

Town of Ghent



Final Draft Comprehensive Plan

Part I

April 2009

Prepared by the
Town of Ghent Comprehensive Plan Committee

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1. Introduction and Overview

A comprehensive plan is a written document that identifies the goals, objectives, principles, guidelines, policies, standards, and strategies for the growth and development of the community. It is designed to answer three critical questions:

- Where are we now?
- Where do we want to be?
- How do we get there?

The town is authorized to develop and adopt a comprehensive plan by New York State Town Law Section 272-a. New York State considers adoption of a comprehensive plan to be a critical tool to promote the health, safety and general welfare of the people of the town and to consider the needs of the people. A comprehensive plan is the policy foundation upon which communities are built. Once a comprehensive plan is adopted, there are several implications:

- All government agencies involved in planning capital projects in Ghent must consider this plan before they start any capital project. That means the town now has a much larger stake in what other governmental agencies want to do when they are proposing a project in town.
- Community consensus and support can be built on the shared vision, goals, and strategies presented in the plan.
- Programs and regulations may be adopted to implement the plan to protect the town's resources and encourage desired development and growth.
- Comprehensive plans are also important documents to help the town be successful in obtaining grant monies to implement items contained in the Plan.
- In New York State, all land use regulations must be in accordance with a comprehensive plan (Section 272-a). The plan is the basis for regulatory programs. All land use laws should be reviewed, and updated where necessary to be in accordance with this plan.

In the fall of 2006, the Ghent Town Board began a planning process to update the Town Comprehensive Plan. They appointed a Comprehensive Planning Committee and hired a planning consultant to develop the draft plan. The Committee represented a wide variety of interests and points of view including:

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- Ghent Zoning Board of Appeals
- Ghent Planning Board
- Ghent Town Board
- Ghent Business People and Educators
- Farmers
- Residents

Town Input and Data Collection

The issues, goals and recommended strategies detailed in this comprehensive plan are based upon studies of data gathered about the Town of Ghent, as well as from the input of many town residents. During the fall of 2006 and spring/summer of 2007, the Town of Ghent surveyed its residents and businesses, and conducted planning workshops to hear opinions on town needs and people's hopes for its future. Specific sources of information used to prepare this plan included:

- Results from surveys sent to each property owner in Ghent
- Community visioning workshops
- Resident survey to gain input on issues, vision and goals
- Public hearings
- Other studies and analyses were also conducted including:
 - Background studies of land use, including a build-out analysis
 - Population and demographic profiles
 - Existing housing conditions and availability
 - Community facilities
 - Transportation resources
 - Recreation and educational resources
 - Public safety programs
 - Environmental conditions of the town
 - Analysis of the regional growth patterns and trends that have affected, and will continue to affect the area's growth.

Organization of Plan

1) *Where are we now, and where are we going?* The profile and public input sections (found in Appendix A) answer the "where are we now?" and "where are we going?" questions. These sections describe current conditions, demographics, physical and cultural features, and information from the residents.

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2) *Where do we want to be?* The Vision statement sets the tone and overall direction the Town should take in the future. It was developed directly from the survey and planning workshop, and other public comments received. The goals included in this plan are broad statements that reflect “ideal” future conditions desired by the community. The goals offer more specific direction and are consistent with the stated vision of the town. This is found in Section 2A.

3) *How can we get there?* This is answered by a series of recommendations or action steps that the Town can take to accomplish each goal contained in this plan. When put into action, these strategies will help Ghent attain its vision. This is found in Section 2B. This comprehensive plan is not a local law. The recommendations made in this Comprehensive Plan will not take effect until the Town Board decides to do so. This Comprehensive Plan will be implemented through local laws and programs over time. Each time a local law is amended or developed, public hearing(s), review by the county planning board, and an environmental review will be necessary. A recommended implementation schedule is found in Section 3.

The whole plan should be reviewed and updated by the Town Board or a special “Ad-Hoc” committee every five years to ensure that it remains up-to-date and useful to address current conditions and needs.

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2. Vision and Goals

A. Vision

The Town of Ghent enjoys a diverse residential population who share the vision of a rural lifestyle in a scenic setting, protected from suburban-style sprawl characterized in neighboring towns and counties. Our community believes that children growing up in Ghent should have viable, economic options, that would allow them to choose to live here as adults. Our community also believes that its aging population should be able to avail themselves of benefits and services that will allow them to remain in Ghent, if they wish.

Although the traditional farming-base in Ghent has shrunk over time, a shared vision supports land-use planning and laws that both protect open space and promote agriculture and agri-economics, thereby making Ghent a recognized regional leader in “growing our own.” These businesses include produce and specialty crop growers, meat and dairy productions, and local wineries whose products are sold locally, regionally, downstate and elsewhere. These emerging businesses are important to the economic future of our Town, and will have the potential to draw new businesses, residents and visitors, while helping to preserve and protect the Town’s agricultural heritage and open lands.

As the regional economy fosters innovative work-at-home technologies, Ghent has responded by creating a provision in its zoning code to accommodate home-based businesses. Some of those businesses have even grown to the point where they have moved on to the Commerce Park and other commercial zones. To continue to take advantage of new technologies to boost local economic development and livability, Ghent will encourage the development of wireless broadband access. It is especially important that the Town take this expansive view of the future, where we have one foot in the soil, and a reliable connection to the worldwide web of ideas and commerce, in order to make it a community that offers economic opportunity for all, including its youth.

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A broad and supportive view of education, technology, housing, health, recreation, agriculture, agri-tourism, and community services suggests that the Town of Ghent must be ready to respond as the needs of its residents change over time. Surveys (1974, 1994, and 2007) have shown a shared support among Ghent townspeople for the protection of the scenic beauty and farming traditions, as well as support for exploring strategies that can make Ghent an affordable option for those who want to start a new home here or upon retirement, choose to remain in the area. Potential new public water and sewer districts could provide new affordable housing alternatives in support of this goal.

The Town of Ghent is a smart-growth community, supporting a regional approach to economic development, and a flexible approach to address housing. This is exemplified by a successful Conservation Subdivision Law whereby average density zoning allows for affordable housing through the elimination of minimum lot sizes. Informed, well-trained, non-partisan and active public boards—e.g., the Planning Board and the Zoning Board of Appeals—combined with sensible and even-handed code enforcement, create an environment in Ghent that accommodates the wishes of a varied population whose long-time and more recent residents share a similar vision. By continuing to protect the rural qualities and resources that all residents of the Town of Ghent regard as critical to maintaining a high quality of life, the vision will be realized.

A path to fulfilling this vision is supported by its successful tradition of forming *ad hoc* working groups of citizens and public officials to tackle the ongoing challenges facing the town. These relate to everything from development and conservation, to improving recreational opportunities and boosting volunteerism. This model has proved to be a remarkably effective and constructive way to incorporate the disparate views of those who all share a common interest in maintaining a vital town defined by its wealth of natural riches and its commitment to civil discourse in the name of bolstering community.

The quality of life envisioned for the Town of Ghent in this Comprehensive Plan is exemplified by community involvement. This model reinforces the ethic in Ghent that it is important to recognize many viewpoints and to use consensus building to focus on the fundamental values that make our Town a particularly special place to live, work, and raise a family. The Comprehensive Plan is a tool to help guide those efforts, and guide the

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Town's leaders in enacting and administering the policies, laws and actions to make our vision a reality.

A consensus for the vision of the Town is delineated in strategies and goals throughout this Comprehensive Plan. It endorses land use planning that respects the right of future generations to enjoy the benefits provided by progressive planning standards, standards that seeks to balance the wishes and interests of all townspeople with those of individual landowners. This vision requires an active and caring approach to protect the gateway roads and vistas across the town, and the rural character and quality of community in Ghent and its hamlets.

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B. Recommended Strategies

The following prioritized topics have been identified by the public as important and should be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan. Each topic is addressed in the vision statement above (1):

- Community Character (Rural, Scenic, Beauty, Sense of Community)
- Natural Resources, Open Space and Environment
- Infrastructure (Roads, Transportation, Sidewalks)
- Business and Employment
- Historical Heritage
- Government and Taxes
- Recreation and Cultural Opportunities
- Agriculture
- Housing

Goal 1: Maintain and enhance the natural beauty and rural character of Ghent.

Strategies and Actions

1. Maintain the current RA-1 and RA-2 zoning districts, but rename to Rural Residence/Agriculture – 1 (RRA-1) and Rural Residence/Agriculture – 2 (RRA-2).
2. Maintain use of the existing conservation subdivision regulations.
3. Enhance purpose statements of and review criteria used for both the special use permit and site plan review sections of zoning to more strongly reflect the rural character and environmental protection goals of Ghent. Since these are major goals of Ghent residents, the purpose statements should reflect that.
4. Include rural layout and design guidelines in subdivision regulations for minor subdivisions or those not being designed as a conservation subdivision. Although the current conservation subdivision process will

¹ Priority order was determined by looking at priorities identified at the Ghent Planning Workshops

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work to maintain rural character for those subdivisions for which it applies, design of other smaller subdivisions to maintain rural character should remain a concern to the Planning Board as well.

Basic rural design concepts include, but are not limited to

- keeping stone walls as they may exist,
- not placing new structures in the middle of former farm fields,
- carefully placing structures away from critical environmental features,
- reuse of old farm roads, and
- placement of structures so as not to interfere with adjacent agricultural or woodland operations.

These standards can be used to reflect and promote traditional built forms and patterns of the Town. Where applicable, the Town should consider using the design guidelines outlined in the Building Form Guidelines, Hamlet Design, Rural Design Guidelines, and Rural Development Guidelines published by the New York Planning Federation.

5. Consider changing the name of the Suburban Residential district in the hamlet of Ghent (SR) to Hamlet Residential (HR) to reflect the nature of and desire for the hamlet area to remain a traditional neighborhood.
6. Consider expanding the western SR district boundary, where environmentally feasible, to give Ghent room to grow its hamlet.
7. Consider the following amendments to the Planned Residential District:
 - a. Allow PRD's to have mixed uses to accommodate some non-residential developments such as live/work complexes.
 - b. Add language that encourages the developer, or authorizes the Planning Board to design the PRD as a traditional neighborhood (similar to a hamlet in scale, lot sizes, and uses).
 - c. Add in language to the PRD process to ensure that new PRD's are consistent with rural character.
 - d. Consider altering the approval process for PRD's.

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A more common approach is to have a general concept sketch and proposal that is reviewed and approved first by the Town Board with an advisory opinion from the Planning Board. After approval of the development concept (with or without conditions) by the Town Board, the project then goes for detailed site plan and subdivision review by the Planning Board. Since a PRD constitutes a zoning change, it is appropriate for the Town Board to approve or disapprove it first before significant investments are made.

8. For the Village Business district, add hamlet style design standards for commercial structures into zoning requirements that will result in hamlet-style buildings and scale. Ghent currently does not have any specific standards or guidelines to ensure consistency with hamlet scale and design. To ensure scale is consistent with the hamlet, consider, among other concepts illustrated in the Hamlet Design Standards, setting a maximum square footage requirement for commercial structures in VB or consider requiring façade breaks for buildings that have a façade over 80 feet. Prohibit windowless walls along facades or visible sides.
9. Enhance parking lot requirements so that more attention is given to parking lot location and design for commercial uses.
10. Large parking lots should require landscaping and screening, and all should have lighting and landscaping standards. Further, lots should be placed to the side or rear of buildings to avoid large expanses of pavement in the front, especially in the VB district and along road frontages on Route 9H. Offer more flexibility in deciding how many parking spots are required for a new use to avoid overbuilding parking lots. Work with each applicant to determine the necessary number of parking spaces they will need for that use.
11. Maintain existing commercial districts located along Route 9H to keep the “nodal” pattern of commercial development and minimize creation of any new commercial districts as there are currently ample opportunities for commercial development.
12. Avoid allowing Route 9H to develop into strip commercial areas.
13. Consider reducing allowable height of lighting poles, in commercial development, from 25 feet to 20 feet. Establish standards in zoning law to

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reduce or eliminate light pollution by requiring use of fully shielded light fixtures and limitation of lighting at property boundaries.

14. Update subdivision regulations so that natural boundaries (streams, stone walls, forested edges, hedgerows, etc.) are used wherever possible to configure new lots.
15. Allow for controlled use of flag lots when they would be advantageous for maintaining open spaces, rural character, or environmental features that should be preserved. For each use added, ensure that adequate definitions are included in the zoning law.
16. Establish anti-monotony standards for major subdivisions. Modern subdivisions can bring many changes to rural areas.² Zoning and subdivision performance standards can be established for major subdivisions to address monotony and uniformity. Consider the following for major subdivisions:

Variation of lot width and front setbacks

Variation in building height

Variation in roof styles

Variation in building orientation

Use of porches

Use of side-loaded garages or recessed front-loaded garages instead of garages that face the street

Street trees and landscaping

17. Study the feasibility of use of wind power in Ghent. Initiate a study to determine potential locations suitable for wind power and establish a zoning overlay district to restrict such wind farms to those areas. Establish a local wind turbine local law that would cover development standards, required safety measures, construction traffic, setbacks, noise easements, abatement, and wind measurement towers.

² Monotony in appearance and what is called the “monopoly-set house” are both situations that can erode rural character. Monotony is defined as a structure producing a lack of interest in detail or other design elements. Major subdivisions can be monotonous because the same limited numbers of house models are repeated over and over with inadequate differentiation. Monotony comes from not only repetition in design, but use of similar roof trims, roof lines, front facing garages, lack of 360 degree architecture, shallow roof overhangs, and uniform building setback and yard sizes.

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18. Encourage higher density housing to locate in or near Hamlet areas, with the density of development decreasing outside of hamlets centers.
19. Consider adding provisions to zoning law to guide the design and development of multifamily uses.

Goal 2: Protect the natural environmental features of Ghent, and preserve open spaces for wildlife, environmental health, and outdoor recreation.

1. Amend zoning to ensure that the FAO (Flood Area Overlay) map matches the actual floodplain boundaries.
2. Protect forested streams by requiring undeveloped buffers to stabilize banks, limit erosion, preserve wildlife habitats, and create open space and recreation areas.
3. Establish a building setback along streams to further protect waterways from erosion and water-quality degradation. These areas can also be preserved through land purchases or obtaining easements.
4. All site plans and major subdivisions should incorporate soil erosion and sediment control programs. The goal should be to ensure that stormwater runoff rate after development does not exceed the rate that existed prior to the site being developed. This can be accomplished by implementing Low Impact Development (LID) standards in subdivision and zoning (or a stand-alone law) to reduce the volume of runoff and improve water quality by preserving the natural hydrology of a site. Techniques that could be incorporated into local regulations include use of building retention and detention ponds, swales, and infiltration devices, buffering berms, filter strips and vegetated buffers between new development and wetlands.
5. Ensure that all NY SPDES required stormwater protection standards are met during development. This will require stormwater protection plans to be developed and reviewed as required by New York State. Utilize the NY SPDES General Permit #GP-02-01 for Construction Activities.

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6. Ensure that reviewing boards are familiar with and utilize the most recent version of the New York Standards and Specifications for Erosion and Sediment Control.
7. Identify areas of high ecological and wildlife value. These would include stream corridors, wetlands, natural areas that are not currently fragmented by roads or development, “stepping stones” of habitats that link together fragmented habitats, and other features such as steep slopes, patches of unique vegetation, etc (see Water Features, Slope, Bedrock Geology, Agriculture, Farmland, and Topography maps).

These features should be preserved and linked together over time to maintain wildlife habitats. The Town should consider limiting removal of vegetation on steep slopes (See Slope map) and prohibiting development on slopes in excess of 25%.

8. Create a system of incentives to achieve desired land-use patterns. Incentives can be effective to retain large undeveloped parcels and to keep lands in agricultural use. Incentives could be approved for those who provide public benefits such as open space, contiguous tracks of prime farmland, park land, affordable housing, infrastructure improvements, energy efficiency, or other facilities that benefit Town residents.
9. Fully use the Town’s GIS data produced for this plan. Obtain ArcExplorer software (available for free) and load GIS data into a Town computer for use by the Town Board, Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals. All boards should use this information as needed to make decisions. It should be the policy of the Town to ensure that the Planning Board conducts project reviews using the GIS data and maps.
10. Consider enacting local laws to regulate ridge-top development.
11. As a Hudson River Valley Greenway Community, Ghent should work to implement the “Greenway Criteria”.

The Hudson River Valley Greenway is a state sponsored program created to facilitate the development of a voluntary regional strategy for preserving scenic, natural, historic, cultural and recreational resources while encouraging compatible economic development and maintaining the tradition of home

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rule for land use decision-making. The Town of Ghent voluntarily participates in the Greenway community planning program.

12. Promote The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System™ in Ghent. This program encourages and accelerates global adoption of sustainable green building and development practices through the creation and implementation of universally understood and accepted tools and performance criteria.

Goal 3: Promote a sense of community, small town atmosphere, neighborliness, and civic pride.

Strategies and Actions:

1. Provide leadership and coordination to enable community and volunteer organizations in Town to mutually advertise events, volunteer needs, donations, etc. Establish a Ghent Community Pride Committee to develop and implement programs designed to foster community involvement, such as a community pride award program (which has been very successful in other places.)
2. Enhance use of existing facilities activities, especially the West Ghent Community Center.
3. Promote the dissemination of information to the community at large.
 - o Establish a community bulletin board in a prominent location to advertise community events and activities.
 - o Establish a Town E-Newsletter. Initiate an effort to collect email addresses to create the database for this newsletter. Consider four issues per year at the least. Enhance use of local papers to communicate with the public.
 - o Enhance the Town of Ghent web site by posting minutes, documents, application forms, and other critical information for easy access.
4. Continue to support town-wide activities, especially Community Day.
5. The Town Board should establish an annual town-meeting day to foster communication with residents. This would also be an opportunity for the

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Town Board to hear concerns and issues from the public so that an annual work-plan could be developed to address critical needs.

6. Develop the hamlet of Ghent as the town center for recreation, community activities, and government. Consider construction of a community center to aid in this effort.
7. Provide leadership and facilitation for the development of a Youth and Teen Development Plan with other service providers and stakeholders to establish healthy, safe and productive activities.

Goal 4: Provide for quality road maintenance while retaining the rural character of town roads.

Strategies and Actions:

1. Mitigate and plan for increased traffic volumes in the future.
 - a. Promote use of traffic access management techniques to control traffic congestion when new development occurs.
 - o Require linked and shared parking areas between commercial developments. This can be accomplished through subdivision and/or site plan review.
 - o Allow and encourage use of shared driveways for both commercial and residential development. This should be authorized in the subdivision law and should require a deed covenant or other documentation to show how the shared driveway will be maintained.
 - o Prepare a standard road maintenance agreement to define how shared roads will be maintained.
 - o Establish standards for subdivision and site plan review to decrease the number of new curb cuts on highways and arterial roads whenever possible.
 - b. Consider development of an “official map.”

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An official map (not a zoning map) is a map showing all new streets, highways, right-of-ways, drainage systems, parks and other physical features. The “Official Map” is final and conclusive with respect to the location and width of streets, highways, drainage systems, rights-of-ways, and parks shown on it and is established to conserve and protect the public health, safety and welfare. It essentially shows where infrastructure will be and where it will not.

- c. Require a “Traffic Impact Analysis” whenever a proposed project will increase local road traffic by 100 or more cars per day and require mitigation when that study finds that current level of service on area roads will be decreased.
2. Strategies to protect rural and scenic character along roads include:
- a. Consider deeper front setbacks and more screening where appropriate. Encourage the retention of existing stone walls and require the replacement of trees or the planting of new trees, particularly in front yards and along new subdivision streets during subdivision review process.
 - b. Develop a philosophy or policy to preserve important roadside features on local roads such as stonewalls and street trees along existing town roads.
 - c. Incorporate rural-scaled dimensional requirements in local laws. Design, build, and maintain roads that are consistent with rural road standards and small town character.
 - d. Establish new standards appropriate to new rural roads.

Currently, the road standards are contained within the subdivision law (156-13 – 14). New residential roads should be appropriate for low traffic volumes and built so that they maintain the character of the area. This should be addressed in updated subdivision regulations. Reduce current requirements for local street pavement widths from 22 feet to 20 feet, maximum. New collector streets should not be 40’ wide and should be reduced as well. Consider adding to the street design section standards

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- that address rural-scale grading and clearing, curbing, topcoat standards, and driveway standards.
- e. Update road specifications to incorporate these policies.
3. Consider enacting tools that can be incorporated into the subdivision law and/or a site plan review law. These include:
- o driveway spacing standards;
 - o design standards for roads (including establishing minimum corner clearance;
 - o standards, driveway design, and use of shared driveways);
 - o limitations on the number of driveways allowed;
 - o reduction of the number of driveways from a subdivision to an arterial;
 - o use of shared driveways when flag lots are proposed; and
 - o provide for future interconnection of parking areas for commercial uses.
4. Classify local roads based on traffic volumes, types of vehicles using the road, and the adjacent land use. For this task, use the documents listed in the footnote below.³

These manuals outline a classification system for low-volume roads, offer guidelines for the rehabilitation of a low-volume road, and contain local road maintenance guidelines and recommendations for traffic control. Local roads could also be classified as recommended by the Local Road Classification Task Force of New York State: low-volume collector (collects traffic and channels it to higher level roads such as arterials and interstates); residential access (residences); farm access (to a farm's center of operations, including the residence); agricultural-land access; resources/industrial access (provides access to industrial or mining operations); and recreational land access (provides access to recreational land including seasonal dwellings and parks).

³ *Manual: Guidelines for Rural Town and County Roads* (Local Roads Research and Coordination Council. December 1992, or its updates. New York State Department of Transportation. Albany, NY, 50 pp.) for low-volume roads with fewer than 400 cars per day as recommended by the New York State Department of Transportation, Local Roads Research and Coordination Council and the publication *Classifying and Managing Low-Volume Local Roads* (Geoffroy, Donald, P.E., 1996. Cornell Local Roads Program, CLRP Report # 96-6).

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These classifications are more appropriate to a rural community than what currently exists.

5. Develop mechanisms to slow vehicular speed on new roads constructed during project development, where necessary and appropriate.
 - a. If appropriate, new roads should be built in a grid or modified grid pattern so that all streets are or can be connected in the future (where possible and with consideration to topography). The shorter road segments in a grid or modified grid pattern will serve to slow traffic better than straight or slightly curved suburban style roads.
 - b. Ghent should institute a traffic calming policy and plan consistent with the New York State Department of Transportation design manual.⁴ Traffic calming may not be applicable to every project proposed. Individual projects should be assessed to determine if necessary and feasible. In order for traffic calming techniques to be applied by the Planning Board during the project review process, Ghent should ensure that adopted local highway standards incorporate and allow use of these techniques.
 - c. Use of traffic calming techniques should be considered when there is concern about the safety, noise, pollution, and visual impact of cars and trucks on roads. Local input from residents, emergency services, truck delivery companies, and utility companies should be obtained prior to initiating or requiring traffic calming techniques.
6. Continue to maintain a safe town road system with adequate staff, equipment, and training. Initiate capital improvement planning.

A Capital Improvement Plan, or CIP, is the tool through which the town can show its plan for capital improvements. It is a document that can show how projects to be built in a particular year relate to those built in other years, shows the relationship among investments in different infrastructure (roads, sewer, water, parks) and relates to the future land use elements of this comprehensive plan. A CIP usually covers 5 years and typically includes details on projects to be built, funding needs and priorities, and equipment and staff needs and priorities.

⁴ Use category I and III roads (most of the rural roads in Town) from the the New York State Department of Transportation Highway Design Manual, Chapter 25 – Traffic Calming, Revision 33, August 31, 1998.

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These documents are excellent planning and budgeting tools and are usually “rolling plans” where the plan is updated each year, dropping off the previous year and adding one more year at the end of the cycle.

7. Development standards for hamlets should be different from standards for rural areas. New hamlet streets should be required to be constructed with sidewalks (at least on one side), street trees, and traditionally styled street lights.
8. Work with the County Sheriff and the New York State Police to enhance traffic enforcement activities to control speed. Work within State requirements to post local roads with lower speed limits.
9. Amend subdivision law to allow and encourage new roads within major subdivisions to use front loaded streets.
10. Minimize use of cul-de-sac roads. Cul-de-sacs should only be used when no other alternatives exist. Should a dead-end road be necessary, use a “T” end or a “hammerhead” instead of a cul-de-sac. Where a cul-de-sac is the only alternative, reduce the “bulb” width to no more than 45 feet and limit the number of units with access to that cul-de-sac to 6.
11. Establish a policy for the Highway Department to maintain trees and other significant vegetation along local road sides. This vegetation is critical in maintaining the rural character of town roads.
12. During subdivision review, the Planning Board should ensure that existing trees along a road-edge should be maintained to create a buffer between the road and new dwellings.

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Goal 5: Provide for new modes of transportation including public and pedestrian opportunities.

Strategies and Actions:

1. Amend subdivision regulations to clarify that safe walking areas should be provided outside the motor vehicle traffic travel-way for all new roads. Right of ways should be large enough for pedestrians. Provide walkways or wider shoulders on one side of the road to promote walking and biking on roads where practical.⁵
2. As new development is proposed, ensure that all new roads are interconnected and that they are designed with pedestrian opportunities such as a wide shoulder, or other pathway in the right of way.
3. Provide for the construction of new sidewalks or maintain and improve existing sidewalks in the hamlets. Subdivision and site plan laws should include standards for provision of sidewalks, bike paths or other pathways as appropriate.
4. For any major new subdivision built in a clustered manner, require provision of sidewalks or pedestrian paths.
5. Work with Columbia County to enhance public transportation between Chatham and Hudson. Work to help Ghent be more transportation-friendly for children and seniors. Expand access/ride services that could be provided by volunteers such as by younger seniors or teens.
6. The Town should collect and organize information on the various transportation options available to town residents and make that available.

⁵ A paved or unpaved shoulder could be provided as a minimum along new roads. Paved shoulders are preferred to provide an all-weather walking surface, since they also serve bicyclists and improve the overall safety of the road. A 5-ft wide shoulder is acceptable for pedestrians along low-volume rural roads. Greater width, up to 8 to 10 ft, is desirable along high-speed highways, particularly those roads with a large number of trucks. An edge line should be marked to separate the shoulder from the travel way. Wider shoulders would be desirable along Route 22, 66 and 9H. Work with the NYS DOT and the County Highway Department to evaluate the feasibility of created multi-use access for cars and pedestrians along state routes.

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7. Increase pedestrian safety and access to roads and parking lots. Local regulations should require provision of safe pedestrian facilities within new parking lots. This could be incorporated into the site plan law. Some techniques that may be appropriate to consider include use of curb extensions, textured crosswalks, and pedestrian crossing islands.

Goal 6: To provide for small business development that provides quality employment opportunities in a manner that protects the environment and rural character of Ghent.

Strategies and Actions

1. Support the Town's agricultural economy by ensuring prime farmland is retained for agricultural uses. *(See also Strategies related to Agriculture.)* Recognize agriculture and agri-tourism as important economic resources and support the preservation and enhancement of these resources. Assist in the promotion and attraction of agricultural related services and industries to maintain agriculture as a viable business.
2. Recognize the important role of home businesses and home industries in Ghent and endorse home occupied business law in code.
3. Create a Town committee to advocate and spearhead economic related activities. This should be a public/private endeavor. This committee should build consensus and cooperation among these groups and individuals and take leadership on behalf of the Town to strengthen the existing and diversify the local economic base. Committee activities include:
 - o helping existing businesses expand;
 - o recruiting new businesses to provide a balanced mix;
 - o converting un-used space into productive property; and
 - o sharpening the competitiveness of local businesses.
4. Future programs that should be considered by this Committee on behalf of the Town include:
 - a. Creation of a Local Development Corporation. This is a legal entity/organization directed by a board of directors and/or members, for the purpose of creating new jobs and income growth. This group can

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work closely with county-wide economic development programs and officials to promote business development in the Town.

- b. Create and maintain a vacant land and building inventory in the business districts to easily identify potential redevelopment sites.
- c. Market Ghent's unique characteristics to investors, new businesses, and others. Effective promotion creates a positive image of the community. Promotion of retail activities, special events and ongoing programs can also contribute to community pride. Develop the Ghent website to aid in promotion.
- d. Develop a Business Assistance Program.

Such programs can seek grant funding for a revolving loan fund that is designed and directed to new or existing businesses. Revolving loan funding uses include, but are not limited to: relocation and start up expenses; purchase of equipment or inventory; the engagement of professional technical assistance, leasehold improvements; and working capital. The funding could also be used to assist with capital improvements, façade and sign enhancements, business expansion and second and third story rehabilitation.

5. Promote ongoing dialog between the Town and economic development programs/officials in Columbia County to ensure that County economic development projects are consistent with goals and objectives of the Town's Comprehensive Plan and get support for County Economic Development programs in town.
6. The Town should study feasibility of and consider future development of public water and sewerage needs in the Ghent hamlet to promote small hamlet-scale commercial development in the Village Business (VB) and Residential (VR) district.
7. Foster improved telecommunications and utility infrastructure, including broadband services, fiber optic, Wi-Fi, DSL, high speed Internet, and/or cable access connections.
8. Review and as appropriate revise existing commercial development design and layout standards (Section 190-13 of the zoning law) to address

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architectural design, building form, signage size and design, parking lots, lighting, and landscaping to foster new development that promotes the small town, historic, and rural character of the Town. The design standards should be applicable to all proposed commercial activities, including signage and franchise/chain businesses during site plan review and/or special permit approval.

9. Review existing zoning code to encourage the existing business districts along State Route 9H as commercial clusters or “nodes” and prevent expansion of these districts that result in strip-style development along the entire length of this important highway.
10. Amend zoning use table (Appendix C) to add agri-business and agri-industry as an allowable use subject to special use permit in the CI and BIC zones. Further, define these terms broadly to include food processing facilities. These uses would be advantageous to promote local and regional agricultural products as well. Such use of lands in the Empire Zone/Business Park would meet both commercial and agricultural goals.
11. Re-evaluate the BC and LCB commercial districts. Combine into one commercial zone and make it consistent with the Empire Zone (BIC) district near that location. Any zoning changes to this location should be coordinated with the Town of Claverack.
12. Review the current commercial business district boundaries to assure the amount of land zoned for commercial use is adequate to meet future needs, especially along Route 9H.
13. Explore options to sustain and possibly increase tourism and recreation businesses in the Town, by supporting bed and breakfasts, agri-businesses, parks, trails and other uses that promote the natural resource base and the unique heritage of the Town.
14. Allow small, low-impact non-farm businesses on farm properties. *(A low impact development is not necessarily one that is unobtrusive in its surroundings or that does not alter the existing landscape; a low impact development is one that, through its low negative environmental impact, either enhances or does not significantly diminish environmental quality.)*

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15. Communicate with adjoining municipalities in the planning, siting, and appearance of commercial and industrial development proposed along shared borders.
16. Use State and federal grant programs to supplement local tax revenue whenever practical and advantageous.
17. Establish fees and policies to ensure that new land development pays for its own water, sewer, road, utility, or other site improvements that may be required.
18. Promote local businesses through the Town website. It could be used, for example, to provide more information on each Town business, and to make all Town regulations and permit applications directly available to the public and businesses.
19. Promote green development practices as well as development that use the LEED certification (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Green Building Rating System). LEED encourages and accelerates global adoption of sustainable green building and development practices through the creation and implementation of universally understood and accepted tools and performance criteria. *(See also strategies related to environmental protection.)*

Goal 7: Maintain quality emergency services and promote safety.

Strategies and Actions:

1. Work with the State Police and the County Sheriff's Office to enhance speed enforcement in Town and along high priority roads.
2. The Town should continue to support our local fire and ambulance departments through volunteerism and participation in fund raising activities. Work with volunteer fire and emergency services and continue to look for innovative ways to provide for the recruitment and training of new members. Offer all available tax incentives to attract new volunteers.

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3. To control future emergency service delivery costs, consideration should be given to growth patterns in relation to the efficient provision of emergency services.
4. Ensure that Town residents are protected with an updated Emergency Preparedness Plan that also addresses animal welfare, and disseminate the contents of that plan to the community.
5. Continue to ensure that emergency service and road safety issues are evaluated and mitigated during project development. Create a process to ensure that emergency services and the Town Highway Superintendent are consulted prior to the Planning Board approving a development proposal.
6. Ensure that zoning, subdivision and site plan laws clearly authorize the Planning Board (and ZBA) to evaluate impacts of new development on emergency services and public safety.

Goal 8: Preserve the historic heritage, structures, views and landscapes of Ghent.

Strategies and Actions:

1. There is one historic site currently included on the State and National Historic Registers: the Van Valkenbergb – Isbister Farm, and one historic district encompassing the Taconic State Parkway.

In addition to these historic resources, there are 16 other locations already identified by the New York State Historic Preservation Office that may be eligible for listing on these registers. Ghent should conduct a full survey and inventory of historic and cultural resources and work to help landowners get properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

2. In hamlet areas, establish design standards for commercial buildings to help them be compatible with the surrounding hamlet-style neighborhood.

These design standards should be presented in an illustrated format so that all parties understand the community expectations for design. Commercial

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structures should be of the same scale, design, and layout of existing buildings and should be consistent with the small town nature of the hamlet(s).

The items that play critical roles in preserving historic character to be addressed in these standards are

- roof pitch and style;
 - parking lot placement, landscaping and location;
 - preventing large expanses of windowless walls;
 - eliminating or modifying trademarked architecture;
 - lighting;
 - tree preservation and planting;
 - screening of utilities;
 - limiting pavement width along the front of a property;
 - encouraging shallow setbacks;
 - placing parking to the rear or side;
 - having consistent architecture;
 - requiring sidewalks; and
 - having signs and lights that are consistent with a traditional neighborhood.
3. Outside the hamlets, commercial structures should have ample landscaping and screening from the road and meet performance standards for noise, vibration, odor, smoke, etc.
 4. The goal of Town zoning and subdivision laws should be to enhance historic resources in Ghent Zoning, and planning purpose statements should be written to place emphasis on protecting and enhancing the historic, small town, and rural character of the Town. Development review processes should recognize the importance of historic resources. The Planning Board and the Zoning Board of Appeals should have the tools to ensure protection of these features.
 5. Consider local incentives and programs for historic preservation. Seek grants to offer programs, studies, and activities that will serve to protect the Town's historic resources. For example, the Town could apply for money to fund low interest loans to improve building facades of historic structures or offer local tax incentives for preservation and restoration. The Town could also sponsor workshops on historic preservation techniques for homeowners.

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6. Encourage citizen input, including the improvement of the streetscapes in the hamlet of Ghent. This could include historic lighting, enhanced sidewalks, landscaping, and planting of street trees.
7. Encourage adaptive reuse of historic buildings, especially old barns. Zoning should specifically encourage conversion of buildings to new uses as a specially permitted use, rather than promote demolition of existing buildings.
8. Consider creation of mapping showing all historic and cultural places in the Town. The inventory would include all historical markers, cemeteries, and other historical and cultural sites.
9. Understand the applicable laws that can help Ghent protect historic resources. These include Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, which directs federal agencies to consider historic resources in their project planning. New York State has a parallel law for state agencies in Section 14.09 of the State Preservation Act of 1980.

Goal 9: Promote agricultural activities and protect farmlands.

Strategies and Actions

1. Work with Columbia County and local landowners to review County Agricultural District #1 and add actively farmed lands that are not currently included in the district. Conversely, seek to remove lands that no longer have farming potential from the district.
2. Consider establishment of development standards oriented to promoting and protecting agriculture. Residential density should be low and non-farm businesses limited and small scale. Continue to evaluate the effectiveness of the density requirements of the Town and make changes as needed. Other options for regulations within this district include:
 - a. Add language to the current conservation subdivision requirements to ensure that where active agriculture can take place, the preserved open space include those lands and allow for continued agricultural use.
 - b. Require buffers between new development and farms be established by

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the non-farm use.

- c. Encourage that new structures be placed outside of lands having prime farmland soils, active farm fields, soils of statewide importance, etc. Subdivision and structures going through site plan reviews should be sited to minimize impacts to agriculture. The Planning Board should evaluate and permit non-farm and non-residential uses located so that they do not negatively impact farm operations.
 - d. Allow farm worker housing as a permitted right.
3. Purpose statements in zoning (especially #2 and #8) should be expanded to recognize the importance agriculture plays in Ghent.
 4. Amend zoning to make the definitions for agriculture, farm, and other similar terms consistent with NYS Agriculture and Markets laws (Section 301 of the NYS AML). Add in other terms such as agri-business, agri-tourism, u-pick operations, etc.
 5. Modify purpose statements to better define the desired goals for each zoning district.
 6. Consider establishing an agricultural advisory committee to provide guidance to the town as they implement agricultural-related portions of this plan related to farming.
 7. Promote green markets, roadside stands, and expanded agri-businesses as uses permitted in Ghent. Change this section of zoning to promote farmers working together to sell local produce via farm stands.

Currently, zoning requires that roadside stands can only have produce grown principally on the same lot. Not only do farmers have more than one lot, but it may be advantageous for several farmers from different areas to work together to sell their produce at one stand.

8. Allow for and encourage flexibility in agri-business uses in zoning. Specify that zoning allows a variety of agri-businesses including u-pick, agri-tourism, and retail uses that may be associated with. For example, a dairy farm should be allowed to have a retail store that sells cheese or other dairy products produced on-site.

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9. Amend the appendices in zoning (Use Table) to allow a variety of agriculture-related home occupations in a manner consistent with this Comprehensive Plan.
10. Institute a policy that public water and sewer infrastructure will not be provided or expanded into agricultural areas. Focus such infrastructure investments in the hamlets. Such services are often the force for conversion of farms to non-agricultural uses.
11. Make sure local assessors are aware of the various provisions of State law which provide agricultural exemptions.
12. Consider other tax incentives that support farming which are allowed pursuant to the Agriculture and Markets law. Consider offering additional tax incentives for farmers above what is offered by NYS. The Town can offer more, but not less than what the State requires.
13. Consider use of a transfer of development rights program whereby a “sending” area within the core farmlands of Ghent and a “receiving” area in or near existing hamlets are established. This would be a voluntary option for landowners.⁶
14. Consider using the modified site plan review procedures advocated by the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets for agricultural uses.

⁶ When a landowner in a “sending area” desire to sell their land, they would sell the development rights they are eligible for and instead of building on that land, transfer that density to the “receiving” area. The land in the sending area can remain as agriculture permanently while the landowner maintains the same equity and dollar value.

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Goal 10: Provide for a diversity of housing opportunities for residents of all ages and income levels.

Strategies and Actions

1. Encourage additional affordable⁷ housing for people of average or fixed incomes when larger developments occur, consider adding “inclusionary zoning” provisions for major subdivisions.

For these developments, the Town could require developers to dedicate a minimum of 10% of all units as affordable housing as part of their plan approval. As an alternative to mandatory inclusionary zoning requirements, Ghent could provide for positive incentives, such as density bonuses to encourage dedication of affordable housing units.

2. Encourage the development of additional senior (55+) housing opportunities in Town.

This development is recommended in areas adjacent to services that can easily be accessed by senior adults, such as public transportation, retail shops, library, community center, etc. There is high demand for this type of housing and it should include both affordable units as well as market-rate units, to allow existing residents to downsize. Further market analysis should be conducted to identify other appropriate uses, including assisted living facilities or cooperative housing development. Consider offering density bonuses to developers of senior projects as an incentive for this type of housing.

3. Zoning should be updated to properly define “senior housing” and “assisted living facilities” and other related senior housing definitions. Use <http://seniorhousing.state.ny.us/definitions/index.htm> as a base for obtaining

⁷ Affordable housing is defined by the US Housing and Urban Development Agency (HUD) as housing that does not cost more than 30% of the annual household income.

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accepted definitions. The Zoning should permit these uses by Special Use Permit with site plan review.

4. To promote a variety of housing types, the Planned Residential District (PRD) (Section 190-6) should allow for a mix of residential housing types (including senior housing) as well as small neighborhood commercial uses.

The PRD concept could be used to promote live/work developments that are built in a manner consistent with the rural character of Ghent. These districts may best be suited for locations in and around hamlets and the Village of Chatham. PRD standards should require that the development be designed in a "traditional" neighborhood and provides appropriate landscaping, sidewalks and paths. Standards could also include architectural design, building form, and signage guidelines that serve to retain the historic development patterns found in Ghent's hamlets and the Village.

5. Greater housing diversity and affordability may be achieved by revising zoning policies to eliminate both direct and "back door" prohibitions and explicitly allow a range of housing types, rather than requiring a special review process for certain types of structures entirely. Review special permitted uses to determine if there needs to be additional standards specific to a certain use.
6. Town zoning should define and allow by special use permit accessory (so-called "in-law) apartments to provide alternative housing opportunities for the citizens of the community. A special permit process can ensure that such a use can fit in the neighborhood and that all water, septic, or other environmental issues are dealt with.
7. Establish criteria for the use of flag lots. To avoid problems associated with flag lots but allow more flexibility in use of some parcels, consider establishing flag lot criteria for single-family, detached housing.

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Flag lots are not appropriate where a series of large lots could be converted to flag lot developments thereby raising the density and change the character of an area. However, occasional use in a unique situation can add flexibility and create lots, which may preserve open space or rural character in a specific location. Such criteria could include:

- minimum parcel sizes for use of flag lots;
 - requiring orientation of buildings to the street;
 - use of both front and rear yards;
 - front yards that match neighborhood patterns; and
 - use of common driveways.
8. New housing units and neighborhoods in or near hamlets should be consistent with existing neighborhoods with the same or similar setback distances from the main road.
 9. Zoning and subdivision regulations should reflect that major subdivisions or large residential developments should reflect the historical development patterns of the area and should avoid monotonous and repetitious architectural styles.
 10. Consider seeking funding from federal and state sources to assist in the rehabilitation of sub-standard housing, facilitate home-ownership for first time buyers, and help restore historic homes.

For example, the Town could apply for funding to establish a Homeownership Assistance Program. This can be used for down - payment assistance, a grant to buy down the interest rate, or for rehabilitation assistance. Focus efforts to attract funding for development of affordable housing for households earning less than 60% of the County median income because that is the current focus of effort for many grant-making institutions.

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11. Review and amend where necessary, definitions of housing-related terms. Add in definitions of manufactured houses, modular houses, and update mobile home definitions to be consistent with State and Federal definitions.
12. Encourage a mix of residential and commercial uses in some areas, especially the hamlet of Ghent.
13. Allow for greater density or lot coverage in hamlet SR districts to promote more affordable lots.
14. Engage in dialogue with the community about the requirements under which affordable housing can be successfully integrated within Ghent.
15. Continue to use regulatory tools to encourage innovation and allow flexibility in local design and land use such as conservation subdivisions and PRD. These policies don't have housing affordability as their core objective, but by facilitating development that might not otherwise be able to occur (cluster zoning) or facilitating economies of scale, higher densities, and more predictable approval processes (planned residential developments), these techniques can help to expand the supply of housing and reduce upward price pressures.

Goal 11: Enhance the quality of life of Ghent residents through diverse and accessible recreational and cultural opportunities.

Strategies and Actions

1. Continue the town-sponsored recreation committee whose role would include:
 - inventory existing recreational resources;
 - identify future needs for existing and new facilities and programs
 - create a long-range recreation strategic plan for Ghent;
 - work as an advocate for the town in seeking grants to fund projects; and explore and seek additional funding sources for recreational facilities and programs;

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- involve teens and senior citizens in development of programs for those age groups;
 - coordinate and improve existing recreational programs; and
 - coordinate and communicate with surrounding towns to benefit all area residents.
2. Identify locations that are feasible for public access to the creeks for fishing and recreation. Enhance creek access to those locations and work with willing landowners to acquire land via fee-simple purchases, easements, or landowner agreements for this purpose.

Help landowners understand options, benefits and implications of providing public access on their lands. Provide information on the NY Recreation Use Statute that addresses landowner liability. Encourage private landowners of those properties to provide public access to creeks.

3. During major subdivision or site plan review, the Planning Board should seek opportunities for creating public access points to the creeks and other open space areas suitable for recreation in Town. For example, this may be able to be accomplished through conservation easements when a conservation subdivision takes place.
4. Seek to link preserved open space lands with trails and greenways. The Planning Board should maintain a map and inventory of preserved lands in Town and work to find linkages between them over time.
5. Enhance and expand a system of walking trails, bike trails, and other pathways. Long-term, work to create a network of paths and trails throughout town.
6. Create a plan showing potential pathways and establish a pathways fund to provide monies to accomplish this. Creating pathways linking the hamlet of Ghent and recreation areas with other locations should take precedence. This would be an important action for enhancing the hamlet as the town center as well. Funding should include a mix of grant, private and public funds and Ghent could consider establishing a larger recreation fee to be assessed for each new subdivision in town to raise funds for this pedestrian pathway.
7. Work with area land trusts to obtain and manage easements or land purchases for creek and recreational access.

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8. Liaison with the school district to improve community use of school buildings that serves the Town of Ghent. Work to find ways to expand and build on programs using existing school district resources to benefit the broader community and coordinate activities. Work together to explore opportunities to obtain NYS Department of Health physical activity promotion grants or technical assistance to support recreational efforts.
9. Enhance the language of the subdivision regulation by granting the Planning Board the authority to require in appropriate cases that park and recreational lands be established for major subdivisions in the Town or payment in lieu of setting aside parkland to strengthen the current recreational land contribution requirement.
10. For new subdivisions, establish a per lot recreation fee to fund recreational programs in Town. These fees would go into a dedicated fund for recreation.
11. Establish a constructive dialogue with all-terrain vehicle and snowmobile enthusiasts in Ghent related to trails and their recreational needs. Include this effort as well as other public input into development of a trail network in Ghent.
12. For all recreational and cultural facilities, evaluate and consider future parking needs, especially at the Water Street recreational field.
13. Add recreation facilities as a category the town should consider in its long range planning.
14. Engage more youth in community pride and town activities. Establish a teen forum to discuss teen needs and programs that they can get involved in. Involve the Youth Commission in this effort.

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Goal 12: Ensure that local government remains responsive, fiscally responsible, and forward thinking in its approach to meeting the needs of Ghent residents.

Strategies and Actions

1. Where feasible, consolidate or share municipal services to limit duplication of services. Conduct a feasibility study with the Village of Chatham and surrounding towns to assess benefits of consolidation or sharing of services. Apply for a NYS Shared Municipal Services Incentive Grant to fund this work.
2. The Town Board should, on an annual basis, establish a Comprehensive Plan work plan that will guide implementation on an annual basis. This work plan should include those items to be accomplished that year. In addition, the Town Board should form a Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee to oversee and initiate projects to implement this Comprehensive Plan. This Committee should operate under the direction of the Town Board and assist with implementing the annual priorities of this plan guided by the work plan established by the Town Board (see Action Plan).
3. Fully develop the Town of Ghent website so that all maps, plans, permit applications, notices, laws, and other municipal information is available via the internet.
4. Consider retaining a grant writer where appropriate to assist the Town in attaining funding for programs and facilities recommended in this plan.
5. Ensure that the Planning Board and ZBA use the maps created for this plan. Each Board should have a full set of the maps for their use during meetings. Consider purchasing these Boards a computer and install the Geographic Information System (GIS) data and maps for ease of use during application review.
6. Update the tax parcel based GIS data in the Town on a regular basis so that information can be most useful by the Planning Board and ZBA as they review projects.
7. Evaluate this plan and make updates as needed every 10 years to keep it current.

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8. When plan is completed, work to develop a summary brochure and make available at public locations, place on website, and/or mail to all households.
9. Communicate with adjoining municipalities in the planning, siting, and appearance of commercial and industrial development proposed along shared borders.

Goal 13: Support zoning and planning laws and other strategies that address aging in place issues. Maintain quality health and human services.

Strategies and Actions

1. Encourage land uses oriented towards senior services such as health clinics, recreational facilities for seniors, and senior housing such as continuous care complexes and assisted living facilities. Senior services should be close or within walking distances to other services.
2. Consider establishing a committee to investigate and implement programs and strategies to support quality health and human services for the elderly.

Goal 14: Support the relationship between protection of the rural character of the town, eco-tourism and education with zoning code changes that provide support and incentive to non-traditional educational venues and activities.

Strategies and Actions

1. Provide access to the Town of Ghent website to communicate public, not-for-profit, and private educational initiatives.

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2. Provide access at a reasonable charge to Town facilities for not-for-profit educational forums, workshops, seminars, speakers, and related events.
3. Zoning code changes should include provisions to support business, including home-occupied business, whose work, directly or indirectly includes an educational component.
4. The Town could explore the enhancement of broadband, and wireless communications whose development has the effect of supporting businesses, educational efforts and facilities.
5. Property tax incentives should be considered for Ghent-based not-for-profit organizations whose primary mission and activities are educational, and add to the quality of the Town through economic development, unique educational opportunities and/or work-force development. Acknowledge that granting tax benefits in support of non-traditional educational venues and activities may accrue greater value for the town through the intangible advantages of reputation and unique differentiating characteristics than can be measured in traditional terms.
6. The Town's zoning should allow for alternative and private schools as a permitted use subject to a special use permit.
7. Support or organize educational workshops, on grants, loans and similar business development opportunities for traditional or emerging businesses to locate and expand in the Town of Ghent.
8. Special Use permits. Review and revise as necessary the existing conditions, provisions and standards in 190-16 Article V. to assure that they are in harmony with the goals, strategies and intent of the revised comprehensive plan, and specifically that they support the goals and strategies of Goal 14 with respect the support of non-traditional educational venues and activities.

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3. Implementing the Strategies

This section outlines an action plan to implement this plan's recommendations. It is to be used as both a plan and a checklist to aid the Town Board in organizing implementation activities in Ghent. It is the Town Board's role to implement and maintain this plan. However, the Town Board will need assistance from various boards, agencies, and organizations for specific strategies recommended in the plan. So that the ideas presented in this plan can become a reality, it is recommended that the Town Board commit to the following after adoption:

1. Set up a Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee made up of members of the Town Board, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, as well as members of the public. The role of this committee would be to coordinate implementation activities on behalf of the Board. It is recommended that the Town Board develop an annual work list of items to be addressed and implemented that year and set a priority action schedule based on the following table/checklist. Further, it is recommended that the Town Board evaluate implementation activities on an annual basis.
2. Enhance public participation by ensuring that citizens have electronic access to this plan and other town documents.
3. Provide all members of the Board, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Town Clerk, and Highway Superintendent with copies of this plan.
4. Maintain, update, and utilize the maps created through the GIS for this plan at all Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals meetings and also make them available to landowners and the public, preferably via a web site.

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4. GIS Maps

Maps included and Referenced in Plan:

1. Roads and Property Boundaries
2. Water Features
3. Flood Hazards
4. Topography
5. Steep Slopes
6. Bedrock Geology
7. Surficial Geology
8. School Districts
9. Property Class
10. Agriculture
11. Farmland
12. Zoning
13. Soil Limitations, Septic Tanks
14. Build Out Results (Series of Several Maps)
15. Aerial Photographs (2001 and 2004)