

**Town of Ghent**

**Profile and Inventory (v2)**

**December 12, 2007**

## **Location and Regional Context**

The Town of Ghent is one of eighteen towns in rural Columbia County, southeast of Albany, NY, along the east bank of the Hudson River. Ghent is located in the north-central portion of the County, and borders the Towns of Austerlitz and Hillsdale to the east, the Town of Claverack to the south, the Town of Stockport to the west, and the towns of Kinderhook and Chatham to the north. The incorporated Village of Chatham contains portions of both the Town of Chatham and the Town of Ghent.

The Town is approximately seven miles wide and eight miles long at its longest point north-to south, and contains about 45 square miles (approximately 28,873 acres) of land. Hamlets in the Town, in addition to the hamlet of Ghent, include West Ghent and Omi in the western portion and Buckleyville and Arnolds Mills in the northeastern corner. Other neighboring hamlets are Harlemville, just over the eastern boundary in Hillsdale, Moorehouse Corners to the northeast in Austerlitz, and Stottville, beyond the southwestern corner in Stockport. The Village of Philmont is located just south of the Ghent boundary in Claverack.

Ghent is primarily a rural town, but it is not isolated. It contains portions of the Taconic State Parkway and New York State Routes 9H and 66, as well as half of the Village of Chatham. A short drive will take the visitor or resident to the Villages of Kinderhook, Valatie, and Philmont. The City of Hudson, Columbia County's seat, is only four miles from the Ghent town line. Albany is 25 miles north, New York City is 115 miles south, and Boston is about 150 miles east of Ghent.

## **Physical Environment**

### **Water Resources**

The Town of Ghent lies in the Mid-Hudson River watershed. Streams within the Town that ultimately carry water to the Hudson are the, Kline Kill, Widows Creek, Fitting Creek, North Creek, Mud Creek, Agawamuck Creek, and a small portion of Claverack Creek among others (See Water Features Map). These streams have also been designated classified streams by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC). The NYS DEC issues discharge permits to allow certain kinds and amounts of substances to be released into the streams based upon their classification. A Special Flood Hazard Area has been identified by the US government for federal insurance purposes. This area was incorporated into a Flood Overzone in earlier zoning ordinances in Ghent, but is no longer covered by the Zoning Law. There is currently a separate local law (Chapter 99 of the Ghent Code) covering flood damage prevention.

Many small and large wetlands are scattered throughout the Town, particularly in a wide north-south band covering the central and northwestern portions of the Town (See Water Features Map). Many are associated with the classified streams mentioned above. Those wetlands 12.4 acres or larger have been designated by the DEC as regulated wetlands, and state law requires a permit for any alteration or development in a wetland and

requires a 100-foot buffer around the wetland boundary. Wetland systems are natural assets for many reasons, including their capacity for flood control, groundwater recharge, as temporary filters of pollution carried by streams, landscape and habitat diversity, education, research, and providing food and shelter for both rare species and economically important fish, birds, and animals. For example, the 35-acre Smith Pond adjacent to the Mary E. Dardess Elementary School and the Chatham High School grounds, and Starks Pond near the Fairgrounds, are both DEC-designated wetlands (CH2- and CH-3, respectively) that provide ecological education and recreational opportunities, among other benefits, to Ghent residents and others.

In the early days, settlers used water resources to power mills that ground grain, cut lumber, made paper, etc. Today, Ghent’s streams, ponds, and wetlands remain important ecological, educational and recreational assets. Wetlands in Ghent represent a significant protected open space resource, and numerous and valuable as they are, also present a limitation for development.

### **Topography/Land Forms**

Topography is especially important in defining the character of the Town of Ghent. Rolling slopes and hilly areas in the Town command diverse scenic views, both from public highways and from interior lands and farm fields.

Approximately ¾ of the Town contains moderate to steep slopes. Two relatively level valleys run on a north-south axis along State Route 9H to the west and County Route 9 to the east. In the portion of the Town with rolling topography, elevations vary from 150 feet above sea level to about 500 feet at the ridges. The eastern section of the Town is the steepest (with slopes in excess of 25%), where elevations range from 300 feet along County Route 9 to approximately 900 feet along the Town line.

See Table 1 which shows percentages of four slope categories, and indicates that 19% of the Town has relatively steep slopes (over 10%) that present potential constraints for development. Construction on slopes in excess of 15% presents potential erosion hazards and is generally more expensive and environmentally damaging than on gentler terrain. Also, septic system leach fields normally cannot be constructed on slopes exceeding 15%. Although beautiful views of wooded hills and farm fields can favorably affect real estate values, steeply sloped areas such as those found in Ghent (particularly the eastern portion) present severe limitations for development.

**Table 1: Slopes\***

Slope Category	Acres	Percent of Town Area
0 to 5%	19,514	68%
5 to 10%	3,935	14%
10 to 25%	4,710	16%
25% and over	714	3%

*\*Note: this table differs significantly from the Slope table found in the 1973 plan, and the 1994 draft plan. Those tables were probably derived from the County Soil Survey soils classifications. The table shown here*

*was derived from digital elevation data obtained through the NYS GIS data sharing cooperative. This digital data is supplied at a finer scale, and is more suitable for this type of analysis than the soils data.*

## **Soil Conditions**

The mosaic of soil types found in the Town of Ghent is complex. According to the 1985 Columbia County Soil Survey, more than 2/3 of the Town is made up of shallow, steep, and/or stony land, and therefore is very constrained for development. Large areas of rock outcrop occur in the hilly eastern portion of the Town. (Under poor soil conditions, septic tank systems are likely to be more expensive to install and require more engineering than might otherwise be the case.) As noted in Ghent's 1973 Comprehensive Plan, even in those areas where the largest areas of fertile soils, occur, there are substantial pockets of poor soils: the good soils occur in extremely irregular areas. To see where these limiting soils are located, refer to the map *Soil Limitations: Septic Tank Absorption Fields*. In addition to the physical constraints mentioned above, the amount of soils adequate for agricultural use is limited. The largest areas of agricultural soils in Ghent are found in the north-south valley near County Route 9 (the Mellenville Flats area, once called "Squampamock Flats").

Prime farmland soils represent significant regional resources, in that their capacity to produce food for the northeastern U.S. may need to be more heavily tapped in the future. Maintaining the agriculture-based economy and way of life contributes to Ghent's rural and scenic character, as well. Therefore, if prime agricultural soils (the easiest to develop) are permanently converted to non-farm uses, an important scenic and economic resource will have been lost. If readily developed farmland "grows" suburban subdivisions, the rural character that so many residents appreciate (as well as the capacity for food production) will be permanently lost. Although not a physical constraint, the presence of valuable prime agricultural soils can thus be considered to be another limitation on development – that is, if the community is serious in its commitment to keeping agriculture viable in Ghent.

Unlike the eastern valley, the western half of the Town contains only small patches of prime farmland soils, scattered among soil areas poorly to moderately suited for development. Physical constraints (rocky soils less than 40 inches deep, slopes over 15%) are the limiting factor on this side of Town, rather than preservation of prime farmland soils.

The natural constraints of wetland areas combined with the steep slopes and soil constraints – both shallow rocky soils and the prime agricultural soils – result in relatively little land in the Town appropriate for easy development. All of Ghent's development constraints contribute to the pressure mentioned above to convert those scarce prime farmland soils to residential uses.

## Photographic Survey

A photographic survey of the Town was done in conjunction with the 1973 Comprehensive Plan, and an update was done for this plan. (See XXX). This shows an interesting and informative record of the changes taking place in Ghent over time. STILL HOPING WE CAN FIND THESE SLIDES. LEAVE A PLACEHOLDER HERE FOR THIS IF WE DO.

## Natural Resources/Habitats

### Wildlife Inventories

The New York State Breeding Bird Atlas recorded information on which bird species breed in the Town of Ghent. Two different atlas surveys were conducted; one between 1980 and 1985 and again repeated between 2000 and 2005. Four blocks encompassing most of the Town of Ghent were included in these surveys. The data for this work is included below. In general, the number of bird species inventoried in the second atlas was fewer than that found in the first atlas during the 1980's. Block 6068A is found in the northwest corner of Town, 6068B is in the northeast corner, 6068C is in the southwest corner, and block 6068D is in the southeast corner.

### New York State Breeding Bird Atlas Data for Ghent

Inventory Block Number	1980-1985 Atlas			2000- 2005 Atlas		
	Total # Bird Species Found	Species with Listed Status *	# Game Birds	Total # Bird Species Found	Species with Listed Status †	# Game Birds
<b>6068A</b>	75	Red Headed Woodpecker (SC)	6	69	None	8
<b>6068B</b>	69	Pied Billed Grebe (T) Golden-Winged Warbler (SC)	9	59	Coopers Hawk (SC)	4
<b>6068C</b>	58	Vesper Sparrow (SC)	6	64	None	6
<b>6068D</b>	85	American Bittern (SC) Horned Lark (SC) Vesper Sparrow (SC) Grasshopper Sparrow (SC)	10	74	Sharp Shined Hawk (SC) Coopers Hawk (SC) Grass-hopper Sparrow (SC)	5

\* SC indicates a species listed by New York State as one of Special Concern; T indicates a species listed by New York State as one that is Threatened.

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The United States Fish and Wildlife Service sponsors an annual breeding bird survey throughout the United States. This survey is done through a uniform census along 25 mile routes. One Breeding Bird Survey Route passes through the Town and has had data recorded for many years. Although not the entire route is within the Town of Ghent, the bird species found along this route are characteristic of the area. One hundred twenty - two bird species have been identified through this census. Some of these species are different than those identified through the New York State Atlas.

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation also conducts an atlas of reptiles and amphibians. Data collected for the Town include the following 28 identified species, of which the Eastern Box Turtle is classified as a species of special concern (any native species for which a welfare concern or risk of endangerment has been documented in New York State):

Spotted Salamander  
Red-spotted Newt  
Northern Dusky Salamander  
Northern Redback Salamander  
Northern Two-lined Salamander  
Gray Treefrog  
Northern Spring Peeper  
Wood Frog  
Common Snapping Turtle  
Eastern Box Turtle  
Eastern Painted Turtle  
Northern Water Snake  
Northern Brown Snake  
Northern Ringneck Snake  
Eastern Milk Snake  
Spotted Salamander  
Red-spotted Newt  
Northern Dusky Salamander  
Northern Slimy Salamander  
Northern Two-lined Salamander  
Eastern American Toad  
Gray Treefrog  
Northern Spring Peeper  
Green Frog  
Wood Frog  
Pickerel Frog  
Common Garter Snake  
Eastern Milk Snake

The New York Natural Heritage Program (NYNHP) studies and inventories critical species and their habitats throughout the state. A report from the NYNHP prepared in December 2006 lists one bird and two plant species found in Ghent. The Pied-billed Grebe is listed as threatened, and ranked as rare or uncommon in the state. It was last reported during the first NYS Breeding Bird Atlas in 1984, confirmed as breeding in the northeastern portion of the town. There are two old reports of the threatened plant Golden

Club, ranked as imperiled, and the endangered plant Narrow-leaved Sedge, ranked as critically imperiled. These were reported in the early 1900's, and have not been verified since. This report does not make any conclusions about whether or not these species still exist, or if there are other threatened or endangered species located in the town, but not listed in the database.

## **History and Economy**

In about 1740, a family named Sharp made improvements on a large farm interest previously purchased from patent holders in Claverack by Johnnes Hogeboom. Hogeboom's inn became a well-known stopping place on the Albany-Boston road. Other early families in Ghent included the Groats, the Moulds, the Harders, the Ostrandors, the Stupplebeems, and the Holsapples. Settlers in the western part of Ghent were, among others, families by the names of Vosburgh, Kittle, Van Alstyne, Link, Leggett, and Van Valkenburgh. Although it was founded as an agricultural community in the mid-1700, Ghent's agricultural base may reach even further back as the land may have been cultivated by Native Americans.

Ghent was originally named Squampamock, a Native American word meaning "the meeting of the waters" (referring to the joining of two small branches of Claverack Creek). This name was later changed to Ghent by the State Legislature, commemorating the US – Great Britain Treaty which ended the War of 1812. Ghent held a prominent position in the area because of its agriculturally productive land. Early settlers owned large estates, some of which are still owned by their descendants. These estates were worked by slaves who were liberated in the 1820's.

The Town of Ghent was formed in 1818 from the then Townships of Kinderhook, Claverack, and Chatham in the County of Columbia. The first local election was held on April 7<sup>th</sup> of that year. The first Town meeting was held in a private home, but a Town hall was subsequently built in the hamlet of Ghent.

Business thrived in Ghent due to the construction of the Boston and Albany Railroad (with a connection to the City of Hudson) and the Harlem Division of the New York Central Railroad. The principal industries of the Town were paper mills, grist mills, saw mills, and wool factories, located along the Kline Kill. Arnolds Mills, in the northeastern former of the Town, was named after these water-powered industries.

In 1869, the Village of Chatham was incorporated from portions of the Towns of Chatham and Ghent, becoming a separate municipality. However, the Village still overlaps each Town as before. (This frequently engenders confusion when residents and visitors alike are unaware that they may be in both the Village of Chatham and the Town of Ghent simultaneously. The fact that many call the hamlet of Ghent "the village" causes additional confusion.)

The first Protestant Church, built in a settlement called Old Ghent, was used by two denominations: the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Reformed Dutch Church. After

a fire however, each denomination built its own church. In 1943, the West Ghent Protestant Reformed Church was dedicated. The German-speaking people of the Town erected a church of their own, St. John's Church of Ghent, in 1855. Its cemetery survives and is maintained by the Town.

There were many one-room district schools located throughout the Town, and the original brick schoolhouse built in 1878 was still used by area schoolchildren into the 1980's. It was then converted to the Ghent Town Hall. The previous Town Hall, near the post office in Ghent hamlet, was too small for Town offices and functions. That building dates from 1893, and was the first Town Hall in Columbia County erected for that specific purpose. It functioned as a meeting place for community events, as well as serving as a venue for local theater productions beginning in 1917. The Bartlett House (a prominent brick building, once a hotel/bar/restaurant) and the Navarra House opposite it on Route 66, provided additional focus for the busy hamlet. The Bartlett House is currently empty but has potential for other uses.

Another agriculture-based local industry was the famous Borden family's dairy farm and bottling plant, located near the railway in the Buckleyville area of Ghent. This farm operation produced high quality milk and milk products for urban markets all over the northeast. Borden sent rail shipments to New York City from the 1920's until the mid-1930's, while the bottling plant was phased out over several years and finally closed. Unfortunately, fire consumed the Borden barns in the early 1960's.

It is evident that Ghent's economy was historically based on agriculture, with mills and plants processing local products and shipping them to markets via the railroads that passed through the town. Today, the Town of Ghent is still predominantly rural in nature, but agricultural land is gradually being converted to residential uses. The trains don't stop in Ghent anymore; the economic base of the community depends much less on agricultural activities. Ghent provides a home for workers, most of who commute outside the Town and may even travel outside the County (or State) to their jobs. Most of the Town's economic activity is currently concentrated along State highways (Routes 9H and 66) and in settlements (the hamlets of Ghent and West Ghent, the Village of Chatham). The number of households that depend upon farming for a livelihood has steadily decreased over the years. According to the 2000 Census, less than 1% of Ghent's population (over 16 years of age) had occupations in agriculture.

(Note: for more historical background, *Squampamock: A bicentennial history of Ghent, NY*, published by the Chatham Printing Company in 1977, includes historical essays, poems, and photographs, as well as documentation of Ghent's celebration of the nation's bicentennial.)

## **Land Use: Planning and Zoning**

Although not a large employment factor in Town, agriculture in Ghent continues to be an important enterprise and one of the largest single land uses. 5,152 acres of the Town's land is in classified as being used for agriculture by the town assessor and another 5,678

has been identified by the comprehensive plan committee as being used for agricultural purposes. However, Ghent's proximity to Kinderhook and the Capital District exposes it to similar suburban development pressures seen there. The more physically constrained land in Ghent and its somewhat greater distance from the Capital District have thus far slowed the rate of change. However, as discussed elsewhere in this document, Ghent contains a significant number of open fields that have already been platted for suburban-style subdivisions. When land values once again increase to the point where it becomes financially feasible to construct these subdivisions, the face of Ghent may change drastically.

Besides residential, agricultural, and forest lands, other land uses in the Town include commercial, industrial, public and semi-public, institutional, recreational, and water resource lands. The more intensive land uses in the Town are concentrated along state highways such as the Route 9H and Route 66 corridors, in the hamlets of Ghent and West Ghent, and in Chatham Village. The Commerce Park is an expansion of the "strip" along Route 9H into a more substantial block. The remainder of the commercial land uses found in Ghent is dispersed widely throughout the rest of the Town.

## **Commercial**

Older commercial areas are the established business centers in the Village of Chatham and hamlet of Ghent. These contain small retail businesses, shops and offices, with higher density residential uses mixed among the commercial ones. The Village of Chatham contains a pedestrian-oriented downtown (on the Town of Chatham side of the Village). Downtown parking is usually provided on the street or in small lots tucked behind buildings. People can often walk from their homes to their jobs or shopping, thereby reducing the number of cars necessary. Hamlets meet basic community needs, such as a small grocery, gas station, and post office adjacent to homes, as in the hamlet of Ghent. Traditional hamlets are also built in a clustered pattern that is conducive to pedestrian use.

Car-oriented shopping plazas can be found in Town mainly along Route 66 near the Village of Chatham and in the hamlet of Ghent. These are characterized by attached or detached stores and large off-street parking lots. Wide parking lots line the road and the stores are set back from the street. These plazas are not friendly to pedestrians, since the outdoor spaces are designed to serve the automobile. Car-oriented strip developments tend to pull vitality away from downtowns and reduce the amount of informal community interaction.

### *Columbia County Commerce Center*

The Gerald R. Simon Commerce Park (Columbia County Commerce Center) consists of approximately 250 acres of rolling hillside. Formerly the Kitchie Farm, the land was purchased by the County and divided into three development phases. Phase 1 consists of about 140 acres and now houses 25 businesses. The Park is fully serviced with municipal infrastructure and public utilities. Assessments on this property should be in the

\$25,000,000 range upon full build out and employment should exceed 400. Phase 2, located next to the Whittier facilities and across the street from Columbia County Soil and Water Conservation District is approximately 30 acres and is available for sale, but is yet to be developed into shovel-ready lots. Phase 3 located to the east of the Columbia County Airport is approximately 80 acres and is yet to be developed into shovel ready lots. The Commerce Park was originally conceived to significantly enhance economic development in the County by providing a full-service, central location for future commercial and business development. The County-owned area has been zoned business-commercial and business-industrial-commercial to allow a mix of uses including air service and support facilities and health-related, commercial and light industrial development. The original hope was that the project will attract businesses in the County that will increase Columbia County's tax base, while reducing the amount of haphazard industrial and commercial development.

Due to the creation of a Generic Environmental Impact Statement, specific projects within the Park are subject to limited environmental review. The environmental impact statement for the project estimated that 1000 jobs would be created. The most recent analysis indicates 400 jobs could be expected.

The Commerce Center, served by a central water and sewer system, obtains water from outside Ghent, and discharges tertiary-treated effluent from a package wastewater treatment plant into Mud Creek, a Class C stream on the site which flows through state-designated regulated wetland ST-39. Disturbance of protected wetlands ST-39 and ST-30 was mitigated by a four-acre constructed wetland elsewhere on the County-owned site.

In 1992, the initial construction phase of the Commerce Center development, the 120-bed, 83,500 square foot Whittier Rehabilitation and Skilled Nursing Center (Green Manor Nursing Home), was completed on 25 acres south of Route 66. This facility provides long term, rehabilitation and ventilator care to residents of Columbia County and the greater Albany area. Located adjacent and behind the Nursing Home, the Adult Home portion of the Center opened in 1995 and the dialysis center opened in 1996. A total of 80 beds are located in the adult care facility and 40 of those rooms are dedicated to the Assisted Living Program.

Columbia County's Empire Zone includes the Columbia County Commerce Park lands. The Empire Zone is a New York State program established to encourage businesses to locate in targeted areas, to revitalize economically distressed areas by stimulating private investment, to provide jobs, and reduce poverty, unemployment, public assistance and blighted conditions. The program gives companies a variety of incentives and benefits including sales tax exemptions, credits for real property taxes, utility rate savings, technical assistance, and other refunds and credits. The Empire Zone extends beyond the Town of Ghent into Claverack and Livingston.

#### *Art Omi*

Art Omi is a non-profit cultural center located off County Route 22 and Letter "S" Road. Indoor and outdoor facilities are provided for visual artists, writers, dancers and

musicians. The 90-acre Fields Sculpture Park displays more than 80 contemporary works. The large rolling fields of this “park” are open for walking and picnicking from dawn to dusk year round. A new building off County Route 22 will formally open to the public in the spring 2008. It will include an art gallery, museum gift shop, a café, information center and restrooms. From time to time, readings, lectures and concerts will be presented within.

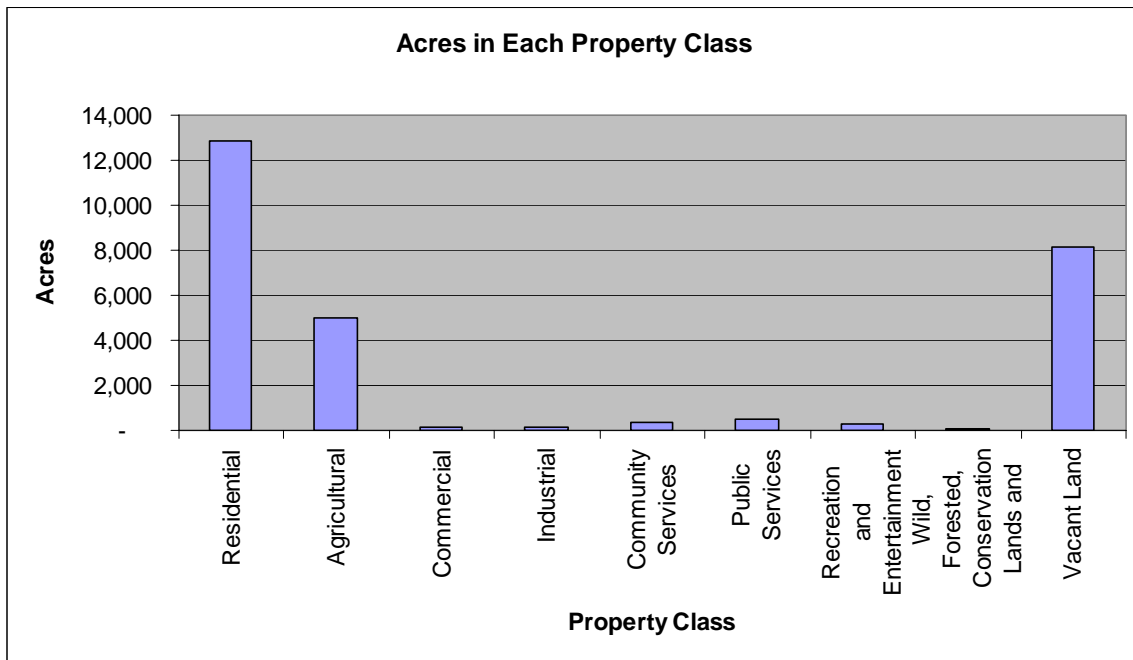
### **Property Class Tables and Charts**

The tables on the following pages show the various types of land uses in Ghent, the amount of land in each type, and the percentage of the total that are in the different land use categories.

The first table and chart in this series outlines the general land use classifications given by the local assessor. Subsequent tables and charts describe those general classifications broken down into sub-classes. The percentages in each table are based on the entire land area of the town. This total land area does not include the area devoted to public roads and streets, which are not assigned a property class by the local assessor. These public rights of way (ROWs) account for approximately 1,369 acres, or 4.75% of the land area of the town.

### General Property Classes

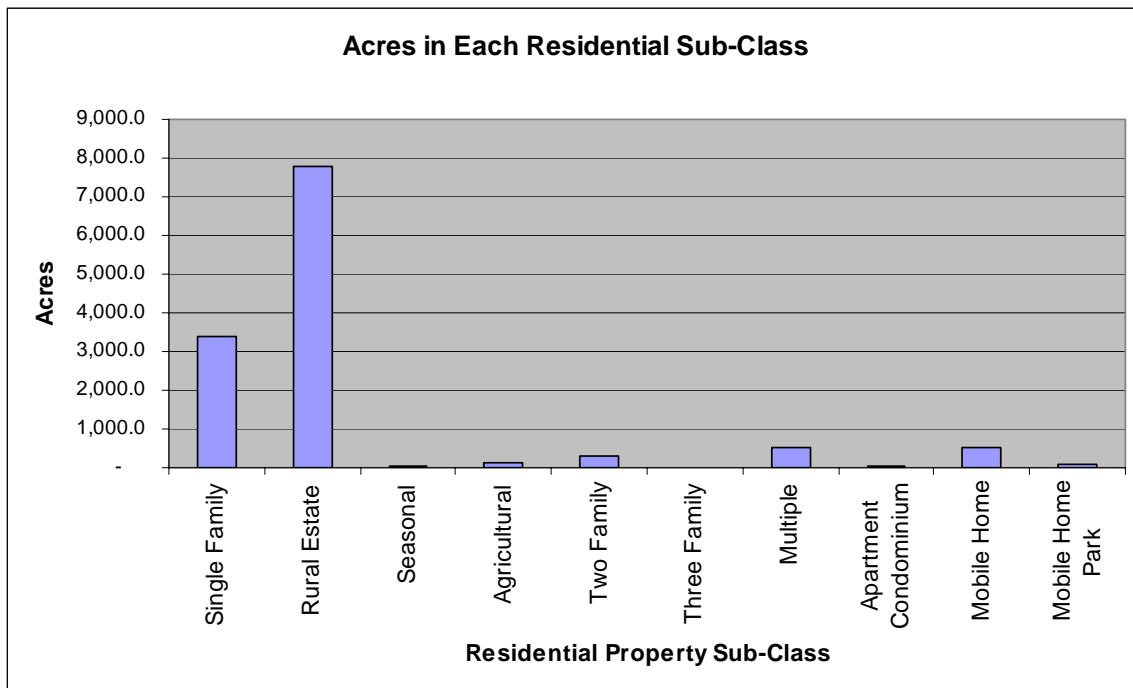
Property Class	Number of Parcels	Acres	Percent of Land Area
Residential	1,482	12,846	46.7%
Agricultural	55	5,011	18.2%
Commercial	51	157	0.6%
Industrial	7	160	0.6%
Community Services	25	332	1.2%
Public Services	14	524	1.9%
Recreation and Entertainment	13	278	1.0%
Wild, Forested, Conservation Lands and Public Parks	2	37	0.14%
Vacant Land	463	8,159	29.7%
Grand Total	2,112	27,504	100.0%



The most predominant property classes found in the town, both in number and in area, are those devoted to residential land uses. Nearly half of the area of Ghent is classified as residential, with nearly another third being classified as vacant. Over 18% is classified as agricultural in use. A field survey completed by some members of the comprehensive plan committee shows a number of parcels classified as residential or vacant also hold a significant amount of agricultural activity.

### Residential Sub-Classes

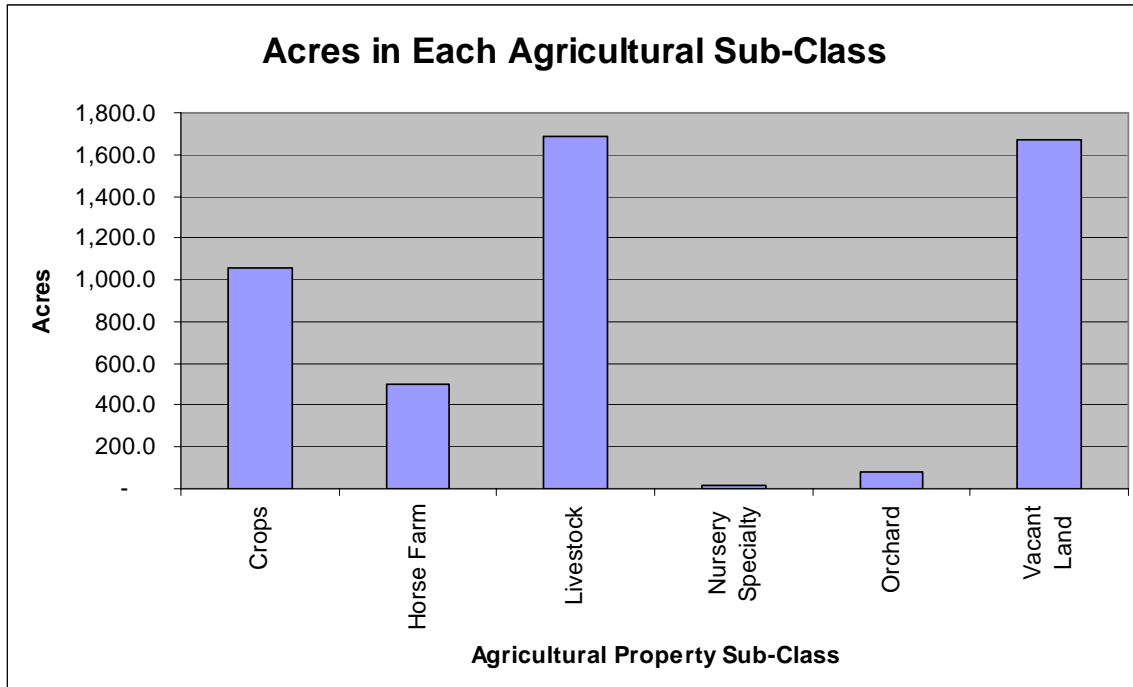
Residential sub-class	Number of Parcels	Acres	Percent of Land Area
Single Family	1,110	3,411.4	12.4%
Rural Estate	201	7,770.5	28.3%
Seasonal	8	49.5	0.2%
Agricultural	2	139.0	0.5%
Two Family	32	305.0	1.1%
Three Family	4	5.0	0.02%
Multiple	21	532.6	1.9%
Apartment/Condominium	5	36.1	0.1%
Mobile Home	93	504.2	1.8%
Mobile Home Park	6	92.4	0.3%
Residential Total	1,482	12,845.8	46.7%



The majority of the residential class properties are single family, or rural estates (which are essentially single family homes on very large lots). The 201 parcels classified as rural estates occupy over 28% of the land area of the town, while the 1,110 parcels classified as single family homes occupy less than half of that area.

### Agriculture Sub-Classes

Agricultural sub-class	Number of Parcels	Acres	Percent of Land Area
Crops	9	1,055.1	3.8%
Horse Farm	4	503.5	1.8%
Livestock	11	1,686.3	6.1%
Nursery Specialty	1	16.2	0.1%
Orchard	1	77.4	0.3%
Vacant Land	29	1,672.7	6.1%
Agricultural Total	55	5,011.2	18.2%



Agricultural class parcels in Ghent are primarily devoted to Livestock or are vacant. In this case the term vacant refers to productive vacant lands devoted to an agricultural use. Usually this implies a parcel that is mowed for hay, which is in turn supplied to or used by another agricultural use such as dairy or horse farms.

The remaining land area of the town is divided into the following property sub-classes by the local assessor:

**Commercial**

<b>Commercial sub-class</b>	<b>Number of Parcels</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Percent of Land Area</b>
Auto	8	16.3	0.1%
Bar	1	5.6	0.02%
Dining	6	9.5	0.03%
Junkyard	1	4.1	0.02%
Kennel	2	6.1	0.02%
Multipurpose	14	25.1	0.1%
Office	5	12.1	0.04%
Parking	4	5.5	0.02%
Retail	2	2.4	0.01%
Storage and Distribution	8	70.4	0.3%
<b>Commercial Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>156.9</b>	<b>0.6%</b>

**Industrial**

<b>Industrial sub-class</b>	<b>Number of Parcels</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Percent of Land Area</b>
Manufacturing	7	160.3	0.6%
<b>Industrial Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>160.3</b>	<b>0.6%</b>

**Community Services**

<b>Community Services sub-class</b>	<b>Number of Parcels</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Percent of Land Area</b>
Cemetery	5	34.8	0.1%
Cultural and Recreational	1	6.5	0.02%
Educational	6	236.5	0.9%
Government	4	23.4	0.1%
Health	1	11.8	0.04%
Other	1	14.2	0.1%
Protection	3	2.0	0.01%
Religious	3	2.2	0.01%
Transportation	1	0.4	0.00%
<b>Community Services Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>332.0</b>	<b>1.2%</b>

**Public Services**

<b>Public Services sub-class</b>	<b>Number of Parcels</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Percent of Land Area</b>
Communication	2	16.3	0.1%
Electric and Gas	3	161.6	0.6%
Transportation	3	327.2	1.2%
Water	6	18.7	0.1%
<b>Public Services Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>523.8</b>	<b>1.9%</b>

### Recreation and Entertainment

Recreation and Entertainment sub-class	Number of Parcels	Acres	Percent of Land Area
Amusements	1	25.2	0.1%
Camp Resort	1	56.2	0.2%
Park	5	81.6	0.3%
Social	2	19.1	0.1%
Sports	2	89.5	0.3%
Theater and Exhibit	2	6.6	0.02%
Recreation and Entertainment Total	13	278.1	1.0%

### Wild, Forested, Conservation Lands and Public Parks

Wild, Forested, Conservation Lands and Public Parks sub-class	Number of Parcels	Acres	Percent of Land Area
Private	2	37.3	0.1%
Wild, Forested, Conservation Lands and Public Parks Total	2	37.3	0.1%

### Vacant

Vacant Land sub-class	Number of Parcels	Acres	Percent of Land Area
Commercial	21	270.8	1.0%
Residential	442	7,888.2	28.7%
Vacant Land Total	463	8,159.1	29.7%

### Planning and Zoning Regulations and Administration

Predated only a year or two by subdivision regulations, the first zoning ordinance in Ghent was passed in 1972. The following year, in response to some unpopular development plans, the 1973 Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Ghent was completed by the Columbia County Planning Department. Other land use-related regulations in the Town include:

- Chapter 40: Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals
- Chapter 71: Animals
- Chapter 93: Farming
- Chapter 99: Flood Damage Prevention
- Chapter 123: Littering
- Chapter 136: Rental Property
- Chapter 144: Solid Waste
- Chapter 150: Streets and Sidewalks
- Chapter 156: Subdivision of Land
- Chapter 185: Wireless Telecommunication Facilities
- Chapter 190: Zoning
- Chapter A193: Road Specifications

The five-member Town Board, chaired by the Town Supervisor, is the elected legislative body. The Planning Board is a seven member board and has been given the authority to review and approve site plans, approve special use permits, and approve preliminary and

final subdivision plats. Additionally, the Planning Board may review and make recommendations on a proposed Town Comprehensive Plan or amendment thereto.

A seven-member Zoning Board of Appeals responds to requests for use and area variances and matters of interpretation. The Building Inspector and Zoning Officer enforces the New York State Building Code and the Zoning Law respectively. The Board of Appeals is authorized to hear matters related to interpretations, variances, and appeals from permit denial by the Building Inspector/Zoning Officer. It also can review applications involving a change in use where original use was “pre-existing, non-conforming”.

The Zoning law establishes 12 different zoning districts. These are:

RA-1	Residential Agricultural-1
RA-2	Residential Agricultural-2
SR	Suburban Residential
VR	Village Residential
VB	Village Business
CI	Commercial Industrial
CI-2	Commercial Industrial-2*
PCID	Planned Commercial-Industrial District
PRD	Planned Residential District
BIC	Business Industrial Complex
BC	Business Commercial
LC/B	Limited Commercial/Business

The most recent revisions to Chapter 156: Subdivision of Land were made with the adoption of local law #3-2005, commonly referred to as the Mining Law. This law added a mining overzone map, showing where mining is permitted by special permit. The most recent revisions to Chapter 190: Zoning were made with the adoption of local law #2-2006, commonly referred to as the Conservation Law. This law Allows the planning board to require conservation subdivisions within the RA-1 and RA-2 zoning districts.

## **Agriculture**

Ghent’s roots are in agriculture. The prime farmland soils of Squampamock (later Mellenville Flats) may have been cultivated by Native Americans for crops and orchards, but it was permanently settled by farmers of European descent. There are currently 34 different owners of agriculture class properties in the Town of Ghent, comprising 18% of Ghent’s land area. There are an additional 59 farmland owners in the Town. This includes support lands, farms which may be operated by a neighboring farmer, “gentlemen farmers” which are run by a farm manager for a non-farming owner, and recently abandoned farm properties. These agricultural support lands make up another 20% of the Town. In fact over 10,759 acres of land in Ghent can be classified as being used for agricultural purposes. This is a significant component of the Town’s land resources. On the other hand, the farm population is a very small component of Town residents. In 1980, 3% of employed persons were in farming, forestry, or fishing (1980 census). By 1990, this was down by nearly half, to 1.54%, and in 2000 it was less than 1%. (Actual

experience leads us to believe there are more residents employed in farming than indicated in the 2000 census.)

Most of the farms in active agricultural use in Ghent are located within Agricultural District 10. Portions of Agricultural District 8 and Agricultural District 3 are also located within the Town. Overall, 15,500 acres of land are included in one of these three County Agricultural Districts. This is more than 54% of the land area of the town. There are significant portions of these Agricultural Districts that do not include parcels identified as agricultural uses by the local assessor, or by the comprehensive plan committee. Most of these areas are found in the western half of the town, along Route 9H and the southern Route 66 corridor; and also in the northeastern corner of the town, near the village of Chatham.

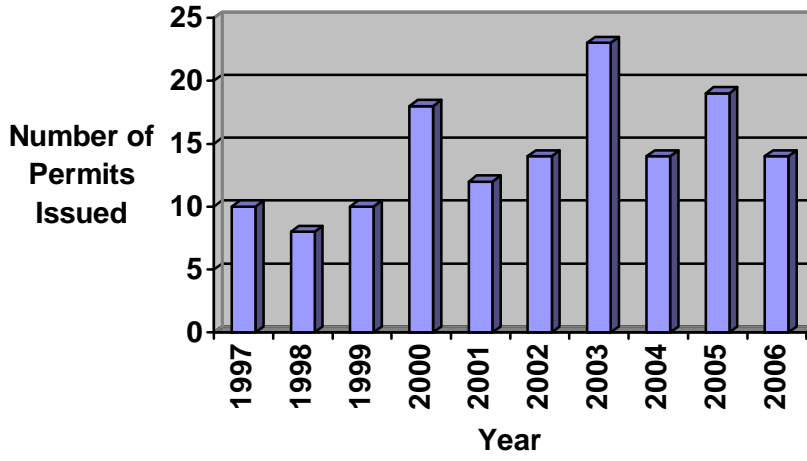
The New York State agricultural assessment program offers a lower tax assessment, under certain conditions, for land that is in active agricultural use. In 2006, 149 parcels owned by 79 different farmers/farm landowners received agricultural assessments.

Agricultural activities in Ghent include dairy, beef, sheep, and horse farms, farms producing field crops and hay, an orchard, and two plant nurseries and greenhouses. Some farm operations conduct multiple activities. Besides providing milk, grain, meat, wool, and vegetables for local and regional tables, farms and farmers benefit Ghent's citizens and the region by providing open space, scenic landscapes, wildlife habitat, and recreation areas. These amenities and rural character contribute to increased property values, and can bring new business, tourists, and second-home dollars to the Town. Diversifying products and serving new markets appear to be the wave of the future; these are vital steps if Ghent is to maintain its agricultural base.

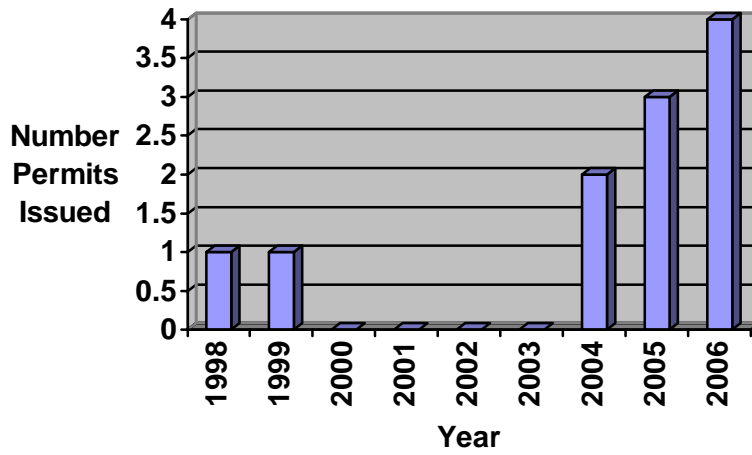
### **Building and Subdivision Activity in Ghent**

The following charts show growth in new single-family dwellings, commercial development and major/minor subdivision activity between 1997 and 2006. For single-family dwellings, the overall trend has been upward, although the number of new dwellings varies year to year. The number of new commercial buildings has also shown increasing trends, but the number is still small (only four in 2006). There has not been much major subdivision activity in the last few years in Ghent. However, there has been a relatively high level of minor subdivision activity: 91 minor subdivisions have been approved between 2000 and 2006.

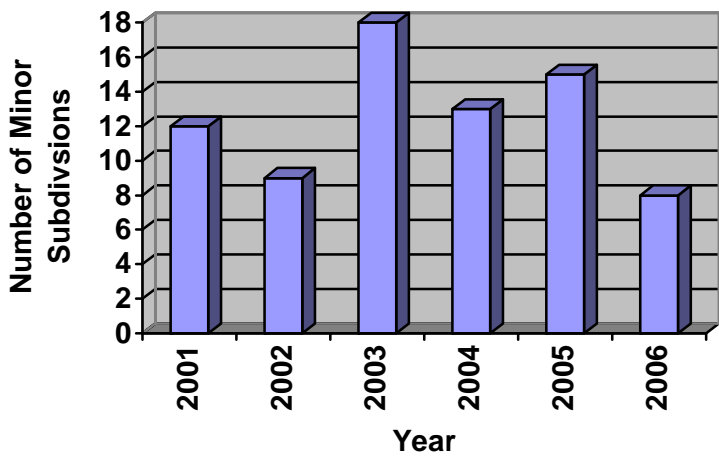
### New Single-Family Dwellings



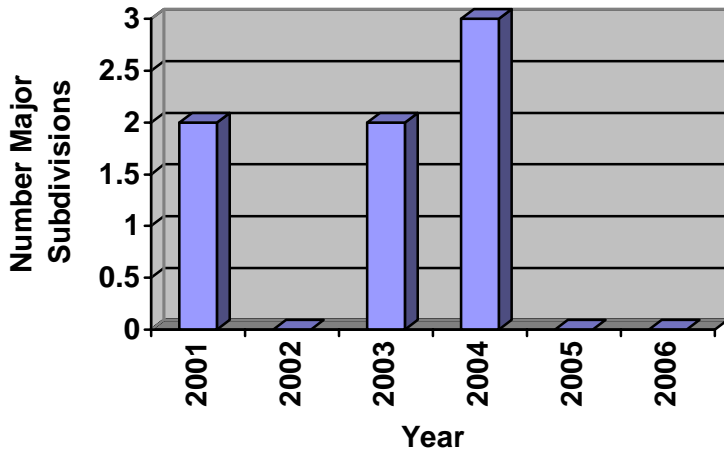
### New Commercial Buildings



**Minor Subdivisions Approved**



**New Major Subdivisions**



## **Land Trust Properties**

The Columbia Land Conservancy, located in Chatham, owns or holds easements on the following lands within the Town of Ghent:

Borden's Pond Preserve: 64 ½ acres along the eastern border with Chatham Village, almost all in Ghent, accessed from Route 203. It includes parking area, trails, and a pond. This is now open to the public.

County Route 21 Property: 54.6 acres of land fronting on County Route 21 not far from the Ghent hamlet. This was acquired by the Columbia Land Conservancy in December of 2006 and is not yet open to the public. This area features rolling meadows and good frontage on the Kline Kill Creek.

Other Properties: Conservation Easements are held by the Columbia Land Conservancy for a total of 1,466 acres in Ghent as of January 25, 2007. A total of 12 landowners and 14 parcels are involved. The Conservancy publishes an annual map that shows where these properties are located in Ghent, and throughout the County.

## **Other Public Lands**

The Town of Ghent owns two recreational properties. The West Ghent Recreational Facility is located on County Route 22, near the intersection with Route 9H, and next to the West Ghent Reformed Church. This 17 acre property includes tennis courts, a basketball court, and a building for indoor recreational activities. The Town Park and Playground is located between Water Street and Maple Ave to the east of Route 66. This 5.5 acre property includes two ball fields, and tennis courts.

## **Tax Exempt Properties**

According to tax information in the Town, 31 different organizations/agencies have properties in Ghent with tax exempt status. These range from fire company parcels of land to Town-owned parcels. A list of tax exempt properties is show in the table below.

### Tax Exempt Properties in Ghent, 2007

- Art Omi, Inc. (5 parcels)
- Bible Baptist Church of Kinderhook (4 parcels)
- Chatham Cemetery, Route 203
- Chatham School District, High School
- Christ's Evangelical Lutheran Church and Parsonage
- Columbia Civic Players Theater
- Columbia County (highway garage, airport, Ghent Flats railroad ROW, Former Kitchie farm on Route 66, and on Talerico Road)
- Columbia County Agricultural Society Fairgrounds
- Columbia County IDA (Community Service, of Route 66, Health Building 1049 Route 66)

Columbia Development Leasing Corp., Govt. Building 1024 Route 66  
Columbia Economic Development Corp. (vacant industrial land)  
Columbia Land Conservancy (Vacant land on Dinnegar Ext., Route 203 park,  
Vacant land on County Route 61)  
Evam Institute  
German Cemetery, German Church Road  
Ghent Union Cemetery Association, County Route 9  
Ghent Volunteer Fire Co. (2 parcels)  
Greenburger Memorial Field (Payne Ave.)  
Harlem Valley Rail Trail Association (Tice Hill Road)  
High Point Senior Housing project  
Hudson Valley Care Center, Aged Home and Health Bldg (Whittier  
Rehabilitation & Skilled Nursing Center)  
MacHayden Theater, Route 66 theater  
Maranatha Evangelical Mission, Route 203  
Rudolph Steiner Educational and Farming Association (4 parcels, 2 rural vacant  
and 2 educational facility)  
Saint James Cemetery  
Special Needs Program, Route 66  
The Nature Institute, Inc., May Hill Road  
Town of Ghent (Garage Place Road, Route 22 Recreation Facility, Town Hall,  
Park and Playground, Maple Ave. Playground, Water supply land, Water  
Street Cemetery)  
Veterans of Foreign Wars  
Village of Chatham (5 water supply, and 1 vacant commercial – Starks Park)  
West Ghent Cemetery  
West Ghent Reformed Church, Route 22  
West Ghent Volunteer Fire Company, Bender Blvd.

## Demographics, Housing, and Labor

### Population

According to the Squampamock history mentioned earlier, the Census of 1820 showed that there were 460 males over the age of 21 in the newly formed Town. By 1875, women were also included and figures indicated that 1,543 males, 1,514 females, and 432 “foreigners” resided in Ghent (if no overlap, a total of 3,489). In 1900, the population of Ghent (not including the Village of Chatham portion) was 1,745 persons. It declined to a low of 1,314 in 1920 and steadily increased as shown in Table 1, below. The population increase between 1980 and 1990 (for the total town including the Village), was 38%. The population increase between 1990 and 2000 increased 9.7%. Between 1990 and 2000, that portion of the Village of Chatham in Ghent decreased in population by 2.7%.

Similarly, the number of households decreased slightly between 1980 and 1990 but then increased 8.3% between 1990 and 2000. The Village of Chatham portion of the Town lost households (3.1% loss) in the previous decade. Considering growth outside the Village, the Town of Ghent increased population by 13.1% and increased households by 12%. Notice that the persons per family have decreased substantially over the years. The Village has even smaller persons per family than the Town as a whole.<sup>‡</sup>

Table 1: Population

	<b>1970</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990 Total Town</b>	<b>1990 Town Outside Village</b>	<b>1990 Village Portion Only</b>	<b>2000 Total Town</b>	<b>2000 Village Portion Only</b>	<b>2000 Town Outside Village</b>
Persons	3729	4636	4812	3750	1062	5276	1033	4243
Households	1683	1875	1865	1412	453	2020	439	1581
Persons Per Family			3.018			2.98	2.32	

### Housing

While populations were increasing, so was the number of housing units. Between 1980 and 1990, the number of housing units increased 12.8%. The growth in housing units slowed a small amount between 1990 and 2000 but still increased 9%. While the Village portion of Ghent lost population, the number of housing units in that part of Town increased 1.1%. Outside the Village, the number of housing units increased 11.3%. This is about equal to the population growth.

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<sup>‡</sup> Census information on population is gathered at the place of primary residence. Therefore, weekenders and second-home owners have probably been substantially “under-counted”. Since at least some of the residential construction has been for second homes, census data do not give the entire picture of the current population trends. The increases and changes noted in this section do not include those related to second homes and thus the housing stock and average household size figures, especially may be artificially low.

About 90% of all housing units are occupied. Of those that are vacant, about half are considered seasonal units and that pattern has not changed between 1990 and 2000. Most of the vacant houses in Ghent are located outside of the Village of Chatham portion of Town. The median value of an owner-occupied home has increased 7.42% to \$114,140 in 2000. While values of owner-occupied housing has increased, rents charged in Ghent has decreased (15.7%) from \$400 per month to \$337 per month.

Most of the occupied units are owner occupied (1510 out of 2020 units or 75%. In 2000 there were 510 rental units in Ghent, up from 395 in 1990 (a 29% increase). The number of vacant units has remained steady over the years.

Census information indicates that Ghent’s housing stock is relatively new overall: 46% of all houses have been built in the past 30 years. Between 1990 and March of 2000, 13% of all units were built. 32% of all units were built before 1939. Many of the older homes can be found within the Village of Chatham portion of Ghent.

Table 2: Household and Housing Costs

	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990 Total Town</b>	<b>2000 Total Town</b>	<b>1990 Town Outside Village</b>	<b>2000 Town Outside Village</b>	<b>1990 Village Portion Only</b>	<b>2000 Village Portion Only</b>
Housing Units	1825	2059	2244	1596	1776	463	468
Occupied Housing Units	1656	1834	2020	1399	1581	435	439
Vacant Housing Units	169	225	224	197	195	28	29
Seasonal Vacant Units		130	135				
Median Value Owner-Occupied House		106,260	114,140				
Median Gross Rent		400.60	337.60				

### **Housing Affordability (2000 US Census Data)**

There are several ways to determine if housing is generally affordable in a community. One method is to determine the “rental index”. This index shows the maximum gross rent a given household can afford. Affordable rental housing is generally considered to be no more than 30% of a household’s monthly income. The average monthly rental rate in the Town of Ghent in 2000 was \$337.00. The median household income is \$43,431. This is about \$3,619 of income per month. Thirty percent of this is \$1,086, which means that the average household could afford \$1,086 per month in rent. This figure is higher than the average monthly rent. Thus, rentals are affordable in Ghent for the average households. However, there are many households that earn below the median income level and it is these households that would have more difficulty affording the \$337 rent.

Another method to determine affordability is to look at the ratio between the median value of a single-family house and median household income. Nationally, a ratio of 2 or less is considered to be affordable. The affordability ratio for Ghent is \$114,140 (median value of homes) divided by \$43,431 (median household income), or 2.63. This figure is above the desired ratio of “2” and indicates that some families would spend more than twice their annual income on a home. This figure indicates that affordability of homes is an issue in Ghent.

Finally, the purchase price multiplier also gives an indication of affordability. This looks at the maximum mortgage approval amount likely to be given to potential homebuyers. This is usually about 2.25 times annual income. The figure below shows this multiplier plus a 10% down payment. This is the amount of money that would be able to be afforded for a mortgage by the median household.

$$2.25 \times \$43,431 = \$97,720 + 9772 = \$107,491$$

Thus, median households (and those households who earn more than the median income) would be able to afford at least a \$107,491 dollar house (using 2000 Census data figures). With the median value of a house in the area (in 2000) at \$114,140, it would indicate that many households have some difficulty affording the average house. As the average price of homes has increased substantially since 2000, even more households would have difficulty affording the average priced house.

### **County Housing Affordability (Using City Data.com Estimated 2005 Data for Columbia County)**

It is very difficult to get specific data on housing values and incomes for the Town outside of the 2000 census. This analysis used estimated data for Columbia County. This 2005 estimated data showed a median household income of \$47,795, a median value of owner-occupied house at \$196,104, and an average monthly rent of \$553. Using these figures, the housing affordability information is as follows:

Rental Index = \$1195 per month: rentals are generally affordable

Affordability Index = 4.1: housing values have increased disproportionately from income and this shows an acute problem related to housing affordability.

Purchase Price Multiplier = \$118,293: Thus many households would not be able to afford a mortgage for the average priced house.

### **Housing Units**

About 65% of all housing units are one family units. The number of two-family units has increased about 3.3% and the number of multi-family units has increased from 162 to 183, or a 13% increase. The number of mobile homes in Town has increased more than all other types of housing units with 428 units (19.1% of all units). This is a 27% increase in mobile homes between 1990 and 2000.

Table 3: Units in Housing Structure

Units in Structure	1990 Total Town	2000 Total Town
1-family	1393	1473
Two-family	151	156
3 to 20 units	162	183
Mobile Homes	337	428

### Residential Patterns

Table 4 illustrates trends related to the movement of the population. The majority of Town residents aged over 5 years have lived in the same house between 1995 and 2000 (65%) but this is slightly less than in 1990 when 70% of those aged 5 and older lived in the same house for the previous five years. The number of people living in Columbia County has been relatively stable between 1990 and 2000 and there has been an increase in people moving into Ghent from areas outside of Columbia County. Neighboring town statistics are included for comparison.

Table 4: Residential Patterns

	Ghent 1990 (Total Town)	Ghent 2000 (Total Town)	Austerlitz 2000	Chatham 2000	Claverack 2000	Greenport 2000	Hillsdale 2000	Kinderhook 2000	Stockport 2000	Stuyvesant 2000
Lived in Same house for past 5 years	3,112 (70%)	3,260 (65%)	937 (67%)	2,621 (65%)	4,031 (66%)	2,656 (67%)	1,027 (62%)	4,859 (62%)	1,985 (72%)	1,391 (68%)
Lived in different house, but same County for past 5 years	987 (22%)	1,152 (23%)	222 (16%)	814 (20%)	1,289 (21%)	989 (25%)	293 (18%)	1,674 (21%)	590 (22%)	435 (21%)
Lived in different County, but same State for past 5 years	288 (6.4%)	405 (8.1%)	109 (8%)	426 (11%)	505 (8%)	210 (5%)	132 (8%)	937 (12%)	132 (5%)	142 (7%)

## Employment and Labor

Table 5, below, shows that for the past 10 years, the majority of those aged 16 years and older worked in Columbia County (72%). This is only slightly lower than that in 1990. A smaller number of people work outside of Columbia County (about 24%) but an increasing number of Ghent residents work outside of New York State (4.5%). There has been a large increase in the number of people working from home, up to 130 people from 52 in 1990. That represents about 5.3% of the workforce and a 150% increase over the level of home occupations in 1990. Of those employed, fewer people are living closer to home and more are traveling over 20 minutes to get to work. In 2000, 47.3% of workers traveled more than 20 minutes compared to 41.5% in 1990.

The employment rate has been fairly constant between 1990 and 2000 (about 1.8% unemployed). About 62% of residents aged 16 and older are employed and this figure is not very different from that in 1990. The number of people not in the labor force has increased however and in 2000 38.4% are not in the labor force. This compares to 35% not in the labor force in 1990. This probably reflects an aging population with more retirees.

Table 5: Employment Patterns

	<b>1980 Total Town</b>	<b>1990 Total Town</b>	<b>2000 Total Town</b>
Worked in County of Residence	1401	1721	1762
Worked outside of County of Residence	323	536	583
Worked outside of State	11	70	110
Worked 5 to 19 minutes away from home		1308	1167
Worked over 20 minutes from home		967	1158
Worked at home		52	130
Unemployed	156	75	73
Employed	2077	2379	2565
Not in Labor Force	1392	1318	1598

## Educational Attainment

The table below shows a moderate increase in the number of people attaining some college degree. This went from 28% of the population aged 25 and older in 1990 to 35% in 2000. Those with less than a high school education have dropped in the past decade. An interesting trend according to the 2000 census data is a decrease in the number of people earning a high school degree. In 1990, 33% of those aged 25 and older had received a high school diploma and in 2000, this had fallen to 29%.

Table 6: Educational Attainment

	<b>1990 Total Town</b>	<b>2000 Total Town</b>
Less than 9 <sup>th</sup> grade education	281	254
9 <sup>th</sup> to 12 <sup>th</sup> grade education	451	509
High School Diploma	1061	1100
Some college	537	594
College Degrees	924	1294

### **Incomes**

Median household income and per capita income levels have risen between 1990 and 2000. Median household income has risen 37% and the per capita income has increased 47% between 1990 and 2000. At the same time, the number of people aged 64 years or younger living below the poverty level has increased. Note that the number of households with public assistance has decreased substantially (down 66.7%) between 1990 and 2000, but this probably reflects a change in the federal assistance programs that made fewer people eligible. A more important figure is the increase in the number of people living below the poverty level. In Ghent, about 4.4% of all residents lived below the poverty level in 2000 and about 3.4% lived below the poverty level in 1990.

Table 7: Incomes

	<b>1990 Total Town</b>	<b>2000 Total Town</b>
Median Household Income	31,693	43,431
Households with public assistance	81	27
Per Capita Income	14,377	21,083
# people under poverty level aged < 18 years	28	50
# people under poverty level aged 18 to 64 years	69	117
# people under poverty level aged 64+	61	63

### **Industries and Occupations**

The workforce contains a balance between professional, managerial, and technical workers and those engaged in blue-collar occupations. In 1980, private business provided jobs for 1,248 or 65% of Ghent workers over 16 years of age, while 450 (23%) were government employees. Almost 12% (223) were self-employed or worked for no pay in a family business. In 1990, 68% of the workforce was employed in private enterprise (1,412 in for-profit and 191 in not-for-profit businesses). Over 21% of Ghent workers

were in government, and almost 11% (257) were self-employed or worked in unpaid family businesses in 1990.

In 2000, these figures were:

57% of all wage and salary workers were in private for-profit businesses.

9% were in non-for-profit businesses.

21% were government workers:

12% were local government workers

9% were state government workers

<1% was federal government workers

10% were self-employed workers

Table 8, below, shows occupations of Ghent workers. The executive, administrative, and managerial occupations were the most prevalent occupations for Ghent workers. The general pattern of occupations is similar to that of 1990 with the exception of those employed in agriculture. In 1990, 64 persons were listed as having agricultural related occupations. By 2000, that had fallen to 12.

Table 8. Occupation of employed persons 16 years and older in 2000

Executive, administrative, managerial	905 (36%)
Professional specialty	554 (22%)
Sales	575 (23%)
Service	356 (14%)
Farming*, Forestry, Fishing	6 (less than 1%)
Transportation	352 (14%)
Construction, extraction, maintenance	287 (12%)

*\* Actual experience leads us to believe there are more residents employed in farming than indicated here.*

The following industries showed decreased numbers of people aged 16 and over employed:

- Agriculture, forestry, fisheries, mining
- Manufacturing
- Transportation
- Wholesale Trade
- Retail Trade
- Finance, Insurance, Real Estate
- Other professional and related services
- Public Administration

The following industries showed increased numbers of people aged 16 and over employed:

- Construction
- Communications and Information

Entertainment and Recreation  
 Professional Health and Related Services  
 Professional Educational and Related Services

The industry with the most Ghent workers is health related services, followed by education, retail trade, manufacturing, and entertainment/recreation. Again, agriculture, forestry, fisheries and mining has shown a decrease from 5.4% of the workforce in 1980, to 3.2% of the workforce in 1990 and with only 1.9% of the workforce in 2000.

### School Districts

Four public school districts serve students in Ghent: Chatham Central School District, Ichabod Crane (Kinderhook) Central School District, Hudson City School District, and the Taconic Hills Central School District. These school districts have undergone demographic changes over the past several years as follows:

#### Chatham Central School District

Measurement	2003 - 2004	2004 - 2005	2005- 2006
# students	1501	1422	1423
# teachers	111	124	124
Annual Attendance Rate	92%	94%	94%
Avg. Class Size (Grade 8 Math)	15	18	15
Graduation Rate			85%
Eligibility Rate for Free Lunch	13%	13%	13%
Overall Accountability Status as Determined by NYS			In Good Standing
Student/Teacher Ratio	13.52	11.46	11.47

#### Ichabod Crane Central School District

Measurement	2003 - 2004	2004 - 2005	2005- 2006
# students	2285	2276	2214
# teachers	172	178	173
Annual Attendance Rate	95%	96%	95%
Avg. Class Size (Grade 8 Math)	17	20	17
Graduation Rate			85%
Eligibility Rate for Free Lunch	12%	14%	13%
Overall Accountability Status as Determined by NYS			In Good Standing
Student/Teacher Ratio	13.28	12.78	12.79

**Taconic Hills Central School District**

Measurement	2003 - 2004	2004 - 2005	2005- 2006
# students	1871	1833	1762
# teachers	149	148	156
Annual Attendance Rate	93%	93%	94%
Avg. Class Size (Grade 8 Math)	17	22	17
Graduation Rate			82
Eligibility Rate for Free Lunch	19%	21%	20%
Overall Accountability Status as Determined by NYS			In Good Standing
Student/Teacher Ratio	12.55	12.39	11.29

A closer look at the three schools that make up the Taconic Hills School District (elementary, middle and high schools), shows that the elementary and middle school enrollment has been relatively steady over the past 3 years, and the high school has risen 7% between 2002 and 2005 from 614 students to 657 students. Drop out rate has decreased slightly and suspension rate has remained steady. The student teacher ratio has changed from 11.97 students per teacher in 2001-2002 to 12.39 students per teacher in 2004-2005.

**Hudson City School District**

Measurement	2003 - 2004	2004 - 2005	2005- 2006
# students	2215	2193	2076
# teachers	208	203	195
Annual Attendance Rate	92	93	94
Avg. Class Size (Grade 8 Math)	18	15	15
Graduation Rate			68
Eligibility Rate for Free Lunch	38	42	39
Overall Accountability Status as Determined by NYS			In Good Standing
Student/Teacher Ratio	10.65	10.8	10.65

The Hudson City High School has seen a 5.8% increase in the student enrollment between 1998 and 2005. At the same time, the suspension rate has increased, but the student teacher ratio has decreased. The Middle School, John Edwards School, and Greenport School have all seen decreased student enrollments (13.5%, 19.8%, and 22.3% respectively). While the student population has decreased, the number of teachers has remained steady or increased, and thus has resulted in a lower student/teacher ratio in these three schools.

## Transportation

An important factor in the growth and development of a community is the transportation infrastructure that connects it to the rest of the world. As mentioned previously, Ghent is not an isolated community. The network of public roadways built and maintained by New York State, Columbia County, and the Town of Ghent, provides the primary method of transportation available to residents of Ghent. New York State Routed 9H and 66, once called the “post road” and the “Union Turnpike” respectively, are the key features of the regional transportation network. Trucks comprise a significant portion of the traffic through the Town, particularly along Route 9H.

The highways in Ghent can be categorized as follows:

1. New York State roads: 42.76 miles of hard surface “highway lane” road pass through the Town of Ghent, including sections of the Taconic State Parkway and State Routes 9H, 66, 203, and 217.
2. Columbia County roads: 18.75 miles of hard surface roads, including portions of County Routes 9, 21, and 22.
3. Town of Ghent roads: 70 miles of hard surface road and 10 miles of gravel road.
4. Private roads: The town contains between 7 and 8 miles of privately owned road.

In Ghent, Town roads are maintained by the Town of Ghent Highway Department through state and local tax revenues: in 2007, appropriates for the Highway Department was over \$1 million and is the largest expenditure of tax dollars in Ghent. The Highway Department is located on a parcel off of Garage Place Road where buildings include a new salt shed (shared with Columbia County), a large main building built in the 1920’s as well as three smaller machinery sheds. The Town has formal or informal agreements to share services with Columbia County, Town of Austerlitz, Town of Stockport, Town of Canaan, Town of Kinderhook, and Town of Chatham.

In 2007, the Department had eight full time employees (not including the Superintendent) and five or six part-time employees. Equipment includes seven large trucks with plows, two medium trucks with plows, three one-ton trucks (2 with plows) and one bucket truck with no plow. Other equipment includes two loaders, one grader, one mowing tractor, one backhoe, one track excavator and one roller.

Areas of concern to the Highway Department are the need for some dirt roads to be widened and the need for a new highway garage. Problems with flooding and drainage occur and are addressed as required.

As in most rural towns, the highway maintenance budget is one of the largest expenses for taxpayers to bear. As development occurs and population increases, the cost of maintaining roads grows quickly. Demands from newcomers often bring political pressure to pave more Town roads, requiring more specialized heavy equipment. Guiding settlement patterns to avoid sprawl can be helpful in avoiding skyrocketing road improvement and maintenance costs.

Traffic volumes on state roads are shown in the table below. The table shows the traffic volume measured as the annual average daily traffic for both directions of the route segment. Overall, most road segments measured over the past decade have shown increased traffic volumes. The road segment with the largest increase in traffic volume is on the Taconic State Parkway as it travels through Town. Other non-parkway highway segments showed traffic volume increases ranging from 8% to 26%. In 1995/1996 the traffic volume was approximately 45,930 traveling state highways in Ghent on average per day. In 2000 that figure was 50,810 or an 11% increase in annual average daily traffic.

There is no traffic count information for County or local highways.

**Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) for State Highways in Ghent by Year of Traffic Count**

Route	Segment Description	AADT (Year)	AADT (Year)	AADT (Year)	AADT (Year)	Overall Traffic Count Trend <sup>§</sup>
203	Taconic State Parkway to Route 66 Chatham	2818(01)	2950 (00)	2400(95)	2600(92)	↑ 8%
203	Route 66 to CR 26	3700(00)	3400(95)	3200(92)	3600(89)	↔
217	Taconic State Parkway to end of Route 217	860(00)	846(99)	780(96)	680(95)	↑ 26%
217	CR 6 Martindale Road to Taconic State Parkway	1150(00)	1234(01)	1050(95)	1100(92)	↔
Taconic State Parkway	Route 217 to Route 203	5330(02)	3350(00)	4200(95)	4050(92)	↑ 32%
66	Route 9H to CR 53 South of Ghent	4751(02)	4700(00)	4000(95)	3950(92)	↑ 20%
66	CR 53 South of Ghent to	6552(02)	7450(00)	7350(99)	5800(95)	↑ 13%

<sup>§</sup> ↑ Shows a general increasing trend in traffic volume and ↔ shows a variable traffic volume trend over the years.

Route	Segment Description	AADT (Year)	AADT (Year)	AADT (Year)	AADT (Year)	Overall Traffic Count Trend <sup>§</sup>
	Route 203 Chatham					
9H	Valatie Route 9 to Route 9 at end Route 9H	8323(99)	8450(00)	7100(95)	6700(91)	↑ 24%
9H	Route 66 to Route 9 Valatie	6588(02)	8600(00)	6700(94)	5700(89)	↑ 16%
9H	Route 66	5553(02)	5050(00)	4850(96)	4500(93)	↑ 23%
9H	Route 9 and Route 82 and Start of Route 23 to Route 23B and end of Route 23	4353(02)	4550(00)	5750(96)	5000(92)	↔

## Municipal and Emergency Services

In addition to maintaining highways, Town government oversees additional services to taxpayers including emergency services such as fire, police, rescue, etc. Limited water and sewer infrastructure (in certain areas of the Town) is provided by the Village of Chatham. **GET MAP SHOWING WHERE VILLAGE WATER IS**. Among other things, the Town government also handles building inspection and zoning enforcement, provides stipends for municipal officials, pays salaries to administrative staff, contracts with consultants (attorney, engineer, etc.) as necessary, and contributes to veterans' services, programs for the aging, the council on the arts, band concerts, community celebrations, and cemetery maintenance.

### Water and Sewer

Most residential, commercial, and industrial facilities in the Town of Ghent are served by on-site wells and septic systems. The Commerce Park development on Route 9H is served by County water and sewer facilities.

Three water lines from the Village of Chatham serve portions of the Town of Ghent. One serves the Edgewood Acres mobile home park (about 160 units) located west of the Chatham Fairgrounds off Route 203. This line also serves residences on Houseman Avenue and Roxbury Road. In addition, the Village of Chatham also provides sewer service to Edgewood Acres and to two residences on Houseman Avenue.

The second water line is located on the west side of State Route 66 from the Village and terminates at the Taconic Telephone property. A third water line meanders back and forth across Route 66 to the hamlet of Ghent, where it serves much of the hamlet's residential development, the White Stone Café, the Dairy Queen, and the X-tra Mart.

The Village's hook-up fee for water delivery to parcels outside the Village boundary is \$1550. The Village is not required to connect water or sewer services to properties in Ghent through which lines pass, although such residents can apply for water delivery services. Extension of water and sewer lines by the Village into the Town and provision of services is purely discretionary. By contrast, the Village has legal responsibilities to provide service to Village residents.

### **Solid Waste**

The Town of Ghent does not provide trash collection services for residents; individuals can contract with private haulers to remove garbage and recyclables. A County recycling facility, run by Resource Recovery System, has been established at the Commerce Center, and receives many types of recyclables collected at transfer stations County-wide.

The County provides transfer stations and recycling centers at various locations. Depending on their location in the town, the closest for Ghent residents are on Newman Road off of NYS route 23B in the Town of Greenport, Route 295 north of the Village of Chatham, or Route 9h in the town of Kinderhook. From these transfer stations, waste is delivered to a regional landfill in Seneca Falls, NY. The County sponsors an annual collection day for tires and hazardous materials at the Greenport transfer station. Disposal costs are \$125 per ton for truck loads, \$0.50 per 7 gallon bag, \$2.00 per 15 gallon bag, \$3.00 per 30 gallon bag, \$4.00 per 40 gallon bag, and \$5.50 per 55 gallon bag. Capacity of the solid waste system is adequate, and able to handle more.

### **Columbia County Airport**

The Columbia County Airport is a 308 acre publicly owned public-use transport facility. It serves the aviation needs of Columbia County and the Upper Hudson Region of NY. The County of Columbia owns the airport and its operation is the responsibility of the Department of Public Works.

Direct access to the airport is provided by Route 9H and the airport is about 20 minutes from the NYS Thruway. The aircraft at the airport include a mix of propeller driven aircraft and large aircraft including 3 jets owned and operated by the fixed base operator Richmor Aviation. Transient aircraft consists of many similar to the types presently based at the airport. Many private jets use the airport regularly, especially in the summer. The airport also accommodates several helicopters. The airport is not serviced by a precision instrument landing aid but this upgrade is being considered in 2011. The airport fuel facilities consist of two 8000 gallon jet fuel and 2 6000 gallon AVGAS tanks. The fuel facility is owned by the County and operated by Richmor Aviation.

Airport estimates its maximum annual volume at 230,000 landing and takeoffs. At present, the volume is about 50,000 thus indicating that capacity will not restrain the growth of the airport. The Columbia County Airport generates a regional economic impact annually of 220 jobs, \$6.6 million in income, and \$12.2 million in total economic impact.

### **Police Protection**

The Town of Ghent hires local residents to act as “constables” during events or activities which may require police protection. At the Town Supervisor’s discretion, police can also be hired through a “rent-a-Deputy” program for special events in the Town. The services of a part-time officer or deputy, from the Columbia County Sheriff’s Department can be subcontracted on an as-needed basis.

The Sheriff’s Department, based in the City of Hudson, is on call whenever events occur in Ghent that require immediate police action. The Sheriff’s Department patrols every town in Columbia County; generally a patrol passes through Ghent at least every eight hours.

Those Ghent residents that live within the Village of Chatham boundary are also in the jurisdiction of the Chatham Police Department.

### **Fire Protection and Rescue Services**

Two fire companies provide fire protection in Ghent: Ghent Volunteer Fire Company No. 1 and the West Ghent Volunteer Fire Company. Ambulance services are provided through Chatham Rescue, Valatie Rescue, and Greenport Rescue. There are also automatic mutual aid agreements with Chatham and Philmont for coverage at various times of the day and in certain parts of the Town. Rescue squads are dispatched depending on location of call and also availability of squads. Rescue squads are automatically dispatched with all fire calls. All Ghent emergency service organizations rely on Albany Medical Center and the NY State Police for med-flights in cases where critical care is required. The Greenport Rescue has paid employees and numerous volunteers.

The Ghent Volunteer Fire Company has 30 active members. Equipment includes a 2006 Central States pumper with 1500 gpm pump, 750 gallon tank and compressed air/foam system; a 1997 Central States pumper with 1500 gpm pump and 1000 gallon tank; a 1998 GMC 4x4 brush truck with 150 gpm pump and 250 gallon tank; a 1983 international Tanker with 3500 gallon tank and 50 gpm pump and the fire company’s original attack pumper, a 1928 American LaFrance.

The West Ghent Volunteer Fire Company is an independent corporation that contracts to protect the western third of the Town as well as the northern portion of the Town of Claverack. It has 14 active members. The Company has a new firehouse with six bays for

equipment as well as a meeting and banquet hall to accommodate 150 people. It is located in the Columbia County Commerce Park.

The equipment consists of a diesel pumper with 1,250 gallon water capacity and a 1500 gpm pump, a second pumper with 1500 gpm pumper as well as a 1000 gallon tank. They also have a diesel powered 10-wheel tanker with 3500 gallon capacity, a brush truck with winch and 250 gpm pump, a utility box van with extra equipment and clothing, and a rescue mini-pumper with 750 gpm pump and 500 gallon tank. This last truck has accident extrication equipment (jaws and spreaders and generator). The West Ghent District includes the coverage of the Columbia County Airport, BAC Sales, Ginsberg's Food Warehouse, a waste recycling plant, a truss manufacturing plant among others.

A major issue related to these fire companies is loss of volunteer staff, and the lack of affordable housing.

### **Medical Services**

The nearest hospital is Columbia Memorial Hospital (CMH) in Hudson, about ten miles from the center of the Town of Ghent. Rescue squad ambulances can generally reach the hospital within 12 to 15 minutes of leaving an emergency call in Ghent. CMH can refer patients requiring specialty cancer care, open heart surgery, and in-patient rehabilitation to St. Peter's Hospital in Albany. In addition, Albany Medical Center, a teaching hospital, is available for transfers of patients requiring more sophisticated care. The nearby Valatie Medical Arts Building, opened in 1993, serves Ghent residents as well. Some residents in the eastern portion of the town travel into Massachusetts for hospital services at the Berkshire Medical Center in Pittsfield. The Medi-Vac out of Albany Medical Center and State Police helicopters are also available for an emergency. CMH maintains a dozen Family Care Centers in Columbia, Greene, and northern Dutchess Counties. Two of these are located in Ghent. The Chatham Family Care Center is located at 31 Dardess Drive in the village, and the Ghent Family Care Center is located at 60 Garage Place Road. Hudson Valley Orthopedic Associates, P. C. also has an office on Fish and Game Road near Route 66 in Claverack.

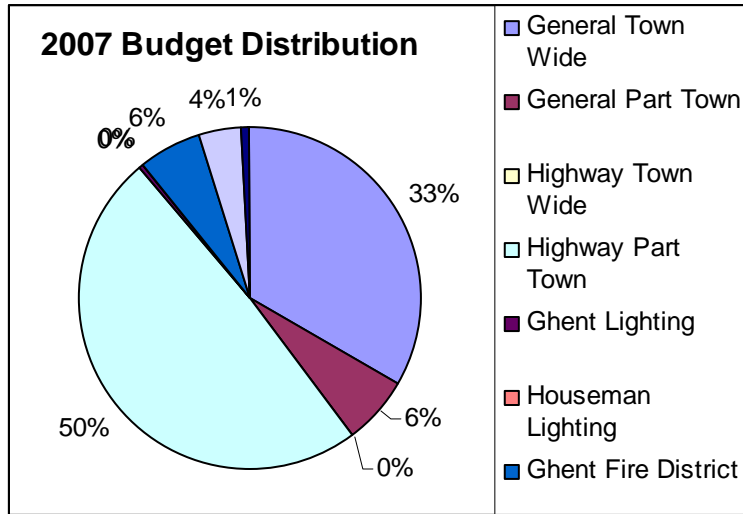
### **Charities and other Health and Human Service agencies serving Ghent residents**

Columbia Children's Center  
Columbia Opportunities, Inc.  
Catholic Charities, Inc.  
Common Ground Dispute Resolution,  
Inc.  
Crellin Morris Association  
Family Resource Centers of Columbia  
County  
Family of Woodstock, Inc.

Mental Health Association of Columbia  
and Greene Counties, Inc.  
Operation Unite Education and Cultural  
Arts Center  
The REACH Center  
The Salvation Army of Hudson  
Time and Space Limited  
The Healthcare Consortium

## Town Budget

In 2007, the Town budget can be summarized as follows:



### The town budget funds over the last three years

Fund	2005	2006	2,007
General Town Wide	\$ 531,245	\$ 653,870	\$ 694,440
General Part Town	\$ 74,459	\$ 124,990	\$ 132,975
Highway Town Wide		\$ 2,160	\$ 2,153
Highway Part Town	\$ 1,183,372	\$ 1,424,410	\$ 1,022,400
Ghent Lighting	\$ 9,350	\$ 10,400	\$ 9,900
Houseman Lighting	\$ 425	\$ 425	\$ 300
Ghent Fire District	\$ 115,000	\$ 120,000	\$ 125,000
West Ghent Fire	\$ 70,000	\$ 75,000	\$ 80,000
Chatham Fire	\$ 17,000	\$ 18,000	\$ 19,250

**Other Columbia County town budgets**

The following table shows the various tax levies and tax rates for all Columbia County towns in 2006.

The equalization rate is the state’s measure of a municipality’s level of assessment. This is the ratio of total assessed value (determined by the town) to the municipality’s total market value (determined by the state).

<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Municipal Tax Levy</b>	<b>Municipal Tax Rate Per \$1000 Assessed Value</b>	<b>State Equalization Rate</b>
Town of New Lebanon	563,360	3.15	71.00
Town of Greenport	966,246	3.11	100.00
Town of Taghkanic	528,088	2.67	100.00
Town of Stockport	255,791	2.65	80.09
Town of Ancram	476,550	2.55	63.93
Town of Germantown	404,000	2.34	79.60
Town of Hillsdale	692,085	2.29	78.00
Town of Chatham	951,046	2.12	75.00
Town of Copake	727,996	1.98	75.33
Town of Gallatin	348,650	1.70	100.00
Town of Livingston	341,840	1.65	85.00
Town of Ghent	468,980	1.64	63.79
Town of Stuyvesant	245,063	1.62	90.00
Town of Austerlitz	443,649	1.41	80.00
Town of Claverack	460,796	1.25	74.55
Town of Kinderhook	440,967	0.84	100.00
Town of Canaan	163,809	0.49	94.19
Town of Clermont	62,700	0.39	80.18

The following table shows the various tax levies and tax rates in 2005, for the four school districts serving the town of Ghent.

<b>School District</b>	<b>School Tax Levy for the area of the town being served</b>	<b>School Tax Rate Per \$1000 AV</b>
Chatham	4,065,028	18.74
Taconic Hills	864,222	15.43
Hudson	275,980	21.29
Ichabod Crane	666,867	19.80