



Jessica Montgomery <montgomeryj@togny.org>

Fwd: Comments on Draft Guilderland Comprehensive Plan Update

1 message

Peter G. Barber <barberp@togny.org>
To: Jessica Montgomery <montgomeryj@togny.org>

Wed, Mar 19, 2025 at 8:12 AM

FYI
Peter G. Barber
Supervisor, Town of Guilderland
Town Hall
PO Box 339, [5209 Western Turnpike](#)
[Guilderland, NY 12084](#)
Phone: 518-356-1980
Fax: 518-356-5514
barberp@togny.org

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Ken** [REDACTED]
Date: Tue, Mar 18, 2025 at 4:29 PM
Subject: Comments on Draft Guilderland Comprehensive Plan Update
To: barberp@togny.org <barberp@togny.org>, napierskic@togny.org <napierskic@togny.org>, crawfordj@togny.org <crawfordj@togny.org>, beedlea@togny.org <beedlea@togny.org>, santosg@togny.org <santosg@togny.org>

Please enter the attached comment letter (also pasted below) into the official record.

To: Guilderland Town Board 17 March 2025
Supervisor Peter Barber <barberp@togny.org>
Christine Napierski <napierskic@togny.org>
J. Crawford <crawfordj@togny.org>
A. Beedle <beedlea@togny.org>
G. Santos <santosg@togny.org>

Re: Draft Guilderland Comprehensive Plan Update

Good evening. My Name is Kenneth Smith.

I live in a modest home on Sumter Avenue. My wife and I have lived in our home since 1994, that's more than 30 years. We raised our children here, we paid off our mortgage, and we had planned to remain here.

Today, we are no longer sure that staying here will be in our future. This troubling thought comes from learning the Draft Guilderland Comprehensive Plan Update contains a map that draws a red line around our neighborhood and calls it a "Proposed Town Center", Figure 12 Guilderland Priorities Map. The area within the redlined oval not only includes properties with businesses fronting Western Ave. and Route 155, but reaches deeply into the heart of our neighborhood, grasping at residential properties along Sumter Ave., Cornell Ave., and Norman Ave., as well.

To be clear, if superimposing any label on our established neighborhood, which includes Sumter Ave., Cornell Ave., and Norman Ave., and Seward Street, please use Guilderland Gardens. That is the name given to our neighborhood as far back as the early 1940s. Many of the homes in our neighborhood were built in the 1940s. Our lot sizes are generally about a quarter acre, and our houses are much smaller than most newer homes built.

These modest homes, made it possible for generations of hard working people of modest means to own a home. The smaller size makes them manageable to maintain - something very important for seniors like myself, who wish to age in place, rather than move to some sort of large apartment complex. After all, it is all about realistic choices and available options.

Many living in other neighborhoods ultimately may seek to downsize to smaller homes, whereas, in our neighborhood we already have that smaller home.

Our neighborhood should not be redlined as part of a "Proposed Town Center", diminished by implying it lacks meaning, character or value and needs to be developed into something else - our homes targeted for destruction and displacement. Rather, our neighborhood of modest homes on smaller lots ought to be recognized for what it truly is, a desirable neighborhood that possesses a desirable modest housing stock which has allowed seniors to remain in their homes as they grow older, while also making home ownership possible for those seeking an attainable first home.

Please remove the redlining of our neighborhood and the corresponding "Proposed Town Center" labeling. The text on Page 195 - p. 196 appears to provide little basis for choosing this particular location beyond the presence of infrastructure. Below, I have included additional comments on the text appearing on pages 195 - 196.

I most certainly do recognize, and the Town Comprehensive Plan also should reflect the presence of other neighborhoods comprised of smaller homes within Westmere, as well as in other areas of our Town. These neighborhoods also ought to be recognized for the value they offer to seniors and potential first time homeowners.

I would hope that those neighborhoods also would not be redlined, or otherwise slated for destruction and displacement.

Neighborhood character is and must continue to be recognized as paramount.

I am aware that the process of preparation of the update to the Town's Comprehensive Plan included a resident subcommittee for neighborhood housing and town character that, after considerable community interaction and deliberation, put forth a set of clear goals and objectives for the Housing and Town Character sections. It is troubling to learn that the consultant and Town Planner, largely ignored the subcommittee by omitting the section on Town Character and inserting recommendations not comporting with the product of the subcommittee on these topics. How can a comprehensive plan offer recommendations for what our Town needs without a thorough analysis and assessment of what have and what must be preserved?

Town Character may not be a simple define, however, a place to begin might be with understanding the character of the network of neighborhoods comprising our Town.

As for what the Draft Guilderland Comprehensive Plan Update does include, The vision statement misses the mark regarding communities and neighborhood and homes.

The vision statement is lacking, offering only the following, From Page 22., "distinctive, attractive neighborhoods". This provides nothing to define our neighborhoods in context, a necessary step toward protecting and strengthening the character of existing neighborhoods.

From Page 23. Neighborhoods & Housing

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

The goals for Neighborhoods & Housing focus exclusively on what some might term a desired state for the availability of housing types, without recognition of the character of existing neighborhoods and the need to protect and sustain existing homes and neighborhoods in the Town of Guilderland. The set of neighborhoods of smaller or modest homes on smaller lots in close proximity to transportation corridors need to be recognized for their value as a desirable and achievable option for home ownership.

From Page 195 - p. 196

Proposed Town Center

Guilderland experienced periods of elevated population growth during past decades when car-centric development patterns prevailed. The result, as members of the CPUC and the public have noted, is the lack of a distinct center in Guilderland – a place for Town residents to meet and gather. Exploring the feasibility of a Town Center development – comprising a mix of retail, residential, entertainment, and other services – was identified as a key future priority, to begin to focus the civic energies of the community. In keeping with the goal of using existing infrastructure efficiently, the intersection of Western Avenue/US-20 and State Route 155 was identified as a potentially suitable location for a Town Center, with available water, sewer, and transportation infrastructure to support the mix of envisioned uses.

Since "...the public have noted [a] the lack of a distinct center in Guilderland – a place for Town residents to meet and gather", why press for the feasibility of private "development – comprising a mix of retail, residential, entertainment, and other services"?

Why not instead focus on providing desired public space to the public? How might that public meeting place look and function, possibly a combination of indoor and outdoor space, e.g. a gathering square, public meeting hall? I don't believe the participating public were looking for yet more, or replacement, retail or entertainment development. Rather than picking a single site out of a hat, why not create and articulate measurable criteria to guide the initial selection of multiple sites for suitability analysis? There are many areas of our Town that possess necessary infrastructure. Selection of the single site makes me wonder what really is behind the recommendation.

In summary, our neighborhood of modest homes on smaller lots is "Guilderland Gardens", it is not "Town Center". Nor, should it be replaced by a Town Center. Our neighborhood must be recognized for what it truly is, a desirable neighborhood that possesses a desirable modest housing stock that has allowed seniors to remain in their homes as they grow older, while also making home ownership possible for those seeking an attainable first home.

Our neighborhood and similar neighborhoods should continue to consist of naturally occurring affordable housing made possible by the relatively modest size of our houses and lots.

The Draft Guilderland Comprehensive Plan Update must include a full section on Town Character that recognizes neighborhood character and presents a vision, corresponding goals and objectives, that will foster the protection and strengthening of the character of existing neighborhoods.

I request that the the Town Character section, including the five goals (appearing in the March 13th Altamont Enterprise, p.4), deleted by the consultant and Town Planner, be put back in its entirety in the Guilderland Comprehensive Plan Update.

The public has a right to view and comment on a comprehensive plan that is genuinely comprehensive, and representative of the public participation process. Residents of our neighborhood, and of our entire Town, have the right to the protection of our neighborhoods as well as the right to honesty and transparency.

Please enter this comment letter into the official record.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kenneth Smith, MURP

 **Kenneth Smith Comments on Comprehensive Plan.pages**
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