

## Section 2: Community Vision







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### INTRODUCTION

Through a series of public workshops, residents worked together to develop a vision for rural Guilderland. Residents envision a balanced combination of resource conservation and limited development that retains the existing sense of place in rural Guilderland. The *vision statement* summarizes the residents' general aspirations for the town's rural portion, while the *concepts for conservation* and *concepts for development* detail the vision themes.

### VISION STATEMENT

Rural Guilderland is valued for its beautiful farmlands, countryside and natural setting which distinguish it from the town's more urbanized eastern area. This attractive open landscape, along with a rich culture and history, contribute significantly to the quality of life in rural Guilderland.

As the town is confronted with the pressures of growth, the existing character of rural Guilderland should be maintained to the highest extent possible. Key natural resources such as the Helderberg Escarpment, Watervliet Reservoir and watershed, Settles Hill, large tracts of woodlands, wetlands and streams should be the recognizable, dominant features of rural Guilderland. Farms, hamlets, and traditional style development should be interspersed throughout the natural foundation. The town supports local agriculture and those whose private lands contribute to the overall beauty of rural Guilderland. New development should provide unique, well-defined, individual character that contributes to the overall sense of place that defines rural Guilderland.

### VISION THEMES

Vision themes are organized into concepts for conservation and concepts for development:

#### Concepts for Conservation:



*Town residents help to create a vision for rural Guilderland*



*Views such this one of the Helderberg Escarpment should be preserved by limiting development impacts on the landscape*

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### **Protect Significant Natural Resources**

Rural Guilderland's diverse natural resources, such as the **Helderberg Escarpment, Settles Hill, Black Creek Marsh**, and large patches of **woodlands and wetlands**, contribute to the bucolic character of the town. They provide habitat for wildlife and recreational and economic opportunities for people. These natural resources should be a significant focus for conservation planning endeavors in rural Guilderland.

### **Protect Water Supply**

The **Watervliet Reservoir** is a primary drinking water source for the Town of Guilderland and the City of Watervliet. The reservoir and its watershed - including the **Black Creek, the Normans Kill and Bozen Kill** - should be carefully managed to protect and limit adverse impacts to water quality.

### **Promote Agricultural Heritage**

Rural Guilderland's **working farmlands** provide economic benefits to the town while providing the community with a beautiful landscape. They are highly valued by the community and recognized for their important role in maintaining rural Guilderland's character. Rural Guilderland's small but diverse agricultural resources include orchards, field crops, dairy farms, and horse farms, to name a few. A varied combination of tools and programs should be employed to support farmers who wish to continue farming while ensuring that landowners retain flexibility and economic empowerment.

### **Respect Scenic Roads**

Many of rural Guilderland's roadways offer views of the town's natural and cultural resources. Expansive views of the town's agricultural heritage, often in the backdrop of the Helderberg Escarpment, can be seen from many of the town's roads. Scenic corridors such as Settles Hill Road and Lainhart Road help to distinguish rural Guilderland's sense of place and set it aside from the more urbanized area of town. They also provide a framework for viewing the town's extensive historic resources. The town should ensure that development respects the unique character and special qualities of these roads.

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**Protect Cultural and Historic Heritage**

Rural Guilderland’s cultural and historic assets contribute to its unique sense of place and scenic quality. For example, the town’s hamlets –**Guilderland Center, Dunnsville, and Meadowdale** – have a unique settlement pattern and architectural style that connects to Guilderland’s history that should be celebrated and maintained.

**Concepts for Development:**

**Create a Rural Greenway and Trail System**

Many informal trails that provide residents with access for horseback riding, hiking, snowshoeing, etc. are already in place in rural Guilderland. Where feasible, these trails and others should be linked to each other and to existing and planned open spaces to create a rural recreational greenway.

**Preserve Rural Hamlets and Enhance Gateways**

The compact settlement pattern of the town’s rural historic hamlets should be maintained and a countryside greenbelt around hamlets should be preserved. This “town and country” pattern will help to preserve the rural hamlets as unique and special places. The entrances to rural hamlets should be distinguished with gateway markers appropriate with the rural character.

**Recognize Altamont Village as a Distinct Community**

The Village of Altamont should be recognized for its compact, traditional settlement patterns and community ties. Historic, traditional village development patterns should be continued and supported.



*The town’s historic hamlets are a traditional compact settlement form that should be preserved. The above photograph shows an aerial view of Dunnsville hamlet.*

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### **Maintain Roadside Rural Character**

Route 20 (Western Ave.) has the potential to absorb some additional necessary commercial growth. New development that is focused and compact should be allowed on a limited basis when it is consistent with country highway character.

### **Allow for Limited New Development that is Consistent with Rural Guilderland Character**

New country hamlets should be focused in areas with existing water and sewer infrastructure supply. They should be sited in locations that connect to existing development and should be accessible from State and County highways. The conservation subdivision approach to development should be promoted as the preferred style of development throughout rural Guilderland.