interestingly, there appears to be a split in how residents perceive the past and current rate of growth with 52% considering the growth rate acceptable and 43% feeling growth is occurring too quickly. Of those people who feel growth is too fast, the majority identified the growth in residential and commercial development and the associated increases in traffic as the primary issues.

A series of questions were asked to identify the importance of a Town Center. A Town Center is similar to a Hamlet defined by municipal facilities such as the Town Hall, a library, post office, parks or other open spaces as well as limited service oriented commercial uses. The majority of respondents (74%) do not believe that a Town Center currently exists. The majority of those who do feel that there is a Town Center, identified Town Hall/McCormack Corners area as the Town Center. When asked if a new Town Center should be developed, the majority of respondents (62%) said no.

Attitudes towards business development were sought based on the general types of business: retail, commercial office space, and industrial. In each case, respondents indicated that there was currently enough or too much development. Not surprisingly, the majority of respondents (57%) want the Town to discourage future business development in undeveloped areas of the Town. However, the margin of difference is closer to a split than an overwhelming majority. This may suggest that many residents are impacted by business development, whether by land use conflicts or secondarily by noise, odors, or traffic. For those impacted by development, locating new development elsewhere in the Town might be perceived as a benefit. Nevertheless, the type and location of new business development in the Town is clearly an issue.

The survey also indicates that the current pattern of residential development involving the development of single-family homes in standard subdivisions and the development of apartments, condominiums and townhouses in general is unfavorable. Approximately 64-67% of the respondents indicated that there is enough of this type of development with another 18-25% indicating there is too much. However, the idea of creating village or hamlet style neighborhoods appears to be more appealing. Although the majority of respondents (53%) feel there is enough village or hamlet style development, 42% feel there is not enough. There also appears to be a perceived deficiency in senior housing with almost 60% of the respondents indicating there is not enough.

When asked if the Town should encourage or discourage residential development in undeveloped areas, the majority of respondents (60%) indicated that the Town should discourage development. This relates well to the previous results. It is likely that a portion of the respondents who would like to encourage residential development are those who responded favorably to the development of village/hamlet neighborhoods and senior housing.

Recreational resources are valued amenities in most communities, especially those that are residentially based. The survey results indicate that the majority of respondents (51%) believe there are enough outdoor recreational opportunities related to ball fields, swimming and picnic areas. However, almost 47% indicated that there are not enough of these facilities. Very few (2%) indicated that there are too many facilities. The majority shifts slightly when asked the same question regarding neighborhood parks and playgrounds with 56% indicating that there are not enough of these facilities. Combined, the results suggest a need for additional recreational facilities with a priority on neighborhood parks and playgrounds. Given that in both questions only 2% of the respondents indicated that there are too many of these resources suggests that there will be a perceived deficiency in recreational resources as the community grows over the next 20 years, providing that no new facilities are constructed.

The survey was also designed to identify resident's perception of the future of Guilderland in terms of some key issues that effect land use and transportation. Based on the survey results, residents overwhelmingly (80%) support efforts to protect the Town's drinking water supply. They also afford a high priority to the preservation of open space (64%). However, a later question regarding the willingness of residents to pay an increase in taxes to protect open space resulted in a split between those willing to pay and those not willing. A slight majority (43%) identifies the expansion of town water and sewer distribution lines as a moderate priority with another 40% identifying this issue as a high priority.

Residents appear to be divided on transportation issues. The majority of respondents (41%) identified the expansion of mass transit as a high priority with 21% identifying this issue as a low priority. Likewise,

increasing road capacity is afforded a slight majority (38%) as a high priority but those identifying this issue as a low priority climbed to 26%. The provision of sidewalks is evenly distributed among high, moderate and low priority. The provision of bike paths is also evenly distributed with a slight majority identifying this as a moderate priority. Few (18%) identified the addition of park and ride lots as a high priority.

Demographic information gathered by the survey provides some insight to the character and composition of the Town's resident population. In general, respondents are predominantly married with a slightly higher percentage without children. The majority of respondents have attained a bachelor's degree or graduate level study. Most respondents are at least 40 years of age and have a household income of \$50,000 or more. Few respondents (8%) make less than \$25,000 per year while 23% make in excess of \$100,000. Gender is essentially split with slightly more men than women.

The demographic information indicates that the population is aging (consistent with State and national trends), which is important when considering the types of services and amenities offered to residents, it is also well educated and generally financially sound. When considering what types of jobs would be supported by the local work force, it appears that well-paying, professional or high-tech positions would be most suitable.

A.2 Study Circles

Study Circles were also formed as an alternative model for providing input to the comprehensive planning process. This is a grassroots organization sponsored by the Town of Guilderland and the national Study Circles Resource Center, which provided the structure for many ongoing small group discussions. Each group consisted of 8-12 participants led by trained facilitators and recorders. All residents who volunteered to participate in this process were included in a Study Circle. A total of 96 residents met in three sessions of two hours each. From these sessions, three major concerns emerged: traffic, environment, and the way government policies affect growth and development.

Beginning with the issue of traffic, residents identified numerous impacts of increased traffic volume, primarily safety and quality of life. They also recognized some of the problems that cause traffic congestion, such as multiple driveways in close proximity along portions of Route 20, a single arterial serving the community, and truck traffic through residential neighborhoods. Despite the concern over traffic congestion, the residents did not recommend popular short-term traffic solutions, such as road widening and constructing new roads. They believe that there may be more creative methods of decreasing congestion while improving the pedestrian environment and public transportation.

Participating residents commented that suburban sprawl has had significant impacts on the environment, such as the loss of open space, farmland,

wildlife corridors, and significant ecosystems (Pine Bush). In their opinions, the short-term administrations make it very difficult to conduct long-term and meaningful planning. They note that small impacts from individual developments result in cumulative, significant impacts. Therefore, as a solution, they propose allowing the Town's natural limits on water supply to limit future growth. They point to the recent permanent Albany interconnect as an artificial means of providing water to allow residents to water their lawns during dry periods.

The final major issue discussed in Study Circles was that of the impact government policies have on growth. An obvious example has been the construction of roads and highways which has ultimately led to the suburban phenomena. Local land use regulations intended to prevent certain types of growth have resulted in greater land use impacts. Participating residents cite the use of 1-acre zoning as a means of eliminating denser development. However, the result has been the development of much larger areas of land, limiting open space and other land uses, such as recreation and farming. The residents also believe that there is a lack of long-range planning for growth and that the average resident has been left out of the process. Most planning appears to be reactive vs. proactive.

This short synopsis of the results of Study Circles does not do their work justice. Their efforts have been reviewed and incorporated into the planning process and recommendations. Full minutes/meeting notes were taken for each of the sessions. This work is available for public review. The results of their discussions has provided greater insight into the issues touched on more briefly in the community survey and other community outreach meetings. The issues discussed and the potential solutions proposed show a sophisticated understanding of land use, environmental and social issues.

A.3 Focus Group Workshops

The Focus Group Workshops were public forums where information was presented on specific topics and the public was afforded the opportunity to discuss opportunities, issues and the desired state or condition. The first workshop focused on economic development and housing. After a facilitated process of defining problems, issues and solutions, statements regarding the current and desired state of the economy and housing were formulated. Beginning with the current state, residents in attendance identified a need to diversify the employment and tax base through various incentives. At the same time, residents recognize a need to protect the Town from business that result in adverse impacts to the environment and community character.

Under the desired state, residents in attendance envision Guilderland as a place with suitable and appropriate development, which contributes to the tax base and aesthetics of the community.

Concepts for the current state of housing in the Town focused on providing village or hamlet scale housing, improving and reuse of existing homes before allowing new development, and protecting the rural areas of Town. Under the desired state, residents in attendance took a broader view of housing, recommending a range of housing options, including rental and home owner, which provide affordable housing opportunities for all income levels. Growth should be well planned. Decisions should be made in a manner that considers the cost of growth and staging growth over time. Residential neighborhoods should be focused around neighborhoods where services are easily accessible by sidewalk or bike path.

The second focus group workshop reviewed natural resources, open space and agricultural preservation. Major natural resources in the Town were identified: Pine Bush, Helderberg Escarpment, Watervliet Reservoir and watershed, and stream channels and their associated features, including wetlands. The Town Environmental Resources Committee also identifies parks and recreation areas as another priority issue.

Residents in attendance recommended that important environmental areas be preserved while other less critical but nonetheless important features be protected from development impacts. In like manner, farmland should be preserved through incentives. Preservation techniques for both natural resources and farmland should consider property rights and focus on incentive based measures.

The third Focus Group Workshop topic was transportation and infrastructure. Due to the input from Town officials and other public entities and the issues surrounding both transportation and infrastructure, statements regarding the desired state and solutions to issues could not be worked out in the time allotted. However, several issues were identified including whether or not to serve the entire Town with water and sewer, water source and wastewater treatment limitations, traffic congestion on local roads due to congestion on arterials, the availability of public transportation, truck traffic associated with the Northeast Industrial Park, and cooperation with the NYS Department of Transportation in planning for road improvements.

The fourth and final Focus Group Workshop occurred on October 18, 1999 and addressed recreation and cultural resources. Deficiencies were identified for each issue. Recreational deficiencies include funding, limited field space for soccer, lack of trail systems, and lack of winter activities. Residents in attendance identified fields and indoor facilities as the recommended top priorities.

Cultural resource deficiencies include a lack of youth activities, lack of gathering places/activities for seniors, limited facilities for small performances, lack of protection for historic sites. The recommended top priorities included protecting the Town's history, trail development

(providing connections), and the development of a multi-use, multi-generation facility.

A.4 Neighborhood Meetings

Four neighborhood meetings were conducted to provide residents throughout the Town the opportunity to voice their opinions and suggestions in their own neighborhoods. It gave them an opportunity to discuss issues with fellow neighbors that are specific to their location. Meetings were held at the Fort Hunter Fire House on September 28, 1999, the McKownville Fire House on September 30, O'Connor's Antiques & Auctions on October 19, and Guilderland Center Fire House on October 21. At each of these meetings, residents in attendance were asked what they liked about where they live, what they dislike, what they would like to change, how they see the Town in 20 years, and their primary issues of concern. Although similar issues were raised at each meeting, there were some important differences that reflected location. The following primary issues are provided for each meeting:

Fort Hunter

- Traffic plan coordinated with the State
- Water distribution plan
- Growth management tools/plan
- Maintaining residential community character
- Protection of unique resources and the preservation of open space
- Agricultural land preservation
- Balancing the tax base
- Recognition and preservation of historic/cultural resources
- Increased cooperation/communication at a regional level.

McKownville

- Decrease traffic on Route 20 and Fuller Road and improve the pedestrian environment
- Improve the aesthetics of the area by reducing the visual impact of utilities
- Growth management that focuses on controlling commercial growth, strengthening community centers, and allowing a diversity of housing in a planned manner
- Diversification of the tax base
- Provide job opportunities in other areas of Town to reverse the traffic pattern
- Provide stormwater management to deal with the quantity and quality
- Watershed management
- Intermunicipal cooperation
- Preserve open space

O'Connor's

- Extension of water and sewer to western portion of Town
- Manage commercial growth along Route 20
- Manage growth rather than prevent it
- Maintain rural character and historic land use patterns and aesthetics
- Enforce land use regulations
- Intermunicipal cooperation to prevent land use conflicts
- Protect Watervliet Reservoir and groundwater resources
- Develop a Town-wide vision or theme
- Promote equitable application of rules and regulations
- Provide a pedestrian friendly environment
- Maintain high quality police and fire protection
- Provide recreational opportunities for children

Guilderland Center

- Volume and speed of traffic through Guilderland Center
- Improved pedestrian environment and mass transit opportunities
- Managed growth
- Preservation of open space
- Protect water quality
- Intermunicipal cooperation in planning
- Inventory resources
- Implement the Comprehensive Plan and establish time frames for each implementation item
- Institute a moratorium on development until plan is completed

Several issues were repeated in each neighborhood such as traffic, preservation of the Town's water supply, intermunicipal cooperation in planning efforts, and growth management. These issues are generally consistent with the results of the survey. Issues that differed appear to be a result of locational differences, further supporting the allocation of resources to conduct these neighborhood meetings. Folks in Fort Hunter focused on community character, the preservation of open space and unique habitat, presumably influenced by their neighbor the Pine Bush. Folks in McKownville are concerned about the aesthetics of their neighborhoods and the impacts associated with commercial development along Route 20. They are highly influenced by traffic congestion and changes within the Route 20 and Fuller Road corridors.

Folks in the rural areas of Guilderland would like to have some, if not all, of the same services provided in the eastern portion of Town. Traffic is less of an issue, while the extension of municipal sewer and water is important. They are looking to develop a unified Guilderland and recommended a Town-wide theme or vision to begin to address the apparent distinctions between east and west.

Guilderland Center is a hamlet area that is highly impacted by truck traffic as well as buses and cars accessing the high school. Many of the Town's services are located in this area and folks here believe they have a disproportionate burden to endure the impacts associated with such facilities. They feel that they have lost their identity as a hamlet, primarily due to traffic.

A.5 Community Work Sessions

Six Community Work Sessions were conducted to present and comment on each step of the comprehensive planning process. The first Work Session kicked off the planning process and introduced the plan components to the public. The second Work Session presented the results of the Study Circles, Focus Group Workshops and Neighborhood Meetings. Visioning and associated goals and objectives were introduced at the third Work Session., Plan concepts were developed and discussed at the fourth Work Session based on the framework completed for the plan and the community survey results. The Corridor Study and growth management strategies were presented at the fifth Work Session. The sixth and final Work Session involved the presentation of the Draft Plan.

A.6 Advisory Board Meetings

Several Advisory Board meetings were conducted throughout the planning process. The purpose of these meetings were to review work prepared by the consultants, and to develop the vision, goals and objectives, plan concepts, and action plan through the recommendations of the consultant and facilitated discussions. Most of the Advisory Board meetings and all of the Community Work Sessions were televised through cable access in an effort to bring the issues into the homes of individuals who could not attend the meetings in person.

A.7 Public Hearings

Two Public Hearings will be held in accordance with Town Law. The first hearing is conducted by the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Board prior to their recommendation to the Town Board. Once recommended for their consideration, the Town Board will hold a Public Hearing that will also include a SEQR Hearing prior to adoption of the Comprehensive Plan.

A.8 Fact-Finding Outreach

This is an information gathering effort that involves meetings, telephone conversations and correspondence with key organizations, agencies and individuals that can provide unique insight or have a significant impact on the community. State and local agencies and adjoining municipalities were contacted. Also contacted were major businesses such as the Northeast Industrial Park, and local advocacy groups. Many of these organizations

refrain from participating in public forums for various reasons. Yet, their impact on the community and land use is often significant. Therefore, it is very important to listen to these organizations as a step in the all-important effort to gain community consensus on plan concepts and recommendations.

In conclusion, Community Outreach is essential to reach consensus. Not only is consensus important for the adoption of the Plan, it is crucial for the future implementation of the Plan recommendations. A common cord struck throughout the Community Outreach effort is that the talk needs to be put into action or it is a waste of time and resources. To do this, Town officials must feel confident that the majority of residents and businesspeople support the recommendations.

B. Community Vision Statement

The Town of Guilderland envisions itself as a distinctive suburban and rural community within the Capital District. It is a desirable and attainable place for families and individuals of all ages to live and work - with a large assortment of local and regional opportunities for high-quality employment, education, recreation, and cultural activity. These opportunities are easily accessed within the town and throughout the region by a varied and efficient transportation system that emphasizes mobility and safety for all residents. Guilderland's settlement patterns are focused around attractive and vibrant neighborhoods, and are based on a recognition of, and shared sense of responsibility for the town's natural, agricultural, open space, and scenic resources and the value of these resources to the current and future health, culture, and economy of the community. It is a community that looks to the future in the belief that through continued community dialogue and action it can manage and shape change for the better.

From this vision and the results of the Inventory & Analysis, the Town prepared a list of goals and objectives that would be used to frame the plan recommendations. They are provided as follows:

B.1 Growth Management

Goal:

Create a land use pattern and management system, which remediates the adverse impacts of sprawl, discourages further sprawl, responds to community needs, and protects and enhances Guilderland's resources, unique features and quality of life.

Objectives:

1. Adopt a future land use plan which identifies a balance between preservation and development - one which promotes ongoing fiscal health without compromising the Town's character

2. Develop regulations and incentives to guide future development in conformance with the future land use plan
3. Consider the link between infrastructure investment and development patterns, and plan capital investments to support the future land use plan
4. Identify the tools, financing and administrative structure to implement an ongoing growth management program
5. Acknowledge the link between transportation and land use, and promote farsighted, regional transportation planning and investment that seeks to resolve Guilderland's traffic concerns and which promotes Guilderland's desired future land use pattern and quality of life
6. Recognize the investment and stewardship of land by landowners, respect property rights, and provide support for the responsible use of land by private landowners
7. Identify specific areas and sites for protection as well as specific areas and sites that are appropriate for development,
8. Establish a process by which the future land use plan can be refined and updated as necessary.

B.2 Transportation and Mobility

Goal:

Provide safe, convenient, and efficient transportation options for people and goods within, through and around the Town of Guilderland, which are supportive of the Town's future land use plan and which minimize the impact of traffic on the Town's character and quality of life.

Objectives:

1. Promote an attractive and efficient transportation network that integrates pedestrians, bicycles, automobiles and public transit
2. Promote interconnected street networks and reestablish connections between parts of Town
3. Maintain the integrity and capacity of state, county, and local roads through access and corridor management
4. Support planning efforts with adjoining municipalities and regional entities such as: Albany County, the Capital District Transportation Committee (CDTC), the Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA), the Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDRPC), the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) and the New York State Thruway Authority.
5. Enhance the pedestrian environment in all areas of Town
6. Create a multi-use trail system linking community centers, shopping and employment areas, recreation areas, and neighborhoods
7. Identify programs and incentives for reducing traffic and, in particular, single-occupancy vehicle use (for example, park-and-ride lots, ride-sharing programs, etc.)

8. Reduce the impact of truck traffic on the community through careful siting of any future truck generating enterprises, promoting enhanced rail options, and seeking solutions to existing conflicts
9. Carefully locate any future large traffic generators (neighborhood, community and regional destinations) to reduce trip lengths through Guilderland
10. Explore ideas for traffic calming and pedestrian safety

B.3 Public Utilities

Goal:

Provide a utility infrastructure system that meets the demands of current residents, maintains the Town's existing investments, and supports the future land use plan.

Objectives:

Water

1. Assure an adequate supply, treatment, distribution, and fire-fighting capacity, of potable water to meet current and planned future needs
2. Establish Town policies for any proposed service area extensions that consider and address cost, revenue, and potential impacts on the future land use plan

Storm Water Management

3. Develop a plan to address storm water management issues (retention and detention basins, sump pumps, flooding of roads)

Sewer

4. Assure adequate collection and treatment capacity of sewer to meet current and planned future needs
5. Establish Town policies for any proposed service area extensions that consider and address cost, revenue, and potential impacts on the future land use plan

Communications, Electricity, and Natural Gas

6. Support coordinated facility development with public utilities to meet community desires, advance the future land use plan, maintain community character and support economic development objectives

B.4 Business, Employment, and Fiscal Resources

Goal:

Promote a diverse economic base that provides income, employment and fiscal resources to the community in a manner that is compatible with the future land use plan and character of Guilderland.

Objectives:

1. Consider the fiscal impact of various town growth scenarios as part of the Town's ongoing planning process
2. Identify partnerships and incentives available through federal, state, county and local organizations that support both the existing and future business community, and promote Guilderland's economic future
3. Identify the desired mix and scale of businesses in the commercial districts in a manner that recognizes, and is sensitive to, the neighborhood setting and desired character of the Town
4. Support home-based businesses to help residents expand their economic opportunities, while protecting the character of Guilderland's neighborhoods
5. Identify existing and potential centers for economic and community development, and establish mechanisms and partnerships to encourage appropriate development in these locations
6. Focus marketing efforts, investments in infrastructure and transportation systems, and economic development incentives, on the areas identified as centers for economic and community development
7. Simplify the project review process for those projects that: meet the Town's identified economic development objectives, which are located in planned centers for economic and community development (according to the future land use plan), and which meet carefully crafted design and impact criteria
8. Attract well-paying, job-creating employers who will be able to provide employment opportunities for Guilderland's residents
9. Support the efforts of local businesses to thrive in Guilderland
10. Support the continuation of agriculture as an economic activity in Guilderland and, working with farmers who wish to continue farming, identify ways in which the Town can help make this possible
11. Encourage partnerships with the University at Albany to promote economic development opportunities in the Town

B.5 Housing

Goal:

Provide a balanced blend of quality housing opportunities, including a desirable range of housing types and price ranges, which are affordable and accessible for residents.

Objectives:

1. Develop policies and programs that help maintain and strengthen the character, value and enjoyment of existing housing resources in the established neighborhoods of Guilderland
2. Create incentives and appropriate regulations that guide the location and pattern of new housing in a manner that protects the character and resources of the community
3. Ensure that the Town's zoning accommodates the need for housing diversity
4. Encourage housing opportunities for the elderly, and those with disabilities, that will allow residents to remain in the Town despite their changing housing and care requirements
5. Allow for a range of housing types in order to meet the diverse needs of residents.
6. Identify appropriate sites and incentives for the creation of housing options that are needed but not adequately provided by the marketplace

B.6 Town Character

Goal:

Preserve and enhance Guilderland's identity, image, and quality of life; and maintain and strengthen the distinction between the Town's developed and rural/natural areas

Objectives:

1. Establish guidelines to ensure that future residential and commercial development is of a scale and design that is appropriate from both a neighborhood and townwide perspective
2. Identify boundaries of existing, or locations for potential, mixed-use community centers or hamlets (similar to the Village of Altamont)
3. Work with residents in the Town's traditional, small community centers to generate strategies for enhancing their existing environments
4. Identify necessary transportation improvements for each traditional community center which will address traffic calming and other pedestrian safety issues
5. Support continued use of viable agricultural lands; preserve open spaces, and natural resources
6. Improve the quality of site design, including harmonious signage, lighting, planting, and building facade design in commercial districts
7. Ensure that new development does not result in adverse impacts such as noise, odor, and vibrations
8. Encourage street tree planting and other aesthetic improvements in residential neighborhoods
9. Identify potential public and private partnerships to implement needed improvements

B.7 Agricultural, Natural Resources and Open Spaces

Goal:

Protect important agricultural, natural, and open space resources, which contribute to the diversity, character, aesthetics, economy, and general health and welfare of the Town. Resources such as the Watervliet reservoir and watershed, viable farmland, ravines, woodlots, streams, aquifers, wetlands, floodplains, the escarpment, viewsheds and the pinebush are recognized for their role in drainage, water supply, agriculture, aesthetics, recreation, and wildlife habitat.

Objectives:

1. Maintain and improve water quality
2. Create incentives for property owners to protect important agricultural, natural and open space resources including financial, regulatory, and other tools available for this purpose
3. Encourage community participation in a county-based agricultural and farmland protection program
4. Identify incentives and actions by the community to support farming as an economic activity in Guilderland
5. Discourage impact to sensitive resources such as steep slopes, stream corridors, wetlands, and significant habitat/open space and viewsheds
6. Identify ways to help protect and improve the water quality in the reservoir such as encouraging cooperative efforts with the City of Watervliet (reservoir owner), and neighboring communities located in the watershed of the Watervliet Reservoir
7. Identify new potential groundwater sources for municipal water supply and protect these areas from incompatible, potentially polluting land uses through a well-head protection plan
8. Create an action plan for the identification, voluntary acquisition and management of properties that comprise a comprehensive open space and natural resource preservation system

B.8 Cultural Resources

Goal:

Recognize Guilderland's historic resources and preserve and enhance cultural opportunities in the community.

Objectives:

1. Support the work of interested community residents and organizations who are already working on protecting and enhancing the Town's historic and cultural resources
2. Develop land use regulations and incentives to protect historic/archaeologically sensitive areas
3. Enhance the opportunities for residents and visitors to experience the Town's historic and cultural sites

4. Cultivate public awareness of the Town's historical and cultural resources through the schools
5. Develop closer ties with the University at Albany and increasing community access and awareness of its diverse array of programs and facilities
6. Promote educational opportunities, festivals, and other community observances
7. Evaluate the adequacy of existing facilities to support programs for youth, seniors, small-scale performances, recitals, concerts and other public events
8. Create strategies for the sustained financial support of the Town's historical and cultural sites and programs

B.9 Recreation

Goal:

Provide sufficient, well-located, and affordable, active and passive recreational opportunities for all Guilderland residents.

Objectives:

1. Formalize a community dialogue to continually evaluate the Town's recreational facilities and programs to ensure responsiveness to the Town's changing recreational desires
2. Work with other municipalities, the school districts, the YMCA, the University at Albany, and private recreation providers to maximize year-round recreational opportunities for Town residents, especially youth.
3. Maintain and upgrade the Town's existing recreational programs and facilities
4. Identify a network of multi-use trails that link neighborhoods with schools, commercial and entertainment centers, Town service facilities, the public transit system, and open spaces
5. Identify potentially underutilized resources and explore the creation of new recreational opportunities for Town residents

B.10 Governance

Goal:

Nurture and support the civic environment so that input from Town residents is considered a customary and integral component of the Town's ongoing planning and implementation process, and promote inter-municipal and interagency cooperation.

Objectives:

1. Establish a community involvement component to the Action Plan(s) that will involve broad based participation and a "grass roots" approach to all future planning efforts

2. Evaluate the resources, level of expertise, and Town government structure to determine which review boards are best suited to efficiently and effectively implement various planning goals and objectives
3. Encourage, and in some cases require, members of the Town's review boards to take advantage of opportunities to update their knowledge of planning and zoning techniques and laws on a continuing basis. Provide access to continuing education and professional development opportunities for Town employees
4. Consider the use of mitigation fees, established through the State Environmental Quality Review process, that would assist the Town in mitigating adverse environmental impacts by, for example, recouping the cost of new infrastructure, improvements, and maintenance of community-provided utilities and services related to new development
5. Establish an ongoing dialogue with adjacent municipalities and regional governmental agencies, send official representatives to appropriate meetings and forums to keep abreast of intermunicipal planning issues that may impact the Town of Guilderland, share the Town's plans with these municipalities and agencies, and promote a regional approach to solving land use, water, transportation, infrastructure and economic development issues
6. Encourage the pursuit of various grants and/or funding offered by the State of New York and the federal government
7. Improve communications with Town residents
8. Pursue partnerships with the City of Watervliet regarding operation of the Watervliet Reservoir.

B.11 Implementation

Goal:

Ensure that the efforts of the community, in crafting this vision for Guilderland's future, result in tangible actions to achieve the community's goals.

Objectives:

1. Identify and support specific actions, financial and administrative requirements, and follow-up planning work that will be necessary to achieve the goals and objectives of this plan
2. Prioritize proposed actions, and set general time frames for them, so that the community can focus attention, and direct energy toward completing a manageable number of tasks at one time
3. Assign responsibility for advancing particular actions described in this plan to appropriate entities within the Town's government (for example, departments, committees, etc.) and the community
4. Review and update the adopted comprehensive plan on a regular basis