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# 01 INTRODUCTION

## Overview

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

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

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

## Purpose of the Comprehensive Plan

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

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

## Plan Authority

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



## Plan Organization

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

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

## Vision

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Town Character

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Guilderland Center Hamlet is an historic hamlet in the central area of the Town of Guilderland. The center of the hamlet is at the

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

The Rural Guilderland area occupies the western portion of Town, including the Village of Altamont, and consists of diverse natural environments, active farmland and agricultural operations, rural residences and close-knit neighborhoods and hamlets, steep cliffs, hills and overlooks of the Helderberg Escarpment and Settles Hill, and the streams, creeks, and water bodies that contribute to local and regional drinking water resources. Many areas of rural Guilderland offer panoramic views of the Helderberg Escarpment and John Boyd Thacher State Park. In 2023 the national park Service designated Thacher Park as a National Natural Landmark due to its distinctive ridge of the Helderberg Escarpment, which, in addition to its scenic allure, stands as a living testament to the geological evolution and ecological diversity of the region.

Key Objectives Related to Town Character:

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

## Goals

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

**Figure 1.1: Comprehensive Plan Goals**

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

# 02 AGRICULTURE

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

## Overview

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

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

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

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

Agriculture is a land use activity that is tied directly to – and dependent upon – the natural resources of the area. Chief among those natural resources is high-quality soil. The Town has a high concentration of well-drained soils that are very conducive to farming (see Figure 1: Agricultural Resources Map). While some areas with these productive soils have been converted to suburban or low-density residential use in preceding decades and remain under development pressure, agricultural activities still take place in rural Guilderland. (Rural Guilderland is defined as those lands west of the CSX rail line and the Normans Kill.) This section presents information from several sources to detail the extent and role of agriculture in the Town



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

# Farmland Soils

Successful farming depends largely on suitable topography, soils, and water to support agriculture. Land that is too steep, arid, or rocky presents significant challenges to successful agricultural operations, although advancements in agricultural techniques such as greenhouses and hydroponics can compensate for soil deficiencies in certain instances. That said, soils conducive to farming can be found across a substantial portion of Guilderland (See Figure 2.1). Three types of soils are considered farmland soils: Prime Farmland Soils, Prime Farmland Soils if Drained, and Farmland Soils of Statewide Importance. Agricultural practices can also highly influence soil health. Good soil management practices can mitigate climate change and can lead to more climate resiliency.

## Prime Farmland Soil

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

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

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

## Farmland Soil of Statewide Importance

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

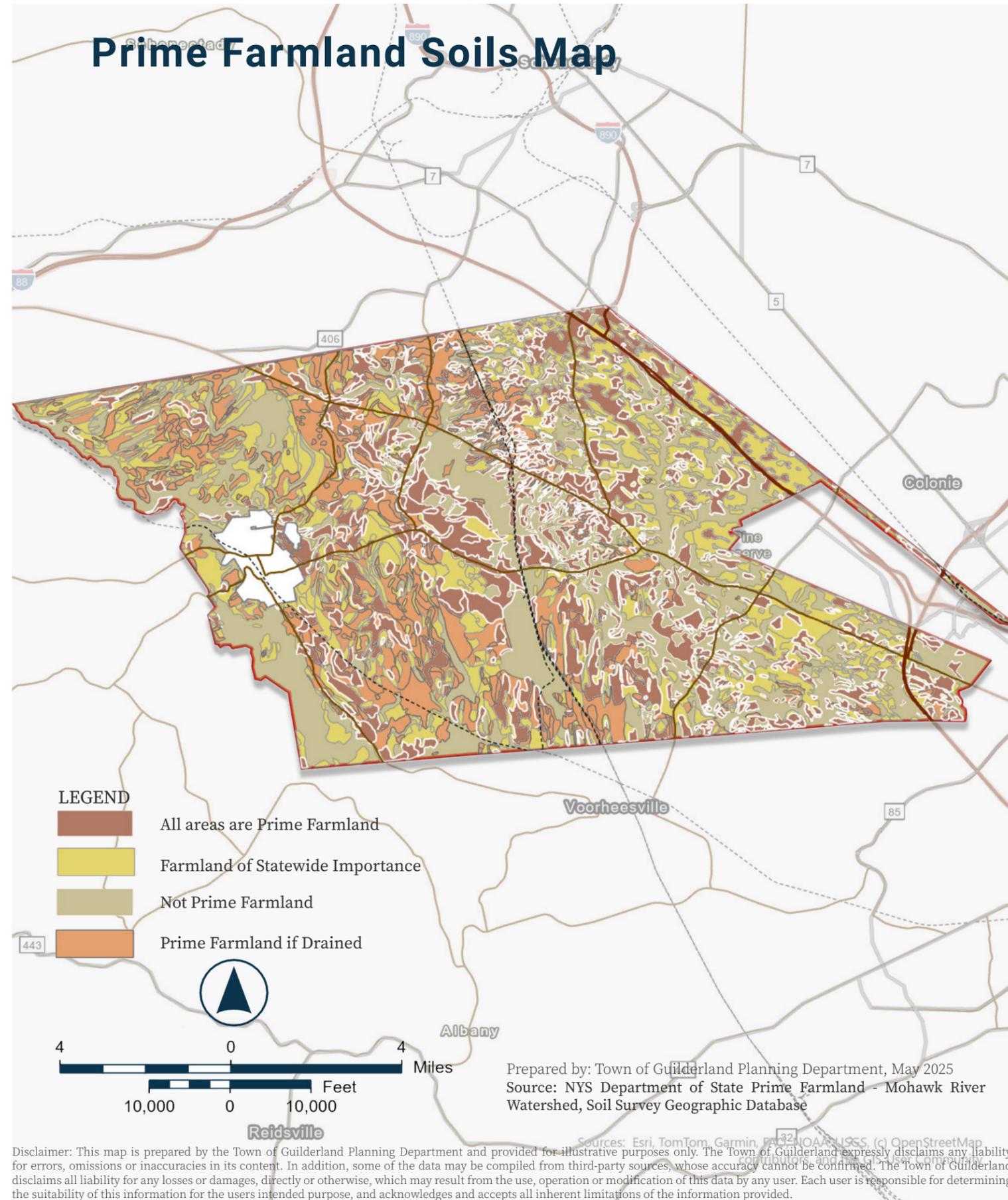
## Prime Farmland if Drained

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

**Figure 2.1: Soil Type by Acreage**

Soil Type	Acreage in Guilderland
Prime Farmland Soil	10,202.66
Farmland Soils of Statewide Significance	9325.36
Prime Farmland Soil if Drained	6779.75

Source: USGS



# Farmland Parcels

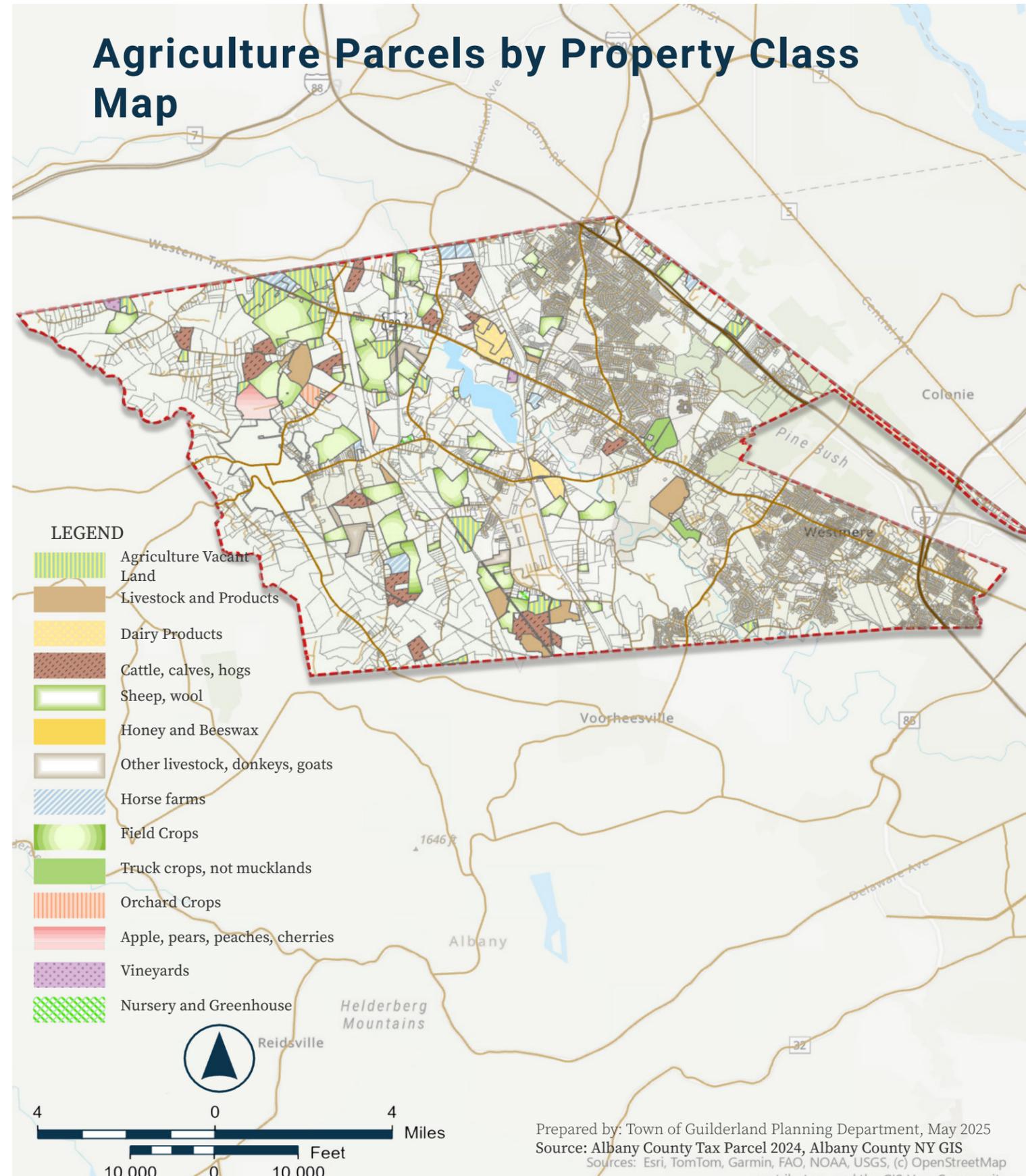
Farmed parcels, defined by tax assessment data and aerial imagery, can be found across a broad swath of the Town in the valley area. The valley area encompasses the remaining portion of rural Guilderland, not including the Settles Hill and Helderberg Escarpment areas. The valley is a large area with gentle slopes and a mosaic of farmlands, hamlets, wood lots, and water bodies. It contains the Watervliet Reservoir and its three main tributaries: the Bozen Kill, Normans Kill and Black Creek. The valley contains the bulk of rural Guilderland's agricultural resources. The majority of rural Guilderland's working farmlands are located here - including many within the agricultural district as shown in Figure 1. Agricultural uses consist mainly of field crops, with a small number of livestock farms. However, the gentle slopes and access to water supply that make the valley conducive to agriculture also make the valley a prime area for development.

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

**Figure 2.2: Number and Area of Agriculture Parcels by Property Class**

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

Source: 2024 data from the Town of Guilderland



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## Agriculture Districts and Agriculture Assessments

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

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

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

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

forgone for converting such land will be imposed.

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

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

## Agriculture Census Data

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

The Ag Census also provides an indication of the types of farm activities. At that time, 23 farms were listed as having animals, all with sales < \$50,000. Of those, nine had cattle, 12 had chickens, 15 had equine, 1 had hogs, 7 had poultry, and 3 had sheep. Eleven farms had berry operations, 13 had fruit crops, 4 had corn/grain, 8 had some type of crop operation with sales > \$250,000, 3 had crop sales (\$50,000 to \$249,000), and 20 had crop sales less than \$50,000. Crops grown in Guilderland at the time of this Census were grain, hay, nursery/greenhouse, maple syrup, oats, orchards, potatoes, and vegetables.

## Albany County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

Albany County adopted a county-wide agricultural and farmland protection plan in 2018. That plan provides a snapshot of agricultural conditions and trends in the County and offers a comprehensive suite of strategies to promote and preserve agricultural activities. As part of that Plan, the county developed a program for defining and prioritizing farmland for protection. The result of that analysis is the Albany County Priority Farmland for Protection Map (see Figure 1). As illustrated on this map, the Valley area in Guilderland where the remaining farms are located shows as priority farmland for protection.



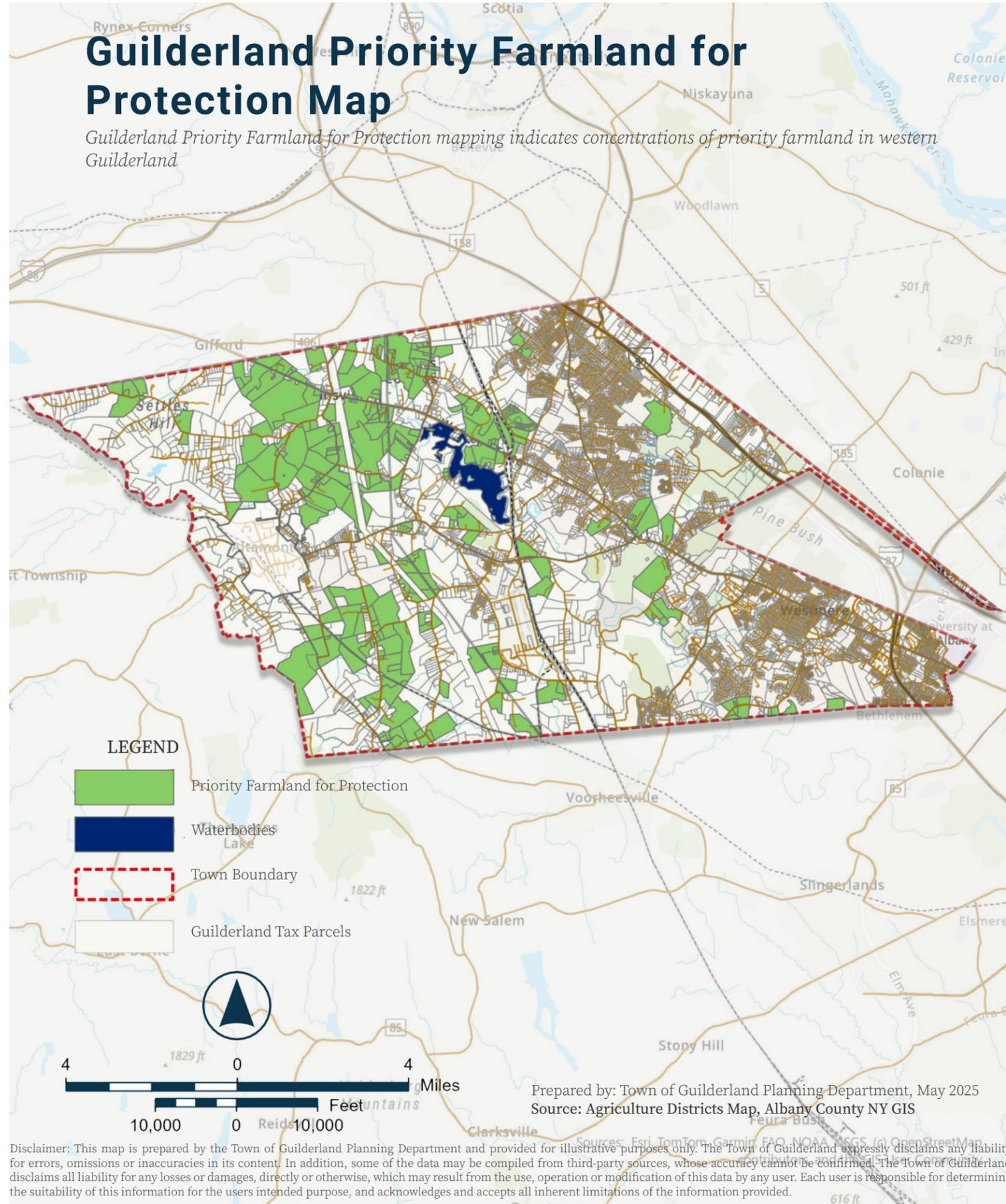
Altamont Orchards located on Dunnsville Road  
Source: [Altamont Orchards](#)



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

# Guilderland Priority Farmland for Protection Map

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



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# Role of Agriculture in Guilderland

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

During preliminary stakeholder focus group discussion for the Guilderland Comprehensive Plan Update, agriculture was a topic that arose in both the economic development focus group and

the open space/environment focus group. It also emerged as an important topic in the Public Open House & Visioning Workshop, with public input indicating great support for farms and farmland. Preservation of agricultural land, promotion of sustainable agricultural practices, and use of conservation easements were among the many comments received in support of agriculture. The community values the existing farmland in Guilderland, recognizes its role in contributing to the rural character and to the economy of the area, and sees opportunities to promote new operations and protect agricultural land. Concerns were raised about the loss of farms to development as well as the need to have sustainable agriculture. In addition to development pressure, it was recognized that taxes can present a significant burden for farm operators.



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



Vineyards contribute to the Town's agricultural sector.

## Recommendations

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

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

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

The Guilderland Farmers Market currently operates from the parking lot of the Guilderland Public Library at 2228 Western Avenue. Should there be a need for the Market to expand or relocate, it is recommended that the Town prioritize finding a Town-owned property or a suitable private partnership to host the event. The Guilderland Farmers Market currently operates on Sundays from July through early October; expansion of

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



*View of Helderberg Escarpment from Gardner Road*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In 2022, the Town Board adopted a Conservation Easement Agreement Exemption (Town Code Chapter 251, Article XVI §251-66), establishing a framework to provide financial incentives to those Guilderland landowners willing to forego development and maintain open space on a portion of their land for a minimum of 15 years. This step was the realization of a recommendation from the Rural Guilderland: Open Space and Farmland Protection Plan (2005). Pursuant to NYS Real Property Tax Law §491-b, the local legislation provides for reductions in property taxes on exempted lands that have been set aside from development. At the time of adoption, the legislation did not provide for reductions to school or county taxes. Since adoption of the conservation easement program the Albany County Legislature passed legislation allowing a reduction in County taxes for properties that enroll in the conservation easement program. As of 2025, one Conservation Easement Agreement Exemption had been completed: a 57-acre plot of land on Wormer Road.

The use of conservation easements as a tool for engaging willing landowners in the effort of

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

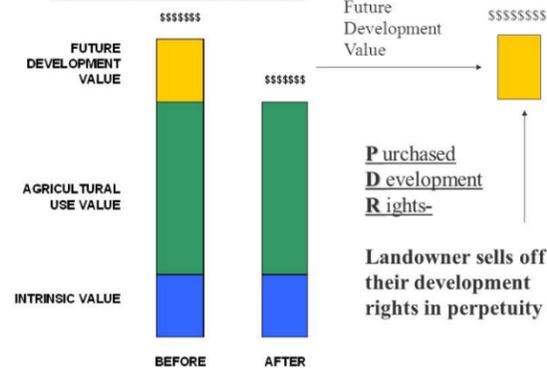
The great majority of business activity in the Town of Guilderland is conducted along Western Avenue between the intersection with Carman Road/NY-146 and the Albany City line to the southeast. There are far fewer commercial offerings, however, serving northern areas of the Town. Limited Local Business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

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

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

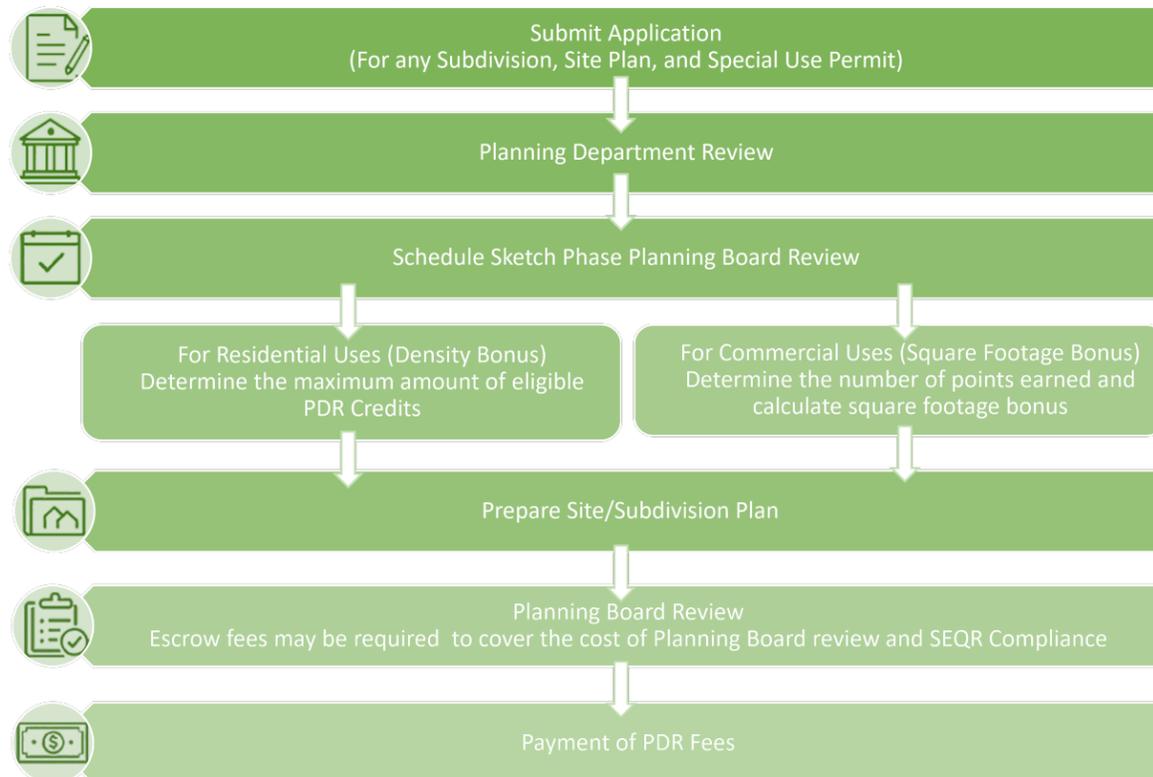
To complement Guilderland’s Conservation Easement Exemption program, the Rural Guilderland: Open Space and Farmland Protection Plan (2005) included a recommendation to establish a Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program to limit the loss of important open space and farmland soils to development.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

**What is a PDR and how do you determine its value?**



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

**Figure 2.3: Example of Steps to Acquire PDR Credits**



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

protect the Watervliet Reservoir, its tributaries and other watercourses.

5. Coordinate with Schenectady County to ensure the Watervliet Reservoir watershed, upstream from the reservoir, is adequately protected.

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

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

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

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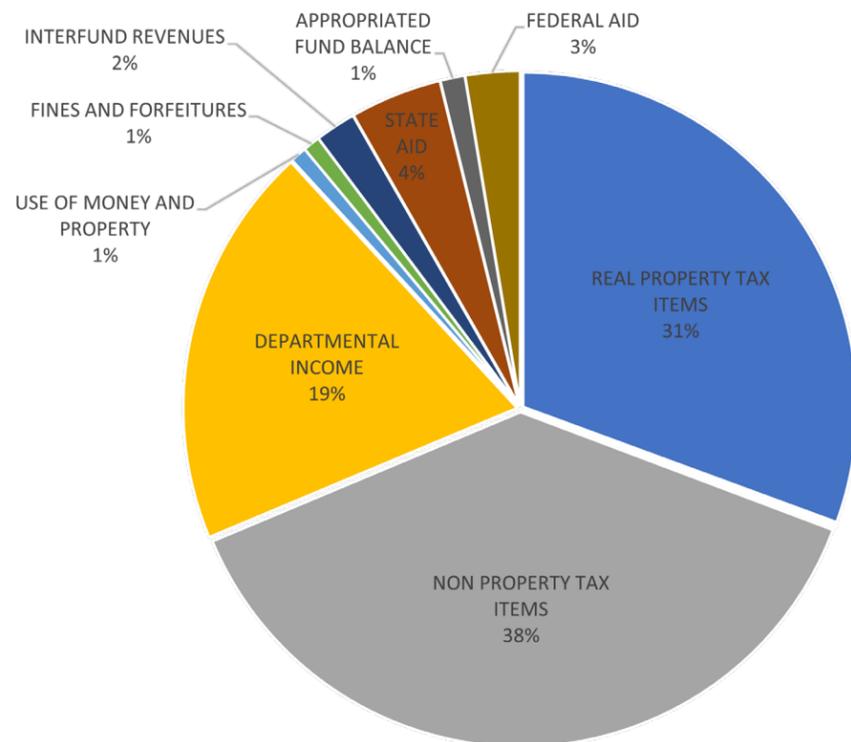
# 03 BUSINESS, EMPLOYMENT & FISCAL RESOURCES

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

## Overview

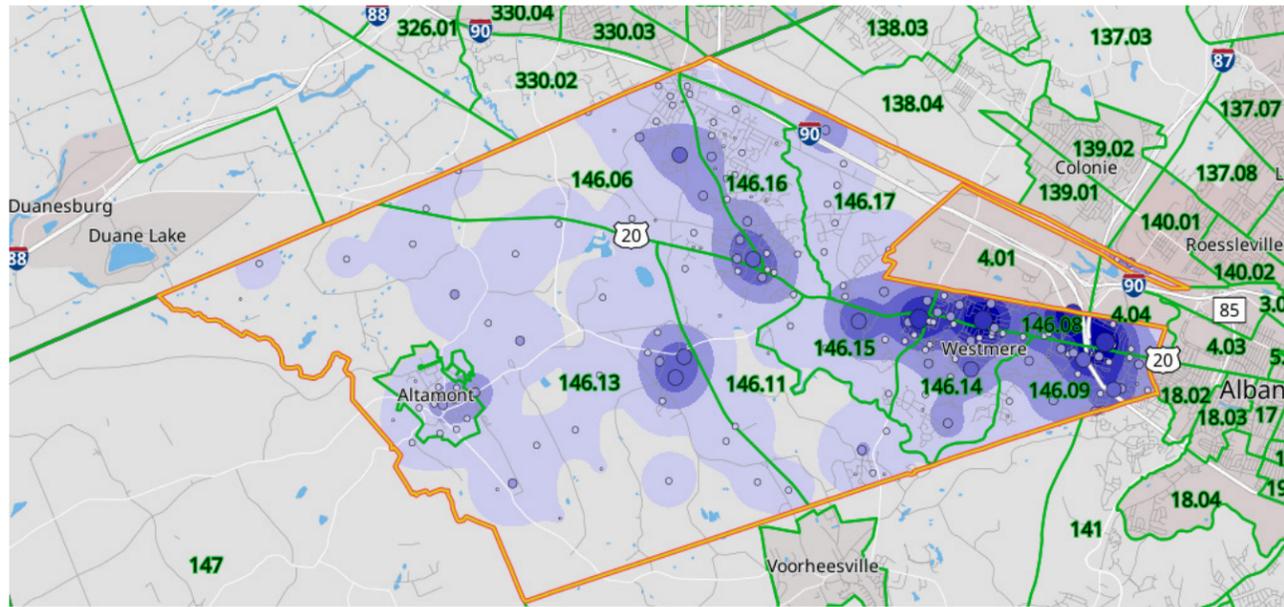
While the Town of Guilderland may be more widely known in the Capital District for its attractive and diverse residential neighborhoods, its commercial areas are equally important in supporting the conditions for a high quality of life. Among other things, commercial activity in Guilderland strengthens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

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



*Crossgates Mall and Stuyvesant Plaza*

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



**Map Legend**

<b>Job Density [Jobs/Sq. Mile]</b>	<b>Job Count [Jobs/Census Block]</b>
■ 5 - 141	● 1 - 2
■ 142 - 552	● 3 - 32
■ 553 - 1,236	● 33 - 161
■ 1,237 - 2,194	● 162 - 507
■ 2,195 - 3,426	● 508 - 1,238
	<b>Selection Areas</b>
	▭ Work Area

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

Columbia, and Greene.

More than 420,000 people are employed in the Albany-Schenectady-Troy MSA, 52% of them in Albany County (Figure 3.3). The regional economy is anchored by government, health care, and professional and business services. Government represents about 22% of the employment in the metro area, and includes jobs in local, state, and federal agencies as well as public school districts, community colleges, and state universities. The University at Albany, a portion of which is in the Town of Guilderland, has approximately 4,000 employees. In the last two decades, the region's economy has become more diverse with the growth of high-technology, knowledge-based industries (e.g., semiconductor chip manufacturing, nanotechnology, video game development) and research activity.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Source: Albany Business Review, July 12, 2024  
\* Parent company of Price Chopper and Market 32 supermarkets

## Employment by Place of Work

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

As shown in Figure 3.5, nearly 20% of the Town’s employed residents work in government, including public schools, while 17.5% of the jobs are in professional and business services. Retail trade, health care and social assistance, and leisure and hospitality are also major employers.

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

## Commercial and Industrial Development

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

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

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

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

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

## Crossgates Mall

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

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

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

frontage on Western Avenue, and, in particular, the “Crossgates Mall Ring Road, due to its importance to the commercial and traffic characteristics of the area.”

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

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

1. A 192-room Tru by Hilton hotel built on Western Avenue in front of Crossgates Mall in 2018 was the first new hotel in Guilderland in more than 20 years.
2. A new Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Purple Line, which began operation in November 2023, connects Crossgates Mall with the University at Albany campus, the Harriman State Office campus, and downtown Albany. The Purple Line reduced travel times from Crossgates Mall to downtown Albany by 33% when compared to the previous non-BRT bus route.
3. Installation of a roundabout at the intersection of Crossgates Mall Road and the entrance/exit to I87 which has significantly reduced accidents at this intersection and has moved traffic through the intersection more efficiently.
4. The Flats @ Crossgates is a 24-unit multi-family community completed in 2023 and located north of the Tru by Hilton hotel.
5. Apex @ Crossgates 222-unit multi-family community located to the west of Crossgates Mall and is expected to be completed in the Summer of 2025.

- 6. A 160,000 square foot Costco currently under construction with an expected opening in early 2026.
- 7. New York Oncology Hematology’s 105,000 square foot cancer treatment center currently under construction with an expected opening in 2026.
- 8. Crossgates Mall Road ‘complete streets’ improvements including a reduction in the number of travel lanes, installation of multi-use trails, intersection improvements, installation of dedicated turn lanes and installation of landscaped medians. Construction is expected to be completed in the Summer of 2025



Aerial view of Crossgates Mall looking west to east.

## Stuyvesant Plaza



Aerial view of the Stuyvesant Plaza

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

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

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

Stuyvesant Plaza is located at the intersection of Western Avenue and Fuller Road. Dating back to at least the 1970’s there is a history of flooding at this intersection during heavy rain events. The flooding incidents decrease traffic to the Plaza, and other surrounding establishments, impacting business for the retailers and businesses within the Plaza.



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

Source: September 06, 1980 (Paul D. Kniskern, Sr./Times Union Archive) Paul D. Kniskern, Sr./Times Union Historic Images

## University at Albany

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



Source: University at Albany

Albany Nanotech Campus.

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

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

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

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



Country Club Highlands Historic District Boundary

## Northeast Industrial Park



Aerial view of the Northeast Industrial Park

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

## Railroad Avenue Industrial Zone

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



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

## Notable Important Retail Establishments

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

## Commerical Real Estate Market Trends

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

## Offices and the “New Normal.”

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

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

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

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

## The Evolution of Retail

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

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

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

These trends could provide an opportunity in Guilderland for the development of walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods with retail uses at their core, while addressing the demand for multifamily housing. In some respects, such an effort has

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

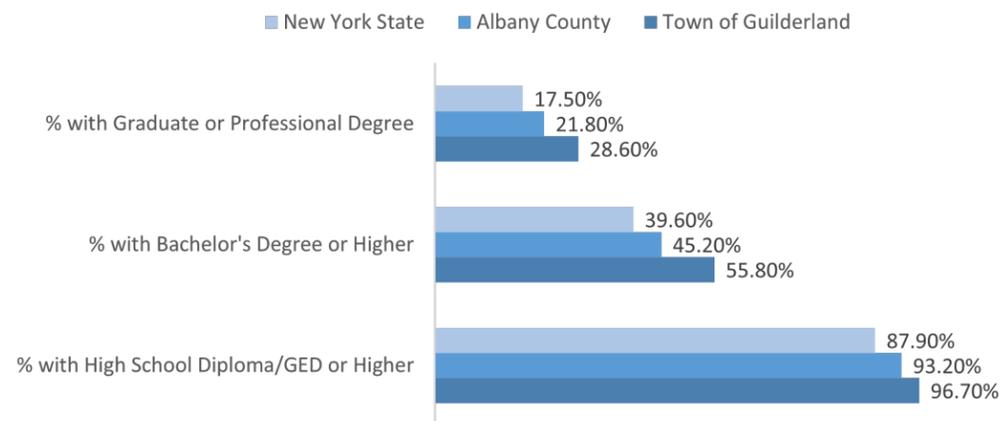
already begun at Crossgates Mall, where a Transit Oriented Development District has been created, a hotel was developed, and underutilized property is being repurposed for apartments. As retail continues to evolve, there is also an opportunity for shopping malls to become places that are less homogenous and more interesting and engaging.

## Resident Labor Force

The labor force consists of residents ages 16 and older who are currently employed or who are unemployed but actively looking for work. Local Area Unemployment Statistics from the NYS Department of Labor show that labor force levels in Guilderland have been steady for the past 20 years. In 2022, the resident labor force stood at 20,000, slightly above the average of 19,800 between 2002 and 2021. Guilderland residents are highly educated. As indicated in Figure 3.6, 55.6% of individuals aged 25 and over hold a bachelor’s degree or higher, and 28.1% have a graduate or professional degree. These educational attainment levels, which contribute to the affluence of the town’s population, are higher than those in Albany County and the state overall. Bethlehem is the only town in Albany County with a higher share of residents who hold at least a bachelor’s degree (59%).

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

Figure 3.6: Education Attainment, Population Age 25 and Over



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

## Employment by Place of Residence

Nearly a third of employed residents of the Town of Guilderland hold jobs in the City of Albany, while 14.2% work in the Town of Colonie (Figure 3.7). Only 11% of residents live and work in Guilderland. Others commute to jobs in the counties of Schenectady, Rensselaer, and Saratoga, but 84% of residents travel less than 25 miles each way to work. The flow of workday travel from the town is mainly to the east and southeast or to the north.

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

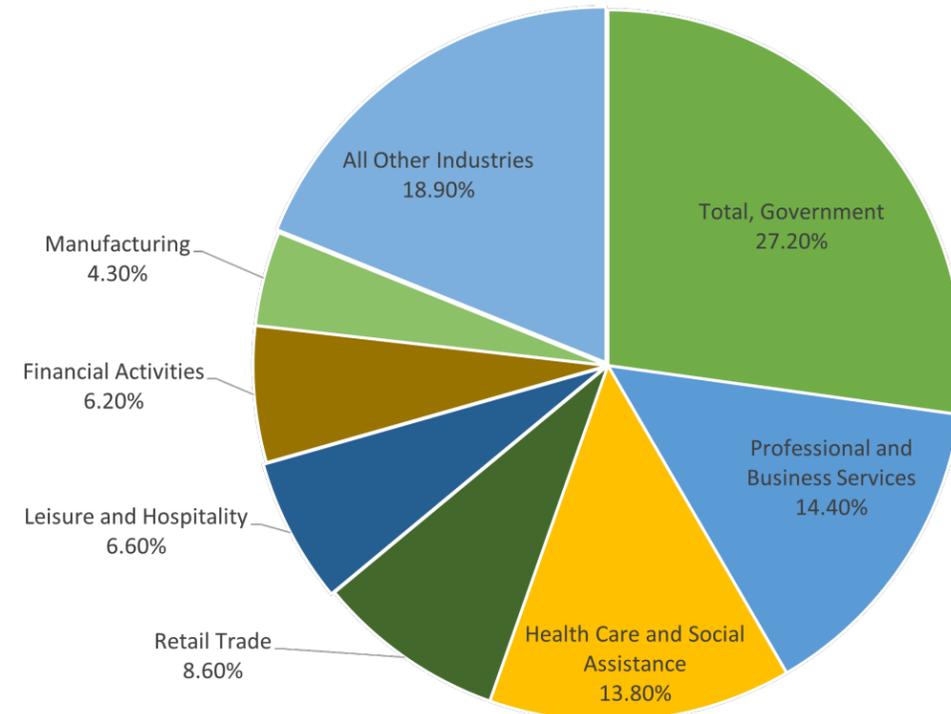
Location	Count	Share
<b>Albany County</b>	<b>10,016</b>	<b>60.1%</b>
Guilderland Town	1,807	10.8%
Albany City	5,107	30.6%
Colonie Town	2,445	14.7%
All other location	657	3.9%
<b>Schenectady County</b>	<b>1,761</b>	<b>10.6%</b>
Schenectady City	897	5.4%
Rotterdam Town	338	2.0%
All other locations	526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

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

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

Guilderland residents are well-represented in the industries that dominate the region's economy. As shown in Figure 3.8, 29% of the jobs held by town residents, regardless of location, are in the public sector, whether in government or education. Other industries in which Guilderland residents are employed include health care and social assistance (14.7%), professional and business services (13.8%), and retail trade (8.6%).

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



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

## Recommendations

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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# 04 ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE & RESILIENCY

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

## Overview

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

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

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

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



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

## Recommendations

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



*Aerial view of Watervliet Reservoir*

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

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

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

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

The Reservoir was formed in 1915 by damming the Normanskill at Frenchs Hollow; in 1982 a one-megawatt hydroelectric facility was developed at the Reservoir to generate power from excess water flows. According to the Watervliet Reservoir Watershed Protection Study prepared by the Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDRPC), the watershed area of the Reservoir includes an area of roughly 115 square miles which comprises parts of three counties, eight towns, and three villages. The majority of the watershed area encompasses northern Albany County and southern Schenectady County. The primary tributaries to the Reservoir are the Normanskill, the Bozenkill, and Black Creek. The path of the Normanskill continues its path to the upper

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



*Watervliet Reservoir, looking west from Western Turnpike*

Hudson River from the outflow at the southern end of the Watervliet Reservoir.

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

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

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

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

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

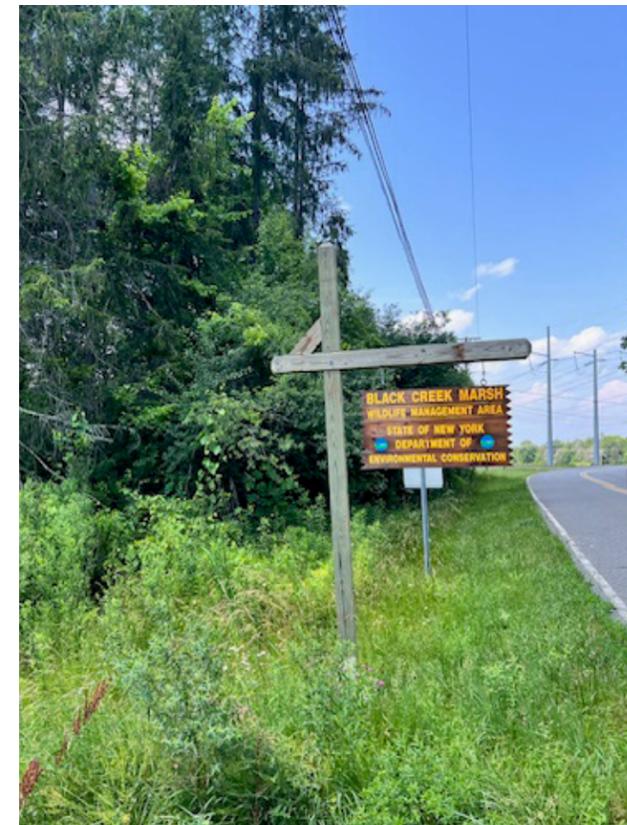
Western Turnpike/US-20 skirts the Reservoir to the northeast, and State Route 158 crosses the Normanskill where it enters the Reservoir's northern end. Active freight rail lines cross above the retention dam at Frenchs Hollow. The proximity of these transportation routes – together with agricultural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

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

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

#### ***Stormwater Infrastructure Improvements***

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



*Black Creek Marsh Wildlife Management Area on Hennessey Road*

#### ***Wetland Protection***

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

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

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

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

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

**Preservation of Open Space**

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

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

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

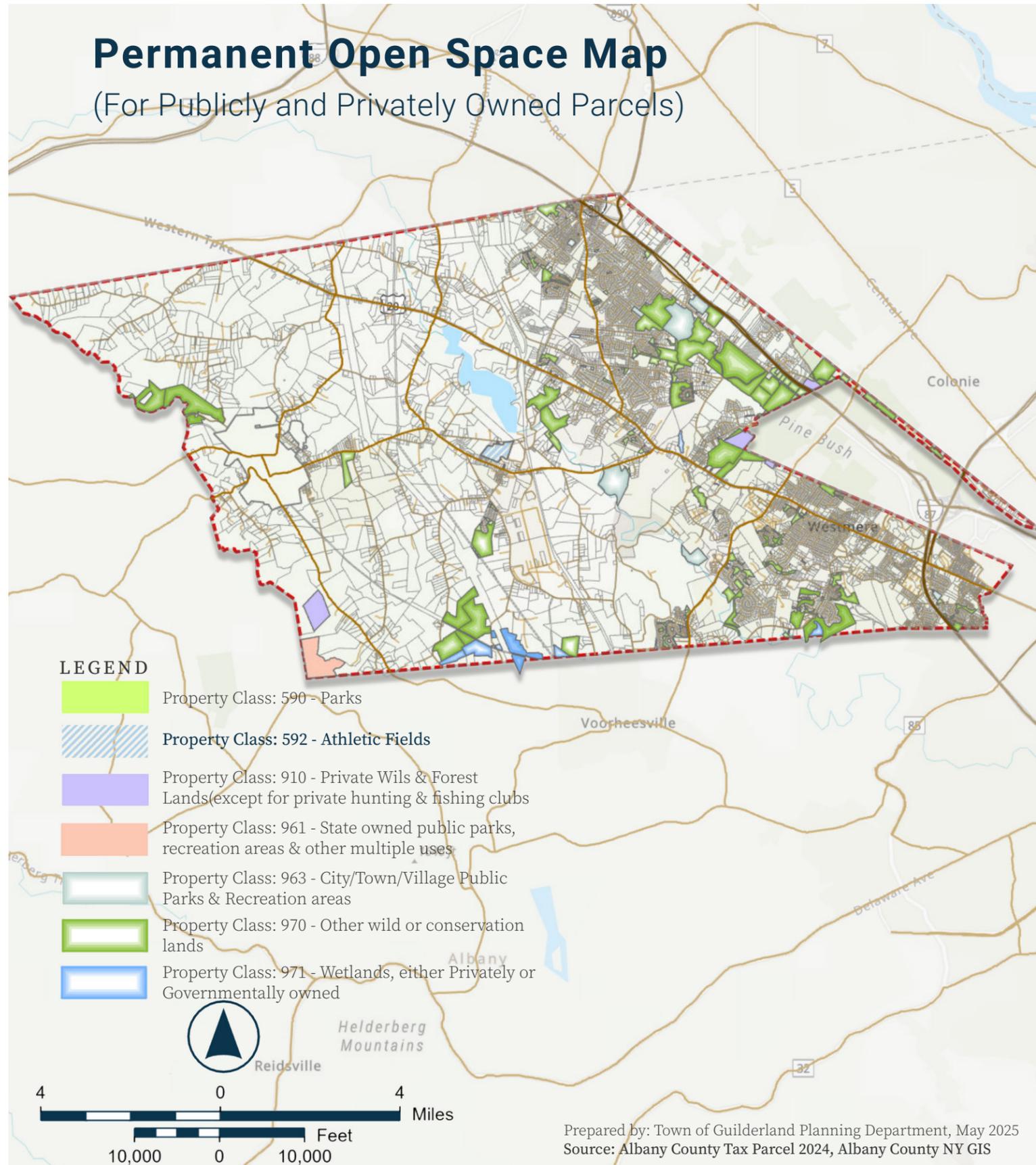
Enhancing public awareness of environmental concerns and ongoing initiatives is an opportunity to build a common understanding of challenges and a pool of potential volunteers for such activities as invasive species removal, tree planting, pollinator habitat restoration, and other efforts. Through the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

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

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



**Permanent Open Space Map**  
(For Publicly and Privately Owned Parcels)



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

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

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

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

- a. Wherever feasible, encourage and incentivize clean energy production, including rooftop solar/PV collection systems on new and/or existing structures, where practicable.*
- in sidewalks, multi-use pathways, public transit, and other mobility infrastructure to increase the number of daily trips that residents are able to make without the use of a personal vehicle.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*b. The older storm sewer infrastructure may contain pipes that are deteriorating and/or undersized to handle storm events occurring today.*

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# 05 NEIGHBORHOODS & HOUSING

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

## Overview

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

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

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

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



*Neighborhood on Carman Road*

# Housing in Guilderland

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

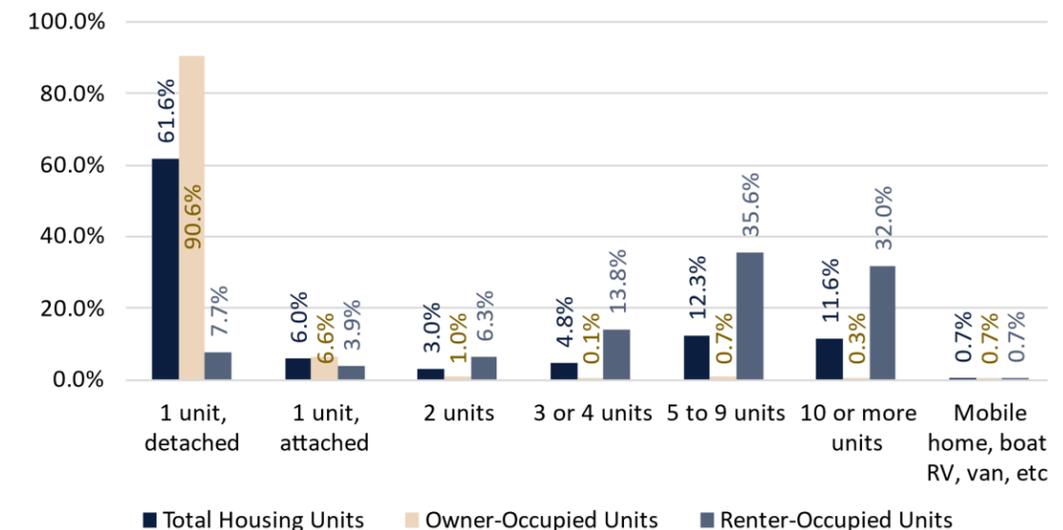
## Housing Characteristics

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

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

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

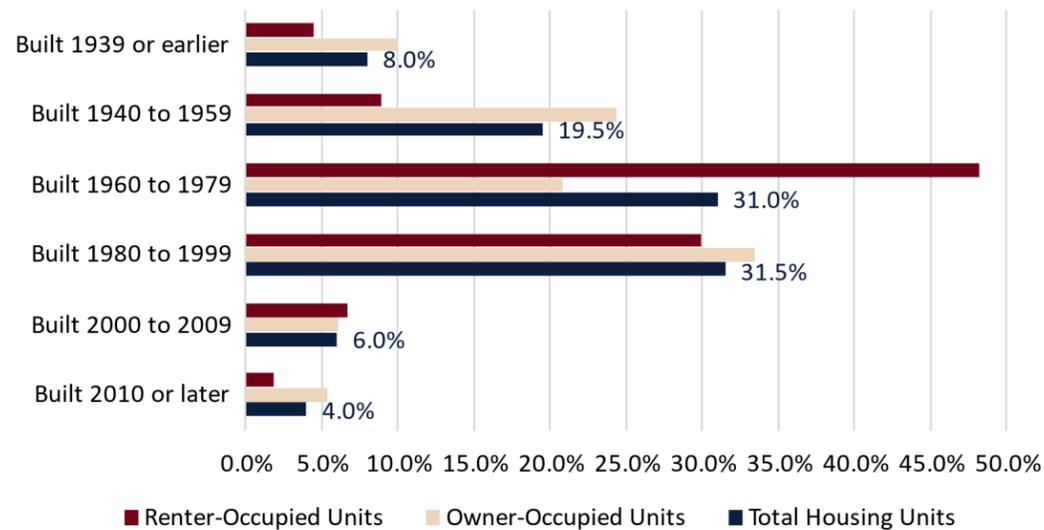
**Figure 5.2: Housing by Units in Structure, Town of Guilderland**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2017-21 Five-Year Estimates

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

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



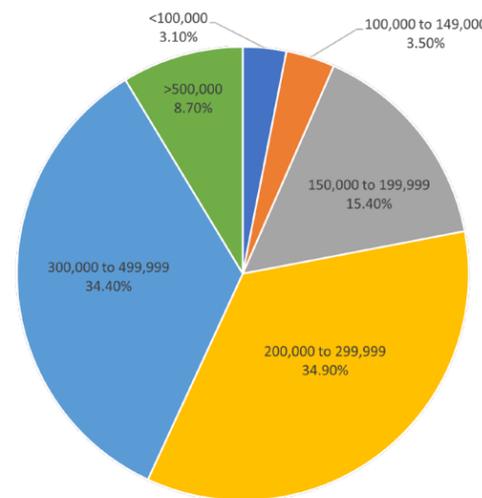
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2017-21 Five-Year Estimates

## Home Values

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

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

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



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2017-21 Five-Year Estimates

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

## Housing Costs

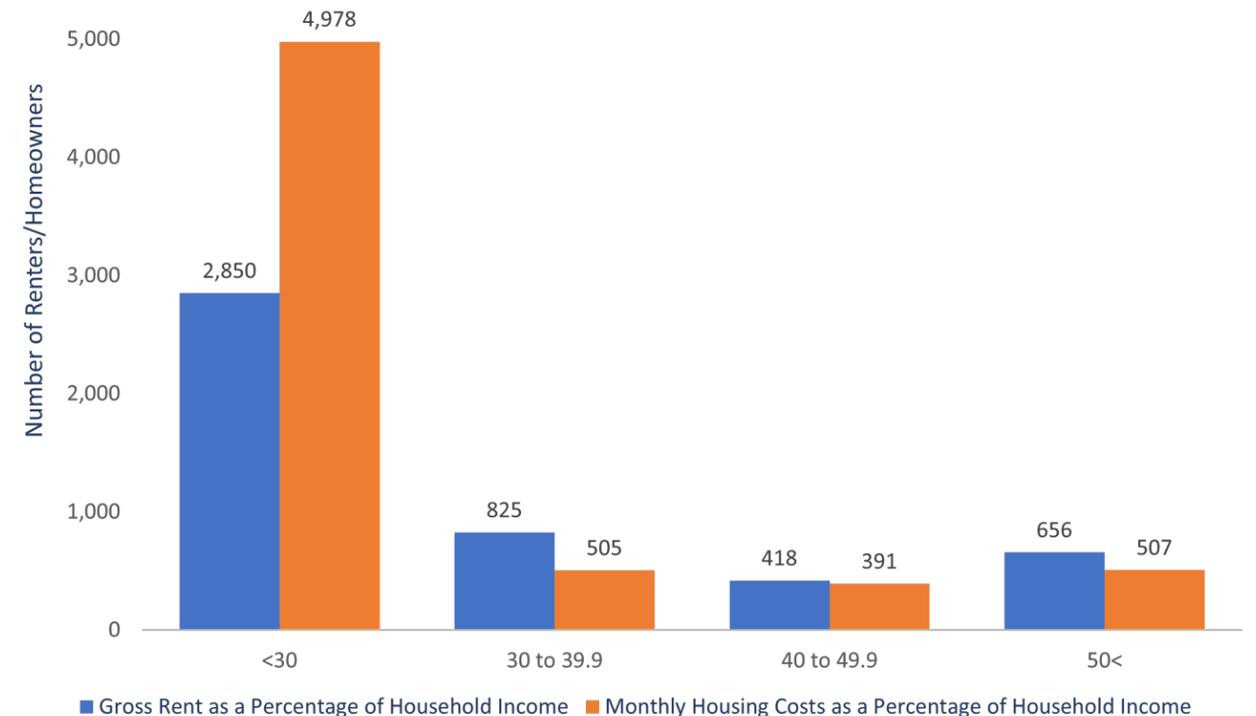
The median gross rent is defined as the contract rent plus the average monthly cost of utilities, including heat. The median gross rent in Guilderland is \$1,310, well above the Albany County median (\$1,113) and slightly below the median rent in the Town of Bethlehem (\$1,372). The current median rent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

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

## Housing Affordability

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

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



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2017-21 Five-Year Estimates  
\* Homeowners with a mortgage only

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

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

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

In the Spring/Summer of 2025 the Guilderland Industrial Development (IDA) commenced discussions on developing a 'workforce housing' policy in order to address interest from developers of workforce housing projects seeking financial assistance from the IDA. The IDA's discussions

have focused on the agency's authority to grant financial assistance for workforce housing projects and whether the agency should develop a percentage of the AMI to target when considering offering financial assistance ie 60% of the AMI, 80% of the AMI. The Town Board should also consider adopting an affordable and workforce housing policy as a result of the Comprehensive Plan Update process and consider codifying this policy into Town Zoning Law.

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

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

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

**Figure 5.6: Housing Cost Burden, Town of Guilderland**

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

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

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

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

**Housing Affordability - Missed Opportunities**

In 2019 the Beacon Meadows Special Use Permit was approved by the Zoning Board for a 65- unit development consisting of 52 age restricted units (55+), 5 units for foster, adoptive or kinship care families and 8 units for young adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities located on Mercy Care Lane. Unfortunately, the project's financial viability relied upon receiving assistance from NYSHCR's Multifamily 9% LIHTC grant program. The project was denied assistance twice from this program, and the Special Use Permit approval has since expired.



Preliminary Site Plan of Mercy Care Lane - Intergenerational Housing

Preliminary Site Plan of Mercy Care Lane - Intergenerational Housing

In 2017 the Town Board approved the PUD which consisted of a 56 unit assisted living facility, 40-unit memory care facility and 96-unit independent living facility located on New Karner Road. In 2021 the applicant requested, and Town Board approved, an amendment to the PUD, with the applicant requesting to replace the previously approved 96 independent senior housing units with 86 mixed-income affordable senior housing units to be financed under the State's NY Homes and Community Renewal program. Unfortunately, the project's financial viability relied upon receiving assistance from NYSHCR's Multi-family 9% LIHTC grant program. The project was denied assistance twice from this program and the PUD approval has since expired.

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

## Building Permits

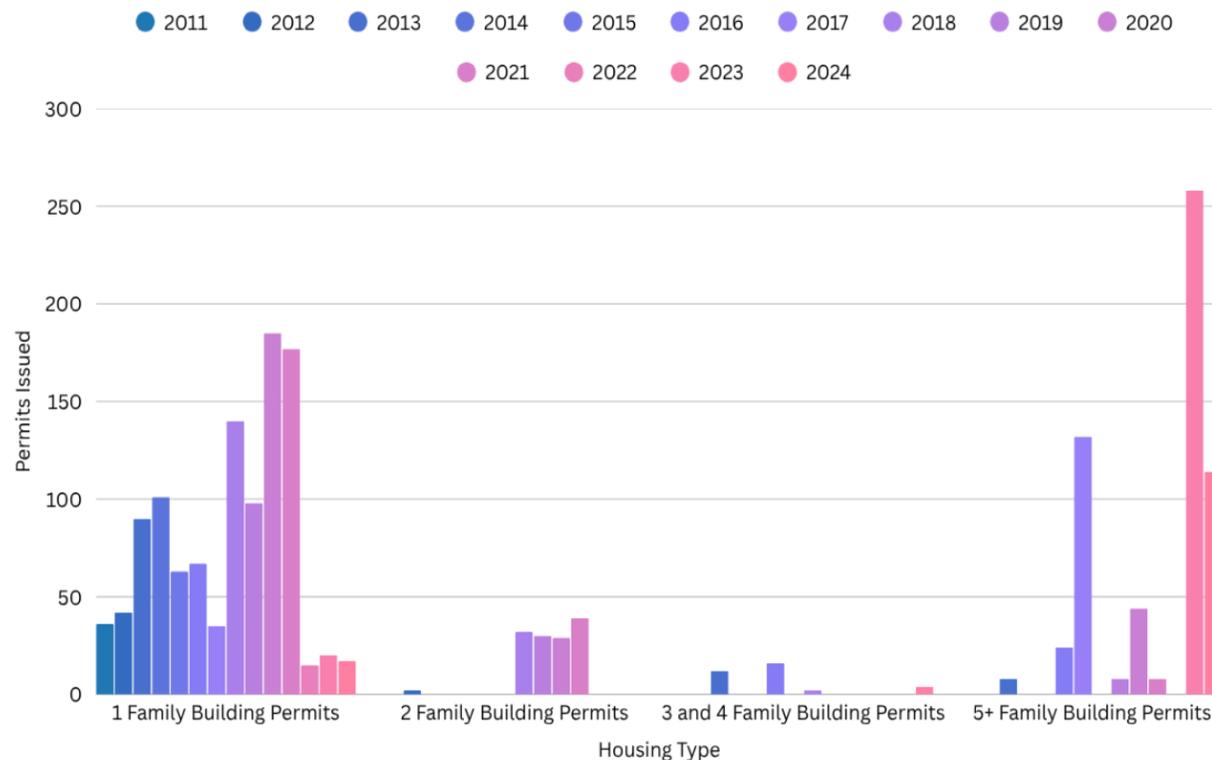
The U.S. Census Bureau’s Building Permits Survey reports that between 2011 and 2024, the Town of Guilderland issued a total of permits for residential construction, of which add new data (or about add new data) were for single-family homes. These homes were valued at an estimated add new data million,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

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

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

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

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



Source: HUD User SOCDC Building Permit Database

## Housing Sales

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

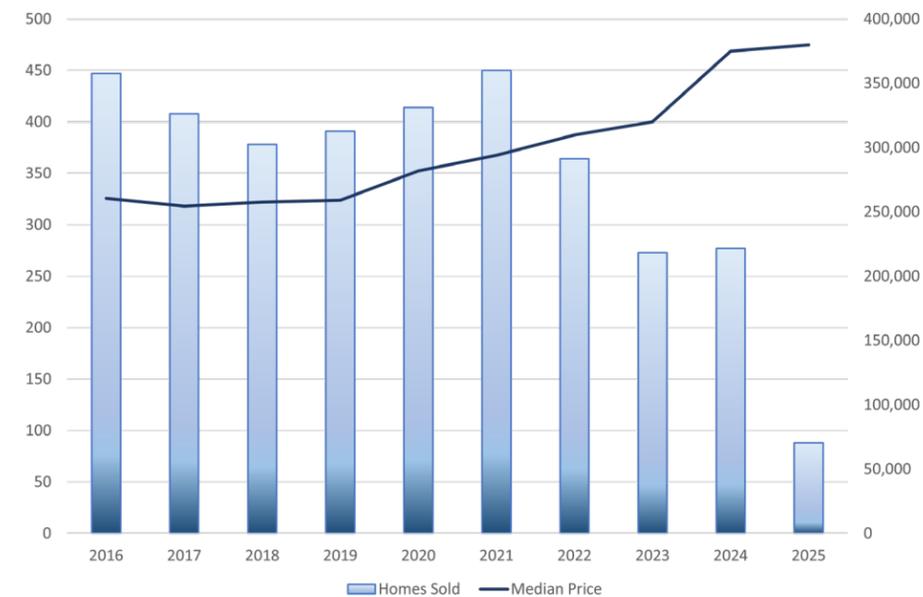
As the chart demonstrates, the median selling price of a single-family residence in the town rose from \$265,000 in 2016 to \$310,000 in 2022, a 17% increase. A growing percentage of homes had selling prices of at least \$500,000. These higher priced homes accounted for less than 5% of the residences sold each year between 2016 and 2019, but they made up about 10% in 2020 and 2021, and nearly 20% in 2022. In contrast, the proportion of homes that sold for less than \$200,000 declined from 27% in 2016 to 12% in 2022.<sup>10</sup>

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

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

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

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



Source: NYS Office of Real Property Tax Services.

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

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

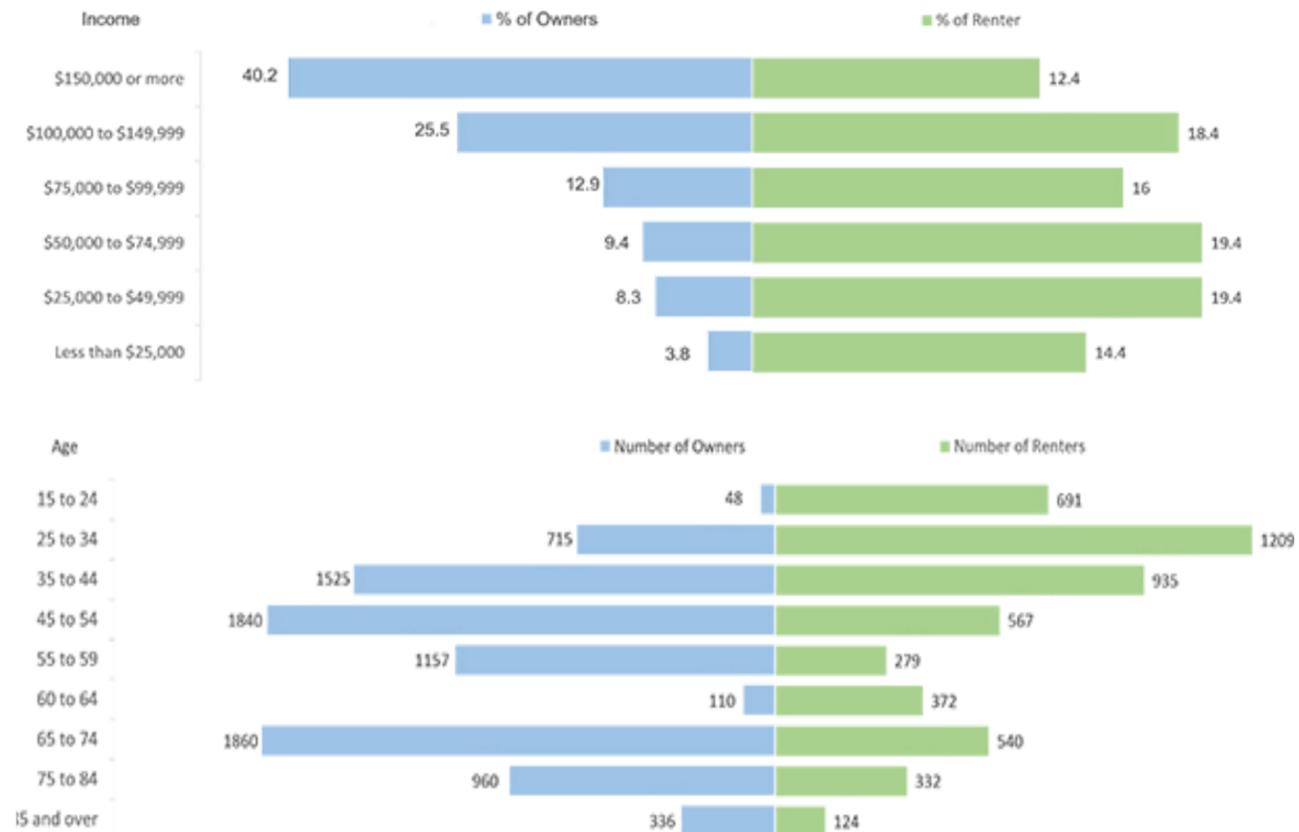
aging parents or accommodate adult children moving back into the house, while 31% of buyers had children under 18 living at home.

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

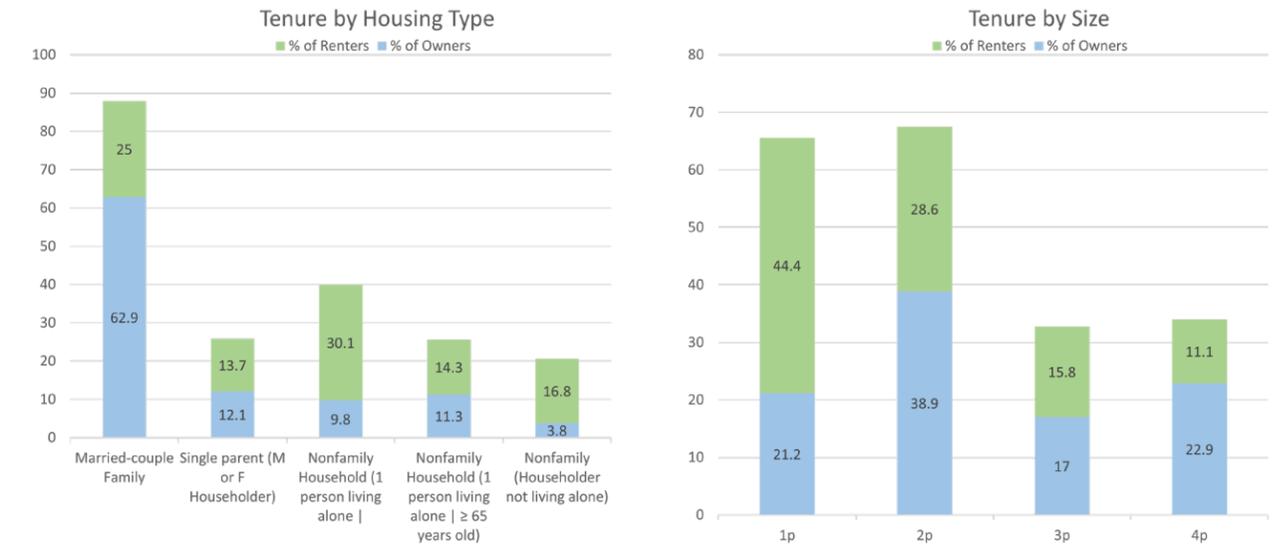
**Who Owns? Who Rents?**

Decisions about whether to own or to rent are based not only on income but also on life stage and household type. Homeownership rates tend to rise as people enter young adulthood and begin to settle down. Among Guilderland householders (heads of household) under age 25, 71% are renters (see Table 11). In contrast, 82% of householders ages 45 to 54 – peak earning years – own a home. After age 65, rates of homeownership decline as wages and salaries from employment are replaced by incomes from savings, pensions, retirement accounts, and Social Security. Some seniors transition to rental units or downsize to smaller homes that are easier to maintain. Nevertheless, four out of every five households headed by someone between the ages of 65 and 74 in Guilderland, and 76% of households ages 75 to 85, own their homes. The rate of homeownership among householders age 85 and above is 56%; however, this figure excludes seniors who reside in group quarters (like a nursing home or assisted living facility) and are not in a household.

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



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



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

## Housing Market Demographics

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

## Population Change

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Households

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

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

## Age Distribution

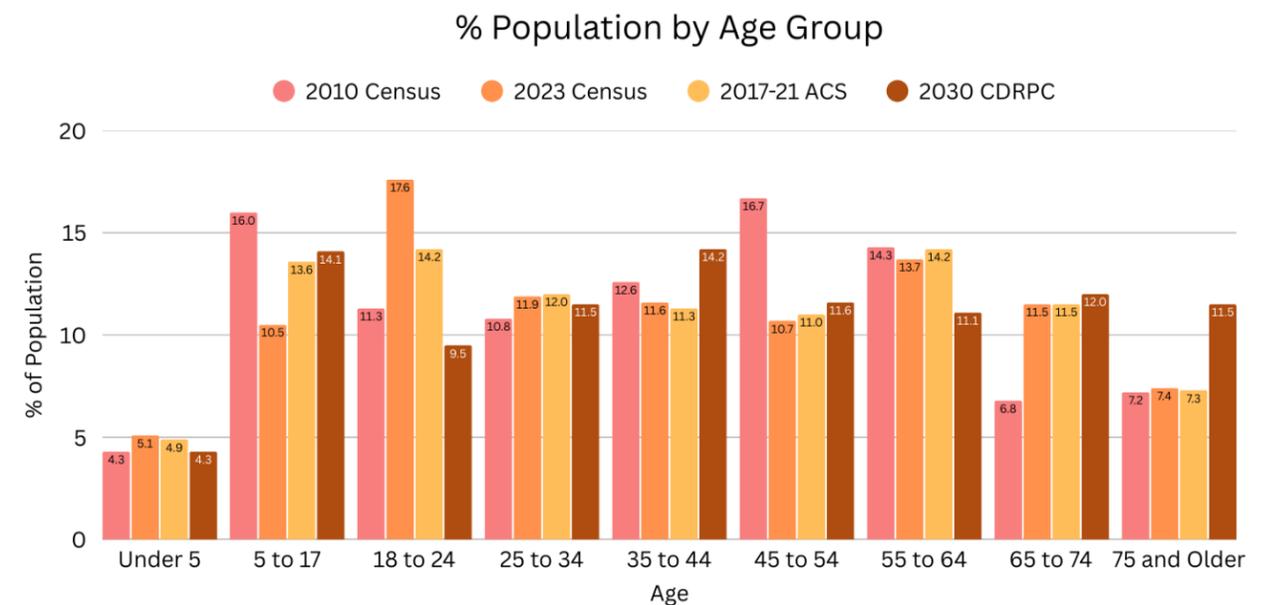
The U.S. Census Bureau expects that by 2030, one in five Americans will be age 65 and over as the youngest members of the Baby Boom generation, born between 1946 through 1964, reach retirement age. Both the number of older Americans and their share of the total population has been increasing. Between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

family and multi-family housing.

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

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

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



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Decennial Census and American Community Survey 2017 - 21 Five-Year Estimates; CDRPC (2030 projection); 2023 ACS Five-Year Estimates

# Income

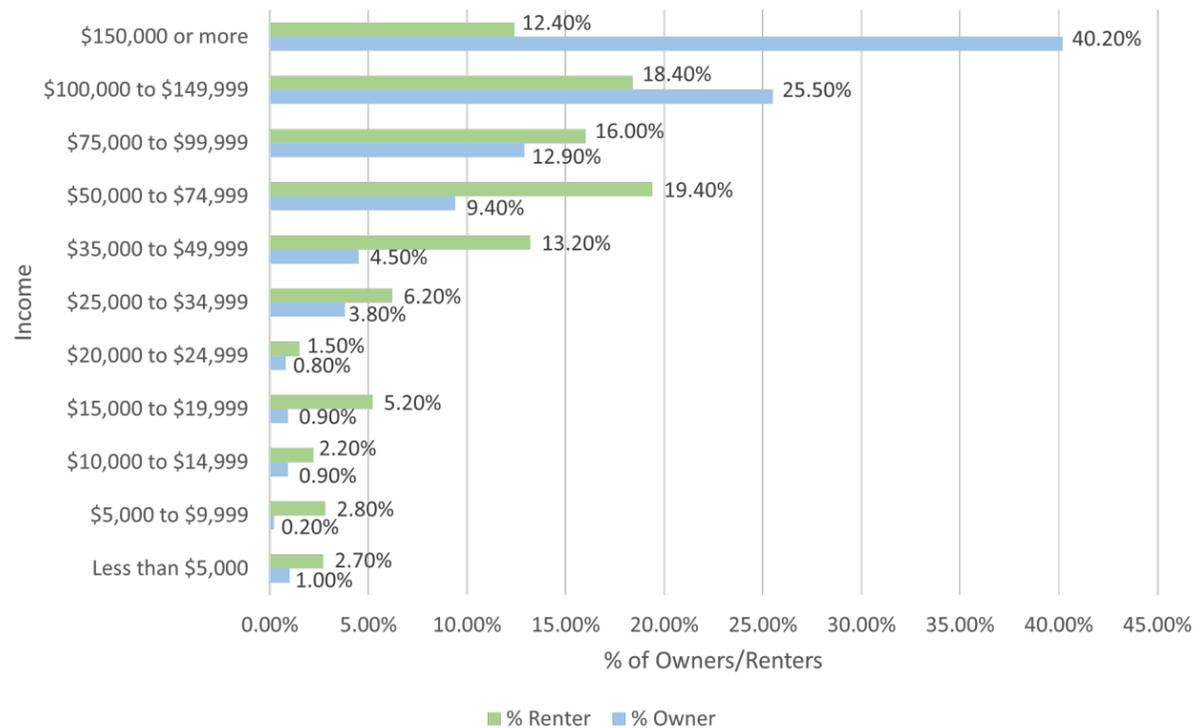
Household income levels impact the ability of residents to pay for housing, contribute to the tax base, and support the local economy as consumers of goods and services. According to the US Census Bureau, the median income of households in the Town of Guilderland in 2023 is \$107,488, well above the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

Income levels vary by tenure. Owner households in Guilderland have a median household income of \$117,527. Most owner households (61.2%) have annual incomes of at least \$100,000, while 12.7% earn \$75,000 to \$99,999 per year. The median household income among renters is \$58,219. More than 26% of the town's renter households have annual incomes of \$25,000 to \$49,999, while 25.3% earn \$50,000 to \$74,999 per year (Figure 5.12).

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

Most affordable housing programs target low-income households, those whose incomes are at or below 80% of the area median income (AMI), although housing developed with funding from the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program is restricted to households earning 60% or less of the AMI. Table 13 below lists the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) FY 2022 Income Limits for the Albany MSA.

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

# Recommendations

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

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

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

The Town should be proactive in seeking affordable housing opportunities as this approach can increase neighborhood diversity while meeting the housing needs of low- and moderate-income citizens. Pursuing such projects can assist

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



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

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

Recognized sustainability practices include but are not limited to:

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



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

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

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





*Fourplex Dwelling in Rosedale Meadows*



*Threplex and Duplex Dwelling in Rosedale Meadows*



*Duplexes at The Meadows at Mill Hill*



*Apex Apartments and Town Homes*



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



*An example of an Accessory Dwelling Unit or “mother-in-law” apartment above a garage. Photo courtesy of: www.guthmannconstruction.com*

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

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

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

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

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

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



*Smaller Lot Sizes in Older Neighborhoods*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**D-12. Consider using density restrictions rather than minimum lot sizes in the RA3 and RA5 District along with the provision for density bonuses that incentivize affordable housing types, open space protection, and other desired amenities.**

Existing District Regulations (Town Code §280-24) set forth dimensional requirements for the Rural Agricultural Districts (RA3 and RA5) in Guilderland. Both districts permit a maximum lot coverage of 30% at present, however, the two districts differ in the minimum lot area required for each: three (3) acres for RA3 and five (5) acres for RA5. Permitted uses for both include agriculture/farming, passive recreation area, single-family dwelling, two-family dwelling, family apartment, and wildlife/historic preserve, among others.

Using a density measurement (i.e., dwellings per acre instead of minimum acres per dwelling), the Town has the opportunity to establish lots that fit with the landscape better while simultaneously creating opportunities for additional housing that conforms to rural design standards.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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