



Guilderland Coalition for Responsible Growth  
P.O. Box 201  
Guilderland, NY 12084  
February 19, 2025

Town Supervisor Peter Barber  
Council Members Crawford, Napierski, Beedle and Santos  
Planning Board Chairman Stephen Feeney  
Planning Board Members Rogosu, Longo, Barry, Hennings, Robert and  
McKnight  
Zoning Board of Appeals Chairwoman Elizabeth Lott  
Zoning Board of Appeals Members Cupoli, McDonald, Ventresca Cohen, Villa  
and Zieno  
Chief Building and Zoning Inspector Jacqueline Coons  
Town Planner Kenneth Kovalchik

Attached is a document that our organization compiled based on a review of the recent Comprehensive Plan Draft and the individual Sub Committee recommendations. We ask that this document be shared with the above committee members. We also looked at other municipalities' Comprehensive Plans to see what was included and what was not.

What we found is that the Town of Guilderland is very unique as a suburban community because of the different neighborhoods, protected land (Pine Bush), wetlands, Helderberg escarpment and how the town functions with these variables and the fact that there continues to be less and less available land to build the large, multi-residence buildings and expansive subdivisions typically found in Suburbia. Couple that with the changes noted in McKownville and Westmere from more suburban areas to that of urban areas and we now have a town that has been losing its character, charm and inviting nature that was present even 10 years ago. The previous Comprehensive Plan did have a section about Town Character. For that to be omitted this time, give license for the town development and identity to become anything, meaning not exactly what residents want, but developers do.

In addition to being represented on the Housing and Neighborhood Subcommittee, we also spoke with neighbors in the various neighborhoods and what we found is that the residents of Guilderland are not entirely happy with the way growth has been allowed, the ignoring of traffic issues by statements saying there hasn't been an increase in traffic (when clearly there has been), the development of tall apartment buildings that do not conform to the neighborhoods they are in or near, the concern for our environment and infrastructure. We made it a point over the summer to engage with as many residents as we could at the Farmer's Market, and through contact in our everyday lives. We noted a great deal of apathy and lack of concern because "Builderland" will do whatever they want because they do not care about the residents, work only with developers and help them to build monstrosities and are in the pockets of the developers.

This is a very strong accusation, but it is the perception that residents have about our Planning and Zoning Departments. Many residents feel as though they have not been listened to as far as building in their neighborhoods. There is Hamilton Parc that is a 'behemoth' on Route 155. Residents in that neighborhood were not in favor of this project and it is more than 50% vacant after having been on the market for over a year and closer to two years. The Apex is another area that has invaded the small neighborhood around Westmere Terrace as well as being totally incongruous with the Rapp Road Historical District. Modern apartments and townhouses next to this remarkable historic location diminishes the value of this historical area. As far as Westmere Terrace is concerned, the developer still has not replanted the trees that have died and needed to be reminded to mow the grass, in addition to bringing in an invasive species to the area that residents now need to contend with. This is a slap in the face of that neighborhood that has to endure the life changing effects this has had on their homes and families. There is the Foundry Road project that will disturb the residents on Foundry Road. This is another example of ignoring the residents and wanting to push forward with another monstrosity of apartments that we have no use for. As a Pro Housing town, we would expect that the town would take a much harder stand and say "no" to these types of housing that do not meet the needs of our residents. To say that there will be 10% workforce

housing and accept it is not enough. This is quid pro quo no matter how you look at it. There have been solutions to these areas that the town has not availed itself of, primarily that of enforcement of the Town Code. Specifically Section 220-7 of the Town Code addresses Maintaining and Securing Properties. If this part of the code was enforced, perhaps we would not have so many eyesores on our main streets that people are tired of looking at. If the code had been enforced, perhaps residents would have a better sense of pride in their town. With this neglect, it is no surprise that residents agree with whatever a developer wants to put on a parcel of land just to get rid of what is there. These are all things that became evident to us as we engaged with the public.

The hope is that this plan will actually represent what the town residents want, and not what the Planning Department thinks we should have. To leave out a section on Town Character is a slap in the face of the residents of this town, especially for those who have seen the changes over the years. To take this away and claim it is in other parts of the plan diminishes the importance of what this means to residents. This section needs to be added as it is an important part of the identity of Guilderland. If you are only interested in continuing to build whatever developers want, then you will ignore it.

With the building of multi-family residences, there is not enough attention paid to the senior population. That was also very evident. There is not enough housing for seniors to age out in comfort at a price they can afford. Many do not want to live in apartments, and would prefer to stay in their homes. Senior Services in our town are sorely lacking. If you go to the websites of other towns, there are a lot more services listed for seniors. As this is the largest growing population, they should be listened to and assisted as much as possible. We are all going to be there at some point and it is in our interest to help this group maintain their homes or move to smaller, affordable homes. According to an AARP survey of 12/24, while 44% of those surveyed feel that a move may be inevitable, 75% want to stay in their homes/communities and 75% of 50+ adults still want a single family home.

If we want to become a robust community, we need to engage with the residents and pay attention to what they say and what they want. This was most evident in the Neighborhood and Housing group as we are talking about where people live, how they live and that we value our residents.

We hope that you take our suggestions seriously and include the missing sections we outlined in our report.

Sincerely,

Guilderland Coalition for Responsible Growth

We conducted a review of the Current Comprehensive Plan that has been in effect since 2000/2001, the proposed Comprehensive Plan that was completed in 2024, and the recommendations of the Housing and Neighborhood Subcommittee.

The other subcommittees did not have as many or nearly as glaring discrepancies between the subcommittee recommendations and the Comprehensive Plan recommendations. In fact, the Comprehensive Plan was more inclusive in terms of recommendations for each of the other subcommittees.

The most glaring difference in the plan is the exclusion of a section entitled Town Character. In fact, Ms. Hakes, the Consultant from MJ Engineering stated at the Public Hearing by the Town Board on February 4, 2025 stated that the town does not have a single town character, that there are many and they are addressed differently in the plan. In the previous plan, Town Character was included. In fact, in checking with other towns that used MJ Engineering as their consultants for their plans, there were sections dedicated specifically to Town Character. (Town of Rotterdam for example) The Consultant did not include this section and made the statement that Town Character was identified throughout the plan. We beg to disagree and find that if this is not defined as a specific goal with

objectives; too much is left up to a developer or a town board for their interpretation rather than a guideline that has been established.

All three groups (Comprehensive Plan 2000-2001, Housing and Neighborhood subcommittee for the 2025 Comprehensive Plan and the draft Comprehensive Plan) identified the same goal for Housing:

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

The differences are in the objectives or implementation guidelines. The new Comprehensive Plan addresses these issues specifically:

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

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

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

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

D-5. Offer a density bonus of additional dwelling units if certain amenities or features, such as affordable housing, senior housing, open space, recreation, and/or public access are included in a housing development. (Density bonuses are dangerous. This allows developers to build higher without concern for the neighborhood or the character of the area, and in smaller lots.)

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

The subcommittee delved into the process a little more deeply and submitted the following goals:

“As a general rule, ensure that all apartment buildings in all zones are located near transportation centers and limited to a percentage of overall town housing to match the objective sources for actual demand (not based on developers’ studies) to create a balanced distribution of housing in town.”

“Create sustainability developments that truly focus on diverse housing, environmental improvements and economic growth. Develop green building standards and codes that promote energy efficiency, water conservation and the use of sustainable materials.”

(This latter goal is addressed in the new Comprehensive Plan, but not in as much detail)

### **Housing Objectives:**

**Develop policies and programs to help maintain and strengthen character, value and enjoyment of existing housing resources in established neighborhoods of Guilderland**

- Avoid overdevelopment especially in or near established neighborhoods

(The entire subcommittee felt this was extremely important and needed to

be stated in the new Comp Plan, however, it was deleted)

- Create parks- develop a park for the Westmere area that includes areas for adults as well as playsets and facilities that all children can use  
This is not in the consultant’s plan, even though the residents of Westmere have been asking for this for years.

**Ensure that the town's zoning accommodates the need for housing diversity, and that supply matches need/demand**

- Multi Residence Zones- The subcommittee determined that the current apartment housing units are sufficient for the demand in town. We especially recommend against any future zoning changes for any additional MR zones. This objective is extremely important as a blueprint for the town and was also dropped by the consultant and does not appear in the draft Comp Plan.
- Current Code- The town code contains a variety of diverse types of housing (Country hamlet, planned unit developments, senior housing etc) The subcommittee recommends adding some additional categories for affordable housing in the next section of this report.

**Encourage affordable housing opportunities for seniors and those with special needs, etc. that will allow residents to remain in their homes despite changing their housing care requirements.**

- Encourage smaller homes- encourage one-story ranch homes for seniors and people with special needs, etc, either in existing established neighborhoods or in new 1- 1-1/2 story cottage type housing developments.
- Promote Age in Place programs: Promote town programs like Guilderland Senior Services which allows seniors to age in place in their own homes with a range of services.

**Identify appropriate sites and incentives for the creation of housing options that are needed but not adequately provided for in the marketplace. Houses that are +/- 1,000-1,500 sq. ft. are the most desirable types of housing and are part of the missing middle housing. This includes homes that are more affordable than single family homes currently being built.**

- Incentivize smaller homes. These are generally understood to be one story ranch style homes or cottages that can be 'starter homes' or 'downsized' for senior citizens or smaller affordable homes for low to middle income working families.
  - Create a new Affordable Home Zone in the code -for developers to build smaller homes on smaller lot sizes.
  - Identify which areas of town this type of development would be suitable
- Give Tax incentives to renovating smaller homes.
    - Reinvest in established older neighborhoods
    - Create tax incentives for renovating and updating smaller homes in established neighborhoods to make them more sellable.
  - The town should encourage renovations, enhancements and additions to existing homes in established neighborhoods as an alternative to the sprawl created by continuous patterns of new construction. Use of assessments with improvements would be deferred or waived for a period of time, or phased in over a period of time. (Single-family and multi-family property)
  - Affordable Housing Requirements- While not requiring quotas, a certain number of units in each housing development be 'affordable 'housing units. (for apts., less than 30% of average renter's annual income) If possible, add provisions to the zoning code that require this. Work with developers and use the site planning process to encourage this.
  - Attached Dwelling units/Apartments- develop policies for accessory dwelling units (ADU's) either attached or detached, as an opportunity for alternative housing options in single-family residential neighborhoods while preserving the Character of these neighborhoods. The intent is to provide low-cost housing options, slow suburban sprawl and slow non efficient use of existing infrastructure. \*
    - Need a Special Use Permit

- May be up to 1000 sq. ft or 30% of the principal structure, whichever is smaller
- Maximum height of the detached structure should not be taller than the principal structure
- One of the residences must be owner occupied
- Require a minimum of one additional off street parking space
- Must meet setback requirements of the primary structure
- Cannot be used as short-term rental (AirbnbVrbo)
- The occupant does not need to be a relative of the owner
- If the ADU is rented by the owner of the principal residence it cannot be sublet

There is overlap between the plan and subcommittee report in several areas, but the subcommittee report gave more specific details of what should be included.

Sustainability was mentioned by both, which includes green building practices, water conservation, energy efficiency, etc.

The Draft Comp. Plan suggests that Zoning regulations be updated to require major subdivisions and large developments incorporate affordable housing options including smaller lots, smaller housing, senior housing, open space, recreation and/or public access as well as housing for households earning 80 - 120% of the area median income. While some of this sounds good, the draft Comp Plan should instead be using numbers for per person income in town as a more realistic and fair measure, especially when considering affordable housing has to include a single head of household or a single apartment/homeowner too.

The residents' Subcommittee determined that the current apartment housing units are sufficient for the demand in town. With two new complexes having been built, neither are at or near capacity and in fact are having difficulty in renting. (The Apex and Hamilton Parc). Given the growth that is projected for the next 40 years as outlined in

the Comprehensive Plan, to be about 1.5% for each 20 yr period, there appears to be sufficient housing available for this growth.( page 79) The areas of growth that are needed are those of affordable housing and senior housing which would free up existing housing that could be available for incentives that would encourage updates to existing homes as recommended by both the subcommittee and the committee. The draft Comp Plan ignores this point.

The Subcommittee also recommended that there be a creation of housing options that are not adequately provided for, specifically homes that are approximately 1000-1500 sq. ft. This is the middle housing that is missing in Guilderland and would fill a need for starter homes and senior homes. The subcommittee also suggests creating a new Affordable Home Zone in the code for developers to build smaller homes on smaller lots and to identify areas of town where this would be suitable. Again, these recommendations were ignored and not included in the Draft Comp. Plan.

The Subcommittee also suggested that there be tax incentives for renovating smaller homes (either to live in or resell), reinvestment in our older neighborhoods, to help alleviate the sprawl created by larger development. This point was included in the Draft Comp Plan. .

As to the issue of affordable housing, the Draft Comp. Plan mentions this, but is not as specific as the Subcommittee recommendations. While not requiring quotas for affordable housing, the Subcommittee suggested adding a provision to the zoning code that would require this and working with developers to meet the needs of the town rather than meeting the needs of the developer as has been done continually for the past 20+ years.

The Subcommittee also gave more detail on how to set up and allow for Accessory Dwelling Units/Apartments (attached or detached), including the following:

- Would need a Special Use Permit
- Size: Up to +/-1000 sq feet or 30% of the principal structure
- One structure must be owner occupied
- Require a minimum of one additional off-street parking space
- Meet setback requirements of the primary structure
- Cannot be used as a short-term rental (Airbnb/VRBO)
- Occupant does not need to be a relative
- If the ADU is rented by the owner of the principal residence, it cannot be sublet

What is lacking in the overall Draft Comprehensive Plan is a clear definition of what Town Character is and how to preserve and protect it going forward. This is an important issue for a municipality as it helps to define what the town is and how it can grow in a cohesive manner, rather than in the haphazard manner in which this town has been growing in recent years.

As we all know, Guilderland is unique in that there are several areas that are clearly different from one another. McKownville is mostly an urban area closest to the city of Albany. In addition, there is a university and the influx of the college population in the area. Westmere is another area that has been forced into urbanization with the change in zoning to allow for big box stores such as COSTCO, an outpatient hospital clinic, storage units, hotels and apartment buildings. The area next to Crossgates in Westmere, that once had a clearly defined spirit, sense of community and cohesiveness, was destroyed by a developer's buyout of homes and then the developer's overall neglect of the area for the past 20 years with no enforcement by the town to maintain the properties. Thus, it became such an eyesore that many people felt that anything built in the space would be

better than what was there. This is also happening further down on Western Avenue near Foundry Road. These areas (the first, once a thriving neighborhood, the second once part of a quaint hamlet) have been ignored by corporations for years, and left to deteriorate, leaving them unkempt, in disrepair, and ultimately a blight on the landscape of the town.

Other areas of the town include the hamlet of Guilderland near the Library, the Fort Hunter area which is clearly a suburban area and the western part of town that is also very rural and includes farms.

The residents of this town need to know the Town Character goals that the Subcommittee set, and which were wholly deleted from the Draft Comp. Plan when it deleted the entire section on Town Character, are as follows:

- Preserve and enhance Guilderland's identity, image and quality of life; maintain and strengthen the distinction between the Town's developed and rural areas as well as the distinction between the town's neighborhoods and commercial areas;
- Prevent any trends that move Guilderland toward the look of a city or large commercial town; namely, avoid putting all commercial businesses along the Western Avenue Corridor. Instead, spread them out thoughtfully in appropriately zoned areas in town that are in conformance with the town's height limit and with landscaping and buffers to clearly separate them from the residential areas with native species landscaping. [Notably, the Draft Comp. Plan is ignoring this entire goal, and recommending the opposite—putting more

commercial zoning on Western Ave, while remaining silent on preserving our town's long held 2 ½ story height limit for structures].

- Prioritize residents' quality of life while encouraging small business to grow and flourish [Draft Comp Plan is silent on this]
- Town character should recognize the abundance of ethnic groups in the town and encourage and promote diversity [Draft Comp. Plan is silent on this].
- Establish resilience goals/strategies that reduce the Town of Guilderland's vulnerability to potential natural hazards and events. Reduce risk to future developments through a careful planning process, and take steps to protect existing infrastructure and natural resources. [Draft Comp Plan is silent on this].

In order to achieve these goals, the Subcommittee suggested the following (all of which was dropped from the Draft Comp Plan):

Establish guidelines to ensure that future residential and commercial development is of a scale and design that is appropriate from both neighborhood and townwide perspective This is critical to preserving the town's character for the next 20 years.

- The town should proactively select one or two designated areas in town on main roads (avoiding Western Ave) that have enough population to support small non-residential commercial uses in BNRP or LB districts in order to bring light offices, dining, professional services and employment opportunities to areas that need those services. Again, the residents' Subcommittee here

recommended avoiding overburdening Western Ave with new development, but the Draft Comp Plan ignores this and creates a new commercial zone in an existing single family residence zone on Western Ave.

- Identify boundaries of existing or locations for potential mixed use community centers or hamlets (similar to the Village of Altamont)
- Create neighborhood 'community centers' and identify necessary transportation improvements for each area that will address traffic calming and other pedestrian safety issues
  
- Work with residents in Traditional neighborhoods corridors to generate strategies for enhancing their existing environments and require town leadership to provide updates on processes achieved with the Comprehensive Plan's goals and objectives to each neighborhood corridor community periodically. [Note that these last three objections in particular are community and neighborhood focused. The Draft Comp Plan has no goals or objectives to preserve and promote these important town interests, finding them irrelevant.

#### Ensure adequate, but not excessive parking

- Terminology: change the Zoning Code from 'required' to 'recommended' parking spaces
  
- Recommended Parking Lot Spaces: The number of parking spaces in the code is excessive and underutilized in many commercial and residential apartment complexes, often causing stormwater runoff. Better to recommend less parking

in the code and allow the developer to argue reasons for more parking spaces.

- Banked Parking: Banked parking spaces should be required for all projects to allow for future growth.
- Connected Parking Lots- Adjust site plan code requirements to encourage connected parking lots for adjacent businesses that filter traffic away from residential areas to a single traffic signal.
- Ensure that new development does not cause adverse impacts such as noise, odor, and vibrations, unapproved signage or undue burden on town infrastructure

The town should compile a list of its important natural resources which deserve special protection and draft code provisions protecting these resources (i.e. Pine Bush Preserve, Watervliet Reservoir, the Helderberg Escarpment viewshed, etc.)

- Draft Code provisions to protect the Pine Bush Preserve as a special area, similar to the Town of Colonie's code provisions for the Pine Bush
- In light of the recent Supreme Court Decision limiting the Army Corps of Engineers designation of wetlands to only those that flow into U.S. navigable waters, immediately draft a new code provision to protect our town's wetlands. As other towns are doing (See the Town of New Paltz code provision, the upcoming code provision in the Town of Bethlehem. This will serve many purposes including preventing the destruction of important ecosystems as well as preventing uncontrolled stormwater runoff throughout the town. [Note: this is a critical and smart objective to preserve the ecosystems in our

wetlands and prevent storm water devastation, which were ignored by the Draft Comp. Plan].

- Protect the views of the Helderberg Escarpment
- Incentivize Farmlands- Create a way to encourage continued use of farmlands for farming. Continue support of farmer's markets in town
- Establish Conservation Programs- Continue to establish programs like the Conservation Easement Program which gives tax incentives to residents for conserving their lands
- Actively reach out to land trusts and partner with them to purchase open spaces

Encourage use of vacant properties: Encourage development of abandoned or vacant property for new housing and commercial uses rather than breaking ground in open or green spaces in town:

- Create tax incentives where possible to encourage developers to use already used property (i.e. vacant retain space in Pyramid, Westlawn Bowling Center, Jiffy Lube, Foundry Rd, Rustic Barn etc) for new projects in town rather than building new structures on undisturbed lands. [Note: this is a serious problem in Guilderland that the Subcommittee wanted addressed and included, but was not included in the Draft Comp. Plan].

Solar and Wind Farms- Encourage green energy in appropriately sited areas that will not cause a negative impact on any town or residential natural or historic viewshed.

- Do not allow major solar or wind farms in residential areas
- Promote the use of solar panels as much as possible on town properties such as town hall, Nott Road Garage, School Bus garage, etc., and on large private commercial structures such as Crossgates Mall and Guilderland Center Industrial Center
- Encourage residential rooftop solar panels with tax incentives

Retain and strengthen the character of Guilderland's residential neighborhoods and develop building, landscaping and signage guidelines for commercial areas to create a cohesive and aesthetically pleasing visual environment and sense of place rather than a sprawling suburban patchwork [Note: This, like all goals and objectives that the Subcommittee included to protect and preserve the town's residential neighborhoods, was completely dropped in the Draft Comp Plan].

- Zoning Code Updates- Improve the quality of site design with an emphasis on harmonious signage, landscaping, lighting, planting and building facade designs to fit in with small town look for commercial and business retain zones similar to what Altamont has done
- Make initial sign permits review part of the site plan process
- Enforcement- Hire additional zoning personnel to actively enforce violations in the code for these items townwide. Actively seek out violators, quickly respond to residents' complaints and take appropriate action to enforce the code uniformly.
  
- Fines- Re-examine the code to determine if there are appropriate fines for these violations. Draft provisions to impose fines for successive, continuing or escalating violations that are strong enough to act as deterrents and to help avoid the necessity of costly litigation.

Encourage street tree planting and other aesthetic improvements in residential neighborhoods using native/non-invasive species

- Town Arborist- Hire a town arborist to evaluate trees in town, protect heritage trees from development, and enforce code provisions regulating the number of trees that can be cut down for any development project. Include fines in the town code for

violations of town code provisions on tree cutting. The town arborist should also review and provide comments on all site plans and submit those comments to the Planning Board and/or Zoning Board for implementation as conditions to any site plan'

### Improve the Character of Existing Neighborhoods

- Provide more sidewalks in residential areas where desired by residents
- Provide attractive historic (lamppost) streetlighting that meets zoning code requirements in denser areas (McKownville, Altamont, Guilderland Hamlet) to enhance town character
- Provide funds for the garden club and/or other volunteer organizations to plant flower beds in areas along prominent roadways and intersections (as Saratoga and Albany do)

Seek out potential public and private partnerships to implement needed improvements. This includes land trusts, business organizations, community leaders, etc.

- Grants- actively seek out and apply for all appropriate grants for town improvements
- Tree Planting Program- Set up a town program, run by the Town Arborist to encourage tree planting with special requirements in the town code for developers to replace cut trees with a proportionate number of well-established trees. This will not only add to town character but will also add to green initiative/climate change protections. [Note: Since the Subcommittee rendered its report, a town arborist has been hired].

The one suggestion by the Draft Comprehensive Plan was to establish a 'Community Center' near the Route 20/155 intersection, in the area that was previously identified as a possible Senior Housing project. This was never discussed in the Subcommittee meetings and in fact, it is an

extremely poor idea. The traffic at this intersection is at least 4-6 lanes for each of the four corners. Pedestrians have a very hard time trying to cross this intersection, let alone cars who may want to try and turn in against traffic to an area not far from this intersection. Guilderland has 2 other areas already used for community engagement and does not cost anything. One is the Guilderland Public Library and the other is the YMCA. Community groups are able to use them by reserving space as needed. In addition, our school taxes pay for the library and this is an excellent place for the community to come together. The same can be said for the YMCA who also allows various community groups to meet in one of their meeting rooms. These existing community centers already act to increase the interface between the community and these groups, exposing the community to what they have to offer. Both are family oriented and offer programs for all ages. This is what Community Centers do. We should focus on what we have and encourage similar community centers in other areas of town (like the Altamont library), rather than promulgate something new that may or may not meet our community needs.

Mckownville currently has a good neighborhood network and they meet regularly. This is something that other neighborhoods could also do. There is a group in Westmere that also works together. The areas of Guilderland Hamlet, Fort Hunter and the rural areas, do not have the same sense of neighborhood and could learn from these two neighborhoods.

Fortunately, one of the recommended goals is to have a Town Arborist, which our town now has. We also have a Conservation Overlay Zoning Committee that was recently set up with several members.

In addition, there is still work that will be done to increase the sidewalks in town to meet the needs of pedestrians. With that comes the responsibility of maintaining those sidewalks in winter. The town has made a better effort and has been clearing them timely and cleanly.

The last area that needs to be mentioned is that of Governance. There

was no sub-committee that addressed this issue, however there was mention of it at the Public Hearing by the Comprehensive Plan Committee.

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

One of the areas that is mentioned in the Draft Comp Plan is that of Senior Services. Specifically, the Town's Senior Services Department is responsible for planning, advocating, coordinating, and monitoring services and programs that benefit Town residents aged 60 and older. With its fleet of four shuttle buses, the department offers senior transportation for older residents for medical appointments and grocery shopping. In 2023, the Town Senior Services Department accommodated more than 3,000 transportation requests and served more than 800 Town seniors. Other services offered include daily educational, social, and recreational programs, monthly day trips, special events, and outreach to homebound elders. The Department also serves as a liaison between the Town and relevant area agencies. The Senior Services Department is a community focal point where older people or groups can participate in a variety of programs that promote independence and community involvement.

In reading this, you would think that our town has a robust Senior program, yet nothing is further from the truth. In fact, there are 3 Senior groups in our community, two of which are not served by the Senior Center. These two groups are more interested in activities that encourage socialization, discussion, outings for lunch at local restaurants and involvement in activities that allows them to give back. There is no mention of these two other groups in the plan. There is also a statement that the Senior Center 'advocates' for seniors, yet there does not seem to be any evidence of that. If you are to go to the town web page for senior services,

you will find that it is very limited in what it offers. If you are to go to web pages of other towns that offer senior services, you will see more robust pages that provide information for all seniors, not just the small group that uses the Senior Center. More attention needs to be paid to this growing community as it is the largest faction of our town population in terms of growth. Many seniors are still productive, very involved and want to continue to be yet there is nothing other than a volunteer group that functions to engage this energetic and engaged group.

Another area that is addressed in the Draft Comp. Plan is the Conservation Easement Review Board (CERB). The purpose of the CERB is '...“to conserve open space lands and maintain character of the town....” but there is no definition in the Draft Comp. Plan for Town Character. If you want to preserve the character of the town, you must define what it is, what it entails and how it fits in with the design, zoning and growth of the town. In the Infrastructure and Public Utilities, town character is also mentioned. It says in part ...“...expansion of existing infrastructure can have a dramatic effect on the character and function of the Town. Such expansion requires careful attention to the potential for growth-inducing impacts.’ Again, nothing in the Draft Comp Plan explains or defines what is meant by “Town Character.”

Stormwater runoff is generated from rain and snow melt that falls on impervious surfaces such as parking lots, paved streets, rooftops, and compacted bare soil. When water flows over impervious surfaces it may collect and transport pollutants that are harmful to the environment and drinking water supplies. The increase in runoff generated during such precipitation events is directly related to the increase in impervious surfaces and, therefore, to land development activities that increase impervious surfaces. So, what are we as a town doing about this? We have a lot of impervious surfaces generated by the building of large apartment complexes, big box stores, storage units etc. If we are to reduce the runoff from these areas, we need to reduce the amount of impervious material which would give you the impression that large buildings and complexes would not be in concert with this. It appears that this town is at

a crossroads.... We have quite a bit of protected land with the Pine Bush, we have a lot of wetlands. We need to be cognizant of the fact that there may not be a lot of property available to continue to build large subdivisions and multifamily units. Perhaps this needs to be addressed in concert with the fact that our projected growth will be in the area of 1.5-3% over the next 20 years. None of these considerations are in the Draft Comp. Plan. We need to pay attention to what is being built, who it is serving and does it meet the needs of the town.

Updating the Town Zoning Code to ensure that development is compatible with Town Character is also mentioned in the Draft Comp. Plan, but ironically the section that defined the Town's Character has been completely omitted! This needs to be specific. Should we be looking at eliminating some of the zoning such as MR, PUD, TOD etc? Should they be modified to fit in with what is in the area as a whole rather than just one section of town that is zoned in this manner? The use of a PUD is not congruent with the surrounding areas and to add PUD zoning takes away from some areas where there are historic buildings, single family homes and small businesses that are 1-2 stories high rather than an unlimited height.

We need to continue to coordinate with Rotterdam and the city of Watervliet with our and their water needs. We hear that we don't have enough water on our own, yet we still don't have our wells up and running. We have not been totally forthcoming in advising the City of Watervliet of building projects that could impact the water supply of the Watervliet Reservoir. To read some of the emails you would think that our town would be a little more professional and considerate of what is being said.

We continue to have a severe flooding problem near Stuyvesant Plaza that has been ongoing for over 25 years. There needs to be remediation of this problem and one way to do that is to cease building that requires paving and cause runoff and flooding.

We have been identified as a Climate Smart Program. With that designation, you would think that the town would take a more forward position by encouraging businesses such as Metro Storage and Tractor Supply (to name only 2) if they would put solar panels on their buildings. The same could be said for Crossgates Mall, Stuyvesant Plaza, Towne Center, Hamilton Plaza etc. If we have this designation, why are we not encouraging businesses to follow suit?

As far as implementation of the new Comprehensive Plan and the issue of Governance, the Draft Comp Plan states that the town may establish a body and/or mechanism to guide the Comprehensive Plan's implementation with heavy input from the Planning Department. The suggestion we have for this, is to have a group including not only members of the Planning and Zoning Departments, but also residents of the town. It is one way to have checks and balances in place regarding the implementation of the plan. It would be no different than any other committee the town has created to do its work and provide guidance.

In terms of implementation and monitoring, this should be done on an annual basis to see where the town is with the implementation of the goals. While not all goals contained in the Comprehensive Plan can be addressed or even achieved at one time, it would seem to be important to develop an implementation plan and follow up for review on a periodic basis. Again, the inclusion of residents who will look at these issues and not be afraid to present their point of view is important. We need folks who will actually work to ensure implementation and follow up and if there are issues, and not be afraid to address them and work toward a solution.

There were also many grammatical and spelling errors in the following sections:

Parks and Recreation

Police

We hope that you find this useful and will take into consideration what is contained in this document.

Thank you.

Guilderland Coalition for Responsible Growth