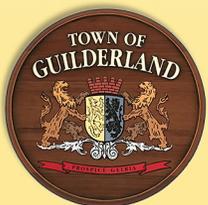




# Town of Guilderland Comprehensive Plan Update

November 2025



Pathway to our Future



GUILDERLAND COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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# 01 INTRODUCTION

## Overview

The Town of Guilderland initiated an update to its Guilderland 2000 Comprehensive Plan to reengage with the wider community about the Town's future direction and to capitalize on opportunities to improve overall quality of life for residents. Situated in northern Albany County, New York, between the forested Helderberg Escarpment along its southern and western border, the Albany Pine Bush Preserve Management Area along its northern border, and higher density areas including Crossgates Mall, Stuyvesant Plaza and University at Albany on its eastern border, Guilderland is home to hamlets, neighborhoods and the Village of Altamont that support a broad range of lifestyles, built environments, and open space and parklands. As a Capital District community, Guilderland residents have nearby access to cultural institutions, large employers, and an international airport, while

also enjoying access to local agriculture and scenic outdoor recreation. Pride in local schools, parks, and libraries connects a community that has grown in both size and diversity since the last Comprehensive Plan process was undertaken more than two decades ago.

This Comprehensive Plan Update aims to balance the interconnected priorities of Guilderland residents, business owners, and other stakeholders, charting a clear pathway toward a sustainable and livable community for people of all backgrounds, ages, and abilities. Toward that end, the Comprehensive Plan update process has incorporated an array of events, activities, and methodologies to engage the public and solicit various viewpoints on the current and future challenges facing Guilderland.

## Purpose of the Comprehensive Plan

The Town of Guilderland Comprehensive Plan is an officially adopted policy document that outlines the community's vision and goals for the future. The Comprehensive Plan provides guidance for Town leadership, residents, and staff in making decisions regarding Guilderland's future, quality of life, and experience. The written goals and recommendations of the Comprehensive

Plan, provide guidance for decisions affecting growth and annexation, the use and development of land, preservation of open space, and the expansion of public facilities and services. The recommendations, maps and graphics contained in the Plan are interrelated and should be used in context of each other.

## Plan Authority

In New York State, Town Law §272-a outlines the requirements and procedures for towns to create and adopt comprehensive plans. Comprehensive plans serve as a blueprint for and guides a town's future development.



# Plan Organization

This update to the Comprehensive Plan establishes a framework for the future of Guilderland. The plan addresses a series of topics that impact overall quality of life in the community, at the present moment and for years to come. To support its overarching community Vision for Guilderland, the Plan includes Goals and targeted Recommendations for each topic area. The Plan devotes an individual chapter to each of the following six (6) topics:

- Agriculture
- Business, Employment, and Fiscal Resources
- Environment, Climate Change, and Resiliency
- Neighborhoods and Housing
- Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Historic Resources
- Transportation and Mobility

## Vision

A key step in articulating the future direction of the Town, for the purposes of comprehensive planning, is the creation of a community vision. The vision represents an ideal toward which the Town can strive in both the short- and the long-term. As a collective intention, the vision also inspires the process of goal-setting and the creation of recommendations – concrete actions that the Town can take to realize its vision.

Members of the public provided input on priorities for the Town vision via the Community Survey, as well as via an interactive activity station at the Open House and Visioning Workshop. Common themes from public input included a

Each of the above-listed chapters begins with identification of the goal(s) for that thematic category, followed by an overview of community specific data and, finally, a set of enumerated recommendations which lay out action steps that form the pathway to Guilderland's future.

Following the six theme-based chapters are sections pertaining to the governance structures of the Town, the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan Update, and the mapping of identified Plan priorities.

desire for more open space and parks, traffic management and walkability, affordable housing, and a focus on commercial redevelopment of vacant buildings on Western Avenue. Drawing upon public input, the Comprehensive Plan Update Committee (CPUC) undertook an iterative process to refine a Town vision that could encapsulate the core priorities of the community. The community was given an opportunity to review and provide feedback on the revised vision during Open House #3. Based on additional input provided, the CPUC expanded language in the vision to emphasize the importance of environmental stewardship as a common value in the community. The resulting Town Vision reads as follows:

***The Town of Guilderland is made up of distinctive, attractive neighborhoods, with abundant recreation open space, and scenic resources that serve to connect the community and support a high quality of life for all residents. Collaborative environmental stewardship of Guilderland's land, air, and water reflects the community's values and its commitment to forward-thinking resiliency planning. Varied, productive agricultural operations link the Town to its proud agrarian history, while the architectural legacy of Guilderland's past is honored through preservation and educational initiatives. The Town is home to a balanced array of prosperous and well-loved businesses, whose success generates the economic base necessary to support quality public services. Well-designed transportation corridors maximize safety for all travelers while facilitating efficient movement and incorporating relevant emerging technologies. Residents of all age groups and backgrounds contribute to the vitality of the Town, each proud to call Guilderland home.***

# Town Character

Town character refers to the unique set of qualities and attributes that define a town, shaping its identity and atmosphere. It's the collective impression a place makes on residents and visitors, influenced by factors such as architecture, natural features, history, culture, and the way people interact within the community. Essentially, it's what makes a town feel distinct and memorable.

Measuring and defining a town's character includes many components. The built environment includes the layout of streets, design and architectural style of buildings, and the arrangement and locations of public spaces. Natural features and open spaces may include parks, streams, forested areas, and other natural elements. The history and culture of the town may include historical buildings and places, cultural events, and traditions in the community. Demographics and social interactions may include the diversity of the population, the way people interact with each other, and the presence of community organizations contribute to the overall feel of the town.

The importance of town character includes providing a sense of place, belonging and identity for residents. Community cohesion provides a sense of community and shared values among residents. Economic development provides a distinctive town character as it can attract visitors and tourists, and attract investments into the community. A well-defined town character can enhance the overall quality of life for those who live in the community.

When it comes to town character, Guilderland is unique. The character of the Town is as unique as the changing landscapes and built environment that define the multiple hamlet areas throughout town.

The Westmere and McKownville areas of town are characterized by older residential neighborhoods typically on smaller lot sizes. The predominant features of the built environment include Crossgates Mall, which as of attracts approximately 10 million visitors annually and

the University at Albany and its 17,000 students. Multiple transportation corridors bisect the Westmere and McKownville hamlets, including NYS Route 20 (Western Avenue), which carries approximately 40,000 vehicles per day, and the NYS Thruway. Western Avenue consists of large shopping plazas, such as Stuyvesant Plaza and Town Center, office developments such as Great Oaks and Executive Park, Tru by Hilton Hotel, Homewood Suites by Hilton and Hampton Inn Hotel, and residential homes converted to office uses.

The Hamlet of Fort Hunter consists of newer residential developments. One of the defining natural features in Fort Hunter is the Albany Pine Bush Preserve, a 3,300+ acre Preserve consisting of one of the best remaining inland pitch pine scrub oak barrens in the world. The Albany Pine Bush Preserve's ecosystem provides habitat for many plants and animals, including the endangered Karner blue butterfly. The APBP is a National Natural Landmark, Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area Site, a New York State Unique Area, Bird Conservation Area, and a National Audubon Society Important Bird Area.

The Hamlet of Guilderland is the Town's population and geographic center, with established local shopping options, restaurants, diverse housing, and popular destinations, like the YMCA, Guilderland Public Library, Guilderland Elementary School, and Tawasentha Park. The Hamlet is bisected by New York State Route 20 (Western Avenue), which was originally the primary connection between Albany and the towns and villages of central New York. Today, Route 20 is a busy, mixed-use corridor serving as an east-west commuter route tying Guilderland and western Albany County to the City of Albany. In addition, two golf courses, active farmland properties, and a variety of parks and open space, including the Albany Pine Bush Preserve provides a break in the urbanized landscape and contribute to the unique character of the hamlet.

The Guilderland Center Hamlet is a historic hamlet in the central area of the Town of

Guilderland. The center of the hamlet is at the intersection of State Route 146 and School Road (CR 202). It is a self-sufficient hamlet with well-maintained homes, a diversity of services, Roger Keenholts Park, which contributes to a nice rural atmosphere. On the outskirts of the hamlet is Guilderland High School and the Northeast Industrial Park.

The Rural Guilderland area occupies the western portion of Town, including the Village of Altamont, and consists of diverse natural environments, active farmland and agricultural operations, rural residences and close-knit neighborhoods and hamlets, steep cliffs, hills and overlooks of the Helderberg Escarpment and Settles Hill, and the streams, creeks, and water bodies that contribute to local and regional drinking water resources. Many areas of rural Guilderland offer panoramic views of the Helderberg Escarpment and John Boyd Thacher State Park. Contributing to these rural settings are uses such as the Albany Country Club property located off of Wormer Road and Grant Hill Road. The Country Club consists of 844 acres with much of that acreage remaining undeveloped and forested areas along the Normanskill. Also, on the Wormer Road there is a property with a Conservation easement on 57 acres along the Normanskill. In 2023, the National Park Service designated Thacher Park as a National Natural Landmark due to its distinctive ridge of the Helderberg Escarpment, which, in addition to its scenic allure, stands as a living testament to the geological evolution and ecological diversity of the region.

#### Key Objectives Related to Town Character:

1. **Preserve Existing Character** - Protect unique architectural styles, historic buildings, and natural landscapes that contribute to Guilderland's identity.
2. **Guide Future Development** - The Plan Update aims to ensure new development aligns with the Town's desired character, whether it is through architectural guidelines, open space preservation, or other measures.
3. **Promote Walkable Neighborhoods** - Encouraging pedestrian-friendly streets, mixed-use development, and access to amenities can help foster a strong sense of community and enhance the Town's livability.
4. **Protect Natural Resources** - The Plan Update includes goals to safeguard environmentally sensitive areas, open spaces, and recreational opportunities that contribute to the Town's character and quality of life.
5. **Balance Growth and Preservation** - A core objective is to manage growth in a way that doesn't overwhelm the Town's existing character or degrade its unique qualities.
6. **Enhance Community Identity** - The Plan Update aims to strengthen community identity through public art, cultural events, and other initiatives that celebrate the town's unique history and culture.

# Goals

A series of thematic goals were created to address the priorities identified in the Town vision. Goals were informed by community input and developed through a collaborative process involving the CPUC, theme-based subcommittees, and the planning team, which worked to solicit and synthesize the information provided. Six (6) thematic priority areas – drawn from the Town vision – were identified. The goals associated with those priority areas are listed below:

**Figure 1.1: Comprehensive Plan Goals**

Theme Category	Goals
Agriculture	Ensure the long-term viability of agriculture as a vocation and economic pursuit within the Town of Guilderland by prioritizing the preservation of suitable farmland and by promoting agriculture as an important component of the Town's economy and character.
Business, Employment & Fiscal Resources	Establish and promote a diverse and strategic economic base that provides income, employment, and revenue to the community in a manner compatible with the future land use and unique identity of Guilderland.
Environment, Climate Change & Resiliency	Protect the natural resources that support quality of life and Town character in Guilderland through strategic hazard mitigation and resiliency measures to address the impacts of a changing climate.
Neighborhoods & Housing	Provide a balanced blend of quality housing opportunities, including a desirable range of housing types and price ranges, which are affordable and accessible to residents.
Parks, Recreation, Open Space & Historic Resources	Provide access to a diverse network of well-maintained active and passive recreational facilities for Guilderland residents of all ages and abilities.
	Prioritize the preservation of open space in the Town, particularly where such areas perform critical ecosystem functions and/or contribute to scenic resources that influence the character, aesthetics, economy, health and welfare of the Town.
	Preserve Guilderland's historic resources and enhance cultural opportunities in the community.
Transportation & Mobility	Provide safe, convenient, and efficient transportation options for people and goods within, through, and around the Town, which are supportive of the Town's future land use plan and which minimize the negative impacts of traffic on the Town's character and quality of life.

# The Albany Pine Bush Ecosystem

The Albany Pine Bush ecosystem is one of the best examples of inland pitch pine-scrub oak barrens in the world. The Albany Pine Bush ecosystem is located between the Cities of Albany and Schenectady and primarily in three municipalities: the City of Albany, the Town of Colonie, and the Town of Guilderland. The ecosystem once covered 56,000 acres of land, and is now about one tenth of its size.

The boundaries of the Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission Study Area are Fuller Road on the east, Central Avenue on the north, Western Avenue on the south and Route 146 on

the east. Within the Study Area is the remaining approximately 6,920 acres of Pine Bush ecosystem. Only about 3,400 acres of the Pine Bush ecosystem has been protected and is dedicated to the Albany Pine Bush Preserve, leaving approximately 3,520 acres of ecosystem that is privately owned and is in danger of being destroyed through development.

The single largest portion of privately-owned undeveloped Pine Bush ecosystem is located in the Town of Guilderland and constitutes approximately 1,795 acres. The Town of Guilderland should strive to protect all of this remaining, undeveloped Pine Bush ecosystem.

## Formation of the Preserve

The Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission (APBPC) was formed in 1988 through the passage of Article 46 of the Environmental Conservation Law by the New York State Legislature to protect, manage, and restore the globally rare inland pitch pine-scrub oak barrens ecosystem known as the Albany Pine Bush. Save the Pine Bush, a local volunteer activist group, played a key role in protecting the Preserve's ecosystem through successful litigation. The Commission's approach combines land acquisition with active ecological management, including prescribed fire, to Preserve and restore the ecosystem for both ecological benefit and public use.

The formation of the APBPC followed decades of conservation efforts driven by the recognition of the Pine Bush's ecological significance, including its globally rare habitat and endangered species like the Karner blue butterfly. The legislation recognized the area as a landscape of rare and endangered species and communities. The APBPC was established as a public benefit corporation, not a state agency, operating with its own budget primarily funded by the New York State Environmental Protection Fund. It is governed by a board representing various stakeholders, including state agencies, local governments, The Nature Conservancy, and citizen representatives.

## The Albany Pine Bush Preserve

The Albany Pine Bush Preserve is a large nature area featuring unique inland pine barrens, rolling sand dunes, and diverse habitats, including forests, grasslands, and ravines. Managed for public recreation and education, it is known for its nearly 20 miles of trails, a Discovery Center, and its crucial role in protecting species like the federally endangered Karner blue butterfly. The Preserve's ecosystem relies on fire for rejuvenation, a process now managed through a prescribed fire program, and it is a recognized National Natural Landmark for its extraordinary sand dunes and rare plant communities.



Albany Pine Bush Preserve  
Source: [Northern Woodlands](#)



*Albany Pine Bush Preserve Trail Marker*

Source: [Teevio](#)

The Preserve is a rare inland pine barren, a fire-dependent ecosystem that thrives in sandy, nutrient-poor soil. A signature feature of the landscape, these dunes create a unique visual and provide habitat for specialized species. The Preserve is home to over 1,500 plant and animal species, including the federally endangered Karner blue butterfly, as well as sand-burrowing amphibians.

## Mission and Goals

The APBPC's mission is to protect and manage the unique natural communities and species of the Albany Pine Bush, while also allowing for controlled public recreational and educational use. The long-term vision is to protect 5,380 acres to ensure the ecosystem's long-term viability. This means the Commission is still working to Preserve over 1,900 additional acres. The protected land includes not only existing pine barrens but also areas being restored. The Commission uses methods like prescribed fire, mowing, and tree removal to manage these areas and reverse damage from invasive species. Key goals include:

- Acquiring land from willing sellers to protect 5,380 acres and connect fragmented parcels.
- Restoring habitats, such as creating areas for the Karner blue butterfly.
- Using scientific management methods, including prescribed fire, mechanical removal, and invasive species control.
- Providing educational programs through the Albany Pine Bush Discovery Center to promote stewardship.
- Engaging the community through volunteer programs and events.
- Offering over 20 miles of trails for passive recreation compatible with conservation goals

## Land Preservation Policies

The APBPC aims to create a connected Preserve by acquiring land within a designated "study area". Land is protected through fee acquisition from willing landowners, donations, and conservation easements. A "Vision Map" guides protection priorities, identifying areas for full or partial protection based on their ecological value and ability to connect existing parcels. The APBPC

lacks regulatory authority over development but works cooperatively with landowners and advises member agencies on potential environmental impacts, and offers mitigation recommendations. Rules are in place to protect Preserved lands from damage and ensure appropriate public use.

## Fire Management Policies

Fire is a crucial natural element of the pine barrens ecosystem. The APBPC implements a prescribed fire program, initiated in 1991, to reintroduce controlled burns that mimic natural fire effects. The goals of these burns are to restore fire-dependent plant communities and create habitats necessary for species like the Karner blue butterfly, as well as to reduce the risk of severe wildfires by managing fuel build-up. Prescribed fires are conducted under strict guidelines, involving detailed planning, optimal weather and fuel conditions, and trained personnel.



*Albany Pine Bush Preserve Fire Management*

Source: [Albany.com](http://Albany.com)

## Partial and Full Protection Areas

The APBPC uses areas of partial and full protection to create a larger, connected habitat for native species while guiding strategic land acquisition efforts. Different levels of protection allow the Commission to prioritize land based on its ecological value and ability to contribute to the overall health of the ecosystem. The Pine Bush is a globally rare inland pitch pine-scrub oak barrens ecosystem that has become fragmented by development. By protecting and restoring native plant communities, the Commission connects these fragmented parcels into a larger, more viable ecosystem. Larger, connected areas of protected habitat improve the long-term survival chances of

native Pine Bush species. For example, a bigger, more integrated Preserve is essential for the recovery of the federally endangered Karner blue butterfly and other fire-dependent wildlife.

The APBPC has a limited budget and must prioritize which properties to protect. A vision map of the Pine Bush study area guides this process, recommending different levels of protection for different areas. This allows for strategic acquisition through purchase, donation, or easements from willing landowners.

## Partial Protection Areas      Full Protection Areas

In the Albany Pine Bush Preserve Ecosystem, partial protection areas are designated for lands within the Preserve's larger study area that are recommended for protection as open space but not necessarily full protection. These areas are considered valuable for connecting habitats or supporting the Preserve's ecosystem, but they may have limitations on direct public access or management. The goal is to balance ecological needs with potential land uses and to work with willing landowners to eventually incorporate these areas into the fully protected Preserve. The purpose of the partial protection areas:

**Connecting Habitats:** These areas help link fragmented parcels of land, creating larger, more viable habitats for native species.

**Supporting the Ecosystem:** They are identified as important for the long-term health and viability of the entire Albany Pine Bush ecosystem.

**Balancing Protection and Use:** While not designated for full protection like the dark green areas, they are considered crucial for maintaining the integrity of the Pine Bush and are subject to specific protection goals.

Full protection areas within the Albany Pine Bush Preserve are designated zones where the primary purpose is to create and protect a viable, connected landscape of the inland pine barrens ecosystem, ensuring the long-term survival of its rare species and unique characteristics. These areas are crucial for restoring native plant communities, providing undisturbed habitat for wildlife, and connecting fragmented parcels to create a larger, healthier ecosystem that is dependent on natural processes like fire. The purpose of full protection areas:

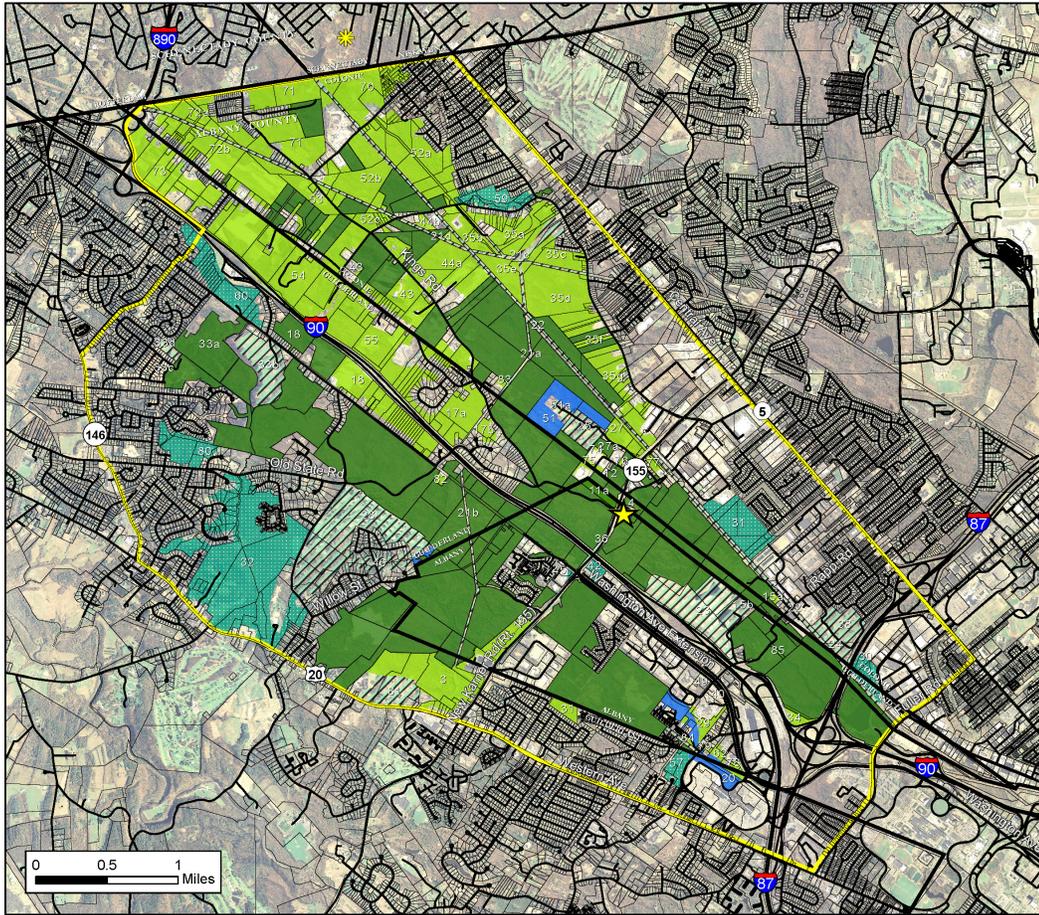
**Habitat Connectivity:** To connect isolated patches of pine barrens, creating a larger, more sustainable landscape for both plant and animal species, including the federally endangered Karner blue butterfly.

**Ecosystem Viability:** To ensure the long-term survival of the globally rare inland pine barrens ecosystem by protecting and enhancing the specific conditions it needs to thrive.

**Protection of Rare Species:** To conserve the unique and often endangered species that are dependent on the pine barrens environment, such as specialized plants and wildlife.

**Restoration of Native Conditions:** To restore and protect native plant communities, which are often fire-dependent, to create the conditions necessary for a healthy pine barrens landscape.

**Minimizing Disturbance:** To concentrate human activity and recreational use in designated zones, allowing the interior of the Preserve to remain a safe and secure refuge for wildlife.



**Management Plan For The Albany Pine Bush Preserve**

- Woodlawn Preserve**
- Discovery Center
- Study Area  
13,000 acres
- 2017 Vision Map**
- Protected Lands
- Recommended Full Protection
- Recommended Partial Protection
- Protection Agreement/Easement
- Recommended Open Space
- Sources:  
Imagery - 2007, 1 foot Natural Color Orthoimagery, New York State Office of Cyber Security & Critical Infrastructure Coordination.  
Vision Map - 2010, Albany Pine Bush Preserve

Prepared By:  
  
 March 2017

**Figure 8:**  
 2017 Protection Priorities and Vision  
 Prepared by: Tyler Briggs, Fire Management and GIS Specialist

*Figure 1.1: Albany Pine Bush Preserve Management Plan, 2017 Protection Priorities and Vision*  
 Source: [Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission](#)

The Albany Pine Bush Preserve Management Plan Map (Figure 1.1) shows the areas within the Preserve that are already protected, along with lands identified in the 2017 Vision Plan for full or partial protection. The Pine Bush Preserve Map for Remaining Large Open Spaces in Guilderland (Figure 1.2) focuses on parcels within the Pine Bush Study Area that contain more than two acres of undeveloped land (shown in yellow). This map highlights efforts to preserve these remaining undeveloped parcels. It is important to note that some of the parcels shown are already under protection and/or may contain single family dwelling on the parcels.

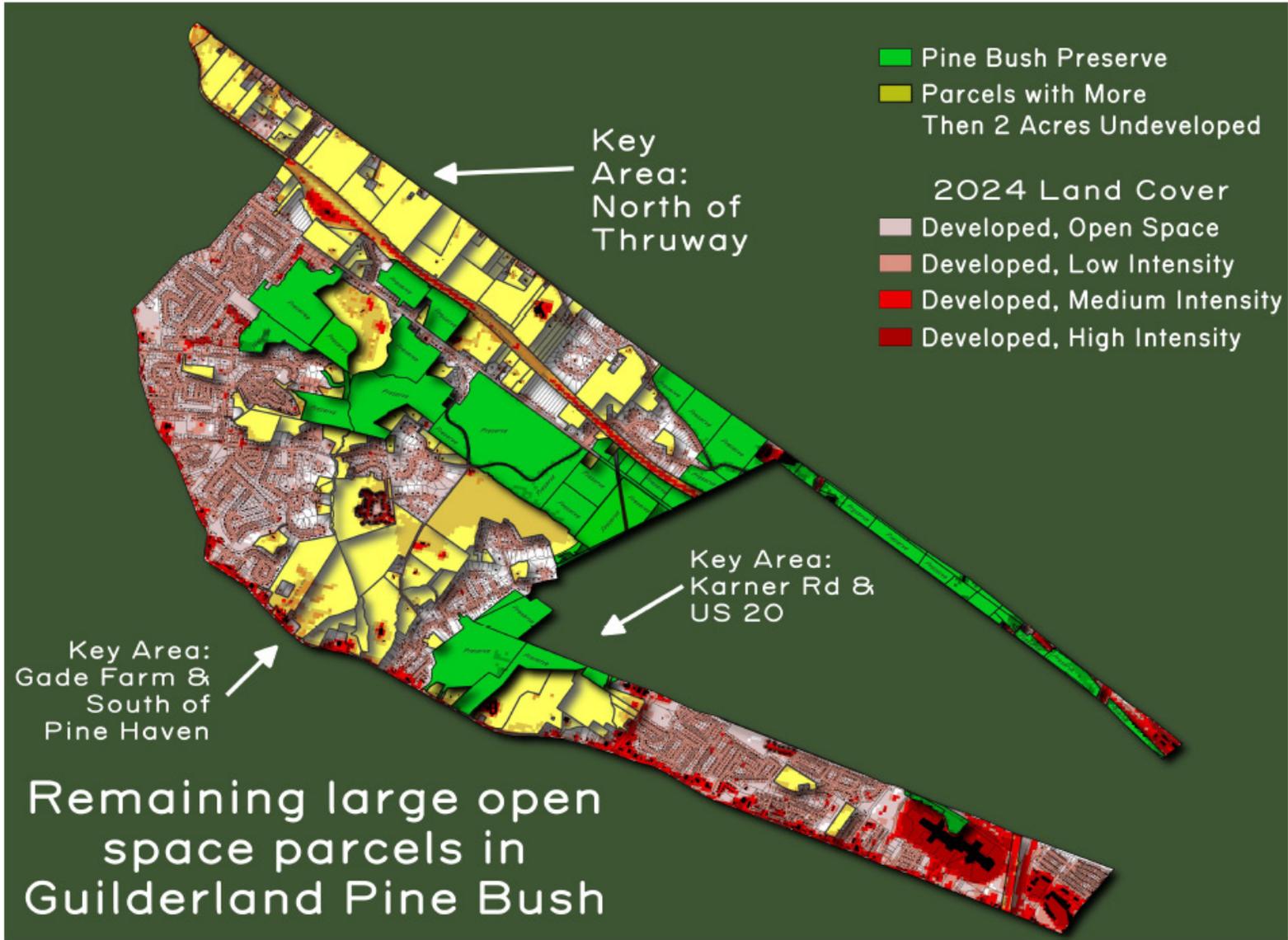


Figure 1.2: The Pine Bush Preserve Map for Remaining Large Open Space in Guilderland  
Source: [Save the Pine Bush](#)

## Community Benefits

**Recreational opportunities:** The Preserve offers over 20 miles of trails for non-motorized recreation, including hiking, running, and wildlife observation. These opportunities provide stress relief and a connection to nature for residents.

**Educational resources:** The Albany Pine Bush Discovery Center and Preserve trails are a "living lab" that provides educational programs for local schools and the general public.

**Preserving community character:** Guilderland has explicitly recognized the importance of conserving open space and the benefits of a "green infrastructure" of connected trails to its quality of life.



*Albany Pine Bush Preserve welcome center*

Source: [All trails.com](https://www.alltrails.com)

## Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission Technical Committee

The purpose of the Albany Pine Bush Preserve Technical Committee is to advise municipal and state planning agencies on how to balance economic development with the conservation of the Preserve's natural resources. The Technical Committee also offers guidance to the Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission (APBPC) staff on protecting and managing the Preserve's environmental and cultural resources. Key functions of the Technical Committee include:

**Advising planning agencies:** The Technical Committee provides expert advice to government bodies on development proposals near the Preserve. Its input helps ensure that new construction, such as commercial or residential projects, does not negatively impact the protected inland pine barrens ecosystem.

**Reviewing development projects:** The Technical Committee reviews specific proposals and applications, discussing potential issues with applicants and recommending solutions. For example, the Technical Committee has evaluated plans for community solar projects and proposed bypass roads, assessing their effect on species and management of adjacent Preserve lands.

**Protecting endangered species:** A critical focus of the committee's work is the protection of the Preserve's rare and endangered species, including the Karner blue butterfly. The Technical Committee reviews proposals for their potential impact on wildlife movement and habitat.

**Supporting the APBPC:** The Technical Committee provides technical recommendations to the APBPC staff on issues related to the Preserve's ecosystem management and land protection efforts. The committee's expertise is used to evaluate management plans and ecological studies.

Members of the Albany Pine Bush Preserve Technical Committee are experts from various agencies and organizations involved in the Preserve's management and conservation. Members of the Technical Committee include individuals from the NYSDEC (NYS Department of Environmental Conservation), the USFWS (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), and the Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission itself, such as environmental analysts, endangered species biologists, and regional wildlife supervisors and local government representatives. The Town of Guilderland has representation on the Technical Committee.

# Importance for the Town of Guilderland in Preserving Land within the Pine Bush Ecosystem

It is important for the Town of Guilderland to preserve land in the Albany Pine Bush ecosystem to protect a globally rare ecosystem, conserve endangered wildlife, manage stormwater, and maintain the region's character. The Town is a partner in creating and managing the Preserve and its future land-use decisions have significant environmental consequences.

## Ecological Importance

**Protecting a unique ecosystem:** The Albany Pine Bush ecosystem is one of the best examples of an inland pitch pine-scrub oak barrens in the world. This unique ecosystem, formed from ancient glacial lake sand deposits, requires periodic wildfires to maintain its health and open character. The APBPC uses controlled burns to mimic this natural process and prevent more dangerous wildfires.

**Conserving endangered species:** This special ecosystem provides crucial habitat for a variety of rare plants and animals, including the federally endangered Karner blue butterfly. The butterfly depends on the Wild Blue Lupine, which flourishes in the Preserve's sandy soils and open spaces.

**Preventing habitat fragmentation:** Preserving land within the Pine Bush helps connect fragmented barrens, creating a larger, more viable habitat. This improves the long-term survival prospects for the plant and animal species that live there.



Albany Pine Bush Preserve Karner Blue Butterfly  
Source: [wgna.com](http://wgna.com)

## Environmental Benefits for the Town

**Stormwater management:** The sandy soil of the pine barrens is naturally effective at absorbing and filtering rainwater. Preserving undeveloped land prevents flooding and erosion that can accompany development.

**Maintaining air quality:** Land preservation, particularly the protection of native trees, improves air quality for the community by filtering pollutants.

**Reducing light and noise pollution:** A Preserve buffer zone helps insulate nearby residences from noise and light pollution associated with urban development.



Albany Pine Bush Preserve  
Source: [Scenic Hudson.org](http://ScenicHudson.org)

# 02 AGRICULTURE

**Goal:** Ensure the long-term viability of agriculture as a vocation and economic pursuit within the Town of Guilderland by prioritizing the preservation of suitable farmland and by promoting agriculture as an important component of the Town’s economy and character.

## Overview

The Town of Guilderland’s landscape and historic settlement patterns have been influenced by its agricultural history. Lands at the base of the Helderberg Escarpment, and along the Normans Kill were used for food production by indigenous peoples during the pre-colonial period and later by early European settlers to the region, prior to Guilderland’s incorporation as a Town in 1803.

Agriculture plays a multifaceted role in modern-day Guilderland. Agriculture remains an important sector in the Town’s economy, preserves rural viewsheds that are important to the Town’s identity and character, and influences ecosystems that support plant and animal life, both within the Town and beyond its borders. Farmland provides watershed protection and wildlife habitat such as meadows and pastures, which are vital to species requiring open areas for feeding and breeding. Local and regional visitors to Guilderland’s farmers’ market, farm stands, orchards, vineyards, nurseries, breweries, and other businesses benefit from access to locally grown products, knowing that support for such businesses helps bolster employment and investment in the community.

Agricultural operations and the development of infrastructure – road, water, and energy -- necessary to support such operations can frequently be in tension with each other. The inauguration of the Great Western Turnpike (now US-20) in 1799 helped to connect Guilderland’s

farmers with distant markets for their products, but transportation infrastructure is frequently a precursor to population growth, which puts pressure on agricultural land uses over time. In more recent history, advancements in solar and wind energy generation technology have led to demand for undeveloped lands for solar arrays or windmills, creating land-lease opportunities for farmers wishing to supplement the incomes they derive from agricultural land uses but causing concern about the potential loss of crucial scenic resources.

Agriculture is a land use activity that is tied directly to – and dependent upon – the natural resources of the area. Chief among those natural resources is high-quality soil. The Town has a high concentration of well-drained soils that are very conducive to farming (see Figure 2.5: Agricultural Resources Map). While some areas with these productive soils have been converted to suburban or low-density residential use in preceding decades and remain under development pressure, agricultural activities still take place in rural Guilderland. (Rural Guilderland is defined as those lands west of the CSX rail line and the Normans Kill.) This section presents information from several sources to detail the extent and role of agriculture in the Town



*Agricultural operations near the intersection of Becker Road and Dunnsville Road in Guilderland*

# Farmland Soils

Successful farming depends largely on suitable topography, soils, and water to support agriculture. Land that is too steep, arid, or rocky presents significant challenges to successful agricultural operations, although advancements in agricultural techniques such as greenhouses and hydroponics can compensate for soil deficiencies in certain instances. That said, soils conducive to farming can be found across a substantial portion of Guilderland (See Figure 2.5). Three types of soils are considered farmland soils: Prime Farmland Soils, Prime Farmland Soils if Drained, and Farmland Soils of Statewide Importance. Agricultural practices can also highly influence soil health. Good soil management practices can mitigate climate change and can lead to more climate resiliency.

## Prime Farmland Soil

Prime Farmland, as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and is available for these uses. It could be cultivated land, pastureland, forestland, or other land, but it is not urban, or developed land, or waterbodies. Prime Farmland Soils have the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to economically produce sustained high yields of crops when proper management, including water management, and acceptable farming methods are applied.

In general, Prime Farmland has an adequate and dependable supply of moisture from precipitation or irrigation, a favorable temperature and growing season, acceptable acidity or alkalinity, an acceptable salt and sodium content, and few or no rocks. The water supply is dependable and of adequate quality.

Prime Farmland Soils are permeable to water and air. They are not excessively erodible or saturated with water for long periods, and either are not frequently flooded during the growing season or are protected from flooding. Slopes range mainly from 0 to 6 percent.

## Farmland Soil of Statewide Importance

In general, land that does not meet the criteria for Prime Farmland is considered to be "Farmland of Statewide Importance" for the production of food, feed, fiber, forage, and oilseed crops. Generally, this includes soils that nearly meet the requirements for Prime Farmland and that economically produce high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods. Some areas may produce yields as high as those of Prime Farmland if conditions are favorable.

## Prime Farmland if Drained

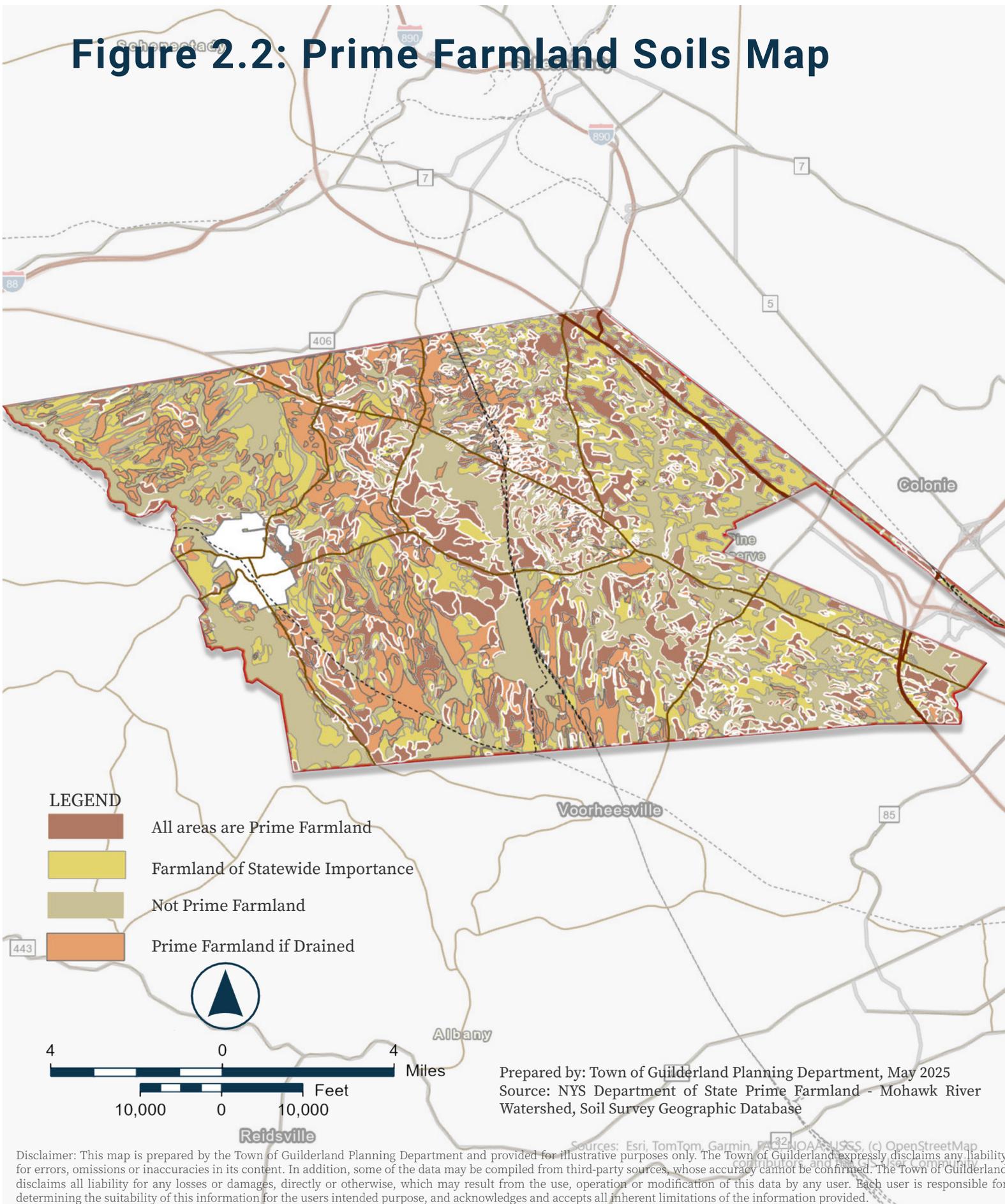
Soils that are designated as Prime Farmland if Drained meet all the prime farmland criteria except for depth to seasonal high-water table and are suitable if drained. In New York, somewhat poorly drained soils are designated as Prime Farmland if Drained, if they meet all criteria for prime farmland other than depth to water table. The following table details farmland soils in Guilderland:

**Figure 2.1: Soil Type by Acreage**

Soil Type	Acreage in Guilderland
Prime Farmland Soil	10,202.66
Farmland Soils of Statewide Significance	9,325.36
Prime Farmland Soil if Drained	6,779.75

Source: USGS

# Figure 2.2: Prime Farmland Soils Map



Disclaimer: This map is prepared by the Town of Guilderland Planning Department and provided for illustrative purposes only. The Town of Guilderland expressly disclaims any liability for errors, omissions or inaccuracies in its content. In addition, some of the data may be compiled from third-party sources, whose accuracy cannot be confirmed. The Town of Guilderland disclaims all liability for any losses or damages, directly or otherwise, which may result from the use, operation or modification of this data by any user. Each user is responsible for determining the suitability of this information for the users intended purpose, and acknowledges and accepts all inherent limitations of the information provided.

## Farmland Parcels

Farmland parcels, defined by tax assessment data and aerial imagery, can be found across a broad swath of the Town in the valley area. The valley area encompasses the remaining portion of rural Guilderland, not including the Settles Hill and Helderberg Escarpment areas. The valley is a large area with gentle slopes and a mosaic of farmlands, hamlets, wood lots, and water bodies. It contains the Watervliet Reservoir and its three main tributaries: the Bozen Kill, Normans Kill, and Black Creek. The valley contains the bulk of rural Guilderland's agricultural resources. The majority of rural Guilderland's working farmlands are located here - including many within the agricultural district as shown in Figure 2.5. Agricultural uses consist mainly of field crops, with a small number of livestock farms. However, the gentle slopes and access to water supply that make the valley conducive to agriculture also make the valley a prime area for development.

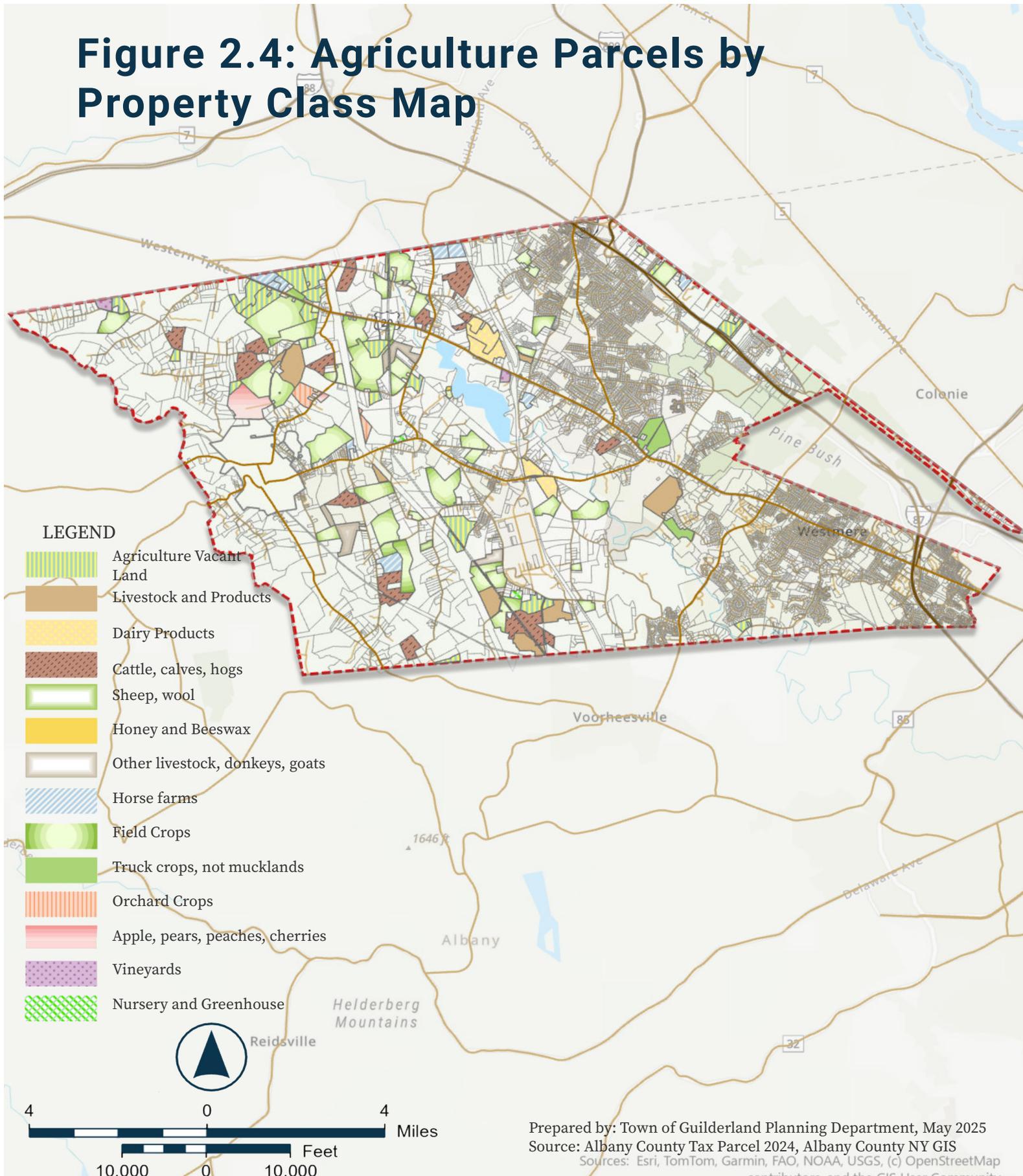
Real property data from 2024 shows that there were 113 actively farmed parcels in Town on just over 5,395 acres. The following table lists the various property classes of these farmed parcels and their total area.

**Figure 2.3: Number and Area of Agriculture Parcels by Property Class**

Property Class	Number of Parcels	Total Acreage
Agricultural Vacant Land (productive)	23	703.58
Livestock and Products	7	457.99
Dairy products: milk, butter and cheese	4	247.89
Cattle, calves, hogs	12	751.21
Sheep and wool	1	13.1
Honey and Beeswax	1	2.7
Other livestock, donkeys, goats	4	204.18
Horse farms	9	224.12
Field crops	40	2321.48
Truck crops, not mucklands	3	157.8
Orchard Crops	3	96.6
Apples, pears, peaches, cherries	2	149.97
Vineyards	2	38.66
Nursery and Greenhouse	2	25.8
<b>Totals</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>5395.08</b>

*Source: 2024 data from the Town of Guilderland*

# Figure 2.4: Agriculture Parcels by Property Class Map



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# Agriculture Districts and Agriculture Assessments

An Agricultural District is a land area identified through New York's Agriculture & Markets Districts Law (Article 25-AA) to help protect current and future farmland from non-agricultural development by reducing competition for limited land resources and helping to prevent local laws that would inhibit farming and raise farm taxes. In an agricultural district, the NY Commissioner of Agriculture is authorized to review local comprehensive plans, legislation, and regulations, and approve or disapprove them according to whether they unreasonably restrict or regulate farm operations within an agricultural district. The Commissioner also reviews any purchase by a municipal or state agency of active farmland larger than one acre, or any land over 10 acres within an agricultural district, to assess the potential impacts on local agricultural resources. Agricultural Districts are developed when interested landowners, who collectively own at least 500 acres of land, request formation of such a district. Farmers and rural landowners enrolled in a state-certified Agricultural District receive important "right-to-farm" protections.

In Guilderland, 239 parcels (as of 2024) encompassing 7,467.43 acres are within the NYS Agricultural District.

Some farms receive an Agricultural Tax Assessment. These are active farmlands that participate in and receive special land assessments through the assessment program established in New York State Agriculture Markets Law, Article 25-aa. These special assessments are based on criteria established in State Law and applied by the Town Assessor, and are determined by crop production, soils, and acreage of farmland. This is a voluntary program designed to reduce, but not eliminate, a farmland owner's property tax liability. Land generally must consist of seven or more acres that were used in the preceding two years for the production for sale of crops, livestock, or livestock products. The annual gross sales of agricultural products generally must average \$10,000 or more for the preceding two years. If an agricultural enterprise is less than seven acres, it may qualify if average annual gross sales equal \$50,000 or more.

Lands having an agricultural assessment are generally considered to be committed to staying in agriculture because there are penalty fees to pay when active farmland that has received an agricultural assessment is converted to non-farm use. If farmland that has received an agricultural assessment is converted to a nonagricultural use (within five years of last receiving an agricultural assessment, if located in an agricultural district and within eight years, or if located outside an agricultural district), a payment to recapture the

taxes for converting such land will be imposed.

A payment for conversion will be equal to five times the taxes saved in the most recent year that the land received an agricultural assessment. In addition, an interest of 6 percent per year compounded annually will be added to the payment amount for each year that the land received an agricultural assessment, not exceeding five years. When only a portion of a parcel is converted, the assessor apportions the assessment, the agricultural assessment and determines the tax savings attributable to the converted portion. The payment for conversion of the portion of the parcel is then computed. Whenever a conversion occurs, the landowner shall notify the assessor within 90 days. Failure to notify may result in a penalty of two times the payments owed to a maximum of \$1,000.

The other kind of tax incentive is New York's 480-a program, designed to promote maintenance of forested areas through best management forestry practices. As of May 2025, there are 76 parcels in Guilderland receiving a 480-a exemption.

## Agriculture Census Data

Data from the US Agricultural Census (Ag Census) confirms that there is a relatively small level of agriculture taking place in Guilderland. Zip codes having data from the 2017 Ag Census in Guilderland are: Guilderland (12084), and Altamont (12009). There were 56 operations identified as farms at that time - most of them were small (24 had less than 50 acres and 32 between 50 to 999 acres).

The Ag Census also provides an indication of the types of farm activities. At that time, 23 farms were listed as having animals, all with sales < \$50,000. Of those, nine had cattle, 12 had chickens, 15 had equine, one had hogs, seven had poultry, and three had sheep. Eleven farms had berry operations, 13 had fruit crops, four had corn/grain, eight had some type of crop operation with sales > \$250,000, three had crop sales (\$50,000 to \$249,000), and 20 had crop sales less than \$50,000. Crops grown in Guilderland at the time of this Census were grain, hay, nursery/greenhouse, maple syrup, oats, orchards, potatoes, and vegetables.

## Albany County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

In 2018, Albany County adopted a county-wide Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan. That plan provides a snapshot of agricultural conditions and trends in the County and offers a comprehensive suite of strategies to promote and preserve agricultural activities. As part of that Plan, the county developed a program for defining and prioritizing farmland for protection. The result of that analysis is the Albany County Priority Farmland for Protection Map (see Figure 2.5). As illustrated on this map, the Valley area in Guilderland where the remaining farms are located shows as priority farmland for protection.



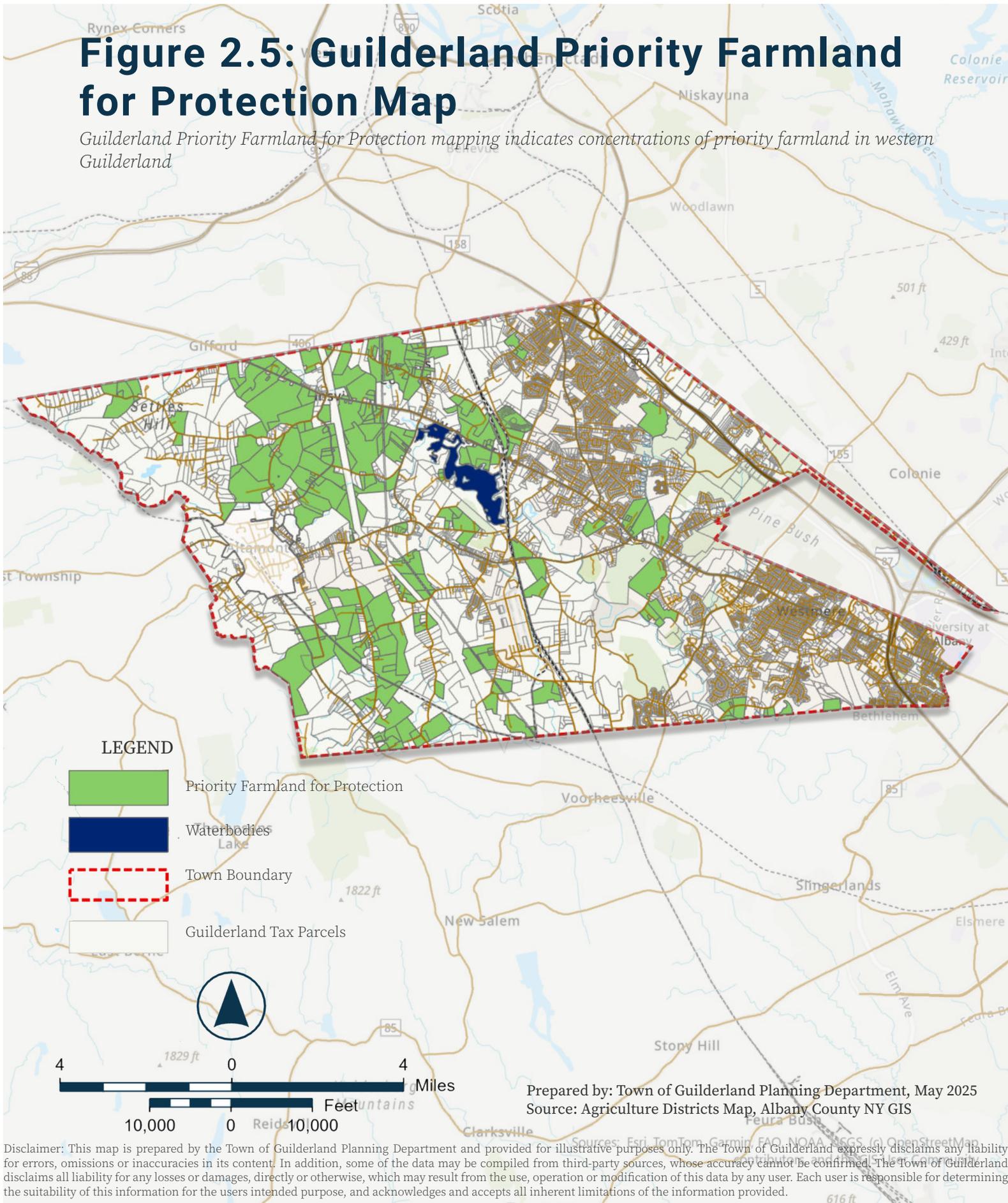
Altamont Orchards located on Dunnsville Road  
Source: [Altamont Orchards](#)



Gade Farm located on Western Avenue  
Source: [Gade Farm](#)

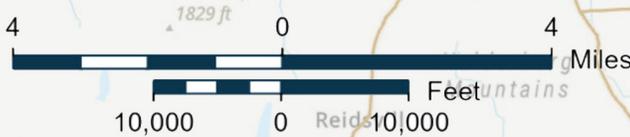
# Figure 2.5: Guiderland Priority Farmland for Protection Map

*Guiderland Priority Farmland for Protection mapping indicates concentrations of priority farmland in western Guiderland*



### LEGEND

- Priority Farmland for Protection
- Waterbodies
- Town Boundary
- Guiderland Tax Parcels



Prepared by: Town of Guiderland Planning Department, May 2025  
Source: Agriculture Districts Map, Albany County NY GIS

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## Role of Agriculture in Guilderland

Farms and other agricultural operations can have a local economic impact that goes beyond generating crops and produce. Agritourism – which includes seasonal opportunities such as apple picking, maple syrup tapping, and Christmas tree harvesting, among other activities – can draw visitors from throughout the region, thus increasing the market for local goods. Guilderland residents also interact with local agriculture in other ways, from visiting local nurseries for landscaping needs and visiting the Guilderland Farmers Market.

During preliminary stakeholder focus group discussions for the Comprehensive Plan Update, agriculture was a topic that arose in both the economic development focus group and the open space/environment focus group. It also emerged as an important topic in the Public Open House & Visioning Workshop, with public input indicating great support for farms and farmland.

Preservation of agricultural land, promotion of sustainable agricultural practices, and use of conservation easements were among the many comments received in support of agriculture. The community values the existing farmland in Guilderland, recognizes its role in contributing to the rural character and to the economy of the area, and sees opportunities to promote new operations and protect agricultural land. Concerns were raised about the loss of farms to development as well as the need to have sustainable agriculture. In addition to development pressure, it was recognized that taxes can present a significant burden for farm operators.



*Apple picking is a seasonal activity that draws residents and visitors to Guilderland's orchards.*



*Vineyards contribute to the Town's agricultural sector.*

# Recommendations

The following recommendations constitute a coordinated, multi-faceted approach toward achieving the goal of prosperous and sustainable agriculture in Guilderland:

## **A-1. Promote agriculture's place in Guilderland's economy by supporting farmers markets, farm stands, and other opportunities for residents to connect with local agricultural businesses.**

Both agricultural producers and Town residents stand to benefit from successful farms, orchards, vineyards, and nurseries, as businesses such as these contribute not only to the local economy, but also to the character of the community. Guilderland's zoning laws are supportive of the Town's agriculture economy. Farm stands are allowed as a permitted use in the agricultural districts and require no land use approvals from the Town. Farm implement stores, farm machinery sales, and other agricultural related businesses are permitted in the agricultural districts subject to Special Use Permit approval from the Zoning Board of Appeals. Garden facility/nursery uses are allowed in the Local Business and General Business Districts subject to Special Use Permit approval from the Zoning Board of Appeals.

A farmers market currently operates from the parking lot of the Guilderland Public Library at 2228 Western Avenue. Should there be a need for the market to expand or relocate, it is recommended that the Town prioritize finding a Town-owned property or a suitable private partnership to host the event. It currently operates on Sundays from July through early October; expansion of offerings to include a longer season and/or a wider range

of value-added agricultural products and local crafts could benefit Guilderland's small business owners but would require a location that could adequately accommodate such an event. The high priority that residents place on access to local food sources should factor into Town decisions about properties within the Town's control.

In addition, the Town can support agricultural operations in Guilderland by recognizing the role that bicycle and pedestrian transportation infrastructure – e.g., sidewalks, bike lanes, multi-use trails – can play in facilitating agri-tourism activities such as wine/brewery tours. Connecting more populated areas of Town to rural farms via active transportation networks helps establish farms as destinations for commercial and recreational opportunities. Further, Town regulations should be in alignment with and supportive of seasonal events such as apple picking, maple syrup tapping, and Christmas tree harvesting, since such activities give residents opportunities to gather as a community and appreciate the charm of rural Guilderland.

## **A-2. Promote and maintain the scenic resources of rural corridors and roads through the use of rural development design guidelines and conservation subdivision practices that prioritize maintenance of rural character.**

Views of the Helderberg Escarpment, orchards, and other agricultural lands are central to the experience of living and moving about in Guilderland. Indeed, the scenic vistas of and from the Escarpment influenced settlement patterns throughout Guilderland's history as a Town. Strong public support for maintaining that important connection to scenic resources was expressed throughout the Comprehensive Plan Update process via public engagement activities.

The Helderberg Escarpment Planning Guide (1999) identified important Escarpment viewshed corridors on sections of the following roadways in western Guilderland:

- Dunnsville Road
- Gardner Road
- Hawes Road
- Frederick Road
- Meadowdale Road
- Depot Road
- Hennessey Road

Rural design guidelines are an important tool at the Town's disposal to regulate building height/bulk, landscaping, setbacks, and other factors that can potentially detract from valued viewsheds. As identified in the Rural Guilderland: Open Space and Farmland Protection Plan (2005), the conservation subdivision approach is another methodology that the Town can employ to "maintain important water resources, provide for usable open space, and generally ensure that development considers the natural environment as the key component to site layout."



*View of Helderberg Escarpment from Gardner Road*

**A-3. The Town should support the Village of Altamont's efforts to implement an interconnection between the water districts to improve the Village's water security. It remains important to focus on water and sewer capacity improvements to support traditional population centers in Town.**

The Town of Guilderland provides water to residents via its own municipal treatment works as well as via connections to the public water supplies of neighboring Rotterdam and Albany. However, areas in western Guilderland are served by smaller branches of the municipal water infrastructure or rely on drilled wells and septic systems. A portion of this population is served by the Village of Altamont water district, an isolated district with limited capacity and without an alternative source for drinking water. The limitations on access to high-capacity water and sewer infrastructure in rural areas of Guilderland have served to inhibit large-scale residential, commercial, or industrial development allowing it to maintain its agricultural viewsheds and lifestyles.

To improve water security and reliability in and around the Village of Altamont, the Village should consider options for redundancy in water sources. This could be in the form of determining if constructing a new water well is feasible, or if a water line extension is feasible. If a waterline extension is the most feasible option, the closest waterline is at the intersection of NYS Route 146 and NYS Route 158 in Guilderland Center. A waterline extension from this intersection and along the NYS Route 146 corridor to Armstrong Drive in Altamont is approximately 1.2 miles. The Village would be the lead agency in the design, construction, and funding of any waterline extension.

The Town can utilize existing land use regulations, such as cluster subdivision and conservation subdivision options in the Town Subdivision regulations to address concerns related to development along a future interconnect. An overlay district is another land use control option that could include additional requirements or standards related to development in addition to the underlying zoning. Overlay districts allow for targeted regulations that address specific needs and concerns in a particular area, which might not be adequately addressed by the base zoning. For example, an overlay district could be created to protect a scenic corridor or agricultural lands with stricter building standards or to preserve the character of a historic district with specific architectural guidelines. Overlay districts can help balance the need for development with the need to protect sensitive resources or maintain the character of an area.

Any proposed new regulations should align with Guilderland's commitment as a registered participant in New York State's Climate Smart Communities program, which aims to "Minimize the greenhouse gas impact of new development through smart-growth strategies. Adopt community plans, land-use policies, building codes, and multi-modal transportation actions to limit sprawl, reduce vehicle miles traveled, support local agriculture, and protect open lands, wetlands, and forests." The Town should understand that research shows isolated residential developments typically

generate lower tax revenue per acre, leading to a situation where municipalities bear a greater burden of maintaining and supporting these areas without proportional returns. This makes the long-term sustainability of isolated growth problematic, both financially and environmentally.

In general, when prioritizing maintenance and upgrades to Guilderland's water and sewer infrastructure, it is recommended that the Town prioritize water lines and wastewater pump stations to serve existing population centers, in order to continue delivering high-quality public utilities to residents and avoid inducing development that is out of alignment with community land use goals.

**A-4. Form a standing Town Agricultural Lands Committee, with oversight by the Town, to enhance and advocate for the productive use of agricultural lands and to serve in an advisory role on agricultural land uses.**

Given the importance of agriculture to Guilderland's identity, it is recommended that the Town create a standing Agricultural Committee to serve as a liaison between the Town and local agricultural producers. In form, the Agricultural Committee would mirror committees that are already in place such as the Traffic Safety Committee or the Tree Preservation Committee, which represent similarly important Town priorities.

With an established liaison between the Town and agricultural land- and businesses owners, there will be a two-way mechanism in place to help the Town share details of relevant policies on Conservation Easement Exemptions, solar energy infrastructure siting, and rural design guidelines while farmers and agricultural business owners can share expertise about relevant land use concerns.

**A-5. Expand participation in the Town's Conservation Easement Program through targeted promotion and potential funding incentives. Lands surrounding Watervliet Reservoir and lands connecting existing Town recreation and open space should be prioritized to advance the goals of watershed protection and open space connectivity.**

In 2022, the Town Board adopted a Conservation Easement Agreement Exemption (Town Code Chapter 251, Article XVI §251-66), establishing a framework to provide financial incentives to those Guilderland landowners willing to forgo development and maintain open space on a portion of their land for a minimum of 15 years. This step was the realization of a recommendation from the Rural Guilderland: Open Space and Farmland Protection Plan (2005). Pursuant to NYS Real Property Tax Law §491-b, the local legislation provides for reductions in property taxes on exempted lands that have been set aside from development. Albany County passed legislation allowing a reduction in County taxes for properties that enroll in the conservation easement program. As of 2025, one Conservation Easement Agreement Exemption had been completed: a 57-acre plot of land on Wormer Road.

Comprehensive Plan Update process. The adoption of the legal framework in 2022 was a key stepping stone; increasing the number of participating landowners will require a multi-pronged approach that encompasses both publicizing the benefits of participation to landowners as well as exploring potential ways to augment the existing benefits, and to have school districts in Guilderland opt into the conservation easement program by allowing reductions in school taxes in order to increase participation rates among landowners.

Maintaining the flexibility that exists in the current tax exemption, i.e., the percentage reduction in property tax liability is tied to the term of conservation, from 15 years to in perpetuity, will be important to address the different needs of landowners. Providing relief from a portion of school taxes, in addition to Town and County taxes, would likely motivate greater levels of participation among landowners.

The use of conservation easements as a tool for engaging willing landowners in the effort of open space preservation has received a substantial amount of support via public engagement activities of the

**A-6. Regulate the development of solar and wind energy installations in agricultural areas of Town. Consider forming a Solar Floating Zone based upon a solar capacity analysis of land within the Town. Consider requiring energy infrastructure designs that allow for agrivoltaics or compatible “dual use” agricultural operations.**

In 2020, the Town amended the Supplemental Regulations (§280-40-v) in its Town Code to regulate the siting, development, and decommissioning of solar energy systems. The Town adopted NY State’s Unified Solar Permit, which provides for streamlined review of solar photovoltaic (PV) installations with a DC capacity of 25 kW or less that meet specified zoning and installation requirements. As a registered “Climate Smart Community” with the NY State Department of Environmental Conservation and as a “Clean Energy Community” recognized by the NY State Energy Research Development Agency (NYSERDA), the Town of Guilderland looks to capitalize on the environmental and economic benefits of renewable energy sources.

In addition to supporting local and State energy goals, however, the purpose of the solar energy regulations in the Town Code includes “Protecting scenic and environmental resources from the impact of major solar energy facilities on parklands, trails, wetlands, wildlife, scenery, floodplains, historical and cultural sites, and

recreational activities.” Term leases of agricultural land for solar and/or wind energy generating infrastructure represent potential supplemental income for owners of large land parcels. The Town, therefore, must balance the needs of agricultural landowners with the community goal of viewshed preservation. To minimize the impact of energy infrastructure on the Town’s scenic resources, it is recommended that Guilderland initiate a solar capacity analysis of lands within the Town, upon which a Solar Floating Zone could be based. The solar capacity analysis would include items such as transmission line capacity, priority agricultural lands, and proximity to identified scenic views/scenic corridors of the Helderberg Escarpment in the zoning districts where large scale, ground mounted solar facilities are allowed.

As technology and best practices in the field of agriculture continue to evolve, it is recommended the Town continue to encourage “agrivoltaics” or “dual use” arrangements in which energy infrastructure and agricultural production can compatibly take place on the same land parcel.

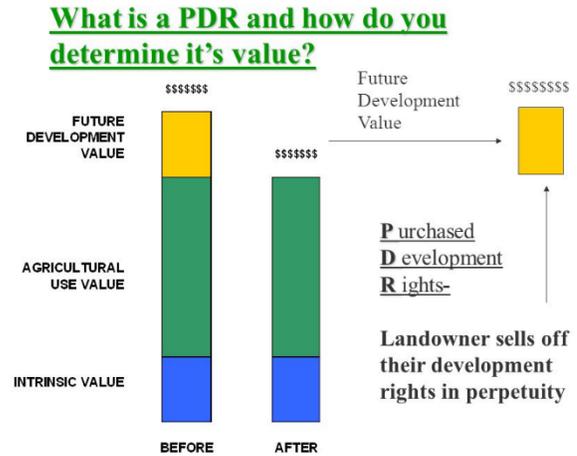
**A-7. Create opportunities for local retail/farm service businesses on US-20 near the Princetown municipal line in a manner that is consistent with rural design guidelines and the character of the surrounding area.**

The great majority of business activity in the Town of Guilderland is conducted along Western Avenue between Albany city line to its intersection with Carman Road/NY-146. There are far fewer commercial offerings, however, serving northern areas of the Town. Limited Local Business (LB) zoning exists at Western Turnpike’s intersections with Dunnsville Road and State Route 158, but the need to travel toward Albany to procure most goods and services contributes to traffic congestion along stretches of Western Avenue in more densely populated areas of Town. To better serve residents of rural parts of Town and to reduce vehicle miles traveled for commercial trips, it is recommended that the Town evaluate opportunities to expand opportunities for additional local retail and/or

farm service businesses along Western Turnpike between State Route 158 and the Princetown town line, provided that such businesses conform to rural design guidelines that ensure compatibility with the character of the surrounding area. Uses such as farm implement store, farm machinery sales and service, and garden facility/nursery are uses allowed in the Agriculture, RA3 District and RA5 District subject to Special Use Permit approval. The current Town Zoning Code permits Local Retail uses to operate in a building up to 20,000 square feet. Limited public water and sewer systems are available west of the NYS Route 158/Western Turnpike intersection and would require new commercial uses to utilize private wells and septic systems.

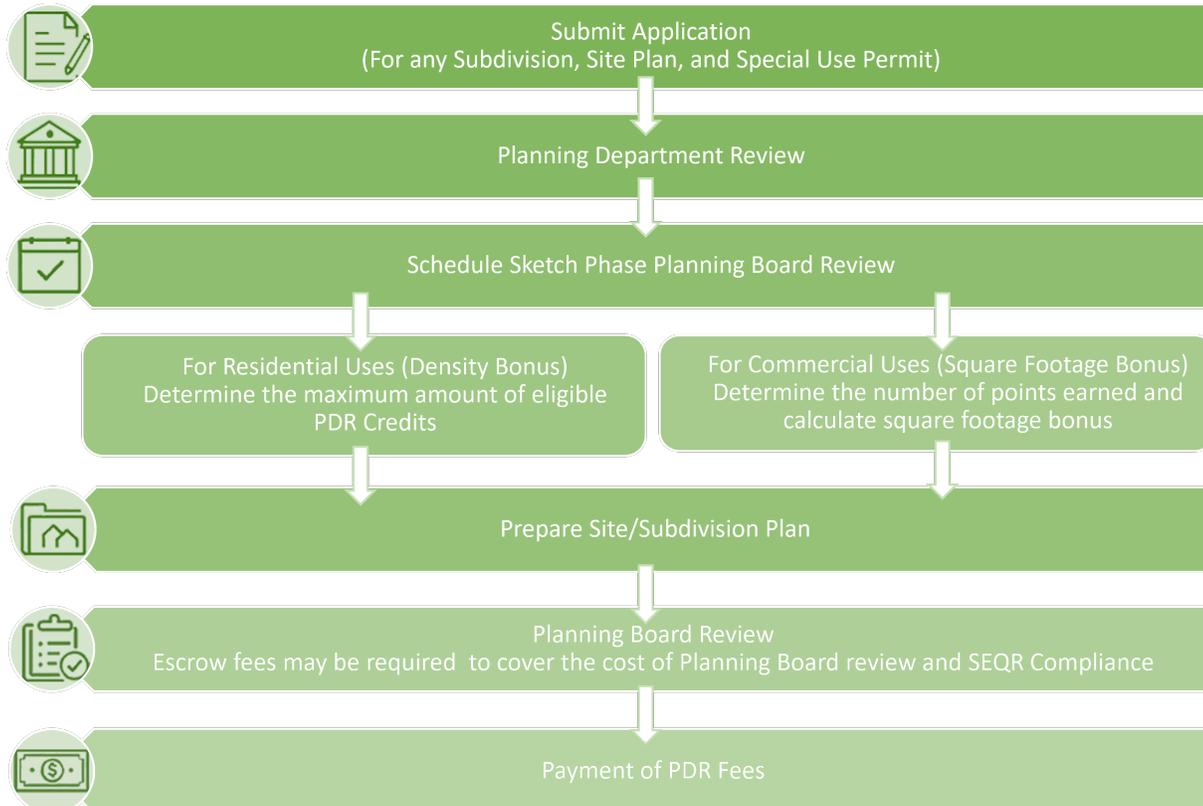
**A-8. Consider implementing a flexible, voluntary Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program to preserve farmland and open space.**

To complement Guilderland’s Conservation Easement Exemption program, the Rural Guilderland: Open Space and Farmland Protection Plan (2005) included a recommendation to establish a Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program to limit the loss of important open space and farmland soils to development. A PDR program is a voluntary land preservation tool where landowners sell their development rights to a government or conservation organization, allowing them to continue using their land while preventing future development. While a conservation easement grants property tax relief, a PDR program provides upfront funding to landowners who voluntarily agree to leave a portion of their property undeveloped. For some landowners, access to capital in the near term is a determining factor in retaining the ability to farm or otherwise retain property ownership. Municipal funding sources, often in partnership with funding from land trusts or other conservation organizations, are required to incentivize the voluntary participation of landholders.



A purchase of development rights provides cash for a landowner and may result in a reduction of estate taxes and/or property taxes on the protected property. The proceeds of any sale may, however, be subject to capital gains taxes and remain part of the landowner's taxable estate.

**Figure 2.6: Example of Steps to Acquire PDR Credits**



**A-9. Partner with the Albany County and Schenectady Council Soil and Water Conservation District to assist local agricultural operations in preventing adverse impacts on Guilderland watersheds from agricultural runoff.**

Maintaining high water quality in Guilderland's rivers, streams, and wetland areas has been identified as a key priority by the Town, State agencies, residents, and other stakeholders. To that end, the Town has instituted buffer zones in the form of setbacks to prevent incompatible development within 500 feet of the high-water line of the Watervliet Reservoir, within 250 feet of tributaries that directly flow into the reservoir, and 100 feet for all other watercourses. As unpaved and permeable surface, agricultural lands have the capacity to mitigate stormwater runoff to Guilderland's waterways, but that beneficial effect can be negated if agricultural best practices are not employed to prevent nutrient-rich soil and water from entering nearby water bodies.

The Albany County Soil and Water Conservation District spearheads the voluntary Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) program, which is designed to help farmers protect important environmental resources. In cooperation with the local AEM team, farmers can tract their environmental stewardship and contribute to an enduring positive image of agriculture in the community. The AEM program also helps direct valuable local, State, and federal resources to the farms that need them. It is recommended that the Town of Guilderland promote partnerships with the AEM program, using the aforementioned Agricultural Committee as a liaison to spur participation in AEM and to publicize its successes in maintaining environmental quality in Town.

The application of biosolids on agricultural lands has recently become a concern and issue in Albany County as it relates to source water protection of drinking water sources. As defined by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, biosolids are the solid or semi-solid organic materials resulting from the treatment of wastewater carried through sewer lines from homes and businesses. Biosolids can be used on agricultural land, forests, rangelands, disturbed land in need of reclamation, or nonagricultural lands like parks, golf courses, and home lawns and gardens.

In April 2025, the New York State Senate introduced legislation that would put a 5-year moratorium on the spread of biosolids on farmland, requires permit holders for biosolid use to test for PFAS in groundwater and soil, and wastewater treatment facilities will have to test for PFAS as well. Many experts and homeowners say spreading of biosolids on agricultural lands is to blame for harmful chemicals leaching into groundwater.

In the spring of 2025, the Capital District Regional Planning Commission formed a stakeholder group to commence the process of developing the "Watervliet Reservoir Drinking Water Source Protection Plan". Town of Guilderland officials are part of the stakeholder group. The purpose of developing the Plan is to:

1. Prepare a Drinking Water Source Protection Map.
2. Create a Potential Contaminant Source Inventory.
3. Identify Protection and Management methods.
4. Develop an Implementation Timeline.
5. Designate a Plan Management Team.

The Town should take an active role in assessing how agricultural and other land use activities in the Watervliet Reservoir watershed may impact water quality. The Town should consider the following recommendations:

1. Review the existing Watervliet Reservoir and watercourse setbacks in Section 280-30 of Town Zoning Law to assess if the current setbacks provide adequate protection.
2. Review the existing Permitted Uses, Site Plan Uses and Special Uses in Section 280-11 of Town Zoning Code to assess if additional protection measures need to be implemented to protect the Watervliet Reservoir, its major tributaries and other watercourses.
3. Consider implementing recommendations from the Watervliet Reservoir Drinking Water Source Protection Plan once the Plan is completed.

4. Consider agricultural Best Management Practices that can be implemented to protect the Watervliet Reservoir, its tributaries and other watercourses.
5. Coordinate with Schenectady County to ensure the Watervliet Reservoir watershed, upstream from the reservoir, is adequately protected.

**A-10. Update zoning code to align with the vision and goals of the Comprehensive Plan.**

In order to ensure that Town regulations work in concert to help support the varieties of agriculture taking place in Guilderland now and in the future, the following modifications to Town code are recommended:

- Update the definition of Agriculture or Farming in the Town of Guilderland Zoning Code to eliminate the portion of the definition that states “for the primary purpose of obtaining a profit”.
- Review the purpose statements for agricultural zoning districts in the Town Zoning Code to determine if any updates may be necessary based on recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan Update.
- Update the definition of Angle of Repose in Section 280-5 and 280-30 of Town Zoning Code to be applied where watercourses are not present at the toe of a slope. As currently defined in Town Zoning Law, an angle of repose only applies to steep slopes if a watercourse is at the toe of the slope.
- Cluster/Conservation Subdivision regulations in Section 280-35 of Town Zoning Code allow a reduction in lot size to 20,000 square feet in the RA3 District and 30,000 square feet in the RA5 District.



# 03

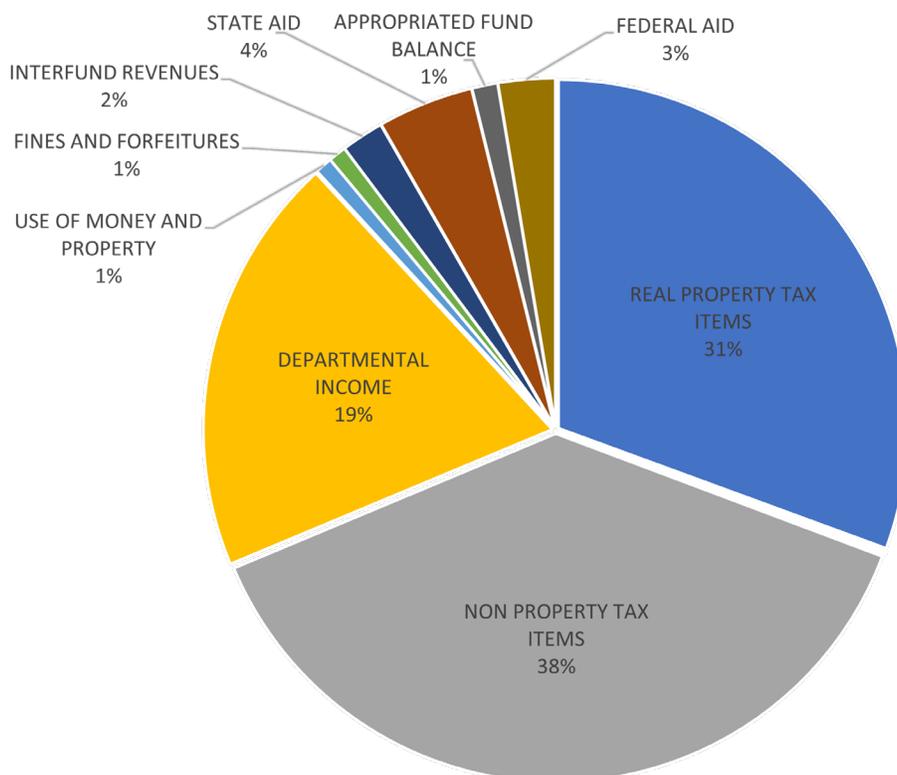
## BUSINESS, EMPLOYMENT & FISCAL RESOURCES

**Goal:** Establish and promote a diverse and strategic economic base that provides income, employment, and revenue to the community in a manner compatible with the future land use and unique identity of Guilderland.

### Overview

While the Town of Guilderland may be more widely known in the Capital District for its attractive and diverse residential neighborhoods, its commercial areas are equally important in supporting the conditions for a high quality of life. Among other things, commercial activity in Guilderland strengthens the tax base that funds essential public services, including high-quality public education, regular road maintenance, water treatment, and emergency response. Land used for commerce in Guilderland takes many forms: Productive agricultural fields, large and small retail centers, warehouse complexes, office parks, tree nurseries, and much more. Western Avenue/US-20 is Guilderland’s primary commercial corridor, with the highest concentrations of private-sector employment at Western’s intersection with the Northway/I-87 and State Route 155, in the eastern half of Town (see Figure 3.2).

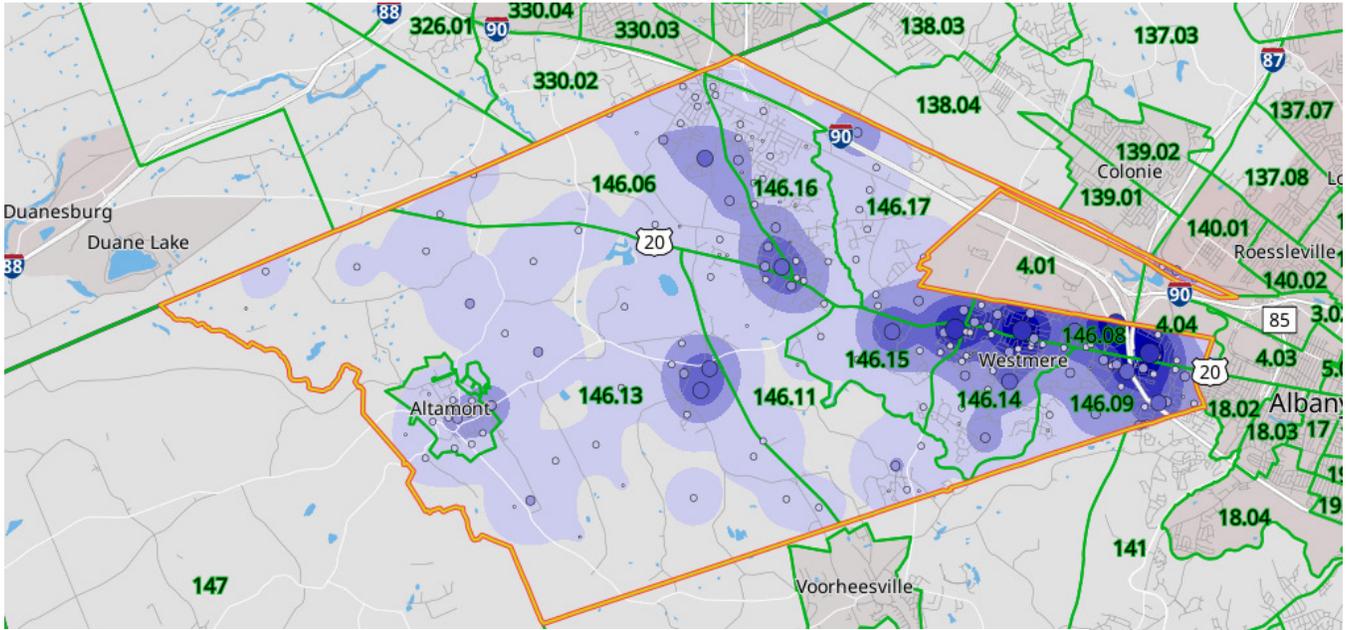
**Figure 3.1: Town Budget Allocation by Category (%)**





*Crossgates Mall and Stuyvesant Plaza*

**Figure 3.2: Counts and Density of Private Employment in Guilderland**



**Map Legend**

**Job Density [Jobs/Sq. Mile]**

- 5 - 141
- 142 - 552
- 553 - 1,236
- 1,237 - 2,194
- 2,195 - 3,426

**Job Count [Jobs/Census Block]**

- 1 - 2
- 3 - 32
- 33 - 161
- 162 - 507
- 508 - 1,238

**Selection Areas**

- ▭ Work Area

A strategic regional location makes Guilderland an attractive place to operate a business. The combination of efficient access to three major transportation routes of I-87, I-90, and I-890, near by international airport, active freight rail lines, and high-frequency public transit to and from downtown Albany – available to Guilderland businesses mean that business owners can source materials, ship finished goods, draw customers, and attract employees from a wide regional radius. The Town is part of a larger economic region connected by employment, trade, and transportation networks, defined as the Albany-Schenectady-Troy Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which consists of Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, and Schoharie counties. The MSA ranks 48th out of 384 MSAs nationwide. The City of Albany is the state capital. Guilderland is also part of the broader Capital Region, a geographical area that extends outward from the Albany MSA to encompass four additional counties: Warren, Washington,

Columbia, and Greene.

More than 440,000 people are employed in the Albany-Schenectady-Troy MSA, 51% of them in Albany County (Figure 3.3). The regional economy is anchored by government, health care, and professional and business services. Government represents about 22% of the employment in the metro area, and include jobs in local, state, and federal agencies as well as public school districts, community colleges, and state universities. The University at Albany, a portion of which is in the Town of Guilderland, has approximately 4,000 employees. In the last two decades, the region’s economy has become more diverse with the growth of high-technology, knowledge-based industries (e.g., semiconductor chip manufacturing, nanotechnology, video game development) and research activity.

**Figure 3.3: Employment by Industry, 2024**

Industry	Albany County		Albany-Schenectady-Troy MSA		County % of MSA
<b>Total, Government</b>	<b>62,411</b>	<b>27.0%</b>	<b>98,202</b>	<b>22.0%</b>	<b>63.6%</b>
<b>Total, Private Sector</b>	<b>168,831</b>	<b>73.0%</b>	<b>347,201</b>	<b>78.0%</b>	<b>48.6%</b>
Health Care and Social Assistance	34,499	14.9%	64,526	14.5%	53.5%
Professional and Business Services	33,122	14.3%	57,291	12.9%	57.8%
Retail Trade	20,251	8.8%	45,206	10.1%	44.8%
Financial Activities	15,172	6.6%	38,493	8.6%	39.4%
Leisure and Hospitality	12,952	5.6%	22,852	5.1%	56.7%
Educational Services (Private)	8,638	3.7%	27,322	6.1%	31.6%
Personal and Repair Services	8,635	3.7%	15,978	3.6%	54.0%
Construction	8,456	3.7%	15,186	3.4%	55.7%
Manufacturing	8,200	3.5%	19,390	4.4%	42.3%
Transportation and Warehousing	6,475	2.8%	12,963	2.9%	49.9%
Wholesale Trade	6,054	2.6%	15,251	3.4%	39.7%
Information	4,006	1.7%	6,581	1.5%	60.9%
Natural Resources and Mining	866	0.4%	2,609	0.6%	33.2%
Utilities	788	0.3%	2,154	0.5%	36.6%
<b>Total, All Industries</b>	<b>231,242</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>445,405</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>51.9%</b>

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages*.

Note: Government employment totals include public education, public colleges and universities, etc.

**Figure 3.4: Largest Private-Sector Employment in the Albany Area**

Company	Total Local Staffing
Albany Med Health System	16,741
St. Peter's Health Partners	11,154
Northeast Grocery, Inc.*	8,025
Hannaford Supermarkets	5,000
General Electric	4,500
Stewart's Shops Corp.	3,765
Regeneron Pharmaceuticals	2,700
Ellis Medicine	2,689
GlobalFoundries U.S. Inc.	2,500
Community Care Physicians	1,940

Among the fastest growing industries in Albany County and the Albany-Schenectady-Troy MSA from 2011 to 2021 were transportation and warehousing, manufacturing, and construction. Albany County also experienced significant employment growth in professional and business services and private educational services.

The ten largest private employers in the region are listed in Figure 3.4. The full list includes hospitals and health care networks, retailers, private colleges, manufacturers, and finance and insurance companies. St. Peter's Health Partners, Hannaford, Price Chopper/Market 32, and Stewart's Shops are all represented in the Town of Guilderland.

Source: *Albany Business Review*, July 12, 2024

\* Parent company of Price Chopper and Market 32 supermarkets

# Employment by Place of Work

Total employment in the Town of Guilderland was at 14,149 in 2019, but notably, fell to 12,785 in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Most of the jobs lost were in leisure and hospitality, retail trade, and personal services. These industries were disproportionately impacted by the mandated business shutdowns and social distancing measures that followed the onset of the pandemic, as jobs in these industries often could not be performed from home. While the loss of employment was not as acute in Guilderland as in places more heavily reliant on hospitality, the economic impact of Covid-era closures serves to demonstrate the importance of having a diversified and resilient commercial sector.

As shown in Figure 3.5, nearly 22% of the Town’s employed residents work in government, including public schools, while 16% of the jobs are in professional and business services. Retail trade, health care and social assistance, and leisure and hospitality are also major employers.

Approximately 14% of the jobs based in Guilderland are held by Town residents. Most workers that commute to the Town live elsewhere in the Albany-Schenectady-Troy MSA, which has ramifications for congestion within the Guilderland transportation network. More than 27% of the jobs are held by individuals who reside in other Albany County communities; Schenectady County residents account for 13.9% of the employment in Guilderland, while Saratoga County residents account for 10.6%.

**Figure 3.5: Employment by Industry, Town of Guilderland**

Industry	Percent
Total, Government	22.1%
Professional and Business Services	16.0%
Retail Trade	13.7%
Health Care and Social Assistance	11.8%
Leisure and Hospitality	11.6%
Financial Activities	5.3%
Wholesale Trade	5.2%
Personal and Repair Services	3.6%
Construction	2.9%
Educational Services (Private)	2.1%
Transportation and Warehousing	1.8%
Information	1.7%
Manufacturing	1.5%
All Other Industries	0.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics. Data is as of 2022, the latest available.

# Commercial and Industrial Development

Commercial areas of the Town are concentrated along Western Avenue/Route 20, which serves as Guilderland’s main street. Commercial land uses can also be found on New Karner Road (Route 155) near the Albany city line, on Railroad Avenue off Fuller Road, on portions of Carman Road, and at Northeastern Industrial Park.<sup>1</sup> The inventory of commercial property has a combined total of 1,227 acres and comprises about 3% of Guilderland’s total land area. The most prevalent commercial uses are storage, warehouse, and distribution facilities (684 acres), retail services (194 acres), and office and professional buildings (117 acres). Industrial land uses are much more limited, covering less than 1% of the town’s total acreage.

<sup>1</sup> Commercial land uses include hotels and motels, dining establishments, motor vehicle services, retail stores and shopping centers, banks, office and professional buildings, miscellaneous services, and storage, warehouse, and distribution facilities.

# Crossgates Mall

Guiderland is home to the region's largest shopping center, Crossgates Mall, which opened in 1984 and owned and operated by Pyramid Management Group. Pyramid Management Group is the largest privately held shopping mall developer in the Northeast. Crossgates Mall has more than 180 tenants and over 1.7 million square feet of space, offering opportunities for shopping, dining, and entertainment. Crossgates Mall plays an important role in the local and regional economy, employing approximately 2,300 people, generating approximately \$400M in annual sales, and attracting approximately 10M visitors each year to the mall. In a recent survey of visitors who attended the Albany Capital Center from July 2022 to July 2023, they were asked where they visited when traveling to Albany. Crossgates Mall was one of the top responses of places people visited while attending events at the Albany Capital Center.

Adjacent parcels surrounding Crossgates Mall, owned by subsidiaries of the Pyramid Management Group, have also been the focus of development, particularly since 2015. In 2015 and 2016, implementing the 2001 Comprehensive Plan's recommendations to develop neighborhood specific plans, the Town engaged a consultant to develop the Westmere Corridor Study. The study was intended to develop a neighborhood plan for the area along Western Avenue between Church Road on the east and State Farm Road and New Karner Road on the west. The study was a year-long planning process that included multiple public meetings and significant involvement from the public.

In December 2016, the Town Board accepted the Westmere Corridor Study, the last of the neighborhood studies envisioned by the Town's 2001 Comprehensive Plan. The Study was based upon public meetings where residents, local business owners, professional planners, and regional transportation and planning representatives discussed goals and objectives for the study and provided detailed recommendations. The study's area included Western Avenue from the Northway on the east to Route 155 on the west, including parcels with frontage on Western Avenue, and, in

particular, the "Crossgates Mall Ring Road, due to its importance to the commercial and traffic characteristics of the area."

Among the study's core recommendations was the creation of a Transit Oriented Development ("TOD") District in the area of Crossgates Mall, which would provide a mix of housing, shopping, entertainment, and employment within walking distance (1/2 mile) of the transit center at Crossgates Mall which is planned to be enhanced with a bus rapid transit service. The proposed permitted uses included "a wide range of residential, institutional, retail, service, entertainment, and employment uses found in the 'General Business' (GB) District."

Major development projects and roadway improvement projects that have been constructed, or are under construction on adjacent parcels surrounding Crossgates Mall over the past 10 years include:

1. A 192-room Tru by Hilton hotel and Homewood Suites by Hilton built on Western Avenue in front of Crossgates Mall in 2018 was the first new hotel in Guiderland in more than 20 years.
2. A new Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Purple Line, which began operation in November 2023, connects Crossgates Mall with the University at Albany campus, the Harriman State Office campus, and downtown Albany. The Purple Line reduced travel times from Crossgates Mall to downtown Albany by 33% when compared to the previous non-BRT bus route.
3. Installation of a roundabout at the intersection of Crossgates Mall Road and the entrance/exit to I-87 which has significantly reduced accidents at this intersection and has moved traffic through the intersection more efficiently.
4. The Flats @ Crossgates is a 24-unit multi-family community completed in 2023 and located north of the Tru by Hilton hotel and Homewood Suites by Hilton.
5. Apex @ Crossgates 222-unit multi-family community located to the west of Crossgates Mall and became fully operational in the Summer of 2025.

6. A 160,000 square foot Costco, currently under construction, with an expected opening in the summer of 2026.
7. New York Oncology Hematology's 105,000 square foot cancer treatment center, currently under construction with an expected opening in 2026.
8. Crossgates Mall Road 'complete streets' improvements, including a reduction in the number of travel lanes, installation of multi-use trails, intersection improvements, installation of dedicated turn lanes, and installation of landscaped medians. Construction is expected to be completed in the Summer of 2026.



*Aerial view of Crossgates Mall looking west to east.*

## Stuyvesant Plaza



*Aerial view of the Stuyvesant Plaza*

Another regional shopping center in the Town is Stuyvesant Plaza, which first opened in 1959. Today, the 240,000-square-foot plaza has more than 60 specialty shops, restaurants, and other businesses. In 2022, WS Development, owner of more than 20 million square feet of retail, office, and residential space in 12 states, became the new majority owner of Stuyvesant Plaza. The new ownership is focusing on re-defining what it means to be “the premier open-air shopping destination” in the Capital region through leasing, development, marketing, and operational excellence.

The retail establishments within Stuyvesant Plaza employ between 250 to 500 people. Like Crossgates Mall, Stuyvesant Plaza benefits from

its proximity to I-87 and I-90 and draws shoppers from throughout the Capital Region. On average, approximately 3.1M people visit Stuyvesant Plaza on an annual basis. In a recent survey of visitors who attended the Albany Capital Center from July 2022 to July 2023, they were asked where they visited when traveling to Albany. Stuyvesant Plaza was one of the top responses of places people visited while attending events at the Albany Capital Center.

Stuyvesant Plaza is located at the intersection of Western Avenue and Fuller Road. Dating back to at least the 1960's there is a history of flooding at this intersection during heavy rain events. The flooding incidents impact egress/ingress to the plaza, and other surrounding establishments, impacting business for the retailers and businesses within the Plaza. Stuyvesant Plaza is located within the Krum Kill Watershed, an approximate 860 acres watershed. The entire watershed drains to the intersection of Fuller Road and Western Avenue (Route 20), and the existing undersized culverts do not sufficiently handle the stormwater runoff. The Town is currently seeking funding to prepare a comprehensive study of the drainage area, the issues and how the drainage can be improved.



*Aerial view looking west along Western Avenue in Guilderland, New York with Stuyvesant Plaza shopping center at lower left. McKownville Reservoir is body of water in front of shopping center.*

*Source: September 6, 1980 (Paul D. Kniskern, Sr./Times Union Archive) Paul D. Kniskern, Sr./Times Union Historic Images*



*Flooding 19 November 1974 on Western Avenue near the Fuller Road intersection, at the main entrance to the Stuyvesant Plaza shopping center.*

*Source: [McKownville organization](#)*



*Several cars are seen stranded in a flooded section of Western Ave. just in front of Stuyvesant Plaza*

*Source: [Timesunion.com](#)*

# University at Albany

The University at Albany (UAlbany) campus is located in both the Town of Guilderland and City of Albany, with approximately 25% of the campus located in the Town. UAlbany has over 4,000 employees, including faculty and staff. Additionally, the Fall 2024 enrollment was approximately 17,500 students, a 4% increase from the 2023/24 school year. Compared to an enrollment of 12,000 students in 2000, student enrollment has increased 31.5% in the past 25 years. To accommodate the student enrollment, increase over the past two decades, UAlbany has expanded residential housing both on-campus and off-campus, athletic facilities, academic programs and academic and research facilities, such as the



Source: University at Albany

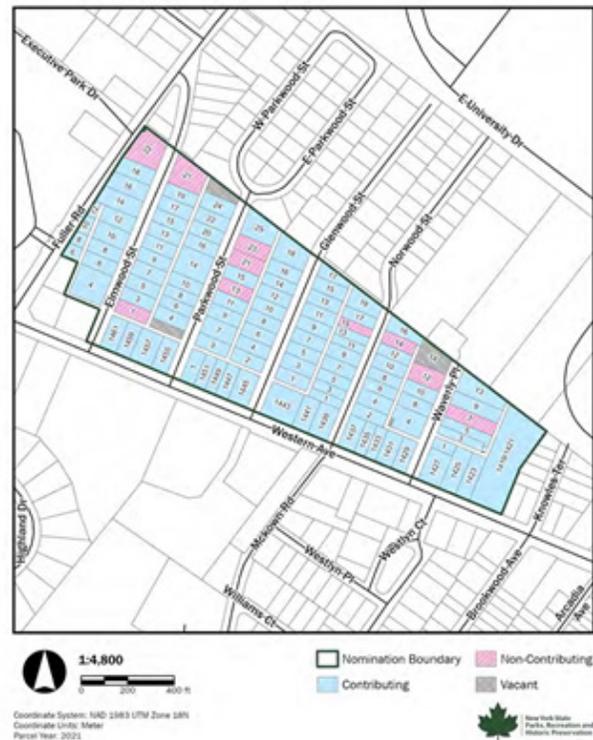
Albany Nanotech Campus.

UAlbany plays an important economic development role both locally and regionally. In a report prepared by the Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDRPC) in 2024 it was found that UAlbany generates \$1.1 billion in economic activity throughout the Capital Region, which translated into:

- \$813 million in operational impacts.
- \$211.7 million in construction related impacts.
- \$80 million in UAlbany students spending in local communities.
- Over 8,000 jobs across the Capital Region.

The Town should anticipate further growth and expansion of the UAlbany campus over the next 20 years. While the Town is supportive of this growth, efforts should be made to protect the existing single-family neighborhoods in the area, such as the Warren Street, Mercer Street, Providence Street neighborhood on the west side of Fuller Road. Efforts should also be made to protect the Country Club Highlands Historic District, which was listed on the New York State Register of Historic Places in 2021. The district boundary includes the area on the north side of Western Avenue between Fuller Road and Waverly Place. The historic district contains 94 houses built between 1910 and 1952, with the integrity of most of the houses in the district retaining the original architecture and subdivision design.

McKownville-Country Club Highlands Historic District  
Town of Guilderland, Albany County, New York  
Parcel Status Map  
See Building List for details



Country Club Highlands Historic District Boundary

## Northeast Industrial Park

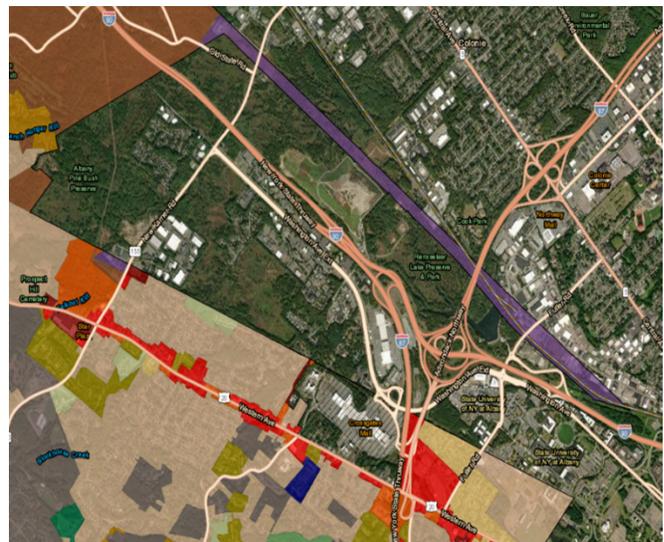


*Aerial view of the Northeast Industrial Park*

Located at the southeastern edge of Guilderland Center, Northeastern Industrial Park is one of the region's most expansive business parks, containing over 4 million square feet of warehouse space on 620 acres. It is seven miles from I-87, six miles from I-90/I-890 and is serviced by an active CSX rail spur that runs along the eastern edge of the site. The industrial park property is part of what was once a U.S. Army maintenance, distribution, and supply depot that operated from 1941 to 1969. Buildings at Northeastern Industrial Park are occupied by about 50 different businesses, and there is room for expansion. One of the newest occupants is Airgas, which constructed a storage and distribution facility on the site with tanks for argon and nitrogen. Purina Animal Nutrition, which operates a manufacturing facility at the industrial park, and received Town approval in 2022 to develop an addition to its existing office building.

## Railroad Avenue Industrial Zone

Railroad Avenue is a commercial and industrial corridor off Fuller Road that houses a mix of retail, wholesale, manufacturing, commercial construction, and trucking/automotive service establishments and storage, warehousing, and distribution facilities. It is split between the Towns of Guilderland and Colonie. The Railroad Avenue area has been identified as an area that is ripe for redevelopment, due to its proximity to the University at Albany, the College of Nanoscale Science and Engineering, and Harriman State Office Campus and its easy access to the interstate highway system. In 2012, the Railroad Avenue corridor was the subject of a Transportation and Revitalization Plan that recommended transportation access and connectivity upgrades and identified strategies to improve the aesthetics and redevelopment potential of the area. The plan called for preserving the existing industrial zoning and maintaining the area's industrial base. One of the large vacant and underutilized properties on Railroad Avenue at the time of the study was a site once occupied by Miron Lumber. The owner of the property has proposed a 68,000 square foot warehouse with offices on the site that would be leased to tenants. Another recent development project on Railroad Avenue is a 14,000 square foot warehouse to support the expansion of an existing catalytic converter recycling business.



*Town of Guilderland Zoning Map. Railroad Avenue Industrial Zone Shown in Purple*

## Notable Important Retail Establishments

Other retail centers in Guilderland include Star Plaza, Hamilton Square (the former 20 Mall), Town Center Plaza, Park Guilderland Shopping Center and Westmere Plaza. There are also numerous stores outside of these developments. Additionally, the Village of Altamont offers unique shopping opportunities with local businesses that contribute to the Town's diverse retail landscape.

## Commercial Real Estate Market Trends

Changes in commercial real estate market conditions since the Town of Guilderland adopted its 2001 Comprehensive Plan could impact future land uses and development patterns in the Town. Trends in the office and retail markets are discussed below.

## Offices and the “New Normal.”

Historically, the demand for office space has been driven by job creation in office-using industries. While virtually all industries have some jobs based in office environments, industries with high rates of office utilization, such as information/media, financial activities, and professional and business services, are particularly important.

Flexible workspaces and virtual office arrangements that allowed employees to spend less time in the traditional office existed long before the pandemic, but these workers represented a mere fraction of the labor force. The broad shift of working from home that started during the pandemic, however, highlighted the benefits of remote work for employees, including better work/life balance, freedom from long commute times, and lower stress levels. It also resulted in higher-than-expected productivity and reduced employee turnover, a key consideration for employers facing a shrinking labor pool, although it is important

to note that the prevalence of remote work varies greatly by occupation, industry, and geography.

The widespread adoption of remote work has affected office demand. Properties with persistently high vacancy rates may need to be modernized, diversified by adding alternative uses, or adapted to new uses that are more financially viable.

An array of office properties can be found along the Western Avenue corridor, especially near Stuyvesant Plaza and I-87. Two of the largest office complexes in Guilderland, Executive Park and Great Oaks Office Park, are located in this area. There are eight office buildings with 320,000 square feet of space at Executive Park, while Great Oaks has 210,000 square feet in three buildings.

## The Evolution of Retail

Although the online commerce share of retail sales has been climbing for two decades, the Covid-19 pandemic accelerated the continued growth of e-commerce. In response to stay at home orders, many consumers shifted their shopping habits online, ordering groceries to be delivered and purchasing goods from Amazon. E-commerce has grown every year but one since the U.S. Department of Commerce began tracking this data in 2000. According to Statista the share of e-commerce in total retail sales was 15.4% in 2023, 14.6% in 2022, 14.6% in 2021, and 14.6% in 2020. In 2024, e-commerce represented 16.1% of total retail sales in the United States.

Although some malls are struggling, mall vacancy rates overall have not markedly increased.<sup>2</sup> To remain competitive, though, malls are reinventing themselves. Many are diversifying their tenant mix, adding “experiential” retail, more dining and entertainment options, fitness and wellness centers, indoor attractions, and other businesses that offer experiences and services that are not available online.

<sup>2</sup> Moody's Analytics, “The Brick and Mortar Retail Evolution,” November 18, 2022

In some malls, the anchor spaces that once housed department stores are being converted to non-retail uses, such as call centers, apartments, medical clinics, event space, and even life science centers. Mall properties are also being transformed into self-contained, walkable neighborhoods that include a mix of uses (e.g., multifamily housing, office, hospitality), providing more customers for the retail centers. Successful examples of this type of redevelopment can be found in places like Virginia (Pentagon Centre), Maryland (Annapolis Town Center), and Massachusetts (Woburn Village).

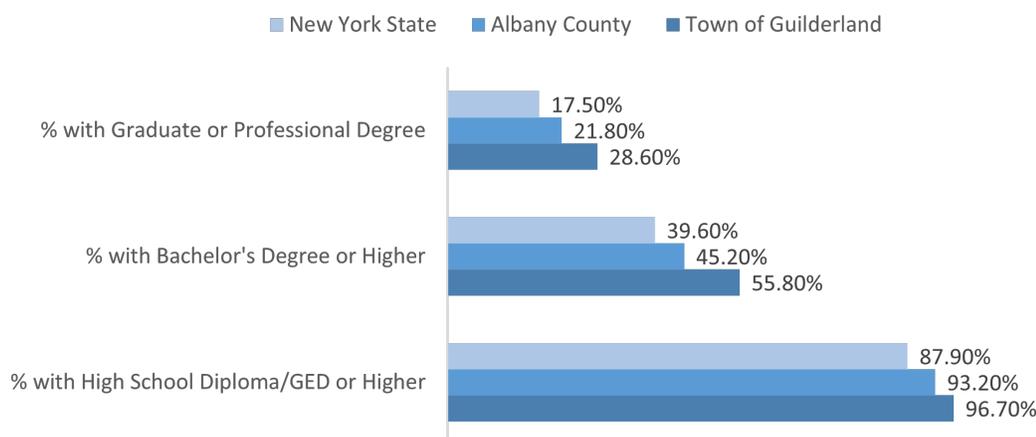
These trends could provide an opportunity in Guilderland for the development of walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods with retail uses at their core, while addressing the demand for multifamily housing. In some respects, such an effort has already begun at Crossgates Mall, where a Transit Oriented Development District has been created, a hotel was developed, and underutilized property was repurposed for apartments. As retail continues to evolve, there is also an opportunity for shopping malls to become places that are less homogenous and more interesting and engaging.

## Resident Labor Force

The labor force consists of residents ages 18 and older who are currently employed or who are unemployed but actively looking for work. Local Area Unemployment Statistics from the NYS Department of Labor show that labor force levels in Guilderland have been steady for the past 20 years. In 2022, the resident labor force stood at 20,000, slightly above the average of 19,800 between 2002 and 2021. Guilderland residents are highly educated. As indicated in Figure 3.6, 55.8% of individuals aged 25 and over hold a bachelor's degree or higher, and 28.6% have a graduate or professional degree. These educational attainment levels, which contribute to the affluence of the town's population, are higher than those in Albany County and the state overall. Bethlehem is the only town in Albany County with a higher share of residents who hold at least a bachelor's degree (59%).

Unemployment rates in Guilderland have been consistently below countywide and statewide figures. Despite the national recessions that occurred in 2008-09 and 2020, annual average unemployment in the town has been less than 5% in fifteen of the last twenty years. The most recent annual rates issued by the NYS Department of Labor (2022) show unemployment at 2.4% in Guilderland compared to 3.0% in Albany County and 4.3% in New York State.

**Figure 3.6: Education Attainment, Population Age 25 and Over**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019-23 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

# Employment by Place of Residence

Nearly a third of employed residents of the Town of Guilderland hold jobs in the City of Albany, while 14.7% work in the Town of Colonie (Figure 3.7). Only 11% of residents live and work in Guilderland. Others commute to jobs in the counties of Schenectady, Rensselaer, and Saratoga, but 84% of residents travel less than 25 miles each way to work. The flow of workday travel from the town is mainly to the east and southeast or to the north.

**Figure 3.7: Where Town of Guilderland Residents Work**

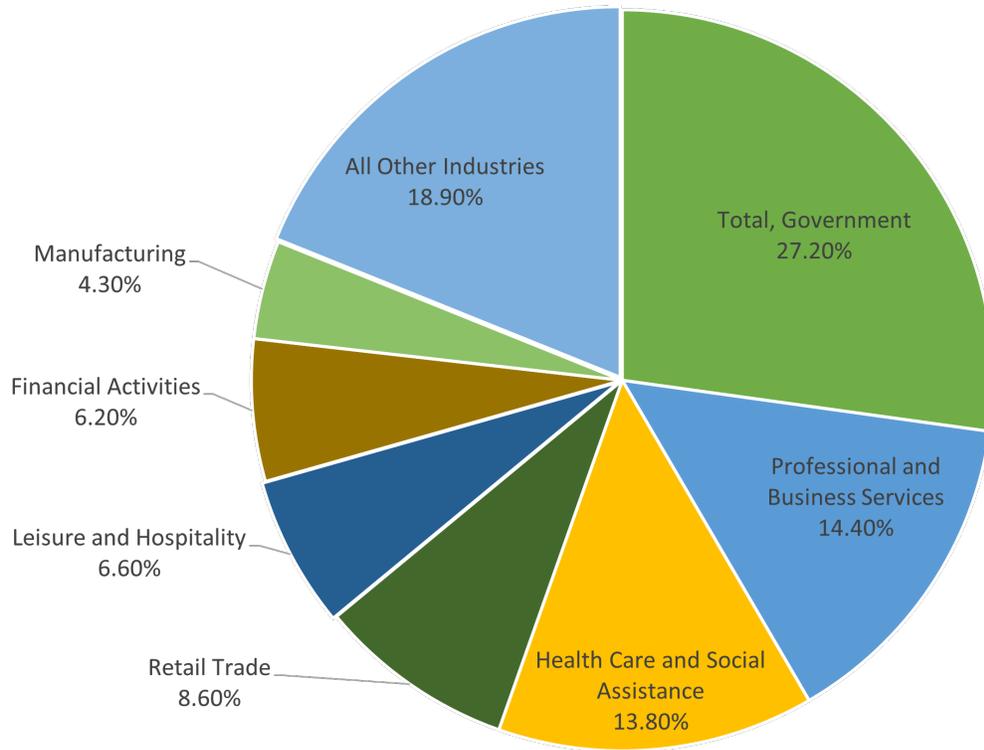
Location	Count	Share
<b>Albany County</b>	<b>10,016</b>	<b>60.1%</b>
Guilderland Town	1,807	10.8%
Albany City	5,107	30.6%
Colonie Town	2,445	14.7%
All other location	657	3.9%
<b>Schenectady County</b>	<b>1,761</b>	<b>10.6%</b>
Schenectady City	897	5.4%
Rotterdam Town	338	2.0%
All other locations	526	3.2%
<b>Rensselaer County</b>	<b>1,005</b>	<b>6.0%</b>
<b>Saratoga County</b>	<b>737</b>	<b>4.4%</b>
<b>All other Counties</b>	<b>3,149</b>	<b>18.9%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,668</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, LED OnTheMap Origin-Destination Database, 2022 (the most recent available).

According to the American Community Survey, from the years 2015 to 2019, an estimated 84% of employed Guilderland residents drive to work, most often traveling alone, and 11% work from home. Less than 1% of residents use public transportation to get to work. This could change, however, with the CDTA's new BusPlus Purple Line, which connects Crossgates Mall and downtown Albany, stopping at the University at Albany and the Harriman State Office Campus. The Purple Line runs along the Washington Avenue and Western Avenue corridors (among the busiest of CDTA's routes) and has a limited number of stops, reducing the time it takes to commute between Guilderland and Albany. It benefits not only Guilderland residents commuting to Albany, but also Albany residents and college students, who will have improved access to job opportunities at Crossgates Mall and other locations.

Guilderland residents are well-represented in the industries that dominate the region's economy. As shown in Figure 3.8, 29% of the jobs held by town residents, regardless of location, are in the public sector, whether in government or education. Other industries in which Guilderland residents are employed include health care and social assistance (13.8%), professional and business services (14.4%), and retail trade (8.6%).

**Figure 3.8: Resident Employment by Industry, Town of Guilderland (2022)**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics

# Recommendations

## **B-1. Further develop existing design guidelines, with illustrative examples, to supplement zoning regulations and articulate expectations for commercial development in the Town.**

While commercial areas in Guilderland contribute needed revenue, employment opportunities, and services to Town residents, the appearance of commercial properties can have a significant influence on the Town character. Factors such as setbacks, landscaping, location of parking, and the height and bulk of buildings all combine to affect the look and feel of commercial corridors. It is recommended both that the Town align its commercial design guidelines with the vision and goals of its updated Comprehensive Plan and also that the Town develop a set of illustrative examples, clearly showing the desired characteristics for commercial development. Having exemplars of site designs that conform to Town regulations can ideally serve to promote compatible design elements early in the planning process, bolstering the efficient use of Town administrative capacity.

## **B-2. Encourage the redevelopment and adaptive reuse of existing sites in Guilderland to improve the attractiveness of commercial corridors, grow the local business base, and make efficient use of existing resources.**

Empty and abandoned properties emerged as a prevalent and consistent public concern throughout the Comprehensive Plan Update public engagement process. Unsightly, derelict sites were seen to detract from both the aesthetics and the commercial vibrancy of Guilderland's commercial corridors, especially Western Avenue/US-20. In the case of brownfields, site abandonment carries with it the additional concern of detrimental impacts to the environment. Finding ways to bring previously developed brownfield and greyfield sites back into productive use holds many potential benefits for the Town: Improved aesthetics, increased revenues, remediation of environmental hazards, and preservation of undeveloped land elsewhere in Guilderland, to name a few. The term "adaptive reuse" refers to retrofitting an existing building for an entirely new purpose than it was originally designed for; for example, converting a former factory into lofts or a museum space, to better serve the needs of the current population. Since such conversion involves a change of use, regulatory frameworks must be navigable, so as not to dissuade developers from advancing project proposals in line with residents' desire for thoughtful reimagining of existing vacant sites. It is therefore recommended that the Town take the following steps to increase the efficiency and transparency of property redevelopment pathways in Guilderland:

- a. Create and maintain an inventory of vacant and underutilized structures and brownfield sites that can be rehabilitated to support commercial or industrial uses within suitable zoning districts.
- b. Analyze whether there are elements in the review process that could be made more efficient to encourage and incentivize projects that redevelop vacant properties. The objective would be that commercial and mixed-use redevelopment projects that fully meet design guidelines would be expedited and streamlined during the review process.
- c. Provide flexibility for office parks and office/professional buildings to accommodate other uses through the conversion of existing space and/or new construction.
- d. Consider increasing the ability to waive the requirement for site plan approval for a change in tenancy in the BNRP, LB, GB, I, and IP districts when it is similar to a prior allowed use, does not involve a change in the scale or intensity of the use, and does not propose a building addition. Any waiver should require that sites and structures are in accordance with the applicable code and any prior approvals.



*A vacant commercial structure near the intersection of Western Avenue and Foundry Road detracts from both the economic vitality and the aesthetic qualities of the corridor.*

**B-3. Develop design guidelines for signage with illustrative examples.**

Signs, by definition, are highly visible elements in the built environment. As such, signage can contribute to or detract from Town character – particularly along Guilderland roadways – depending on the extent to which there are effective regulatory guidelines that are publicly accessible, intelligible, and fairly applied. To that end, it is recommended that the Town develop a set of illustrative examples, to provide a clear understanding of the signage design guidelines and to ensure that these elements in the visual landscape support and conform to the character of their surroundings. Currently, all permanent signs are reviewed and approved by the ZBA. It is also recommended the Town should consider allowing for sign permits to be administratively approved if they are in compliance with Section 280-26 of the Town Zoning Law.

**B-4. Develop strategies to attract well-paying, job-creating employers who will be able to provide employment opportunities for Guilderland’s community.**

Guilderland is fortunate to be located in close proximity to New York State offices, university campuses, and large hospital complexes, all of which provide well-paid employment opportunities in professions that have historically been more resilient to downturns in the wider regional and national economy. Even so, economic trends are always changing, and the large employers of tomorrow may be seeking exactly the sort of well-educated workforce that Guilderland is well-positioned to provide. For that

reason, it is recommended that the Town partner with the Center for Economic Growth, the Advance Albany Alliance, Empire State Development, and other relevant organizations to attract economic development which diversifies, strengthens, and expands Guilderland’s tax base. A diversified local economy does not “put all its eggs in one basket,” but rather seeks a blend that will offer superior employment to residents of all backgrounds, ages, and interests while providing for a reliably strong tax base.

**B-5. Develop resources to facilitate greater participation of small business owners and entrepreneurs in the local economy.**

While businesses of all sizes have roles to play in the Guilderland economy, strong public support was expressed throughout the Comprehensive Plan Update process for the contributions that small business owners and entrepreneurs make to the quality of life in Town. In recognition of the time and energy demands on small business owners, it is recommended that the Town designate resources toward assisting individuals in navigating the development review process for a small business in Guilderland. Local entrepreneurs may need

clarification on permitted uses in each zoning district, so it is recommended that the Town develop an easy-to-read use table that is accessible to the public via the Town of Guilderland Planning Department webpage, alongside other helpful guides.

**B-6. Facilitate business roundtables with Town leaders and staff, adjacent local leaders, and community stakeholders to discuss specific issues of interest, such as economic development, transportation improvements, and infrastructure projects.**

Regular coordination with representatives of Guilderland’s business community provides an avenue for two-way communication on pressing issues such as utilities infrastructure, parking, and regional economic development. It is recommended that the Town initiates and maintains a schedule of periodic roundtable discussions with business owners, the Guilderland Industrial Development Agency, the Guilderland Chamber of Commerce, and the Town Planning Department. Such discussions hold the promise of identifying fruitful public-private partnerships, as well, which can support a broad range of identified Town goals.

Additionally, the Town should support Smart Growth principles, promoting collaboration among community members and stakeholders in development decisions. Business roundtables should not only involve Town leaders but also invite local leaders from neighboring municipalities. This broader engagement will ensure that economic development, transportation improvements, and infrastructure projects are considered within a wider regional context, fostering collaboration and shared insights.

**B-7. Identify and establish the desired mix and scale of businesses in a manner that is sensitive to the neighborhood setting and cultural diversity of the Town. This includes supporting home-based businesses.**

Guilderland's mix of businesses includes decades-old shops that are familiar to residents as well as newly opened restaurants and home-based businesses. Changing trends in the business community affect the Town in a myriad of ways, from increasing the number of delivery vehicles on Guilderland's roads to shifting the demand for office space. In recognition of these and other changes, it is important for the Town to consider how its policies and regulations support the needs of the business community, facilitating the efforts of entrepreneurs and business owners who contribute to Guilderland's dynamism. Since there

are a variety of ancillary benefits to home-based work – e.g., fewer commuters during peak hours, reductions to Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT), and greenhouse gas emissions, among others.

It is recommended the Town review the current Home Occupation, Home Occupation I, and Home Occupation II regulations in 280-40 of Town Zoning Law for amendments that could be made to support home-based businesses that are compatible with the character and scale of its residential neighborhoods.

**B-8. Identify and establish the desired mix and scale of businesses in a manner that is sensitive to the neighborhood setting and cultural diversity of the Town. This includes supporting home-based businesses.**

The State University of New York at Albany (UAlbany) is one of four institutions in the 64-campus SUNY system that confers doctorate degrees in addition to undergraduate, graduate, and professional certifications. The southwestern corner of UAlbany's campus is within Guilderland's municipal boundary. Just to the north sits the Albany Nanotech Complex, off of Fuller Road, home to UAlbany's College of Nanoscale Science and Engineering and its cutting-edge research facilities. Taken together, these campuses represent invaluable economic resources to the Town of Guilderland – as employment sites for highly-skilled current residents, as places of learning for Guilderland's future workers, and as drivers of demand for Guilderland housing and services. To maximize the positive impact of these resources on Guilderland's economy, it is recommended that the Town strengthen existing partnerships and ensure coordination with campus leaders on a range of issues including transportation infrastructure, integration of educational opportunities to benefit Guilderland students, historic preservation initiatives, and more.



*The UAlbany Uptown Campus is linked to Guilderland's Transit Oriented Development district by the CDTA Purple Line BusPlus.*

**B-9. Consider the development of a new village-like planned community that incorporates a mix of land uses – commercial, residential, recreation/open space – that allows for walkability, environmental sustainability, and high quality of life for residents.**

Public input received throughout the Comprehensive Plan Update process consistently identified a desire for walkable community nodes, with a range of services and amenities within close proximity to housing. Improvements to sidewalks and other active transportation infrastructure can increase walkability in existing population centers, but there is also an opportunity to envision a new mixed-use village-like setting that incorporates a range of complementary land uses including residential, commercial, open space, and community services. The population of Guilderland grew from 26,515 people in 1980 to 36,848 in 2020. From 2010 to 2020 the population increased by 4.4%. According to the US Census Bureau 18.9% (6,973) of Guilderland’s population is over the age of 65 compared to 5.1% (1,881) of Guilderland’s population is 5 and under. Guilderland has a higher share of the older adult population compared to Albany County, New York State and the national average, which shows Guilderland is an aging population. As Guilderland plans for a continued growth in population, it should be done in a manner that aligns with our community’s Town character and offers a range of housing, businesses, and recreational opportunities that caters to each age cohort.

It is recommended the Town initiate a process to study the feasibility of developing a new, mixed-use neighborhood development that incorporates design features and building techniques that are compatible with Guilderland’s focus on resiliency and environmental sustainability. Potential locations for this style of development would follow the traditional disbursement of Town hamlets and historic crossroads. This style of development should be promoted through the demonstration of successful developments throughout the United States such as Old York Village in New Jersey and Celebration in Florida.

**B-10. Pursue partnerships and incentives available through federal, state, county, and local organizations that support both the existing and future business community and strengthen Guilderland’s economic future.**

With financial resources that are constrained by available tax revenues, the Town of Guilderland must closely consider the relative merits of municipal expenditures. Partnerships with public entities or private organizations, however, present opportunities to achieve a multiplier effect when spending public dollars. Over time, often coinciding with changes in leadership, government agencies and not-for-profit organizations introduce new funding initiatives targeted at accomplishing specific goals or objectives. When the objectives of such initiatives align with the outlined vision, goals, and recommendations of the Guilderland Comprehensive Plan, it is recommended that the Town devote administrative resources toward the pursuit of partnerships and/or funding that can help the Town leverage municipal spending to maximum effect. On this point, close coordination with the Guilderland Industrial Development Agency and the Guilderland Chamber of Commerce is recommended.

**B-11. Update the Commercial Zone Districts in Town to be consistent with current development trends.**

A key part of implementing the Comprehensive Plan’s vision will include updating the zoning code to align with the vision and goals in the Plan. Zoning is important to promote and manage growth and to help residents and businesses manage expectations about what they and their neighbors can do with their property. By updating the zoning code to align with the comprehensive plan, the Town can ensure that development occurs in a way that supports the desired future.

There are three commercial zoning districts in Town Zoning Law:

- (1) Business Non-Retail Professional (BNRP) District;
- (2) Local Business (LB) District;
- (3) General Business (GB) District.

The majority of the Town’s commercial districts are located along the Western Avenue corridor and Carman Road corridor.



# 04 ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE & RESILIENCY

**Goal:** Protect the natural resources that support quality of life and Town character in Guilderland through strategic land acquisition/protection, hazard mitigation, and resiliency measures to address the impacts of a changing climate.

## Overview

Environmental resources such as clean air, water, and soil form the foundation for a livable community. Without them, a community cannot thrive. Guilderland has long attracted those seeking abundant fresh water, fertile soils, and fresh air, so safeguarding those and other vital natural resources is of paramount importance to residents, as evidenced by input submitted throughout the Comprehensive Plan Update process. Respondents to the Guilderland Community Survey rated “protecting natural resources and wildlife habitat” as a top future Town priority.

Appreciation for the role of the natural world in everyday life has grown in recent decades, as extreme weather events and even large-scale environmental disasters become more commonplace across the region, state, and nation. The Albany County Climate Resiliency Plan (2022) identifies elevated risk of flooding, extreme heat events, and drought as threats to communities throughout the county, including Guilderland. The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, in its report entitled *Climate Change Effects and Impacts*, summarizes the justification for climate resiliency planning in the following way:

*New York's Responding to Climate Change in New York State (ClimAID) report (2011, 2014) the National Climate Assessment (2018) DEC Observed and Projected Climate Change in NYS, and other climate impact assessment reports show that a variety of climate change impacts have already been observed across the northeastern United States and in New York State. These climate change reports clearly show, based on scientific data, that significant climate change impacts are already occurring. People, plants and wildlife, and ecosystems are facing an uncertain future unless adequate actions are taken to adapt to climate change impacts already unfolding and expected to intensify over time. GHG emissions must also rapidly and significantly be reduced in the near future and eventually eliminated to prevent the increasingly harmful impacts of climate change over the next several decades.*

In recognition of the critical role that natural resources and the environment play in supporting quality of life in Guilderland, the following set of recommendations have been put forward as part of a strategic approach to maintaining Town character and livability.



*The Normans Kill along the Vosburgh Trail system, below the Watervliet Reservoir dam*

# Recommendations

**C-1. Build on Guilderland’s designation as a registered Climate Smart Community (CSC) in the State of New York by completing the criteria for bronze-level CSC certification by 2030. Criteria include the formation of a CSC Task Force for Guilderland, the designation of a CSC Coordinator, as well as three (3) or more of the following priority actions:**

- a. Government Operations GHG Inventory
- b. Community GHG Inventory
- c. Government Operations Climate Action Plan
- d. Community Climate Action Plan
- e. Government Building Energy Audits
- f. Comprehensive Plan with Sustainability Elements
- g. Complete Streets Policy
- h. Alternative-fuel Infrastructure
- i. Natural Resources Inventory
- j. Climate Vulnerability Assessment
- k. Evaluate Policies for Climate Resilience
- l. Climate Adaptation Plan
- m. Climate Change Education & Engagement

The Climate Smart Communities (CSC) program is an interagency initiative of New York State, initiated in 2009, that brings together coordination from the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), Department of State (DOS), Department of Transportation (DOT), Department of Health (DOH), Homes and Community Renewal (HCR), the Power Authority (NYPA), and the Department of Public Service. The CSC program supports participating local governments throughout New York State in their efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, adapt to the effects of climate change, and thrive in a green economy. Participating municipalities sign a voluntary pledge to advance environmental planning using the CSC framework, which presents opportunities for free technical assistance and access to grant funding from state agencies. In the CSC framework, municipalities can move through a tiered classification system -- “Registered,” “Bronze Certified,” or “Silver Certified” – based upon completion of specified priority actions.

Guilderland became a “registered” CSC community in August 2019. In order to build on Guilderland’s positive momentum on climate resiliency, it is recommended that the Town

prioritize bronze-level certification through the CSC framework by completing a series of targeted priority actions and pledge elements. In December 2021, CSC program administrators released an updated four-page “action checklist” with the names of the CSC certification actions (see Appendix H). Action categories of the CSC program include:

- PE1: Build a climate-smart community
- PE2: Inventory emissions, set goals, and plan for climate action
- PE3: Decrease energy use
- PE4: Shift to clean, renewable energy
- PE5: Use climate-smart materials management
- PE6: Implement climate smart-land use
- PE7: Enhance community resilience to climate change
- PE8: Support a green innovation economy
- PE9: Inform and inspire the public
- PE10: Engage in an evolving process of climate action
- Innovation
- Performance

In addition to becoming an officially registered Climate Smart Community, the Town of Guilderland has already begun taking steps to implement energy efficiency and renewable energy initiatives. In partnership with National Grid, the Town has converted more than six hundred street luminaries to LED to conserve energy. The Town has also installed free electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure to incentivize use of vehicles with no tailpipe emissions. In terms of renewable energy generation, Guilderland is a partner in a Community Choice Aggregation program and receives credits for a solar facility located near Amsterdam, NY. Although there are current limitations in National Grid’s energy transmission infrastructure, the Town has also signed an option contract with GE Solar for a community solar facility on the Town’s former landfill site.

Throughout the Comprehensive Plan Update process, both the CPUC and the public identified climate resiliency action as a top priority for the Town. The CSC program offers a useful framework for initiating and tracking implementation on a municipal level. A target implementation timeframe of 2030 has been proposed, to align with other Town conservation goals and to act expediently on a high priority concern for the community.



*Aerial view of Watervliet Reservoir*

Source: [news10.com](https://www.news10.com), retrieved July 10, 2025

**C-2. Maintain and improve water quality in Watervliet Reservoir and its tributaries by partnering with the City of Watervliet and communities within the Reservoir’s watershed.**

- a. Establish a watershed-wide committee to evaluate water quality in the Watervliet Reservoir and implement an action plan that includes testing protocols, agency coordination, residential lawn pesticides runoff mitigation, and communication mechanisms to address emerging contaminants such as PFAS, if detected.
- b. Use well-head protection plans to protect potential groundwater sources from incompatible land uses that may jeopardize public drinking water sources.
- c. Minimize runoff and pollutants by continuing to comply with guidelines and regulations such as the Department of Health (DOH) surface water regulations and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) stormwater regulations. Continuing to comply with these guidelines is crucial for protecting the Town’s water resources, environment, and neighborhoods. This compliance helps reduce pollution, prevent flooding, and mitigate the negative impacts of runoff, ultimately supporting a healthier, safer, and more sustainable community.
- d. Refer to recommendations published in the Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDRPC) Watervliet Reservoir Watershed Protection Plan.

The Watervliet Reservoir occupies 420 acres in the geographic center of the Town of Guilderland, representing both a primary drinking water source for the Town and the sole drinking water source for the City of Watervliet, which owns the Reservoir.<sup>3</sup> The Town of Guilderland and the City of Watervliet have a long-term agreement for use of drinking water allotments and the two municipalities utilize separate water intakes, treatment plants, pump stations, and transmission lines for treating and distributing water from the Reservoir.

The Reservoir was formed in 1915 by damming the Normans Kill at French’s Hollow; in 1982 a one- megawatt hydroelectric facility was developed at the Reservoir to generate power from excess water flows. According to the Watervliet Reservoir Watershed Protection Study prepared by the CDRPC, the watershed area of the Reservoir includes an area of roughly 115 square miles which comprises parts of three counties, eight towns, and three villages. The majority of the watershed area encompasses northern Albany County and southern Schenectady County. The primary tributaries to the Reservoir are the Normans Kill, the Bozen Kill, and Black Creek. The path of the Normans Kill continues its path to the upper Hudson River from the outflow at the southern end

<sup>3</sup> City of Watervliet, Normans Kill Relicensing – Water Chestnut Control Study, 2018



*Watervliet Reservoir, looking west from Western Turnpike*

of the Watervliet Reservoir.

In terms of quantity, the safe yield of drinking water from the Reservoir is estimated at 12 million gallons per day.<sup>4</sup> Interconnections with the City of Albany and Town of Rotterdam’s municipal water systems reduce reliance on the Reservoir as a drinking source for Guilderland, and provide important redundancy, but the quantity and quality of water in the Reservoir understandably remain top of mind as concerns for the community. Both water quantity and quality in the Reservoir have been negatively impacted by an invasive species of water chestnut (*Trapa natans*), which is estimated to have infested 169 acres of the Reservoir’s 420 acres and which has a deleterious effect on water chemistry and the efficiency of water treatment infrastructure.

In an effort to protect water quality in the Reservoir and its tributaries, the Town of Guilderland has implemented the following setbacks/buffers:

1. A 500-foot buffer zone area to prevent incompatible development around the entirety of the Watervliet Reservoir;
2. A 250-foot buffer zone along the Reservoir’s northern tributaries: the Normans Kill, Indian House Creek, and the Bozen Kill;
3. A 100-foot buffer zone is in effect along all other watercourses in town, including notable watercourses such as the Black Creek, lower Normans Kill, Hunger Kill, Kaikout Kill, and Blockhouse Creek.

Buffer zones surrounding Town waterways and water bodies appear as a data layer on the Town of Guilderland Interactive Mapping site and are accessible to the public.

Western Turnpike/US-20 skirts the Reservoir to the northeast, and State Route 158 crosses the Normans Kill where it enters the Reservoir’s northern end. Active freight rail lines cross above the retention dam at French’s Hollow. The proximity of these transportation routes, together with agricultural runoff and other potential non-point sources of contamination elsewhere in the watershed area, represent potential vulnerabilities to maintaining high water quality levels in the Reservoir. In addition to ongoing collaboration to mitigate invasive species in and around the Reservoir, it is recommended that the Town of Guilderland develop and implement an action plan, including protocols for testing, coordinated agency response, and communications mechanisms with the City of Watervliet and other municipalities in the watershed to address the threat of emerging classes of contaminants and other potential pollutants in the Reservoir ecosystem.

<sup>4</sup> Watervliet Reservoir Watershed Protection Study, Capital District Regional Planning Commission

### C-3. Encourage and incentivize climate resiliency through Town practices, procedures, rules, and regulations wherever practicable.

Given the substantial amount of land that the Town controls in the form of parks, municipal buildings, rights-of-way along Town roadways, Western Turnpike Golf Course, and other facilities, it is recommended that the Town work to ensure that its policies and practices are in alignment with the high-priority goal of environmental protection and resiliency throughout Guilderland. Resiliency measures include but are not limited to:

#### Stormwater Infrastructure Improvements

So-called green infrastructure employs interventions such as permeable pavement, bioswales, or rain gardens to divert stormwater from municipal water treatment infrastructure and/or Town waterways. When correctly engineered and strategically located, green infrastructure can be a lower-cost, lower-maintenance, and more environmentally friendly solution to stormwater concerns, saving municipalities on both capital and operating expenses.



*Black Creek Marsh Wildlife Management Area on Hennessey Road*

#### Wetland Protection

Wetland areas can serve as sponges during times of high rainfall and can help mitigate flooding events. The Town of Guilderland identifies NY State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Regulated Freshwater Wetlands, DEC Wetland Check zones, and National Wetland Inventory areas on the Town of Guilderland Interactive Mapping site. Maintaining healthy, viable wetland areas in Guilderland is a coordinated effort between the Town, its Planning Board, the DEC, and property owners.<sup>5</sup> The Town may want to consider formalizing a setback from federally designated wetlands. For example, the Planning Board typically requires a setback from federal wetlands when reviewing subdivisions to reduce the likelihood of future encroachments and impacts.

<sup>5</sup> New York State's 2022-2023 budget contained significant changes to the state's Freshwater Wetlands Act, Article 24 of the Environmental Conservation Law. Improvements to the program were made to conserve an estimated 1 million additional acres of unprotected wetland habitat, assisting the state in adapting to increased flooding and severe storms spurred by climate change. Three important changes occurred and will be managed by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC).

First, effective January 1, 2025, existing maps depicting freshwater wetlands will no longer be regulatory. Second, DEC will largely use available aerial imagery and remote data to establish whether there are state-regulated freshwater wetlands on a parcel. Finally, the default threshold for regulated wetlands will decrease from 12.4 acres to 7.4 acres by 2028. Freshwater wetlands are lands and submerged areas, also known as swamps, bogs, sloughs, marshes, and flats that sustain aquatic or semi-aquatic vegetation. This new law will increase the number of wetlands regulated by DEC to further protect water quality and wildlife habitat.

**Creation of a Town alert system for extreme weather events** (intramunicipal and intermunicipal) for extreme weather events, with the establishment of protocols for effective collaboration in State- and Federal-level disaster response situations

Extreme weather events and accidents caused by human error have caused disruptions to important utility, road, and essential services infrastructure in recent years in communities throughout New York State and the nation. Changing climate patterns exacerbate known hazards and increase unpredictability for emergency planning. Input from the CPUC and the public throughout the Comprehensive Plan Update process identified the establishment of both intermunicipal and intramunicipal Town alert systems as a high priority for heightening resilience. In addition to protocols for effective collaboration between agencies and departments in the event of an emergency, it is recommended that the Town alert system incorporate well-publicized channels for disseminating essential information to Town residents.

#### Preservation of Open Space

The Town has initiated a Conservation Easement Exemption program to provide property tax abatement to Guilderland landowners who voluntarily commit to setting aside portions of their land from development. The first open space conserved through this mechanism is located off Wormer Road, near the Normans Kill. Preservation of additional open space can contribute to important ecosystem functions such as air and water filtration, soil stabilization, flood mitigation, and the preservation of habitat for plants and animals.

The Town should consider rezoning many of the publicly and privately owned parcels of land that have been set aside as permanent open space during project reviews to better memorialize their protection.

**Improving environmental education and outreach at Town parks**

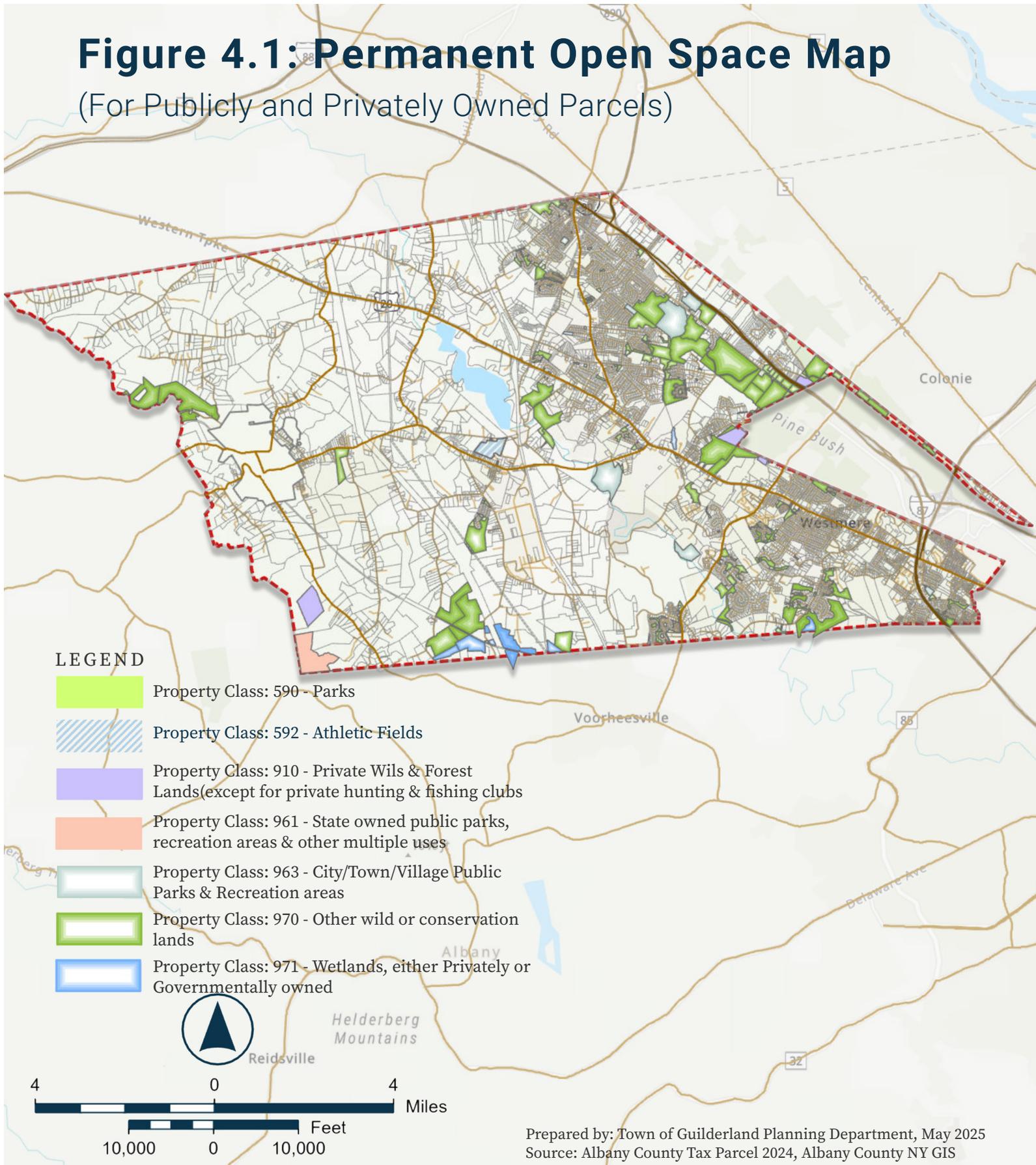
Enhancing public awareness of environmental concerns and ongoing initiatives is an opportunity to build a common understanding of challenges and a pool of potential volunteers for such activities as invasive species removal, tree planting, pollinator habitat restoration, and other efforts. Through the Guilderland Department of Parks and Recreation programming and/or in partnership with educational institutions or conservation organizations, the Town has an opportunity to motivate residents to action with informational outreach.

**Pledge Elements and Certification Actions of the NYS Climate Smart Communities (CSC) program, of which Guilderland is a registered member community**

As indicated in Recommendation 1 in this chapter, certification actions and pledge elements are concrete, measurable steps that the Town can enact to advance climate resiliency goals.



# Figure 4.1: Permanent Open Space Map (For Publicly and Privately Owned Parcels)



Prepared by: Town of Guilderland Planning Department, May 2025  
Source: Albany County Tax Parcel 2024, Albany County NY GIS

Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

Disclaimer: This map is prepared by the Town of Guilderland Planning Department and provided for illustrative purposes only. The Town of Guilderland expressly disclaims any liability for errors, omissions or inaccuracies in its content. In addition, some of the data may be compiled from third-party sources, whose accuracy cannot be confirmed. The Town of Guilderland disclaims all liability for any losses or damages, directly or otherwise, which may result from the use, operation or modification of this data by any user. Each user is responsible for determining the suitability of this information for the users intended purpose, and acknowledges and accepts all inherent limitations of the information provided.

**C-4. Reduce Guilderland's collective contribution to climate change by decreasing community-wide greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions with forward-thinking environmental, transportation, and energy planning.**

As expressed in public input throughout the Comprehensive Plan Update process, the Guilderland community has a desire to mitigate the hazards of a changing climate through resiliency measures coupled with proactive steps to reduce the Town's collective contribution to climate-warming pollution. Actions to reduce the community's collective greenhouse gas emissions are inclusive of but not limited to the following:

- a. Wherever feasible, encourage and incentivize clean energy production, including rooftop solar/PV collection systems on new and/or existing structures, where practicable.

As the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of photovoltaic (PV) solar energy collection systems, as well as the battery storage systems to support off-peak usage – improves over time, it is recommended that the Town evaluate the benefits of installing collection systems on Town-owned properties. The Town has already taken the step of evaluating the former landfill site as a potential solar array location and should continue to evaluate the feasibility and potential cost savings of solar installations as transmission grid infrastructure is upgraded and new technology comes to market.

- b. Encourage low- or no-GHG-producing transportation options in Guilderland by supporting infrastructure for electric vehicles, cycling, walking, and public transportation.

Since the adoption of the Guilderland 2000 Comprehensive Plan, the development of electric vehicle (EV) and plug-in hybrid technology has advanced substantially, reducing the percentage of vehicles on the road that have tailpipe emissions. Guilderland has installed free EV charging stations at Town Hall, in order to bolster the infrastructure network that facilitates EV usage. As technology continually evolves, it is recommended that the Town evaluate the feasibility of so-called "fast charging" stations, which are increasingly becoming the industry standard.

While EV and hybrid vehicles have low- or no tailpipe emissions, there are still considerable environmental impacts of the battery technologies that such vehicles employ. As part of a comprehensive approach, therefore, it is

recommended that the Town continue to invest in sidewalks, multi-use pathways, public transit, and other mobility infrastructure to increase the number of daily trips that residents are able to make without the use of a personal vehicle.

- c. Encourage sustainable agricultural practices that sequester carbon such as forest pastures and no-till seeding.

In addition to its contributions to the Town's economy and character, agriculture offers opportunities to advance Guilderland's environmental goals. Using a combination of time-tested techniques and evolving best practices, agricultural producers in Guilderland can contribute to wider efforts to enhance soil, water, and air quality. Working in partnership with the Albany County Soil and Water Conservation District, the Town can incentivize those techniques that lead to positive environmental outcomes by connecting growers with informational and funding resources to defray the costs associated with transitioning to more beneficial practices.

- d. Encourage the use of energy-efficient lighting and fixtures such as LED, where such applications can reduce ambient light pollution as well as energy consumption.

The Town has already demonstrated a willingness and ability to convert luminaries to LED to realize energy and cost savings for residents. As relevant lighting and other technologies continue to evolve, it is recommended that the Town periodically evaluate opportunities for additional energy conservation in Town operations, especially when such conservation measures hold the promise of conserving Town fiscal revenues as well.

**C-5. Prioritize the preservation of natural resources and animal habitat in Guilderland to promote healthy and functioning ecosystems that mitigate costly and harmful conditions such as invasive species, flooding, and soil erosion.**

- a. Consider limits to development on steep slopes for non-agricultural land disturbances.
- c. Create a Black Creek Marsh Overlay District to set development standards in the vicinity of this critical wetland asset.

The majority of Guilderland’s steep slopes are located in the Helderberg Escarpment and Settles Hill areas of town, with additional steep areas along stream embankments. In order to prevent erosion, subsidence, and topsoil loss, it is recommended that the Town consider a more comprehensive approach to steep slope development regulation, with an acknowledgement that agricultural activities on such slopes may be compatible with the aims of soil stabilization and viewshed protection. In the current Town Zoning Code, there is only a definition for angle of repose. There is no definition for steep slopes. Additionally, the angle of repose regulations only applies to slopes when a watercourse is present at the toe of the slope. The Town should consider adding a definition of steep slopes in Town Zoning Law and to clarify development restrictions when watercourses are not present.

- b. Develop an interactive environmental features map for Guilderland.

Up-to-date mapping of environmental features such as steep slopes, crucial animal habitats, Critical Environmental Areas designated by NYSDEC, and other relevant landscape elements can provide important context for future decisions on the location and scale of future development. The Town of Guilderland has created an interactive map for environmental features including, but not limited to State and federal wetlands, soils, Pine Bush Management Area, Helderberg Escarpment Scenic Corridors, Watervliet Reservoir and watercourse setbacks, FEMA flood zones, and land cover classifications. The Town should continue to expand upon current environmental features and expand upon these features in consultation and collaboration with relevant Albany County and NY State agencies.

The Black Creek Marsh wetland complex in the southwestern corner of the Town is identified in the Albany County Climate Resiliency Plan (2022) as an area at “major” climate risk, owing to a combination of flood, heat, and social vulnerability scores in the County’s risk assessment. As an identified, functioning wetland, this area helps to sequester stormwater from intense precipitation events, in addition to providing vital habitat for birds, fish, and other wildlife. It is recommended that the Town incorporate an Overlay District for Black Creek Marsh when future zoning amendments are made, to prevent loss of this invaluable asset to Guilderland.

- d. Update zoning to limit forest cover removal in the riparian area of major and minor watercourses and tributaries.

Trees provide a variety of functions that support the health of waterways. Root systems mitigate streambank erosion, which prevents soil loss and maintains water quality, and tree canopy provides shade, lowering stream temperatures to maintain viable aquatic habitat for fish and amphibians. It is recommended that future updates to Town land use regulations consider the contributions that trees make to riparian ecosystems along the Normans Kill and its tributaries to ensure that these important natural corridors remain functional and healthy, in keeping with the recommendations of the Rural Guilderland Plan (2005) and the Normans Kill Riparian Corridor Study (2007).

- e. Continue to partner with land conservancies, trusts, and other organizations whose missions include natural resource preservation.

The Town of Guilderland has begun to partner with landowners who wish to conserve open space through the Conservation Easement Exemption program. The Town has also had success partnering with organizations such as the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy to protect wild areas along the Bozen Kill and elsewhere. It is recommended that the Town maintain these and other productive partnerships, leveraging existing funding to attract support from the private and not-for-profit sector organizations with missions that are aligned with environmental conservation.

**C-6. Establish drainage districts as permitted in NYS Town Law Article 12 and NYS Town Law Section 202 to better manage water flows, mitigate flooding impacts and protect property values by facilitating effective drainage.**

- a. The Town must adapt to climate change and the severity and intensity of storm impacts on existing storm sewer infrastructure.

A large percentage of the Town's storm sewer infrastructure was designed and installed decades ago. Much of this infrastructure was designed to handle a 10-year storm event, where today, stormwater facilities are designed to handle 100-year storm events, which seem to be occurring multiple times a year. The intensity of rain storms occurring today may be 500-year storm events.

- b. The older storm sewer infrastructure may contain pipes that are deteriorating and/or undersized to handle storm events occurring today.
- c. Neither water consumption nor property values accurately reflect a property's contribution to stormwater runoff, leading to an inequitable distribution of stormwater

management costs. Properties with large impervious surfaces that contribute significantly to runoff may pay very little towards stormwater management under these systems.

- d. Currently, most jurisdictions in New York do not bill property owners separately for stormwater management. Instead, they rely on revenue generated from metered water and sewer bills or property taxes.
- e. Stormwater utility fees are designed to create a more equitable allocation of costs by linking the fee assessed to the amount of runoff generated by a property, often using the amount of impervious surface as the indicator.

**C-7. Establish Best Management Practices for maintenance of town owned and privately owned stormwater management facilities.**

- a. The Town should utilize information from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), Albany County Stormwater Coalition, and other municipalities to develop appropriate maintenance of stormwater facilities. Consideration of maintenance should include mowing, frequency of inspections, removal of sediment, removal of trash and other debris, removal of overgrown vegetation, keeping inlets and outlets open and clear.
- b. Adequate budgeting should be allocated on an annual basis to provide the Highway Department with the necessary staff and equipment to maintain town owned stormwater facilities in compliance with federal, state and local regulations.



# 05 NEIGHBORHOODS & 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 to residents.

## Overview

Proximity to large public- and private-sector employers, a well-regarded school system, and access to plentiful outdoor recreation opportunities all contribute to Guilderland’s desirability as a place to call home. Unlike former mill towns and industrial towns elsewhere in upstate New York, Guilderland’s population has continued to show growth with each successive Decennial Census count since 1930. Large percentage increases in population during the latter half of the 20th century, particularly in the 1950s, when the number of residents more than doubled in a ten-year span, influenced both the design and the distribution of housing in the town. On average, housing stock in Guilderland is newer than the stock found in more industrial or agricultural areas of the state, and settlement patterns in town are primarily suburban, owing to the prevailing transportation and development practices of the late 20th century.

Guilderland’s population in 2020 (36,848) was virtually identical to its land area in square acres (36,986), but that population is not distributed uniformly across the landscape. The character of Guilderland’s neighborhoods and hamlets runs the gamut from red wooden barns on green farmland to leafy cul-de-sacs to denser, more urban construction near the Town’s border with the City of Albany. The substantial majority of housing in Guilderland (67.6%), however, is presently devoted to single-family dwellings.

When asked what type of housing they would prefer to see constructed in Guilderland in the next 20 years, nearly half of respondents (47%) to the Guilderland Community Survey indicated a desire for a “mix of housing types and price points to attract and accommodate individuals and families with a variety of income levels.” Slightly less than one-third (30%) of respondents registered a desire for “Low-density residential development of single-family housing,” and 14% indicated a desire for “in-law suites and other shared housing options to accommodate young professionals and senior citizens.” Other views expressed via public engagement activities of the Comprehensive Plan Update process included a desire to “build on already developed land” through redevelopment or adaptive reuse efforts. In a separate question that asked survey participants what type of future growth they would like to see in Guilderland in the next 20 years, the leading responses were “Focus on sustainability,” “Preservation of farmland,” “New mixed-use development [commercial with residential],” and “New affordable housing residential development.”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix C: Guilderland Community Survey Summary



*Neighborhood on Carman Road*

# Housing in Guilderland

A sufficient supply of housing is necessary to meet the diverse needs of residents, ensure the vitality and character of residential neighborhoods, and sustain a high quality of life in our communities. It is also essential to economic development. The availability of housing affordable to households at different income levels helps businesses to attract and retain workers. When employees cannot find a decent place to live that they can afford within a reasonable commute distance, businesses may be unable to find workers to hire. The Town of Guilderland believes that the lack of housing for New York residents for all ages and income levels negatively impacts the future of State, regional, and local economic growth and community well-being, that every community must do its part to contribute to housing growth and benefit from the positive impacts a healthy housing market brings, that infill development that reduces sprawl and supports walkable communities, has significant environmental and public health benefits, and that affirmatively furthering fair housing and reducing segregation is not only required by law, but is essential for keeping the community strong and vibrant.

The Town Board further supports that housing production of all kinds in this community will bring multiple benefits, including increasing housing access and choices for current and future residents, providing integrated accessible housing options that meet the needs of people with sensory and mobility disabilities, bringing economic opportunities and vitality to this community, and allowing workers at all levels to improve their quality of life through living closer to their employment opportunities.

Therefore, on March 5, 2024, the Town Board passed Resolution No. 1 of 2024 Authorizing the Pro-Housing Communities Pledge and as of July 1, 2024, the Town was certified as a Pro-Housing Community by the NYS Office of Homes and Community Renewal. As a Pro-Housing Community, Guilderland solidifies its commitment to alleviating the housing crisis through the following steps:

1. Streamlining permitting for multifamily housing, affordable housing, accessible housing, accessory dwelling units, and supportive housing.
2. Adopting policies that affirmatively further fair housing.
3. Incorporating regional housing needs into planning decisions.
4. Increasing development capacity for residential uses.
5. Enacting policies that encourage a broad range of housing development, including multifamily housing, affordable housing, accessible housing, accessory dwelling units, and supportive housing.

Figure 5.1 shows the total number of housing units and the distribution of units by tenure in Guilderland over a 20-year period. Between 2000 and 2010, the supply of housing in the town grew by 7.9%, with a net gain of 1,101 units. Growth continued into the subsequent decade, but at a slower pace (6.6%). From 2010 to 2020, fewer than 1,000 housing units were added to the housing supply, the smallest increase in decades. By contrast, the town gained 2,301 housing units during the 1980s and 1,814 during the 1990s.

**Figure 5.1: Total Housing Units, Town of Guilderland**

	2000		2010		2020	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>Total Housing Units</b>	13,928	100.0%	15,029	100.0%	16,018	100.0%
Occupied Units	13,422	96.4%	14,205	94.5%	15,006	93.7%
Owner-Occupied Units	8,945	66.6%	9,653	68.0%	10,028	67%
Renter-Occupied Units	4,477	33.4%	4,552	32.0%	4,978	33%
Vacant Units	506	3.6%	824	5.5%	1,012	6.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census.

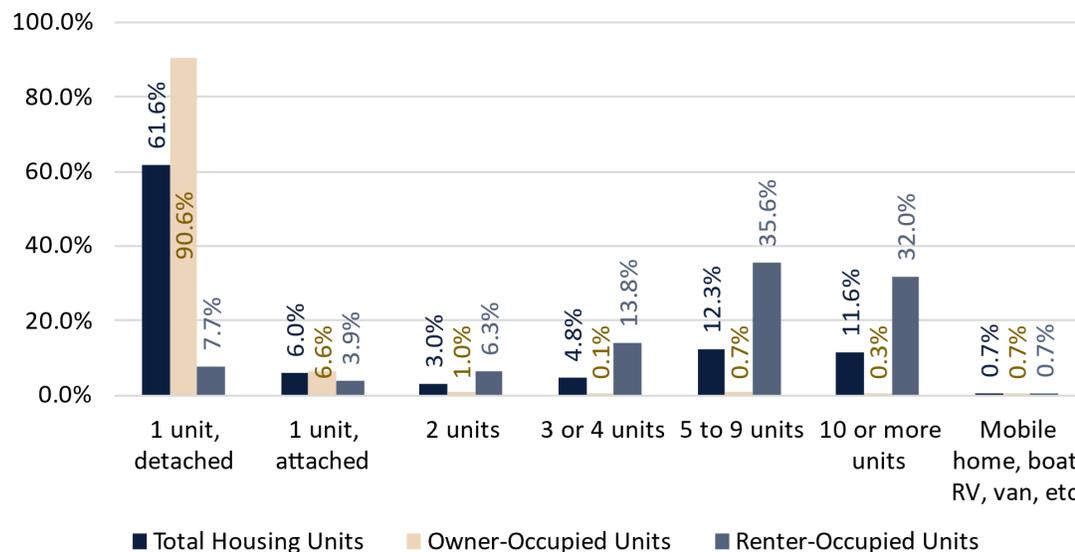
## Housing Characteristics

According to Decennial Census data, the proportion of Guilderland residents who own their homes has held relatively steady at two-thirds during the past 20 years. According to the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS), five-year estimates from 2017-2021, single family homes, either detached or attached, are the predominant housing type in Guilderland, accounting for 67.6% of all units (Figure 5.2). They also make up 97.2% of the owner-occupied units. Approximately 12% of all housing units are in buildings with 5 to 9 units, while 11.6% are in multifamily structures that contain 10 or more units. Virtually all of the

units in the latter category are rentals, as opposed to owner-occupied condominiums.

Duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes account for less than 8% of Guilderland’s housing stock. These structures tend to be prevalent in older towns and cities, where they were often placed on lots suitable for single-family homes. Historically, they provided housing affordable to moderate income households. Two- to four-unit buildings represent 14% of the housing in the Town of Guilderland, and one of every four housing units in Albany County overall.

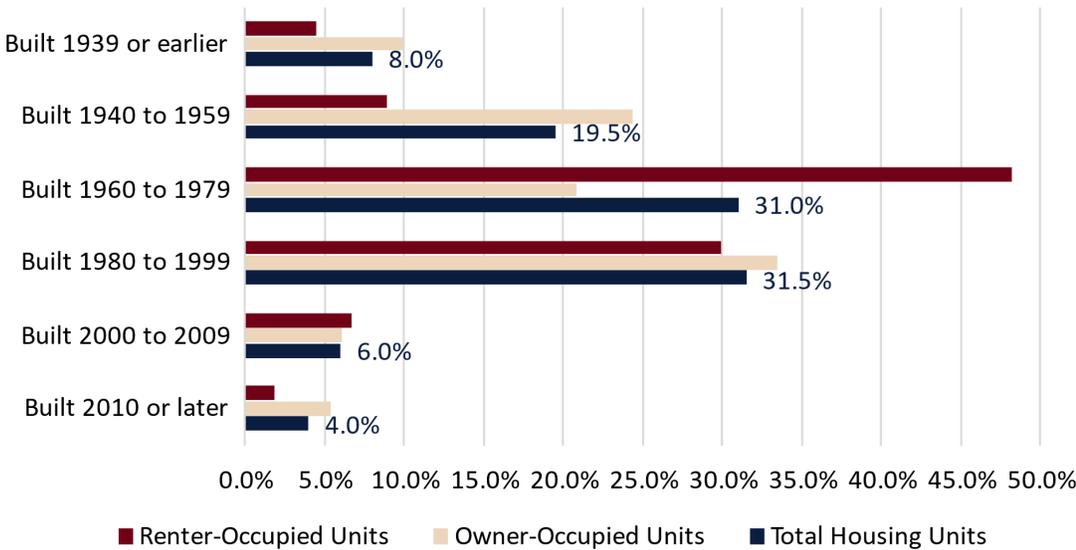
**Figure 5.2: Housing by Units in Structure, Town of Guilderland**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2017-2021 Five-Year Estimates

Figure 5.3 shows the age of housing units in Guilderland. Unlike many communities in upstate New York, only 8.0% of the housing inventory was built prior to 1940. Nearly one-third (32%) of the units were constructed between 1980 and 1999, consistent with the data on housing growth, while 31.0% were built between 1960 and 1979. As the chart illustrates, however, the town’s rental housing stock is generally newer than its owner-occupied housing: 34.3% of the owner-occupied units, but only 13.4% of the rental units, were built before 1960.

**Figure 5.3: Housing by Year Structure Built, Town of Guilderland**



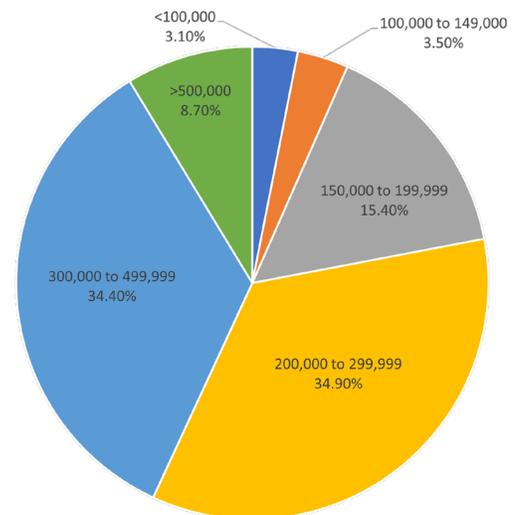
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2017-2021 Five-Year Estimates

## Home Values

Home values tend to reflect both the age and condition of housing. The median value <sup>7</sup> of owner-occupied housing in the town is \$276,100, up from \$135,700 in 2000, a 103% increase, or a 25% increase in inflation-adjusted dollars. The median home value is the midpoint of all home prices in a specific area, meaning that half of the homes in that area are worth more than the median, and half are worth less. Median home values are a key indicator of the general worth of residential properties in a given location. Guilderland has a higher median home value than Albany County (\$235,200) and the Town of Colonie (\$259,500), but a lower median value than the Town of Bethlehem (\$294,600).

As shown in Figure 5.4, approximately 35% of homes in Guilderland are valued at \$200,000 to \$299,999, while 34.4% have a value between \$300,000 and \$499,999. Only 3% of owner-occupied housing in the town is valued at less than \$100,000, compared to 7.2% countywide.

**Figure 5.4: Owner-Occupied Housing Units by Value**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2017-2021 Five-Year Estimates

<sup>7</sup> The housing value is the respondent’s estimate of what the home would sell for if it were for sale. Residential sale prices, a more accurate measure of market value, are discussed later in this section.

## Housing Costs

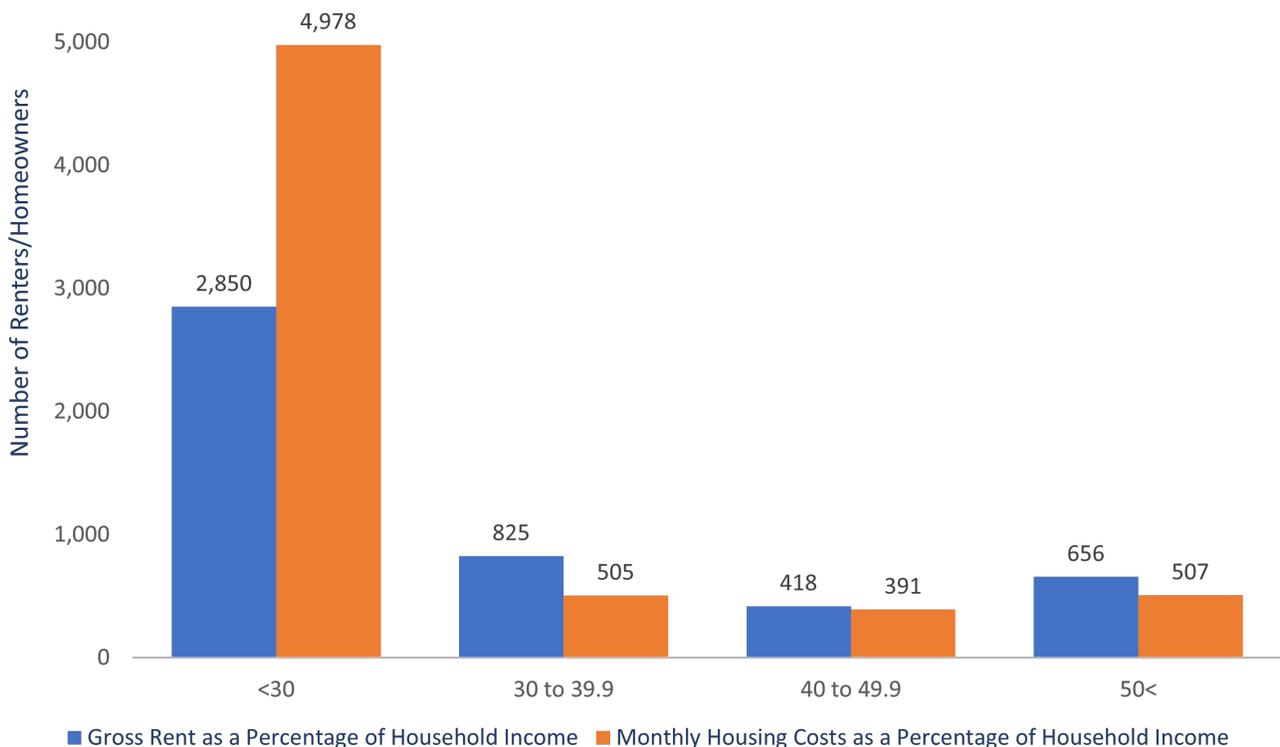
The median gross rent is defined as the contract rent plus the average monthly cost of utilities, including heat. The median gross rent in Guilderland is \$1,310, well above the Albany County median (\$1,113) and slightly below the median rent in the Town of Bethlehem (\$1,372). The current median rent reflects an increase of nearly 71% above what it was in 2000, or a 5% increase in inflation-adjusted dollars. More than 78% of renter households in Guilderland have a gross rent between \$1,000 and \$1,999 per month.

Housing costs paid by homeowners include mortgage payments, if applicable, plus utilities, property taxes, and insurance. According to the ACS, about 65% of those who own a home in Guilderland have a mortgage. The median monthly housing cost among homeowners with a mortgage is \$1,975. Among those without a mortgage, the median is \$703 per month. More than 62% of homeowners with a mortgage have monthly housing costs between \$1,500 and \$2,999.

## Housing Affordability

A standard measure of affordability looks at how much households spend on housing relative to their income. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines a household that spends more than 30% of its gross income on monthly housing expenses as cost burdened; a household that spends more than half of its income on housing is considered severely cost burdened. The greater the proportion of income spent on housing costs, the less households have available for other necessities like food, childcare, and transportation.

**Figure 5.5: Housing Cost Burden, Town of Guilderland**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2017-2021 Five-Year Estimates

\* Homeowners with a mortgage only

As shown in Figure 5.5, 38.7% of renter households in Guilderland are cost burdened, up from 35.8% in 2010. More than 13% of households are severely cost burdened, as they spend more than 50% of their income on rent. The majority of the severely cost burdened renter households are at the lower end of the income scale (though not necessarily low income): 79% of them earn less than \$50,000 per year. Nationally, 46% of all renter households are cost burdened.

Homeowners experience affordability challenges far less than renters. This is because lenders generally will not issue a mortgage that consumes more than 30% of the borrower's income. However, a change in circumstances, such as the loss of a job, retirement, or a divorce, can impact an owner's income and their ability to cover housing costs. In Guilderland, 22.0% of homeowners with a mortgage (and 9.0% of those who own their homes free and clear) are cost burdened. Two-thirds of the cost burdened owner households have annual incomes of less than \$75,000.

Limiting a renter's or homeowner's monthly expenses to 30% (rent/mortgage and utilities) of their income is the goal of workforce housing. Workforce housing refers to housing that is affordable to families and individuals whose incomes are between 60% and 120% of the area median income (AMI). The 2023 AMI for Guilderland is \$107,488, with a per capita income of \$57,286. If Guilderland was to target 60% of the AMI for a workforce housing policy, it would equate to an individual or family earning \$64,493 annually, with 30% of the annual income equating to \$19,348 or \$1,612 a month (rent/mortgage and utilities). If Guilderland was to target 80% of the AMI for a workforce housing policy it would equate to an individual or family earning \$85,990 annually, with 30% of the annual income equating to \$25,797 or \$2,150 a month (rent/mortgage and utilities).

In the Spring/Summer of 2025 the Guilderland Industrial Development (IDA) commenced discussions on developing a 'workforce housing' policy in order to address interest from developers of workforce housing projects seeking financial assistance from the IDA. The IDA's discussions have focused on the agency's authority to grant financial assistance for workforce housing projects and whether the agency should develop a percentage of the AMI to target when considering offering financial assistance, i.e. 60% of the AMI, 80% of the AMI. The Town Board should also consider adopting an affordable and workforce housing policy as a result of the Comprehensive Plan Update process and consider codifying this policy into Town Zoning Law.

Out of Reach: The High Cost of Housing, a report produced by the National Low Income Housing Coalition, highlights the mismatch between the wages people earn and the cost of rental housing in the U.S. According to analysis completed by the organization, a full-time worker in the Albany-Schenectady-Troy Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) must earn an average hourly wage of \$23.21, or \$48,280 annually, to afford a modest, two-bedroom rental home without spending more than 30% of their income on housing costs.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> For more information, see <https://nlihc.org/oor>. The hourly wages necessary to afford a two-bedroom apartment are also available by zip code. In Guilderland, they range from a low of \$21.35 in the 12303 zip code to a high of \$28.08 in the 12084 zip code.

Figure 5.6 lists the affordable housing in Guilderland, properties that currently offer rental units to income-qualified households. These properties, all of which are privately owned, are funded by state and federal programs like Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) and Section 8 Project-Based Rental Assistance. There are a number of assisted living/senior living facilities in town that offer affordable living options:

- Omni Senior Living is a 96-unit affordable housing complex restricted to tenants age 55 and over. Rents in these developments are typically based on income and/or capped to ensure that tenants do not spend more than 30% of their income on housing costs.
- Promenade at University Place was a former hotel converted to a 200 bed, licensed assisted living facility. The Promenade at University Place is one of the few Assisted Living Residences in the Capital Region that is licensed by New York State to accept residents under the Medicaid funded Assisted Living Program. Approximately 40% of the units are available for income restricted residents who qualify medically for admission to the facility.
- Serafini Village is an independent senior living facility consisting of 104 units, with 35 units rented to Section 8 tenants.
- Brandywine Apartments

**Figure 5.6: Affordable Housing in Guilderland**

Name	Location	Units	Year Built
Omni Senior Living	3485 and 3489 Carman Road	96	2002
Brandle Woods	6 Van Evera Drive	32	1991
Altamont Oaks	950 Altamont Boulevard	40	1987
Brandywine Apartments	800 Brandywine Parkway	180	1975
Promenade at University Place	1228 Western Ave	200	2017
Serafini Village	1941-1949 Western Ave	104	1988

Source: *Affordable Housing Online*, <https://affordablehousingonline.com>

Not all cost-burdened households have low household incomes. Middle income households can also be cost burdened, or unable to find suitable housing, if prices are too high or there is a scarcity of housing units within their financial means. These households may earn too much to be eligible for subsidized housing or other forms of assistance, but not enough to comfortably afford quality market-rate housing.

Housing affordability has become a major concern in recent years, as the COVID-19 pandemic, supply chain disruptions, record-high inflation, and other issues led to a dramatic rise in the cost of housing. Renters, who tend to have lower incomes than homeowners, have been hit especially hard. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average rent in the U.S. increased 18% between 2017 and 2022, exceeding the rate of inflation.

# Building Permits

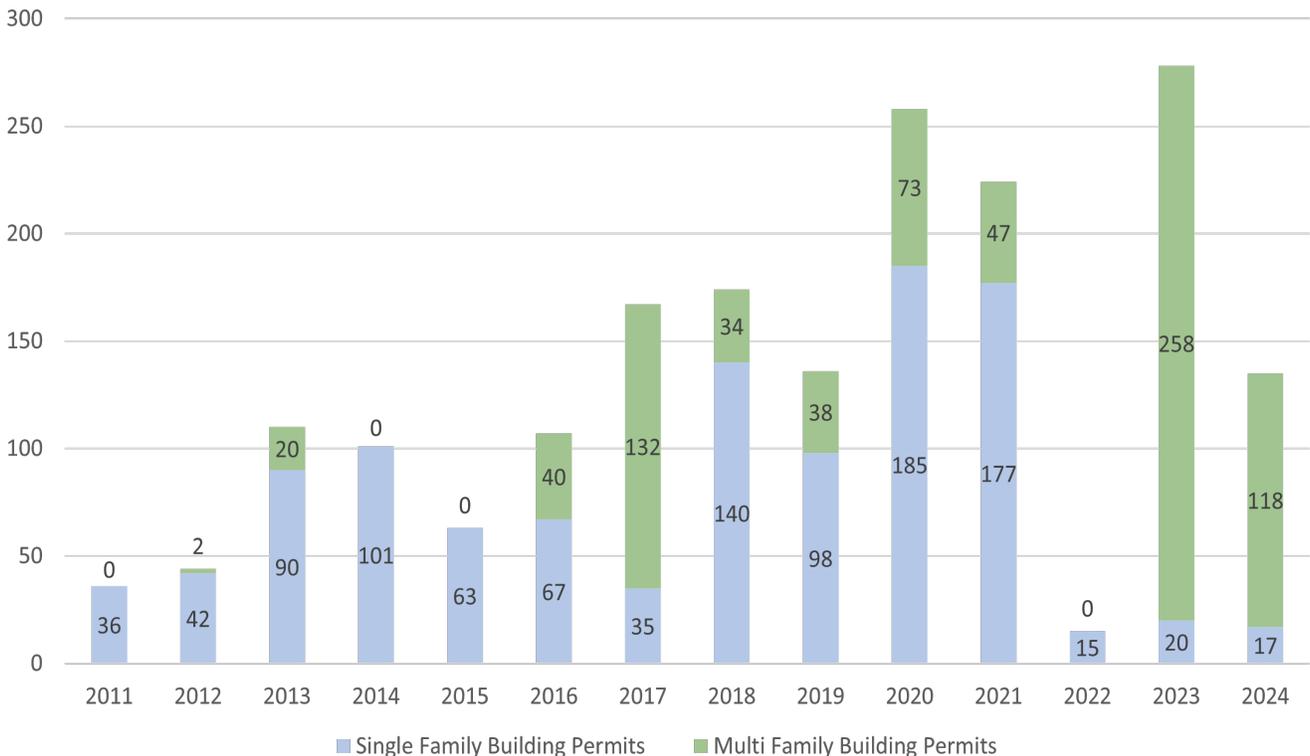
The U.S. Census Bureau’s Building Permits Survey reports that between 2011 and 2024, the Town of Guilderland issued a total of 1848 permits for residential construction, of which 1086 (or about 58%) were for single-family homes. These homes were valued at an estimated \$150.8 million, or an average of about \$332,000 per unit. It is important to note that while the number of approved building permits is an indicator of future construction, not all permits result in new development.

family units. The rising cost of new homes and significant down payment to purchase the home, coupled with closing costs, prices many buyers out of the home buying market. The significant and rising constructions costs to build new single-family subdivisions contributes to the high costs of new single-family homes. The cost of installing infrastructure (roads, water, and sewer) are contributing to making single-family construction very expensive.

Units in multifamily structures accounted for 762 building permits issued, with a substantial increase occurring from 2016 through 2021. In fact, Guilderland issued more permits for multifamily housing units than for single family homes during this time. Prior to 2017, the largest number of building permits issued by the town for multifamily housing units was 112 in 1999. There could be many factors contributing to the increase in multi-family as compared to single-

No new senior housing was built in Guilderland between 2000 and 2015. With nearly one-third of the population in the Albany-Schenectady-Troy MSA age 55 and over, however, developers in the region are tapping into the growing market for independent senior housing. Hamilton Parc, the Summit at Mill Hill, and Westmere Village are among the Town’s newest senior living communities.

**Figure 5.7: Residential Building Permits Issued, Town of Guilderland**



Source: HUD User SOCDC Building Permit Database, Town of Guilderland internal database

# Housing Sales

Figure 5.8 presents data on arm’s length single-family home sales in Guilderland from 2016 through 2022.<sup>9</sup> “Arm’s length” refers to real estate transactions in which buyers and sellers act independently and in their own interest, without undue pressure on either party.

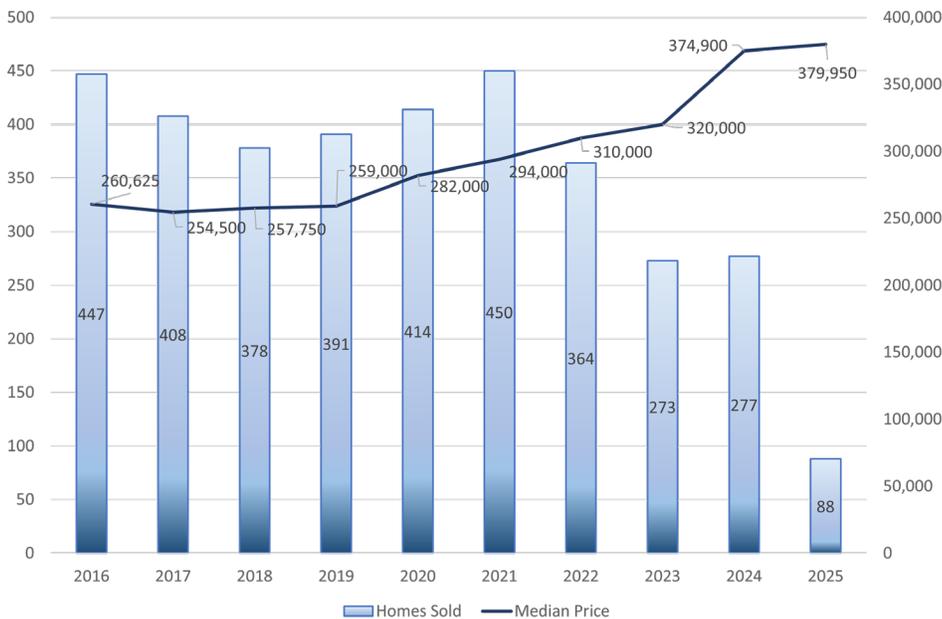
As the chart demonstrates, the median selling price of a single-family residence in the town rose from \$265,000 in 2016 to \$379,000 in 2025, a 17% increase. A growing percentage of homes had selling prices of at least \$500,000. These higher priced homes accounted for less than 5% of the residences sold each year between 2016 and 2019, but they made up about 10% in 2020 and 2021, and nearly 20% in 2022. In contrast, the proportion of homes that sold for less than \$200,000 declined from 27% in 2016 to 12% in 2022.<sup>10</sup>

The selling prices of newly constructed homes, which make up a small subset of residential sales transactions, are higher than existing homes. The median selling price of a new single-family home in Guilderland was \$398,700 over the 2016-19 period, and \$431,500 from 2020 through 2022.

The number of homes sold per year increased somewhat in 2020 and 2021 over each of the previous three years. This may be due to what the National Association of Realtors refers to as the “COVID real estate boom” that occurred from roughly mid-2020 through late 2021. During this time, U.S. housing demand and home prices skyrocketed, aided by historically low interest rates. On average, 3 to 4% of single-family homes in Guilderland change hands each year.

Quantitative information on local homebuyers is not available, but the National Association of Realtors (NAR) produces an annual profile that provides insights about recent buyers and sellers. From 2014 to 2021, Millennials, defined as individuals born between 1980 and 1998, made up the largest share of homebuyers in the U.S. That changed in 2022 due to a rapid increase in mortgage interest rates and higher home prices, when Baby Boomers (born 1946 to 1964) represented 39% of homebuyers. First-time buyers accounted for 26% of those who purchased a home, down from 34% in 2021. Fourteen percent of home buyers purchased a multi-generational home to care for

**Figure 5.8: Arm’s Length Sales of Single-Family Homes**



Source: NYS Office of Real Property Tax Services.

9 This analysis looks only at properties that are classified as 210 – One Family Year-Round Residence, which may be single-family homes or condos. Other types of residential property, such as two-family homes and rural residences with acreage, are excluded.

10 This figure was not calculated by year due to the limited number of newly constructed homes sold in some years.

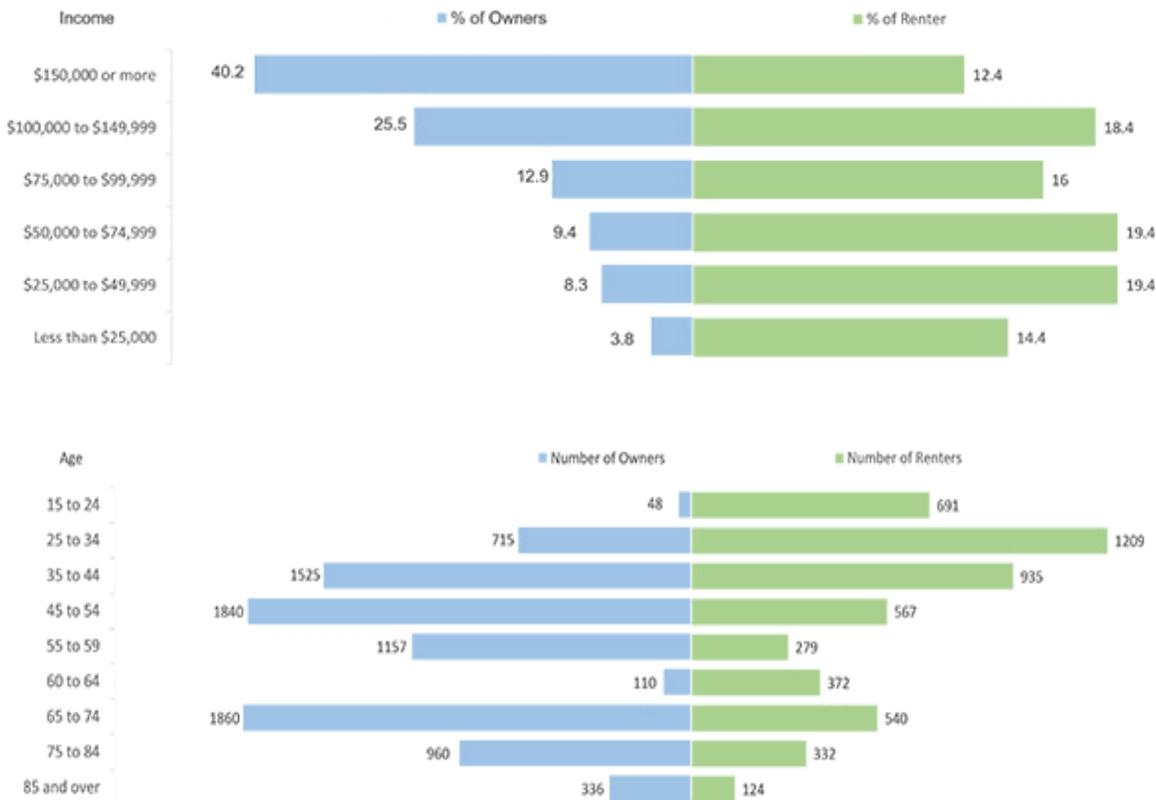
aging parents or accommodate adult children moving back into the house, while 31% of buyers had children under 18 living at home.

Leading factors influencing buyers’ neighborhood choices included the quality of the neighborhood, convenience to friends and family, housing affordability, and convenience to a job. Detached single-family houses represented 79% of the homes purchased.<sup>11</sup>

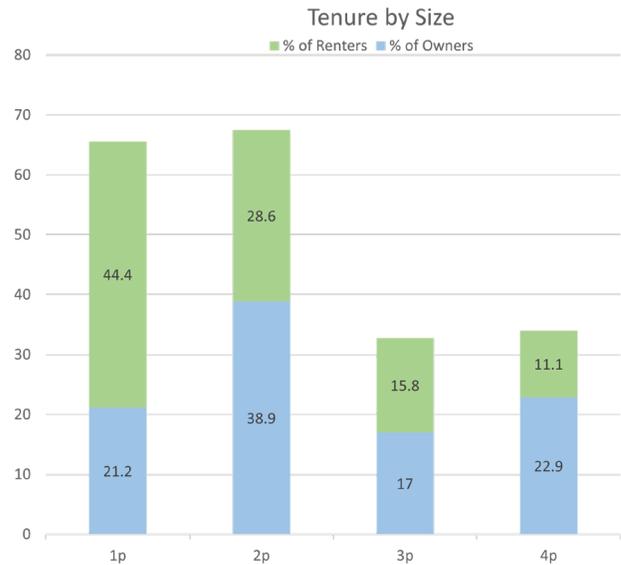
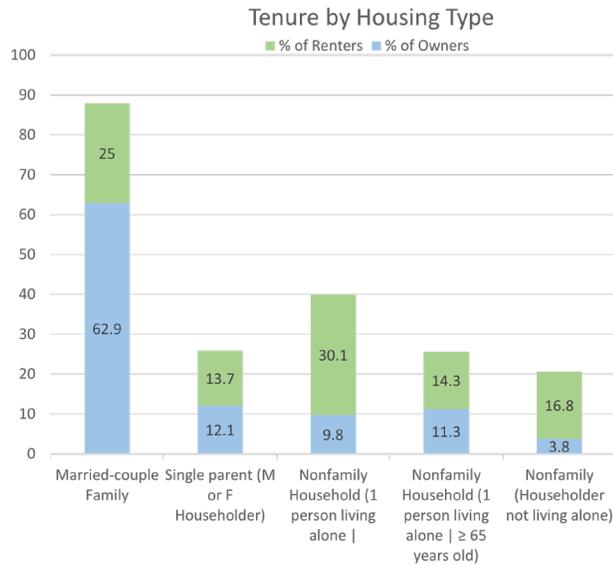
**Who Owns? Who Rents?**

Decisions about whether to own or to rent are based not only on income but also on life stage and household type. Homeownership rates tend to rise as people enter young adulthood and begin to settle down. Among Guilderland householders (heads of household) under age 25, 71% are renters (see Figure 5.9). In contrast, 82% of householders ages 45 to 54 – peak earning years – own a home. After age 65, rates of homeownership decline as wages and salaries from employment are replaced by incomes from savings, pensions, retirement accounts, and Social Security. Some seniors transition to rental units or downsize to smaller homes that are easier to maintain. Nevertheless, four out of every five households headed by someone between the ages of 65 and 74 in Guilderland, and 76% of households ages 75 to 85, own their homes. The rate of homeownership among householders age 85 and above is 56%. However, this figure excludes seniors who reside in group quarters (like a nursing home or assisted living facility) and are not in a household.

**Figure 5.9: Guilderland: Tenure by Income, Householder Age, and Household Type**



<sup>11</sup> National Association of Realtors Research Group, 2023 Home Buyers and Sellers Generational Trends Report March 2023. Accessed at <https://www.nar.realtor/research-and-statistics/research-reports/home-buyer-and-seller-generational-trends>. The recent homebuyers had purchased a primary residence between July 2021 and June 2022.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2019-23 Five-Year Estimates

## Housing Market Demographics

Key factors that shape the demand for housing include population growth, household formation, income levels, and demographic characteristics like age and household type that influence housing preferences. National economic conditions and mortgage rates also affect housing markets. Rising interest rates mean higher monthly mortgage payments and reduced spending power for prospective homebuyers. Some buyers may be priced out of the market and forced to delay their home purchasing plans. Conversely, lower interest rates make homebuying more affordable, increasing the demand for housing.

## Population Change

Guilderland’s population has been growing steadily since the 1950s. In 2020, the town had 36,848 residents, an increase of 4.4% from 35,303 in 2010 (Figure 5.10). While the rate of growth was relatively moderate in comparison to previous decades, the town’s population grew slightly faster than Albany County (3.6%), New York State (4.2%), or the Town of Bethlehem (4.1%). In comparison, the U.S. population grew by 7.4% from 2010 to 2020.

Population levels are expected to be stable over the next 20 years. Based on projections from the Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDRPC), the number of residents in the Town of Guilderland is expected to reach 37,594 by 2030 and 38,151 by 2040.

The 2020 Census reports that 77.4% of residents in the Town of Guilderland are white. About 11% are Asian or Pacific Islander, 5.8% identify themselves as multi-racial, and 4.1% are Black or African American. Individuals of Hispanic origin, who may be of any race, account for 4.6% of the town’s population. Three-quarters of residents of Hispanic origin, however, reside within the two block groups that include the University at Albany campus and parts of McKownville.<sup>12</sup> Notably, Guilderland is more racially diverse than it was in 2010, when 86.2% of residents were identified as white.

<sup>12</sup> Block Group (BG) 004.041 covers the University at Albany campus, and BG 146.081 covers parts of McKownville.

**Figure 5.10: Population and Household Trends, Town of Guilderland**

	Town of Guilderland		Albany County	
	Number	% Change	Number	% Change
<b>Population</b>				
2000 Census	34,045	--	294,565	--
2010 Census	35,303	3.7%	304,032	3.2%
2020 Census	36,848	4.4%	314,848	3.6%
2030 CDRPC Projection	37,594	1.5%	316,018	1.0%
2040 CDRPC Projection	38,151	1.5%	317,709	0.5%
<b>Households</b>				
2000 Census	13,422	--	120,512	--
2010 Census	14,205	5.8%	126,251	4.8%
2020 Census	15,006	5.6%	132,812	5.2%
2030 CDRPC Projection	15,600	2.9%	132,935	0.0%
2040 CDRPC Projection	15,968	2.4%	134,410	1.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census and Capital District Regional Planning Commission (2030 and 2040 projections).

## Households

Approximately 15,000 households reside in the Town of Guilderland. According to CDRPC, the number of households is projected to reach 15,600 by 2030 and 15,968 a decade later, with growth rates averaging less than 0.3% per year.

Nationally, average household sizes have decreased over the last few decades due to an increase in single-parent households, smaller family sizes, and more people living alone. The average household in Guilderland is 2.33 persons, compared to 2.40 in 2000. Individuals who live alone make up about 29% of all households in the town. Approximately 28% of Guilderland households include at least one child under 18 years of age, while 31.1% include at least one person aged 65 and over.

# Age Distribution

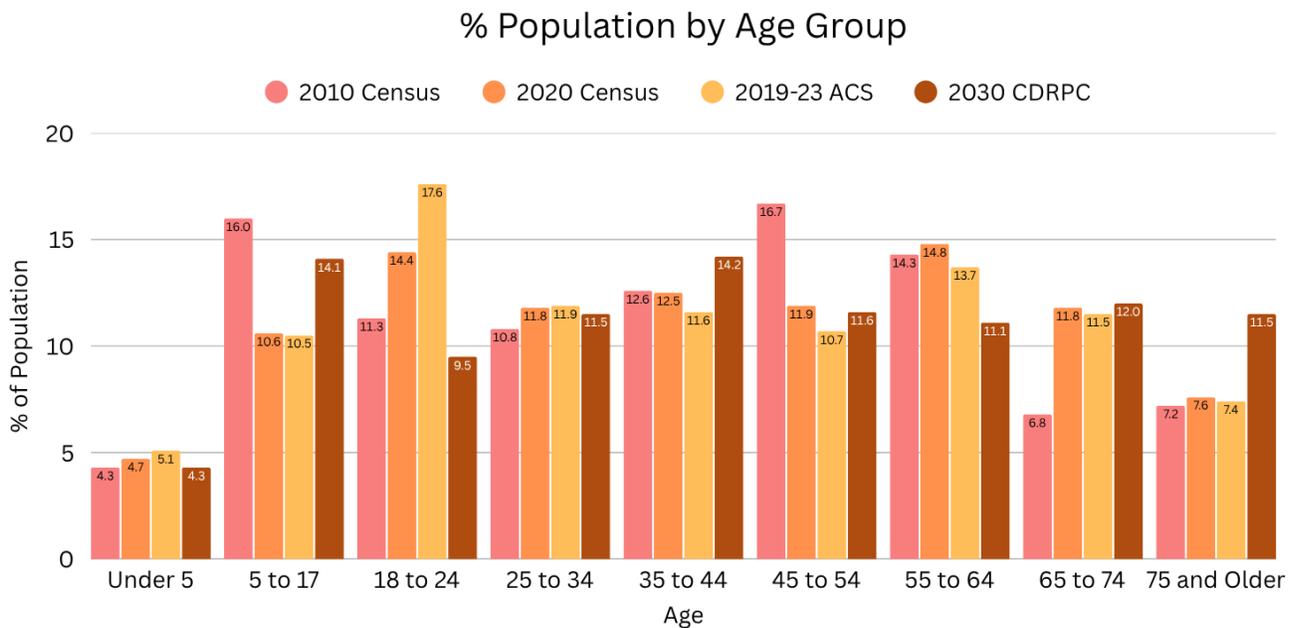
The U.S. Census Bureau expects that by 2030, one in five Americans will be age 65 and over as the youngest members of the Baby Boom generation, born between 1946 through 1964, reach retirement age. Both the number of older Americans and their share of the total population has been increasing. Between 2010 and 2020, the 65-and-over population in the U.S. grew by over a third. Meanwhile, lower fertility rates have contributed to a decrease in the number of Americans under age 18. In the next 15 to 20 years, there will be more people in the U.S. age 65 and older than under the age of 18.

family and multi-family housing.

Consistent with national trends, the population age 65 and over is among the fastest growing age cohorts in Guilderland. The number of residents 65+ increased from 4,942 in 2010 to 6,930 in 2021, or 40.2%. CDRPC projections indicate that by 2030, the number will increase to 8,865, and seniors will make up 24% of Guilderland’s population.

These demographic shifts have wide-ranging implications, from a reduction in the working-age population, lost productivity, and slower economic growth to an increased demand for health services, home-based care, assisted living, and nursing home care as well as transportation. Changes in the age distribution of the population are also expected to affect the demand for single-

**Figure 5.11: Population by Age Group, Town of Guilderland**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Decennial Census, 2020 Decennial Census and American Community Survey 2017 - 2021 Five-Year Estimates; CDRPC (2030 projection).

# Income

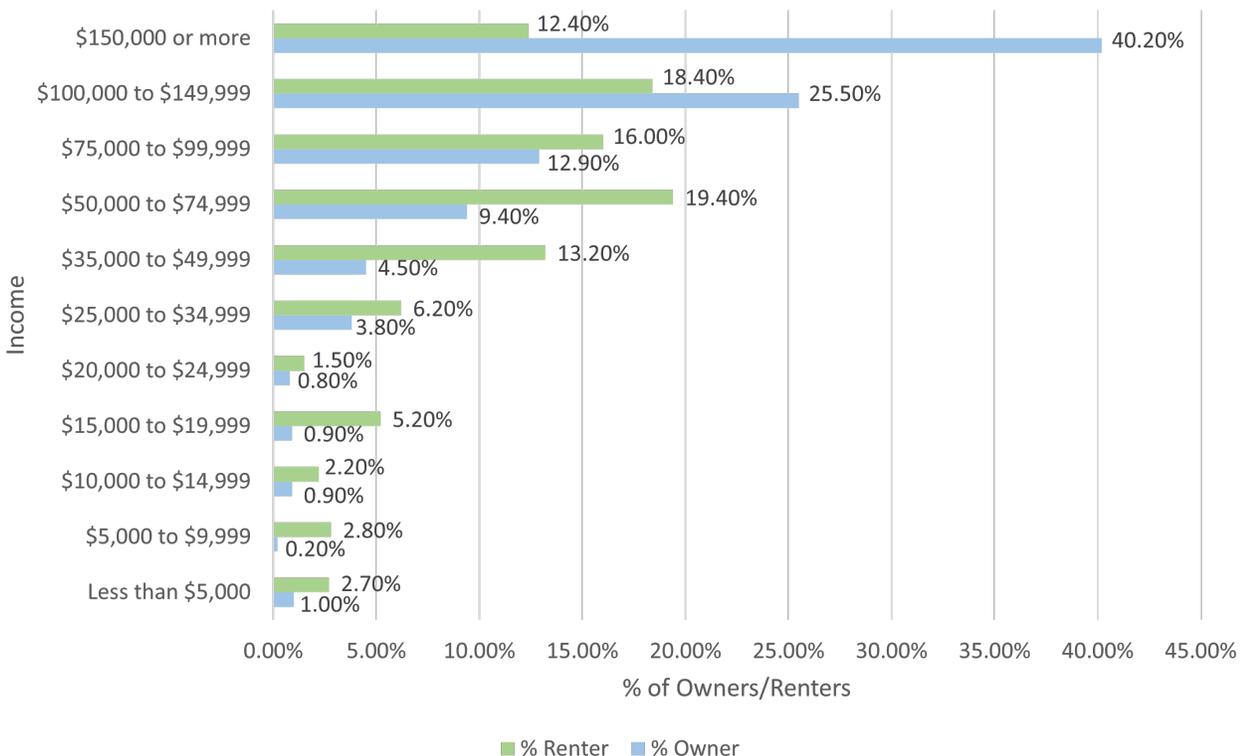
Household income levels impact the ability of residents to pay for housing, contribute to the tax base, and support the local economy as consumers of goods and services. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the median income of households in the Town of Guilderland in 2023 is \$107,488, well above the median in Albany County (\$83,100) and New York State (\$84,578). More than 47% of households in the town have annual incomes of \$100,000 or more. At the same time, 22.9% have incomes below \$50,000 per year.

Income levels vary by tenure. Owner households in Guilderland have a median household income of \$117,527. Most owner households (61.2%) have annual incomes of at least \$100,000, while 12.9% earn \$75,000 to \$99,999 per year. The median household income among renters is \$58,219. More than 19.4% of the town’s renter households have annual incomes of \$25,000 to \$49,999, while 19.4% earn \$50,000 to \$74,999 per year (Figure 5.12).

The American Community Survey reveals that 5.2% of all Guilderland residents have annual incomes below the federal poverty level, with a slightly higher rate, 6.0%, among those under 18. These rates were 4.1% and 4.5%, respectively, in the 2000 Census.

The high median household income and low poverty rate in Guilderland obscure the presence of many households that earn more than the federal poverty level, but less than they need to afford the basic cost of living, including housing. The United Way refers to them as ALICE households; ALICE stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed. Members of these households are often in jobs that pay by the hour, are unemployed, or have unpredictable work schedules, making it difficult for them to save for emergencies. According to UnitedForAlice.org, 29% of all households in Guilderland are under the ALICE threshold, the minimum income level necessary for financial stability.<sup>13</sup>

**Figure 5.12: Households by Income and Tenure, Town of Guilderland**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2019 - 2023 Five-Year Estimates

13 The latest ALICE data available is 2018. See [www.unitedforalice.org](http://www.unitedforalice.org).

**Figure 5.13: FY 2022 Income Limits, Albany-Schenectady-Troy MSA**

Persons in Family	Extremely Low Income (Up to 30% of AMI)	Very Low Income (Up to 50% of AMI)	Low Income (Up to 80% of AMI)
1	\$22,300	\$37,100	\$59,400
2	\$25,450	\$42,400	\$67,850
3	\$28,650	\$47,700	\$76,350
4	\$31,800	\$53,000	\$84,800
5	\$34,350	\$57,250	\$91,600
6	\$37,190	\$61,500	\$98,400

Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Due to pandemic, the release of FY 2023 Income Limits has been delayed.

Most affordable housing programs target low-income households, those whose incomes are at or below 80% of the area median income (AMI), although housing developed with funding from the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program is restricted to households earning 60% or less of the AMI. Table 5.13 below lists HUD FY 2022 Income Limits for the Albany MSA.

# Recommendations

In light of prevailing demographic trends and desired amenities, as identified through the Comprehensive Plan Update process, the following set of recommendations are proposed, to support the Town goal of providing a broad range of accessible, high-quality housing options for current and future residents.

## D-1. Explore tools and approaches to support the Town’s Pro-Housing Designation.

The Town of Guilderland has been designated a Pro-Housing Community by the NYS Office of Homes and Community Renewal and strategies should be investigated to support the steps of the program. When considering potential streamlining of approvals and land use permitting the focus should be affordable housing, accessible housing, accessory dwelling units, and supportive housing. To shepherd the program, the Town should act as a resource for developers to understand and access applicable public funding sources.

income citizens. Pursuing such projects can assist in alleviating housing shortages and attract a wide range of residents. Furthermore, this may lead to increased collaboration with developers, allowing the Town to secure funding and incentives for inclusive development.

The Town should be proactive in seeking affordable housing opportunities as this approach can increase neighborhood diversity while meeting the housing needs of low- and moderate-



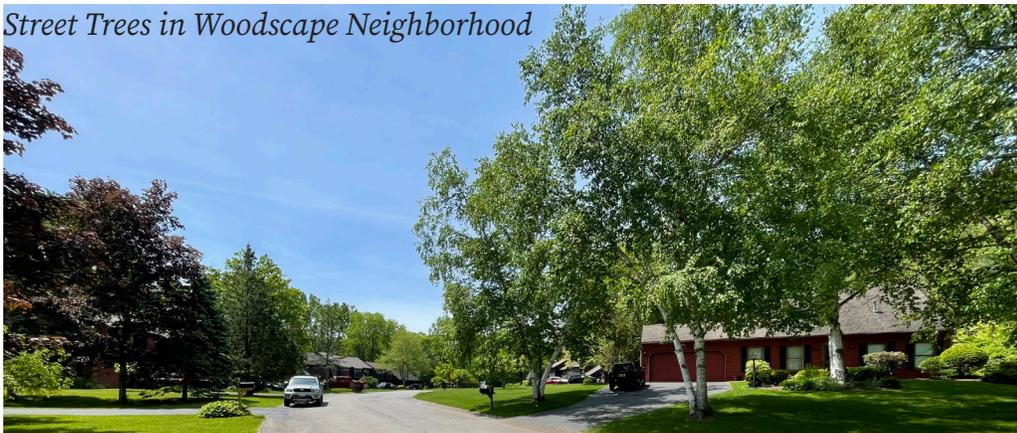
## D-2. Update building design guidelines to promote sustainable green building practices that advance the goals of energy efficiency, water conservation, and the use of building materials which reduce harmful environmental impacts.

Given advancements in building technologies and environmental science research in recent decades, an opportunity exists for Guilderland to align its building design guidelines to its allied goals for natural resource conservation and sustainability. The Town has identified a strain on municipal water supplies during warmer months, noting that much of the elevated water consumption is connected to landscaping.

Recognized sustainability practices include but are not limited to:

- Street tree planting with non-invasive tree varieties to reduce “heat island effect”
- Rooftop solar panels
- Xeriscaping or other landscaping that requires minimal watering
- Recognized green building construction practices

*Street Trees in Woodscape Neighborhood*



**D-3. To maximize the Town’s investments in public water and sewer, transportation, and pedestrian connections, expand opportunities for housing types other than single-family in appropriate districts, provided there are design standards to ensure new housing is compatible with existing neighborhoods.**

Multi-family housing types can allow for efficient use of water, electrical utility, and transportation infrastructure, since a greater number of people are connected by fewer miles of pipe, cable, and road. Multi-family housing can also support the maintenance or expansion of public transportation service in a given area by providing sufficient population densities to satisfy transportation system demand models. Like other types of development, multi-family residential development should be situated appropriately, where infrastructure investments can support such construction, and should conform to design guidelines that are in accord with the envisioned neighborhood character. The Town should consider the following steps in its approach to encouraging appropriate multi-family housing:

- a. Create separate definitions in the zoning code for different types of multi-unit structures, such as duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes, rather than using the term “apartment building.”
- b. Create design guidelines for duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes to ensure that they resemble single-family dwellings and fit seamlessly into residential neighborhoods.
- c. Determine which zoning districts are appropriate for triplexes and fourplexes.
- d. Allow two-family dwellings (duplexes) in single-family districts as long as dimensional standards can be met.
- e. Consider establishing a modified site plan review process to incentivize the development of duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes in appropriate zoning districts.





**D-4. Consider updating zoning regulations to require major subdivisions (5 lots or greater) and large developments to incorporate affordable housing options such as smaller lots, smaller houses, and dwelling units for households earning 80% to 120% of area median income.**

The affordability of housing has been a prevalent concern expressed via public engagement channels during the Comprehensive Plan Update process. Median home prices and median rent have both increased at a rate outpacing inflation in recent years, adding to a sense of financial precarity for many Guilderland residents. In order to promote feasible housing options for current and future Town residents, it is recommended that the Town institute a minimum percentage of dwelling units in large-scale developments or major subdivisions that must meet affordability guidelines. Public input has signaled a demand for smaller lots and/or smaller square-footage homes, to serve the needs of downsizing seniors, younger first-time homebuyers, and others.

**D-6. Proactively develop policies for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) in the Town – either attached or detached – as an opportunity for alternative housing options in single-family residential neighborhoods while preserving the character of these neighborhoods.**

New York State Homes and Community Renewal's Plus One ADU Program offers useful policy frameworks and grant-funding assistance for municipalities that wish to create feasible pathways to ADU construction. The intent of permitting well-regulated ADU construction in the town is to provide low-cost housing options, slow suburban sprawl, and to allow for more efficient use of existing infrastructure. Specific steps for consideration include:

- a. Replace the term "family apartment" with Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) in §280.5 – Definitions.
- b. Eliminate the requirement in §280.40 – Supplemental Regulations, Subsection G(1) that family apartments or ADUs must be "occupied by a person or persons related to the owner by blood, adoption, or marriage."
- c. Evaluate whether owner-occupancy, specified in §280.40 – Supplemental Regulations, Subsection G(1) is an important requirement or a barrier to the use of ADUs.

**D-5. Offer a density bonus of additional dwelling units when affordable housing, workforce housing, or senior housing developments are proposed.**

The Comprehensive Plan Update process, through public input and visioning, has identified a variety of resources that hold great value to the community: housing for seniors, recreation areas, open space, and housing that is within reach for households of different income levels. In order to increase the supply of these desirable resources in Guilderland, it is recommended that the Town offer a "density bonus" – i.e., a conditional allowance to include a greater number of housing units per acre in a project when a percentage of units or lots are set aside for affordable housing, workforce housing or senior housing. The Town Board should set a minimum percentage of units or lots within a proposed development that would need to be offered in order to achieve a density bonus.

- d. Consider allowing ADUs in all single-family districts as long as dimensional standards of the principal structure can be met.
- e. Evaluate whether short-term rentals would be a permitted use in ADUs.



*An example of an Accessory Dwelling Unit or "mother-in-law" apartment above a garage. Photo courtesy of: [www.guthmannconstruction.com](http://www.guthmannconstruction.com)*

**D-7. Consider updating the definition of manufactured housing units and adding a definition of modular building to Town Zoning Law to better reflect current NYS Department of State regulations and the current state of the housing industry.**

Given the growing cost of housing as a percentage of the average household budget, modular/manufactured homes have been gaining increased attention as relatively affordable and often more environmentally sustainable housing option for consideration. Regulatory barriers to manufactured housing placement inhibit opportunities for housing that is more affordable. Modular homes benefit from the increased efficiency that comes from centralized manufacturing processes combined with lower materials costs, due to volume purchasing, and

climate-controlled work environments that allow for year-round housing production. New manufactured homes meet high standards for heat insulation and energy efficiency, outperforming many older homes in a variety of sustainability categories. Town Zoning Law currently includes a ‘Manufactured Housing District.’ The Town Board should consider expanding this district, or allowing manufactured housing as a permitted use in other districts. The Town Board should consider if modular buildings will be permitted uses in single-family districts and/or agricultural districts.

**D-8. Amend zoning regulations to address if/where the development of tiny homes should be permissible within the Town of Guilderland.**

Smaller homes – sometimes called “tiny homes,” have grown in popularity in recent years, offering a chance at personal homeownership even for those with relatively limited financial resources. Given that other communities in the region are addressing interest in so-called tiny homes, a forward-thinking approach should be taken in Guilderland to consider whether such development should have a place in the Town’s range of housing options. Tiny homes can function as standalone Accessory Dwelling Units, where such uses are permitted, or they can be incorporated in cluster developments, so-called “tiny home villages.”

Specific to Guilderland, the Town Board should consider adding a definition of ‘Tiny Home’ to Town Zoning Law and establish a square feet threshold (400 sq. ft. to 1,000 sq. ft) encouraging a range of tiny home design options.



*Smaller Lot Sizes in Older Neighborhoods*

The 2021 International Residential Code (IRC) defines tiny houses that are dwelling units 400 square feet or less in floor area, excluding lofts.

**D-9. Partner with an appropriate housing agency, such as the Albany County Rural Housing Alliance, Habitat for Humanity Capital District to facilitate the rehabilitation of older homes and rental units occupied by low- and moderate income households.**

An important component of the Guilderland housing ecosystem is the maintenance of older homes, particularly for those with fixed-incomes or limited financial means. The Albany County Rural Housing Alliance, Inc. (ACRHA) offers a wide variety of grant and loan programs to assist low- to low-moderate income households in rural Albany County with home repairs or the purchase of a first home.<sup>14</sup> ACRHA administers or facilitates initiatives including an Emergency

Home Repair Program, Revolving Loan Fund, Home Program, and NYS Affordable Housing Corporation’s grant program for home repairs. With a mission that aligns with Town goals to ensure a multitude of housing options, ACRHA represents a valuable partner in Guilderland. It is therefore recommended that the Town liaise with ACHRA representatives regularly, to identify and promote home repair/funding options that could benefit Guilderland residents.

14 [www.acrha.org/what-do-we-do.html](http://www.acrha.org/what-do-we-do.html)

**D-10. Partner with existing non-profit organizations (e.g., Albany County Land Bank) and/or establish a Town housing trust fund to address critical housing needs and support a variety of affordable housing activities.**

The Town of Guilderland can look to regional not-for-profit organizations such as the Albany County Land Bank Corporation for critical support in the Town's efforts to address the identified need for housing that is affordable to low- and moderate-income members of the Guilderland community. The Land Bank's mission includes facilitating the acquisition, improvement, and redistribution of vacant properties in all of the County's 18 municipalities, with the goal of returning such

properties to productive use.<sup>15</sup> By partnering with the Land Bank, the Town can more easily identify properties with the potential for redevelopment as affordable housing units. Given increases in the cost of housing in recent years, the Town should also evaluate the feasibility of creating a housing trust fund to facilitate projects that expand the range of affordable housing options in Guilderland.

**D-11. Add an inclusionary zoning requirement for affordable residential units in Planned Unit Developments.**

Planned Unit Developments (PUD) can include a variety of residential and nonresidential uses, but they are defined by the fact that their various components are planned and constructed as a defined unit, over the same period of time. Existing regulations in the Guilderland Town Code stipulate the following requirements for Planned Unit Developments:

- Access to municipal wastewater and water infrastructure
- Direct vehicular access to a county or state highway
- Setbacks
- Open Space
- Off-street parking and loading

Inclusionary zoning refers to planning ordinances that require or incentivize the creation of housing units that are affordable to low- to moderate income households. By adding inclusionary zoning as a required component of future PUDs in Guilderland, the Town can enlist private developers as allies in a coordinated approach to providing more affordable housing options to Town residents.

**D-12. Consider using additional amenities for density bonuses in the Single Family Residential and RA3 and RA5 Districts that incentivize affordable housing in cluster and conservation subdivision.**

Existing Residential cluster/conservation subdivision regulation (Town code §280-35) permits the reduction of lot sizes in the Single-Family Residential Districts and RA3 and RA5 Districts. For example, in the RA3 District which require a minimum of three-acre lot size, when a cluster subdivision is proposed, the lot size can be reduced to 20,000 sq. ft. provided a minimum of 50% of the parcel is preserved as open space. Density bonuses are permitted if certain amenities are proposed, such as installation of sidewalks, preservation of land, protection of historically significant resources, etc. The Town should consider using incentives for affordable housing as an amenity to be considered for an additional density bonus.

<sup>15</sup> [www.albanycountylandbank.org](http://www.albanycountylandbank.org)

**D-13. Promote the creation of more modestly sized and affordable housing types by revising minimum lot size regulations that prevent construction on smaller lots.**

Not all prospective homeowners wish to live on large lots, which can require significant physical work or additional cost to maintain. Public input received during the Comprehensive Plan Update process identified a desire for smaller homes, particularly for seniors and for first-time homebuyers. Setback requirements, minimum lot sizes, and minimum lot widths represent potential regulatory obstacles to the development of more affordable housing types.

These requirements make it difficult to build smaller homes or on smaller lots and can contribute to a lack of affordability. Updating these building requirements is a tool at the Town’s disposal to create pathways to the development of smaller homes for those that desire them.

**D-14. Explore the feasibility of a mixed-use Town Center near the intersection of Winding Brook Drive and Western Avenue, to create a compact community node with residential, commercial, and other amenities.**

Guilderland experienced periods of elevated population growth during past decades when car-centric development patterns prevailed. The result, as members of the CPUC and the public have noted, is the lack of a distinct center in Guilderland – a place for Town residents to meet and gather. Exploring the feasibility of a Town Center development, comprising a mix of retail, residential, entertainment, and other services, was identified as a key future priority, to begin to focus the civic energies of the community. In keeping with the goal of using existing infrastructure efficiently, the intersection of Western Avenue/US-20 and Winding Brook Drive was identified as a potentially suitable location for a Town Center,

with available water, sewer, and transportation infrastructure to support the mix of envisioned uses. There are multiple civic buildings near the Winding Brook Drive and Western Avenue intersection to provide connections and activities for higher density development in this area, such as the Guilderland Elementary School, Guilderland Library, and YMCA. The Town Board should consider establishing a mixed-use district in this area to encourage and promote the type of development that would be supportive of creating a distinct town center.



**D-15. Promote an enhanced sense of place and community with new, attractive gateway signage at the Town's northern and southern boundaries on Western Avenue/US-20.**

As a Town made up of numerous hamlets and neighborhoods, it may not always be clear to residents and visitors when they are within Guilderland's boundaries. Gateway signage offers an opportunity to build place awareness and offer welcome, or welcome home, to travelers on Guilderland's roads. Signage installed in a traffic roundabout on Carman Road and Lydius Street in 2023 provides just such a welcome to those arriving from Schenectady/Rotterdam. Given how important Western Avenue/US-20 is to Guilderland, identified by many stakeholders as the Town's de facto Main Street, there is an opportunity to enhance signage at both the southern boundary with the City of Albany and the northern boundary with the Town of Princetown. Rather than simply being informative, gateway signage holds

the potential to build a sense of belonging and community togetherness. Positioning gateway signage in such a way as to allow photographs was recommended via public input.



*Gateway signage in a traffic roundabout at the intersection of Carman Road and Lydius Street*

**D-16. Explore the feasibility of a new, sustainably built mixed-use neighborhood node in northern Guilderland.**

Throughout the Comprehensive Plan Update process, several priorities emerged as repeated themes: the desire for a wide array of housing options, an interest in sustainable/green building, and a perceived need to distribute commercial activity more widely throughout the Town, to address underserved areas. The CPUC supported investigating the feasibility of creating a new mixed-use neighborhood, sustainably constructed in a manner that is compatible with its surroundings. Given existing commercial offerings in the eastern parts of Town (Westmere and Guilderland Hamlet) and in the Village of Altamont in the west, the CPUC identified the northern area of Guilderland, near the Princetown boundary, as an area lacking in commercial offerings. Commercial development in this area would be smaller in scale as there is no access to public water and sewer in this area.

# 06 PARKS, RECREATION, OPEN SPACE & HISTORIC RESOURCES

**Goal:** Ensure the long-term viability of agriculture as a vocation and economic pursuit within the Town of Guilderland by prioritizing the preservation of suitable farmland and by promoting agriculture as an important component of the Town's economy and character.

## Overview

Few features contribute as much to Guilderland's town character as its park system. Parks provide places for residents to gather, get exercise, connect with nature, and relax. From walking trails to sports fields to picnic pavilions and playgrounds, Guilderland's parks are absolutely central to the Town's identity. Together with conserved open space in town, the park system represents a constellation of green oases, providing not only varied recreation opportunities, but also a host of ecosystem services such as air and water filtration, stormwater mitigation, and habitat for plants and animals.

Parks do not provide recreation alone. As green spaces with tree cover, parks mitigate the so-called urban heat island effect while filtering air, absorbing rainwater, and contributing to important plant and animal habitat. When viewed from above, via satellite images, much of Guilderland appears green and heavily treed. Changes in climate and development, however, mean that Guilderland's trees face significant threats, including from invasive species. The Town has taken the steps of forming a Tree Preservation Committee to begin to address the issue and has enacted a new Native Tree Preservation Law. Given the important role that trees play in both Guilderland's environment and its community character, the Town has recently hired a Town Arborist. The role of the Town arborist is envisioned to encompass tree maintenance and planting on public lands, as well as contributing to community efforts to plant appropriate, non-invasive tree species in all suitable areas of Town.

The Guilderland Parks and Recreation Department manages the design, maintenance, beautification, and promotion of the Town's parks, facilities, and seasonal programming. In addition to youth sports, seasonal offerings include summer concerts at the newly upgraded Guilderland Performing Arts Center (GPAC), swim lessons at the outdoor public pool in Tawasentha Park, and snowshoeing/cross-country skiing at the Town's winter recreation area. Throughout the year, residents also benefit from access to a range of facilities from dog parks to hiking trails to wildlife viewing areas. The Parks and Recreation Department maintains a website ([GuilderlandRec.com](http://GuilderlandRec.com)) to promote available programming to town residents and to provide information about upcoming events.

In response to input from residents, the Town has continued to add new facilities and amenities to its already impressive park system. Pickleball courts, for instance, are planned for at both Tawasentha Park and Nott Road Park to accommodate growing interest in the sport. Along with other upgrades, a new public restroom was installed at Fred Abele Park to increase park accessibility for all patrons. The Town is also poised to accept dedication of a new 28-acre park facility, Kaikout Kill Park, which will feature a pond with wildlife viewing, picnicking areas, biking and hiking trails on a portion of the former Hiawatha Trails golf course site on NYS Route 155. As treasured assets to the town, the following list of parks and recreation sites comprise a substantial portion of what makes Guilderland. Guilderland: Total 914.05 acres of land in Town Parks.



*Guilderland Performing Arts Center (GPAC) located at Tawasentha Park*

## Tawasentha Park (188 Route 146)

Tawasentha Park is home to the Town swimming pool and the Guilderland Performing Arts Center (GPAC), in addition to a picnic pavilion, baseball diamond, children’s playground, and approximately five miles of walking trails. The park comprises 192.5 acres, centrally located within the town on State Route 146. Situated along the Normans kill, the park offers fishing, kayaking, and canoeing access in warmer months, as well as cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and sledding areas in the adjacent winter recreation area. In 2023, upgrades were made to GPAC’s lighting, audio, seating, and patio areas, and Tawasentha Park’s list of amenities grew to include a children’s splash pad and a fitness court, in addition to the previously mentioned pickleball facilities.



*A landscaped road sign greets visitors to Tawasentha Park at its entrance on NY-146*



*A sign announces some of the public amenities on offer at Tawasentha Park*

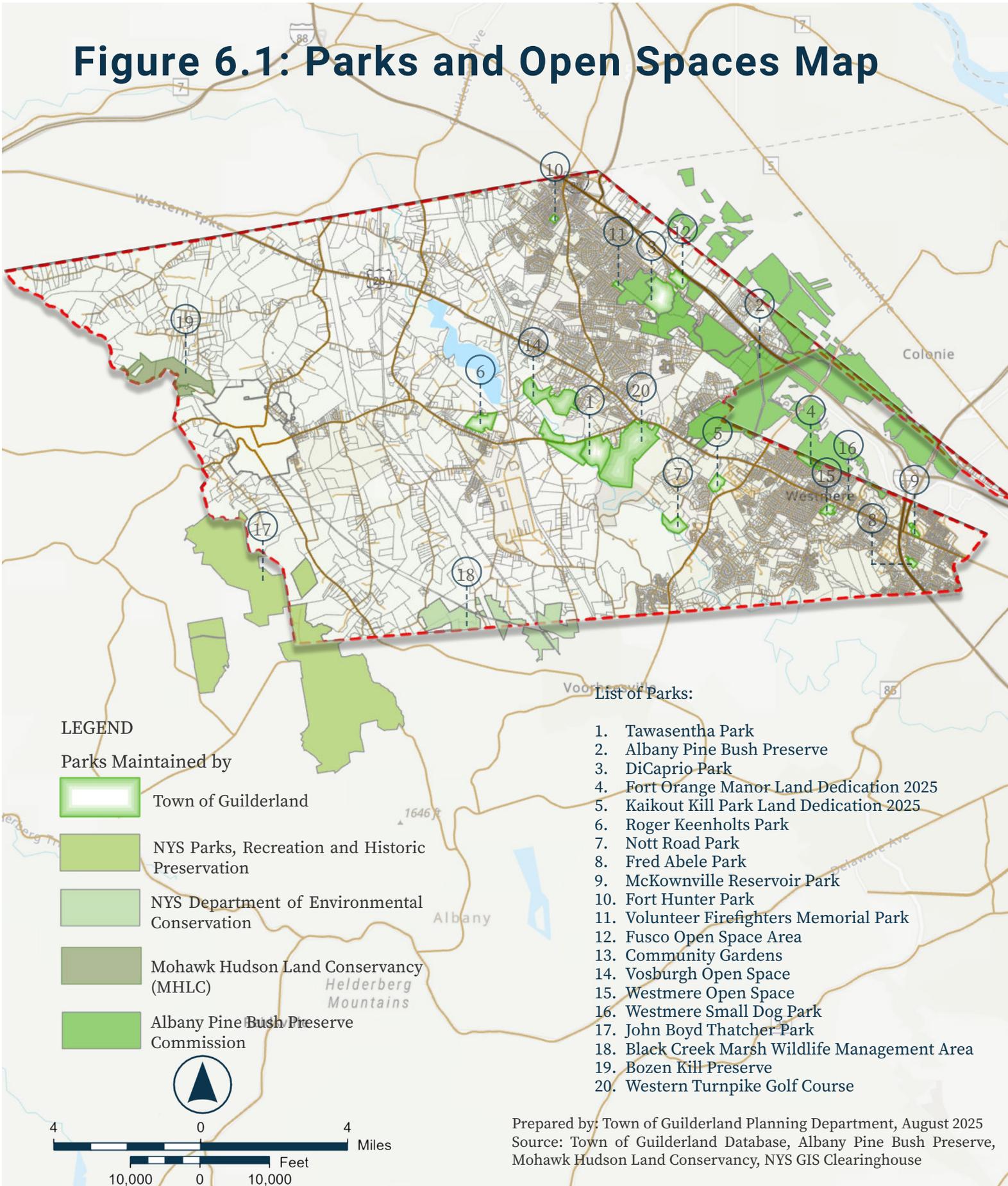
## Albany Pine Bush Preserve

The 3,350-acre Albany Pine Bush Preserve (APBP) straddles the municipal boundary between the Towns of Guilderland, Colonie, and the City of Albany. The APBP supports the world’s best remaining example of an inland pitch pine-scrub oak barrens, 114 rare wildlife species, and more than 70 wildlife species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN), including the federal and state endangered Karner blue butterfly (Kbb), and state threatened frosted elfin butterfly, as well as the largest inland sand dune system in eastern North America. As a result, the APBP has been designated a National Natural Landmark, a Maurice D. Hinchey Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area Site, a National Recreational Trail Site, a New York State Unique Area, Bird Conservation Area, and Birding Trail Site, and a National Audubon Society Important Bird Area.

The Preserve features a state-of-the-art Discovery Center and the lands within the Preserve are characterized by rolling sand dunes and miles of trails. The APBP offers visitors many recreational opportunities including hiking, bird watching, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, mountain biking, hunting, fishing, and canoeing. The Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission is a public-private partnership created by the NYS Legislature in 1988 to protect and manage the APBP and provide the public with educational and recreational opportunities.

In the Town of Guilderland, the majority of land in the APBP is located in the Hamlet of Fort Hunter. There are 4,475 acres of land in the Hamlet of Fort Hunter, of which 847 acres, or 18.9%, is open space. Much of this open space land was obtained via conservation or cluster subdivision approvals

# Figure 6.1: Parks and Open Spaces Map



Disclaimer: This map is prepared by the Town of Guiderland Planning Department and provided for illustrative purposes only. The Town of Guiderland expressly disclaims any liability for errors, omissions or inaccuracies in its content. In addition, some of the data may be compiled from third-party sources, whose accuracy cannot be confirmed. The Town of Guiderland disclaims all liability for any losses or damages, directly or otherwise, which may result from the use, operation or modification of this data by any user. Each user is responsible for determining the suitability of this information for the users intended purpose, and acknowledges and accepts all inherent limitations of the information provided.

and open space requirements associated with the subdivisions and conveyed to the Albany Pine Bush Preserve for management purposes.

Case Study – Woodsfield Subdivision

- 45 single-family lot cluster subdivision approved in 2008.
- 107 acre site.
- 81.8 acres (76.5% of site) conveyed to the Town as permanently protected open space as part of subdivision approval.
- Albany Pine Bush Preserve Purple Trail constructed within the open space area providing access to Volunteer Firefighters memorial Park, DiCaprio Park and Albany Pine Bush Preserve.



*A blaze marker for the Albany Pine Bush Preserve trail system, accessed from Willow Road in Guilderland*



## DiCaprio Park (3420 E. Lydius Street)

The Town of Guilderland purchased 109 acres of land off East Lydius Street from the DiCaprio family in 2001. The land was used for vegetable farming for over 100 years and is situated within the Pine Bush. In order to preserve the unique ecosystem, the Town designated 33 acres for DiCaprio Park and left the remaining 70 plus acres undeveloped and managed by the Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission.

Park construction was completed in 2003 and consists of 12 fields, which are used primarily for soccer and lacrosse. In 2008, permanent restroom facilities and a pavilion were added to the park. In addition to organized athletic competitions, the park is a popular destination for walkers, hikers, and bird watchers. Plans for a new playground and box lacrosse at DiCaprio Park were announced in 2024.

## Fort Orange Manor Land Dedication 2025

In March 2025, the Town Board accepted dedication of 15.7 acres of land from the Fort Orange Manor Homeowner's Association. Fort Orange Manor is located at the end of Velina Drive and abuts land within the Albany Pine Bush Preserve. Additionally, the dedication will benefit the Town as the Town will have the ability to maintain the current stormwater swales, structures, and the land is suitable for hiking trails and a potential future park.

## Kaikout Kill Park Land Dedication 2025

Situated on a portion of the former Hiawatha Trails Golf Course, in February 2025, the Town Board accepted dedication of 24.59 acres of land. The dedication of land was to fulfill a condition of approval associated with the 256-unit Hamilton Parc Independent Living Community. The land being dedicated includes a new pedestrian bridge over the Kaikout Kill and 10' wide paved and unpaved multi-use trails. The Parks and Recreation Department plans on managing the land to promote bird habitat. The Town hopes to secure easements from intervening property owners to provide non-vehicular access to the Guilderland Public Library and YMCA.

## Keenholts Park (6355 French's Mill Road)

Roger Keenholts Park was added to the town's park system in 1993 and is the home of Guilderland Baseball and the Guilderland Girls Softball League. The park has eight minor baseball fields, five girls' softball fields, and a state-of-the-art Babe Ruth-level field known as Dutchmen Field. The Park features public restrooms and lighting for night competitions.



*One of several adjoining baseball diamonds at Roger Keenholts Park*

## Nott Road Park (6073 Nott Road)

Athletic fields at Nott Road Park were constructed by the Town in the early 1980's and continue to host local softball, soccer, and Pop Warner football teams. A dog park was added in 2006, and a pavilion was constructed in 2007. Recent planned upgrades to the park include eight pickleball courts, ballfield grading, improved irrigation, and a playground. In July 2024 the Planning Board approved a conservation subdivision where the applicant conveyed 20.5 acres of land which abuts Nott Road Park and encompasses the Hunger Kill.

## Fred Abele Park (Schoolhouse Road)

Fred Abele Park is in the McKownville neighborhood off Schoolhouse Road. In slightly more than four (4) acres, the park features amenities such as a basketball court, softball field, a walking path to McKownville Road, and a new playground that was installed in 2022. In 2024, plans were announced to install a public restroom at the park and to resurface the basketball courts.



## McKownville Reservoir Park (Stuyvesant Plaza, Western Avenue)

McKownville Reservoir Park was created in 2007, when the Town received a grant from the New York State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation to convert the McKownville Reservoir, a small pond next to the Stuyvesant Plaza shopping area, into a small municipal park with walking trails. To complement this park area, Stuyvesant Plaza management announced plans in 2024 to create additional green space at the western edge of the Plaza's parking lot.

## Fort Hunter Park (25 Anne Drive)

Fort Hunter Park comprises approximately four (4) acres in a quiet residential area off Carman Road. Park amenities include a basketball court, playground, softball field, and a small sledding hill. A series of planned park improvements were announced in 2024, including refurbishing the playfield, parking lot paving, and the creation of a playground and small pavilion.

## Volunteer Firefighters Memorial Park (1028 DiBella Drive)

Built in the mid-1980's, Volunteer Firefighters Memorial Park comprises approximately 20 acres of land, featuring amenities such as walking paths, a children's playground, softball field, and open space. In 2024, plans were announced to add a dog park, pickleball courts, and a small pavilion.

## Fusco Open Space Area (East Lydius Street, across from DiCaprio Park )

Fusco Park, located across East Lydius Road from DiCaprio Park, consists of approximately 30 acres of unimproved open space bordered by the New York State Thruway.

## Community Gardens (Route 146 across from Tawasentha Park)

The Community Gardens are situated on 97 acres of property across State Route 146 from Tawasentha Park. The property was once the site of the Houck Farm. It was purchased by the Town in 1989. Across State Route 146 from the community gardens is a winter recreation area, with cross-country ski trails and a small hill for skiing and sledding.

## Westmere Small Dog Park

Located on Centre Road, behind EMS Station 1, the dog park is open to town residents with current dog licenses. Dogs must be at least 4 months old to enter the park and no more than 2 dogs per owner are allowed at one time.

## Vosburgh Open Space (6455 Vosburgh Road)

Vosburgh Open Space comprises of 124 Town-owned acres on the northern bank of the Normans Kill. A trail system traverses the open space, offering a variety of scenic pathways between the Vosburgh Road trailhead and French's Mill Road. A new (Orange) trail loop was announced in 2024.



*A map kiosk located at the Vosburgh Road trailhead*

## Westmere Open Space (Malpass Rd/ Ashford Dr/Homes Terrace)

The Town owns two parcels totaling approximately 13.76 acres of land. Access to the parcels is provided from Malpass Road, Ashford Drive and Homes Terrace. There is an opportunity in the future to develop the park with walking trails, dog park, benches, and small playground area.

## John Boyd Thacher State Park

John Boyd Thacher State Park is a 2,185-acre park partially located in the Town of Guilderland. The park's dominant landform, Helderberg Escarpment, rises to a height of approximately 1,300 feet in elevation and is visible from many areas within the town and is a landmark cherished by many residents and visitors alike. In 2023, the National Park Service designated the Helderberg Escarpment a National Natural Landmark due to its striking example of a cuesta (hill or ridge with a gentle slope on one side, and a steep slope on the other) and exposes the most complete and minimally disturbed record of middle Paleozoic stratigraphy in the Appalachian Plateaus region, and perhaps across North America. The uniquely accessible, fossil-rich deposits provide a geologic glimpse spanning 63-million years.

John Boyd Thacher State Park forms the western boundary of the Town of Guilderland. The Helderberg Escarpment is a defining feature

of Guilderland's geography. A portion of the park and its 12-mile trail system are located within the southwest corner of the Town, and the park's a broad range of outdoor recreational amenities to town residents. In addition to trails, the park features campsites and cabins, pavilions and shelters, playgrounds, a nature center, a disc golf course, and playing fields. The Park is home to the Indian Ladder Trail, which is a regional attraction.

Thacher State Park also represents the northern terminus of The Long Path (LP), a trail stretching nearly 360 miles, designed with the intention of connecting New York City to the Adirondack region of the state. The LP corridor stitches together various trails, paths, and rural roadways along the route, which is marked by distinctive aqua-colored trail blazes. In 2022, a Long Path Protection Plan was developed with funding from the New York State Conservation Partnership Program (NYSCPP) and New York's Environmental Protection Fund.

## Black Creek Marsh Wildlife Management Area

The Black Creek Marsh Wildlife Management Area consists of 450 acres of wetland and upland habitat in Albany County, straddling the town boundary between Guilderland and New Scotland. The Area is managed by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and, in addition to providing ecosystem services and wildlife habitat, provides opportunities for hiking, hunting, fishing, and birdwatching.



*A marked parking area for the Black Creek Marsh Wildlife Management Area accessible from Depot Road.*

## Bozen Kill Preserve

In the northwestern corner of the Town of Guilderland, the Bozen Kill Preserve is a 214-acre nature area whose preservation was facilitated by the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy (MHLC). The Preserve features three (3) miles of wooded trails beside a stream, located at the base of Bozen Kill Ravine, where MHLC protects an additional 400 acres of land. In 2024, the MHLC purchased 225 acres of land to be added to the Bozen Kill Preserve. The purchase expanded the size of the preserve to 439 acres.

## Western Turnpike Golf Course

The Town of Guilderland purchased the Western Turnpike Golf Course, a 200-acre, 27-hole course with a championship layout, in 2002. The course is located on Route 20/Western Turnpike and features an outdoor picnic pavilion as well as winter cross-country ski trails, walking trails and cart paths, which provide recreation opportunities during months when the golf course is inactive.

Other privately-owned golf facilities located in Guilderland include Albany Country Club, Pinehaven Country Club, and Orchard Creek Golf Club.



*View from the Albany Country Club, looking out over Guilderland.*

# Altamont Trails Master Plan (Completed November 2025)

Historic Altamont, Inc., a not-for-profit organization representing the interests of the Village of Altamont in the Town of Guilderland was awarded funding through ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) to develop a village-wide trail master plan. The study focused on identifying trail segments and connections with hopes of creating a cohesive trail network serving the village and its environs.

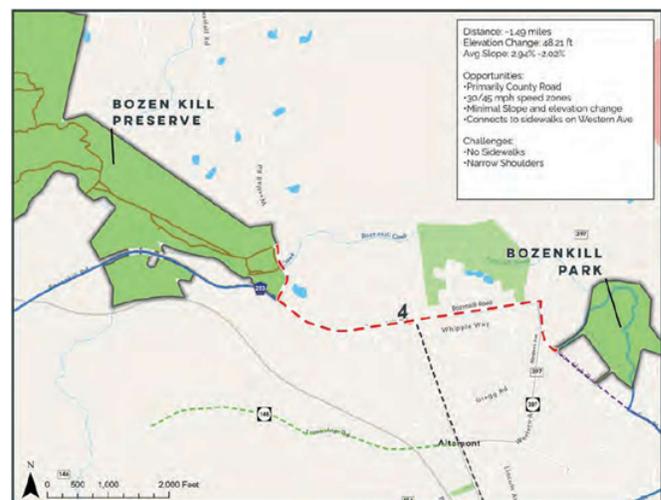
The overall purpose of the project was to study current conditions and assess feasible opportunities for trails in and around the Village of Altamont. The study aimed to identify numerous trail routes, segments and conceptual alignments. The objectives of the study were to identify and establish a list of actionable recommendations and priorities that will advance the projects in various locations and alignments. The study also attempted to address community needs and respond to recreational demands in and around the Village of Altamont. The Village of Altamont plays a key role and node to three trail linkages:

1. The Long Path, linking its trail sections through the Catskill Mountains (originating in Manhattan) to its planned continuance through portions of the Capital Region and its terminus in the Adirondacks.
2. The communities of Voorheesville, Altamont and Guilderland, extending the Helderberg Rail Trail from its origination in the City of Albany into the Town of Guilderland.
3. Public preserves and popular natural resource areas including Thacher State Park, Bozen Kill Preserve, Black Creek Marsh, Indian Ladder Conservancy, Keenholts Park, Vosburgh Trails and Tawasentha Park.

Connectivity is created when these linkages are formally recognized as mapped trails, codified in zoning and other land-use regulations and improved for multiple-use by pedestrians and non-motorized and motorized vehicles. The proposed projects outlined in the study build upon prior and related studies and plans aimed to provide connectivity, linkage and enhanced trail experiences for residents and visitors by making connections to both local and regional trail networks.

The trails plan identified 8 projects linking areas within the Village of Altamont to other areas within the Village or to areas within the Town of Guilderland, such as:

## Project 4: Village of Altamont Bozen Kill Park to the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy owned Bozen Kill Preserve.



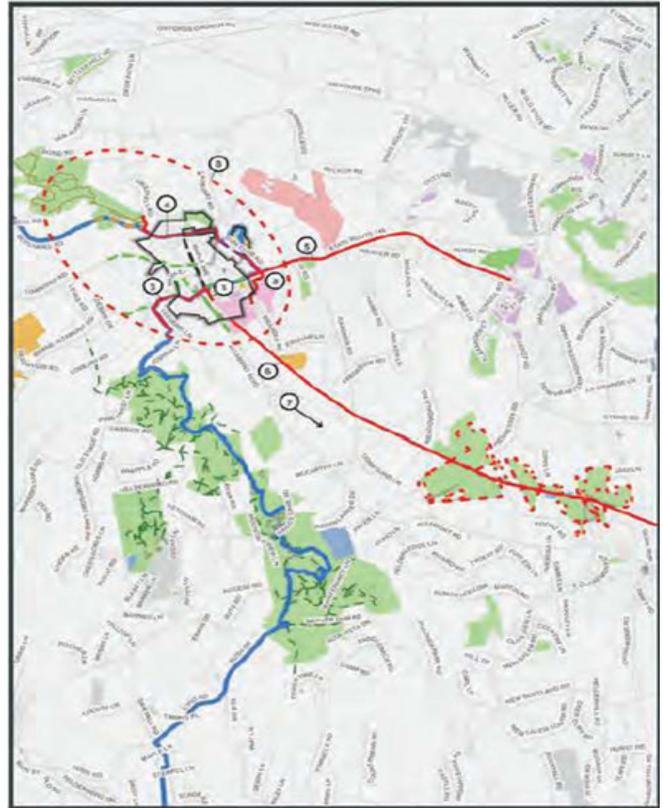
Source: Appendix J - Altamont Trails Master Plan

### Project 5: Guilderland Center Connector Trail



Source: Appendix J - Altamont Trails Master Plan

### Project 7: Black Creek Marsh Connector



Source: Appendix J - Altamont Trails Master Plan

# Recommendations

## **E-1. Maintain and upgrade the Town's existing recreational facilities and programs to include public spaces designed to be inclusive for people of all abilities.**

Given the substantial investment the Town has made in establishing and constructing its parks and recreation system, residents and stakeholders have expressed strong support for maintaining and sustaining existing facilities and programs. This will require sufficient staffing levels of the Town's Parks and Recreation Department, including seasonal hiring to allow for trail maintenance, programming needs, and upkeep of the Town pool, as well as forward-thinking assessments of likely replacement timetables for physical infrastructure located within the parks. The Town should incorporate accessible infrastructure and inclusive play equipment within Town parks.

## **E-2. Initiate formalized opportunities for residents to provide input on the Town's changing recreational needs, in light of a changing demographic profile in Guilderland, and prevailing national trends.**

Over the lifespan of a Comprehensive Plan, changes in community demographics, an aging population, for example, can cause priorities to shift with regard to desired recreation amenities. New sport and fitness trends, the recent popularity of pickleball is a prime example, can also drive residents' interest in changing how available recreation space is allocated. As part of an effort to keep Guilderland residents' recreational needs and the Town's offerings in close alignment, it is recommended that the Town of Guilderland, via its Parks and Recreation Department, facilitate periodic, publicized opportunities for town residents to submit input on desired upgrades or additions to the existing parks and recreation system.

## **E-3. Formalize regular coordination between the Town of Guilderland Parks & Recreation Department and representatives of the University at Albany, Guilderland Public Library, the Guilderland YMCA, school districts, and other local organizations, in order to provide a well-publicized range of year-round recreational opportunities, especially for youth and older town residents.**

Independently, the Guilderland Parks and Recreation Department, the Town library, YMCA, the Village of Altamont, the Village library, and other organizations work to provide engaging programming to Guilderland residents. By coordinating those efforts, however, there is an opportunity to increase promotion of events, to ensure that the diverse interests of community groups are represented, and to potentially collaborate on funding such programming. For that reason, it is recommended that the Town Parks and Recreation Department initiate a recurring coordination mechanism (e.g., scheduled videoconference discussions) with representatives of other relevant organizations or groups that provide recreation offerings to Guilderland residents. Enhanced promotion can be achieved through co-sponsorship of events and/or by incorporating event notifications on calendars viewable via the Guilderland Town website.

**E-4. Identify potentially underutilized Town-owned resources and explore the creation of new recreational opportunities for town residents, particularly in the Westmere area of Guilderland.**

While Guilderland has more than five hundred acres of parkland, that land is not evenly distributed, due to historic patterns of settlement and other factors. Throughout the Comprehensive Plan Update process, members of the public voiced strong support for the addition of recreation facilities in the Westmere area. Additional recreation space serving other community groups has been identified as a priority. Pocket parks, smaller public spaces often established on previously developed sites, offer one potential avenue for addressing the uneven spatial distribution of park facilities around the

town. As the Town inventories the properties that comprise its collection of publicly owned land and facilities, it is recommended that the Town explore opportunities to add park amenities, particularly in areas of the town that may be underserved. The community rooms located in fire stations represent a potentially underutilized all-season gathering space for compatible youth and senior recreation programming, so it is recommended that fire districts be included as relevant stakeholders. One area of opportunity is the Westmere Open Space area previously mentioned in this chapter.

**E-5. Develop a network of multi-use trails in Guilderland to link neighborhoods, public transportation nodes, Town Park/open space areas, commercial and entertainment centers, and regional trail systems.**

The Town of Guilderland Parks and Trails Master Plan (2005) identifies two types of off-road path:

- A footpath is an unpaved five-foot wide path suitable for walking or mountain biking.
- A multi-use path is a paved ten-foot-wide path suitable for street bicycles and rollerblades as well as pedestrians, or twelve-foot-wide path in busier areas

Public input submitted through the Comprehensive Plan Update process has indicated a desire to make the Town's recreational resources accessible to the widest range of residents possible. Of the two path varieties identified in the Parks and Trails Master Plan, multi-use pathways offer superior accessibility, inclusive of a variety of user groups, as well as through seasonal weather fluctuations. The Town of Guilderland has announced plans to initiate construction of a multi-use trail along State Route 146, from Western Avenue to Tawasentha Park (funded in the 2025-30

Regional Transportation Improvement Program), with the intention of extending that trail toward the Village of Altamont in future years. Additionally, the Town should support efforts to formalize the northern expansion of the Long Path, a long-distance hiking trail that stretches from New York City to the Village of Altamont.

Drawing on recommendations from the planning documents listed below, it is recommended that the Town apply the best practices learned through the construction of the trail on State Route 146 in locations elsewhere around Guilderland, where opportunities exist to provide vehicle-free access to key points throughout Town:

- Biking in Guilderland (2004)
- Walkable Destinations in Guilderland (2004)
- Guilderland Pathways Study (2005)
- Pathways Master Plan (2005)
- Guilderland Bicycle and Pedestrian Connectivity Study (2020)

**Goal :** Prioritize the preservation of open space in the Town of Guilderland, particularly where such areas perform critical ecosystem functions and/or contribute to scenic resources that influence the character, aesthetics, economy, health and welfare of the town.

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Respondents to the Guilderland Community Survey cited “protecting natural resources and wildlife habitat” among the very highest priority concerns. Open space areas in town represent repositories of vital natural resources and are home to a variety of plant and animal species. The recommendations below are aimed at recognizing and prioritizing the preservation of open space among Guilderland’s land uses.

**E-6. Update the definitions of open space in Town zoning, subdivision regulations, and the Conservation Easement Agreement Exemption so that the definitions are consistent and accurately reflect the varieties and purposes of open space.**

The term "open space" appears in a variety of existing Town regulations, but discrepancies in the way that the term is described and understood may serve as a barrier to coordinated action across offices, departments, and organizations. Establishing uniform terminology is an important step toward the goal of open space conservation, as consistent language allows for more targeted and precise identification of which parcels in Town meet specified criteria.

**E-7. Update the residential cluster/conservation development and open space/parkland section of the Town code.**

Ideally, Town zoning regulations on residential cluster/conservation development (§280-35) and open space/parkland should be consistent with and complementary to the cluster section of the subdivision law. Enhanced, consistent definitions and added detail on site analysis, primary and secondary conservation areas, open space criteria, and other related concerns would strengthen the Town’s approach to promoting the conservation of open space.

**E-8. Consider forming a Conservation Overlay District to protect steep slopes along the Helderberg Escarpment and the Settles Hill areas of town from non-farm development.**

Development on steep slopes can potentially lead to problems with soil erosion and stormwater management. Because of topography, large developments on steep slopes are also more visible from lower-lying parts of town, with the potential to negatively impact scenic viewsheds of the surrounding hills. The areas in the Town of Guilderland with the steepest slopes include the lands along the Helderberg Escarpment and the Settles Hill area north of Altamont. While compatible agricultural activities in these areas of town can continue to enable soil stabilization and stormwater mitigation, non-farm development is likely incompatible with established ecosystems and viewsheds. For this reason, it is recommended that the Town consider forming a Conservation Overlay District when it updates its zoning code.



*Looking west toward the Helderberg Escarpment ridgeline*

Conservation overlay districts impose additional restrictions on development within specific areas to protect natural resources or unique features. These restrictions, layered on top of existing zoning regulations, can include limitations on building size, density, lot coverage, and types of allowed uses, while also promoting preservation of natural features like trees, ridgelines, and water resources.

**E-9. Incorporate the preservation of Helderberg Escarpment viewsheds into subdivision, site plan, and special use permit reviews.**

Views of and from the Helderberg Escarpment have drawn people to Guilderland for centuries, and such views remain a cherished aspect of Guilderland life. One of the many benefits of open space conservation is that open space maintains and contributes to invaluable scenic resources. In developed areas of town, it is important that the designs of such development place appropriate emphasis on preserving the natural escarpment viewsheds that are such a valued part of Guilderland life for many residents. It is therefore recommended that subdivision, site plan, and special use permitting integrate Helderberg Escarpment viewshed preservation components, to ensure that development designs do not adversely affect this key scenic resource. Protecting scenic viewsheds will involve a combination of regulatory, incentive-based, and acquisition tools, often employed by various stakeholders including the Town, landowners, and conservation organizations.

In addition to the Town's conservation easement program and cluster/conservation subdivision regulations, additional measures to consider to further protect the Helderberg Escarpment viewsheds could include:

1. Establish design guidelines and design review that limit the impact of development on scenic vistas and viewsheds. Clear design guidelines and design review gives communities a chance to decide how development will affect their neighborhoods and countryside. Responsible control of elements such as height, bulk, design, materials, color, landscaping, and siting helps a project blend with its surroundings.

2. Overlay zoning places additional restrictions on zoned areas and is often used to control density, grading, ridgeline development, and vegetation. View corridors are planned openings in the built environment that allow views of scenic vistas and viewsheds.

**E-10. Create an action plan for the identification, voluntary acquisition, and management of properties that comprise a comprehensive open space and natural resource preservation system.**

Working in collaboration with partners such as the Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission, the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy, the Nature Conservancy, Albany County Land Bank, and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, the Town of Guilderland has found success in maintaining or restoring the beauty of natural areas within the Town's borders. As the Town works toward its stated goal of preserving thirty percent (30%) of Guilderland's land mass as open space and parkland, it will be important to channel the efforts of multiple groups and Town departments. Developing an action plan of implementable steps toward the Town's ambitious goal of creating and sustaining a comprehensive open space and natural resource preservation system will be an important step to ensure that interdepartmental and interagency collaboration is as fruitful as possible.

The Town should continue to promote use of Conservation Easement Program which currently reduces a property owner's Town and County taxes, depending on the length of time the easement is in place. The Town should also continue to utilize and promote using cluster and conservation subdivisions, which require a minimum of 50% of the project site to be preserved as open space. The Town should also consider adopting an overlay zone within the Pine Bush Preserve Management Area as a land preservation tool. Utilizing these land preservation techniques will assist in preserving land within partial protection and full protection areas within the Pine Bush Preserve Management Area.

**E-11. The Town Board should adopt a Local Law codifying the land use application referral and review process by the Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission Technical Committee.**

The Town of Guilderland and Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission Technical Committee (Technical Committee) have a long history of coordinating land use reviews and receiving comments from the Technical Committee on land use applications. The land use application referral process between the Town of Guilderland and the Technical Committee involves the Town submitting applications for development projects within the Albany Pine Bush Preserve management area to the Technical Committee for review and comment. The Technical Committee provides its input, particularly concerning impacts on the preserve's sensitive ecological resources, to the Town Board, Planning Board or Zoning Board, which then consider these comments during their decision-making process for subdivisions, special use permits, site plans, planned unit developments and zoning amendments. A summary of the existing application referral and review process consists of the following:

**1. Application Submission**

- The Town of Guilderland, as a municipality within the Preserve's designated management area boundary, is required to refer certain land use applications to the Technical Committee.
- These referrals are typically made for proposed developments within the Preserve's areas recommended for partial protection or full protection.

**2. Technical Committee Review**

- The APBC's Technical Committee, composed of experts, reviews the application to identify potential impacts on the Preserve.
- This review focuses on ecological factors, such as the Preserve's water quality, forest health, and rare species habitats may be impacted by a proposed development.

**3. Technical Committee Recommendation**

- Following their review, the Technical Committee provides formal recommendations and comments to the Town Board, Planning Board or Zoning Board.

**4. Lead Agency Consideration**

- The Lead Agency then consider the Technical Committee recommendations when reviewing the application.
- The Technical Committee's input is crucial for ensuring that development proposals are consistent with the APBPC's preservation goals.

**5. Notice and Participation**

- Notice and participation are integral parts of the process, allowing stakeholders to be informed and provide input on developments impacting the Preserve.

In essence, the Technical Committee acts as an environmental watchdog, providing expert advice to the Town of Guilderland, which ultimately has the authority to approve or deny land use applications within its jurisdiction. Codifying the referral and review process will memorialize the land use application referral and review process and solidify the Town of Guilderland's commitment to preserving and protecting lands within the Albany Pine Bush Preserve for future generations.

**Goal:** Preserve Guilderland's historic resources and enhance cultural opportunities in the community.

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The Normans Kill, which flows in a southeasterly direction through the middle of Guilderland, is one of the four major tributaries that empty into the northern part of the Hudson River estuary. The Normans Kill had early historical importance for the Mohican and Mohawk peoples who lived in this region of what is now New York State. Long before Guilderland was a town, bands of Mohawk Indians camped and lived along the Normans Kill and its tributaries. The Mohican and Mohawk people fished Normans Kill and traded at the Dutch trading post close to Fort Orange, which is now Albany. However, illnesses like smallpox that were introduced through contact with European colonists, caused indigenous populations to decline drastically.

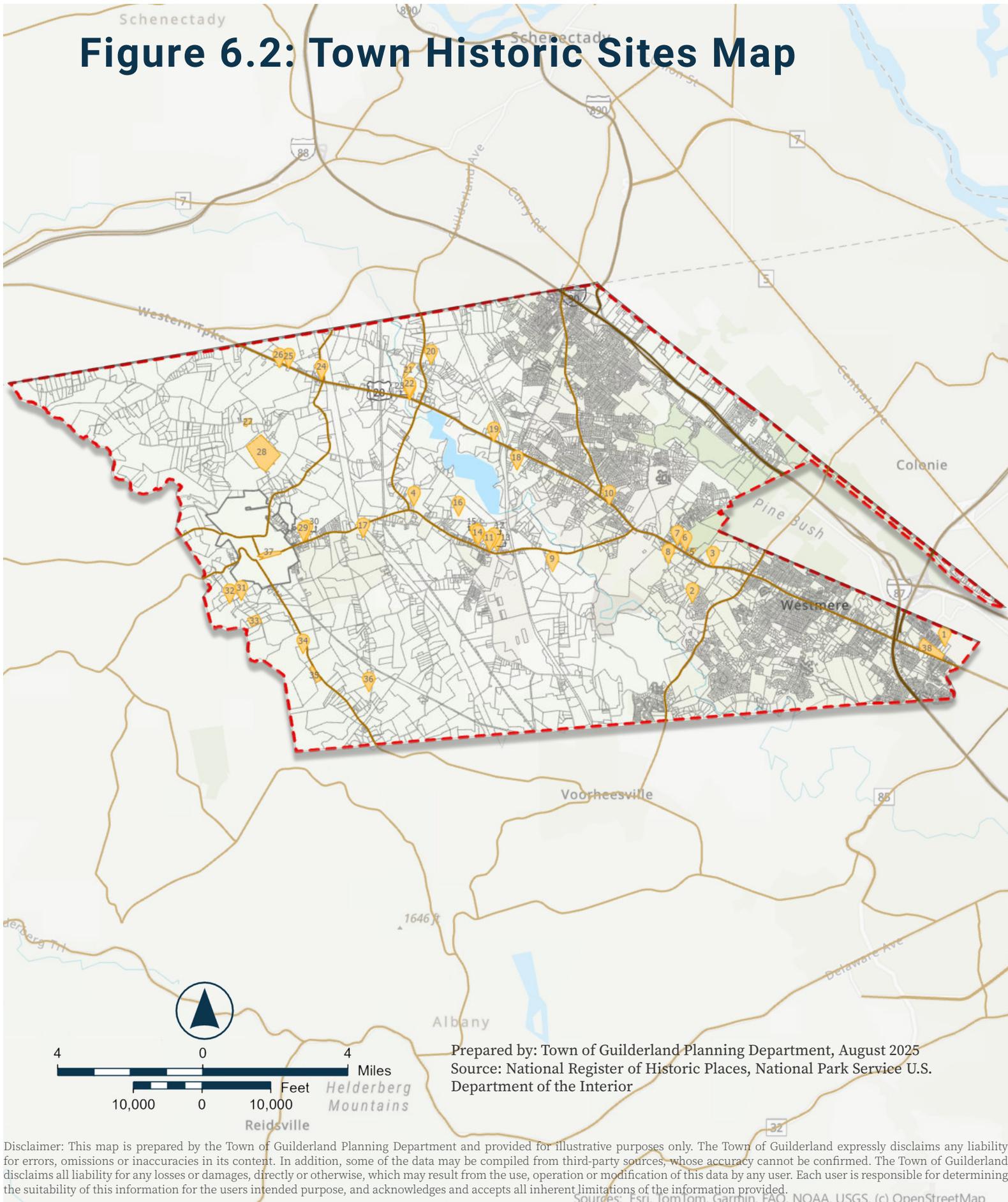
Although European farmers and traders began settling in the Guilderland region in the 1700s, the Town of Guilderland was not incorporated until 1801. By that time, Guilderland was home to industry as well as agriculture, boasting a grist mill, a knitting mill, a textile factory, and a button factory. Guilderland held its first Town meeting at Appel Inn in Guilderland Center. Agriculture replaced Guilderland's forests and the town flourished with the completion of the Great Western Turnpike. Railroads ran through the countryside, ushering in the growth of small hamlets with post offices, churches, schools, and stores.

In the mid-1900s, the eastern end of town began to develop into a residential and commercial suburb in the Albany-Schenectady-Troy Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). In contrast, the western end remained mostly rural. The Town continued to develop in the latter half of the 20th century, with the creation of a State University campus, business and shopping centers, new residential areas, and an expanded road network.

Owing to its history of agriculture, trade, and small-scale industry, there are more than three dozen sites within the Town of Guilderland that are listed on the U.S. National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places:

1. Chapel House
2. Norman Vale (Nott House)
3. Prospect Hill Cemetery Building\* (listed on data.ny.gov)
4. Guilderland Cemetery Vault (Town Owned)
5. Rose Hill
6. Hamilton Union Church Rectory
7. John Schoolcraft House (Town Owned)
8. Albany Glassworks Site
9. Houck Farmhouse
10. Gillespie House
11. Mynderse-Frederick House (Town Owned)
12. Helderberg Reformed Dutch Church
13. Freeman House
14. Cobblestone Schoolhouse (Town Owned)
15. St. Mark's Lutheran Church
16. Apple Tavern
17. McNiven Farm Complex
18. Fuller's Tavern
19. Van Patten Barn Complex
20. Stephen Pangburn House
21. Charles Parker House
22. Sharp Farmhouse
23. Sharp Brothers House
24. Gifford Grange Hall
25. Veeder Farmhouse #1
26. Veeder Farmhouse #2
27. Vanderpool Farm Complex
28. Lainhart Farm and Dutch Barn
29. Knower House
30. Jacob Crouse Inn
31. Adam Hilton House
32. Coppola House
33. Aumic House
34. Frederick Crouse House
35. John and Henry Crouse Farm Complex
36. Gardner House
37. Village of Altamont Historic District
38. Country Club Highlands Historic District (McKownville)

# Figure 6.2: Town Historic Sites Map



Prepared by: Town of Guiderland Planning Department, August 2025  
 Source: National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior

Disclaimer: This map is prepared by the Town of Guiderland Planning Department and provided for illustrative purposes only. The Town of Guiderland expressly disclaims any liability for errors, omissions or inaccuracies in its content. In addition, some of the data may be compiled from third-party sources, whose accuracy cannot be confirmed. The Town of Guiderland disclaims all liability for any losses or damages, directly or otherwise, which may result from the use, operation or modification of this data by any user. Each user is responsible for determining the suitability of this information for the users intended purpose, and acknowledges and accepts all inherent limitations of the information provided.

Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, (c) OpenStreetMap

The Schoolcraft House and the Mynderse-Fredrick House were identified in the Town's 2001 Comprehensive Plan as being historically important properties owned by the Town. Both properties were set to undergo a series of grant-funded site improvements in 2024, including roof, façade, and parking upgrades. The Town plans to construct a multi-use path connection between the Cobblestone Schoolhouse and Keenholtz Park. The Town purchased the schoolhouse property from the Guilderland Central School District in 2024 for \$10,000. The Town maintains information on registered historic sites as a data layer on its Town of Guilderland Interactive Mapping site ([togny.maps.arcgis.com](http://togny.maps.arcgis.com)).



*The Schoolcraft House (circa 1840), located on Western Avenue near the Guilderland Fire Department Station, is slated for renovations to improve its appearance and accessibility.*



*The Mynderse-Fredrick House, located in Guilderland Center near the intersection of School Road and State Route 146.*

When asked to identify their highest priority concerns for the town, respondents to the Guilderland Community Survey cited “identifying and preserving historic buildings/sites” among their top five most pressing issues. The following actions are recommended to both preserve this important historic legacy and to expand access and awareness, so that future generations of Guilderland residents will be able to connect with these markers of the past.

**E-12. Evaluate the adequacy of existing historic sites in Guilderland to support access and programming for residents (e.g., recitals, small-scale performances, and other cultural/educational events) factoring in the needs of youth, older residents, and those with disabilities.**

Historic sites in Guilderland connect residents to the community's past, but they can also serve to help community members connect with one another. The Mynderse-Fredrick House in Guilderland Center, for example, hosts gatherings of the Guilderland Historical Society and the Guilderland Garden Club. Further activating suitable historic sites to host educational and cultural events would complement the role that the Guilderland Public Library plays as an all-weather gathering place, bolstering community spirit by drawing neighbors together. Public input submitted throughout the Comprehensive Plan Update process has consistently identified a desire for increased accessibility of public space in the community, ensuring that all are welcome regardless of age or ability. To this end, it is recommended that the Town inventory historic properties with a view toward identifying suitable sites for expanded cultural programming such as literature readings/book clubs, craft demonstrations, and artist talks. Further, it is recommended that the Town take such steps as necessary to bolster accessibility features of those sites to the extent possible, working within historical preservation constraints.

**E-13. Promote the use of suitable historic sites and the Guilderland Public Library as community gathering places for festivals, special observances, and educational opportunities.**

In addition to the official Town website ([www.townofguilderland.org](http://www.townofguilderland.org)), which features a calendar and a weekly emailed newsletter from the Supervisor, Guilderland also maintains a separate page to promote its many Parks and Recreation offerings ([guilderlandny.myrec.com](http://guilderlandny.myrec.com)). After working to strengthen accessibility to Town historic sites, it is recommended that the Town use available communication channels to promote cultural programming at historic sites. Promoting the use of historic sites may include Town-sponsored events, permitting the use of sites by groups and organizations, or a combination of the two.

The Guilderland Public library was also cited as an important tool to enhance cultural opportunities and historic events by offering programs and events that highlight the Town's heritage. By hosting exhibits, lectures, and other community activities, the library plays a key role in promoting both cultural engagement and awareness of Guilderland's historical significance.

**E-14. Pursue available funding sources and develop strategies for the sustained financial support of the Town's historical cultural sites and programs.**

Maintenance of historic sites, almost by definition, is a costly endeavor. Balancing the public's interest in well-maintained historic sites with the imperative to work within available revenue constraints will be a challenge for the Town to navigate. Just as the Town has partnered with organizations such as land conservancies to advance community goals on open space protection, it is recommended that the Town pursue partnerships, grant funds, and other resources to support sustainable programming at designated historic sites in Guilderland.

**E-15. Partner with higher education institutions in the region to foster engagement with historic and/or archaeological sites in Guilderland.**

Institutions of higher education represent an invaluable potential resource for preserving and promoting sites in Guilderland. In 2020, the Town partnered with State University of New York at Albany's (UAlbany) Department of Geography and Planning Graduate Program to carry out the Parks, Trails, & Open Space Project. Similar opportunities to join forces may be available for research, preservation, and/or programming for registered historic sites in Guilderland. In addition to UAlbany, a portion of whose campus is located within the Guilderland municipal boundary -- the following colleges and universities also hold the promise of being regional partners in the identification, maintenance, and promotion of Guilderland's historic assets:

- Union College (Schenectady)
- SUNY Schenectady
- Skidmore College (Saratoga Springs)
- Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (Troy)
- Russell Sage College (Troy)
- Hudson Valley Community College (Troy)
- Sage College (Albany)
- Maria College (Albany)

**E-16. Ensure that land use regulations and incentives serve to support and protect historic/archaeologically sensitive areas in the town.**

The Town has already incorporated the locations of properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a data layer on the Town of Guilderland Interactive Mapping website. This is an important first step in recognizing the historic legacy that has been left for subsequent generations. A further step will entail incorporating protections for historical sites in future updates to Town zoning, as well as considering a property's historic value as an important factor in conservation incentives that the Town allocates.

**E-17. Cultivate greater public awareness of Guilderland’s historic sites and resources, celebrating past contributions from a broad range of individuals and groups.**

The Guilderland Historical Society has a collection of museum objects kept at the Mynderse-Frederick House, in addition to online collections of historic photographs. As new technology, resources, and archival materials become available, an opportunity exists to highlight forgotten or little-known people and chapters in the story of a Guilderland. It is therefore recommended that the Town promote research and sharing of Guilderland’s history, encompassing its many influences and eras.

The Town may consider development of a Veterans Memorial Park. This could include the repurposing of an existing park to establish a

dedicated space commemorating Guilderland’s military veterans. This initiative would provide a meaningful tribute to those who have served in the armed forces, while also complementing the Town’s existing Hometown Heroes Banner program.

Tawasentha Park, which incorporates the historically significant Normans Kill Battleground, could be considered as a potential location for this Veterans Park, as its setting offers both cultural relevance and an appropriate environment for reflection and tribute.

**E-18. Consider rezoning Town parks, open space, and other similar types of holdings by the Albany Pine Bush Preserve, Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy, New York State, and other groups to a new zoning classification such as “Parkland.”**

Most of the parcels owned by the Town and other entities that are parks and open space retain their underlying zoning, mostly residential districts. The rezoning of those parcels to “Parkland” or other conserved space use would provide a better understanding of lands protected from development.

**E-19. Establish a program for acquiring key properties in Town to preserve as open space by prioritizing land that offers significant ecological, recreational, scenic, and community benefits. It will be funded through a dedicated mechanism and guided by clear, publicly vetted criteria.**

In 2023, the Town Board established the Environmental Protection Reserve Fund. The purpose of this Reserve Fund is to accumulate moneys that may be used, with the Town Board’s approval, to fund actions that protect the environment, including, but not limited to, purchasing land for preservation and protecting watercourses and sensitive areas. The Town Board should create a process for accepting donations to the Reserve Fund from individuals, civic organizations and non-profit groups.

**Define a partnership with non-profits.**

The Town should enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or other formal agreement with qualified non-profits. This agreement would outline the roles and responsibilities of each party, including how donations are solicited and

managed. Non-profits could provide additional capacity for land acquisition by offering their scientific expertise, volunteer labor for land management, or by leveraging their own funding.

**Establish a selection and evaluation process for land acquisition.**

Criteria should be established to prioritize geographic areas in Town to focus on for land acquisition and utilize a data-driven scoring system to evaluate and rank parcels for acquisition. Priority should be given to properties that meet the following criteria:

- **Align with open space plan:** All acquisition decisions must align with the objectives of the Town’s land preservation goals, which prioritizes land for conservation.

- **Evaluation criteria:** A scoring system should be created to evaluate properties based on factors such as:
  - a. **Water resource protection:** Lands that contain or protect wetlands, drinking water sources, shorelines, or contribute to aquifer recharge.
  - b. **Biodiversity and habitat preservation:** Properties that contain unique ecosystems, provide critical habitat for species of concern, or connect existing natural areas.
  - c. **Recreational and scenic value:** Lands that offer opportunities for public access, trail networks, or preserve important scenic views.
  - d. **Rural and agricultural character:** Working farms or lands that help preserve the Town's rural character.
  - e. **Proximity and connectivity:** Parcels adjacent or close to existing preserved lands to create larger, more effective open space networks.
  - f. **Development pressure:** Lands in areas facing intense development pressure where acquisition is time-sensitive.
  - g. **Cost-effectiveness and leverage:** Properties that can be acquired at a lower cost, often in partnership with other organizations, or through bargain sales or donations.
- **Oversight committee:** A committee, such as the Conservation Advisory Council, or a special Open Space Committee, should be created to oversee the evaluation process.
- **Conservation Easements/Purchase of Development Rights:** Donations could fund the purchase of a conservation easement, allowing the non-profit or Town to hold the easement while the land remains in private ownership, with its development rights permanently restricted.
- **Donations of property:** The Town would establish procedures for accepting direct land donations from non-profits, ensuring the properties meet conservation criteria.

### **Promote leveraged funding**

The open space acquisition program should specify that non-profit donations will be used strategically to unlock other funding sources.

- **Matching funds:** Donations can serve as a local match to secure competitive state and federal open space grants, multiplying the impact of the initial donation.
- **Public-private partnerships:** Non-profit funds could support joint ventures between the Town, the non-profit, and other community partners.

### **Codify the open space acquisition program**

Codification ensures consistency, legal defensibility, and public transparency, helping the Town manage its land preservation efforts strategically. The decision to codify the program can be made in several ways, from simple resolution to a more robust local law. The benefits of codifying an open space program include:

- **Creates a strong legal foundation:** Adopting a program through local law, rather than just a policy resolution, makes it more enforceable and robust against legal challenges. It establishes a clear legal basis for the town's actions.
- **Ensures continuity and consistency:** Codification prevents the program from being undermined by changes in local government or leadership. A defined, official policy provides consistent guidance for acquisitions, ensuring that all projects are evaluated and executed according to

### **Allow for flexible donation structures**

The open space acquisition program should recognize that non-profits can contribute in various ways, not just with cash donations.

- **Fee simple acquisition:** The Town can use non-profit donations to purchase land outright.
- **Bargain sales:** The open space acquisition fund could be used to facilitate "bargain sales," where a non-profit purchase a property from a landowner at a discount with the Town and open space acquisition fund assisting to cover the remaining costs such as closing costs, legal fees, etc.

the same standards over the long term.

- **Increases transparency and public trust:** When the acquisition process is clearly documented, the public can better understand how decisions are made and how funds are spent. This builds community trust in the program's fairness and effectiveness.
- **Enhances credibility for grant applications:** Many state and federal grant programs require municipalities to demonstrate a clear and consistent strategy for land conservation. Codified policies and plans

show that the town has a serious, long-term commitment to open space protection, which can improve its chances of receiving funding.

- **Allows for proactive, strategic planning:** Codified programs enable a town to define acquisition priorities in advance, rather than acquiring land opportunistically as it becomes available. This allows the town to focus its efforts on conserving ecologically sensitive lands, preserving connected corridors, or purchasing land for future recreational use.

**Recommendation E-20: The Town of Guilderland should endeavor to support the efforts of the Village of Altamont and Historic Altamont, Inc., where practicable, in implementing the goals and recommendations of the Altamont Trails Master Plan.**

The Altamont Trails Master Plan is an initiative to create a connected trail network throughout the Village of Altamont, the Town of Guilderland, and Albany County, with the primary goal of enhancing recreational opportunities, connecting communities and natural resources, and promoting outdoor activity.

The Town of Guilderland can support the Altamont Trails Master Plan through inter-municipal collaboration, integration into its own comprehensive plan and zoning laws, resource allocation (including grant applications), and community engagement. Key actions for support may include:

- **Inter-Municipal Cooperation:** The plan is a collaborative effort, and the Town can formally acknowledge and work with the Village of Altamont and organizations like Historic Altamont and the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy. This collaboration can include shared resources, joint grant applications, and a shared vision for connected green spaces that extend beyond municipal boundaries.
- **Zoning Amendments:** Reviewing and amending zoning ordinances to align with the trail plan's goals, such as preserving open spaces, viewsheds, and farmland that the trails traverse.

- **Connectivity:** Explicitly planning for the linking of the Altamont trails with existing or planned Guilderland pathways, bike routes, and sidewalks to create a seamless network connecting various parks and open spaces.
- **Grant Applications:** Actively supporting and collaborating on grant applications (state, federal, and county) that benefit the trail system. Guilderland has a track record of successfully obtaining grant money for infrastructure projects, which can be leveraged for the trails.
- **Land Acquisition/Easements:** Exploring opportunities for land acquisition or conservation easements to secure the trail corridors from future development.
- **Development Policies:** The Town can use its reviewing boards to negotiate with developers of new subdivisions to include trail linkages or set aside open space as part of the approval process.

# 07 TRANSPORTATION & 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 negative impacts of traffic on the Town’s character and quality of life.

## Overview

Transportation corridors in Guilderland have been instrumental in the development of the Town, from the construction of the Great Western Turnpike/US-20 to subsequent state and federal transportation projects such as the NYS Thruway, I-890, and I-87 Northway. Roadways and freight rail lines are important connectors for people and goods, but they can paradoxically serve as physical barriers at times for those traveling about Town on foot, by bicycle, or by other means. Balancing the needs of residents and businesses across travel modes is a perennial concern, which is influenced by factors such as emerging technologies, shifting population patterns, and the changing preferences and lifestyles of Guilderland residents.

During public engagement outreach with residents and stakeholders, a number of prevalent themes surfaced. Nearly half (46%) of respondents to the Guilderland Community Survey identified “neighborhood connectivity and walkability” as one of the greatest challenges facing Guilderland now or in the future. Converting “congested intersections to traffic circles” and establishing “pedestrian trails that connect parks and neighborhoods” also emerged as priorities with consistent public support. Representatives of the Guilderland School District and members of the public both noted that traffic congestion, in part due to access road limitations, represented a challenge for safe and efficient transportation to and from public schools, particularly Farnsworth Middle School.



*Western Avenue. Traffic enters Crossgates Mall on Route 20, Guilderland, New York. March 4, 1984 (Tom LaPoint/Times Union Archive)*



*Western Avenue looking east near the main entrance to Crossgates Mall, August 2025*



*“Freighting” on Great Western Turnpike 1880s  
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/albanygroup/>*



*Western Turnpike looking east at intersection with NYS Route 158, August 2025*

## Vehicular Mobility

The Town of Guilderland is primarily auto-dependent, on account of prevailing development patterns during the decades when the Town experienced the greatest growth. The use of a private vehicle is needed for most activities and the availability of mass transit is limited. Major roadways traversing the Town of Guilderland include the following:

### New York State Thruway

The New York State Thruway spans approximately 570 miles across New York State, with connections to interstate roadways in New Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania, as well as the Canadian province of Ontario. The New York Thruway Authority collects tolls on vehicular traffic via a toll collection system that was fully automated in 2020. The Guilderland Travel Plaza, located along the

eastbound lanes of the Thruway, is located within the Guilderland Town boundary, and is connected to the Town's surface street system via Brookview Drive. After a temporary closure for wholesale renovations, the Travel Plaza reopened to motorists in 2024. The Travel Plaza generates revenue and employment opportunities for Guilderland.



*I-90 looking west near the intersection with I-87, Source: Google Maps*

### Adirondack Northway

The Adirondack Northway (I-87), classified as a principal arterial interstate, connects New York City to communities in the Hudson Valley, Albany, and other Upstate communities enroute to the Canadian border. The Northway passes through the southeastern corner of the Town of Guilderland, near Crossgates Mall, where construction of a new traffic roundabout coincided with the launch of the Capital District

Transit Authority's new Purple Line BusPlus service to Crossgates from the downtown Albany in late 2023. Northway connections to New York City and Montreal, both within a half day's drive, bolster multi-modal connections for warehousing operations at the Northeastern Industrial Park located in Guilderland Center.



*I-87 looking north, Western Avenue crossover bridge, Source: Google Maps*

## US-20/Western Avenue

The spine of the Town road network is US 20/Western Avenue, which runs west-northwest from the City of Albany to the Schenectady County line and beyond. US-20/Western Avenue is a major coast-to-coast route spanning 3,365 miles from Boston, Massachusetts to Newport, Oregon. The section of Route 20 that traverses through the town is the major commuter and commercial corridor.

Western Avenue connects the Guilderland neighborhoods of McKownville, Westmere, Guilderland Hamlet, Fullers, Dunnsville, and adjacent rural areas between Watervliet Reservoir and Duanesburg. Having Western Avenue as the Town's de facto "Main Street" is a double-edged sword, presenting both opportunities and challenges. Western Avenue falls under the jurisdictional authority of the New York State Department of Transportation, which requires active collaboration on any alterations to the roadway design. Western Avenue is Guilderland's primary commercial corridor, but some sections of the corridor suffer from a lack of pedestrian infrastructure, creating an inhospitable atmosphere for foot traffic that could benefit

local business owners and residents. Due to its width and status as a DOT-controlled highway, US-20/Western Avenue offers a limited number of protected pedestrian crossings, but improving pedestrian facilities parallel to the flow of traffic can facilitate improved safety and mobility along the corridor.



*Western Avenue looking west near UAlbany*

## NYS Route 155/County Route 155

NYS Route 155 is a 16.85 miles long State highway located entirely within Albany County. NYS 155 begins at a roundabout with NY 85A (Maple Road) on the eastern edge of Voorheesville in the Town of New Scotland. NY 155 proceeds northeast along State Farm Road, crossing under the former railroad bed of the Albany and Susquehanna Railroad into a junction with County Route 306 (CR 306 or Voorheesville Avenue / Normans Kill Road).



*NYS Route 20 and Route 155 intersection, Source: Google Maps*

The two-lane road continues on, winding northwest through New Scotland before entering the Town of Guilderland. The route passes east of the Albany Country Club before crossing the Normans Kill Creek and passing a housing development. Crossing Blockhouse Creek, NY 155 reaches the hamlet of Westmere and the intersection with US-20/Western Avenue.

At the intersection with US-20/Western Avenue, maintenance jurisdiction switches from the New York State Department of Transportation to Albany County, and the route becomes concurrent with CR 157. The road name changes from State Farm Road to New Karner Road. Shortly north of US-20, the route crosses into the City of Albany at Corporate Circle. Through Albany, NY 155 and CR 157 remain a two-lane arterial, passing through the Albany Pine Bush Preserve and intersecting with the western terminus of the Washington Avenue Extension.



## Bicycle and Pedestrian Mobility

While personal transportation in the Town of Guilderland is primarily oriented toward private car use, the Town has upgraded and expanded its network of sidewalks in recent years. Sidewalk extensions and improvement efforts in the town have gradually increased pedestrian access in strategic locations along Western Avenue, NYS Route 155, County Route 155, Carman Road (NYS Route 146), Old State Road, and elsewhere.

One notable recent sidewalk expansion project links the Guilderland Public Library to the Hamilton Square shopping plaza along the south side of Western Avenue. Sidewalks are scheduled to be constructed on East Old State Road and Carman Road commencing in 2025. A 10-foot wide, paved multi-use trail is scheduled to be installed along NYS Route 146, from US-20/Western Avenue to Tawasentha Park/Winter Recreation area in 2025/26. Recreational walking and hiking trails in Tawasentha Park, the Albany Pine Bush Preserve, the Black Creek Marsh Wildlife Management Area, and the Vosburgh Open Space area are promoted via the Town's official website under the heading Hike Guilderland!

A gap in the pedestrian connectivity network exist between Crossgates Mall and Stuyvesant Plaza. While a sidewalk currently exists along Western Avenue, connecting Stuyvesant Plaza to Crossgates Mall, pedestrians must traverse across numerous intersections and the entrance ramp to I-87. The Town should explore ways to construct safer pedestrian access between these two destinations.



*Extended sidewalk on the south side of Western Avenue now connects the Guilderland Library with the Hamilton Square shopping plaza and points in between.*

## Freight Rail Service

Class I freight rail lines operated by CSX serve Northeastern Industrial Park in Guilderland Center. Between 2,500 and 3,000 freight rail cars per year pass through the Industrial Park. CSX operates the Selkirk Rail Yard in the nearby Town of Bethlehem, New York, providing regional freight connections.



*The Northeastern Industrial Park, served by Van Buren Road, benefits from Class 1 freight rail connections and nearby access to east-west and north-south interstate highways.*

# Traffic Volumes

According to data from the US Decennial Census, nearly a third of employed residents of the Town of Guilderland hold jobs in the City of Albany, while 14.2% work in the Town of Colonie (Figure 5.10). Only 11% of residents live and work in Guilderland. Others commute to jobs in the counties of Schenectady, Rensselaer, and Saratoga, but 84% of residents travel less than 25 miles each way to work. The flow of workday travel from the Town is mainly to the east and southeast or to the north.

According to the American Community Survey, an estimated 84% of employed Guilderland residents drive to work, most often traveling alone, and 11% work from home. Less than 1% of residents use public transportation to get to work.

Given the high percentage of Guilderland residents who commute to neighboring municipalities for employment, traffic congestion, particularly along stretches of US-20/Western Avenue, is a prevalent concern expressed through various forms of public engagement. According to Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) data published by the NYS Department of Transportation (<https://www.dot.ny.gov/tdv>) traffic volumes have actually remained unchanged or declined in much of the town in recent decades, including along stretches of US-20/Western Avenue and Carman Road (NYS Route 146). As shown in Table 15, the roadway sections that have seen the highest increases in traffic include the section of Western Avenue between Carman Road and NY 158 (2.4%), Fuller Road between Western Avenue and Washington Avenue (2.2%), and the section of US-20 between the Schenectady County line and NY 397 (1.9%). Meanwhile, according to the same data, traffic has decreased on Western Avenue between Crossgates Mall and NY 155 (-3.4%), as well as on the section of Western between NY 155 and NY 146 (-1.7%), and on Johnston Road between Veeder Road and the Town line (-1.5%).

While traffic growth has essentially been flat, there are some local streets in town that have probably had increases due to nearby development. One intersection that gets comments about traffic

**Figure 7.1: Where Town of Guilderland Residents Work**

Location	Count	Share
Albany County	9,921	61.5%
Guilderland Town	1,815	11.3%
Albany City	5,164	32.0%
Colonie Town	2,297	14.2%
All other locations	645	4.0%
Schenectady County	1,743	10.8%
Schenectady City	829	5.1%
Rotterdam Town	337	2.1%
All other locations	557	3.5%
Rensselaer County	1,006	6.2%
Saratoga County	825	5.1%
All Other Counties	2,627	16.3%
Total	16,122	100.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, LED OnTheMap Origin-Destination Database, 2020.

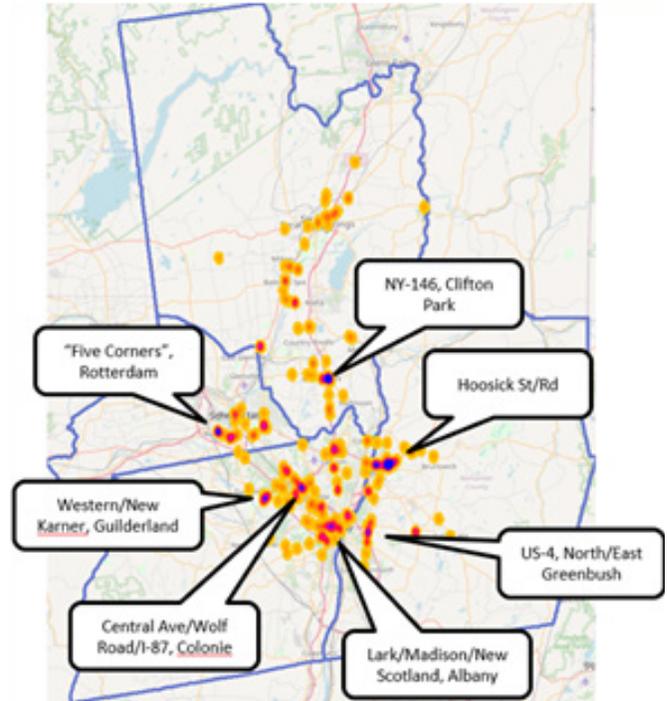
congestion is the Western Ave./Rt. 155 intersection.

The US Route 20/NYS Route 155 signalized intersection currently operates at a LOS F conditions during all peak hours. From 2020 to 2024, there were 188 accidents reported at this intersection according to data from the DOT CLEAR Crash Data Viewer. This is a large intersection consisting of two state roadways operating with nine phases, including an exclusive pedestrian phase. The high number of phases needed to accommodate the high traffic volume, numerous dual left-turn movements, and the exclusive pedestrian phase result in an increase in vehicle delay to people waiting at the intersection.

In 2023, the Capital Region Transportation Council completed the Congestion Management Process Update, which included stakeholder and public engagement, analysis of congestion problems in the region, and multi-modal

congestion performance measures. A copy of the report can be viewed in the link provided: <https://www.capitalmpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Congestion-Management-Process-Report-6-12-2024.pdf>

On the map to the right, dark blue areas represent locations where 10 or more survey takers reported experiencing traffic congestion. The locations with the highest density of congestion reports are noted on the map below. The Western Avenue/NYS Route 155 intersection ranked high in their survey for a congested intersection.



**Figure 7.2: Guilderland Peak Hour Traffic Volume Trends**

Roadway	Segment		AADT	Percentage change +/-
	From	To		
US-20/Western Ave	Schenectady Co. Line	NY 397 /Dunnsville Rd	2015 - 4473 2024 - 4876	9.01%
US-20/Western Ave	NY 397 /Dunnsville Rd	NY 158	2015 - 5462 2024 - 5583	2.22%
US-20/Western Ave	NY 158	NY 146/Carman Rd	2015 - 8634 2024 - 8662	0.32%
US-20/NY 146/Western Ave	NY 146/Carman Rd	NY 146	2015 - 22,965 2024 - 23,002	0.16%
US-20/Western Ave	NY 146	NY 155/New Karner Rd	2017 - 30,209 2024 - 30,574	1.21%
US-20/Western Ave	NY 155	Crossgates Mall Ent.	2015 - 31,364 2024 - 28,224	-10.01%
US-20/Western Ave	Crossgates Mall Ent.	NY 910F/ Northway Ent.	2017 - 45,481 2024 - 39,208	-13.79%
US-20/Western Ave	NY 910F/ Northway Ent.	CR 156/Fuller Rd	2015 - 25,370 2024 - 26,090	2.84%
NY 146	Main St (Altamont)	NY 158	2015 - 7277 2024 - 5824	-19.97%

		Segment		
NY 146	NY 158	CR 201/Depot Rd	2015 - 8496 2024 - 7654	-9.91%
NY 155/State Farm Rd	NY 85A	US-20/Western Ave	2015 - 10,551 2024 - 9296	-11.89%
CR 203/Johnston Rd	Town Line	Veeder Rd	2015 - 4074 2024 - 3689	-9.45%
CR 156/Fuller Rd	US 20/Western Ave	Washington Ave	2015 - 12,770 2024 - 15,154	18.67%
Old State Rd (East)	NY 146/Carman Rd	Lydius St	2015 - 2682 2024 - 2825	5.33%
Old State Rd (East)	Lydius St	Kings Rd	2015 - 5273 2024 - 5042	-4.38%

Source: NYS Department of Transportation Traffic Data Viewer

## Traffic Volumes

Future vehicular trends include a more significant presence of electric vehicles (EV) and plug-in hybrids. As EVs become more prevalent, expansion of charging infrastructure, with an emphasis on fast-charging stations, will become necessary. As of June 2023, there were 3,264 EVs registered on the road in Albany County and the number has been climbing since 2013 when then-Governor Andrew M. Cuomo launched Charge NY, a program administered by the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority to encourage the use of more electric cars and trucks by providing rebates, incentives, tax credits and assistance with infrastructure installation.<sup>17</sup> In addition, the deployment of connected and automated vehicles and infrastructure are important emerging trends and provide safety, mobility, land use, and operational challenges and opportunities.



An electric vehicle (EV) charger in front of the Guilderland Public Library on Western Avenue.

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.nyserda.ny.gov/All-Programs/ChargeNY/Support-Electric/Map-of-EV-Registrations>

# Recommendations

To address community transportation priorities, the following actions are recommended. The recommendations have been grouped by travel mode and represent a coordinated approach to enhancing the Town's transportation network for all users.

## Pedestrian & Bicycle

**F-1. Enhance pedestrian mobility safety and connections by working to link Town community centers, recreation facilities, neighborhoods, shopping, schools, public parks and employment areas with sidewalk networks and multi-use trails. Explore opportunities to connect Guilderland bike/pedestrian infrastructure to the Albany County Rail Trail and other regional trail networks.**

Public desire for greater walkability in Guilderland was a consistent and prevalent theme in input received throughout the Comprehensive Plan Update process. Although materials costs have risen substantially in recent years, the Town has successfully installed sidewalks along portions of Western Avenue, Carman Road, and Old State Road, leveraging Town resources to unlock opportunities for grant funds.

- a. Explore feasibility of extending sidewalks further west along Western Ave and Carman Road and fill in last remaining gaps. Expanding the sidewalk network can create even safer walking routes for residents and encourage more connections between residential neighborhoods, local businesses, schools, parks and recreational areas.
- b. Explore the feasibility of constructing a multi-use trail over I-87 connecting Crossgates Mall to Stuyvesant Plaza, Executive Park, Albany Nanotech complex and UAlbany. Constructing this multi-use trail will provide more efficient and safer pedestrian access between these destinations vs. using the existing sidewalk network along the western avenue.

**F-2. Develop a Complete Streets Policy for Guilderland in recognition of the community's desire for a broad range of transportation options.**

Complete Streets policies are tools that municipalities can utilize to “encourage a safe, comfortable, integrated transportation network for all users, regardless of age, ability, income, ethnicity, or mode of transportation.”<sup>18</sup> Other Capital District communities have adopted Complete Streets policies in recent years, signaling a paradigm shift in how the available space within designated rights-of-way is allocated to various travel modes. There has also been a growing desire to coordinate with NYSDOT to implement Complete Streets policies for State roads within the Town, which would ensure a safer and more accessible transportation network across key corridors. The addition of suitably engineered sidewalks, crosswalks, bike lanes, and safety infrastructure in strategic locations can assist in enhancing public health and wellness and can facilitate greater mobility for those without access to a personal vehicle.

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18 U.S. Department of Transportation

**F-3. Install benches, bicycle racks/parking, bike share nodes, bus shelters, and other appropriate street furniture in strategic locations to incentivize and support transportation options in Guilderland.**

Walking, cycling, or taking public transit is a far less feasible transportation option without the infrastructure to support those activities. Bicycle racks or storage facilities make it possible for cyclists to lock up bikes while shopping or performing other errands. Bus shelters and benches provide foul weather refuge or a moment's rest to transit riders and walkers. Such so-called street furniture is a vital component in a welcoming, well-functioning transportation system, so it is recommended that the Town partner with the Capital Region Transportation Council (CRTC) and other county/regional organizations to install and maintain these amenities, to increase the attractiveness of walking, cycling, or taking public transit in service to the Town's interest in public health and welfare.



*Street furniture such as the benches, bicycle racks, and waste receptacles in a new pocket park at Carman Road and Lydius Street facilitate active transportation options by giving pedestrians and cyclists a place to park and rest.*

**F-4. Upgrade road and pathway signage as appropriate to promote safe driving behavior and awareness of pedestrians/cyclists.**

As Guilderland continues to add to its networks of sidewalks and trails, a complementary step involves ensuring that adequate signage exists at network intersection points to prevent inadvertent collisions or other transportation conflicts across modes. Planners who focus on non-motorized/active transportation modes identify six (6) critical elements involved in successful implementation:

- Engineering
- Education
- Encouragement
- Enforcement
- Evaluation
- Equity

While sound engineering of transportation routes is paramount, incorporating appropriate signage has the ability to educate the public and, potentially, to encourage a greater number of people who might be otherwise reluctant to walk or bike with confidence due to safety concerns.

**F-5. Enhance pedestrian walkways and safe crossings westward from Stuyvesant Plaza, facilitating greater foot traffic for businesses along Western Avenue.**

Western Avenue is Guilderland’s primary commercial corridor, but some sections of the corridor suffer from a lack of pedestrian infrastructure, creating an inhospitable atmosphere for foot traffic that could benefit local business owners. Due to its width and status as a DOT-controlled highway, Western Avenue/US-20 offers a limited number of protected pedestrian crossings, but improving pedestrian facilities parallel to the flow of traffic can facilitate improved safety and mobility along the corridor. An additional benefit of improved pedestrian infrastructure is that it allows for shared use of

parking facilities, so that travelers do not have to return to their personal vehicles in order to visit multiple storefronts in close proximity.

Work with NYSDOT to identify traffic calming and enhanced pedestrian crossing opportunities on Western Avenue. Continue to work with NYSDOT and the CRTc to fund sidewalk construction and fill in gaps in the system.

**F-6. Encourage and incentivize the integration of shared bike/pedestrian paths in housing developments, linking residential areas to one another as well as to parks, community services, and retail.**

To complement the Town’s efforts to install sidewalks and trails linking existing destinations, it is recommended that the Town consider increasing density bonuses as a means to incentivize new residential developments in Guilderland to incorporate pedestrian and/or multi-use paths in their design. The Town of Guilderland experienced its greatest periods of population growth during decades when the personal automobile was the preeminent mode of transportation. While vehicular use may still be the preeminent mode of

transportation., now there is a greater recognition of the importance of multi-modal facilities and incorporating complete streets designs on roadways. The value that the public now places on walkability and bikeability should be reflected in the degree to which new development projects incorporate these travel modes in their planning and layout.

**F-7. Consider the capabilities and characteristics of electric-powered bicycles as a factor in the design of bicycle infrastructure in Guilderland.**

All-electric and so-called “pedal assist” bicycles have been growing in popularity in recent years, propelled by improvements in technology, increased affordability, and the wider effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, which incentivized outdoor recreation options over indoor activities. Electric bicycles, as a relatively new and increasingly prevalent element in the transportation ecosystem, warrant consideration in the planning of future infrastructure. On one hand, electric bicycles expand access to those who may be physically unable to use traditional bicycles, but their greater mass and acceleration capabilities have ramifications for safety on shared multi-use paths.



CDTA Electric bicycle charging station.  
Source: [Times union.com](https://www.timesunion.com)

# Public Transit

## **F-8. Partner with regional employers and CDTA to increase the use and the reach of public transportation for daily commuting, including potential expansion of the Universal Access bus pass system in Guilderland.**

Estimates from the American Community Survey (ACS) indicate that only approximately 1% of Guilderland residents use public transit for their daily commute to work. The inception of the CDTA Purple Line BusPlus service in 2023, between Crossgates Mall and downtown Albany, holds the promise of incentivizing higher levels of transit ridership, since BusPlus routes feature higher frequency service and reduced wait times. The Purple Line connects large employment areas such as the Albany Nano Tech Complex, UAlbany, the Harriman State Office complex, the State Capitol, and SUNY Plaza. Explore options to expand bus rapid transit further into Guilderland along Western Avenue to better connect the community to surrounding municipalities and to provide improved access to Town from elsewhere.

Other proactive steps, however, can be taken to ensure that CDTA service to Guilderland is maintained and well-utilized. As part of its own efforts to increase ridership across its network, CDTA facilitates so-called “Universal Access” partnerships and agreements with regional

businesses and institutions, to allow the employees and/or students of participating entities to use company/college/hospital ID badges as Universal Access passes on CDTA buses and shuttles. Once the arrangement between CDTA and the employer or school is finalized, the fare-box system is programmed to recognize and read the ID cards, the data is compiled in monthly ridership reports, and those reports serve as the basis of annual cost calculations for the participating employers. Some employers pass a portion of the cost on to employees to help pay for access.<sup>19</sup> Benefits of the program include reduced demand for parking and reduction in emissions from private vehicles on the road. It is recommended that the Town and the Guilderland Chamber of Commerce partner with the CDTA Business Development Department to identify potential business/institutional candidates for Universal Access expansion in Guilderland, as a potential mechanism for reducing traffic on Guilderland roadways and ensuring that bus ridership levels remain robust enough to maintain or expand CDTA’s presence in the Town.

## **F-9. Promote the use and expansion of public transit of mobility services such as CDTA Flex on demand, CDPHP Cycle bike share, ride-hailing services, and electric car share.**

The menu of mobility options in the Capital District has grown in recent years to include bike share, car share, and transit shuttle service. CDTA Flex is an on-demand, curb-to-curb shuttle service that can be booked via the mobile Navigator app. As of 2023, the Flex coverage area in Guilderland included the Hamilton Square/Star Plaza shopping area at the intersection of Western Avenue and State Route 155, as well as Crossgates Mall, Stuyvesant Plaza, and a number of residential areas south of Western Avenue in the Westmere and McKownville sections of Guilderland. The Capital District Physicians Health Plan sponsors the CDPHP Cycle! bike share program, which comprises a network of bicycle rental stations located throughout the service area, which includes the UAlbany campus, the NanoTech campus on Fuller Road, Stuyvesant

Plaza, and Crossgates Mall. In late 2023, the Capital Region’s first “mobility hub” was unveiled in nearby Schenectady, a result of collaborative efforts of regional transportation agencies and state legislators. Such a hub could be a useful model for Guilderland, combining complementary transportation modes in a single nodal location.

The Town should conduct a study exploring the expansion of the existing Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) District boundary along Western Avenue. The Town has established a TOD District, which leverages the proximity of public transportation infrastructure to encourage

<sup>19</sup> [cdta.org/universal-access](https://cdta.org/universal-access)

mixed-use, higher density development. TODs are recognized as an effective urban planning strategy that promotes sustainable growth and supports the use of public transportation. This expansion would align with current CDTA services, such as the Purple Line BusPlus route, and support future enhancements to the transit network. Extending the TOD district would not only facilitate higher utilization of existing public transit options but also create opportunities for the revival of previously discontinued lines.

## Roadways & Automobiles

**F-10. Pursue funding from the Capital Region Transportation Council (Transportation Council), NYSDOT, and the NY Thruway Authority to address the following transportation related issues in Guilderland:**

- a. Reduce the traffic burden on Western Avenue by initiating a plan – in coordination with Albany County, other Capital District municipalities, and the State -- to remove tolls and add access points on the NY Thruway between Exit 22 and Exit 25A, transforming the Thruway from an inter-regional limited access facility into a one serving regional traffic, as has been implemented elsewhere in the State of New York.

The New York State Thruway is primarily a toll road, but there are a few non-tolled sections. Specifically, a section of I-90 outside of Buffalo and a segment in the Capital District between Albany and its eastern suburbs are not tolled. Additionally, a short segment within exit 24 in Albany, where I-87 departs and I-90 enters, is toll-free.

While it doesn't appear that entirely new exits have been added to the NYS Thruway recently with the specific purpose of reducing traffic congestion, the Thruway Authority employs several strategies to manage traffic flow and enhance safety. The Thruway Authority is installing emergency ramp control gates at exits, primarily to manage traffic during winter weather events and allow uninterrupted access for emergency and maintenance crews. While their primary purpose isn't to reduce daily congestion, they do contribute to safety and efficiency in emergency situations. The system-wide conversion to all-electronic toll collection eliminated slowed or idling traffic at toll barriers, contributing to a smoother traffic flow and

reducing congestion. The NYS Thruway Authority focuses on maintaining and improving existing infrastructure, implementing new technologies, and managing traffic flow through targeted projects and initiatives rather than solely relying on the addition of new exits to address congestion. If new exits were to be considered by the NYS Thruway Authority, the Town of Guilderland, Town of Colonie, Town of Bethlehem, City of Albany, and Albany County would need to coordinate efforts with the Capital Region Transportation Council to present a cost-benefit analysis to New York State.

- b. Continue to partner and coordinate with CDTA, Transportation Council, NYS Department of Transportation and other regional partners for public transportation improvements and expansion.

Guilderland's public transportation needs continue to evolve over time. The Town currently is included as a municipal partner in all regional transportation boards, committees, and correspondences. However, services need to be expanded to better serve the Village of Altamont, the Village of Voorheesville, and the western part of Town, which refers to areas beyond the Crossgates Mall. These areas currently experience limited access to public transportation which creates challenges for residents and employees. This

service expansion has garnered public support from Town residents, who have expressed a clear desire for increased transportation options in these areas. Addressing these gaps is essential to ensure equitable service across all parts of the town. To achieve an optimal balance of service, the Town should continue to strengthen its participation and communication with these regional transportation agencies while also identifying ways to collaborate with businesses to support public transit.

- c. Traffic signal optimization on key Town roadways.

Effective coordination and synchronization of traffic control devices, i.e., stoplights – along road corridors can lead to a number of benefits: improved traffic flow, reduction in vehicle idling/emissions, and lower levels of frustration felt by Guilderland drivers. The timing of traffic lights must adjust as traffic levels change – within the course of a day and also over the course of time.

In order to strive for paramount efficiency within the existing road network, it is recommended that the Town Highway Department liaise with the NYSDOT, Albany County, and other relevant stakeholders to ensure that traffic signals have been optimized to meet the needs of present traffic levels/patterns.

- d. Repair or replacement of bridges and/or culverts through NYSDOT and CRTCC's BridgeNY program.

The New York State Department of Transportation (NYS DOT) and Capital Region Transportation Council manage an annual Bridge NY funding program. This program provides funding assistance to local governments for projects that rehabilitate and replace bridges, particularly projects that address poor structural conditions, mitigate weight restrictions or detours, facilitate economic development, increase economic competitiveness, improve resiliency and/or reduce the risk of flooding. This program is open to all public bridge owners.<sup>20</sup> As a community that is bisected by the Normans Kill and criss-crossed with other waterways, it is essential for bridges and culverts to be engineered to withstand likely future conditions and to be in peak working order. Bridge replacement may also be necessary to facilitate increased road widths to accommodate bike lanes or multi-use trails, in keeping with the Town's identified multi-modal transportation goals. Further, rehabilitation and/or reactivation

of a bridge over the CSX rail line between Old State Road and Miller Road in the northern part of Guilderland and a bridge connecting Hurst Road and French's Mill Road by the Town landfill site, may facilitate regional trail connections for walking and cycling. It is therefore recommended that the Town seek funding to study, engineer, and implement efforts to keep Guilderland bridges working to connect the community.

<sup>20</sup> Capital Region Transportation Council, accessed from [www.capitalmpo.org/what-we-do/roads-bridges](http://www.capitalmpo.org/what-we-do/roads-bridges)



*A bridge over the Normans Kill on State Route 146 near Tawasentha Park. This bridge is being replaced in 2026 and a multi-use path constructed as part of the project from Tawasentha Park to the Town's Winter Recreation Area.*

**F-11. In partnership with NYS DOT and the Guilderland School District, explore options to improve vehicular traffic flow to Guilderland public schools, including options for a secondary access route to Farnsworth Middle School for buses and/or emergency vehicles.**

Prevalent among the public input received during the Comprehensive Plan Update process was concern about the efficiency and safety of public-school access road infrastructure. Of particular concern was the lone access road, Peter Alland Way, to Farnsworth Middle School, off of State Farm Road/NY-155. It is recommended that the Town initiate coordination with the NYS DOT and school district to investigate potential for an alternate access road/point, as a resiliency measure in case of road closure or an emergency event. Guilderland School District officials have also identified traffic flow inefficiencies at Guilderland High School, off of School Road in Guilderland Center, which has impacted bus scheduling and on-time attendance. There was also public input about the proximity of the GCSD Transportation facility to the Black Creek and its potential impact to water quality.



*Guilderland High School on School Road in Guilderland Center experiences traffic congestion issues that impact on-time attendance, according to District representatives.*

## **F-12. Review and Update Town's Standards and Regulations for Guilderland Roadways.**

- a. Evaluate parking standards and regulations during future zoning updates to align with and advance Comprehensive Plan Goals.

While maintaining adequate available customer parking remains a consistent priority for Guilderland businesses, efficient use of existing parking areas can reduce the need to add unnecessary impervious surfaces, which then require stormwater mitigation measures. Therefore, it is recommended that the Town take a consider alternative approaches to the multi-faceted issue of parking regulations in future updates to Town zoning, ensuring that such regulations support Town goals for resiliency, walkability, and neighborhood aesthetics while continuing to support business owners who rely on customers who arrive by car.

- b. Explore the feasibility of reducing Town right of way standards in rural zoning districts of Guilderland.

The importance of rural areas and their viewsheds to Town character was a frequent theme in public input submitted throughout the Comprehensive Plan Update process. Existing standards for road widths in RA zoning districts stipulate 30-foot paved road width with a 60-foot right-of-way, which may not align with the intent of maintaining rural character. Therefore, it is recommended that the Town consider reducing required paved road widths and rights-of-way in rural zoning districts in future updates to Town code, provided that emergency vehicle access can be maintained. Reducing road pavement width can lower vehicle speeds primarily by influencing driver perception. Narrower lanes create a feeling of constraint and increased risk, prompting drivers to be more cautious and reduce their speed.

- c. Discourage the use of cul-de-sac designed roadways and promote greater neighborhood connectivity in rural areas.

While cul-de-sac street patterns may be appropriate in more suburban areas of Guilderland, the arrangement of streets in subdivisions in the more rural areas of town should be designed to minimize grading and follow the natural contours of the land to help encourage maintaining rural character of the Town. When practical, connections to existing and adjacent subdivision roads should be promoted.

- d. The potential for installing additional traffic roundabouts at appropriate Town intersections to reduce crash rates and ease traffic congestion.

In recent years, traffic roundabouts have been installed in strategic locations in Guilderland (the intersection of Carman Road/NY-146 and Lydius Street, as well as on Crossgates Mall Road at the Northway exit) to increase the efficiency of traffic flow and to decrease the incidence of high-speed vehicle collisions. Future plans have been announced to install a traffic roundabout at the intersection of New Karner Road/NY-155 and Washington Avenue Extension, which – although its location falls outside Town boundaries – will have an influence on traffic congestion in Guilderland. The engineering of traffic roundabouts requires significant planning and, potentially, the acquisition of land adjoining existing intersections. Therefore, it is recommended that the Town proactively pursue funding sources to identify additional feasible locations for traffic roundabouts, conduct requisite engineering studies, and eventually carry out the construction and implementation.



*A traffic roundabout at the intersection of Carman Road and Lydius Drive in the Fort Hunter area of Guilderland, featuring gateway and traffic signage.*

# 08 GOVERNANCE

## Overview

Towns are local government units responsible for addressing and for the practical needs of their residents. Those needs include a range of key functions, such as road maintenance, police services, recreational offerings, land use development permitting, property assessment, and provision of sewer, water, and storm drainage infrastructure to protect public health. The Town of Guilderland works to provide these services efficiently and in a fiscally responsible manner to meet the community's needs.

The Town of Guilderland uses collected taxes to fund the operations of various departments, maintain local infrastructure, and provide public services such as police and emergency medical services (EMS). The town also maintains reserve funds for future capital improvements and emergencies. The town relies on a combination of different tax revenues, along with fees for services and state aid, to fund its operations. Property taxes are a significant revenue source for Guilderland, with the tax levy set annually as part of the budget process. The town's tax office collects the payments from residents on approximately 12,800 parcels (Figure 8.1).

While Albany County collects sales tax, it distributes a portion to municipalities based on population. Guilderland's budget projections include sales tax revenue, which is a major funding source second only to property taxes. Sales tax revenue is a major funding source for the Town of Guilderland, but the exact percentage of the budget it comprises can vary annually. The combined sales tax rate in Albany County is 8%. New York State keeps 4% and Albany County collects the remaining 4%. Albany County retains 60% of the local 4% tax, and the remaining 40% is

shared with municipalities, including Guilderland. The portion of the sales tax distributed to towns like Guilderland is based on population. Sales tax revenue is the town's largest source of revenue after property taxes, providing tens of millions of dollars annually. For example, the approved 2024 budget listed sales tax as the largest source of income, estimated at \$15.3 million. The exact percentage of the budget that sales tax revenue represents changes from year-to-year based on economic conditions and total budget expenses. For example, in 2024, the \$15.3 million in sales tax was a substantial portion of the town's \$43 million budget (Figure 8.2).

Local government functions in Guilderland are carried out and directed from Guilderland Town Hall, located at 5209 Western Turnpike. The Town Hall, which also houses the Justice Court and Guilderland Police Department, is open to the public for assistance with a variety of needs and functions. Other functions such as emergency medical services, fire response, parks and recreation, highway, water and wastewater, animal control, and senior services are handled from a network of distributed locations located throughout the town.



*Guilderland Town Hall*

Figure 8.1: Town Revenues

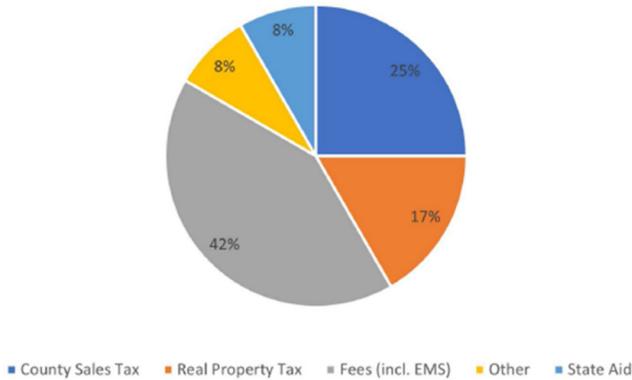
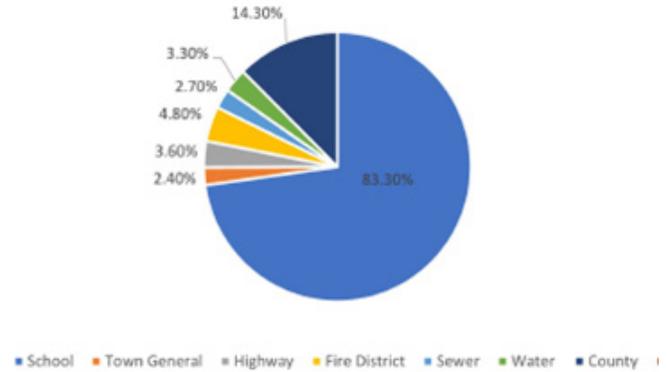


Figure 8.2: Percentage of Taxes Collected on a \$350,000 Assessed Value Home



# Emergency Medical Services

The Town of Guilderland is served by the Guilderland Department of Emergency Medical Services (EMS), which provides prehospital medical care to sick and injured patients and ambulance transportation to area hospitals within an approximately 100-square-mile coverage area. EMS also provides Advanced Life Support First Response to the neighboring Town of Knox. In 2024, Guilderland EMS received 6,727 calls and performed 4,227 transports; both figures represent increases of between 5% and 10% over the previous year. In October of 2024, the first new EMS substation in 40 years was established at the entrance to Western Turnpike Golf Course, on Town-owned property, which eliminated land acquisition expenses for the site. Three existing EMS substations in Guilderland continue to operate at the following locations:

- EMS Station 1 – Western Avenue and Centre Drive in Westmere
- EMS Station 2 – Carman Road in Fort Hunter
- EMS Station 3 – Western Turnpike Golf Course



Town of Guilderland Emergency Services Station 1 building in Westmere and Emergency Services Station 3 at Western Turnpike Golf Course's entrance.

# Senior Services

The Town's Senior Services Department is responsible for planning, advocating, coordinating, and monitoring services and programs that benefit Town residents aged 60 and older. Based on the 2023 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates, approximately 9,694 residents of the Town are over the age of 60. The department acts as

a central hub where older individuals and groups can access a range of services and programs aimed at enhancing their lives, fostering independence, and encouraging active community engagement. With its fleet of four shuttle buses, the department offers senior transportation for older residents for medical appointments and grocery shopping. In

2023, Senior Services accommodated more than 3,000 transportation requests and served more than 800 Town seniors. Other services offered include daily educational, social, and recreational programs, monthly day trips, special events, and outreach to homebound elders. The department also serves as a liaison between the Town and relevant area agencies. Senior Services is a community focal point where older people or groups can participate in a variety of programs that promote independence and community involvement.

## Parks & Recreation

The Town of Guilderland's park system includes numerous well-maintained, multi-use parks such as the large Tawasentha Park, which features a pool, hiking trails, and a Winter Recreation Area. The Parks and Recreation Department manages these facilities, offers a variety of seasonal sports and enrichment programs, and maintains amenities like sports fields and playgrounds. Residents can obtain permits for access to Tawasentha Park and the Winter Recreation Area and participate in activities like cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and summer day camps. The system features several parks including the 200-acre Tawasentha Park, DiCaprio Park (known for soccer and lacrosse fields), Fort Hunter Park, Nott Road Park, and Fred B. Abele Park. The Winter Recreation Area, connected to Tawasentha Park's trails, offering sledding, snow tubing, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing.

The Town Parks & Recreation Department oversees the design, maintenance, beautification, and promotion of the Town's numerous recreational facilities, seasonal programs, and parks. The department offers a wide range of programs and services throughout the year. During the summer, there are Thursday night concerts series that are held at the Guilderland Performing Arts Center in Tawasentha Park. Renovations to the Guilderland Performing Arts Center (GPAC) at Tawasentha Park were completed in time for its 2025 summer concert season. Key renovations to GPAC included tiered audience seating, which was installed to improve viewing of the stage for concert-goers, brick steps were added to make it easier for people to access the hill to watch a concert, and improving the area for food trucks that are now in attendance at GPAC events. Tawasentha Park is also the home of the large outdoor adult exercise facility and a new pool house, with a new sprinkler pad. The Department also manages the Western Turnpike Golf Course (WTGC).

Winter activities include snow-shoeing the Town's Park system, including WTGC, and cross-country skiing on the groomed trails at WTGC and the ungroomed trails in its parks. Tubing and snow-sledding is available at the Winter Recreation Area. Skis and snowshoe rentals are available at the Parks and Recreation Office.

As part of its youth services, the Parks & Recreation Department manages a six-week, half-day enrichment camp at Tawasentha Park each summer for children entering kindergarten through eighth grade. In addition to Day Camp programs, residents can choose over 40 sports camps and 45 enrichment camps. Sports camps include cheer, archery, bowling, football, basketball, lacrosse, field hockey, and strength and conditioning. Swimming lessons are offered as part of Day Camp. Enrichment programs vary across topics of history, cooking, arts-and-craft, music, and science. Parks and Recreation also offers programs during school break weeks and at other times.

The Town recognizes the importance of providing recreational opportunities for youth as part of its commitment to community well-being and development. Youth sports offered include baseball, softball, basketball, soccer, lacrosse, football, cheerleading, and skiing.

The Town of Guilderland expands its park system by investing in new amenities for existing parks like Tawasentha Park and Nott Road Park, adding to their recreational features such as pickleball courts and adult exercise areas. The Town also developed a comprehensive pathway project with UAlbany's Master of Regional Planning program to assess open spaces, identify opportunities for new parkland acquisition, and create multi-use trails that connect neighborhoods to community destinations.



*A baseball diamond at Keenholts Park is used to host youth sports in Guilderland.*

## Police

Law enforcement in the Town is provided by the Police Department, which was established in 1972. The Department's main station is located at Town Hall at 5209 Western Turnpike. The Police Department also maintains a substation located on the first floor of Crossgates Mall. As of 2023, Police Department staffing currently includes 44 sworn officers, including a dedicated Traffic Safety detail, 10 telecommunicators, 3 administrative office staff members, 2 animal services members, and a volunteer Chaplain. The Department has been accredited by the New York State Department of Criminal Justice Services since 2009 and received new accreditation in 2024. The Police Department maintains a dispatch system and has access to microwave communications in the event of Town-wide emergencies that maintains access to a microwave radio network linking the Town system to the Albany County radio core, for seamless communications between the Town and emergency services agencies in neighboring counties.

## Fire



*Guilderland Fire District building at 2303 Western Avenue*

## Code Enforcement

Code enforcement in the Town of Guilderland is carried out by the Town's Building/Zoning Department, whose staff includes fire code enforcement officers and building/zoning inspectors, working under the direction of the Chief Building and Zoning Inspector. The Department also employs three additional administrative staff members. The Department's responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- Building permit applications
- Site plan review applications
- Special use permit applications
- Swimming pool applications
- Unified solar permit applications
- Chicken permit applications
- Vacant property registration
- Fire code inspections

Fire response in the Town of Guilderland is handled by nine separate fire districts, each with responsibility for a given area within the Town. Those fire districts include: McKownville Fire District, Westmere Fire District, Guilderland Fire Protection District, Guilderland Center Fire District, Guilderland Fire District, Fort Hunter Fire District, Elmwood Park Fire District, Altamont Fire District, and the Rotterdam-Princetown Fire District.<sup>21</sup>

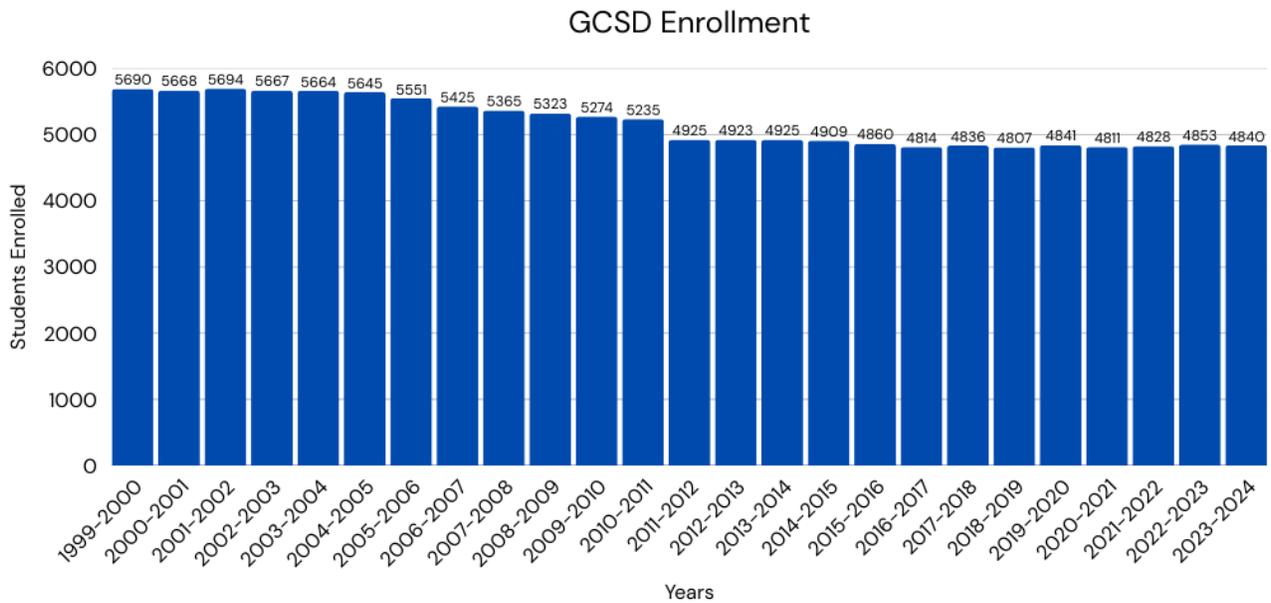
<sup>21</sup> <https://www.townofguilderland.org/town-clerks-office/pages/fire-districts-information>

# Schools

Public education in the Town is provided primarily by Guilderland Central School District. Residents in the northwestern, northeastern, and southwestern corners of town, however, are served by the Schalmont, Mohonasen, and Voorheesville School Districts, respectively.

The Guilderland Central School District currently serves approximately 4,900 students from pre-Kindergarten through grade 12. The district includes five elementary schools: Altamont, Guilderland, Lynnwood, Pine Bush, and Westmere Elementary. The district serves students at higher grade levels at Farnsworth Middle School and Guilderland High School. Figures from the New York State Department of Education show that, during the 2019-2020 school year, the Guilderland Central School District had a total K-12 student enrollment of 4,831. The number of students in the Guilderland CSD has declined somewhat over the preceding decades. Total enrollment stood at 5,046 during the 2011-2012 school year, down from 5,694 a decade earlier (2001-2002).

**Figure 8.3: Guilderland Central School District Enrollment**



Source: Guilderland Central School District

## Libraries

The Guilderland Public Library is located at 2228 Western Avenue, a central location that facilitates the library's role as "Guilderland's Gathering Place." In addition to its print and digital collections, the library provides an array of programming for patrons of all ages, including financial literacy, craft classes, children's storytime, computer literacy, and a notable authors speaker series. The library building was originally constructed in 1992. Substantial renovation in 2020-2021 added 20,000 square feet of available space to the building. The library is currently served by a public bus route, CDTA Route 763, which connects Crossgates Mall to Schenectady, traveling along Western Avenue and Carman Road in Guilderland. The Guilderland Public Library is primarily funded by a local tax levy from the Guilderland Central School District (GCSD), which encompasses residents of Guilderland and parts of other towns. The library also receives additional revenue from other sources, including fees, gifts, grants, and

donations. Residents in the GCSD vote annually on the library's budget and tax levy, a process that falls under New York State's tax cap regulations. As of 2023, the Guilderland Public Library parking lot also hosts the Guilderland Farmers Market on weekends during the summer months.

The Altamont Free Library is a non-profit association library established in 1916, located in the historic Altamont Train Station. It serves the communities of Altamont and Guilderland by providing a diverse collection of materials, including books, movies, and digital resources, as well as programs for all ages. The library also offers computer access and internet service and is a member of the Upper Hudson Library System. The library's mission is to enrich lives, foster literacy and inquiry, and create connections within the community, serving as a welcoming hub for information, culture, education, and recreation.



*Town of Guilderland Public Library on Western Avenue*  
 Source: Guilderland Public Library



*Village of Altamont Free Library*  
 Source: [Village of Altamont Facebook Page](#)

# Boards & Committees

## Town Board

The Town Board acts as the legislative, governing, and policy-making body of the Town. The Town Board approves the budget, votes on appropriations throughout the year, adopts “Local Laws,” and appoints officials to various other boards and committees within the town.

## Planning Board

The Planning Board consists of seven (7) Town Board-appointed members. The Planning Board’s primary responsibility is reviewing development applications for subdivisions and site plans in accordance with the Town of Guilderland Town Code and NYS Town Law. The Planning Board also ensures that each application complies with the regulations implementing the NYS Environmental Quality Review Act.

## Zoning Board of Appeals

The Zoning Board of Appeals consists of five (5) members appointed by the Town Board. The primary function of the Zoning Board of Appeals is to interpret the Town Zoning Code, and hear applications for special use permits, area variances, and use variances with respect to the Town Zoning Code.

## Conservation Advisory Council

Consisting of nine (9) Town Board appointed members, the Conservation Advisory Council guides the local governing boards, planning boards, and zoning board of appeals on issues and concerns relating to the environment.

## Ethics Board

Ethics Board oversees the Town’s adherence to ethical standards as outlined in the Town’s Code of Ethics, ensuring its functions are conducted with integrity. Additionally, the Ethics Board offers guidance to Town officers and employees on matters concerning the Code of Ethics.

## Conservation Easement Review Board

The primary function of the Conservation Easement Review Board is to operate the Conservation Easement Exemption program for the Town of Guilderland, which consists of the review of conservation easement agreement applications. Its purpose is to conserve open space lands, maintain the character of the town, and provide assistance to landowners.

## Traffic Safety Committee

The Traffic Safety Committee collects and reviews concerns and issues and makes recommendations to the Town Board, traffic engineers, or highway department. It is the goal of the Traffic Safety Committee to seek input and address public concern for neighborhood traffic issues. The Traffic Safety Committee also applies for federal grant money to conduct necessary traffic studies or to implement safety measures to address traffic issues.

## Industrial Development Agency

The Industrial Development Agency utilizes the statutory powers set forth under the provisions of the laws of New York State to assist in the enhancement and diversity of the economy of the Town. The Industrial Development Agency acts to facilitate projects within the Town that create, retain, and promote private sector investment.

## Development Planning Committee

The Development Planning Committee consists of representatives of the various Town departments that are involved in facilitating or servicing development projects in the town. The Development Planning Committee facilitates early communication between the Town and developers during the project concept phase with regard to a variety of issues.

## Comprehensive Plan Update Committee

In 2022, the Guilderland Town Board appointed a 9-member Comprehensive Plan Update Committee to assist the Town in reviewing and updating the 2001 Comprehensive Plan to reflect the needs of today and identify a vision for the future.

## Tree Preservation Committee

The Tree Preservation Committee provides guidelines on appropriate plants for the Town's parks and rights-of-ways, and the preparation of a Forestry Plan. The Tree Preservation Committee plays a crucial role in safeguarding the ecological, aesthetic, and cultural value of trees within the Town.

## The American Revolution 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee

This committee was formed to promote the Town's celebration of the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution, and the Battle of the Normanskill which took place in our future Town on August 11, 1777. This battle was directly related to the Battle of Saratoga, the turning point of the war, that occurred in September and October, 1777. The committee is planning a reenactment of the battle, establishing a heritage apple orchard, creating a colonial medicinal garden, and other commemorative events.

# Infrastructure and Public Utilities

The ability of the Town's infrastructure to support the current needs and to accommodate future development is a crucial consideration when planning for the future. Improvements to Guilderland's existing infrastructure occur on an ongoing basis and typically require significant financial resources. The addition of new infrastructure, or expansion of existing infrastructure, can have a dramatic impact on the character and function of the town. Such expansion requires careful attention to the potential for growth-inducing impacts.

## Water

The Town of Guilderland Water District operates a large and complex water system for over 25,000 customers, providing top-quality drinking water from multiple sources, including the Watervliet Reservoir, Town-owned wells, and water from the City of Albany and Town of Rotterdam. The district's Department of Water and Wastewater Management handles water treatment, distribution, and maintenance of the

system, which includes extensive pipe networks and storage tanks. Funding comes from user fees, and the department is focused on ongoing capital improvements, infrastructure maintenance, and ensuring all water quality meets state and local standards.

The Town of Guilderland draws water from different sources: the Watervliet Reservoir and via municipal interconnections with the City of Albany and the Town of Rotterdam's water systems. The Town is actively exploring options to revive use of the three Town-owned wells. In addition to the Town of Guilderland Water Treatment Plant, the Town maintains four storage tanks: Relyea (2.0 million gallons), Westmere (1.0 million gallons), Fort Hunter (1.0 million gallons), and Clearwell (1.0 million gallons). The Town is permitted to use five (5) million gallons of water a day from the Watervliet Reservoir, which is located within the borders of Guilderland, but owned by the City of Watervliet. The Watervliet Reservoir has an impounded area of 620 acres and captures water from a 113-square-mile basin drained by the Normans Kill, Bozen Kill, and Black Creek.

The Town's contract with the City of Albany allows for the transfer of up to 2 MGD of water daily. During 2024, Guilderland's water district also drew approximately 73 million gallons of water from the adjacent Town of Rotterdam, which was slightly higher than the 71,698,000 million gallons transferred to Guilderland from the City of Albany's water system.<sup>22</sup> From May 1 to September 15, the Town Water Department maintains sprinkling regulations, in order to conserve water supply capacity and pressure during the warmest months.

Guilderland Water District billing is based on metered water usage, with rates varying between residential and commercial customers. Bills are sent semi-annually (twice a year) on a rotating schedule. Residential customers pay a base fee plus a rate per 1,000 gallons used, while commercial users also have a base fee and a tiered rate based on consumption. If a water bill is unpaid by the due date, it will be added to the homeowner's next Town & County Property Tax bill, which is sent out in January.

## Sewer

The Town of Guilderland's Sewer District is managed by the Department of Water and Wastewater Management, providing collection and high-level treatment of community wastewater to over 25,000 customers, meeting or exceeding state standards. It serves properties within the district, which is funded through user fees for maintenance and capital improvements. A key rule is that only sanitary waste is allowed in the system, with illegal connections of sump pumps, roof drains, and other non-sewage water being prohibited to prevent increased treatment costs and potential public health hazards.

The Town has two sewer plants: Nott Road Sewer Plant (SPDES Permit NY0022225) and NE Industrial Park Sewer Plant (SPDES Permit NY0022217). Additional DEC-permitted wastewater facilities located within the Guilderland Town boundary include a facility at Crossgates Mall

(SPDES Permit NY0107930), Camp Wildwood (SPDES Permit NY0282472), and Altamont (SPDES Permit NY0031534).<sup>23</sup> Guilderland Town Law Chapter 225, Article II §225-4 requires connection to the public sanitary sewer provided that the public sewer line is within 100 feet of the property line. Where public sanitary sewer service is not available, Section 225-4 of the same Town Code chapter identifies the requirement to connect to a private sewage disposal system that complies with provisions stipulated in the code.

Guilderland Sewer District billing is included in the General Tax Bill, with debt and operations & maintenance (O&M) charges assessed to fund capital investments and routine expenses for the sewer system. This is a self-supporting district, meaning all funds collected go to the sewer district's benefit.

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.townofguilderland.org/department-water-wastewater/pages/annual-quality-water-reports>

<sup>23</sup> <https://gisservices.dec.ny.gov/gis/dil/>

## Stormwater

The Town of Guilderland's stormwater management focuses on complying with federal and state regulations for managing stormwater runoff to protect public health and water quality. This includes managing runoff from construction sites through erosion and sediment controls like silt fences and stabilized construction entrances, and reviewing site development plans to ensure adequate drainage and pollutant control. The town regulates non-stormwater discharges to protect its municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) and promotes green infrastructure practices such as vegetated landscaping in parking areas and the use of green stormwater infrastructure to filter and absorb runoff.

Stormwater runoff is generated from rain and snow melt that falls on impervious surfaces such as parking lots, paved streets, rooftops, and compacted bare soil. When water flows over impervious surfaces it may collect and transport pollutants that are harmful to the environment and drinking water supplies. The increase in runoff generated during such precipitation events is directly related to the increase in impervious surfaces and, therefore, to land development activities that increase impervious surfaces. The Town Highway Department maintains many of the residential stormwater management facilities. Privately owned stormwater management facilities

are maintained by Homeowner's Associations.

Guilderland operates its stormwater system under a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit, which is part of a federally mandated program to control stormwater runoff. For Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4s), the NYSDEC requires inspections of monitoring locations once every five years to support the Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination (IDDE) program. In 2025, the Town of Guilderland has 328 outfall locations that are tested.

The Stormwater Coalition of Albany County includes the Town of Guilderland as a member. The Coalition is made up of ten municipalities, Albany County, and the University of Albany. Each member pays yearly dues and benefits from coalition services. Members work together to carry out Clean Water Act requirements. For inquiries regarding the discharge of water from swimming pools and other water issues needing permits, residents are advised to contact the storm water officer.<sup>24</sup>

Small streams that empty into the Hudson or Mohawk Rivers are protected from pollution by the Coalition. Members must report their progress with reference to past objectives, present objectives, and Best Management Practices (BMPs).

## Other Utilities

The National Grid utility provider supplies electric and gas service to Guilderland homes. Electrical transmission infrastructure limitations in the town and wider region have influenced Town decision-making on the cost-effectiveness of installing solar energy infrastructure at Town-owned sites such as the former landfill. A utility transmission corridor runs essentially north-south through Guilderland to the west of the Watervliet Reservoir.

In 2020, Guilderland began plans to purchase approximately 603 streetlights from National Grid, with the intent to convert them to LED technology, a project supported by a NYSERDA grant and a

collaboration with New Scotland and other towns for maintenance. This initiative culminated in a New York Public Service Commission order on October 13, 2021, authorizing National Grid to sell the approximately 603 streetlights and associated equipment within Guilderland to the Town for \$221,781. The purchase and conversion aimed to reduce energy costs and align with state energy-saving initiatives.

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24 [www.townofguilderland.org/stormwater-management](http://www.townofguilderland.org/stormwater-management)

Internet service is available to Guilderland residents from a variety of private providers including Spectrum, Verizon, T-Mobile 5G Home Internet, Earthlink, ViaSat, HughesNet, Starlink, and others. High speed internet access has increased in importance with developments in remote/hybrid work arrangements, remote schooling during pandemic closures, e-commerce, and the shift to online public information delivery. High speed internet service refers to internet service of at least 100 megabytes per second

(Mbps) download and 10 Mbps upload. Currently, 99.3% of residents in the Town of Guilderland have access to high-speed internet, with multiple providers offering service via fiber, cable, and satellite connections. Fiber and cable connections are widely available and offer some of the fastest speeds in the area. Guilderland's percentage is higher than Albany County (97.8%), but slightly lower than for the City of Albany (99.7%).<sup>25</sup>

## Development

Development in the community is directed by the Town of Guilderland Code, Part II, General Legislation, Chapter 280 Zoning (§280-1 - §280-59) and Chapter 247 Subdivision of Land (§247-1 - §247-33). The Zoning Code was amended in its entirety in 2016. The law addresses the use of property in residential, commercial, industrial, and other areas within the town. The legislation covers, but is not limited to, buildings, signs, lighting, parking, major landscaping, and dimensional requirements. The Zoning Code is administered and enforced by the Building/Zoning Department. All interpretation questions, and petitions for relief, such as area and use variances and special use permits, are addressed by the Zoning Board of Appeals. The Planning Board has jurisdiction over site plan review and subdivision review. The Zoning Code breaks down the land area of Guilderland into the following districts:

The Town of Guilderland's Interactive Mappings System provides information on zoning within the Town and can be viewed in the link below:

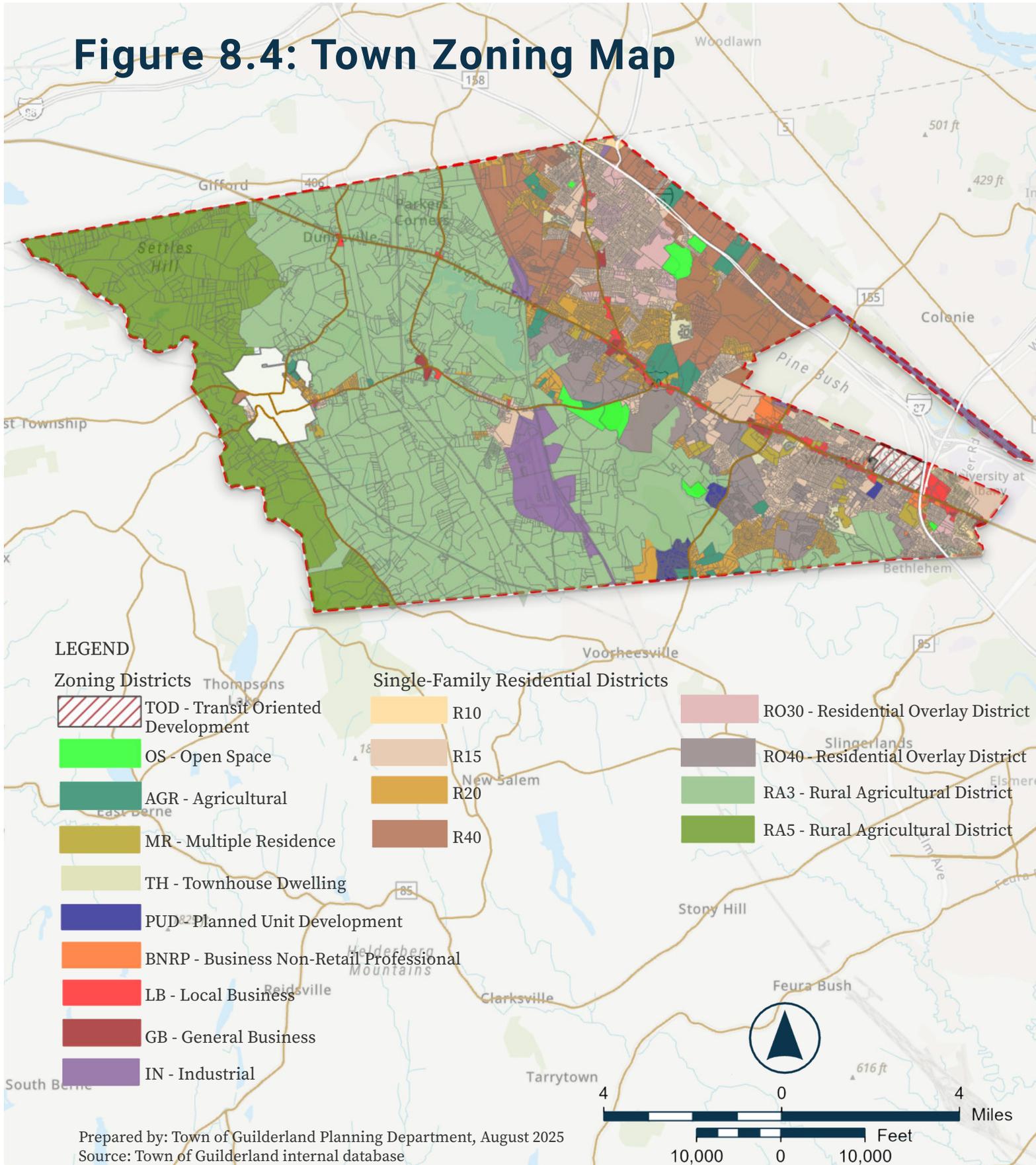
<https://www.townofguilderland.org/398/Town-of-Guilderland-Interactive-Mapping>

Information the Town of Guilderland's zoning districts, such as allowable uses, area, yard and bulk standards can be viewed in Section 280 of Town Zoning Law and viewed in the link below:

<https://ecode360.com/10984536#10984536>

The Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals apply the Town Code and other regulations to land development proposals. The Planning Board is responsible for reviewing various types of land use applications to ensure the orderly development of the Town and performs functions that include subdivision review, site plan review, and advisory roles for special use permits and planned unit development. The Planning Board is guided by the Town's Comprehensive Plan and local ordinances like the Town Zoning Code and subdivision regulations.

# Figure 8.4: Town Zoning Map



Disclaimer: This map is prepared by the Town of Guilderland Planning Department and provided for illustrative purposes only. The Town of Guilderland expressly disclaims any liability for errors, omissions or inaccuracies in its content. In addition, some of the data may be compiled from third-party sources, whose accuracy cannot be confirmed. The Town of Guilderland disclaims all liability for any losses or damages, directly or otherwise, which may result from the use, operation or modification of this data by any user. Each user is responsible for determining the suitability of this information for the users intended purpose, and acknowledges and accepts all inherent limitations of the information provided.

# Recommendations

## **G-1. Update the Town Zoning to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan Update.**

Per New York State Town Law §272-A, “all Town land use regulations must be in accordance with a Comprehensive Plan”. Thus, ensuring the Town Zoning Code is consistent with the contents of this Comprehensive Plan update is required by the State. The Town Zoning Code should reflect the recommendations outlined in this plan, including, but not limited to, promoting a range of accessible housing options, encouraging redevelopment of

vacant properties, preserving open space, and ensuring development that is compatible with Town character, particularly in rural Guilderland. This recommendation is supported by recommendations in Section 6: Parks, Recreation, Open Space & Historic Resources (E6, E7, E8, & E15), Section 7: Transportation & Mobility (F12), and Section 9: Implementation (H1).

## **G-2. Continue to provide all areas of the community with a high level of fire, police, and emergency medical response services, while also adapting to the challenges of climate change.**

Providing a high level of fire, police, and emergency medical response services is crucial for ensuring the safety and well-being of Guilderland residents. These services safeguard lives and property by promptly addressing incidents such as fires, criminal activity, and medical emergencies. An effective emergency response system contributes to community resilience, fostering a sense of security and trust. Therefore, the Town should continue to evaluate

coverage areas, response times, and staffing levels of these departments so that the necessary fiscal allocations can be made to ensure reliable service while addressing the challenge of climate change. This includes enhancing training for emergency personnel to prepare for extreme weather events, such as floods and heatwaves, which can strain resources and impact response times.

## **G-3. Continue to coordinate with the Town of Rotterdam and the City of Albany to ensure sustainable agreements for the delivery of high-quality drinking water.**

Interconnections with the municipal water infrastructure in Rotterdam and Albany support Guilderland’s water treatment capacity and boost Guilderland’s resilience in the event of service disruptions elsewhere in the system. Ongoing coordination with interconnected municipalities will be vital to ensure that both fiscal and water resources are used in an efficient manner and that all applicable water quality standards continue to be met.

**G-4. Continue to coordinate with the City of Watervliet for the effective management of the Watervliet Reservoir's water supply, water quality, and recreational assets.**

The Watervliet Reservoir is a vital resource for both the City of Watervliet and the Town of Guilderland. To address current concerns, such as removal of invasive water chestnut and climate change that impacts reservoir water capacity and water chemistry, and to safeguard the Reservoir against future contamination, the Town of Guilderland should continue to coordinate closely with City of Watervliet officials and departments. It is recommended that the two municipalities collaborate with relevant Albany County and New York State agencies to develop an action plan to address mitigation and communication efforts for the threat of emerging contaminants.

Further, it is recommended that the two municipalities coordinate closely on issues related to permissible recreation activities on or near the Reservoir. Compatible passive recreation activities near the Reservoir, such as bird watching blinds, picnicking areas, and walking trails, emerged as frequently cited desired amenities in public engagement during the Comprehensive Plan Update process. This recommendation is supported by a recommendation in Section 4: Environment, Climate Change & Resiliency (C2).

The Town of Guilderland is currently coordinating with the City of Watervliet, Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDRPC), and a group of stakeholders from Albany County and Schenectady County. The CDRPC is assisting the Town of Guilderland in its participation in New York State's Drinking Water Source Protection Program (DWSP2), providing technical support to create a Source Water Protection Plan (SWPP) to identify and safeguard the town's public drinking water sources, including potential contaminants and risk management strategies. This collaborative effort aims to update source water maps, assess risks, and develop implementation strategies using the DWSP2 framework, with no cost to Guilderland for the planning phase. The DWSP2 is a state-led initiative by NYSDEC and NYSDOH to help municipalities develop lasting protection plans for their drinking water sources.

The Town of Guilderland has been an active participant with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and the City of Watervliet in the City's relicensing of the Normans Kill Hydroelectric Project with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). This involves consultation, environmental reviews, and state-level permitting. The Normans Kill Project is a hydroelectric power facility located on the Normans Kill in the Town of Guilderland. It was built at an existing water supply dam that impounds the Watervliet Reservoir, which serves as the sole source of drinking water for the City of Watervliet and a major source for the Town of Guilderland. Because the project involves a hydroelectric facility, it falls under FERC's licensing jurisdiction. The relicensing process for a hydroelectric project includes a multi-stage, years-long review involving the applicant (the City of Watervliet), federal agencies, and state agencies such as the NYSDEC. The City of Watervliet is the dam owner and the applicant for the FERC license. All FERC licensees must plan and develop public recreational facilities, ensure adequate access, and coordinate with relevant agencies and organizations. The recreational plan developed as part of the FERC process included developing a new trailhead, trails, and fishing pier on land owned by the City of Watervliet off of Hurst Road.

**G-5. Coordinate with the NY State Department of Transportation and other stakeholders to address persistent flooding events on State owned roads, particularly in the Westmere and Mckownville areas.**

Western Avenue/US-20 is Guilderland's "Main Street," and it provides transportation connections to the City of Albany and beyond that are essential to Guilderland residents. Extreme precipitation events have increased in frequency in recent years, resulting in flooded roadway conditions. Given the NYSDOT's jurisdiction over Western Avenue, it is recommended that the Town coordinate closely and expeditiously with DOT, McKownville residents, and business owners, and other stakeholders to develop stormwater mitigation solutions for this area of town that align with the Town's environmental and resiliency goals. This recommendation is supported by a

recommendation in Section 4: Environment, Climate Change & Resiliency (C3).

The Town is currently searching for funding to prepare a drainage study to address the flooding issue at Western Avenue and Fuller Road. The study has an estimated cost of \$500,000. To help defray some of the cost, the Guilderland Industrial Development Agency at its meeting on October 22, 2024, voted to contribute \$50,000 toward funding the study, while State Senator Patricia Fahy is working to secure \$300,000 in grant funding from New York State.

**G-6. Continue to ensure that a high percentage of Guilderland households and businesses have access to high-speed internet connection.**

The value of high-speed internet connectivity was highlighted by business and school closures in 2020 and 2021, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The internet became an essential link to education, news, and commerce. Ensuring universal access is an important step not only for equity in education, but also to stimulate home-based business opportunities and to keep residents informed of important Town initiatives. NY State's ConnectALL initiative, established in 2022, represents the largest-ever investment in New York's digital infrastructure. ConnectALL includes a municipal infrastructure program which provides substantial funding to municipalities and other applicants to

construct last mile, open access, public broadband infrastructure. Working with community stakeholders such as school districts and the Chamber of Commerce, the Town should pursue available State funds to ensure equitable, reliable access to high-speed internet service in all areas of Guilderland, regardless of population density. The NYS Department of Public Service initiated a series of public outreach activities to determine the degree to which broadband was available in the State; public input from these efforts may be useful in determining service gaps in Guilderland.

**G-7. Coordinate Town functions to advance Guilderland's participation in the Climate Smart Communities program.**

The Town of Guilderland is a registered Climate Smart Community in the State of New York, as of 2019. Through public engagement activities associated with the Comprehensive Plan Update effort, Guilderland residents expressed strong support for additional Town actions to advance environmental sustainability and resiliency. Within the Climate Smart Community framework, local governments can complete a combination of specified actions to earn bronze- or silver-level certification status through the

program. These certification pathways offered by the State through the Climate Smart Communities program offer a useful guide as the Town evaluates ways to increase energy efficiency and support a healthy environment, so it is recommended that the Town coordinate its activities to align with specified Climate Smart Communities priority actions. This recommendation is supported by recommendations in Section 2: Agriculture (A6) and Section 4: Environment, Climate Change & Resiliency (C1 & C3).

**G-8. Coordinate with the Conservation Easement Review Board, the Conservation Advisory Committee, the Town Assessor, Albany County, and other stakeholders to expand participation in Guilderland's Conservation Easement Exemption Program.**

Conservation easements are an important tool, complementing parkland stewardship and environmental preservation efforts of not-for-profit organizations, to help the Town of Guilderland achieve its goal of conserving 30% of its land mass. In order to increase participation in the Conservation Easement Exemption program, coordination will be necessary with a host of stakeholders, potentially including school district officials, Albany County taxing authorities, local

boards and committees, and interested private landowners. This recommendation is supported by recommendations in Section 2: Agriculture (A4, A5, & A8), Section 4: Environment, Climate Change & Resiliency (C3 & C5), and Section 6: Parks, Recreation, Open Space & Historic Resources (E6).

**G-9. Continue collaboration and coordination with the Village of Altamont on maintenance and management of shared resources.**

The Village of Altamont is located entirely within the Town of Guilderland. Although it is a separate municipal entity with its own elected leadership, the Village provides commercial offerings to Guilderland residents and shares many common concerns such as viewshed preservation and the maintenance of rural character. The Altamont Fairgrounds straddle the Village's boundary with the Town of Guilderland, representing an important shared resource whose utilization to host fairs, festivals, concerts, and other events benefit both municipalities.

Town on topics such as infrastructure development, pedestrian pathways and trail connections. This partnership can enhance the quality of life for residents by aligning transportation and infrastructure projects with the needs of both municipalities.

Given the Village's location within the Town, there are ample opportunities for continued collaboration among the Village Board of Trustees, the Rural Guilderland Referral Committee, and the

By adopting a cohesive approach to land use and development, the Town and Village can optimize resource allocation and reduce duplication of efforts. Ongoing coordination between Town and Village leadership will be important to advance goals such as multi-use trail connectivity, preservation of open space, and other concerns.

# 00 IMPLEMENTATION

## Overview

This Comprehensive Plan Update is the outcome of considerable effort on the part of the Town of Guilderland, the Comprehensive Plan Update Committee members, Town staff, stakeholders, and engaged residents. An active, ongoing implementation process will be necessary for the plan to have a durable, positive impact on the community. Working with a range of public, private, and not-for-profit implementation partners, the Town can accomplish the

recommended actions and continue striving toward its ultimate vision, as outlined through the plan update process. Following the adoption of this Comprehensive Plan Update by the Town Board, the first step in the implementation process is to evaluate and update if necessary, the Town's land use regulations for consistency with the plan.

## Implementation Recommendations

The following recommendations are priority actions to be completed immediately following the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan Update.

### **H-1. Establish a committee and mechanism to guide the plan implementation.**

NYS Town Law §272-A provides for the periodic review of the Comprehensive Plan to gauge progress toward the completion of the Plan's enumerated goals and recommendations. The Five-Year Action Plan could serve as the mechanism for the Town to address the periodic review of the Plan.

For a Comprehensive Plan to be effective in achieving the Town vision and goals, it must be implemented. Implementation will be incremental and will be dependent on a number of factors, some which may be out of the Town's control. To guide the implementation effort while recognizing some recommendations may take longer to implement than others, it is recommended that a Five-Year Action Plan be prepared with annual updates and progress report to the Town Board. The Five-Year Action Plan should include the specific steps and actions needed to implement each recommendation as well as target timeframe for initiation and completion.

The Town Planning Department will have a significant role in the preparation of the Five-Year Action Plan. To assist the Planning Department, the Town Board should appoint a committee to monitor and assess implementation efforts, with regular meetings. The appointed committee of Town officials, and community members can evaluate progress, make necessary adjustments, and address any emerging challenges or opportunities in real time. The committee will help to ensure that the Town stays aligned with its Comprehensive Plan's recommendations.

**H-2. Review, evaluate, and amend the Town’s zoning ordinances and subdivision regulations to ensure consistency with this Comprehensive Plan.**

A Comprehensive Plan provides the foundation for local zoning laws. A zoning diagnostic (also called a regulatory analysis) should be performed to identify inconsistencies between the local zoning code and the newly adopted Comprehensive Plan. The zoning diagnostic should also identify potential solutions to resolve any such inconsistencies. New York State’s zoning enabling statutes require

that zoning laws be adopted in accordance with a comprehensive plan. Specifically, §272-A states “All town land use regulations must be in accordance with a Comprehensive Plan adopted pursuant to this section”.

**H-3. Continue to provide support or training opportunities for Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals members to keep up to date on current planning and zoning practices and laws and meet the minimum training requirements, pursuant to NY State Town Law.**

The New York Department of State’s Division of Local Government Services provides training and technical assistance to local governments and boards. Training on land use planning, regulation and procedure, and community development is offered both through on-site and regional workshop opportunities.

## Prioritization of Recommended Actions

The Action Plan Table that follows is a tool to be utilized by the Town to guide the creation of the recommended Five-Year Action Plan and identification of the necessary steps to achieve each recommendation. The purpose is to assist Town leadership and Town staff in prioritizing the use of the Town’s human and fiscal resources.

The table is organized by recommendation with a column for timeframe to implement (short-, medium- or long-term) as well as an identification of the recommendation lead and potential partners to assist in implementation.

Potential funding sources are also listed to support implementation. A ‘needed action and status’ column has been included to facilitate tracking and review of implementation progress related to each recommendation. The information within the Action Plan can be translated into an annual report to the Town Board on the actions and strategic steps that have been taken toward accomplishing the Comprehensive Plan’s goals.



AGRICULTURE												
Recommended Action		Timeframe to Initiate (Years)			Potential Lead and Partners	Potential Funding/ Technical Resources	Needed Action and Status					
		0-2	2-5	5-10			Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6
A7.	Create opportunities for local retail/farm service businesses on US-20 near the Princetown municipal line in a manner that is consistent with rural design guidelines and the character of the surrounding area.				Guilderland Town Board, Guilderland Chamber of Commerce, Agricultural Business Owners							
A8.	Consider implementing a flexible, voluntary Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program to preserve farmland and open space.				Conservation Advisory Council, Conservation Easement Review Board, Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy, Guilderland Town Board							
A9.	Partner with the Albany County and Schenectady County Soil and Water Conservation District to assist local agricultural operations in preventing adverse impacts on Guilderland watersheds from agricultural runoff.				Albany County and Schenectady County Soil and Water Conservation District, Guilderland Town Board							
A10.	Update zoning code to align with the vision and goals of the Comprehensive Plan				Guilderland Town Board, Guilderland Planning Board, Town Residents							

BUSINESS, EMPLOYMENT & FISCAL RESOURCES													
Recommended Action		Timeframe to Initiate (Years)			Potential Lead and Partners	Potential Funding/ Technical Resources	Needed Action and Status						
		0-2	2-5	5-10			Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6	Step 7
B1.	Further develop existing design guidelines, with illustrative examples, to supplement zoning regulations and articulate expectations for commercial development in the Town.				Guilderland Town Board, Guilderland Planning Board, Guilderland Chamber of Commerce, Guilderland Industrial Development Agency (IDA)								
B2.	Encourage the redevelopment and adaptive reuse of existing sites in Guilderland to improve the attractiveness of commercial corridors, grow the local business base, and make efficient use of existing resources.				Guilderland Industrial Development Agency (IDA), Guilderland Planning Department, Guilderland Chamber of Commerce	EPA Brownfields Grants							
B3.	Develop design guidelines for signage with illustrative examples.				Guilderland Town Board, Guilderland Planning Board								
B4.	Develop economic development strategies to attract well-paying, job-creating employers who will be able to provide a diversity of employment opportunities for the Guilderland community.				Guilderland Industrial Development Agency (IDA), Guilderland Chamber of Commerce, Guilderland Town Board								
B5.	Develop resources to facilitate greater participation of small business owners and entrepreneurs in the local economy.				Guilderland Chamber of Commerce, Guilderland Industrial Development Agency (IDA)								
B6.	Facilitate business roundtables with Town leaders and staff to discuss specific issues of interest, such as economic development, transportation improvements, and infrastructure projects.				Guilderland Chamber of Commerce, Guilderland IDA, Guilderland Town Board								
B7.	Identify and establish the desired mix and scale of businesses in a manner that is sensitive to the neighborhood setting and cultural diversity of the Town. This includes supporting home-based businesses.				Guilderland Town Board, Guilderland Chamber of Commerce, Guilderland IDA								

BUSINESS, EMPLOYMENT & FISCAL RESOURCES													
Recommended Action		Timeframe to Initiate (Years)			Potential Lead and Partners	Potential Funding/ Technical Resources	Needed Action and Status						
		0-2	2-5	5-10			Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6	Step 7
B8.	Seek partnerships with higher learning institutions including the University at Albany, the Albany Nanotech Complex, and other entities to promote economic development opportunities in Guilderland.				UAlbany, Albany NanoTech Complex, Guilderland IDA, Chamber of Commerce, Guilderland Town Board								
B9.	Consider the development of a new village-like planned community that incorporates a mix of land uses – commercial, residential, recreation/ open space – that allows for walkability, environmental sustainability, and high quality of life for residents.				Guilderland Planning Department, Guilderland Water/Wastewater Department, Guilderland Town Board, Guilderland IDA								
B10.	Pursue partnerships and incentives available through federal, state, county, and local organizations that support both the existing and future business community and strengthen Guilderland’s economic future.				Guilderland IDA, Albany County Department of Economic Development, Conservation and Planning, Guilderland Town Board, Guilderland Chamber of Commerce								
B11.	Update the Commercial Zone Districts in Town to be consistent with current development trends.				Guilderland Town Board, Guilderland Planning Board								

ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE & RESILIENCY													
Recommended Action		Timeframe to Initiate (Years)			Potential Lead and Partners	Potential Funding/ Technical Resources	Needed Action and Status						
		0-2	2-5	5-10			Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6	Step 7
C1.	Build on Guilderland’s designation as a registered Climate Smart Community (CSC) in the State of New York by completing the criteria for bronze-level CSC certification by 2030.				NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (CSC program administrator), Guilderland Town Board, Tree Preservation Committee	NYS DEC Climate Smart Communities Grant Program							
C2.	Maintain and improve water quality in the Watervliet Reservoir and its tributaries by partnering with the City of Watervliet and communities within the Reservoir’s watershed.				City of Watervliet, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, municipalities within the Watervliet Reservoir watershed, Guilderland Town Board	NYS DEC Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP) Program, NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation Water Infrastructure Improvement (WIIA) Program							
C3.	Encourage and incentivize climate resiliency through Town practices, procedures, rules, and regulations wherever practicable.				Conservation Advisory Council, Tree Preservation Committee	NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation Asset Management program.							
C4.	Reduce Guilderland’s collective contribution to climate change by decreasing community-wide greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions with forward-thinking environmental, transportation, and energy planning.				Guilderland Town Board	Municipal Zero-Emission Vehicle (ZEV) Program, Climate Pollution Reduction Grants Program (CPRG) through EPA,							
C5.	Prioritize the preservation of natural resources and animal habitat in Guilderland to promote healthy and functioning ecosystems that mitigate costly and harmful conditions such as invasive species, flooding, and soil erosion.				Conservation Advisory Council, Tree Preservation Committee, Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission, Historic Altamont, Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy	NYS DEC Hudson River Estuary Program and Community Forest Conservation Grant Program							

ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE & RESILIENCY												
Recommended Action		Timeframe to Initiate (Years)			Potential Lead and Partners	Potential Funding/ Technical Resources	Needed Action and Status					
		0-2	2-5	5-10			Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6
C6.	Establish drainage districts as permitted in NYS Town Law Article 12 and NYS Town Law Section 202 to better manage water flows, mitigate flooding impacts and protect property values by facilitating effective drainage.				Guilderland Town Board, Guilderland Planning Department, Guilderland Highway Department							
C7.	Establish Best Management Practices for maintenance of town owned and privately owned stormwater management facilities.				Guilderland Town Board, Guilderland Planning Department, Guilderland Highway Department							

NEIGHBORHOODS & HOUSING													
Recommended Action		Timeframe to Initiate (Years)			Potential Lead and Partners	Potential Funding/ Technical Resources	Needed Action and Status						
		0-2	2-5	5-10			Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6	Step 7
D1.	Explore tools and approaches to support the Town's Pro-Housing Designation.				Guilderland Town Board, Guilderland Planning Department, NYS Homes and Community Renewal	NYS HCR Pro-Housing Program, NY Forward, DRI, Regional Council Capital Fund, Market NY, NY Main Street							
D2.	Update building design guidelines to promote sustainable green building practices that advance the goals of energy efficiency, water conservation, and the use of building materials which reduce harmful environmental impacts.				Guilderland Water/Wastewater Department, Guilderland Planning Department, Guilderland Town Board, Guilderland Building Department, Stakeholders	NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation Green Innovation Grant Program, NYSERDA Home Energy Efficiency Program							
D3.	To maximize the Town's investments in public water and sewer, transportation, and pedestrian connections, expand opportunities for housing types other than single-family in appropriate districts, provided there are design standards to ensure new housing is compatible with existing neighborhoods.				Guilderland Planning Department, Guilderland Town Board, Guilderland Water/Wastewater Department, Guilderland Highway Department, Guilderland Building Department, Stakeholders								
D4.	Consider updating zoning regulations to require major subdivisions (5 lots or greater) and large developments to incorporate affordable housing options such as smaller lots, smaller houses, and dwelling units for households earning 80% to 120% of area median income.				Guilderland Planning Department, Guilderland Town Board, Stakeholders								
D5.	Offer a density bonus of additional dwelling units when affordable housing, workforce housing, or senior housing developments are proposed.				Guilderland Planning Department, Guilderland Town Board, Stakeholders								
D6.	Proactively develop policies for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) in the Town - either attached or detached - as an opportunity for alternative housing options in single-family residential neighborhoods while preserving the character of these neighborhoods.				Guilderland Planning Department, NYS Homes and Community Renewal, Guilderland Town Board, Stakeholders	NYS HCR Plus One ADU Program grants							

NEIGHBORHOODS & HOUSING													
Recommended Action		Timeframe to Initiate (Years)			Potential Lead and Partners	Potential Funding/ Technical Resources	Needed Action and Status						
		0-2	2-5	5-10			Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6	Step 7
D7.	Consider Updating the definition of manufactured housing units and adding a definition of modular building to Town Zoning Law to better reflect current NYS Department of State regulations and the current state of the housing industry.				Guilderland Planning Department, Guilderland Town Board, Guilderland Building Department								
D8.	Amend zoning regulations to address if/where the development of tiny homes should be permissible within the Town of Guilderland.				Guilderland Town Board, Guilderland Building Department, Guilderland Planning Board, Guilderland Planning Department								
D9.	Partner with an appropriate housing agency, such as the Albany County Rural Housing Alliance, Habitat for Humanity Capital District to facilitate the rehabilitation of older homes and rental units occupied by low- and moderate-income households.				Albany County Rural Housing Alliance, Habitat for Humanity, Guilderland Town Board, Guilderland Building Department								
D10.	Partner with existing non-profit organizations (e.g., Albany County Land Bank) and/or establish a Town housing trust fund to address critical housing needs and support a variety of affordable housing activities.				Albany County Land Bank, Guilderland Town Board								
D11.	Add an inclusionary zoning requirement for affordable residential units in Planned Unit Developments (PUD).				Guilderland Town Board, Guilderland Building Department, Guilderland Planning Board, Guilderland Planning Department								
D12.	Consider using density restrictions rather than minimum lot sizes in the RA3 and RA5 District along with the provision for density bonuses that incentivize affordable housing types, open space protection, and other desired amenities.				Guilderland Planning Department, Guilderland Town Board, Guilderland Planning Board								



PARKS, RECREATION, OPEN SPACE & HISTORIC RESOURCES													
Recommended Action		Timeframe to Initiate (Years)			Potential Lead and Partners	Potential Funding/ Technical Resources	Needed Action and Status						
		0-2	2-5	5-10			Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6	Step 7
E1.	Maintain and upgrade the Town's existing recreational facilities and programs to include public spaces designed to be inclusive for people of all abilities.				Guilderland Parks & Recreation Department, Guilderland Town Board, Stakeholders	Environmental Protection Fund Grant Program for Parks, Preservation and Heritage (EPF)							
E2.	Initiate formalized opportunities for residents to provide input on the Town's changing recreational needs, in light of a changing demographic profile in Guilderland and prevailing national trends.				Guilderland Parks & Recreation Department, Guilderland Town Board, Stakeholders								
E3.	Formalize regular coordination between the Town of Guilderland Parks & Recreation Department and representatives of the University at Albany, Guilderland Public Library, the Guilderland YMCA, school districts, and other local organizations, in order to provide a well-publicized range of year-round recreational opportunities, especially for youth and older Town residents.				Guilderland Parks & Recreation Department, UAlbany, Guilderland YMCA, Guilderland Public Library, school districts, Stakeholders								
E4.	Identify potentially underutilized Town-owned resources and explore the creation of new recreational opportunities for Town residents, particularly in the Westmere area of Guilderland.				Guilderland Parks & Recreation Department, Guilderland Town Board, Stakeholders								
E5.	Develop a network of multi-use trails in Guilderland to link neighborhoods, public transportation nodes, Town Park/open space areas, commercial and entertainment centers, and regional trail systems.				Guilderland Traffic Safety Committee, Guilderland Planning Department, Guilderland Parks & Recreation Department, NYS Department of Transportation (DOT), Guilderland Town Board, Guilderland Highway Department, CDTA, Albany County Department of Public Works	Recreational Trails Program through the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP)							

PARKS, RECREATION, OPEN SPACE & HISTORIC RESOURCES													
Recommended Action		Timeframe to Initiate (Years)			Potential Lead and Partners	Potential Funding/ Technical Resources	Needed Action and Status						
		0-2	2-5	5-10			Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6	Step 7
E6.	Update the definitions of open space in Town zoning, subdivision regulations, and the Conservation Easement Agreement Exemption so that the definitions are consistent and accurately reflect the varieties and purposes of open space.				Guilderland Planning Department, Guilderland Town Board, Conservation Advisory Council								
E7.	Update the residential cluster/conservation development and open space/parkland section of the Town code.				Guilderland Planning Department, Guilderland Town Board, Guilderland Parks and Recreation Department								
E8.	Consider forming a Conservation Overlay District to protect steep slopes along the Helderberg Escarpment and the Settles Hill areas of town from non-farm development.				Guilderland Town Board, Tree Preservation Committee								
E9.	Incorporate the preservation of Helderberg Escarpment viewsheds into subdivision, site plan, and special use permit reviews.				Guilderland Town Board, Tree Preservation Committee								
E10.	Create an action plan for the identification, voluntary acquisition, and management of properties that comprise a comprehensive open space and natural resource preservation system.				Conservation Advisory Council, Guilderland Planning Department, Guilderland Town Board, Tree Preservation Committee								
E11.	The Town Board should adopt a Local Law codifying the land use application referral and review process by the Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission Technical Committee.				Guilderland Town Board								
E12.	Evaluate the adequacy of existing historic sites in Guilderland to support access and programming for residents - e.g., recitals, small-scale performances, and other cultural/educational events - factoring in the needs of youth, older residents, and those with disabilities.				Guilderland Historical Society/Historian	Technical Assistance Grants from The New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) and the Preservation League; NYSCA Preserve New York Program							

PARKS, RECREATION, OPEN SPACE & HISTORIC RESOURCES												
Recommended Action		Timeframe to Initiate (Years)			Potential Lead and Partners	Potential Funding/ Technical Resources	Needed Action and Status					
		0-2	2-5	5-10			Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6
E13.	Promote the use of suitable historic sites as community gathering places for festivals, special observances, and educational opportunities.				Guilderland Historical Society/Historian							
E14.	Pursue available funding sources and develop strategies for the sustained financial support of the Town’s historical cultural sites and programs.				Guilderland Historical Society/Historian	Environmental Protection Fund Grants Program for Parks, Preservation and Heritage (EPF)						
E15.	Partner with higher education institutions in the region to foster engagement with historic and/or archaeological sites in Guilderland.				Guilderland Historical Society/Historian, UAlbany, SUNY Schenectady, Union College, Town Historian							
E16.	Ensure that land use regulations and incentives serve to support and protect historic/archaeologically sensitive areas in the Town.				Guilderland Planning Department, Guilderland Town Board							
E17.	Cultivate greater public awareness of Guilderland’s historic sites and resources, celebrating past contributions from a broad range of individuals and groups.				Guilderland Historical Society/Historian							
E18.	Consider rezoning Town parks, open space, and similar types of holdings by the Albany Pine Bush Preserve, Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy, New York State, and other groups to a new zoning classification such as “Parkland.”				Guilderland Town Board							
E19.	Establish a program for acquiring key properties in Town to preserve as open space by prioritizing land that offers significant ecological, recreational, scenic, and community benefits. It will be funded through a dedicated mechanism and guided by clear, publicly vetted criteria.				Guilderland Town Board, Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission, Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy, The Nature Conservancy, Save the Pine Bush, Historic Altamont							





TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY													
Recommended Action		Timeframe to Initiate (Years)			Potential Lead and Partners	Potential Funding/ Technical Resources	Needed Action and Status						
		0-2	2-5	5-10			Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6	Step 7
F7.	Consider the capabilities and characteristics of electric-powered bicycles as a factor in the design of bicycle infrastructure in Guilderland.				Traffic Safety Committee, Guilderland Planning Department, Guilderland Highway Department, Guilderland Parks and Recreation Department, Guilderland Town Board								
F8.	Partner with regional employers and CDTA to increase the use and the reach of public transportation for daily commuting, including potential expansion of the Universal Access bus pass system in Guilderland.				CDTA, Chamber of Commerce, Guilderland IDA, Guilderland Town Board								
F9.	Promote the use of mobility services such as CDTA Flex on demand, CDPHP Cycle bike share, ride-hailing services and electric car share.				CDTA								
F10.	Pursue funding from the Capital Region Transportation Council (CRTC), NYS DOT, and the NY Thruway Authority to address identified transportation-related issues in Guilderland.				CRTC, NYS DOT, NY Thruway, Capital District Thruway communities	BridgeNY Program, Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program							
F11.	In partnership with NYS DOT and the Guilderland School District, explore options to improve vehicular traffic flow to Guilderland public schools, including options for a secondary access route to Farnsworth Middle School for buses and/or emergency vehicles.				Guilderland School District, NYS DOT, Albany County Department of Public Works, Guilderland Highway Department								
F12.	Review and update Town’s standards and regulations for Guilderland roadways.				Guilderland Planning Department, Guilderland Highway Department, Guilderland Emergency Medical Services, Guilderland Fire Districts, Guilderland Town Board								

GOVERNANCE												
Recommended Action		Timeframe to Initiate (Years)			Potential Lead and Partners	Potential Funding/ Technical Resources	Needed Action and Status					
		0-2	2-5	5-10			Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6
G1.	Update the Town Zoning to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan Update.				Guilderland Town Board, Guilderland Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Guilderland Planning Department, Stakeholders							
G2.	Continue to provide all areas of the community with a high level of fire, police, and emergency medical response services, while also adapting to the challenges of climate change				Guilderland Emergency Medical Services, Guilderland Police Department, fire districts							
G3.	Continue to coordinate with the Town of Rotterdam and the City of Albany to ensure sustainable agreements for the delivery of high-quality drinking water.				Town of Rotterdam Department of Public Works, City of Albany Water Department, Guilderland Water/Wasterwater Department, Guilderland Town Board							
G4.	Continue to coordinate with the City of Watervliet for the effective management of the Watervliet Reservoir's water supply, water quality, and recreational assets.				City of Watervliet Water and Sewer Department, Guilderland Water/Wastewater Department, CDRPC, Guilderland Town Board							
G5.	Coordinate with the NY State Department of Transportation and other stakeholders to address persistent flooding events on Western Avenue in the McKownville area of Guilderland.				NYS DOT, Guilderland Highway Department, NYS DEC, McKownville Improvement Association, City of Albany, Stuyvesant Plaza, Crossgates Mall, Albany Nanotech, NYS Thruway Authority							
G6.	Continue to ensure that a high percentage of Guilderland households and businesses have access to high-speed internet connection.				NYS Department of Public Service							

GOVERNANCE												
Recommended Action		Timeframe to Initiate (Years)			Potential Lead and Partners	Potential Funding/ Technical Resources	Needed Action and Status					
		0-2	2-5	5-10			Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6
G7.	Coordinate Town functions to advance Guilderland's participation in the Climate Smart Communities program.				Guilderland Planning Department, NYS DEC, Guilderland Town Board							
G8.	Coordinate with the Conservation Easement Review Board, the Conservation Advisory Council, the Town Assessor, Albany County and other stakeholders to expand participation in Guilderland's Conservation Easement Exemption Program.				Conservation Advisory Council, Conservation Easement Review Board, School Districts							
G9.	Continue collaboration and coordination with the Village of Altamont on maintenance and management of shared resources.				Village of Altamont, Guilderland Town Board, Guilderland Water/Wastewater Department, Guilderland Highway Department, Guilderland Planning Department							

IMPLEMENTATION												
Recommended Action		Timeframe to Initiate (Years)			Potential Lead and Partners	Potential Funding/ Technical Resources	Needed Action and Status					
		0-2	2-5	5-10			Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6
H1.	Establish a committee and mechanism to guide the plan.				Guilderland Town Board							
H2.	Review, evaluate, and amend the Town's zoning ordinances and subdivision regulations to ensure consistency with this Comprehensive Plan.				Guilderland Town Board, Guilderland Planning Board, Guilderland Zoning Board of Appeals, Guilderland Planning Department, Guilderland Building Department, Stakeholders							
H3.	Continue to provide support or training opportunities for Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals members to keep up to date on current planning and zoning practices and laws and meet the minimum training requirements, pursuant to NY State Town Law.				NYS Department of State Division of Local Government Services, CDRPC							

# 10 PRIORITIES MAP

## Overview

During the Comprehensive Plan Update process, input from the public and the CPUC emphasized preservation of open space and redevelopment of vacant or abandoned commercial areas as key Town priorities. Existing land uses such as agricultural activity, limited industrial zones, and commercial corridors were confirmed as largely appropriate for Guilderland’s future direction. However, a number of key priorities related to multi-modal transportation, environmental conservation, viewshed preservation, and more were identified through iterative public engagement and CPUC deliberations.

The Guilderland Priorities Map on the proceeding page provides a graphic representation of those recommended actions that emerged from CPUC deliberations and public engagement, distributed across the landscape of the Town.

**DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS DISCUSSION**
▶▶▶

## Town Character Factors

Light commercial/retail in areas other than Western Ave

Desire for more recreation and community gathering spaces

Redevelopment/adaptive reuse of properties

Increase walkability with sidewalks and multi-use trails

Develop building, landscaping, and signage guidelines

Preservation of viewsheds – Escarpment & rural corridors

Preserve agricultural land and open space

Improve traffic conditions, esp. Western Ave + schools

Promote street tree planting; town arborist

A presentation slide from CPUC Meeting #9 depicts a number of recommendations related to Town character.



*Town residents attend an Open House and Visioning Workshop event at Guilderland Town Hall as part of the public engagement activities during the Comprehensive Plan Update.*

## Gateways

As a town made up of numerous hamlets and neighborhoods, it may not always be clear to residents and visitors when they are within Guilderland's boundaries. Gateway signage offers an opportunity to build place awareness and offer welcome, or welcome home, to travelers on Guilderland's roads. Signage installed in a traffic roundabout on Carman Road and Lydius Street in 2023 provides just such a welcome to those arriving from Schenectady/Rotterdam. Given how important Western Avenue/US-20 is to Guilderland,

identified by many stakeholders as the Town's de facto Main Street, there is an opportunity to enhance signage at both the southern boundary with the City of Albany and the northern boundary with the Town of Princetown. Rather than simply being informative, gateway signage holds the potential to build a sense of belonging and community togetherness. Positioning gateway signage in such a way as to allow photographs was recommended via public input.

## Mixed-Use Neighborhood

Throughout the Comprehensive Plan Update process, several priorities emerged as repeated themes: The desire for a wide array of housing options, an interest in sustainable/green building, and a perceived need to distribute commercial activity more widely throughout the town, to address underserved areas. The CPUC supported investigating the feasibility of creating a new mixed-use neighborhood, sustainably constructed in a

manner that is compatible with its surroundings. Given existing commercial offerings in the eastern parts of town (Westmere and Guilderland Hamlet) and in the Village of Altamont in the west, the CPUC identified the northern area of Guilderland, near the Princetown boundary, as an area lacking in commercial offerings.

## Improved School Access

In response to public input about vehicle access at both Farnsworth Middle School and Guilderland High School, the CPUC recommended seeking appropriate agency partnerships and funding to improve access at these two public school complexes.

## Proposed Town Center

Guilderland experienced periods of elevated population growth during past decades when car-centric development patterns prevailed. The result, as members of the CPUC and the public have noted, is the lack of a distinct center in Guilderland; a place for Town residents to meet and gather. Exploring the feasibility of a Town Center development, comprising a mix of retail, residential, entertainment, and other services – was identified as a key future priority, to begin to focus the civic energies of the community. In keeping with the goal of using existing infrastructure efficiently, the area around the intersection of Western Avenue and Winding Brook Drive was identified as a potentially suitable

location for a Town Center, with available water, sewer, and transportation infrastructure to support the mix of envisioned uses. Additionally, with uses such as the YMCA, Guilderland Public Library, Guilderland Elementary School, along with residential community's and health care related facilities, this area of Guilderland has the potential to be developed into a Town Center.

## Redevelopment of Vacant/Underutilized Sites

Since Western Avenue carries much of the vehicular traffic in Guilderland, vacant or dilapidated sites along that corridor have a negative influence on the Town character and economy. Finding creative, productive solutions to redevelopment and/or brownfield remediation at Western Avenue sites between Foundry Road and Rapp Road is, therefore, a priority with aesthetic, economic, and environmental benefits.

### Stormwater Improvements

Through the Comprehensive Plan Update process, public input identified frequent flooding as both a transportation and livability concern in the McKownville area of Guilderland. With the climate changes discussed elsewhere in this Plan, the importance of resilient transportation and water infrastructure is of paramount importance, particularly as the Transit-Oriented Development District, anchored by Crossgates Mall, attracts an increasing number of visitors to the town for shopping, services, and residential opportunities.

### Pedestrian Infrastructure

Both Crossgates Mall and Stuyvesant Plaza generate substantial amounts of vehicular traffic along Western Avenue in eastern Guilderland. Public input during the Comprehensive Plan Update process indicated a need for improved pedestrian amenities (safe crossing areas, signage, street furniture, attractive plantings) along this corridor to facilitate greater walkability. Providing these pedestrian amenities can also serve to activate the Transit Oriented Development District around Crossgates Mall, allowing those who arrive in Guilderland via public transit to more easily visit businesses along Western Avenue and allowing those who park at Crossgates or Stuyvesant Plaza to patronize other Western Avenue shops and services without the need to drive to a nearby parking lot.

### Thruway Access

Elsewhere in New York State, in Buffalo, for instance, the New York Thruway accommodates regional traffic, ameliorating pressure on surface roads. At present, tolls and limited access points on the Thruway in the Capital District contribute to high traffic demand on Western Avenue/US-20, especially at peak traffic times. Lower Level of Service (LOS) on Western Avenue negatively impacts daily life and commuting for Guilderland residents, per input submitted by both Guilderland residents and members of the CPUC. Working with neighboring Capital District municipalities and relevant regional/State transportation agencies, it is recommended that Guilderland initiate a process to expand the use of the Thruway for intra-regional travel, thus lessening the burden on Western Avenue.

### Mixed-Use/Light Commercial

Public input on Guilderland land use identified a desire for creating additional light commercial/retail offerings along Carman Road/NY-146 between Western Avenue and the New York Thruway. Mixed land uses were recommended in order to incorporate housing and expand the range of residential offerings in Town.

## Escarpment/Settles Hill Viewshed

The Helderberg Escarpment is a defining feature of Guilderland's geography. Together with the Settles Hill area in the northwestern corner of the Town, these hillside areas contribute to important viewsheds and comprise important environmental resources such as tree cover. Creating a conservation overlay district to preserve important environmental and scenic resources from non-agricultural development emerged as a point of emphasis in public input through the Comprehensive Plan Update process.

## Riparian Corridor Preservation

Riparian corridors comprise important vegetation and tree cover along and beside waterways. Such vegetation serves to stabilize stream banks, filter potential pollutants, and maintain important habitat for animals. Protecting the riparian corridors along the Normans Kill and its tributaries emerged as a high priority in both public and Committee input throughout the Comprehensive Plan Update process.

## Black Creek Marsh Overlay

The wetland complex in Guilderland's southeastern corner, fed by Black Creek, provides critical ecosystem services such as stormwater management and habitat for aquatic and avian species. Creating an overlay zone in future land use regulations is intended to safeguard this vital town resource from incompatible development.

## Albany Pine Bush Ecosystem Overlay

The Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission (APBPC) has determined that about 2000 acres need to be added to the Preserve and more than half of the remaining privately owned Pine Bush ecosystem is in Guilderland. The Town of Guilderland should seek to add acreage to the Preserve.

## Water Quality at Watervliet Reservoir

Watervliet Reservoir, as a collaboratively managed environmental resource, is a vital Town asset that provides drinking water, scenic viewsheds, and passive recreation opportunities to the people of Guilderland. The Reservoir also provides important animal habitat, although this and other Reservoir functions are negatively impacted by invasive species, such as water chestnut. Input throughout the Comprehensive Plan Update process placed a strong emphasis on ensuring the enduring viability of the Reservoir as a source of clean drinking water, working with relevant partners to create contingency plans for potential contaminants or other threats.

## Prioritize Open Space & Agriculture

The low-density rural development patterns in western Guilderland lend that part of town with features (e.g., open space, attractive viewsheds, agriculture) that emerged as some of the most valued assets through public engagement activities. Prioritizing the preservation of these characteristics through appropriate land use regulations and working to codify the protection of open space through the use of conservation easements and other tools will remain a key focus for the Town in the future.

# The Future Land Use Plan

## Purpose of the Future Land Use Plan

A future land use map serves as a visual guide for a community's long-term vision, providing a blueprint for how and where different types of land uses—residential, commercial, industrial, and open space—are intended to develop over time. It aligns with the goals of the comprehensive plan, guiding future zoning decisions, protecting natural resources, and ensuring coordinated, sustainable growth by showing desired locations for various land uses based on community needs and resources.

The future land use map translates the broader goals of the comprehensive plan into a tangible, graphical representation of the community's desired future, showing what the community wants

to become. The map provides guidance for elected and appointed officials when making decisions about future development, zoning changes, and public resource allocation. It acts as a key tool for implementing the comprehensive plan, as local zoning must be consistent with the land use map's directives. It helps identify areas for protecting sensitive environmental features like wetlands, agricultural lands, and forests from destructive development. By showing the planned locations for different types of development, it helps prevent uncoordinated and potentially costly growth by ensuring compatible development patterns.

## Future Land Use Plan - What it is Not

A future land use map is NOT a legally binding document, it does not establish current or future zoning, and it is not the same as an official map or a zoning map. Instead, the future land use map serves as a community's visual guide to desired development, providing a generalized pattern and framework that influences and directs future zoning changes to align with the goals and policies of the broader comprehensive plan.

Unlike a zoning map, a future land use map does not have the force of law, nor does it legally dictate

what can or cannot be built on a property. A future land use map shows general areas for potential development, while a zoning map designates specific boundaries and rules for permitted uses and intensities within those areas. It is not a precise prediction of what will actually happen, but rather an expression of the community's vision for its future development. A future land use map does not change existing zoning, and property owners can continue to use their land according to its current zoning status after the map's adoption.

## Future Land Use Plan Classifications

### **Helderberg Escarpment Scenic Viewshed Area (HEV)**

The future land use for the Helderberg Escarpment Scenic Viewshed Area focuses on preservation and minimal, thoughtfully designed development to protect scenic and natural resources. The primary goal is to preserve the "signature" views of and from the Helderberg Escarpment. This is achieved by limiting new development, especially on ridgelines and in areas that would impact significant views. Strategies emphasize land protection through means such as conservation easements and the transfer of development rights. These tools protect land from subdivision while allowing traditional uses, such as farming, to continue.

### **Bozenkill Conservation Corridor (BCC)**

Centered on protecting and expanding a contiguous natural area for conservation, passive recreation, and wildlife habitat. The effort ensures the area remains undeveloped and focused on environmental protection. A major success occurred in late 2024 with the acquisition of 225 acres off Bond Road, bringing the corridor's total protected area to nearly 700 acres.

### **Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission Study Area (PB)**

Grow from its current 3,400 acres to a complete 5,380-acre preserve by acquiring or protecting additional properties from willing landowners, primarily in key areas for ecosystem health and continuity. The goal is to create a large, functional ecosystem of inland pitch pine-scrub oak barrens, supporting unique wildlife and providing opportunities for public recreation like hiking and biking. Land management techniques, including prescribed fire and mechanical treatments, will continue to restore and maintain these unique ecological communities.

### **Settles Hill Scenic Viewshed Area (SHV)**

Emphasizes the preservation of its rural character, natural beauty, and open spaces. Development is intended to be low-intensity and environmentally conscious, primarily through updating zoning regulations and guiding growth to respect the area's sensitive features

### **Black Creek Marsh Wildlife Management Area (BCM)**

Maintaining and enhancing its current functions as a wildlife habitat and a site for wildlife-dependent recreational activities like hunting, trapping, fishing, and hiking. The primary goal will be to preserve its diverse wetland and upland habitats, which support a wide array of amphibians, reptiles, and other wildlife. Future actions, guided by habitat management plans, will focus on protecting natural features, controlling invasive species if present, and providing access for public enjoyment.

### **Rural, Agriculture & Natural Resources (RAN)**

These regulations designate areas for long-term preservation as predominantly undeveloped rural landscapes. Key objectives include maintaining low population density and an open character, protecting vital agricultural and timber resources, and conserving critical water resources, wildlife habitats, and scenic vistas.

## Historic Preservation Area (HPA)

This land use classification seeks to preserve, protect, and enhance districts, buildings, structures, sites, and objects that are significant to the community's history, architecture, archeology, and culture. This designation is applied to areas that contribute to the community's distinctive character and heritage. Ensure that growth, development, and change respect the important historical, architectural, and environmental characteristics of the area.

## Campus Institutional (CI)

Under the Campus Institutional land use designation, large-scale institutions such as colleges and large medical complexes are identified. These campuses are typically major sources of employment in the area. Where appropriate, multi-modal transportation connections should be established to connect these institutions with adjacent nodes, corridors, and surrounding neighborhoods.

## Industrial (IN)

The site is intended for industrial operations, which include the manufacturing and assembly of goods, as well as warehousing and large-scale bulk storage.

## Civic Use (CU)

Uses such as schools, libraries or government facilities.

## Parks-Green Space (PGS)

This classification includes parks, open spaces and trails.

## Corridor Mixed Use (CMU)

Transportation corridors are key thoroughfares that connect communities. These corridors are planned to support multiple transportation modes and are framed by a mix of compatible buildings. Land use along these routes features a blend of residential, retail, and commercial properties, accommodating both vertical and horizontal density. Higher-density development, including taller buildings, is typically located closest to the corridor and gradually transitions to a lower density and height near existing residential areas. Appropriate buffers should be used to protect adjacent neighborhoods.

## Regional Mixed Use (RMU)

Areas designed for high-density development that integrates a variety of residential, commercial, and institutional uses to serve a broad population. These developments are typically located in strategic, well-connected regional centers and often near major transportation hubs. The goal is to create vibrant, walkable communities that reduce reliance on automobiles and create a central destination for people to live, work, and shop.

## Hamlet Mixed Use (HMU)

This area features a dynamic mix of residential and commercial spaces, designed to promote walkability and encourage the use of public transportation. Common mixed-use buildings integrate various functions and sizes to create a vibrant, pedestrian-oriented environment.

## **Mixed Residential (MR)**

This classification is designated for mixed residential use, allowing for the integration of single-family, two-family, three-family, accessory dwelling units, and multi-family housing. Future development is encouraged to incorporate a balanced variety of housing types to provide diverse residential options. To ensure consistency with existing neighborhoods, new construction must adhere to design guidelines that specify appropriate scale, architecture, and transition areas at the border of established residential communities.

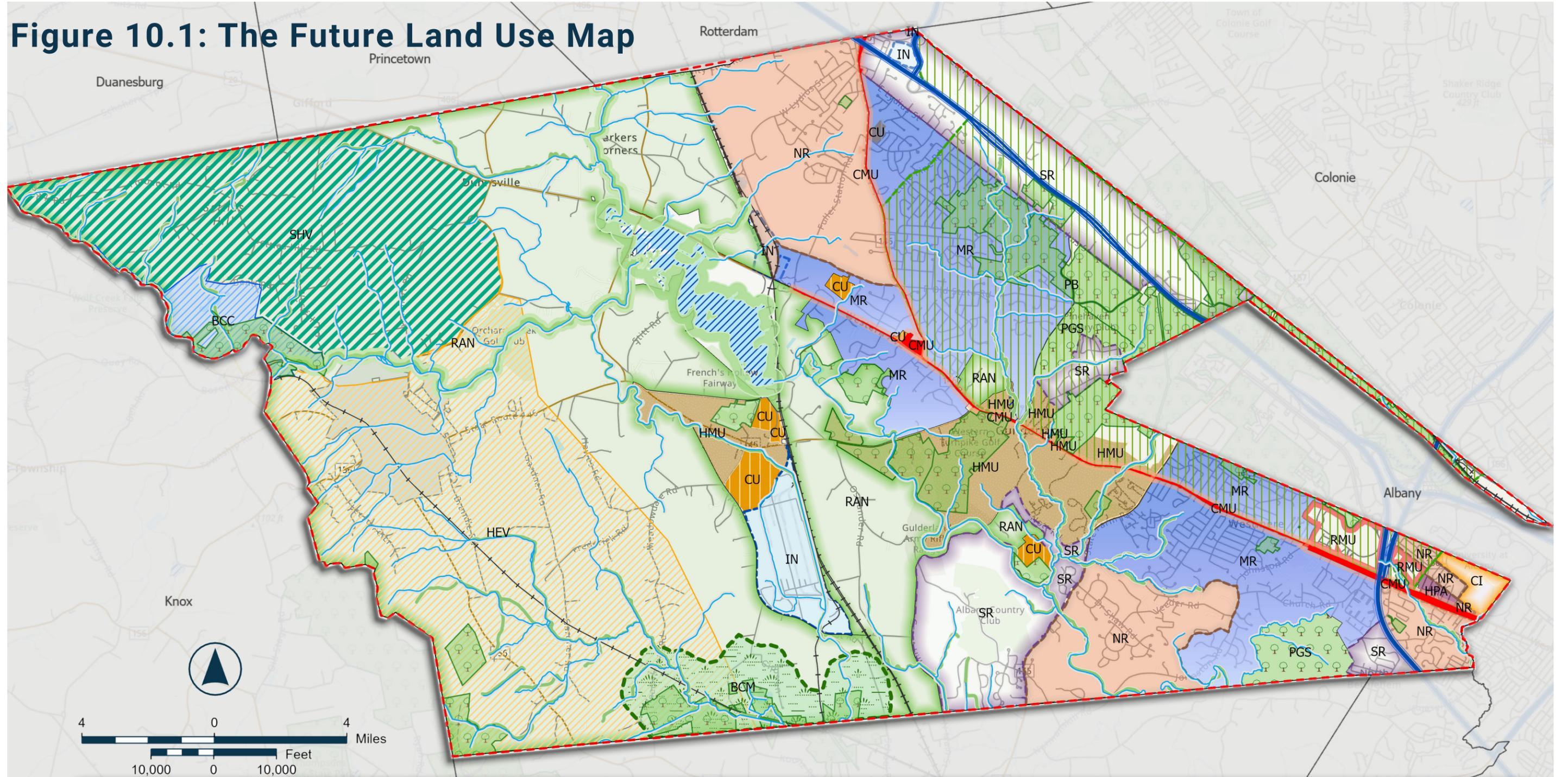
## **Neighborhood Residential (NR)**

The predominant land uses within this zone are single-family residential dwellings, including those with accessory apartments, and two-family dwellings. Three-family dwellings and low-scale multi-family buildings are not characteristic of the area but may be permitted, provided they adhere to specific design guidelines ensuring they are compatible in size and design with the surrounding residential uses.

## **Suburban Residential (SR)**

This land-use designation is characterized by low-density, single-family residential properties, typically featuring larger lot sizes and a lack of sidewalks on many streets. The zone may also permit complementary uses, such as community recreation facilities, schools, and places of worship.

# Figure 10.1: The Future Land Use Map



	Helderberg Escarpment Scenic Viewshed Area (HEV)		Settles Hill Scenic Viewshed Area (SHV)		Industrial (IN)		Regional Mixed Use (RMU)		Suburban Residential (SR)
	Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission Study Area (PB)		Rural, Agriculture & Natural Resources (RAN)		Civic Use (CU)		Hamlet Mixed Use (HMU)		Mixed Residential (MR)
	Black Creek Marsh Wildlife Management Area (BCM)		Historic Preservation Area (HPA)		Parks -Green Space (PGS)		Neighborhood Residential (NR)		
	Bozenkill Conservation Corridor (BCC)		Campus Institutional (CI)		Corridor Mixed Use (CMU)				

