

Comprehensive Plan

Town of Germantown, NY



May 8, 2018

Prepared by the Town of Germantown Comprehensive Plan Committee

Prepared with technical assistance from: Planit Main Street, Inc.

Adopted by the Town Board on May 8, 2018



Preface

The Town of Germantown has long recognized that community planning is an ongoing process. In 2011, the Town Board adopted a Comprehensive Plan (written in 2007), which was an update of its 1989 Master Plan. The 2011 Comprehensive Plan recommended additional actions, plans and detailed studies to pursue the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan. It also recommended periodic updating of the Town's Comprehensive Plan. "A comprehensive Plan is not a static entity, but a flexible document that provides the opportunity for a continuous process of evaluation of progress over time and as change occurs. The Town of Germantown should assess and update its Comprehensive Plan every five years to assure its continued effectiveness in the future." 2011 Comprehensive Plan.

In September 2016, the Town Board appointed a new Comprehensive Plan Committee (CPC) to guide the public participation process and undertake an update of the Town's 2011 Comprehensive Plan. This 2018 update of the Town of Germantown's Comprehensive Plan is not a new departure. Rather it incorporates and builds upon the Action Strategies set forth in the 1989 and 2011 Plans. Therefore, it should not be viewed as a change of direction but, rather, as a refinement of the course already established.



Acknowledgements

The 2016-2017 Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee acknowledges the extraordinary work of the 2007 Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee in creating the Town's 2011 Comp Plan.

Germantown Town Board 2017

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Germantown Town Board 2018

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Hudson River Valley Greenway

“Funded in Part by a Grant from the Hudson River Valley Greenway.”



Acronyms

CDBG: Community Development Block Grant

Micro-enterprises: have up to 10 employees

Small-scale enterprises: have up to 50 employees

Medium-sized enterprises: have up to 250 employees

SWOT: Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats

SWPPP: Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan



Priority Actions

Chapter 11.0 – Action Strategies includes a summary of the policy recommendations included in this 2018 Comprehensive Plan. When developing the Comprehensive Plan there was a realization that environmental constraints, such as soil conditions and limited groundwater resources, could prevent the Town from achieving goals related to business development or clustering housing developments to preserve open space and farmland. There was also an understanding that growth along the NYS Route 9G Corridor would likely shape the character of the community in years ahead and without design guidelines in place to shape this growth Germantown could lose its unique community identity. With these concerns in mind, the following Priority Actions are recommended to be taken by the Town Board upon the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan.

1. Pursue funding through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program or other State programs to expand the sewer district consistent with the land use recommendations of this Plan.
2. Look for water resources that could support a future public water supply system.
3. Develop a pipeline of projects needed to further Plan objectives and aggressively pursue funding through the New York State Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) process.
4. Seek State and Federal funding to expand the sidewalk system in the Germantown hamlet center (notably from Palatine Park to Main Street).
5. Develop a Corridor Enhancement Plan for the NYS Route 9G Corridor to shape future development so that it enhances the character of the community.
6. Ensure the Town's Design Guidelines (contained in Article VII – Additional Development Standards of the Zoning and Subdivision Law) are followed when existing buildings are renovated or new buildings constructed within the expanded Hamlet Mixed-Use Zoning District from the traditional center to Hover Avenue [<http://germantownny.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Adopted-Germantown-Zoning-and-Subdivision-Law.pdf>].
7. Develop Design Guidelines to assist the Planning Board in reviewing projects within the Town's Waterfront Scenic Overlay District.
8. Create a Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan (LWRP) for the Town of Germantown.
9. Assign the Business and Economic Development Committee with the task of securing grant funding to conduct a feasibility study to assess the likelihood of attracting medical/mental healthcare providers and supportive services to Germantown.



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1.0 Introduction and Purpose of Plan

Planning Process

In September 2016, the process of updating Germantown's Comprehensive Plan was initiated as the Town Board came to realize that refinements to its Comprehensive Plan were necessary to preserve the traditional aspects of life in Germantown, while allowing for managed growth.

The Town Board formed a new Comprehensive Plan Committee, which immediately began planning for the public participation process and collecting data necessary to update the Comprehensive Plan. The Committee members quickly reached consensus on a public participation process consisting of monthly meetings at Town Hall, a public comment period during each meeting, a public Visioning Session and a Comprehensive Plan Survey using Survey Monkey. A Comprehensive Plan Review webpage was also added to the Town's website at <http://www.germantownny.org/community/comp-plan-review/> to keep the public informed.

In November 2016, the Committee kicked off the public participation process with a Community Vision Session, which gave the people of Germantown the opportunity to identify issues they felt should be addressed in the update of the Plan. Over 100 people turned out to participate in a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis, to express their thoughts and opinions about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats currently bearing on the Town and to offer their ideas for future solutions and initiatives.

Then, in January 2017, a second public forum was held where participants were asked to identify specific strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (listed in the first SWOT Analysis) they felt should be prioritized in the update of the Comprehensive Plan. Nearly 100 participants attended the second forum. Exceptional participation in these events verified the interest of townspeople in the project, and strong agreement on many topics occurred among the Town's diverse population.

The Committee used the findings from the SWOT Analysis and Comp Plan Survey to help it focus on the Comprehensive Plan update. However, the Committee also reached out to the Town Board, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals and the Local Waterfront Revitalization Committee to share maps/data and get their insights on the issues, which needed to be addressed in the update of the Comprehensive Plan. Throughout the planning process, the Committee held its meetings at Town Hall and provided a public comment period at each to afford residents an opportunity to provide input on the Comprehensive Plan update.

The Germantown Comprehensive Plan of 2011 identified many of the same concerns the present Committee has heard. But times have changed, new issues have arisen (e.g., national retailer interest, solar energy systems, and new demand for accommodations to serve regional wedding venues) and an updated Comprehensive Plan must address the Town's needs today, as well as its continuing issues that are likely to affect the Town in the future.



This 2018 update of the Town of Germantown Comprehensive Plan is not a new departure. Rather it incorporates and builds upon the Action Strategies set forth in the 1989 and 2011 Plans. Therefore, it should not be viewed as a change of direction but, rather, as a refinement of the course already established.

Plan Purpose

A comprehensive plan is a public document that belongs to the entire community. It is a statement of a community's goals and a conceptual road map for how to achieve them. The Town of Germantown Comprehensive Plan establishes a sound foundation to serve as a reliable guide to Town leaders and decision makers in discharging their responsibilities as stewards for the Town. As a framework for decisions and actions that will affect the public, this Comprehensive Plan reflects the expressed needs, desires and will of the Town's collective majority. Consistent use of the plan will assure that change, when necessary, occurs in ways that are orderly and objective, that conserve irreplaceable resources and that consider the consequences of present actions on future generations of citizens.

The reasons for adopting a comprehensive plan are many. It is the legal basis for a community's land-use regulations, which must, by law, be "in accordance" with the plan. As implemented in a town's zoning code, a comprehensive plan and the values and priorities it articulates must be recognized and considered by all local, county, state and federal agencies and other organizations and institutions as to their plans and actions that impact upon the town. Because it describes a town in detail and lays out detailed recommendations for its future, a comprehensive plan also allows a community to more effectively market and attract the kinds of development it prefers and to compete successfully for grants, loans and other kinds of public and private assistance for desired projects. It can be used to promote regional cooperation with nearby communities with similar goals and objectives and to seek common solutions to common problems.

The Town Board and the Comprehensive Plan Committee jointly agree that nothing in this Comprehensive Plan is intended to prevent commercial development in areas where it is zoned currently. The Town Board and the Comprehensive Plan Committee jointly agree that a comprehensive plan is a guidance document to be used to draft an update to existing Zoning Law and is not an alternative authoritative source for interpreting Zoning Law.

Keeping the Plan Up-To-Date

A comprehensive plan is not a static entity but a flexible document that provides the opportunity for a continuous process of evaluation of progress over time and as change occurs. The Town of Germantown should assess and update its comprehensive plan every 5-7 years to assure its continued effectiveness in the future.

This Plan further recommends the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals prepare an annual summary of any issues or concerns they have identified with the Town's Comprehensive Plan or land use regulations so such issues can be addressed in a more timely manner.



2.0 Central Findings

“Let’s keep our wonderful, quiet, rural town just that.”

Central Findings

The single most important factor in determining a town’s character is the uses to which it devotes the land within its borders. As time passes, the interests, concerns and wishes of townspeople change, shape and reshape the look of the land and the uses made of it. Germantown is no exception.



Earlier generations may have taken for granted that Germantown was a rural community, but its current citizens have become acutely aware of the need to take steps to preserve and enhance the Town’s traditional character while meeting the challenge of changing times. The growth pressure in the Town is the result of a growing regional economy and proximity to the New York metropolitan area, which will continue to draw second homeowners who are seeking a bucolic setting for their weekend getaway. Several new businesses were created in response to second homeowner demand along with new job opportunities. Second homeowners also strengthen the local tax base. Germantown’s challenge and planning vision is to accommodate new growth while retaining its unique heritage and preserving the Town’s character and quality of life.

The Town’s unique character is defined, in part, by its natural resources, built environment and population. With respect to natural resources, scenic vistas of the Hudson River and Catskill Mountains help to form the dramatic backdrop to Germantown’s landscape. Throughout the Town, one can still catch glimpses of Germantown’s agricultural heritage through its historic farm buildings, which dot the landscape. A few of these structures are part of active farm operations, but many stand neglected. While some farm buildings have been converted to other uses, countless others will be lost without a concerted effort to retain them.

The Town’s character is also defined by its hamlet centers including the Germantown hamlet, which provides a compact and energizing mix of land uses; its business center is aesthetically pleasing and conveniently human scaled; its unique shops and eateries, along with historic buildings, invite walking; its inn attracts patrons from the surrounding region; and the central school is a center for many community activities. The Germantown hamlet stands in contrast to the surrounding countryside yet is visually harmonious with it. However, commercial development at the corner of Main Street and NYS Route 9G stands in stark contrast to the rural character of the Town, pointing the need to follow the Design Guidelines (contained in Article VII – Additional Development Standards of the Zoning and Subdivision Law) to ensure that new commercial development respects the unique rural character of Germantown.

The Town is also fortunate to have large open spaces (e.g. Palatine Park, Cheviot Park, Lasher Park, Roe-Jan Park, and 143-acre KEEP Conservation Foundation preserve), working farms, and sweeping views of the Hudson River and Catskills Mountains, which provide a scenic backdrop to the built environment – helping to retain the rural character of Germantown. However, without sound planning for the future, these assets could be lost to development.



The planning vision for the Town of Germantown is to allow for growth in a manner that reflects the best qualities of the Town's built environment, while maintaining a high quality of life by protecting natural and heritage resources, ensuring the right-to-farm and efforts to keep agricultural lands in production; providing for economic, employment and housing opportunities, providing a full range of community services and facilities, and protecting the community against negative environmental impacts resulting from new development and/or natural disasters.

In statements made at the community Vision Sessions, in responses to the Comp Plan Survey, and in numerous meetings, e-mails and conversations, the people of Germantown have clearly said what kind of future they want for their Town. Their values and priorities may be summarized as follows:

- 1) Maintain the rural character of Germantown.
- 2) Preserve Germantown's natural resources.
- 3) Encourage controlled business and residential development, in a manner that respects community character.
- 4) Promote efficient and responsive local government.
- 5) Secure State and federal funding to help implement recommendations of this Plan.

2.1 Maintain the rural character of Germantown.

In terms of square miles, Germantown is the second smallest town in Columbia County with a land area of 13.9 square miles, of which 12.1 square miles is land and 1.8 square miles is water. The Town's population density of 149 persons per square mile falls within New York State's definition of "rural" as encompassing 150 residents or less per square mile. Viewing the Town from its state, county and town roads reveals a landscape and townscape of an undeniably rural nature. Large open fields and woods surround widely scattered homes. There are working farms and no large apartment or condominium developments, big-box retail stores or hotel developments. Even the Germantown hamlet core, with its post office, few businesses, Central House hotel, and denser housing has the feel of a rural center; Germantown residents "come in from the country" to its small "downtown" area. Along State Route 9G, Germantown's major north-south highway, there are more homes than commercial enterprises, and always present to the west of the highway are the Hudson River and, beyond it, the Catskill Mountains, natural features of great beauty and importance to Germantown's history and character.

The 2017 SWOT Analysis revealed the three greatest "strengths" of Germantown were its Main Street small business community center, rural small town character, and its viewshed. Participants in the SWOT Analysis also identified the character of development, overdevelopment and impairment of the viewshed to be the greatest "threats" facing the community. Recognizing these indications of Germantowners' determination to give direction to their Town, the Comprehensive Plan Committee has considered its primary task the recommending of ways to protect and preserve, in the context of present and future changes, Germantown's rural character.



2.2 Preserve Germantown's natural resources.

Germantown is rich in open fields, rolling hills, wetlands, forests, streams and lowlands. For hundreds of years, these natural features and their soils supported the Town's principal industry – farming [orchards, vineyards, pastures, fields in garden and silage crops supplied the local population and maintained the local economy]. In the second half of the twentieth century, however, farming activities began to decrease as the Town became more and more a residential community. But there are still large farms in Germantown, and in recent years there has been an upsurge of activity in specialty farming that takes advantage of increasing consumer interest in unprocessed and locally produced foods. This Plan supports efforts by working farms to participate in the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets administered Farmland Protection Implementation Grant (FPIG) program that offers state funding to Purchase Development Rights (PDR) from farmers. It also recommends networking with local land trusts including Scenic Hudson and the Columbia Land Conservancy to protect open space. Preserving viable agricultural land with a conservation easement most often prohibits/limits non-farm development, but would allow for agricultural development on the land where development rights are purchased (i.e., agriculture is a commercial use by definition; e.g., allowing for the expansion or conversion of farm operations may result in more agricultural structures such as barns, greenhouses, etc., to be built on the easement area). The Ag & Markets FPIG program is an effective means of supporting working farms, which still forms the backdrop of Germantown's rural landscape.

But the varied landscapes of Germantown, rich as they are, overlie a subsurface geology that is remarkably poor in one important resource – water. A recent study by the New York Rural Water Association has revealed that there may be an unconsolidated aquifer underlying the Town near the mouth of the Roeliff Jansen Kill as it enters the Hudson River. There are no other known aquifers underlying the Town. Residents have long relied on individual wells, more productive in some places than in others, for their water supply, and it is clear the only source for those wells is groundwater. Geologic formations suggest a possible aquifer in northern Germantown, but its distance from the village center would make it, if it exists, of little practical use as the source of a public water system, if one were ever proposed. This lack of a deep water supply to the Town, along with the vulnerability of its groundwater to contamination because of its closeness to the surface of the land, will impose serious constraints on future residential and commercial developments. Protecting its existing water supply must be a key element in any regulations that the Town adopts to preserve its natural resources.

2.3 Encourage controlled business and residential development.

Participants in the Community Vision Sessions chose “Main Street small businesses community center,” as Germantown's most important strength followed by rural small town character. Managing growth to strengthen community character was identified by participants as the Town's most important opportunity for the future. The two short blocks along Main Street from the post office to Church Avenue in Germantown constitute the historic hamlet center and have traditionally been – and should continue to be – the principal site of the Town's retail and service businesses. The Town Board has expanded the Hamlet Mixed Use Zoning District east of the traditional center to Hover Avenue. This area of the hamlet is comprised primarily of single-family homes with no provision of sidewalks.



The Hamlet Mixed Use (HMU) district was extended to encompass lands from the traditional hamlet center to Hover Avenue. While this extension may expand opportunities for commercial and mixed use development, more careful consideration must be given to developing a long-term plan for accommodating vehicular parking and pedestrian walkways. This Plan recommends the Design Guidelines of Article VII – Additional Development Standards are followed to ensure the character of new mixed use development or the redevelopment of existing buildings within an extended Hamlet Mixed Use district complement the character of the traditional center. New infill development should be pedestrian-oriented, comparable in scale and in keeping with the character of the traditional hamlet center to strengthen its social and economic vitality.

The compactness of this area, which also includes residences, provides a valuable degree of “walkability” to the historic Germantown hamlet center. The establishment of a public sewer district reaching out from the center provides an opportunity for new housing still in the hamlet, and beyond the center, where housing is less dense, there are possibilities for meeting housing needs through alternate housing arrangements like accessory apartments and other shared living solutions and for environmentally appropriate developments. In the 2007 community survey, more than half of the respondents called for the Town to use zoning regulations to encourage a greater diversity of housing in the Town.

Business development, job creation, and housing development are intricately related. The recent shift in demographics toward Germantown’s being more and more a residential town, combined with an increase in second-home buying in the town, has already provided new employment for local contractors and others in the building trades. Collaboration with Columbia County agencies and with administrations in neighboring towns will increase the chances of successful business initiatives and housing solutions within Germantown.

2.4 Promote efficient and responsive local government.

As in other small towns in Columbia County and elsewhere in New York State, government in Germantown is administered essentially by a Town Board, which includes the Town Supervisor, and by a limited number of other boards and committees. Except for the Highway Superintendent, a few Highway Department employees and a part-time executive assistant to the Supervisor, Town positions are part-time and salaries, including that of the Supervisor, are low. Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals members are paid a nominal stipend for each meeting. Other members of boards and committees are community volunteers. Other elected positions in the Town include the Tax Collector, Town Clerk, and two judges.

In the past, this governance structure has proved adequate to the needs of the Town. But changing demographics and both new opportunities and more complex local issues now call for revised and improved Town services and personnel to solve current problems and meet future challenges. As the cost of services rise, this Plan recommends the Town seek funding from New York State to undertake shared services studies to assess the feasibility of jointly providing certain services with adjoining municipalities. As indicated at the 2016 and 2017 Community Vision Sessions, the people of Germantown recognize the character of the Town is changing and the interests of all its residents, whether full-time or part-time, newly arrived or present for generations, need to be reconciled and acknowledged for the greater good of the community.



2.5 Secure State and federal funding to help implement recommendations of this Plan.

There are many State and Federal funding programs that are intended to help local governments to provide basic services or enhance the quality of life in a community. Examples include funding for safe routes to schools, water and sewer infrastructure, trail systems or connections, and purchase of development rights (PDR) to save farmland. To offset the burden on local property taxes, this Plan strongly recommends the Town Board pursue such funding opportunities as they arise.

Summary

“Everything is land use,” a member of the 2007 Comprehensive Plan Committee remarked at one of its meetings. As noted at the beginning of these Central Findings, it is equally true that land use is everything. When goals, concepts, requirements and recommendations about land use, as well as about development and town governance are made practical in the real world of town planning, the principal tool for doing so is zoning. To that end, the committee recommends that the Town Board, as its highest priority on adopting this comprehensive plan, appoint a Zoning Committee to revise and update the Town’s zoning and subdivision ordinances to protect and enhance the Town’s natural beauty, rural character and prosperity, as so clearly mandated by its citizens. A concept of “thoughtful growth” emerged from the October 2005 community workshop and 2016 and 2017 Community Vision Sessions. It is an idea that has and should continue to provide a guiding vision for the Town’s future.

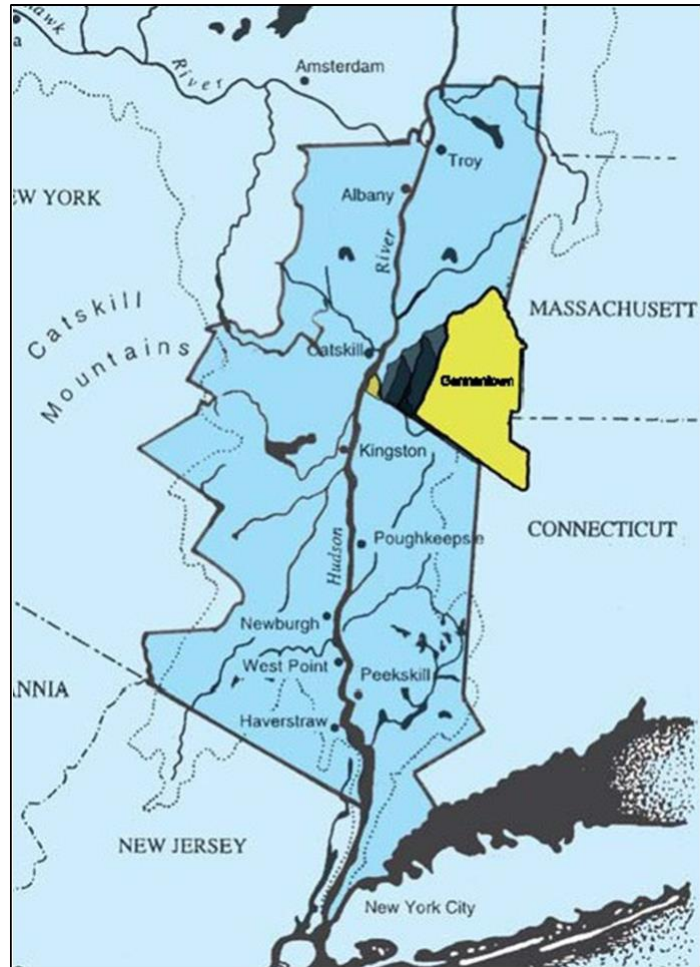


3.0 Regional Context and Local History

"I think the idea here is to expand somewhat and improve tastefully but keep the character of Germantown. It is such a beautiful place to live with wonderful, friendly people." 2011 Comprehensive Plan

Regional Setting

Germantown is situated on the east bank of the Hudson River in the southwestern part of Columbia County. It is bounded on the west by the Hudson River, on the south and east by the town of Clermont, and on the north by the town of Livingston. Centered in the historic and scenic Hudson Valley, Germantown commands beautiful views of the northern Catskill Mountains range. The Town is located approximately 110 miles north of New York City and 35 miles south of Albany.



A History of Germantown

Germantown was originally part of the Livingston Manor, a large tract of lands granted by the British crown to Robert Livingston in the late 17th century and operated on a tenant-farmer basis. In 1710, by order of Queen Anne, Robert Hunter, the Royal Governor of New York Province, purchased 6,000 acres from Livingston. This land, which now comprises the majority of present-day Germantown, was purchased to provide a settlement for Protestant Palatines who had fled to England to avoid hardship and over-taxation in the Rhineland of Germany. They formed the largest mass migration to New York in colonial times and became the first substantial community in Columbia and Dutchess counties.

They replaced the sparse indigenous population, one of whose sites in far northern Germantown yielded to the New York State Museum a key pottery collection. Using artifact finds there by his colleagues and avocationalists, the State Archaeologist was able to define styles of ceramic decoration in eastern New York for a crucial period 1,200 to 1,400 years ago in a transition from ancient peoples to traceable ethnic groups ancestral to the Stockbridge-Munsee Tribe, Band of Mohican Indians, now centered in Wisconsin.



A group of about 1,200 Palatines arrived within the next year and set up four rudimentary settlements -- Annesbury, Queensbury, Hayesbury and Hunterstown -- collectively called “The Camp,” on the east bank of the Hudson River, while across the river were three villages temporarily with about 600 persons in “West Camp.” The settlers were to produce naval stores (tar and pitch) for the British Navy, but the Palatine orchardists and vinedressers resisted and the project quickly failed. Most of the Palatine settlers relocated elsewhere, but 63 families remained and were granted the original 6,000 acres of Germantown in 1724, while about twice that number remained nearby, in present day Columbia and Dutchess counties. Many descendants of these the founding families still live in Germantown, conservatively a quarter of the population, which is a testimony to the unique and rich history of the community.

The government of Germantown was generally under the jurisdiction of the Livingston Manor until 1775, when Columbia County was divided into “districts” and Germantown became an independent entity. On March 7, 1788, the District of Germantown officially became a Township. In 1790, according to the first Federal Census, Germantown had 516 residents, of whom 40 were slaves, who with their children, made up about 10% of the population. A portion of Clermont was added to Germantown in 1858 to make a total of approximately 8,000 acres.

The area remained a German-speaking community for many years, and even the schools did not use English until 1813, when a public-school system was established. The community was largely farming in nature, producing almost everything the community needed. Crops of the day were wheat, rye, corn and potatoes. Dairy products and vegetables were also staples. Orchards and vineyards gradually replaced these crops as the community became less self-supporting and specialization emerged. The building of roads and the use of horses and, later, automobiles and trucks, contributed materially to this change.

The Germantown of today still retains many of the characteristics of its rural past with small-scale farming a growing presence. However, the advantage of the area for residential purposes has resulted in a gradual change of Germantown into primarily a rural-residential community.

Historic Resources

In 2010, Germantown celebrated the 300th anniversary of its founding. Even in the face of three centuries of progress, there are still many historic features in the Town that reflect its origins and historical development and that merit preservation. In 1976, a Historic Features Inventory was completed for the Town by a local historian. The inventory provides historical and architectural descriptions, as well as locational information and map references for a variety of historic structures and sites (see Volume 2, Appendices). The inventory was not updated to reflect additions or demolitions since 1976, and this Plan supports an update of the inventory.

Historic settlements. Evidence of Germantown’s history as an agricultural community still persist in its current land-use patterns: small, dense settlements along the Hudson River, large unbuilt tracts in the eastern and southern parts of the Town and the presence throughout the Town of old, frequently abandoned orchards and open fields. Characteristics of Germantown’s earliest settlements are still recognizable by road and land-use patterns, by the density of settlement, and by the architecture of homes and outbuildings.



Annesbury. Today's North Germantown, the area along Northern Boulevard, Anchorage Road and Camp Creek Road, features many historic homes and fine views of the Hudson River and Catskill Mountains. The Ernest R. Lasher Memorial Park, which provides Hudson River access, is located on the site of the old Anchorage, an important landing place throughout Germantown's history.

Queensbury. The vicinity of Sharp's Landing, Maple Avenue and Route 9G was an active 18th-century trading center in Germantown. The neighborhood was home to the old Reformed Church and First Lutheran Church. The Parsonage is a significant surviving building.

Hayesbury. The crossroads where Main Street crosses State Route 9G is mostly devoid of historical character today, but it once featured a hotel, a mill, a blacksmith shop, a post office and other commercial and residential buildings. The area west of Route 9G – Lower Main Street and Young America Road – still has many attractive homes dating from the 19th and early 20th centuries. At the river, there is now a disused cold storage facility and the site of what was once a busy railroad station.

East Camp / Hunterstown / Cheviot. At the southwestern corner of Germantown, this earliest settlement is generally known today as Cheviot. The ferry landing to West Camp across the Hudson River was located here, as was the Town's first railroad station. An old schoolhouse has been converted into a private residence, and the nearby cemetery has Palatine gravestones with German inscriptions.

Hamlet center. Germantown's hamlet center is located on County Route 8 (Main Street) considerably east of the Hudson River and Route 9G. A hamlet (or settlement) was established here in the first half of the 19th century. Although several buildings were destroyed by fire in 1923, the area retains an attractive collection of late 19th and early 20th century commercial buildings and residences that give it a charming small-town character. The Central House on Main Street at Church Avenue was an important hotel and tavern from the 1860s onward. It had fallen into derelict condition, but its recent renovation and reopening has provided an important anchor for the Main Street business district. Surrounding the Germantown hamlet center, along Main Street, Church Avenue and Maple Avenue, are many fine homes dating from the 19th and 20th centuries. Several are significant because of their age or architectural merit, and others are simply fine examples of vernacular domestic architecture.

The Parsonage. The Town's oldest building, the Parsonage, built in 1767, is a fine example of a vernacular residential building erected by 18th century settlers in New York. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, it is owned by the Town and is a repository of archival material and museum artifacts that document the history of Germantown. Still possessed of its architectural integrity and situated in a rural setting, the Parsonage is an important representative of the early settlement of Columbia County.

Also home to the minister's slaves, the property was purchased in the mid-19th century by an African American family, who lived there until 1911. By the time of the Civil War, it had become part of a neighborhood with at least four adjacent houses belonging to African Americans.



Historic homes. Much of Germantown's housing stock is old, vintage or antique. According to the 2010 Census, 50% of Germantown's homes were built before 1940. The Town's older homes and their relation to other features (e.g., closeness to the road, barns and outbuildings, mature trees) contribute significantly to the rural character and attractiveness of the area. A drive along any of Germantown's roads will present many examples of old country homes, some of them of great age or significant architecture. Many of the Town's historic homes are well preserved; a few need repair.

A prime example of the Town's historic homes is the Rockefeller Home, a two-story building located on County Route 8 east of the village. The oldest part was built in 1755 by Simeon Rockefeller, an ancestor of John D. Rockefeller, and served in its early days as a tavern. In the first decade of the 19th century, the building's size was doubled and a colonnaded double porch added to the facade. The Rockefeller Home may have been the site of Germantown's first town meeting. It was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2009.

Churches. Germantown was home to four churches, each of which has been an important institution in the community for many years. Three congregations are presently active.

- Reformed Church of Germantown, Church Avenue, is a beautiful Carpenter Gothic building erected in 1880. The church was established in Germantown in 1728.
- Church of the Resurrection Catholic Church, Church Avenue; building was erected in 1924.
- United Methodist Church, Camp Creek Road; its history in Germantown dates from the 1840s or earlier (now privately owned and congregation no longer active).
- Christ Lutheran Church, Church Avenue, Viewmont; the Lutheran denomination arrived in Germantown with the Palatines in 1710. This classic country church building was dedicated in 1868.

Cemeteries. Germantown's cemeteries are not only sacred sites, they also provide a historical record of Germantown's inhabitants over the past three centuries. Several graveyards are associated with and located near current churches; both the United Methodist Church and Christ Lutheran Church have adjacent cemeteries. Valley View cemetery on Hover Avenue is an annex of the Methodist Church cemetery.

The Reformed Church cemetery is located on a beautiful site on [County](#) Route 8 at the church's second location. The East Camp cemetery in Cheviot is the Town's oldest, with gravestones dating back to the Palatine period. One ancient human burial is known in oral history and at least two currently un-marked cemeteries have been similarly noted in the Sharps Landing Road area, raising its potential for further discoveries of skeletal remains there and on the adjacent east side of Route 9G where the first Lutheran Church was located.

Historic Designations and Site Markers. Germantown is included in the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area, established by Congress in 1996, a 165-mile-long district stretching from Westchester County northward to Saratoga.



The National Heritage Area was established to educate the public and preserve the rich history of the area. Its website (www.hudsonrivervalley.com) promotes heritage tourism in the Hudson Valley. A small portion of southern Germantown is also included in the New York State-designated “Estates District Scenic Area of Statewide Significance.” Cheviot and Roundtop Roads mark the northern boundary of this district.

The Hudson River National Historic Landmark District, designated by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior in 1990, abuts Germantown on its southern boundary and stretches southward to Hyde Park. Hudson River Heritage, a not-for-profit membership organization, acts as the steward for the district and may be helpful in obtaining historic- district status for initial Palatine settlement areas.

As noted above, the Parsonage and the Simeon Rockefeller House (Tavern), are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. There are also several other properties in the Town that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. There are nine historic-site markers in Germantown, put in place by the New York State Marker Program in the 1930s. Unfortunately, most of them mark sites of buildings that are no longer standing, and a few bear factual inaccuracies as revealed by subsequent historical research.

Future Issues

The Visioning Sessions recorded a moderate expression of interest in the potential for enhancement of historical awareness and concern for protection of Germantown’s cultural resources although greater alarm was sounded about inappropriate development. Development pressures may jeopardize preservation of what remains of Germantown’s historic fabric. Large farm parcels may be subdivided for housing developments, and old and historic houses may be altered or replaced by new construction. Archaeological remnants of Germantown’s earliest history may be disturbed or destroyed by future building and development activities.

To safeguard against such losses, the Town Planning Board should **continue to** utilize the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) environmental review process to assess and mitigate potentially significant adverse environmental impacts to the archeological and historic resources in the Town. This Plan also supports the adaptive reuse of farm buildings (e.g., barns, silos, ice houses, milk houses, etc.) to help preserve the agricultural heritage of Germantown.

The Town would benefit from the updating of its 1976 Historic Features Inventory, as it could then determine whether the establishment of a Town of Germantown historic/architectural review process would be appropriate. Such a process could create standards for the review of proposed demolitions, removals and major exterior alterations to designated historic or architecturally significant structures and sites. The Town might also want to consider whether historical context should be a consideration in the review of proposed developments that are next to historic sites and structures.



Goals and Recommendations

Goals:

- To favor the preservation of existing housing stock and commercial buildings through rehabilitation and reuse instead of encouraging new building and development.
- To ensure that new developments adjacent to historic properties are respectful of the character and context of the historic properties.

Recommendations:

- HP1. Through SEQRA review process, assess and mitigate impacts to historic and archeological resources in the Town.
- HP2. Amend zoning and subdivision standards to:
- a) require an assessment of historic and archaeological assets, to include annotated mapping of early settlement and traveled ways, as part of the review process for development proposals in the Town's historic areas, and
 - b) adopt design standards for historically significant districts (such as the village center) and for significant properties.
- HP3. Encourage a private/public partnership (e.g., an historical society or "Friends of" organization) to provide better resources to preserve the historic Parsonage building and the Town's historical archives and artifact collections and to broaden public awareness and appreciation of Germantown's history.
- HP4. Coordinate historic-preservation activities with neighboring organizations that have related missions (e.g., Hudson River Heritage, Hudson Valley Vernacular Architecture and others).
- HP5. Perform an updated, detailed historic-resource inventory for the Town in collaboration with the Germantown History Department.
- HP6. Support extension of the Hudson River National Historic Landmark District to include the Germantown waterfront or establish a new such district.
- HP7. Support the preservation of barns and other farm buildings by providing greater flexibility in the adaptive reuse of these structures.
- HP8. Support owner's effort to secure State or National Historic Preservation designation or NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation grants to restore these farm structures.
- HP9. Encourage property owners to seek Historic Preservation Tax Credits to preserve historic farm buildings that are so important to preserving Germantown's rural heritage.



4.0 The People of Germantown

“Germantown seems to be becoming a retirement community. I want to see more people here raising their families and providing a future for our young people.”

Population Growth

In 2010 Germantown had a population of 1,954 persons according to U.S. Census data. During the 1960s and 1970s, the Town experienced modest growth that then leveled off during the 1980s and 1990s. The Town’s population peaked in 2000 with 2,018 persons and experienced a slight decrease of 0.3% between 2000 and 2010 (see Table 1). However, the U.S. Census 2015 population estimate shows the population rebounding slightly to 1,986 persons in 2015.

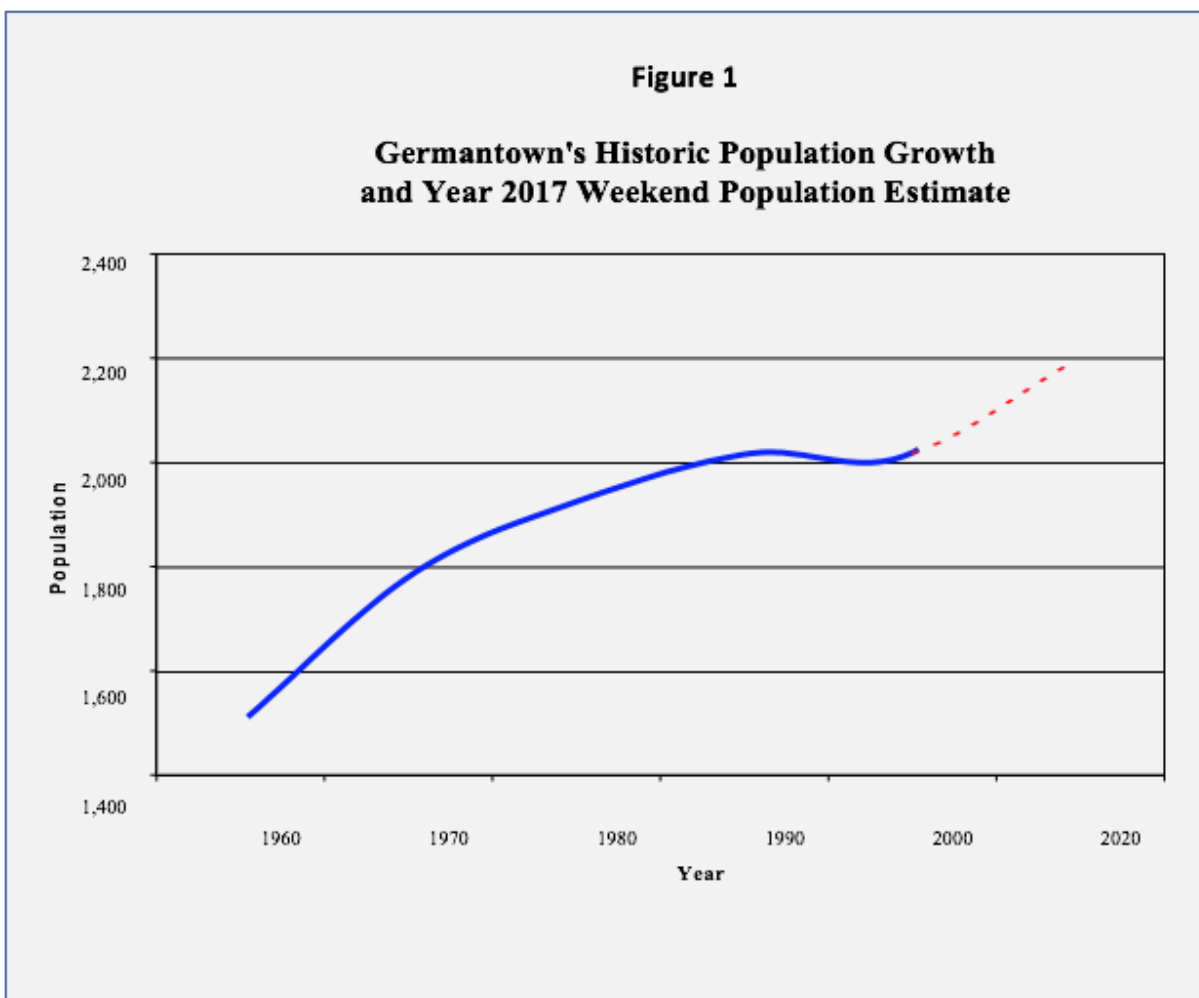
Table 1: Germantown’s Population Growth		
Year	Population	% Change
1960	1,504	
1970	1,782	18.5%
1980	1,922	7.9%
1990	2,010	4.6%
2000	2,018	0.4%
2010	1,954	-0.3%
2015*	1,986	1.6%
Source: U.S. Census 2010 American Factfinder *Census Est.		

Census figures alone, however, cannot present a complete picture of Germantown’s population, partly because the data are already seven years out-of-date, but also because they do not reliably account for the Town’s part-time residents, since the Census counts only permanent inhabitants. Like other towns in the mid-Hudson Valley, Germantown has become an attractive second-home destination for New York City residents. In 2000, U.S. Census data indicated that 9.6% of the housing units in the Town are for seasonal, recreational or occasional purposes. This percentage increased to 12.4% by the 2010 Census. Based upon the turnout at the Community Vision Sessions, this is a trend that is likely to continue as more people from the New York metropolitan area discover Germantown.

Census statistics do not tell the whole story about Germantown’s likely population growth in coming years. Although the Town’s population, decreased slightly between 2000 and 2010, the 2015 Census estimate suggest that population growth is again on the rise. An influx of new residents from the New York Metropolitan area, is likely to put additional development pressure on Germantown as growing numbers of NY metropolitan households move northward. Proximity to New York City and a growing appreciation of the scenic beauty of the Hudson Valley will contribute significantly to the area’s future growth.



The 2010 Census counted 1,050 housing units in the Town of Germantown. Of these, 842 were occupied housing units and 208 were vacant housing units. However, of the 208 vacant housing units, 130 were utilized for seasonal, recreational or occasional use. If we apply Germantown's average household size of 2.3 persons per household to the number of seasonal units, we can estimate a second homeowner population of 299 persons. Coupled with the year-round resident population of 1,986 persons, Germantown would be expected to have a 2017 [total](#) population of 2,285 persons (i.e., year-round and second-home residents).



Population Characteristics

The character of each community is as unique as the individuals that comprise it. The age, social and household characteristics of communities can vary significantly from one place to another, although similarities between communities may also exist. In general, the characteristics of Germantown's population closely align with those of Columbia County. However, Germantown's population is racially more homogeneous than the populations of Columbia County or New York State. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, overwhelmingly, Town residents are white (95.8%), with Asian and African-American groups making up 1.2% and 0.8%, respectively. With respect to ethnicity, 3.1% of the Town's population were self-identified as Hispanic or Latino. But as in the broader American society, women are in the majority in Germantown, making up 50.8% of the population.



The median age of Germantown residents is 46.6 years, a little older than that of Columbia County (44.4 years) and much older than New York State (38.0 years). Not quite one-quarter of the Town's residents are children (21.2%), nearly two-thirds are adults (58.1%), and 20.7% are senior citizens. Like much of the nation, the population of Germantown is aging. In the decade between 2000 and 2010, the percentage of residents 45 years and older increased from 43.8% to 52.6%.

Germantown's population is generally well educated. According to the 2010 Census, the percentage of Town residents who have completed high school (87.4%) is comparable to that for the County (88.4%) and the State (84.4%). And while the percentage who have earned a college or graduate degree (28.5%) is even with the County average (29.2%), it is below the State average (32.1%). Germantown has a similar proportion of veterans (17.1%) to the County, but a higher proportion than the State 6.9% (see Table 2).

The great majority of Germantown residents was born in the United States; only 6.3% were foreign born, a figure like the County figure (5.6%), but lower than the State average (23.4%). Similarly, very few Germantown residents speak a language other than English (see Table 2).

Table 2: Social Characteristics (2010)	Germantown	Columbia County	New York State
High school graduate or higher (age 25+)	<u>87.4%</u>	<u>88.4%</u>	<u>84.4%</u>
Associates degree (age 25+)	<u>10.3%</u>	<u>11.3%</u>	<u>8.2%</u>
Bachelor's degree (age 25+)	<u>14.6%</u>	<u>15.3%</u>	<u>18.3%</u>
Graduate or professional degree (age 25+)	<u>13.9%</u>	<u>12.9%</u>	<u>13.8%</u>
Bachelors degree or higher (age 25+)	<u>28.5%</u>	<u>29.2%</u>	<u>32.1%</u>
Civilian veterans (age 18+)	<u>17.1%</u>	<u>12.5%</u>	<u>6.9%</u>
Speak a language other than English at home (age 5+)	<u>8.2%</u>	<u>7.7%</u>	<u>29.2%</u>
Foreign born	<u>6.3%</u>	<u>5.6%</u>	<u>23.4%</u>

Source: U.S. Census 2010

Families predominate in Germantown. Of the 850 households in the town in 2010, 67.4% were families, with 52.4% including married couples, female heads of household at 9.4% and residences with children under 18 years at 25.0%. By contrast, single people living alone made up 29.4% of households, while 34.1% of all households included an individual 65 years or over. From 2000 to 2010, Germantown's households saw a decrease in those households with individuals under 18 years of age (from 30.1% to 25.0%) while seeing an increase in households with individuals over 65 years of age (32.7% to 34.1%). This trend is also reflected in the Town's median age, which increased from 41.8 years to 46.6 years over the course of a decade. Germantown households are like those within the County, except there are fewer female household heads in Germantown and more households with individuals 65 and over (see Table 3).



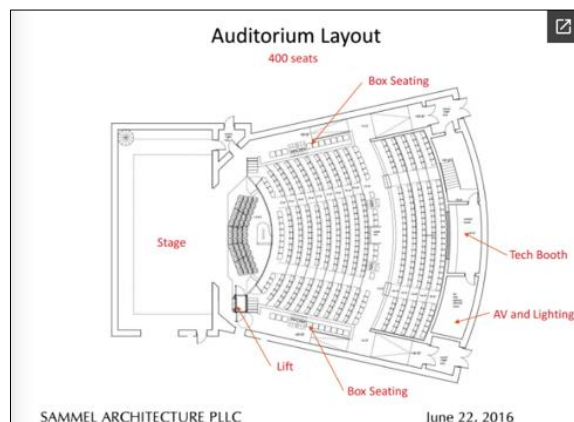
Table 3: Households by Type (2000-2010)						
	Germantown		Columbia County		New York State	
	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010
Total Households	831	829	24,796	25,906	7,056,860	7,317,755
Family households	65.8%	67.4%	66.9%	63.4%	65.7%	63.5%
Married-couple family	53.7%	52.4%	52.2%	47.7%	46.6%	43.6%
Female householder, no husband present	7.5%	9.4%	10.3%	10.6%	14.7%	14.9%
Nonfamily households	34.2%	32.6%	33.1%	36.6%	34.3%	36.5%
Householder living alone	28.8%	25.0%	27.1%	28.8%	28.1%	29.1%
Households with individuals under 18 years	30.1%	25.0%	32.2%	27.3%	35.0%	31.7%
Households with individuals 65 years and over	32.7%	34.1%	28.3%	31.0%	25.0%	26.3%
Average household size	2.41	2.30	2.43	2.35	2.61	2.57
Average family size	2.95	2.84	2.95	2.89	3.22	3.20

Source: U.S. Census 2000 and 2010

To summarize, Germantown's population is similar in many ways to Columbia County's, except that it is somewhat older and, like the County, is growing older. An older population has different service needs -- for example, for housing and transportation -- from those of a younger population. While an older population will increase the demand for senior services, the Town must also continue to address the needs for its younger residents (individuals under 18 years) who still represent 25% of the Town's households. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that younger people (i.e., 20-40 year olds) are finding Germantown as an attractive second home destination and buying homes here.

One of the issues identified through the Community Visioning Session SWOT analysis was the need for more "third places," or social activities separate from the first place (home) and second place (work) in Germantown. Examples of third places include environments such as cafés, clubs, senior or youth centers rail trails and parks. For Germantown to remain vibrant, it needs to provide services to meet the needs of all its residents -- young and old. It can do so directly by designing multi-purpose community facilities that can accommodate senior and youth activities. It can also do so by ensuring its land use regulations allow for and encourage the private sector to create more third places such as cafés or private recreation facilities.

The Germantown Central School will soon be adding a 400-seat state-of-the-art auditorium with stage and music suite, which has the potential to become a cultural anchor in the community. This Plan recommends the Town Board work with the school district to explore opportunities to utilize this facility for cultural events during the summer break or when the school is not in session.



5.0 Current, Adjacent and Regional Land Use

“This is a beautiful small-town. I would like to see the small-town atmosphere remain intact.”

Current Land Use

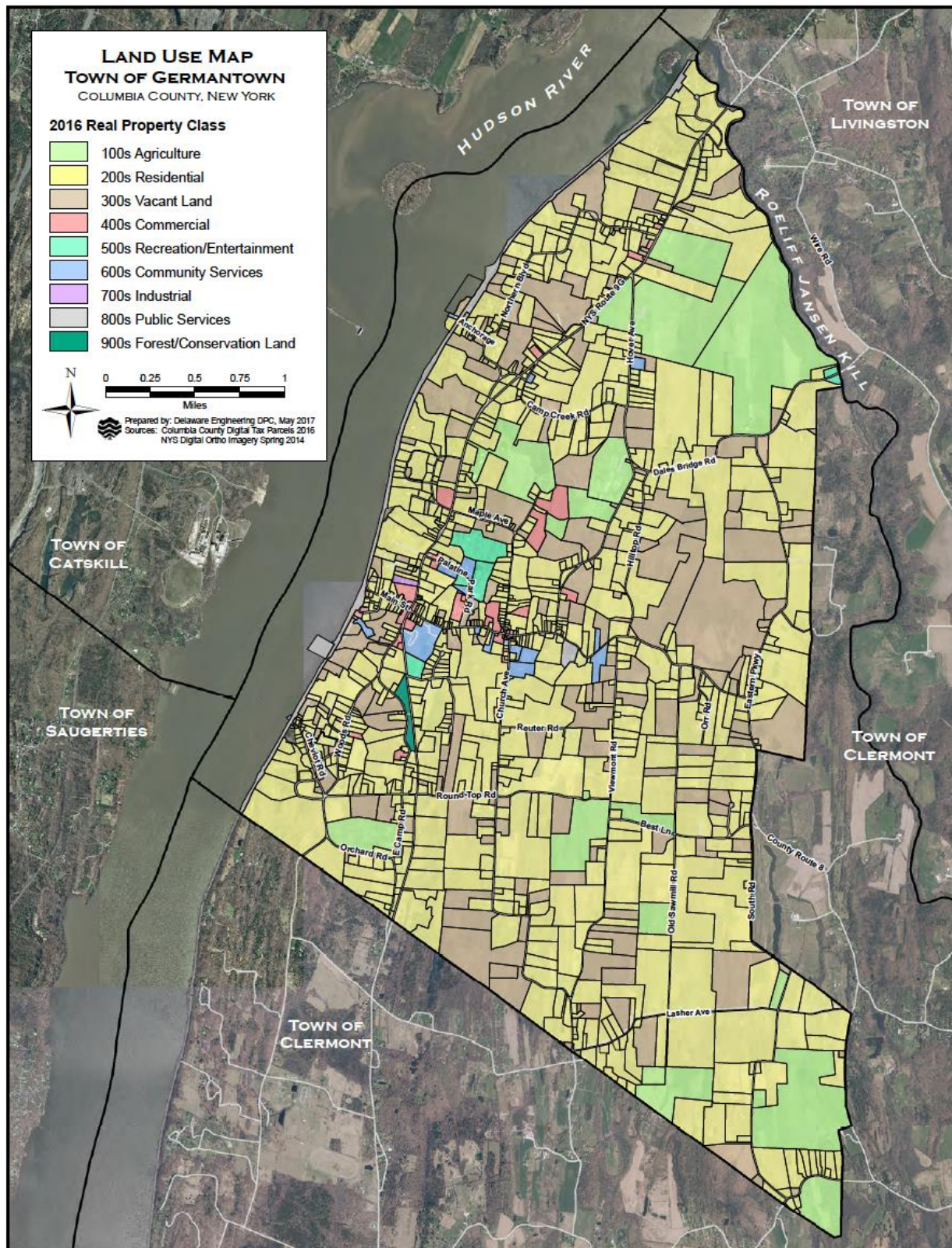
Over the last forty years the principal use of land in Germantown has shifted dramatically from agricultural to residential. There are still many open fields and woodlands in the Town, but the fields are now less dedicated to farming, and the woodlands and open spaces are increasingly used for residential development. Current land uses are shown on the Land Use Map on page 19.

With a footprint of approximately 7,500 acres, Germantown’s small size and its population density are factors to be considered when planning for its future. A brief summary of the recent history of land use in Germantown - as defined by the Germantown Tax Assessment Roll Real Property Type Classification Codes - appears in Table 4. Although the main categories of use have remained the same from 1973 to 2017, new categories have been added over the years and old ones eliminated. Different numbers for acreages have also been given in different documents or by different agencies, but for the purposes of this chapter, total acreage in Germantown will be taken from the 2016 tax assessment roll as 7,722.74 acres.

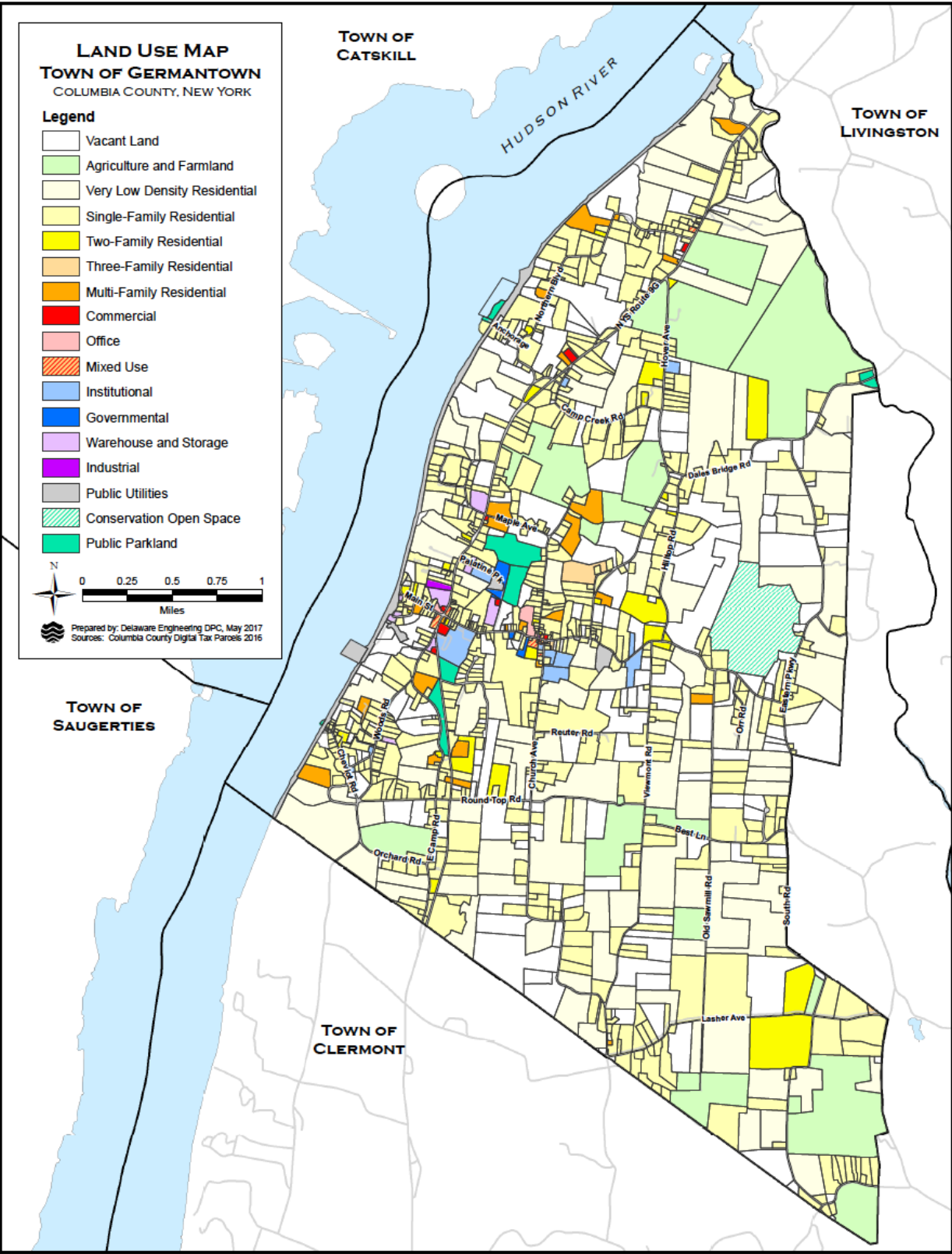
Table 4: Acreage in Germantown by Major Categories				
	1973	1988	2004	2016
Agricultural	2,593 (35%)	1,412.23	1,130.49 (15%)	970.21 (12.5%)
Residential	400 (5%)	3,029.77	4,520.72 (60%)	4,712.26 (61.0%)
Vacant Land		1,985.65	1,555.28 (21%)	1,711.40 (22.2%)
Forest, Brushland	4,877 (65%)			
Wild, Forested, Parks, Conservation Land		18.10	10.30	10.30
Recreation & Entertainment		16.26	38.68	50.74
Public Services	29		86.49	103.44
Community Services			73.64	76.01
Commercial/Industrial	33	100.52	84.17	88.38
Totals (ACRES)	7,932	6,562.53	7,499.77	7,722.74
Sources: 2004 & 2016 Germantown tax assessment roll & the 1973 and 1989 Germantown Comprehensive Plans.				
Note: The discrepancies in the acreage totals is simply a reflection of how the data was collected, not changes in the total acreage within the Town of Germantown.				

The most dramatic changes are the decrease of acreage in agriculture and the increase in residential use. Changes in assessment practices over the period, such as counting some large residential-agricultural properties as residential, may account for a portion of these changes, but the trend in land use from farming to residential is unmistakable. Some of the 4,877 acres in “Forest, Brushland” in 1973 presumably found their way into the “Vacant” category in 1988 and 2016, while lesser acreages in the latter years were assessed as “Wild, Forested, Parks, Conservation Land.” The increase in land used for “Recreation & Entertainment,” “Public Services,” and “Community Services” in 2016 further reflects the transformation of Germantown from a farming to a rural residential community.





The Land Use Map provided below was created by converting Real Property Class Codes to more traditional land use planning classifications of land use. The conversion provides greater level of detail such as the density of residential land use and a distinction between conservation lands and public parklands. This map is based upon 2016 Real Property Class Codes.



As might be expected from Germantown's history of development since the early 18th century, parcels of land close to the Hudson River, whether currently in residential, commercial, or agricultural use, are smaller and create patterns of greater density than those in the rest of the Town. Small lot sizes also predominate along the Town's older roads and in the hamlet center. In general, parcels east from the river to the Town's eastern and northern borders with Livingston and Clermont become progressively larger and begin to include open lands as well as more extensive farms.

Germantown is not yet under the pressures of large residential development being experienced by other Columbia and Dutchess County towns, but small subdivisions have been approved in Germantown. In the words of a member of the Planning Board, "the Town is not being gobbled up by sharks, it's being nibbled away by guppies."

Current commercial activities are scattered throughout the Town, but there are four points of concentration: the intersection of State Route 9G and County Route 8; Main Street at the historic Germantown hamlet center; the west side of Palatine Park Road; and a strip along Route 9G in North Germantown. Taconic Farms, an agribusiness raising mice for medical research, is the largest employer in Germantown. Home businesses round out the commercial activities in Germantown.

Adjacent Land Use

A knowledge of land use and zoning in neighboring communities can be helpful in pursuing consistent and coordinated planning and zoning at the edges of a town. The majority of land in Clermont, to the east and south of Germantown, is zoned two-acre residential/agricultural, with a strip along the Hudson River in low-density five-acre zoning. Similarly, all the zoning in Livingston, on Germantown's northeast border, is two-acre residential/agricultural, except for a small conservation area -- again along the Hudson River -- of seven-acre zoning.

Regional Land Use

As communities change and grow over time, all new building, development or demolition combine and create regional consequences. New York State is a "home rule" state, meaning the over 1,500 units of local government can develop comprehensive plans and adopt zoning, subdivision and site-plan regulations independently. The fragmented nature of the home-rule system presents specific challenges to regional cooperation and contributes to a lack of coordination and to policies that drive sprawl. This fragmentation often exacerbates regional economic inequities, hampers economic development efforts and drives up costs for the taxpayer. In the Hudson River Valley it also threatens the natural and cultural resources that make the area a great place to live.

In rural communities like Germantown, many issues are regional. Habitats, watersheds, farmland protection, scenic vistas, highway networks, waste management, schools and affordable housing all have regional implications. These issues, along with many others, should be addressed with regional coordination.



While communities are not required to cooperate regionally, they are empowered to do so by numerous New York State laws and statutes. Local governments are empowered to provide any service or perform any function jointly that they may otherwise perform separately. For example, communities may join to create consolidated zoning boards, create intermunicipal comprehensive plans and/or land-use regulations and even create intermunicipal overlay districts for the purpose of protecting, enhancing or developing community resources that encompass two or more municipalities. The Town Board should work with the County to implement recommendations of the County Agriculture & Farmland Protection Plan and consider creating a Town Ag Plan.

Germantown's location in the Hudson River Valley means that it is part of the Hudson River Valley Greenway and National Heritage Area, two special-purpose regional designations for the valley that bring technical resources and guidance, small grants and other benefits to area communities. The Greenway has a Trail Vision Plan for the valley that proposes a trail section in Germantown between Route 9G and the Hudson River in North Germantown. The Greenway also offers "Greenway Guides" that visually present tools and techniques that allow growth to occur while maintaining community character. Finally, the Greenway encourages communities within a county to participate in a regional "Compact" that can provide a variety of community benefits, including preferential consideration for state grants.

Future Issues

The small-lot zoning of most of Clermont and Livingston contrasts with the planned larger-lot protective designations of significant areas of land within Germantown that lie adjacent to those towns (see Chapter 6, *Natural Resources and Agriculture*). This proximity may result in single farms that lie in two towns having widely divergent zoning.

It is important that state, county and local governments and agencies work together to address regional issues and that localities approach local land-use decisions with a regional perspective. Germantown should consider countywide regional and statewide plans such as the NYS Open Space Plan and the Hudson River Estuary Management Plan and should coordinate with various regional and county economic-development and environmental-protection agencies when making local land-use decisions. The Town should also explore opportunities for creating new regional partnerships.

During the Community Visioning Session Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis, participants were asked to identify issues they felt were threats to Germantown by placing dots next to the issue of their choice. The number one issue identified by participants (58 dots) was "Character of Development." Rounding out the top five (5) threats was "Overdevelopment" (26 dots), "Business Retention" (24 dots), "Viewshed" (21 dots) and "Growing Cultural Divide" (11 dots).



This Plan recognizes that Germantown must retain its businesses, which provide needed goods and services, employment opportunities and help to reduce the tax burden on residential properties. This Plan also recognizes the need for the community to accommodate new growth in the residential and non-residential sectors, to ensure the long-term sustainability of Germantown as a socially and economically vibrant Town.

To this end, the Town's land use regulations should be strengthened to better define the types of non-residential land uses it seeks to attract, where such establishments should be situated, the scale of such non-residential development and how the character of new development should be shaped to protect Germantown's small-town character. The Character of Development concern focused on corporate and franchise businesses, which were viewed by participants as being out-of-character with the community, in part, due to their cookie cutter corporate design. However, concern also focused on oversized national retailers adversely affecting established local businesses. Another concern with national retailers is they take their profits out of town.

During subsequent Comprehensive Plan Committee meetings, the above concerns were also extended to the potential for large-scale hotels to locate in Germantown, due to the significant growth in wedding venues in the surrounding region. Again, from a land use perspective, such developments would likely stand in sharp contrast to the existing community in relation to building scale, large parking areas and the rural landscape.



Above: NYS Route 28 looking north just a few miles south of the Village of Cooperstown, NY. The large-scale Holiday Inn Express to the right stands in sharp contrast to the traditional small-scale development along the corridor. This demand for hotels fueled by the attraction of Cooperstown and the Baseball Hall of Fame and the Cooperstown Dream Park baseball camp, which is situated nearby the new hotel. The large-scale of this hotel, long driveway and extensive parking area are all factors that make this establishment seem out of place. This Plan recommends design guidelines be established to prevent such large-scale hotel developments within the Town of Germantown.

Through its land use regulations (i.e., Zoning and Subdivision Law, Code Enforcement) the Town can manage new growth in a manner that preserves its small-town character that so many residents recognize is a great strength of the Town. Once this Plan is adopted, the Town Board should review its zoning law to ensure it allows only those uses the Town desires, while prohibiting uses it finds would not complement or be inconsistent with Germantown's small-town character. It should also move forward with the creation and adoption of design guidelines.



The Zoning Code should also be reviewed to ensure the scale of permitted uses it does desire (such as accommodations) are in line with the goal of protecting the small-town character of the community. For retail and hotel accommodations this might be accomplished by placing limits on maximum permitted building height and size. It is also recommended the Design Guidelines (contained in Article VII – Additional Development Standards of the Zoning and Subdivision Law) are followed to ensure non-residential development, both within and outside the traditional Germantown hamlet center, complements the rural and small-town landscape rather than detract from it. Within the hamlet center, new buildings should be constructed in a manner that reinforces the historic building patterns founding adjacent and nearby buildings with regards to placement, massing, height, scale, signs and form.

Along the NYS Route 9G corridor, Design Guidelines should provide a framework in which to guide the Planning Board’s decisions relating to the site design, signs, lighting, landscaping, architecture, and form of new non-residential development. The primary purpose of such guidelines is to facilitate quality design of new commercial establishments so that it complements the character of the community. Another goal is to ensure a cohesive design so that collectively these new businesses help to reinforce the character of the Town, allowing our community to retain its unique sense of place.

It is also recommended that the design of new commercial developments include the provision of sidewalks along NYS Route 9G, as is already required pursuant to Article VII of the Town Zoning Law. Depending on the site, sidewalks might be installed at the time of construction, or an agreement would be signed by the developer to install sidewalks once connections to the existing sidewalk system become feasible.

“FIRST WE SHAPE OUR BUILDINGS; AND AFTERWARDS OUR
BUILDINGS SHAPE US.”

Winston Churchill

Note: Stated while addressing the nation regarding the re-building of the ‘*Houses of Commons*’ after its destruction during the Second World War.



Above: Central House within the heart of the Main Street business district in the hamlet of Germantown. The rehabilitation of historic inns, Bed & Breakfast and smaller scale boutique accommodations should be encouraged through the Town’s land use regulations. Such establishments complement the Town’s rural small-town character.



Goals and Recommendations

Goals:

- To promote regional coordination and intermunicipal cooperation.
- To preserve a traditional balance between land uses while accommodating necessary development.

Recommendations:

- LU.1. Inform adjacent municipalities of proposed and adopted planning and zoning at the Town's boundaries.
- LU.2. Establish mechanisms for local and regional partnerships such as the Hudson River Valley Greenway Compact process, **Scenic Hudson and Columbia Land Conservancy**.
- LU.3. Focus development more efficiently in and around traditional centers and avoid overdevelopment of the rural surroundings.
- LU.4. Foster an interconnected regional system of open-space corridors to offer recreational opportunities and protect environmentally sensitive areas.
- LU.5. Provide a stronger emphasis on walkable communities while supporting land- use and site-plan decisions that reduce traffic impacts.
- LU.6. Clearly communicate the Town's future land-use goals, law standards and requirements to the development community and the public.
- Create a developer's guide to site plan, special permit and subdivision review.
 - Provide a copy of this Plan to the Planning Board, Town Board and Zoning Board of Appeals.
 - Provide Town Code online and place 2018 Comprehensive Plan on the Town Web site.
- LU.7. Review the Town's zoning law and subdivision regulations, as well as other parts of the Town Code, to ensure these land-use regulations adequately implement the Comprehensive Plan.
- Adopt amendments to the zoning law as identified in this Plan based upon Town Board priorities.
 - Determine specific zoning law and subdivision regulation amendments, which are necessary to:
 - Encourage reinvestment and growth in the Main Street business district.
 - Protect natural resources.
 - Reflect differences in sign needs between the Main Street business district and NYS Route 9G and respond to new technologies such as digital display signs.
 - Stimulate economic development.
- LU.8. Consider the compatibility of development with surrounding uses.
- Utilize strategies such as landscaping, tree preservation and other buffering techniques.
 - When necessary, require modification of site development plans to minimize impacts.
 - Adopt Design Guidelines to give Planning Board power to compel national and regional developers to modify site development and building design to protect small-town and rural character.



- LU.9. Encourage mixed-use infill development within the Main Street business district.
- Encourage the use of Neo-Traditional design principles to strengthen the character of Main Street.
 - Develop and implement a comprehensive long-term parking strategy for Main Street.
- LU.10. Expand upon the Site Development Standards for Scenic View Overlay District to better guide the Planning Board's decisions.
- LU.11. Utilize the tool of cluster development to enhance the natural environment and preserve prime farmland and open space.
- LU.12. Establish a general design vocabulary for commercial development along the corridor that will lead to aesthetically pleasing and cohesive development over time. General standards for building placement and orientation, architectural features (massing, scale and form), design detail, materials and colors, signs and lighting should be established while providing framework to allow for creative and quality design on new individual commercial establishments.
- LU.13. Adopt local law to regulate *solar energy generating facilities*, which permit solar energy systems and equipment, but ensure the provision of adequate sunlight necessary therefor; to balance the potential impacts on neighbors when solar collectors are installed near their property, while preserving the right of property owners to install solar energy systems in accordance with applicable laws and regulations; and to recognize solar energy as a priority for current and long-term energy sustainability.
- LU.14. Encourage more construction of U.S. Green Building Council's LEED certified buildings.
- LU.15. Regulate outdoor lighting to balances nighttime visibility and security needs while protecting the night sky, natural environment and wildlife habitats.
- LU.16. Work with local land owners, County and State Economic Development agencies to explore feasibility of creating *shovel-ready sites* for small-scale industries such as on-farm value added food processing (e.g., cheese production, craftsman, etc.).



Above: NYS Route 28 looking north just a few miles south of the Village of Cooperstown, NY. The scale and placement of this Best Western is less obtrusive than the Holiday Inn shown above. This illustration is provided to show how the placement, architecture and scale of development, along with signs, can complement or adversely affect community character.



6.0 Natural Resources and Agriculture

“Cherish Germantown’s unique vistas.”

“Preserve Germantown’s rural, agricultural character and limit development that would impinge on it and create pollution (water, air appearance, noise,...)”

“The rural nature of Germantown with its woodlands, wetlands, and diminishing agriculture needs to be preserved.”

Introduction

Germantown is fortunate to have an attractive historic hamlet center, as well as Hudson River frontage, open farmland, forest cover and superb Catskill Mountain views. This diversity is a strong part of the Town’s appeal and contributes to the “rural character” that townspeople have praised throughout the comprehensive planning process. Yet much of our undeveloped physical base has constraints against building or would be very vulnerable to the impacts of development. We have serious water-supply issues, as well as a predominance of soils that are unsuitable for septic systems. Many former agricultural fields, once tiled and drained, are now wet meadows supporting diverse plant and animal life.

The 2017 Columbia County Natural Resources Inventory, conducted in conjunction with Hudsonia Ltd., includes a map showing Land Cover for the entire County. The Land Cover map on page 28 was taken from the County-wide map to show land cover in the Town of Germantown. The Land Cover data is based primarily on circa 2011 Landsat satellite data and, unlike the Land Use map is not parcel based. The predominant Land Cover is pasture/hay, but it should be noted developed areas are often mapped as hay/pasture, and therefore underestimated. Furthermore, residences with large lawns may be shown as pasture/hay. The map also shows significant areas of woody and/or herbaceous wetlands or shrub/scrub land that likely represents former farmland.

















Land-use capabilities and constraints largely determine the uses to which land can and should reasonably be put and therefore, are a fundamental basis for good planning and zoning. As development pressures increase around Germantown, it is essential to understand the carrying capacity of our land and to protect our limited natural resources for both current residents and generations to come.

This chapter addresses the Town’s natural resources – its slopes and topography, soils, geology, waterbodies and wetlands, groundwater resources, open-space and agricultural resources and farming. The Site Development Constraints map illustrates the extent of the Town’s unbuildable and developmentally constrained land areas, while the Agriculture and Open Space map shows the Town’s farmlands, forest lands and other open spaces. The Cultural Resources map shows the Town’s vistas and viewsheds (see *Maps* following Chapter 12).



Columbia County
Natural Resources Inventory

Land Cover

-  Open water
-  Developed, open space
-  Developed, low intensity
-  Developed, medium intensity
-  Developed, high intensity
-  Barren land (rock, sand, clay)
-  Deciduous forest
-  Evergreen forest
-  Mixed forest
-  Shrub/scrub
-  Grassland/herbaceous
-  Pasture/hay
-  Cultivated crops
-  Woody wetlands
-  Herbaceous wetlands
-  Major road
-  Municipal boundary



Hudsonia Ltd.

German town

9G



Existing Conditions and Trends

Slopes and Topography. Although much of Germantown has gently rolling topography, the Town is bisected by a central elevated spine that defines its two major watersheds. Water flows west/northwest via streams and creeks to the Hudson River and also indirectly to the Hudson via waters feeding north/northeast to the Roeliff Jansen Kill. The watershed divide travels roughly southward along Hover Avenue and Hilltop Road, passing the Town's high point at 332 feet above sea level, down Viewmont Road, turning southeast to Old Saw Mill Road, and then eastward to a ridge lying west of South Road.

The western half of Town lies predominantly at elevations ranging from 100 to 200 feet above sea level. Most of the eastern portion lies above 200 feet, and while this includes some significant slopes, there also are large, fairly level areas to the northeast and southeast where the Town's regulated wetlands are found. The lowest elevations, near sea level, are along the Hudson River.

A slope analysis of the Town confirms the gentle topography that we see, with elevation differences of less than 5% -- that is, varying less than one vertical foot for every 20 feet of ground. Steep slopes, defined as exceeding 15% (a one-foot rise in less than seven feet) are found mostly in association with the major waterways -- the Hudson River, Roeliff-Jansen Kill, and Camp Kill -- as well as along the watershed divide.

Soils. Of the 57 soil types found in Germantown, 30 or so tend to be poorly drained. Soils with the highest infiltration capacities are found in a broad swath along the Hudson River, with a few isolated, small pockets elsewhere. The Hydrologic Soils map (see *Maps*) shows most of the Town having soils with slow or very slow infiltration capacities and high runoff rates largely due to the preponderance of clay. More than one-quarter of the town has all hydric, or wet, soils. The presence of hydric soils is one of the conditions used to define wetlands. Soils that are wet or infiltrate slowly tend to be unsuitable for on-lot septic systems.

Sixty percent of the other soil types found in Germantown are highly rocky types, often with thin soils and/or located on steep slopes. The large areas of forest cover in town tend to share these conditions. The Surficial Geology map (see *Maps*) shows broad areas -- perhaps one-half the Town -- with soils consistent with shallow bedrock.

There is not a great deal of land classified as "prime agricultural" in Germantown, although there are many soils suitable for and used for agriculture, especially if drained. Many of these, and other less suitable soils, can be, and are, used for pasture and hay in dry seasons. The best agricultural soils are found north of County Rte. 8 and east of Hover Avenue.

Geology. The three dominant landform types found in Germantown are plains, a pattern of north-south ridges and what are called "dissected valleys." The plains are remainders of Glacial Lake Albany, which was formed by receding glaciers and covered a large area. The Town's widespread silt and clay soils remain from what were deep-water areas of the Lake, whereas silt and sand soils remain from shallower areas. The north-south ridges are the result of plate tectonic movements millions of years ago that realigned many different eras of rock into the



layered mix of limestone, siltstone, shale and other rock that are found today. These ridges usually feature exposed bedrock, although some deep soils can be found at higher elevations in the eastern part of the Town. The dissected valleys, including the Roeliff-Jansen Kill and other stream corridors, were formed by erosion through glacial matter.

Waterbodies, Wetlands and Floodplains. Germantown contains on a web of streams and small tributaries that flow ultimately into the Hudson River via its two watersheds. The Roeliff-Jansen Kill, a major trout stream, forms the northern and much of the eastern border of the Town. Germantown has numerous ponds, many, or all, of which may be man-made, including the Town swimming lake in Palatine Park.

The Town's New York State regulated wetlands are an area east of Hilltop Road, a few areas to the south in the Old Saw Mill and Viewmont Roads, and two marsh areas on the Hudson River, including the mouth of the Roeliff Jansen Kill. There are other large areas of wetlands in Town that are smaller than the 12.4-acre threshold for regulation under the Freshwater Wetlands Act (Article 24 of the New York State Environmental Conservation Law). Some of these are subject to federal jurisdiction by the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) under Section 404 of the federal Clean Water Act. Proposed activities in designated wetlands areas require review and permitting by one or both of these agencies.

Germantown's wetlands perform a number of important functions such as cleansing the water that flows through them and thus improving water quality. They carry and slow down excess water from heavy rains and snow melt. Therefore, filling wetlands can increase flooding. Wetlands help prevent erosion and remove sediments and can also be helpful in recharging groundwater, especially when groundwater is the primary water source, as in Germantown. They are an important source of biodiversity as they provide habitat for many fish and wildlife species and many native plants. They are also valuable for providing open space where they are protected.

Floodplains are low-lying areas adjacent to streams that may be inundated during storm events or by snow melt offs. They can also serve as important aquifer recharge areas for groundwater resources. Floodplains consist of the floodway, which is primarily the waterway channel, together with the flood fringe, the area adjacent to the floodway. One hundred-year floodplains are those areas that have a 1% chance of being inundated in any given year. These areas have been mapped in the Town as part of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) National Flood Insurance Program.

In Germantown, the mapped 100-year floodplain extends minimally along the Hudson River and along the Roeliff Jansen Kill. Development and fill in the floodplain exposes people and properties to on-site flood hazards and increases the volume and velocity of downstream flooding. FEMA offers low-cost flood insurance to landowners in communities that restrict development and fill in floodplains, with the lowest costs extended to communities offering the greatest protection.

Groundwater Resources. The New York Rural Water Association (NYRWA) has contributed to this comprehensive plan with the development of a Groundwater Protection Plan. The plan is based upon data from the United States Geological Survey and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, as well as from geologic maps, the Columbia



County Soil Survey, other sources and fieldwork. These data were used to generate a variety of composite maps for the Town. The full Groundwater Protection Plan is included as an appendix in Volume 2 of this document.

A chief objective of NYRWA's report was to identify Germantown's aquifers, particularly as a potential source for a municipal water supply. The report defines an aquifer as "a body of rock or sediment that yields significant quantities of water." The quantities sufficient for a municipal water supply in Germantown would be in the range of 86,000 gallons per day based upon the 2000 Census population report. There is an aquifer consisting of unconsolidated material found in the north end of Town along the Roeliff Jansen Kill and the Hudson River (see map on page 32). Natural conditions there indicate that it might be capable of high yields, although there are no current data available to verify this possibility. Furthermore, water quality there is likely to be compromised by surface water introducing organisms and pollutants and would have to be filtered for domestic use.

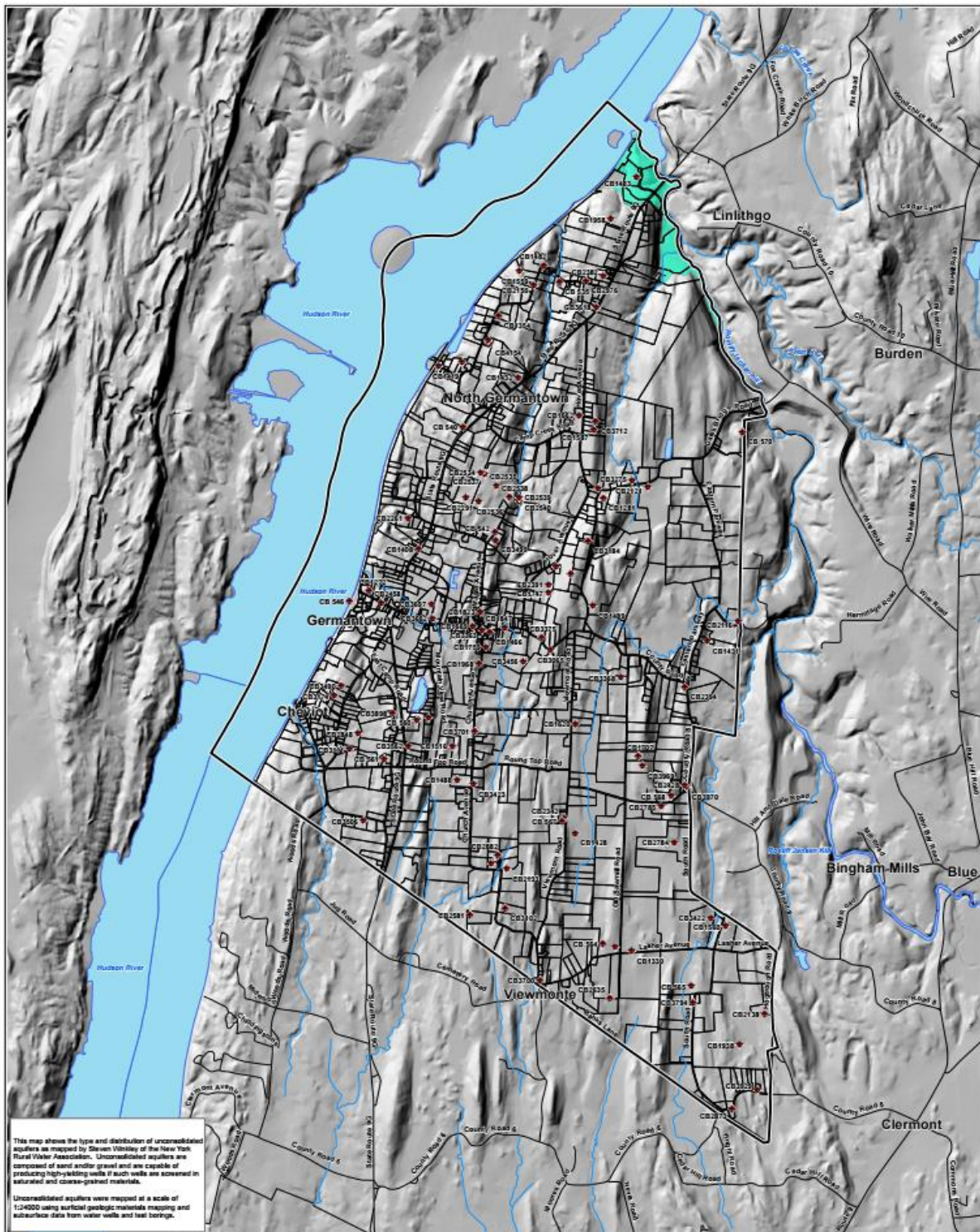
The NYWRA study finds that Germantown's domestic water supply, as well as its water bodies -- streams, ponds and wetlands -- all rely upon groundwater as their source. Groundwater is underground water found in voids and cracks in rock and soil. In Germantown, bedrock is the primary water source for all wells. But the Town's commonly wet, heavy clay soils are a major limiting factor in water availability as they limit the infiltration of rainwater that replenishes the groundwater. Thus the apparent abundance of water throughout the Town disguises the underlying lack of this resource.

Air Quality. The quality of air in Germantown was not factually known at the time of the writing of this comprehensive plan. An air monitor on the roof of the school was removed by the NY State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) in the mid- 1990s and not replaced.

Glens Falls Lehigh Cement (GFLC) is located directly across the Hudson River from Germantown. It is permitted by the DEC to operate 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Of particular concern are the dangers from PM 2.5, sooty chemical particles no larger than 2.5 microns in size, that may be released from cement plants. These are believed to cause thousands of premature illnesses and deaths in the United States annually from cardiovascular and respiratory diseases and some cancers. In light of these facts, Germantown residents have recently begun to advocate pressing appropriate state officials and representatives to have an air monitor re- installed in Germantown. The Plan strongly recommends the Town Board reach out to the NYSDEC and EPA to ensure the air quality in Germantown is monitored to ensure it is not adversely effected by the operation of the GFLC plant and that air quality monitoring reports be made available to Town officials quarterly.

Open Space. Although most people would say they know "open space" when they see it, it is difficult to arrive at an exact definition of it in the context of a rural community like Germantown. One method might be to distinguish "built" from 'unbuilt" lands, with unbuilt lands defined as open space. These would include working landscapes such as farms with planted fields, pastureland, orchards, and vineyards, all of which exist in Germantown; natural landscapes such as ponds, wetlands, streambeds, forests, and steep slopes; and cultural landscapes such as sites that command scenic views as well as recreational sites like athletic playing fields, playgrounds and campsites. All these areas would clearly satisfy most people's ideas of open space.





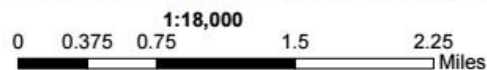
Legend

- ◆ Well - completed in unconsolidated deposits
- ◆ Well - completed in bedrock

Unconsolidated Aquifers

- Unconfined sand and gravel with a limited saturated thickness and/or silty texture
- Unconfined sand and gravel with a considerable saturated thickness
- Area where unconfined sand and gravel deposits may be underlain by a confined aquifer
- Confined aquifer - area of sand and gravel locally found beneath finer sediments
- Area of sand and gravel for which no well data exists to indicate saturated thickness

Lake, Pond, or River



Town of Germantown Unconsolidated Aquifers



Hudson River
Valley Greenway

Map Prepared By the New York Rural Water Association
As Part of a Project Entitled GIS Datasets for Groundwater
Resource Mapping Funded in Part by a Grant from the
Hudson River Valley Greenway.



The Town's working farm landscapes are described in the following Agricultural Lands and Farming section, while natural landscapes are largely described in this chapter's sections on Slopes and Topography and Waterbodies, Wetlands and Floodplains. Recreational sites are described in Chapter 9, *Community Facilities and Services*. Significant forest cover exists in parts of the Town.

Germantown possesses a number of remarkable scenic views and vistas, including several scenic roads with sweeping views of the Hudson River and the Catskill Mountains such as Hilltop Road, Northern Boulevard, Roundtop Road and Hog Trough Road and others identified on the Cultural Resources map (see *Maps*).

Three other road segments in Town have been rated in a process undertaken by the Hudson River Valley Greenway together with Columbia County residents as having good potential for designation as scenic byways. They include Route 9G north of Woods Road, County Route 8 west of Route 9G and Anchorage Road from Route 9G Anchorage Landing on the Hudson River.

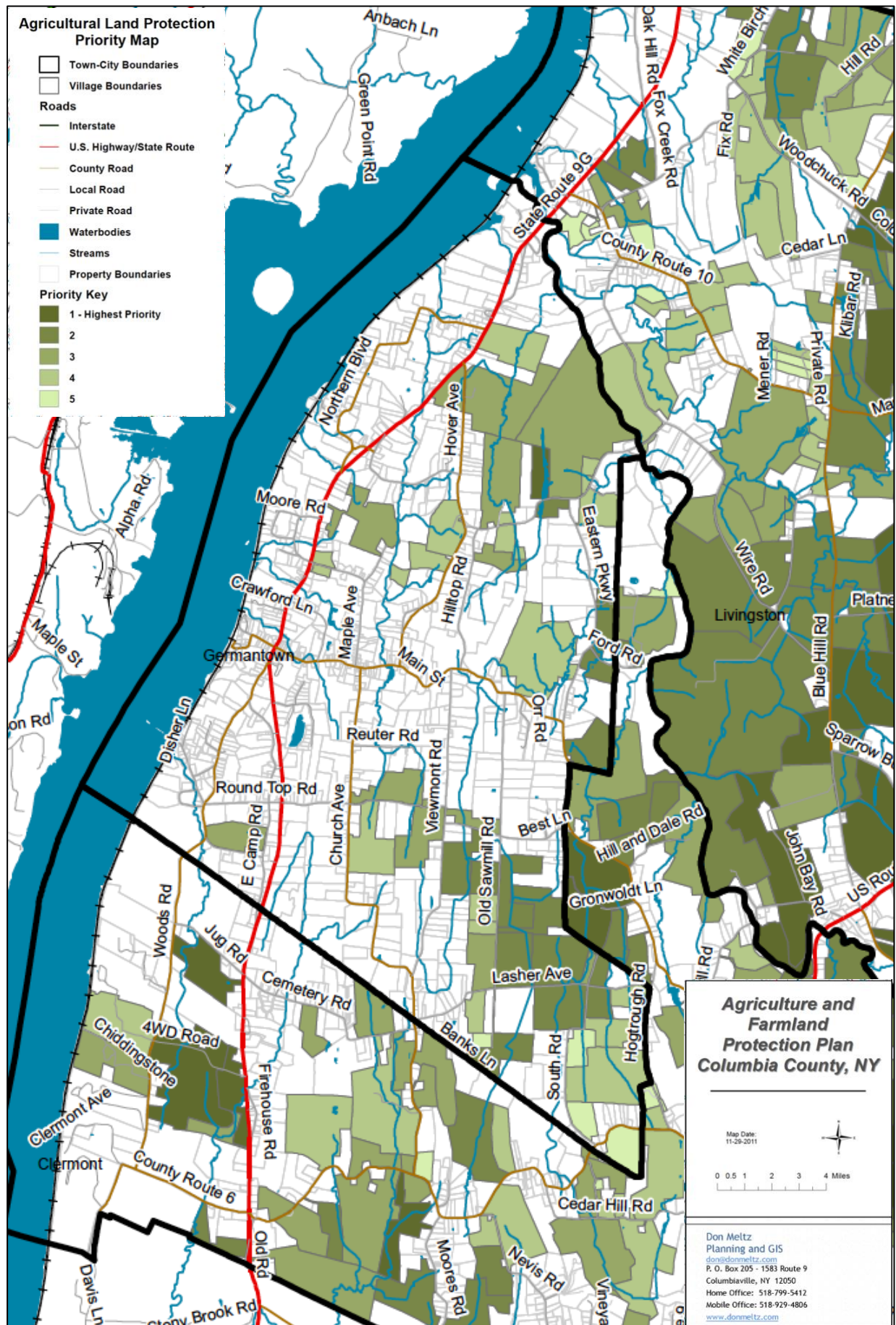
Finally, most residences in Germantown are sited on lots of two acres or more. Even in the hamlet center, some houses along Main Street are fronted by sizable lawns and backed by open fields, and driving along the Town and county roads that cross and crisscross the township, one sees large areas of unused land in fields or woods surrounding landowners' residences. These lots may technically be "built" land, but, as much as any other aspect of the Town's physical appearance, they create the impression of openness, or of "unused land," that residents may have in mind when they think of open space and refer to Germantown's rural character.

Agricultural Lands and Farming. Fruit and vegetable farming in the Hudson Valley consolidated along the Hudson River in the early 19th century, due in part to favorable microclimates. Aerial mapping of Germantown from 1959 shows a much vaster patchwork of orchards than we see today, although there were a considerable number of abandoned orchards even then. These were interspersed with open cropland and hayfields, much of which has been developed. But the aerials also show that a good deal of our current forest cover grew up on abandoned farm fields. The Land Cover map on page 28 shows these lands as shrub/scrub land.

When Germantown's Comprehensive Plan update was conducted in 1989, fruit growing was still important, although the farming that remained was diversifying and, as the plan noted, "residential settlement has supplanted agricultural activity as the primary land usage within the town." The percentage of agricultural land used for farming had declined from 32.4 percent to 21.5 percent by then. By 2004, the figure was approximately 15%. Today, the percent of the land in the Town used for agricultural purposes is 12.5%.

However, significant areas of farmland remain in the Town, primarily in the east and southeast portions, where lands are enrolled in Agricultural District #4 – farmer-initiated areas that provide certain tax and other benefits. These lands are part of larger Agricultural Districts that extend into the adjacent towns of Clermont and Livingston, reflecting the Town's part in a larger regional farm economy (see Agricultural Land Priority Protection Map on page 34).





As of 2016, there were 37 tax parcels receiving agricultural tax exemptions under New York law. Most of these were renting their fields to a few full-time farmers. It is estimated that additional acres are agricultural lands, active or not, whose owners choose not to take agricultural tax exemptions. Hay and pasture account for the largest uses, followed by corn and fruit growing, mainly apples and pears. There are also a few acres of Concord grapes - part of a larger farm outside the town limits - and Christmas trees. There are several parcels noted in the Town with recently-abandoned orchards and fields formerly used for hay, pasture and vegetable crops. Some residents have also turned to small-scale hobby farming.

Anecdotal information suggests that there are only two or three full-time farmers in Germantown. However, there are 37 tax parcels receiving an agricultural assessment. To qualify for an agricultural assessment land must be a minimum of seven acres and farmed as a single operation; must be used for crop production or commercial boarding of horses, or livestock production; and gross \$10,000 or more per year. Parcels of less than seven acres may qualify if gross sales are \$50,000 or more. Landowners who rent land to farmers are eligible to receive agricultural assessment if the property satisfies acreage requirements, the farmer renting the land meets the gross sales requirement and there is a written lease between the farmer and landowner of at least five years.

Farming in Germantown today consist of smaller and more diversified farms than in years past. Many farmers are involved with mixed farming, garden crops and livestock operations, and livestock producers growing cattle, hogs, poultry, sheep and goats, as well as goat milk products. There are greenhouse operations, horse farms, a beekeeper, an herb farmer and more.

In late 2006, Germantown residents began to organize in support of agriculture with the help of the Glynwood Center and its Keep Farming program, which was designed to help communities take action to strengthen local farming and the regional food system. The Towns of Clermont, Livingston and Red Hook joined with Germantown in recognition of the regional nature of farming in support of this initiative.

The new Hudson Valley Agri-Business Development Corporation complements this effort as it is intended to develop new agricultural businesses in the County. The Town Board should work with the County Ag & Farmland Protection Board, Columbia Land Conservancy (CLC) and NYS Ag & Markets to sustain agriculture in Germantown. The CLC's Farmer Landowner match program is one tool that could be used to save farms. This Plan recommends on-going networking with these entities to save farms and agriculture in Germantown.

Future Issues

Germantown's neighbors are already experiencing development pressure from the NY Metropolitan area. Our physical base makes many areas of Town unsuitable for building due to soil, topography, and water resources, but our current zoning and subdivision regulations provide very little in the way of controls. Any long-term development plan for the Town must consider the limitations of its physical base and natural resources, particularly the difficulty of providing for future water needs.



Throughout the comprehensive planning process, the townspeople have also expressed a strong and unified desire to protect the Town's "rural character" with its natural beauty, "farmland and open spaces, forests and fields." As defined by the participants in the Community Visioning Session, Germantown residents value a community that protects its water resources and air quality, maintains open space, forests, wetlands and stream corridors, provides access to its parks and riverfront, and maintains the viability of agriculture and businesses that support farming.

Furthermore, there is hard evidence that working landscapes and other open space lands make important fiscal contributions to the community that significantly exceed the service demands these lands generate. In 2001, the American Farmland Trust summarized 83 studies of the cost of community services and found that residential uses cost communities an average of \$1.15 in community services for every \$1.00 in tax revenues collected. In contrast, farm and open space lands cost communities only \$.36 in services for every \$1.00 in tax revenues collected. More recently, a 2005 Cost of Services Study by Bonner & Gray for the Town of Rochester, NY found residential uses cost communities an average of \$1.27 in community services for every \$1.00 in tax revenues collected. In contrast, farm and open space lands cost communities only \$.18 in services for every \$1.00 in tax revenues collected – the same cost as commercial and industrial uses. These findings show, that while residential development does increase the tax base, the increase is not enough to cover public service costs to the new development. The findings also demonstrate that farm and open space land uses should be considered similar in value to commercial development with respect to the large net revenues they generate for communities.

Water Resources. The Town's extensive wetlands, waterbodies, stream corridors and groundwater resources provide a variety of highly valuable benefits to the community. As future development could adversely impact the quantity and quality of the Town's water resources, it is important to develop and adopt new land-use regulations that will reduce these impacts as much as possible. In addition, the Town's floodplain regulations should be evaluated to determine if they could be made more protective, thereby enabling Town residents to have access to low-cost flood insurance. Finally, because most of the Town's steep slopes lie along major waterways, the protection of these slopes can help to protect water quality. For additional discussion of water-supply issues, see Chapter 9, *Community Facilities and Services*.

Climate Change. Virtually all scientists agree that the earth's climate is now negatively affected by an increase in atmospheric greenhouse gases that will become more severe over time. In our community, in our lifetimes, we may anticipate rising temperatures, more intense storms and flooding and an impact on farming and future development. The Hudson River is a tidal estuary and susceptible to sea level rise, which makes Climate Change even more relevant to Germantown. The challenge is global, but local efforts are possible and necessary to help sustain an environmentally healthy quality of life in Germantown. This Plan supports local measures to address climate change including participating in the NYS Climate Smart Communities (CSC) Program. Its goals are to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, prepare for a changing climate, and save taxpayer money. Local governments can participate by signing a voluntary pledge, which outlines strategies they are prepared to pursue for these purposes. These include things like monitoring energy consumption, energy efficiency measure in town buildings, changes in land use regulations and planning decisions. The state offers generous grants with a 50/50 match that can be used to undertake more ambitious projects that promote the program goals.



A complementary program to CSC is the Clean Energy Communities, a program of the New York Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA). Communities can complete a minimum of improvements at little or no cost to the community which then entitles them as a Clean Energy Community to apply for grants up to \$250,000 to fund additional projects. These two programs are thoroughly complementary and actions under one can help qualify a town for credit under the other. For example, most new Climate Smart communities start by taking actions to increase energy efficiency or install renewable energy sources such as the Clean Energy program incentivizes, and NYSERDA provides a lot of technical assistance for these actions.

Agriculture. It is tempting to doubt the long-term viability of small-scale agricultural activities standing up to development pressures and land values. But an inventory of farms and farmers only begins to suggest the scope of agriculture's influence within any community. Many land-use preservationists agree that the best way to maintain open space is to preserve the working landscape, especially farming landscapes. And they make the case that the value of agriculture is much greater than numbers and acres alone can suggest. More than \$5.4 billion in farm products were sold from New York farms in 2012, and those farms spent close to \$4.1 billion dollars more to produce those goods. In 2012, there were 494 farms consisting of 95,378 acres in Columbia County. The market value of products sold for this year were \$66,524,000.

And, as noted above, many studies show that farmland offers communities a net gain in value, as their tax revenues outpace the cost to a community for infrastructure, schools and other services. There's no question that farming has lost ground over recent decades, but agriculture is still an important economic sector in New York State. At 18% of total land area, Columbia County has the largest land base in agriculture among Hudson Valley counties, and this base has *increased* slightly during the recent period, due in part to an expanded definition of agriculture to encompass horse farms and hunting preserves. A study by the The Glynwood Center published in 2005 found that losing a critical mass of agriculture to development increases the challenges to continued farming, while land and tax costs increase and income erodes. This situation argues for taking a regional approach to farmland and open-space preservation.

It is beyond the scope of this planning process to undertake the wide-ranging assessment that is needed, but a strong case can be made for seeing agriculture as an integral and far-ranging piece of the Germantown community, and its significance as an economic development sector. In addition to direct income generation, support businesses from equipment and feed vendors to food markets are part of this equation. Agriculture is also an important part of natural resource and open space protection efforts, and is a scenic resource that appeals to a wide cross-section of the populace. Once a community embraces agriculture for its benefits, there is a chance to take action to protect and preserve it.

The Town's involvement in County and regional Agriculture and Farmland Protection programs is a tremendous opportunity to build a regional effort to strengthen agriculture and is consistent with preserving the Town's rural character. The Town should continue to support such efforts and should build on the program by working with the Hudson Valley Agri-Business Development Corporation on other initiatives.



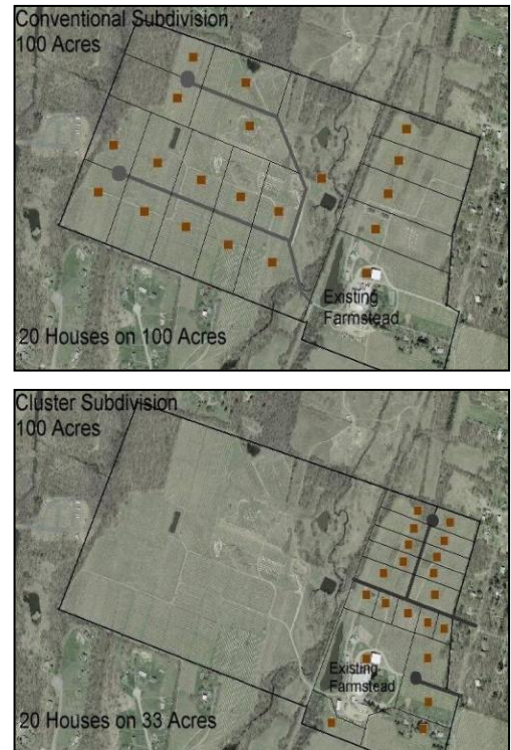
Agricultural and Natural Resource Designations

Two designations support the agricultural and natural resource areas of the Town -- Agricultural Resource and Natural Resource. The Agricultural Resource designation is intended to include lands within the Town's Agricultural District as well as extensive overlapping areas of wetlands, streams, hydric soils and soils that are vulnerable to contamination. These areas include many of the Town's largest parcels and should be planned to significantly limit residential and other development that could conflict with adjacent agriculture or adversely impact water resources.

The Natural Resource designation is intended to include primarily contiguous areas of large-lot lands with any combination of the following resources: forest cover, wetlands, streams, hydric soils, soils vulnerable to contamination, floodplain, Hudson riverfront, steep slopes, designated and proposed scenic byways and rare-animal habitat. In most instances, included lands include multiple such resources. These areas should be planned to limit residential and other development that could adversely impact natural and other resources. Both the Agricultural Resource and Natural Resource designations are intended to promote the use of *conservation-design subdivisions*, which can permanently protect important areas of open-space resources while allowing limited, carefully sited residences.

Major subdivisions involving five or more lots in either designation are encouraged to use conservation-design standards. Conservation-design standards use a density standard rather than a minimum lot size to allow the same number of dwellings as the underlying zoning but with maximum flexibility in sizing and siting the dwellings. For instance, an area designated Natural Resource with a five-acre minimum lot size would ordinarily allow one dwelling per five acres. If a major subdivision were proposed on a 50-acre property, conservation-design standards could potentially permit ten dwellings on one-acre lots grouped in one area so that the remaining 40 acres of the site would be protected for open-space values. The open space could be used for farming, for the recreational needs of the residential development or for public purposes, as the landowner desires.

This Plan also strongly supports farmer participation in the New York State Agricultural and Markets Farm Protection Implementation Program (FPIG) that offers state funding to Purchase Development Rights (PDR) from farmers (see page 6 for full description of program).



Above (top to bottom): The above illustrates how a conservation subdivision can be used to retain large tracts of farmland. The top illustration shows a conventional subdivision of 100 acres into 20 five-acre lots where the community's zoning requires a minimum lot size of five acres per lot. The illustration below it shows a conservation (cluster) subdivision where the 20 building lots are clustered on 33 acres of the site – leaving 67 acres of prime farmland within a conservation easement. The conservation easement can be held by a homeowner's association, land trust, or sold to an adjacent farmer for the agricultural value of the property that is far lower than the use value if it could be developed.



Goals and Recommendations

Goals:

- To ensure protection of natural and agricultural resources through Town regulatory procedures, including zoning, site-plan review and subdivision regulations.
- To institute measures to promote, protect and preserve working farms and landscapes in the Town.
- To adopt methods to identify, evaluate and protect open-space areas.
- To ensure that the quality of air is not hazardous to public health or the environment.

Recommendations:

Natural Resource Protection

NR.1. Amend zoning and subdivision standards to:

- a) adopt wetlands and waterbodies standards to protect water resources, including stream corridors,
- b) ensure that the types and densities of allowed development in areas with limited groundwater supplies do not exceed capacity,
- c) adopt siting standards for all new developments to protect environmentally sensitive lands, including slopes and ridges, forested corridors, open space and farmland, wetlands and waterbodies, important habitat and scenic resources,
- d) ensure that the types and densities of development allowed in and adjacent to Town Agricultural Districts minimize potential adverse impacts to agricultural lands while enhancing opportunities for increased on-farm income, and
- e) preserve valuable open space by using conservation-design subdivisions to site housing in more rural parts of the Town in environmentally sensitive ways.

NR.2. Adopt a plan with specific goals and a timeline for the Town to reduce energy use and solid waste production by:

- a) obtaining an energy audit of Town facilities to determine where energy savings can be realized, and
- b) evaluating energy-saving and nonpolluting alternatives for purchases and capital improvements, including building according to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards.

NR.3. Develop GIS (Geographic Information Systems) capability within Town government as a planning tool.

NR.4. Investigate opportunities for funding to develop a management plan for those roads located within the Town Scenic Viewshed Overlay Zone.

NR.5. Develop a long-range plan for preservation and protection of agricultural, open- space and natural-resource areas, to include the evaluation of areas for protection, the identification of suitable land-use tools, programs and funding sources and a public-education and outreach program.



- NR.6. Support the Town's involvement in County and Regional agriculture and farmland protection programs and similar efforts to promote connections between farming and the community.
- NR.7. Evaluate the need for a local "Right to Farm" ordinance, new zoning provisions for farm and farmworker housing, new on-farm business options and other farm- friendly provisions.
- NR.8. Work regionally with those concerned to obtain air monitoring equipment, to develop and implement a monitoring program and to hold accountable those responsible for ensuring appropriate air quality in the area.
- NR.9. Implement Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) best management practices as required by the NYSDEC.
- NR.10. Minimize impact of new development on the natural resources through best management practices (BMP) and *low-impact design standards*.
- Require onsite stormwater management to reduce runoff and nonpoint source pollution.
 - Minimize the amount of tree loss and impervious cover for new projects, consistent with permitted land-use intensity.
 - Encourage clustering of development away from environmentally sensitive land such as woodlands, wetlands and steep slopes.
- NR.11. Conserve the riparian zone along major streams and tributaries.
- NR.12. Participate in the NYS Climate Smart Community and Clean Energy Community programs to make community more resilient and lower greenhouse gas emissions.
- NR.13. Develop wellhead protection plan for the Town of Germantown based upon findings in the New York Rural Association Groundwater Protection Plan included as an appendix to this Plan.

Agriculture and Farmland Protection

- AG.1. Encourage both private and public efforts to preserve and manage agricultural lands through purchase of development rights (PDR) program administered by the Columbia County Ag & Farmland Protection Board and NYS Agriculture & Markets.
- AG.2. Encourage conservation subdivision design to preserve prime soils when farms are subdivided.
- AG.3. Require sufficient vegetative buffer on the nonagricultural land, so farms are buffered from homes.
- AG.4. Support local farmer efforts to diversify their farms by providing letters of support to farmers who may be seeking funding through USDA loan and grant programs.
- AG.5. Encourage participation in the New York Farm Link Program (nyfarmnet.org) to match farmers who are selling their farms with people who are looking to purchase a farm.
- AG.6. Increase community engagement and consumer demand for locally grown food.
- Work with regional economic-development entities and County and local governments to give local agriculture a higher priority and more visibility.
 - Help connect institutional, restaurant and wholesale opportunities with agricultural producers.
- AG.7. Review and revise regulations pertaining to farm operations to ensure these laws do not needlessly inhibit farming (e.g. farm stands, year-round farmer's markets, greenhouses, value-added product operations, home-food production, U-picks, CSAs, and agritourist sites).



7.0 Housing

“I would like to see local people being able to afford living in this area. I am supportive of affordable homes and the development towards jobs as long as it isn’t at the expense of our present rural environment.”

Introduction

The above quote aptly summarizes the desire that Germantown remain rural while also looking cautiously toward the future. Housing is a fundamental human need, and although Germantown’s population growth over the past decades and its need for new housing have been moderate, that scenario is changing. The small size of the Town, coupled with the townspeople often expressed desire to maintain its rural character, clearly suggests a need for rigorous planning strategies that provide for housing growth, including affordable housing opportunities, without destroying the landscape so highly valued by the Town’s residents.

This chapter describes the current mix of housing and recent residential building trends. It then addresses housing occupancy and tenure, housing costs and affordability and housing conditions.

Existing Conditions and Trends

Housing Mix. In 2010, almost three-quarters of the 1,050 total housing units in Germantown consisted of single-family dwellings. Multi-family units and duplexes comprised slightly less than 20% of the other housing units and mobile homes just about 3%. Germantown had a higher percentage of single-family dwellings and a lower percentage of mobile homes than is true for Columbia County (see Table 5).

Table 5: Housing Type						
	Germantown		Columbia County		New York State	
	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010
Single Family	732 (74.4%)	834 (79.4%)	21,224 (70.3%)	24,175 (73.7%)	3,198,486 (41.7%)	3,881,569 (47.5%)
Duplex	80 (8.1%)	100 (9.5%)	2,264 (7.5%)	2,132 (6.5%)	836,907 (10.9%)	866,202 (10.6%)
Multi Family	109 (11.1%)	85 (8.2%)	3,369 (11.2%)	3,806 (11.6%)	3,070,630 (39.8%)	3,236,003 (39.6%)
Mobile Home	63 (6.4%)	31 (3.0%)	2,809 (9.3%)	2,689 (8.2%)	207,378 (2.7%)	187,949 (2.3%)
Total Housing Units	984 (100%)	1050 (100%)	30,207 (100%)	32,802 (100%)	7,679,307 (100%)	8,171,725 (100%)

Source: U.S. Census 200 and 2010

Changes in the mix of housing over time show the types of dwellings for which there are demand and need. Between 2000 and 2010 the percentage of single-family houses increased very slightly as did the percentage of duplexes. The percentage of multi-family and mobile homes decreased during this period. In the five years since the 2010 Census, however, the number of permits for the construction of new single-family homes has decreased dramatically over the previous five years.



Before the Great Recession of 2007, the average cost of construction was on the rise as well, more than doubling between 1996 and 2005 (see Table 6). However, the collapse of the housing bubble in 2007 resulted in a dramatic drop in the number of residential building permits in Germantown. From the peak of eleven (11) single-family home building permits in 2005, only one (1) building permit was issued in 2011. The number of single-family home building permits has stayed in the low single digits since 2011.

Table 6: Single Family Home New Construction Building Permits		
Year	# of Permits	Average Cost
1996	2	\$105,000
1997	4	\$97,500
1998	5	\$136,000
1999	3	\$216,700
2000	8	\$300,000
2001	10	\$165,000
2002	9	\$171,500
2003	18	\$198,000
2004	8	\$202,100
2005	11	\$275,000
2006	7	
2007	3	
2008	4	
2009	6	
2010	5	
2011	1	
2012	3	
2013	1	
2014	2	
2015	1	
2016	3	

Source: www.city-data.com/city/Germantown-New-York.html

Housing Occupancy and Tenure. As noted in Chapter 4, *The People of Germantown*, well over half the Town's households are families, and the average household size is 2.30 persons. This somewhat low average household size reflects an increase in the number of residents living alone or as couples without children. Housing occupancy rates indicate the percentage of homes and rentals that are occupied and the percentage that are vacant and available for sale or rent. Germantown and, even more so, Columbia County, have housing vacancy rates well above that for New York State. This reflects the significant number of second homes that are not primary residences and that are not captured in the 2010 Census. While Germantown's vacancy rate is officially 19.8%, 12.3% of this figure reflects this part-time use. (Source: U.S. Census 2010 Table DP-1.)

Vacancy rates of between 2% and 5% as applied to full-time dwellings are considered acceptable. Higher rates than these indicate a lack of demand for housing in the area, and lower rates indicate a tight market and inadequate numbers of available homes. Germantown's homeowner vacancy rate of 2.7% is within the acceptable range, however, the rental vacancy rate of 11.8% is outside the acceptable range. As shown in Table 6 above, 100 new dwelling permits were issued between 2000 and 2016; it is not known how many of these permits were sought by long-term residents or were issued to newcomers to the community.



Housing Values/Costs. Germantown's median home value as of the 2010 Census was \$258,000, somewhat higher than that for the county. The Town also has a higher proportion of houses valued at \$300,000 or more than does the county (see Table 7).

Table 7: Value of Owner-Occupied Housing in Germantown (2000-2010)						
	Germantown		Columbia County		New York State	
	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010
Owner-occupied units	427	576	12,024	18,804	2,689,728	3,894,722
Value: Less than \$50,000	1.4%	4.9%	2.5%	6.5%	5.6%	5.7%
\$50,000 to \$99,000	28.3%	2.7%	38.4%	7.0%	26.6%	11.4%
\$100,000 to \$149,000	35.8%	7.6%	33.7%	12.4%	18.3%	11.3%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	17.1%	19.6%	13.4%	16.9%	17.4%	9.8%
\$200,000 to \$299,999	11.9%	26.0%	8.7%	28.3%	18.7%	14.1%
\$300,000 or more	5.4%	39.2%	3.3%	28.9%	13.5%	47.8%
\$500,000 or more		12.32%		10.0%		23.3%
Median	\$123,000	\$258,100	\$111,80	\$221,900	\$148,700	\$283,400
Source: U.S. Census 2000 and 2010						

According to the local tax assessor, sales in Germantown in this period have primarily been to people from New York City.

Housing Affordability. Affordable housing is important to the economic and social health of a community because it helps assure that residents and their families have access to housing that fits their budgets. New York State communities also have a legal responsibility to provide a range of types, densities and costs of housing to adequately meet regional housing needs. Affordable housing is defined by the federal government as housing costs of no more than 30% of a household's annual income.

In 2009 over half of Germantown's homeowners paid less than 15% of their monthly income on housing costs, a percentage that compared favorably with costs for the county and the state. In all, nearly 70% of homeowners in Germantown spent less than 25% of their monthly income on housing. At the same time, 32.3% of homeowners spent 30% or more of their income on housing, which may be more than they can comfortably afford. The proportion of similarly stretched household budgets in the county is significantly lower, while it is lower for the state (see Table 8).

Table 8: Selected Monthly Owner Costs as a Percentage of Household Income (1999-2009)						
	Germantown		Columbia County		New York State	
	1999	2009	1999	2009	1999	2009
Less than 15 percent	36.8%	57.9%	35.7%	47.9%	31.5%	48.8%
15 to 19.9 percent	16.4%	4.5%	16.8%	13.7%	17.1%	13.5%
20 to 24.9 percent	15.2%	4.1%	15.4%	10.8%	14.2%	9.0%
25 to 29.9 percent	8.9%	1.2%	9.2%	4.9%	10.0%	6.2%
30 to 34.9 percent	7.5%	5.0%	5.8%	5.8%	6.7%	4.5%
35 percent or more	15.2%	27.3%	16.2%	16.9%	19.6%	18.0%
Not computed	0.0%		0.8%		0.7%	
Source: U.S. Census 2000 and 2010						



In the rental market at the time of the 2010 Census, slightly over 40% of Germantown residents who rented rather than owned their living accommodations paid less than 30% of their income on housing. Another 59.2% spent 30% or more, a figure that is somewhat higher than for the county or the state (see Table 9). The Census American Community Survey estimated that 58.1% of residents who rented in Germantown spent 30% or more on housing cost in 2015.

Table 9: Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income (1999)						
	Germantown		Columbia County		New York State	
	1999	2009	1999	2009	1999	2009
Less than 15 percent	10.4%	2.8%	15.9%	14.2%	19.1%	13.8%
15 to 19 percent	19.3%	5.6%	13.5%	15.5%	12.8%	11.8%
20 to 24 percent	19.8%	22.9%	15.2%	13.0%	11.4%	11.8%
25 to 29 percent	10.9%	9.5%	9.7%	12.3%	9.8%	11.1%
30 to 34 percent	6.4%	31.3%	7.0%	10.8%	7.1%	9.0%
35 percent or higher	21.8%	27.9%	27.7%	34.2%	33.4%	42.6%
Not Computed	11.4%		10.9%		6.3%	

Source: U.S. Census 2000 and 2010

Future Issues

Data confirms that the Town currently has a healthy mix of housing as to type and even as to value, while the population has remained basically stable. However, this balance and socioeconomic diversity may be hard to maintain in the future. In the past decade change has been steadily occurring. Fueled largely by an influx of people from elsewhere, many of whom live here part-time, there has been an increase in both the volume and cost of new construction and in the sales of certain kinds of previously owned homes.

This is reflected, in part, in the growing homeownership affordability gap, that is reflected in Table 8. Between 2000 and 2010, those homeowners spending more than 35% of their household income on housing increased from 15.2% to 27.3%. During this same period, those homeowners who paid less than 15% of their household income on housing cost jumped to 57.9%, far exceeding the increase in the median household income for the Town. This can only be explained by the increase in second homeowners in Germantown.

Should current housing trends continue without careful planning, such growth will result in housing sprawl that will have a serious impact on already limited water resources, safe management of wastewater, preservation of open space, as well as the availability of affordable land and housing. The Town's attraction of second homeowners appears to be driving up home ownership cost, which may force the children of year-round residents out of the housing market, without some provisions to continue to provide for affordable housing opportunities.

Future Planning

Careful planning can protect against sprawl and mitigate these problems by directing future housing development into areas where adequate water and sewer infrastructure exist or could be made available. Careful planning can also encourage a broader range of housing options to maintain diversity and maximize choice through residents' various stages of life.



The Town currently has a Hamlet Residential zone that is limited to a small area in the hamlet center along Main Street and on Lower Main Street west of Route 9G; there is very little remaining developable acreage in this zone. This Comprehensive Plan proposes that the designation for that zone be expanded in both areas to allow for additional residential development that can take advantage of public sewer availability. More housing opportunities, subject to design review standards, would be allowed, as well, in the Hamlet Commercial zone described in Chapter 8. Also proposed is the continuing option for rural residential development, although at somewhat lower densities than has been allowed in the past and with siting and other standards to protect or preserve natural resources.

Goal and Recommendations

Goal:

- To ensure that future housing development occurs in ways that will meet the diverse needs of the residents of the community, protect the environment and natural resources and promote the integration of neighborhoods into a cohesive community.

Recommendations:

H.1. Amend zoning and subdivision standards to:

- a) provide for more moderate-cost housing opportunities in the village center such as homes on smaller lots and duplexes,
- b) allow alternate housing arrangements such as accessory apartments and other shared living arrangements or temporary housing for relatives,
- c) direct future housing into appropriate areas of the Town, based on sewer and water capabilities, existing development patterns, development constraints and natural-resource considerations,
- d) preserve valuable open space by using conservation-design subdivisions (see Chapter 6, “Future Planning” section), and
- e) adopt design review standards or guidelines for new multi-family housing.

H.2. Work regionally with other communities on large alternate-living projects requiring broad support and major funding.

H.3. Create a Housing Committee to gather information and establish a database to provide assistance to income-eligible families about affordable-housing options and resources available from county, state and federal governments and banking institutions.

H.4. Implement a *first-time homebuyer* program that provides down payment assistance and below market rate financing programs.

H.5. Implement *housing rehabilitation programs* that provide financial assistance to restore both owner occupied and investor owned housing for low-moderate income and senior residents.

H.6. Develop land use regulations for Tiny Houses.



8.0 Local Economy & Commercial Development

“Help and allow our businesses that exist expand and (don’t) try to stop them when they offer so much to our community. Give the people of Germantown and small businesses jobs right here at home.”

“Have some control over the NYS Route 9G corridor through town. Focus growth in hamlet, commercial and residential (areas). Cooperative planning with nearby towns.”

“Need to improve the character of the Germantown hamlet which means sprucing up the buildings and environment. Any expansion of current businesses or bringing in of new ones should enhance the view of the hamlet as a residential and non-industrial area.”

“Expand job opportunities: first through business retention and recruitment; and second by promoting and marketing Germantown’s rural character and quality of life to attract micro, small-scale and medium-scale enterprises (e.g., value-added agriculture, light industries, personal services, retail, technology and tourism related services, etc.).”

Introduction

Access to employment and commercial goods and services is critical to the economic vitality of Germantown. The challenge for the Town is to encourage commercial growth that serves community needs and adds to the tax base while maintaining the Town’s rural character.

Germantown already enjoys a relatively healthy tax status. However, the revenues that support its fiscal well-being do not come directly from significant commercial taxation. Rather, the Town’s sound fiscal condition is partly due to other revenue streams, but more importantly to the concurrence of healthy real estate values, a low population density, and a rural economy that does not make sizable demands on the Town’s infrastructure and services. The healthy real estate values reflect the desirability of Germantown and the quality of life it offers its residents.

This chapter reviews local economic trends and conditions including employment, resident income status and current business ventures. The results from the Community Visioning Session show a clear direction envisioned by the Town’s residents for future commerce, indicating the types and scale of businesses that would be in harmony with Germantown’s natural resources and rural character. Commercial expansion can be achieved without resort to large or sprawling commercial or industrial enterprises.

Existing Conditions and Trends

Employment. In 2010, the U.S. Census reported that 60.5% of the Germantown’s population over the age of 16 was employed, which is slightly higher than for Columbia County and New York State. The unemployment rate for the Town was a low 4.3%, below that for both county and state (see Table 10).



Table 10: Employment	Germantown		Columbia County		New York State	
	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010
Population 16 Years & Over	1,603	1,439	49,953	52,582	14,805,912	15,394,140
In Labor Force	62.7%	63.2%	62.0%	63.2%	61.1%	63.7%
Civilian Labor Force	62.7%	63.2%	61.9%	63.2%	60.9%	63.5%
Employed	60.3%	60.5%	59.2%	59.0%	56.6%	58.8%
Unemployed	2.4%	4.3%	2.7%	6.6%	4.3%	7.5%
Armed Forces	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.2%	0.2%
Not In Labor Force	37.3%	36.8%	28.0%	36.8%	38.9%	36.3%

Source: U.S. Census 2000 and 2010

Germantown residents work in a wide variety of sectors with nearly a quarter employed in the education and health and social service sectors, nearly 5% in construction, nearly 15% in retail trade and over 8% in manufacturing. Relative to Columbia County, a significantly higher proportion of Germantown residents works in the extractive industries – agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting and mining -- and in transportation, warehousing and utilities. Underrepresented sectors in Germantown as compared with the county include public administration, construction and wholesale trade (see Table 11).

Table 11: Economic Sectors	Germantown		Columbia County		New York State	
Industry	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010
Agriculture, forestry, fishing & hunting, and mining	6.1%	5.6%	3.1%	3.6%	0.6%	0.6%
Construction	9.6%	4.1%	8.7%	8.7%	5.2%	5.9%
Manufacturing	8.4%	9.6%	10.4%	7.2%	10.0%	7.2%
Information	2.6%	0.7%	3.0%	2.4%	4.1%	3.1%
Transportation and warehousing, utilities	4.7%	4.2%	2.7%	4.0%	5.5%	5.3%
Wholesale Trade	1.1%	0.6%	4.6%	2.9%	3.4%	2.8%
Retail Trade	9.4%	14.7%	10.7%	11.8%	10.5%	10.6%
Finance, insurance, real estate and rental and leasing	4.3%	3.7%	5.0%	5.7%	8.8%	8.6%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	6.8%	8.0%	6.6%	6.1%	7.3%	8.5%
Educational, health and social services	23.9%	24.9%	24.5%	25.3%	24.3%	26.6%
Other Services (except public administration)	8.1%	2.4%	4.8%	5.3%	5.1%	5.0%
Public Administration	4.2%	6.1%	7.8%	7.5%	5.2%	4.9%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative and waste-management services	10.7%	15.3%	8.0%	9.6%	10.1%	10.8%

Source: U.S. Census 2000 and 2010

Between 2000 and 2010, there were some significant shifts in the sectors that employed Germantown residents. The fastest growing employment sectors included retail trade; arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services; public administration and manufacturing. The fastest declining employment sectors were in the construction, information, other services, and wholesale trade industries. These trends did not mirror County or State trends and show a shift in employment that is unique to Germantown.



This Plan supports measures to accommodate growth in all economic sectors, but also recommends periodic review of the Town's land use regulations to provide employment opportunities within the Town of Germantown, consistent with the other objectives of this Plan.

More than two-thirds of employed residents of the Town are private wage and salary workers, similar to the percentage for the county. In 2000, Germantown residents were more likely to be self-employed and less likely to be government workers than was true for Columbia County workers. In 2010, Germantown residents who were self-employed dropped to 8.6%, just below the County rate. In 2010, the percentage of Germantown residents employed as government workers increased to 18.8%, which was consistent with the County rate. These findings show a general realignment in the class of workers away from self-employment, but some of this trend may have been affected by the housing market collapse and significant decline in new home construction. (see Table 12). As the housing market slowly recovers, there is the potential for an increase in the number of self-employed workers in the construction industry.

Table 12: Class of Worker (2000-2010)						
	Germantown		Columbia County		New York State	
	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010
Employed civilian population 16 years and over	947	871	29,587	31,015	8,382,988	9,045,999
Private wage and salary workers	70.9%	71.4%	69.5%	70.0%	76.8%	76.8%
Government workers	14.4%	18.8%	19.3%	19.9%	17.0%	16.8%
Self-employed workers in own not incorporated business	14.6%	8.6%	10.8%	10.0%	6.0%	5.0%
Unpaid family workers	0.1%	1.1%	0.4%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%

Source: U.S. Census 2000 and 2010

Income. In 1999, the median household income in Germantown was \$42,195, slightly higher than that for Columbia County, but slightly lower than that for New York State. In 2009, the median household income in Germantown was \$53,542, which was slightly lower than Columbia County and lower than that for the State of New York.

There are many factors that may have contributed to this shift including the loss in better paying construction and information jobs, which traditionally provide higher wages. The replacement of these jobs with lower paying retail jobs in the region were also likely a contributing factor, which mirrors national trends. A bright spot for Germantown is the continued growth in [small businesses within the Germantown hamlet center](#). Those residents employed in this industry grew from 8.4% to 9.6% between 2000 and 2010.

What the 2010 Census data does not pick up is the income of the Town's second homeowners. The Census data is collected on year-round residents. It is reasonable to assume that the household income of these part-time residents, whose primary residences are in the metropolitan New York area, are considerably higher than those of year-round residents. The part-time residents bring with them buying power and disposable income that is likely contributing to growth in the retail trade and arts and entertainment industries. The provision of goods and services to meet both year-round and part-time residents along with the provision of employment opportunities for residents is an important goal of this Plan.



Table 13: Household Income 1999-2009	Germantown		Columbia County		New York State	
	1999	2009	1999	2009	1999	2009
Households	838	772	24,852	25,686	7,060,595	7,205,740
Less than \$10,000	6.3%	6.3%	7.5%	5.0%	11.5%	8.1%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	6.6%	4.9%	6.2%	4.4%	6.4%	5.3%
\$15,000 to \$24,000	14.0%	6.5%	13.4%	10.9%	11.7%	10.0%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	13.2%	11.9%	14.1%	10.3%	11.4%	9.4%
\$35,000 to \$49,000	18.4%	14.0%	17.7%	14.7%	14.8%	12.6%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	19.1%	22.0%	21.0%	18.4%	18.4%	17.4%
\$75,000 to \$99,000	9.9%	14.0%	9.5%	13.2%	10.6%	12.2%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	9.2%	14.5%	6.4%	14.8%	9.1%	13.5%
\$150,000 to \$199,000	1.1%	1.4%	2.0%	4.0%	2.9%	5.5%
\$200,000 or more	2.3%	4.4%	2.1%	4.3%	3.3%	6.1%
Median Household income	\$42,195	\$53,542	\$41,915	\$55,546	\$43,393	\$55,603

Source: U.S. Census 2000 and 2010

Table 14 shows poverty levels in 1999, which were low in Germantown as compared to the State and slightly lower than the levels for the County. Even so, 28 Germantown families (5%) lived below the poverty line in 1999. In 2009, poverty levels for families were still low in Germantown compared to County and State averages, but the percentage of persons 65 years and older living below the poverty level increased from 5.7% in 1999 to 12.6% in 2009.

Table 14: Poverty Status (1999 - 2009)						
	Germantown		Columbia County		New York State	
	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010
Families below poverty level	5.0%	1.2%	6.4%	5.9%	11.5%	10.8%
With related children under 18 yrs	9.3%	0.0%	10.6%	11.3%	16.9%	16.5%
With related children under 5 yrs	16.2%	0.0%	15.8%	5.1%	20.2%	16.5%
Individuals below poverty level	7.9%	5.6%	9.0%	9.5%	14.6%	14.2%
18 Years and over	7.0%	6.6%	8.0%	9.0%	12.8%	12.6%
65 years and older	5.7%	12.6%	6.8%	5.5%	11.3%	11.5%

Source: U.S. Census 2000 and 2010

The increase in the percentage of seniors living below the poverty line in Germantown may be due to Germantown's aging population and the fact that most retirees live on a fixed income. These trends point toward the growing need to provide services for the Town's senior residents.



Commercial and Industrial Land Uses. Current commercial activities are scattered throughout the Town, but there are four points of concentration: the intersection of Route 9G and County Route 8; Main Street at the Germantown hamlet center; the west side of Palatine Park Road; and a strip along NYS Route 9G in North Germantown. These locations offer a mix of service and retail businesses. While commercial uses in three of these areas have a “highway commercial” feel, those commercial and other uses in the Germantown hamlet center are characterized by small-scale, traditional patterns of development.

In 2011, the Town Board adopted a new Zoning and Subdivision Law, which established the Business Development (BD) Zoning District, which is intended to permit nonpolluting light-industrial, high-tech and office-park uses that generate considerable employment base in the community. This Plan supports the objectives of the BD District and recommends the Town Board work with County and State Economic Development Agencies to develop small-scale shovel-ready sites within the Town of Germantown for such purposes. Periodically, there are State funds available for the development of shovel-ready sites.

At present, there are three long-term and important community-based employers in Germantown: Taconic Farms, GTel (Germantown Telephone Company, Inc.) and the Germantown Central School District. Taconic Farms has 425 employees, of whom about 100 live in Germantown. While Taconic Farms has grown significantly in recent years, it considers Germantown to be “tapped out” in terms of utilities and labor force and does not plan to increase production in Germantown. The GTel has 14 employees who work in service, technical, installation and repair areas and says it is difficult to find skilled technicians locally. G-Tel is in the process of overbuilding and updating the existing cooper infrastructure to a fiber optic network, which will dramatically improve the telecommunication infrastructure in Germantown. This investment will help existing businesses to remain competitive and make the Town more attractive to new businesses, home-based businesses and telecommuting.

Future Issues

Both the survey data and the community-forum results indicate that Germantown residents favor business activities that are in harmony with the natural resources and rural character of the Town and support the needs of and serve its citizens. These operations help to maintain property values without increasing Town expenses and so contribute more to the Town’s economic well-being than large or sprawling commercial or industrial enterprises. The number of residential homes along the 9G corridor and Main Street, by itself, makes Germantown less conducive to large commercial operations than other communities in the Hudson Valley.

Through its land use regulations (i.e., Site Plan and Subdivision Review, Code Enforcement and Zoning Code) Germantown can manage new growth in a manner that preserves the small-town character that so many residents recognize is a great strength of the Town. It is also recommended that Design Guidelines are developed for non-residential development, both within and outside the traditional Germantown hamlet center, to ensure it complements the rural and small-town landscape rather than detract from it.



Focusing commercial activity in the mixed-use environment of the Germantown hamlet center and in home-based businesses, with limited, well-designed NYS Route 9G, is consistent with the vision residents have for the Town. Business expansion should also be performed with zoning focused on blending with and maintaining Germantown's historical architecture. The 2005 community survey provided valuable information on the types of new businesses that residents would like to see. The strongest support went to restaurants/diners/coffee shops, followed by grocery store/farmers market and then lodging, B&Bs and inns.

Commercial Development. Respondents to the Community Visioning Session and Comprehensive Plan Survey indicated they welcome small-scale, locally-owned, service-oriented businesses in designated areas that serve the needs of Germantown's population, travelers and tourists. The 2011 Comprehensive Plan found that most residents opposed fast-food businesses and large shopping outlets or other establishments that invite high automobile or truck traffic and that would serve more regional than local needs. According to the National Trust for Historic Places (NTHP), a typical locally owned business returns about 60% of its profit to the community where it exists. Entrepreneurs own homes in a community, pay local taxes, hire local workers and work with other local businesses. On the other hand, a typical chain store returns only about 20% of its profits to the community and "big box" superstores return only about 5-8% of their profits to the community.

Community Visioning Session participants want to discourage strip development along the NYS Route 9G corridor, especially in the form of prototypical chain stores or franchises. One alternative to this would be to direct future commercial growth to small mixed-use nodes along the corridor where traditional walking neighborhoods may develop – such as the intersection of NYS Route 9G and County Route 8. In surveys and public meetings, Germantown's citizens favored directing commercial development primarily into the Germantown Main Street hamlet area. As this is an area in Town with available public sewer capability, the limited expansion of the area in mixed commercial uses makes sense. However, the Community Visioning Session also revealed a strong dislike for the way this intersection has developed to date and the need for design guidelines to shape future development and redevelopment in this area so that it complements, rather than detracts from the Germantown hamlet center.

Industrial Development. Industrial uses should be of a type and scale appropriate to Germantown. In 2011, the Town Board adopted a new Zoning Map that created a BD-Business Development Zoning District, which encompasses Taconic Farms. The Zoning Law defines "light industries", which are permitted-by-right in the BD-Zoning District.

Germantown residents have told the Comprehensive Plan Committee that new industrial operations must be light industrial, must be sited to not disturb residential neighborhoods and must not strain the Town's infrastructure, present a danger to its citizens, emit toxic chemicals or noxious fumes, create excessive noise, traffic or light, or otherwise compromise the environment. Any new business development must be carefully considered and subjected to a rigorous review and site-plan approval process. This Plan supports retention and expansion of existing light industries and the recruitment of micro, small and medium size enterprises to create jobs opportunities.



Whereas some potential business uses might be constrained by the limited water supply in Germantown, potentially acceptable light-industrial uses such as “high tech” facilities may be appropriate and feasible in areas with good access to transportation routes and other infrastructure. Two such areas are along the 9G corridor – one north of the village center and immediately west of and adjacent to the Taconic Farms facility and another north of the intersection of 9G and Hover Avenue on the east side of the highway.

While a thorough analysis of the Town’s infrastructure and other resources is needed to identify appropriate areas for such business development is beyond the scope of this Comprehensive Plan, Columbia County’s economic development body, the Columbia Economic Development Corporation, can be enlisted to assist the Town in taking a proactive approach to identifying appropriate sites and compatible businesses.

Home Businesses. Working at home can save commuting and child care costs, and give those who might be unable to work outside of the home (such as single parents, the elderly and the disabled) an opportunity to earn a living or supplement an income. Home businesses keep Germantown affordable for some of its long-time residents. Telecommuting through broadband technologies is also a growing trend. Community-survey respondents were strongly in favor of encouraging home-based businesses. In keeping with the Town’s rural nature, home businesses should be governed by well-crafted zoning regulations so that they have minimal impact on neighborhoods. Home occupations are regulated under the Town’s 2011 Zoning and Subdivision Law.

Community Appearance. Community Visioning Session participants were also strongly in favor of design guidelines for commercial areas of the Town. Design guidelines can help maintain the Town’s rural character, enhance its natural environment and keep Germantown unique. At a minimum, the Town should use the Hudson River Valley Greenway design guidelines for commercial development when reviewing and approving projects. The Town should also review its existing sign standards to ensure that new commercial signs are harmonious with the Town’s rural setting. Distinctive informational and directional signage would also benefit the Town by helping people find the commercial, recreational and other destinations they seek. The Town implemented a successful directional sign program around the Germantown hamlet that could serve as a model for expansion throughout the Town. Finally, a street tree planting program would add to the attractiveness of the Germantown hamlet center.

Future Planning

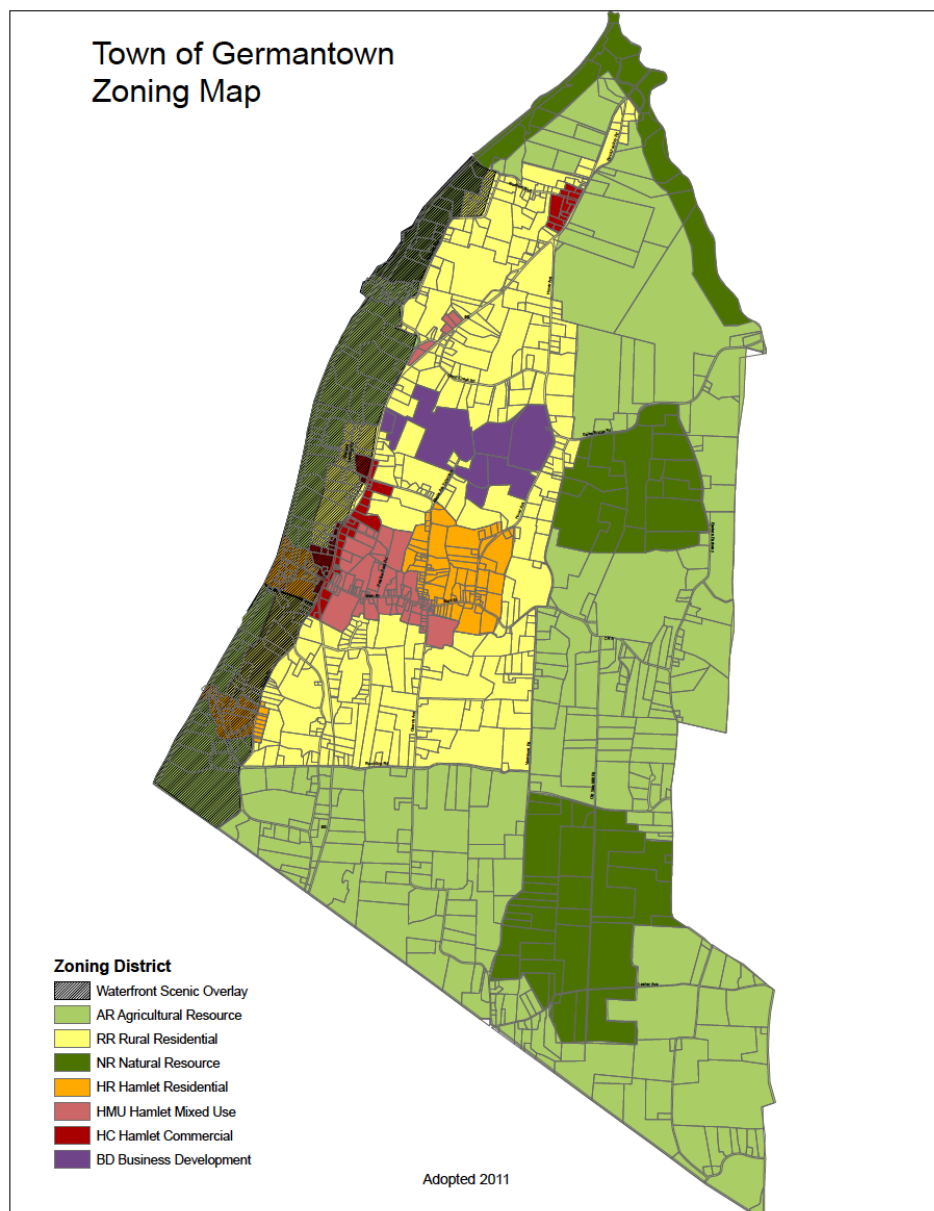
Because the Germantown hamlet center has a character all its own, with build-to lines at or near the street and shallow dimensional setbacks, the Town has established the HMU (Hamlet Mixed Use) Zoning District to this area (see Zoning Map). The HMU zoning designation extends west along Main Street and Palatine Park Road to Route 9G. The reasoning for this HMU zoning designation is two-fold.

First, there are many stately older homes along Main Street between 9G and the Germantown hamlet center that have good potential for adaptation to office-type commercial uses or conversion to apartments. Allowing these options will encourage



homeowners to keep their buildings in good condition and maintain the contribution they make to the character of the community. Second, in undeveloped areas along Palatine Road and Route 9G, community input favors the types of small-scale local businesses that are more typical of Hamlet Mixed Use uses than the HC Hamlet Commercial uses that have developed near the NYS Route 9G and County Route 8 intersection. Although there are a few existing Highway Commercial types of uses at the intersection of Main Street and Route 9G that would probably be nonconforming under this designation, they can be grandfathered, and it is felt that it is more critical that the Town assure that future uses in this area promote the desired small-town character.

This plan also proposes that the HMU zoning designation allow higher-density residential uses as well as commercial uses in mixed-use settings subject to design review standards. It further recommends that the HC Hamlet Commercial designation be limited to an existing commercial area with some room for expansion along NYS Route 9G. For suitable sites for future Light Industrial use, see “Future Issues” above.



Goals and Recommendations

Goals:

- To encourage, promote and grow small and low-impact businesses in a responsible and economically feasible fashion and in appropriate locations in keeping with the Town's rural character.
- To promote commercial, agricultural and light-industrial businesses that strengthen the tax base and offer employment opportunities without adverse impacts on the appearance and environmental quality of the Town.
- To ensure that new commercial and light-industrial buildings are designed in a manner consistent with the desired aesthetic character of Germantown, thereby providing for a visually pleasing community.

Recommendations:

LU.1. Amend zoning and subdivision standards to:

- a) encourage mixed-use business and residential development in the hamlet center that takes advantage of available infrastructure and that supports an expanded walkable neighborhood,
- b) encourage and promote home-based businesses,
- c) require site and design review for new and expanded commercial uses,
- d) rezone land areas as appropriate to Hamlet Commercial and Hamlet Mixed Use to better reflect existing and desired types and scale of businesses,
- e) apply a HMU Hamlet Mixed Use to the hamlet core to apply traditional dimensional standards to existing and new development,
- f) limit the size, height and placement of business signs in commercial zones, and
- g) adopt Design Guidelines to give Planning Board power to compel national and regional developers to modify site development and building design to protect small-town and rural character.

LU.2. Establish a standing Economic Development Committee to promote the growth of small businesses within the community. These businesses could include small, innovative or cooperative agricultural projects on unused farmland.

LU.3. Develop distinctive informational, directional and gateway signage at appropriate locations.

LU.4. Develop and implement a program of landscaping in the hamlet center.

LU.5. Consider the compatibility of development with surrounding uses.

- Utilize strategies such as landscaping, tree preservation and other buffering techniques.
- When necessary, require modification of site development plans to minimize impacts.

LU.6. Encourage mixed-use infill development within the Main Street business district.

- Encourage the use of New Urbanism principles to strengthen the character of Main Street.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive long-term parking strategy for Main Street.

LU.7. Support development of shovel-ready sites within the Town of Germantown.

LU.8. Adopt local law to regulate solar energy generating facilities (see also LU.12 page 27).

LU.9. Review Town of Germantown Junk Storage Law to ensure it is adequately addressing the issue of junk storage on residential and non-residential properties in the Town.

LU.10. Expand job opportunities: first through business retention and recruitment; and second by promoting and marketing Germantown's rural character and quality of life to attract micro, small-scale and medium-scale enterprises.



9.0 Community Facilities & Services

“The Germantown School District is the most important issue. The School is what people will look at to decide if they wish to move into the area.”

“We need interesting community events and activities that will appeal to the diverse interests of the citizens.”

“Institute a ‘Welcome Wagon’ to inform and assist new residents as well as recruit them for the areas of expertise and bright ideas for Germantown community life.”

Introduction

One of the basic functions of local government is the provision of key public facilities and services. As communities grow and change, it is important that they periodically evaluate their ability to meet existing and projected future public-service needs to continue to provide an adequate level of service. Different segments of the community often need different types and levels of services, such as for varying age groups. Because Germantown is a small community, its public services are currently limited, though they will need to grow as the community grows.

This chapter discusses public facilities and services that are provided to the community mostly by the Town administration. As illustrated on the *Town’s Community Facilities and Services map*, these include local government, wastewater management, waste disposal, police, fire and ambulance services, parks and recreation and schools and library. Other topics discussed are water supply and utilities.

Existing Conditions and Trends

Local Government. As a town of fewer than 5,000 residents, Germantown is classified as a second-class town by New York State. Like many small towns in the region, government in Germantown has been evolving slowly since the 1920s.

The Town is governed by a supervisor and four Town Board members who are all Town residents elected for four-year terms in elections staggered every two years. Also elected for four-year terms are a highway superintendent, town clerk, tax collector and two Town judges. [The supervisor appoints a deputy supervisor, but the deputy can only vote if they are an elected Town Board member.](#)

The Town employs a part-time administrative assistant to the Town Board. The Highway Superintendent is a full-time position and the Highway Department has three full-time personnel. Part-time employees include three police officers, board secretaries, and a Code Enforcement Officer/code enforcement officer. A part-time employee works weekends as a Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator. The Town also employs part-time seasonal workers, as needed, for the Highway Department and Park programs. The Town contracts for the independent, part-time services of a lawyer, an accountant, and an engineer. The Town Board appoints a tax assessor and a dog warden as employees of the Town.



The Town Board meets at regularly scheduled monthly meetings that are open to the public. A quorum must be present to conduct business, and minutes are kept. The supervisor and Town Board members each have one vote. The public can apply to place a topic on the agenda, and there is at least one opportunity for the public to comment at Board meetings. Other meetings and workshops may be scheduled but must be announced and open to the public.

Town Laws and Regulations. The NY State Municipal Home Rule Law prevails as the primary source of local laws and regulations except where county, other state or federal laws take precedence. The Town is a member of the New York Association of Towns, which provides members of town government with expert advice and guidance on various matters. An extremely useful reference guide, available in the town clerk's office, is the *Town Law Manual* produced in 2016 by the association.

Town ordinances, laws and regulations are located in the Town Clerk's office and include:

- Sewer Use Law – adopted in 1997, amended in 1998
- Town Ordinances – seven documents from 1965 to 1973
- Local Laws – 28 documents from 1974 to 2000
- Zoning and Subdivision Law adopted in 2011

Town Budget. The supervisor is the chief fiscal officer of the Town and begins the budget process in early September, requesting that all departments and employees review and submit forms reporting current expenses for the year and estimated expenses for the coming year. From these reports and discussion with Town Board members, a tentative budget is drafted, which contains four different funds as follows: one for General Funds, another for the Highway Department, a third for the Sewer District and a fourth for Lighting Districts. Then the tentative budget is developed and presented at a noticed public hearing conducted no later than November 15. At that time, the public may comment. The final budget is reconciled and voted on by the Town Board by the end of November. The budget very strictly guides the spending of Town funds. Unanticipated expenses are restricted and require review and approval of the Town Board at a regular meeting open to the public.

The largest source of income for the Town is from local real property taxes. These are based on the assessment of private property by the Town tax assessor according to NY State requirements. When the Town budgets have been finalized in November, taxes on individual property can be determined. Any shortfall in income to meet budgeted expenses for the coming year must be made up by an increase in property taxes. Other significant sources of income are mortgage taxes on sales and refinancing of properties and shared state sales tax revenue. Both of these sources of income can fluctuate.

The Sewer District generates revenue through the issuance of sewer bills. Other lesser sources of income include the Highway Department through [NYSDOT Consolidated Highway Improvement Program \(CHIPS\) funding](#), recreation fees, fines, interest, tax penalties, franchise fees, Park fees and concessions, youth donations, building permits, youth aid, senior aid, per capita aid and a variety of small, miscellaneous fees. There are also categories of income classified as gifts, donations and miscellaneous.



Administrative Bodies. The Town Board authorizes the following officers and standing boards to carry out administrative functions for the Town. Members of the boards are volunteer residents appointed by the supervisor and approved by the Town Board. All meetings are open to the public for comment. Meetings require a quorum, and minutes are kept that are available to the public.

Code Enforcement Officer. The Code Enforcement Officer reviews and processes all building applications, issues building permits, periodically inspects building sites and issues certificates of occupancy. As the code enforcement officer, the inspector receives complaints about violations of the Zoning Ordinance and investigates and initiates sanctions when appropriate.

Animal Control Officer. The animal control officer enforces NYS Agriculture and Markets guidelines concerning stray dogs.

Planning Board. The Town Board appoints a chairperson and six members to this board, which holds regular monthly meetings. Terms of office run for seven years and are staggered. As of 2007, board members will be required to have four hours of training annually. The Planning Board reviews all land subdivision applications as well as requests for special-use permits prior to these being referred to the Zoning Board of Appeals. The Planning Board can vote on projects to approve, disapprove or approve with modifications. Disputed decisions may be appealed to the New York State Supreme Court. The 2011 Zoning and Subdivision Law added Site Plan approval powers.

Zoning Board of Appeals. The Town Board appoints a chairperson and four members to this board, which meets monthly. Board members have staggered terms of five years. As of 2007, ZBA members, like members of the Planning Board, will be required to have four hours of annual training. The ZBA is responsible for acting upon proposed special-exception uses after their review by the Planning Board, for granting area and use variances, and for deciding appeals on the Code Enforcement Officer's interpretation of the Zoning Ordinance and zoning maps. Disputed decisions may be appealed to the NYS Supreme Court.

Board of Assessment Review. This board consists of five appointed members. Its function is to review any complaints about property assessments. By law the assessor is not allowed to be a member and may not vote on the outcome of the grievance. The assessor is required to attend and present information about the assessment being challenged. Landowners must file a form detailing their grievance and appear at a hearing. The board then considers the issues, makes a decision and notifies the landowner. Further redress is available through the NYS Supreme Court.

Park Commission. This group consists of an appointed chairperson and members who have responsibility for oversight of Town parks and park programs. This Plan recommends the Town Board notify the public when there are vacancies on the Commission to encourage more residents to serve their community when the opportunities arise.

Ethics Board. The intent of this board is to advise the Town Board on issues involving possibly inappropriate or illegal conduct by Town officials or employees. While there are five current members, it appears they have seldom been called upon for advice.



Water Supply. As discussed in Chapter 6, Germantown has no municipal water supply. All residents, businesses and public facilities rely upon wells that are supplied by groundwater. Furthermore, the Town's soils and underlying geology are limiting factors in the availability of water. The known median yield for local wells is only four gallons per minute, which is the minimum required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to qualify for loans insured by the Federal Housing Authority. Thus, many existing homes in Germantown would not qualify.

In addition to private residential wells, there are several wells supplying water to the public that, privately owned, are regulated by the NY State Department of Health in cooperation with the Columbia County Department of Health. These serve larger facilities, including Palatine Manor, the school, and businesses like the convenience stores at the junction of Main Street and Route 9G. Except for these wells, there is little consistent information about well location, type, depth, yield and recovery rates. Information about problems with water quality and quantity is largely anecdotal, although there have been notable problems, such as supply problems in the area of Hilltop Road and water-quality problems in the Germantown hamlet center. The latter problems led to the formation of the public sewer district. Residual water-quality problems may remain there, but are not documented.

Without a true aquifer, Germantown is particularly vulnerable to water problems. The NYRWA Groundwater Protection Plan has identified a unconsolidated aquifer in the northern section of the Town along the Roeliff-Jansen Kill and the Hudson River as well as some locations with potentially high water yields in other areas of the Town that could be sites for municipal wells. These sites would need to be tested to confirm actual yields, and the Town would need to be prepared to purchase a parcel or parcels of sufficient size to provide the required setback distances for *wellhead protection*. None of these areas is situated near the Germantown hamlet center or other places where future growth or development might be most appropriate. Hyde Park and Poughkeepsie use the Hudson River for their municipal water supplies, and while this is an expensive option, it could be considered for Germantown if necessary.

The Town's extensive wetlands and areas with high water tables make existing groundwater resources especially vulnerable to contamination. The Groundwater Protection Plan identifies and maps potential contamination sources as well as especially vulnerable areas of the Town. The known low yields of a large percentage of local wells show how vulnerable the water supply is to severe drought. These are critical issues that require attention and planning, with or without new development in the Town.

Wastewater Management. The preponderance of clay soil in Germantown makes the disposal of wastewater a serious issue as this condition can result in the pollution of groundwater and creeks and streams. Depending on soil type and volume of use, certain areas in the Town are not suitable for development using on-lot septic systems. The Groundwater Protection Plan (see Volume 2, *Appendices*) includes recommendations for protection of water resources with regard to on-lot septic systems.



In 1998, the Town developed a small municipal sewer system in the Germantown hamlet to address the long-standing problem of contamination of water in this area. The sewer has 100,000 gallons per day (gpd) capacity. The average current use is 30-40,000 gpd, leaving 60-70,000 gpd for future connections for new development in the area. At a use level of 300 gpd per household, this could potentially supply about 200 new homes or businesses, depending on their size and volume of use. Enlargement of the system would be expensive and would require a level of population density to support it financially. The current sewer district is mapped, and there is no planned future sewer service in other areas.

Outside the Germantown hamlet center, wastewater must be managed by on-lot septic systems. In the past, residences frequently depended on inadequate treatment methods, and even some homes with septic tanks were without proper leach fields. There is no official documentation on these older systems, and homeowners may themselves have little information.

In recent times the County Department of Health (DOH) has required those seeking to build new structures that will use on-lot septic systems to meet specific standards on the type, placement and other aspects of the system. The DOH then inspects installed systems and issues a certification. For the last 30 years, the DOH and the Town have kept records of septic-system installations.

Facilities serving larger groups of the public that produce 1,000 or more gallons of wastewater per day are under the jurisdiction of the NY State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). They are required to get special SPDES permits with specific requirements, regulations and limits for each facility. They are subject to routine inspections and reporting, the results of which, however, are not shared with the Town.

Waste Disposal and Nuisance Standards. Germantown residents use private waste haulers that offer curb-side recycling pickup of glass, tin, aluminum, plastic, newspapers and cardboard. Germantown also has a recycling transfer station – a Columbia County Convenient Waste Station -- located on Palatine Park Road and used by residents and local businesses. The location of the station in the Germantown hamlet center, where future mixed commercial and residential development is proposed, could be an issue.

Concern about the appearance of exterior grounds with accumulations of “junk” and debris was expressed in the community survey by 92% of survey respondents, who felt that such conditions created an unattractive impression of the Town. Poor junk control was also at the top of the list of concerns expressed by the public at the Town’s initial public workshop on the comprehensive plan.

Glare from poorly shielded lights hampers visibility, and light trespass infringes on the rights of neighbors to enjoy their property. Light sent unnecessarily upwards also causes sky glow and deprives nearby residents of nighttime darkness and a view of the stars. The enactment of the 2011 Zoning and Subdivision Law includes certain standards for exterior lighting. This Plan recommends that any new developments requiring Site Plan approval are required to install International Dark Sky Association (IDA) compliant fixtures to preserve the night sky.



The Town has no standards that control unreasonable noise, including noise above a certain threshold or that continues beyond a certain length of time. Of particular concern can be loud noise in the nighttime hours. This Plan recommends the Town Board consider the adoption of a Noise Ordinance to prevent nuisances that could result from residents or businesses generating excessive levels of noise.

Utilities. The Town has 100% coverage of landline telephone, Internet, and television services provided by GTel (Germantown Telephone). Video services are also available from two satellite-service providers, Dish Network and DirecTV. Many wireless providers in the Hudson Valley whose signals overlay Germantown offer wireless telephone services. On Hilltop Road, Verizon Wireless has established a full wireless cell site. National Grid provides electric services to all of Germantown.

Police Service. The Germantown Police Department currently has a staff of [part-time officers who have “variable” hours. The hours currently cover five days a week.](#) Police protection is an important government function and cooperation with State and County forces is encouraged to reduce local costs. The needs for police protection should be reviewed annually to ensure needs are being met.

Fire Service. The Germantown Hose Company No. 1 is located on Main St. in the Germantown hamlet center and plays a vital role in assuring the safety of Town residents and in the continuing education and training of its volunteer membership. At present, the Fire Company has a roster of 101 volunteer firefighters, 31 of whom are active members and ~~10~~ 7 of whom are Explorers, young future firefighters aged between 14 and 16. There is also a Life Membership status for other semi-active members consisting of 21 members. The active membership is divided into categories of interior and exterior firefighting personnel, as consistent with their training. The current firefighting equipment consists of 2 engines, 1 engine/tanker, 1 heavy rescue truck, 1 light rescue/brush vehicle, 1 EMS van, 1 ice rescue/command van, 1 Zodiac inflatable rescue boat and 1 17' aluminum boat for water rescue in the Hudson River. The Germantown Fire District completed renovations and construction of a new firehouse in 2016. It is critically important for the Fire Company to ensure its firefighter's protective gear is routinely updated to provide the best protection for its members. This Plan support efforts by the District to apply for State and federal grant to buy new firefighting equipment and protective gear. The Clermont, Livingston, Greenport and Hudson fire departments provide mutual aid when needed. Any of their firefighting equipment is available to Germantown at the request of the fire chief. Germantown also responds to their requests for assistance.

Ambulance Service. Northern Dutchess Paramedics (NDP) EMS, a for-profit business serves Germantown. NDP EMS has a fleet of 30 vehicles, located in Dutchess and Columbia Counties in New York and Litchfield County, Connecticut. They provide service to over 50 towns and villages as well as many nursing homes and assisted living facilities throughout Dutchess, Columbia, and Ulster Counties in New York. NDP EMS has expanded its services to providing Basic Life Support, Advanced Life Support, Interfacility Transportation, Ambulette Transportation, EMS Continuing Education, First Aid and Safety Training for the Community, Classes for Allied Health Professionals, and Community Outreach Programs.



Parks and Recreation. Park and recreation lands provide important opportunities for residents to enjoy a variety of active and passive recreational pursuits. The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) has established standards and guidelines to assist communities in determining the minimum recommended acreages and facilities for park and recreation use.

There are four areas of public parkland in Germantown, including two boat landings on the Hudson River, a waterfront campsite on the Roeliff Jansen Kill and Palatine Park on Town property along Palatine Park Road. The Town additionally owns two sites along the Hudson waterfront that are not designated as parkland, as well as access to a third site. It appears the Town may have riparian rights at the Ice Dock Parcel and Lasher Park. A Park Commission of citizens appointed by the Town Board oversees the use of park facilities. While it is important to take a variety of factors into consideration, ten acres per 1,000 residents is the commonly accepted minimum standard. The proximity of parkland to concentrations of population is also important.

Table 15 Recreational Demand – Town of Germantown			
Facility Type	Standard per 1000 persons	Need	Provided
Neighborhood Park	1 acre	2	Palatine Park
District Park With restrooms, playfields, tot lots and winter events.	2 acres	6	Palatine Park
Field Games	3 acres	9	Palatine Park
Tennis Courts	½ court	1	none
Basketball Courts	1 per 5000	1	2 courts (PP)
Baseball	1 per 5000	1	2 fields
Soccer	1 per 10,000	1	1 field
Swimming pool	1 per 20,000	1	none
Trail	1 per region	1	Palatine Park

Germantown has a total of 93 acres in public parkland to serve a current population of 1,954 and an estimated week-end population of 2,285 persons. Existing parkland can, therefore, be considered more than adequate to meet the overall current and future recreational needs of the community. In addition, most of the Town's parkland is centrally located and close to populated areas. While the current numbers of acres of parkland appear sufficient to meet the Town's needs, there is room for improvement in the provision of specific recreational facilities within the Town's parklands. As the Town grows and the needs of the community change due to shifts in population age groups, the need for recreational facilities may also change. The Town also owns two (2) sites along the Hudson waterfront that should be considered for recreational use.

The recommendations of the Town appointed Local Waterfront Committee will form the basis for further study of the waterfront that could lead to a Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan. The Town Board and Park Commission should continue to monitor the recreational needs of the Town with an eye towards providing a greater variety and geographic distribution of recreational facilities throughout the Town such as by increasing access to the Hudson River or providing trails within the Town that could link to regional trail systems.

Cheviot Park. This small boat-launching facility at the end of Cheviot Road on the Hudson River includes a parking lot, boat launch, a small floating dock and a picnic table. This site is designated as a Hudson River Valley Greenway Water Trail site.



Anchorage Landing and Ernest R. Lasher, Jr. Memorial Park. At the end of Anchorage Road in North Germantown is the Germantown Fishing Access Site, constructed in cooperation with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. It includes a parking lot, a concrete boat-launching ramp and boat docks. The boat ramp and dock are owned by New York State. A small building facing a riverbank lawn houses the park office. This site is designated as a Hudson River Valley Greenway Water Trail site.

Palatine Park. This is the largest of Germantown's park and recreation areas, not counting the Germantown Central School playing fields. Palatine Park is considered a community park that serves the park and recreation needs of the Town as a whole. Adjacent to the Town Hall on Palatine Park Road are a playground with climbing, sliding, and other equipment for small children; and changing rooms, restrooms, and a snack bar; a combined baseball diamond and soccer field; two (2) basketball courts, an enclosed dog run, gazebo, the Youth Activities Building and a covered pavilion with picnic tables. Unfortunately, invasive species have recently inundated the pond making it all but unusable for swimming. The Town Board has taken steps to eradicate the invasive species and restore the pond so that it can again be used for supervised swimming with a beach area. This Plan recommends the Town take steps to reopen the pond for swimming. An event fee is charged for private use of the Kellner Community Activity Center, which is situated at Palatine Park.

During the summer months, a day camp, Camp Palatine, is run for the benefit of Germantown children, as well as those from neighboring towns. Camp activities are planned and overseen by a professional camp director and staff, and trained lifeguards are hired to supervise the swimming pond. Various town groups, such as the Girl and Boy Scout troops and Garden Club, use the Activities Building and pavilion, as do other town committees and organizations for public meetings. For a per-capita fee, private parties like family get-togethers may also use these facilities. The Park Commission holds fund-raising barbecues and plans and executes the largest public event of the year, Germantown's Independence Day celebration.

Roe-Jan Kill Park. Roe-Jan Kill Park is situated along Dale's Bridge Road on the Roeliff Jansen Kill. The park consists of a pavilion, picnic tables and barbeque pits.

Other Town Land. Germantown may own several parcels with the potential for use as park and recreation sites. The Town appears to own an underwater parcel running 1280.4' north-east from Lasher Park along the Hudson shoreline. This underwater parcel was deeded to the town by Alan and Pauline Van Tassel in 1999. This Plan recommends a formal deed search to verify ownership. The Town owns the Ice Dock parcel that is on the Hudson shoreline in-between Cheviot Park and the foot of Main St. This parcel has no land access, other than by the CSX rail right of way. It could be used for water-accessible recreation such as picnicking and camping. There is informal conviction the town owns a parcel known as the Van Tassel waterfront, which is a small point of land about 200' north of the Van Tassel riparian area. The Town should take legal steps necessary to verify its ownership of this land.

Private Parkland. In addition to public parkland, there is the private Sportsmen's Association picnic area (private lease on Town-owned land), located along Dales Bridge Road on the south bank of the Roeliff Jansen Kill. A variety of community events are held there. Another private recreation site is a 150-acre bird sanctuary open to the public on County Route 8 east of the Rockefeller Home.



Trails and Greenways. Greenways are usually identified as walking trails or open-space corridors but can also include sidewalk systems along tree-lined streets, country roads through farmlands, designated bike routes, and waterways with access points for non-motorized boats. Even a commercial corridor that is tree-lined and walkable can be part of a greenway. Design principles that emphasize these features are based on traditional settlement patterns embedded in the area's history and landscape.

Trails offer recreational opportunities and promote active lifestyles. Trails can be an integral part of a community or regional transportation system by providing alternative transportation options like walking, biking and other non-motorized transportation.

Communities throughout the Hudson River Valley have been working towards the goal of creating trails within their own communities and exploring options to connect those trails to larger regional trail networks. The Hudson River Valley Greenway trail, made up of riverside and countryside trails, connector trails and the Hudson River Valley Greenway water trail, fosters these regional trail connections. This network includes locally developed publicly and privately owned trails and access points that are open to the public.

Hudson River Valley Greenway trails enable connections between such key community destinations as Hudson River waterfront access points, city or village main streets and downtowns, open spaces, residential areas, historic sites, recreation destinations and the surrounding countryside. Trails that make up the Greenway land-trail system may include, but are not limited to, waterfront esplanades, paved bike paths, sidewalks and shared roadways and simple woods paths.

The Hudson River Greenway water trail is made up of over 70 sites stretching from Waterford in Saratoga County to Battery Park in Manhattan. The goal of the water trail is to establish river access points and paddle-craft launches on both sides of the Hudson River every 10 miles and overnight accommodations every 15 miles. In addition to the water-trail sites at Lasher Park and Cheviot Park, there are several potential campsites and currently used informal access points to the river in Germantown that need to be considered for formal designation.

Schools. In the 1950s the Germantown Central School (GCS) became a regional district school serving Germantown and eventually all, or a portion of, the nearby towns of Livingston, Clermont, Linlithgo, Elizaville, Ancram and Gallatin in southern Columbia County. Except for children living in the Germantown hamlet center, students are bused to school.

GCS serves students from kindergarten through 12th grade. The school is organized into three sections -- the full-day kindergarten and lower grades, elementary school and high school. The school is housed in both new and older buildings, the interiors of which have been recently renovated. It is located in the hamlet on a sizable campus with playing fields, playground and parking. There is room for expansion in the event that it should ever be needed. In the past few years, however, the number of students has been slowly decreasing. For the 2014-2015 school year there were 600 students in attendance. GCS Class for 2014 Graduates' next steps were as follows: 2-year college (49%); 4-year college (29%), work (5%) and military (10%), based on GCS District website data.



The school is governed at the state level by the Department of Education, at the regional level by the Bureau of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) and at the local level by a district superintendent and two principals. There is also a School Board of local residents elected every four years whose role it is to provide oversight and to review and set policies.

The school provides vocational training through a BOCES program at Questar in Hudson. Students with acceptable grades are bused to attend classes there during half the day and return to the school to take their academic classes. Students with special needs are included in regular classes and activities whenever possible and get any extra assistance they need, the costs of which are paid by the local school district. Other students are bused to a variety of special schools or programs best suited to their requirements.

Library. The Germantown library is currently located at 31 Palatine Park Road within walking distance of the Germantown Central School. In February 2008, a new permanent home of the Germantown library opened and features a designated children’s room, young adult and adult sections and a media section. In 2010, the Hover Room was completed thanks in part to a grant from the Alexander and Marjorie Hover Foundation and offers space for library-hosted programs, classes, performances, and community organization meetings. The library is closed on Monday; open 9:00 AM-7:00 PM on Tuesday; 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM on Wednesday; 12:00 PM– 4:00 PM on Thursday; 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM on Friday and 9:00 AM – 2:00 PM on Saturday. The library provides a variety of resources beyond its traditional book catalog including ebooks and downloadable audiobooks, the DayByDayNY program for families with young children with fun activities and reading times and calendar of special events. The Germantown library is an important cultural and educational resource in the Town and like previous Comprehensive Plans, this recommends continued community support to ensure it remains a centrally-located and vital institution within the community.

Future Issues

Local Government. In this era of rapid change and increasingly complex demands and problems, it is essential that Town government assume a proactive leadership role. A commitment of adequate time and energy in training is needed. Such an investment can result in better-informed planning and decision making and would provide a sound basis for the development of improved structure, organization and accountability systems.

Water Supply. It is vital that Town officials educate themselves and Town residents about the very limited water resources in the Town, current and future threats to the supply of water and the risks of contamination, and ensure that this information is integrated into all aspects of planning and zoning in ways that will serve to guide all future development. The Groundwater Protection Plan (see Volume 2, *Appendices*) sets forth specific detailed recommendations for amending the subdivision regulations and site-plan review requirements, including a requirement and standards for a hydrogeological study to be requested to accompany all major development proposals. (See Section 7.2, “Land Use Regulations” in the groundwater plan as well as its Appendix C, “Proposed Requirements for a Hydrogeological Study.”)



Wastewater Management. It is important that planning for future sewer service be closely coordinated with comprehensive planning and zoning, so that areas planned and zoned for growth and development have access to public sewer service and so that the limited remaining sewer-service availability not be used in areas not planned and zoned for growth. For this reason, a coordinated future sewer-service area should be mapped.

Waste Disposal and Nuisance Standards. In the future, the Town may wish to reevaluate the current location of its recycling transfer facility in light of its location in the Germantown hamlet center, where growth and development are planned, and explore potential alternative sites for this use. Accumulated junk on property and dilapidated buildings are significant community concerns. Light pollution and noise are of concern.

Police Service. Police service meets residents' expectations, but the lack of on-duty time and manpower to ensure enforcement of certain Town codes and regulations is an issue in which the police force may be enlisted.

Fire service. The Fire Department provides a service to the Town that is much valued. At the time of writing, areas in the new firehouse, paid for by public funding, may be available in the future for community use.

Ambulance Service. Response time needs improvement throughout the Town.

Parks and Recreation. Palatine Park provides many recreational amenities for all ages. There is a trail within the Park that offers wonderful passive recreation for the community. Routine maintenance of the trail to keep it in good condition will help to make it an even more popular as a local attraction. The Town has established the Roe Jan Kill Park at this location with a pavilion, picnic tables and barbeque pits. Potential walking and water trails as well as additional waterfront access points could be explored through the creation of a local Trails Committee. The Town secured State funding to undertake a Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan assessment as a prelude to preparing a full LWRP. An LWRP Committee is currently working on the assessment as of the writing of this Comprehensive Plan. This Comprehensive Plan recommends a Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan (LWRP) should be developed with NY State funding to extend public access and public trails along the Hudson River and to protect, preserve and promote appropriate use of important natural and cultural resources in the area. Once an LWRP is adopted, further state funding for its implementation may be pursued. The Town needs a parkland-reservation ordinance to require reservation of parkland and public space in residential subdivisions, or fees in lieu thereof as allowed by NY State law.

Schools. The trend of fewer young children living in the area needs to be closely monitored in terms of school planning. As respondents to the community survey requested, school officials, Town officials and residents should explore ways to decrease the perceived distance between the school and Germantown residents.

Library. The Library has obtained tax funding to meet operational expenses.



Goals and Recommendations

Goal:

- To improve existing Town services and facilities to the greatest extent possible and to develop new services that will be needed to address future needs, as recommended by community residents and as consistent with the comprehensive plan.

Recommendations:

Local Government

CF.1. Create a Town Boards Committee to:

- a) review, revise and develop Town laws, ordinances and regulations to be comprehensive, clear, compatible and compliant with state, county and case law; strengthen authority and enforcement requirements; and codify regulations into a format that is accessible to the public and allows for the easy integration of future changes,
- b) create job descriptions for Town officials and employees that clarify roles, responsibilities and functions of all personnel and their orientation and training, and
- c) produce policy and procedure manuals for Town departments, boards, commissions and committees that ensure proper accountability and adequate documentation available to the public.

CF.2. Actively recruit volunteers for Town boards, committees and commissions from a broader spectrum of residents.

CF.3. Explore grant opportunities to support special Town projects.

CF.4. Improve communication with residents by conducting special workshops, producing a quarterly newsletter, enhancing the Town web site and cable coverage of meetings, and by seeking positive publicity for the Town.

CF.5. Conduct a Cost of Services Study to explore opportunities for reduce cost of local government through shared services with adjacent municipalities.

Water Supply

CF.6. Create opportunities to guide future efforts to protect groundwater quality and supply by:

- a) proposing zoning and subdivision amendments to regulate the density of development, minimum lot sizes and adequate well spacing according to the availability of groundwater resources, as recommended in the Groundwater Protection Plan, and to ensure that new development not have adverse impacts on water supply to existing wells and on groundwater resources that may supply future public water-supply wells by requiring a groundwater-extraction impact assessment prepared by a qualified hydrogeologist,
- b) developing a program to protect groundwater from potential contamination, including from development activity not served by the public sewer system,
- c) exploring the feasibility of a municipal water source through mapping of identified potential areas, working with landowners and conducting testing for water quality and quantity, and
- d) creating an emergency response plan in the event water sources fail due to contamination or drought.

CF.7. Revise regulations to require testing for adequate groundwater supply for large development



proposals.

Wastewater Management

- CF.8. Define and map a future sewer-service area that is consistent with planned growth areas as shown on the Future Land Use map.
- CF.9. Coordinate with the Columbia County Department of Health to develop a data base and mapping of all on-lot septic systems and to receive reports of septic- system violations and actions taken to resolve problems.
- CF.10. Begin an educational campaign to encourage property owners to regularly clean out septic systems.

Waste Disposal and Nuisance Standards

- CF.11. Amend zoning and subdivision standards to:
 - a) adopt provisions concerning dilapidated buildings and neglected exterior grounds and the removal of junk, debris and trash,
 - b) develop active enforcement requirements and inspection schedules concerning violations with fine schedules and sanctions in line with state maximums, and
 - c) consider the adoption of lighting standards and a noise ordinance.
- CF.12. Initiate an annual Town-sponsored community car and junk pickup day staffed by Town employees and volunteers.
- CF.13. Initiate a Townwide program that encourages community businesses, organizations and youth groups to conduct trash pickups, plant flowers and shrubs and undertake other beautification projects to improve the appearance of the Town.

Fire, Police and Ambulance Service

- CF.14. Work with the police and fire departments, Northern Dutchess Paramedics and the five Columbia County towns sharing NDP service to ensure that an adequate number of EMS vehicles is stationed permanently within the area, that there is adequate ongoing financial support for the service, and that a first-responder system for the Town is developed.

Parks and Recreation

- CF.15. Work with Park Commission to ensure provision of programs, events and park facilities to meet changing needs of Town.
- CF.16. Amend the subdivision ordinance to adopt parkland-reservation standards.
- CF.17. Establish a Trails Committee to examine trails and linkage opportunities within Germantown and with county and regional connections.
- CF.18. Pursue completion of the campsite project on Dale's Bridge Road.
- CF.19. Apply to the NY Department of State for funding to develop and implement a Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan to promote public access to and enhance responsible use of the Hudson River waterfront.



CF.20. Work with railroad agencies and landowners to place a walking trail adjacent to the Hudson River from Cheviot to North Germantown.

School and Library

CF.21. Develop a School and Town Committee to:

- a) improve communication and coordination on long-term planning issues, including retaining the Germantown Central School in the Town and allowing community use of school facilities and grounds for recreation and adult education after school hours, and
- b) create new opportunities, such as intern programs with local businesses, for assisting the school, its teachers and students and for utilizing talented residents for special learning projects and tutoring/mentoring programs.



10.0 Transportation

“Create a more charming and attractive environment at the intersection of 9G and Main Street. Now it seems like a rest area off a highway/thruway.”

Introduction

A safe and efficient transportation system is important for a healthy community. Planned future land uses can affect traffic patterns and flow, just as planned future road improvements can affect future land uses. Traffic congestion can be minimized by careful attention to transportation alternatives and good land-use planning. This chapter discusses traffic, roads, parking, sidewalks and public transportation within Germantown.

Existing Conditions and Trends

Road Classifications. Roads are designed and classified according to function and include arterial roads, collector roads and local roads. Arterials are designed for long- distance, higher-speed through driving, while local roads are designed primarily for access to local residences. Collectors are designed to connect local roads to arterials. Conflicts arise when the functions of roads are mixed, such as when arterials have numerous access driveways that slow down arterial traffic.

Route 9G is the only state highway in Germantown and the Town’s only arterial road. From the Clermont town boundary in the south to the Livingston town boundary at the Roeliff Jansen Kill in the north, Germantown’s section of 9G is 5.4 miles long. There are no anticipated improvements or alterations to 9G in the foreseeable future.

All of Columbia County’s roadways in the Town may be considered collector roads; the county maintains 12 miles of these roads. County Route 8 (Main Street) is a major collector and the primary route through the Town. Other county roads, including Routes 33, 35 and 35A may be considered minor collectors. All other roads in Germantown are local roads.

Traffic Counts. Traffic-count data help determine increases in the use of roads and future needs for road improvements. According to NY State Department of Transportation data collected from 2004-2007, average daily traffic counts on State Route 9G south of County Route 8 totaled 4,190 and north of Route 8 totaled 4,820. The New York State Department of Transportation data collected in 2015 showed the average daily traffic counts on State Route 9G south of County Route 8 totaled 4,425 and north of Route 8 totaled 4,446.

Germantown Highway Department. The Germantown Highway Department currently has a staff of four employees, including the highway superintendent, and in 2017 had an operating budget of \$584,610. The department currently maintains 26.3 miles of roads, and since the 1989 Master Plan Review, only one road -- Meacher’s-Attean Lane off Best Lane -- has been constructed.



The department seeks to maintain the width of Town roads at 18 feet as a way of controlling traffic speed. This width is consistent with the recommendations of the National Institute of Home Builders, American Society of Civil Engineers and the Institute of Transportation Engineers, as detailed in a publication, Residential Streets, published by the Urban Land Institute. In addition to its effect on controlling speed, the 18-foot width reduces paving and snow removal costs while also contributing to Germantown's rural character. The Town has no available traffic data, nor is there an official engineered road map.

There are currently no plans for any further road construction.

Public Transportation. Public transportation options in Columbia County are limited, although a private bus service subsidized by Columbia County and New York State provides transportation for seniors to nearby locations at a minimal cost. Amtrak rail service to Germantown is available at railway stations in Hudson and Rhinecliff. Table 16 shows how the residents of Germantown travel to work. In 2010, Only 2.7% of Town and county residents use public transportation, and a lower proportion of Town residents drives alone to work 74.1%) than is true for county residents 77.1%). Town residents are less likely to walk to work than county residents, a difference that could reflect a lack of sidewalks in Germantown and separation between residential areas and places of employment. A greater percentage of Germantown commuters carpooled than the County.

Table 16: Commuting to Work (2000 and 2010)						
	Germantown		Columbia County		New York State	
	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010
Workers 16 Years & Over	947	843	28,929	30,262	8,211,916	8,815,965
Drove alone	80.6%	74.1%	75.7%	77.1%	56.3%	61.5%
Carpooled	10.6%	11.3%	11.7%	7.5%	9.2%	7.4%
Public Transportation	2.3%	5.3%	2.3%	2.7%	24.4%	26.5%
Walked	1.8%	0.6%	4.1%	4.8%	6.2%	6.3%
Bicycle	0.0%	0.0%	1.1%	0.2%	0.8%	0.5%
Other means (taxi, motorcycle)	0.7%	0.7%	1.1%	0.9%	0.8%	1.3%
Worked at home	4.0%	7.9%	5.1%	6.7%	3.0%	3.8%
Mean Travel Time to Work in Minutes	28.6	25.6	26.1	25.1	31.7	31.3

Source: U.S. Census 2000 and 2010

The table also shows that the mean travel time to work for Germantown residents is 25.6 minutes, somewhat longer than the average commute for county residents, but shorter than that for state residents. Likely work destinations within commuting distance include Hudson, Rhinebeck, Catskill, Kingston, Poughkeepsie and the Capital Region.

Sidewalks and Bike Paths. Sidewalks in Germantown are located primarily in the village center and along Main Street. There has been strong public support for additional sidewalks in Town that would connect residents with the places they work, shop and recreate, making the community more walkable. Recent sidewalk improvements include:

- The removal, replacement and addition of sidewalks along Main Street (County Route 8) from the hamlet center to Route 9G, including painted crosswalks, ornamental light poles, and concrete curbing;



- The removal and replacement of the existing sidewalks along Church Avenue (County Route 33) and Maple Avenue in the hamlet center;
- Construction of and improvements to the walking trails through Palatine Park, to terminate near the 1746 Parsonage on Maple Avenue;
- Placement of a gazebo at the intersection of Main Street and Palatine Park Road, including a new landscaped seating area; and
- Sidewalks along Palatine Park Road from Main Street to Route 9G.

This Plan strongly supports measure to enhance the walkability of the Germantown hamlet center, NYS Route 9G corridor, waterfront and other densely settled areas. Developers proposing new or expanded commercial development along Route 9G would be required to install sidewalks if they would link to existing sidewalks. The Town Board should continue to pursue State and federal grants to enhance the sidewalk and trail system in Germantown and pursue regional and intermunicipal projects when feasible to do so.

Future Issues

The Town's municipal parking lot across from the post office is currently without lighting and might be better utilized if lighting were provided. The collection of local traffic-count data and the development of an engineered Town road map could help Germantown track increases in traffic flow on its roads over time so that it could effectively plan future road and other transportation improvements.

As traffic volume increases on Germantown's roads, the safety of drivers and pedestrians becomes a growing concern. Traffic accident locations are a good indicator of areas where road improvements may be needed. While accident data from all police agencies are sent to the New York State Department of Transportation, the Germantown data were not made available at the time of the preparation of this Plan. To help the Town identify potential problem areas and propose appropriate solutions, it is recommended that the Germantown police begin to keep records of local traffic accidents.

Another factor that plays into traffic safety is access management and numbers of curb cuts on the Town's more heavily-traveled roads. Shared access and parking in new commercial areas can enhance traffic flow and improve safety, while being more aesthetically-pleasing than traditional individual access drives.

Traffic calming is a term that refers to a variety of measures that can be used to slow traffic and create a safer driving and pedestrian environment. Many communities are beginning to incorporate traffic calming approaches into both transportation and land-use planning. The sidewalk and streetscape enhancements were largely intended to go towards traffic calming, pedestrian enhancement and promoting alternative modes of transport.

The Town has an opportunity to identify the configurations **new** roads will take. It can do this by encouraging interconnected roads, discouraging cul-de-sacs and considering the adoption of an Official Map. New York law permits the creation of an Official Map to lay out future road networks, drainage ways and parks. When development is proposed, roads, drainage and parkland on the site are protected and either dedicated as part of the subdivision review or, in the case of parkland, purchased by the Town exercising its right of first refusal.



For instance, the Town could lay out a grid pattern of street expansion from the village center, and in other areas planned for development. Currently, development in the village center is one-lot deep with little access to reach interior lots. An Official Map could identify future road access in these areas to interior lots and thereby facilitate a continued expansion of the village center compatible with its existing rural character.

An Official Map presents another opportunity. The Town could use it to identify desired trail corridors as part of a future Town-wide trail network. The most workable place to use the Official Map in this regard might be at the perimeter of the village center growth area, where a greenbelt and trail could be established that would wrap around the village, connecting Palatine Park and the Hudson River. Developers could be asked to dedicate land for trails in exchange for building at higher densities in the Germantown hamlet center.

The Town could enhance its planned paths project by extending the system of sidewalks along Route 9G from Main Street north to Palatine Park Road and along Lower Main Street from 9G to the Hudson River to tie in with a future walking trail along the river to Cheviot. This would provide a linked system of sidewalks and trails connecting commercial, residential and civic uses in the Town. Developers proposing new or expanded commercial development along Route 9G would be required to install sidewalks if they would link to existing sidewalks.

Finally, the Town should work with County and regional public transportation providers to ensure that public transportation is available to ensure our aging community members continue to have adequate access to medical and mental health care and supportive services. The greatest threat to the aging population is the loss of independence resulting from failing health, impaired mobility, chronic or sudden illness and dementia.

Much of the illness, disability, and deaths associated with chronic disease are avoidable through known prevention measures, including a healthy lifestyle, early detection of diseases, immunizations, injury prevention, and programs to teach techniques to self-manage conditions such as pain and chronic diseases. While this Plan supports measures to attract primary care providers, urgent care facilities and preventative services to our area, there is a realization that Germantown's population base may make this difficult and it may be more practical to provide transportation to residents so they can access this care in nearby population centers.



Goal and Recommendations

Goal:

- To facilitate smooth traffic flow through appropriate land-use patterns and alternative transportation options.

Recommendations:

T.1. Amend zoning and subdivision standards to:

- a) require new commercial development in the hamlet center and along Route 9G to install sidewalks if linked to an existing sidewalk system,
- b) revise width and material specifications for driveways, rural lanes and local roads to promote aesthetics and rural character,
- c) define criteria under which the Town will consider accepting dedicated new Town roads,
- d) promote shared driveways and parking in commercial areas, and
- e) promote interconnected roadways and discourage the construction of cul-de-sacs in new residential developments.

T.2. Create a Sidewalk Plan for the hamlet center that provides pedestrian connections between residential, commercial, community and recreational land uses.

T.3. Commence the collection of traffic-count data on all Town roads as a benchmark for future analysis.

T.4. Develop an official Computer Aided Design (CAD) engineered road map for all Town roads.

T.5. Maintain a police database of all automobile accident and toxic spill information for future reference.

T.6. Provide lighting for the municipal parking lot.

T.7. Explore strategies to reduce vehicle traffic speed and implement traffic calming measures that create more compatibility with pedestrians and bicyclists.

T.8. Extend the current system of sidewalks to better connect existing and planned future commercial, residential and recreational areas of the Town.

T.9. Encourage Columbia County to establish bike paths on county roads throughout the Town.

T.10. Adopt an Official Map that identifies future desired road configurations and trail networks.

T.11. Encourage the development and enhancement of regular bus transportation and link local efforts with any Columbia or Dutchess County programs.

T.12. Apply for State and federal funding to implement sidewalk and trail system improvements.

T.13. Work with County and regional public transportation providers to ensure that public transportation is available to ensure our aging community members continue to have adequate access to medical and mental health care and supportive services.



11.0 Action Strategies

A comprehensive plan is only as effective as its recommendations are actually likely to be put into action. To that end, it is important that clear recommendations be accompanied by timelines for implementation and by identification of the parties responsible for implementation. This chapter is intended to present all of the comprehensive plan's recommendations at one location, by topic, and organized to show timelines and responsible parties.

The plan's timelines are Short-term, Mid-term, Long-term and Ongoing. Short-term recommendations should be implemented within two years, Mid-term recommendations between three and five years and Long-term recommendations beyond five years. Responsible parties include the Town Board, Planning Board, Zoning Committee (assuming one is assigned to propose changes to local land-use regulations for consistency with the new comprehensive plan) and other Town and community bodies.

Regional Context and Local History

Topic	Timeline	Responsible Party
HP.1. Through SEQRA review process, assess and mitigate impacts to historic and archeological resources in the Town.	On-going	Planning Board
HP.2. Amend zoning and subdivision standards to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) require an assessment of historic and archaeological assets as part of the review process for development proposals in the Town's historic areas, and b) adopt design standards for historically significant districts (such as the village center) and for significant properties. 	Short-term	Zoning Committee Town Board
HP.3. Encourage a private/public partnership (e.g., an historical society or "Friends of" organization) to provide better resources to preserve the historic Parsonage building and the Town's historical archives and artifact collections and to broaden public awareness and appreciation of Germantown's history.	Ongoing	History Department
HP.4. Coordinate historic-preservation activities with neighboring organizations that have related missions (e.g., Hudson River Heritage, Hudson Valley Vernacular Architecture and others).	Ongoing	History Department
HP.5. Perform an updated, detailed historic-resource inventory for the Town in collaboration with the Germantown History Department.	Mid-term	History Department
HP.6. Support extension of the Hudson River National Historic Landmark District to include the Germantown waterfront or establish such district.	Mid-term	Town Board
HP.7. Support the preservation of barns and other farm buildings by providing greater flexibility in the adaptive reuse of these structures.	Mid-term	Town Board Planning Board
HP.8. Support owner's effort to secure State or National Historic Preservation designation or NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation grants to restore these farm structures.	Ongoing	Town Board
HP.9. Encourage property owners to seek Historic Preservation Tax Credits to preserve historic farm buildings that are so important to preserving Germantown's rural heritage.	Ongoing	Town Board



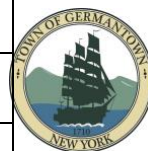
Current, Adjacent and Regional Land Use

Topic	Timeline	Responsible Party
LU.1. Inform adjacent municipalities of proposed and adopted planning and zoning at the Town's boundaries.	Short-term	Town Board
LU.2. Establish mechanisms for local and regional partnerships such as the Hudson River Valley Greenway Compact process.	Mid-term	Town Board
LU.3. Focus development more efficiently in and around traditional centers and avoid overdevelopment of the rural surroundings.	Ongoing	Town Board
LU.4. Foster an interconnected regional system of open-space corridors to offer recreational opportunities and protect environmentally sensitive areas.	Ongoing	Town Board
LU.5. Provide a stronger emphasis on walkable communities, while supporting land-use and site-plan decisions that reduce traffic impacts.	Ongoing	Town Board
LU.6. Clearly communicate the Town's future land-use goals, law standards and requirements to the development community and the public.	Ongoing	Town Board Planning Board
LU.7. Review the Town's zoning law and subdivision regulations, as well as other parts of the Town Code, to ensure these land-use regulations adequately implement the Comprehensive Plan.	Ongoing	Zoning Committee Town Board
LU.8. Consider the compatibility of development with surrounding uses.	Ongoing	Planning Board
LU.9. Encourage mixed-use infill development within the Main Street business district.	Ongoing	Planning Board
LU.10. Expand upon the Site Development Standards for Scenic View Overlay District to better guide the Planning Board's decisions.	Short-term	Zoning Committee Town Board
LU.11. Utilize the tool of cluster development to enhance the natural environment and preserve prime farmland and open space.	Ongoing	Planning Board
LU.12. Establish a general design vocabulary for commercial development along the corridor that will lead to aesthetically pleasing and cohesive development over time.	Short-term	Zoning Committee Town Board
LU.13. Adopt local law to regulate <i>solar energy generating facilities</i> , which permit solar energy systems and equipment, but ensure the provision of adequate sunlight necessary therefor; to balance the potential impacts on neighbors when solar collectors are installed near their property, while preserving the right of property owners to install solar energy systems in accordance with applicable laws and regulations; and to recognize solar energy as a priority for current and long-term energy sustainability.	Short-term	Zoning Committee Town Board
LU.14. Encourage construction of U.S. Green Building Council's LEED certified buildings.	Ongoing	Town Board Planning Board
LU.15. Regulate outdoor lighting to balances nighttime visibility and security needs while protecting the night sky, natural environment and wildlife habitats.	Short-term	Zoning Committee Town Board
LU.16. Work with local land owners, County and State Economic Development agencies to explore feasibility of creating <i>shovel-ready sites</i> for light industries.	Long-term	Town Board



Natural Resources and Agriculture

Natural Resource Protection	Timeline	Responsible Party
NR.1. Amend zoning and subdivision standards to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) adopt wetlands and waterbodies standards to protect water resources, including stream corridors, b) ensure that the types and densities of allowed development in areas with limited groundwater supplies do not exceed capacity, c) adopt siting standards for all new developments to protect environmentally sensitive lands, including slopes and ridges, forested corridors, open space and farmland, wetlands and waterbodies, important habitat and scenic resources, d) ensure that the types and densities of development allowed in and adjacent to Town Agricultural Districts minimize potential adverse impacts to agricultural lands while enhancing opportunities for increased on-farm income, and e) preserve valuable open space by using conservation-design subdivisions to site housing in more rural parts of the Town in environmentally sensitive ways. 	Short-term	Zoning Committee Town Board
NR.2. Adopt a plan with specific goals and a timeline for the Town to reduce energy use and solid waste production by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) obtaining an energy audit of Town facilities to determine where energy savings can be realized, and b) evaluating energy-saving and nonpolluting alternatives for purchases and capital improvements, including building according to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards. 	Short-term	Zoning Committee Town Board
NR.3. Develop GIS (Geographic Information Systems) capability within Town government as a planning tool.	Mid-term	Town Board
NR.4. Investigate opportunities for funding to develop a management plan for those roads located within the Town Scenic Viewshed Overlay Zone.	Mid-term	Town Board
NR.5. Develop a long-range plan for preservation and protection of agricultural, open- space and natural-resource areas, to include the evaluation of areas	Mid-term	Town Board Planning Board
NR.6. Support the Town's involvement in County and Regional agriculture and farmland protection programs and similar efforts to promote connections between farming and the community.	Mid-term	Town Board
NR.7. Evaluate the need for a local "Right to Farm" ordinance, new zoning provisions for farm and farmworker housing, new on-farm business options and other farm- friendly provisions.	Mid-term	Zoning Committee Town Board
NR.8. Work regionally with those concerned to obtain air monitoring equipment, to develop and implement a monitoring program and to hold accountable those responsible for ensuring appropriate air quality in the area.	Mid-term	Town Board
NR.9. Implement SWPPP best management practices as required by the NYSDEC.	Mid-term	Town Board
NR.10. Minimize impact of new development on the natural resources through best management practices (BMP) and <i>low-impact design standards</i> .	Ongoing	Planning Board
NR.11. Conserve the riparian zone along major streams and tributaries.	Ongoing	Planning Board
NR.12. Participate in the NYS Climate Smart Community and Clean Energy Community programs to make community more resilient and lower greenhouse gas emissions.	Mid-term	Town Board
NR.13. Develop wellhead protection plan for the Town of Germantown based upon findings in the NYRWA Groundwater Protection Plan .	Mid-term	Town Board
NR.14. Reserved.	Mid-term	Town Board



Agriculture & Farmland Protection	Timeline	Responsible Party
AG.1. Encourage both private and public efforts to preserve and manage agricultural lands through purchase of development rights (PDR) program administered by the Columbia County Ag & Farmland Protection Board and NYS Agriculture & Markets.	Ongoing	Town Board County ARPB CCE
AG.2. Encourage conservation subdivision design to preserve prime soils when farms are subdivided.	Ongoing	Planning Board
AG.3. Require sufficient vegetative buffer on the nonagricultural land, so farms are buffered from homes.	Ongoing	Planning Board
AG.4. Support local farmer efforts to diversify their farms by providing letters of support to farmers who may be seeking funding through USDA loan and grant programs.	Ongoing	Town Board
AG.5. Encourage participation in the New York Farm Link Program (nyfarmnet.org) to match farmers who are selling their farms with people who are looking to purchase a farm.	On-going	Town Board
AG.6. Increase community engagement and consumer demand for locally grown food.	Short-term	Town Board CCE
AG.7. Review and revise regulations pertaining to farm operations to ensure these laws do not needlessly inhibit farming (e.g. farm stands, year-round farmer's markets, greenhouses, value-added product operations, home-food production, U-picks, CSAs, and agritourist sites).	Short-term	Zoning Committee Town Board



Housing

Topic	Timeline	Responsible Party
H.1. Amend zoning and subdivision standards to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) provide for more moderate-cost housing opportunities in the village center such as homes on smaller lots and duplexes, b) allow alternate housing arrangements such as accessory apartments and other shared living arrangements or temporary housing for relatives, c) direct future housing into appropriate areas of the Town, based on sewer and water capabilities, existing development patterns, development constraints and natural-resource considerations, d) preserve valuable open space by using conservation-design subdivisions (see Chapter 6, “Future Planning” section), and e) adopt design review standards or guidelines for new multi-family housing. 	Short-term	Zoning Committee Town Board
H.2. Work regionally with other communities on large alternate-living projects requiring broad support and major funding.	Ongoing	Town Board
H.3. Create a Housing Committee to gather information and establish a database to provide assistance to income-eligible families about affordable-housing options and resources available from county, state and federal governments and banking institutions.	Short-term	Town Board
H.4. Implement a <i>first-time homebuyer</i> program that provides down payment assistance and below market rate financing programs.	Mid-term	Town Board
H.5. Implement <i>housing rehabilitation programs</i> that provide financial assistance to restore both owner occupied and investor housing for low-moderate income and senior residents.	Mid-term	Town Board



Local Economy and Commercial Development

Topic	Timeline	Responsible Party
<p>LU.1. Amend zoning and subdivision standards to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) encourage mixed-use business and residential development in the hamlet center that takes advantage of available infrastructure and that supports an expanded walkable neighborhood,, b) encourage and promote home-based businesses, c) require site and design review for new and expanded commercial uses, d) rezone land areas as appropriate to Hamlet Commercial and Hamlet Mixed Use to better reflect existing and desired types and scale of businesses, e) apply a HMU Hamlet Mixed Use to the hamlet core to apply traditional dimensional standards to existing and new development, and f) limit the size, height and placement of business signs in commercial zones. g) Adopt Design Guidelines to give Planning Board power to compel national and regional developers to modify site development and building design to protect small-town and rural character. 	Short-term	Zoning Committee Town Board
LU.2. Establish a standing Economic Development Committee to promote the growth of small businesses within the community. These businesses could include small, innovative or cooperative agricultural projects on unused farmland.	Short-term	Town Board
LU.3. Develop distinctive informational, directional and gateway signage at appropriate locations.	Mid-term	Highway Department/ Town Board
LU.4. Develop and implement a program of landscaping in the hamlet center.	Mid-term	Town Board
<p>LU.5. Consider the compatibility of development with surrounding uses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize strategies such as landscaping, tree preservation and other buffering techniques. • When necessary, require modification of site development plans to minimize impacts. 	On-going	Planning Board
<p>LU.6. Encourage mixed-use infill development within the Main Street business district.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use New Urbanism design principles to strengthen the character of Main Street. • Develop and implement a comprehensive long-term parking strategy for Main Street. 	On-going	Planning Board
LU.7. Support development of shovel-ready sites within the Town.	On-going	Town Board
LU.8. Adopt local law to regulate solar energy generating facilities (see also LU.12 page 27).	Mid-term	Zoning Committee Town Board
LU.9. Review Town of Germantown Junk Storage Law to ensure it is adequately addressing the issue of junk storage on residential and non-residential properties in the Town.	Mid-term	Zoning Committee Town Board
LU.10. Expand job opportunities: first through business retention and recruitment; and second by promoting and marketing Germantown's rural character and quality of life to attract micro, small-scale and medium-scale enterprises.	On-going	Town Board



Local Government

Topic	Timeline	Responsible Party
CF.1. Create a Town Boards Committee to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) review, revise and develop Town laws, ordinances and regulations to be comprehensive, clear, compatible and compliant with state, county and case law; strengthen authority and enforcement requirements; and codify regulations into a format that is accessible to the public and allows for the easy integration of future changes, b) create job descriptions for Town officials and employees that clarify roles, responsibilities and functions of all personnel and their orientation and training, and c) produce policy and procedure manuals for Town departments, boards, commissions and committees that ensure proper accountability and adequate documentation available to the public. 	Short-term Mid-term Mid-term	Town Board
CF.2. Reserved.	Mid-term	Town Board
CF.3. Reserved.	Mid-term	Town Board
CF.4. Improve communication with residents by conducting special workshops, producing a quarterly newsletter, enhancing the Town web site and cable coverage of meetings, and by seeking positive publicity for the Town.	Ongoing	Town Board
CF.5. Conduct Cost of Services Study to explore opportunities for reduce cost of local government through shared services with adjacent municipalities.	Ongoing	Town Board

Water Supply

Water Supply	Timeline	Responsible Party
CF.6. Create opportunities to guide future efforts to protect groundwater quality and supply by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) proposing zoning and subdivision amendments to regulate the density of development, minimum lot sizes and adequate well spacing according to the availability of groundwater resources, as recommended in the Groundwater Protection Plan, and to ensure that new development not have adverse impacts on water supply to existing wells and on groundwater resources that may supply future public water-supply wells by requiring a groundwater-extraction impact assessment prepared by a qualified hydrogeologist, b) developing a program to protect groundwater from potential contamination, including from development activity not served by the public sewer system, 	Short-term	Zoning Committee



Water Supply	Timeline	Responsible Party
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c) exploring the feasibility of a municipal water source through mapping of identified potential areas, working with landowners and conducting testing for water quality and quantity, and d) creating an emergency response plan in the event that water sources fail due to contamination or drought. 	Short-term	Zoning Committee
CF.7. Revise regulations to require testing for adequate groundwater supply for large development proposals.	Short-term	Zoning Committee

Wastewater Management

Topic	Timeline	Responsible Party
CF.8. Define and map a future sewer-service area that is consistent with planned growth areas as shown on the Future Land Use map.	Short-term	Town Board Planning Board
CF.9. Coordinate with the Columbia County Department of Health to develop a data base and mapping of all on-lot septic systems and to receive reports of septic- system violations and actions taken to resolve problems.	Mid-term	Planning Board
CF.10. Begin an educational campaign to encourage property owners to regularly clean out septic systems.	Mid-term	Planning Board

Waste Disposal and Nuisance Standards

Topic	Timeline	Responsible Party
CF.11. Amend zoning and subdivision standards to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) adopt provisions concerning dilapidated buildings and neglected exterior grounds and the removal of junk, debris and trash, b) develop active enforcement requirements and inspection schedules concerning violations with fine schedules and sanctions in line with state maximums, c) consider the adoption of lighting standards and a noise ordinance. 	Short-term	Zoning Committee
CF.12. Initiate an annual Town-sponsored community car and junk pickup day staffed by Town employees and volunteers.	On-going	Town Board
CF.13. Initiate a Townwide program that encourages community businesses, organizations and youth groups to conduct trash pickups, plant flowers and shrubs and undertake other beautification projects to improve the appearance of the Town.	On-going	Town Board/ Community groups



Fire, Police and Ambulance Service

Topic	Timeline	Responsible Party
CF.14. Work with the police and fire departments, Northern Dutchess Paramedics and the five Columbia County towns sharing NDP service to ensure that an adequate number of EMS vehicles is stationed permanently within the area, that there is adequate ongoing financial support for the service, and that a first-responder system for the Town is developed.	Mid-term	Town Board

Parks and Recreation

CF.15. Work with Park Commission to ensure provision of programs, events and park facilities to meet changing needs of Town.	Short-term	Town Board
CF.16. Amend the subdivision ordinance to adopt parkland-reservation standards.	Short-term	Zoning Committee
CF.17. Establish a Trails Committee to examine trails and linkage opportunities within Germantown and with county and regional connections.	Mid-term	Town Board
CF.18. Pursue completion of the campsite project on Dale's Bridge Road.	Mid-term	Town Board
CF.19. Apply to the NY Department of State for funding to develop and implement a Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan to promote public access to and enhance responsible use of the Hudson River waterfront.	Mid-term	Town Board
CF.20. Work with railroad agencies and landowners to place a walking trail adjacent to the Hudson River from Cheviot to North Germantown.	Mid-term	Planning Board
CF.21. Reserved.	Mid-term	Town Board

School and Library

CF.24. Develop a School and Town Committee to: a) improve communication and coordination on long-term planning issues, including retaining the Germantown Central School in the Town and allowing community use of school facilities and grounds for recreation and adult education after school hours, and b) create new opportunities, such as intern programs with local businesses, for assisting the school, its teachers and students and for utilizing talented residents for special learning projects and tutoring/mentoring programs.	Ongoing	Town Board
CF.24. Reserved.		



Transportation

Topic	Timeline	Responsible Party
T.1. Amend zoning and subdivision standards to: a) require new commercial development in the hamlet center and along Route 9G to install sidewalks if linked to an existing sidewalk system, b) revise width and material specifications for driveways, rural lanes and local roads to promote aesthetics and rural character, c) define criteria under which the Town will consider accepting dedicated new Town roads, d) promote shared driveways and parking in commercial areas, and e) promote interconnected roadways and discourage the construction of cul-de-sacs in new residential developments.	Short-term	Zoning Committee
T.2. Create a Sidewalk Plan for the hamlet center that provides pedestrian connections between residential, commercial, community and recreational land uses.	Short-term	Highway Department
T.3. Commence the collection of traffic-count data on all Town roads as a benchmark for future analysis.	Short-term	Town Board
T.4. Develop an official Computer Aided Design (CAD) engineered road map for all Town roads.	Short-term	Police Department
T.5. Maintain a police database of all automobile accident and toxic spill information for future reference.	Mid-term	Town Board
T.6. Provide lighting for the municipal parking lot.	Mid-term	Planning Board
T.7. Explore strategies to reduce vehicle traffic speed and implement traffic calming measures that create more compatibility with pedestrians and bicyclists.	Mid-term	Town Board
T.8. Extend the current system of sidewalks to better connect existing and planned future commercial, residential and recreational areas of the Town.	Mid-term	Town Board
T.9. Encourage Columbia County to establish bike paths on county roads throughout the Town.	Mid-term	Town Board/ Planning Board
T.10. Adopt an Official Map that identifies future desired road configurations and trail networks.	Mid-term	Town Board
T.11. Encourage the development and enhancement of regular bus transportation and link local efforts with any Columbia or Dutchess County	Long-term	Town Board
T.12. Apply for State and federal funding to implement sidewalk and trail system improvements.	On-going	Town Board Highway Dept.
T.13. Work with County and regional public transportation providers to ensure that public transportation is available to ensure our aging population members continue to have adequate access to medical and mental health care and supportive services.		



12.0 Future Land Use

In 2011, the Town Board updated its Zoning Map to reflect the recommendations of the 2011 Comprehensive Plan with respect to future land use (see page 87). Each of the Zoning Districts established is unique and intended to encourage certain types of land use over time as individual parcels are developed or redeveloped. These districts also reflect the existing land use patterns in the Town. The Town of Germantown is hereby divided into the following zoning districts:

NATURAL RESOURCE (NR): The Natural Resource designation is intended to include a combination of lands with the following natural resources: forest cover, wetlands, streams, hydric soils and soils that are vulnerable to contamination, floodplain and steep slopes, as well as lands within the Town's Agricultural District. These lands include many of the Town's most sensitive natural resources.

AGRICULTURE AND RESOURCE (AR): The Agriculture and Resource designation is intended to apply to contiguous areas of larger-lot lands characterized by combinations of lands in the Town's Agricultural District and the following environmental resources: forest cover, wetlands, streams, hydric soils, soils vulnerable to contamination, floodplain, Hudson River waterfront, steep slopes, designated and proposed scenic byways and rare-animal habitat.

RURAL RESIDENTIAL (RR): The Residential designation is intended to apply to land areas in the central part of the Town surrounding the hamlet center and Route 9G. These lands show a pattern of scattered residential development and tend to be more parcelized and have fewer significant natural and agricultural resources than other parts of the Town.

HAMLET RESIDENTIAL (HR): The Hamlet Residential designation applies to existing and planned future residential land in the Town center, west of Route 9G to the Hudson River and the existing neighborhood of Cheviot. This designation is intended to permit a variety of residential uses at traditional village densities and a small number of commercial uses enhanced by their proximity to the Hudson River waterfront and Main Street. Areas adjacent to the Town center are intended to receive public sewer service. While currently reliant on on-site wells, if a public water system were developed, this area should receive public water.

HAMLET MIXED-USE (HMU): The Hamlet Mixed-Use designation applies to existing and planned future small-scale, locally oriented commercial uses mixed with compatible residential uses. The designation seeks to allow adaptive reuse and conversion of older homes while employing design standards to promote attractive new development. This area is intended for public sewer service. While currently reliant on on-site wells, if a public water system were developed, this area should receive public water.



HAMLET COMMERCIAL (HC): The Hamlet Commercial designation is intended to permit a variety of primarily commercial uses that are more oriented to automobile traffic and are commonly found along highways. This designation applies to an area of land in existing or prior commercial use along 9G with additional land for expansion.









BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT (BD): The Business Development designation is intended to permit nonpolluting light-industrial, high-tech and office-park uses that generate considerable employment base in the community. The areas of land have been designated for this use where general commercial and light industrial uses already exist. It's proximity to Route 9G makes it appropriate for continued commercial and light industrial use.

WATERFRONT OVERLAY DISTRICT (SVO): The purpose of this overlay district is to protect viewsheds of the Hudson River and Catskill Mountains for the enjoyment of the community as a whole through site plan standards and the preservation of the natural landscape.



Town of Germantown Zoning Map

Zoning District

-  Waterfront Scenic Overlay
-  AR Agricultural Resource
-  RR Rural Residential
-  NR Natural Resource
-  HR Hamlet Residential
-  HMU Hamlet Mixed Use
-  HC Hamlet Commercial
-  BD Business Development

Adopted 2011



APPENDICIES








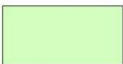


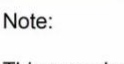
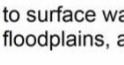
Appendix A

Maps



Germantown Site Development Constraints

Legend

-  Parcel boundary
-  River or Stream
-  Water
-  Surface Water Buffer (100 feet)
-  Partially hydric soils
-  All hydric soils
-  NYSDEC Wetland
-  NYSDEC Wetland Buffer (100 feet)
-  FEMA Floodplains
-  Steep Slopes (> 15%)

Note:

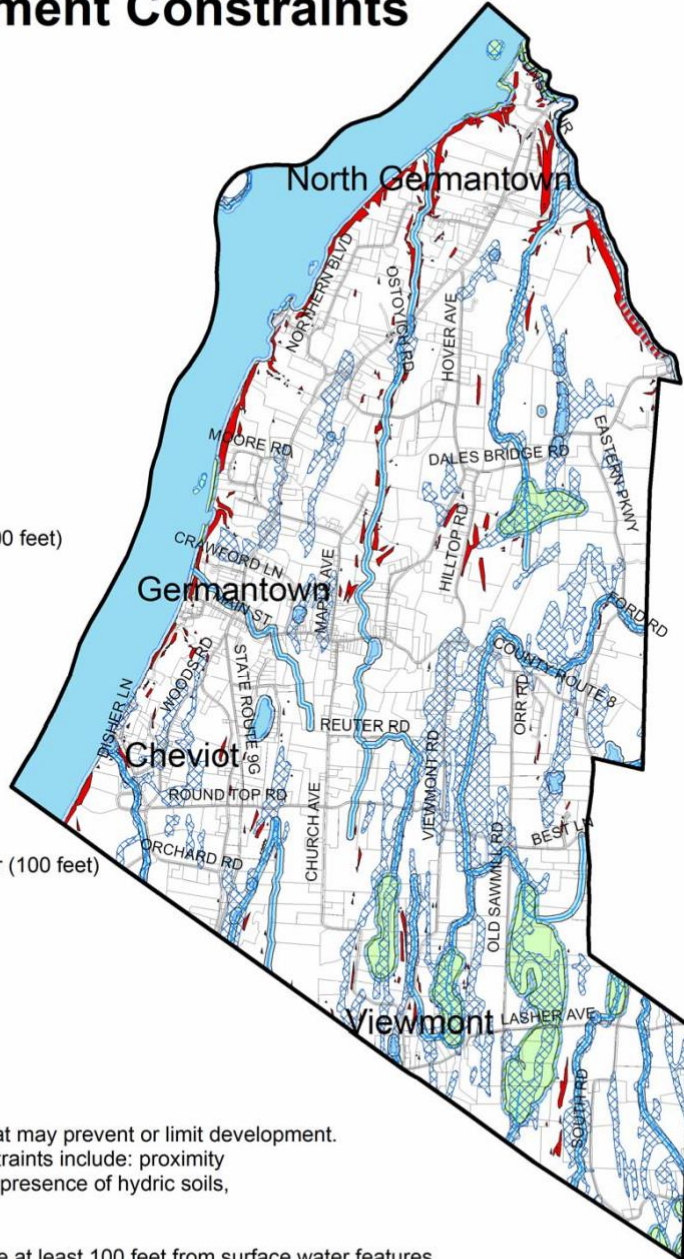
This map depicts site characteristics that may prevent or limit development. These so-called site development constraints include: proximity to surface water, proximity to wetlands, presence of hydric soils, floodplains, and steep slopes.

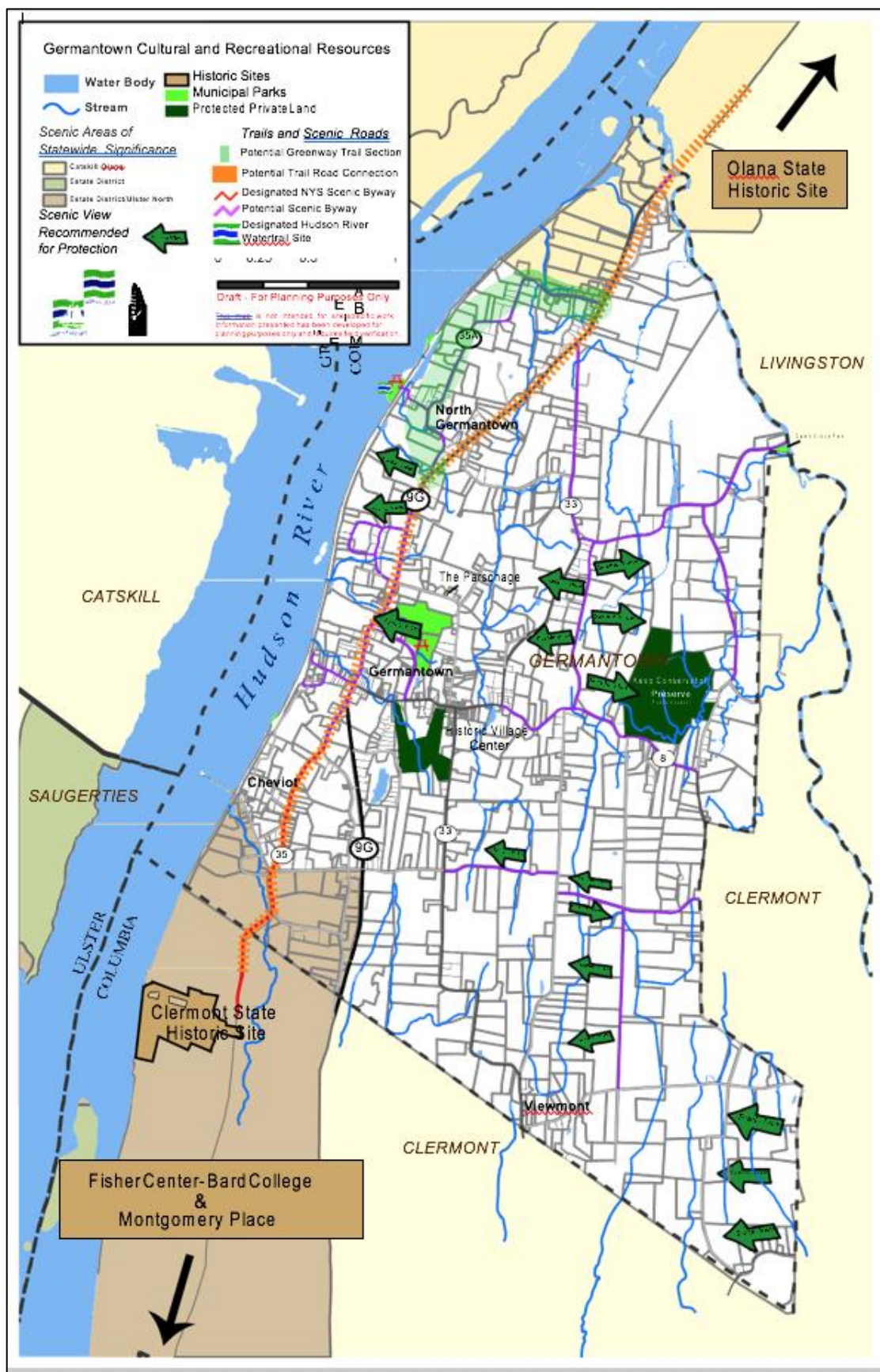
Many septic system components require at least 100 feet from surface water features. NYSDEC requires special permitting for development within 100 feet of a mapped wetland. Hydric soils contain a high water table that may preclude development of a conventional septic system. Development on floodplains is controlled. Finally, septic system development on slopes greater than 15 percent is typically not permitted.

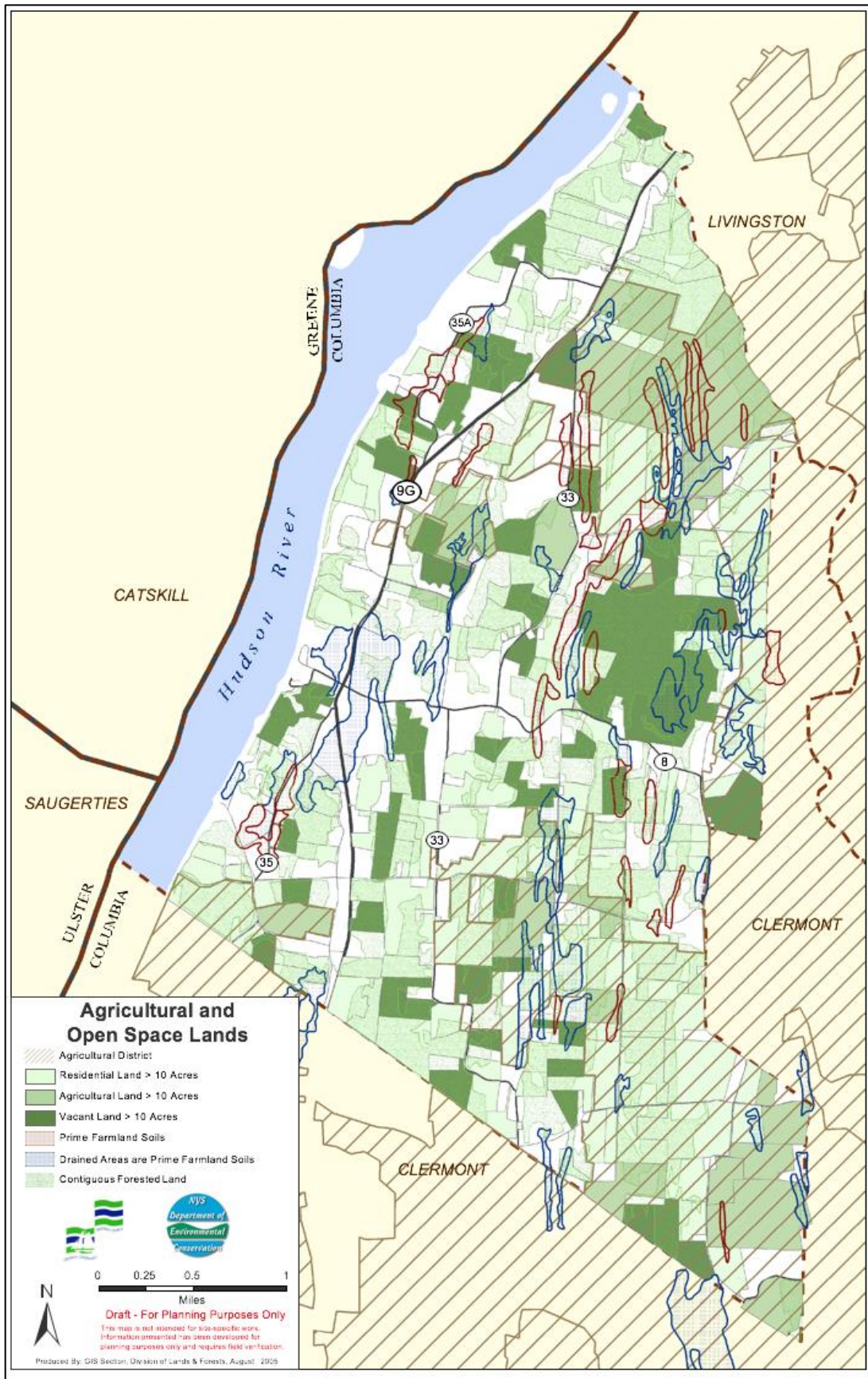


Scale

0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5 2 Miles







Appendix B

SWOT Analysis Results



Appendix C

New York Rural Water Association (NYRWA) Groundwater Protection Plan.



Appendix D

Town Zoning and Subdivision Law

Article VII – Additional Development Standards.

<http://germantownny.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Adopted-Germantown-Zoning-and-Subdivision-Law.pdf>

