

PATHWAY TO OUR FUTURE GUILDERLAND COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



TOWN OF GUILDERLAND

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY

Purpose: Comprehensive Plan Update Committee (CPUC) Meeting #9
Date and Time: March 12, 2024, 7:00 pm
Location: Guilderland Town Hall, 5209 Western Turnpike, Guilderland, NY
Attendees: See Below

Agenda Item	Discussion	Key Decisions & Outcomes
<p>Welcome</p>	<p>Vice Chair of the Comprehensive Plan Update Committee (CPUC) Jim Abbruzzese welcomed Committee members, Town staff, and members of the public. Mr. Abbruzzese introduced Jaclyn Hakes (MJ Engineering), who provided an overview of the meeting agenda, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Schedule & Engagement Update • Draft Comprehensive Plan Update – Document Organization • CPUC Open Discussion on Vision/Goals/Recommendations Refinements • Future Land Use Discussion/Exercise • Next Steps • Public Comment 	<p>None.</p>

<p>Project Schedule & Engagement Update</p>	<p>Ms. Hakes (MJ) provided an update on the Comprehensive Plan Update process, drawing attention to the upcoming steps and required process components prior to the adoption of the Plan Update.</p> <p>Ms. Hakes reiterated the range of completed public engagement activities from earlier in the planning process, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Website Comment Portal • Public Open House/Visioning • Stakeholder Focus Groups • Community Survey • Student Engagement • Public Workshop #2 <p>Ms. Hakes noted that the third public engagement event took place on February 12, 2024. Ms. Hakes also indicated that the fourth public engagement event would be a public hearing – as required by Town Law 272-a. The anticipated timing for the public hearing is summer 2024, pending work by the CPUC to review the Comprehensive Plan document for readiness.</p> <p>Jesse McCaughey (MJ) then provided an overview of the Public Open House event, which was held on February 12:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Held at Guilderland Town Hall • Participants could drop in between 7-9 p.m. • More than 60 recorded participants • At least 12 first-time participants • Background info on Comp Plan provided • Draft Vision, Goals, & Recommendations listed • There was a visual preference board for different “missing middle” housing types • Interactive large-format land use maps with stickers • Feedback from all participants welcome 	<p>None.</p>
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<p>Project Schedule & Engagement Update (Cont'd)</p>	<p>Open House participants provided the following feedback on the Draft Vision statement, which was displayed at one Open House activity station:</p> <p>Ideas/Wording that Resonated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting historic sites/environment/ wildlife/open space • Supporting local agriculture • Educational initiatives • Affordable housing • “Well-loved businesses” • Well-designed transportation and emerging technologies • “Residents of all ages and backgrounds” <p>Ideas/Wording that Needs More Emphasis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment/resilience • Protecting infrastructure from overdevelopment • Lack of Town center(s) • Town character <p>Open House participants used blue stickers on interactive station boards to indicated which of the proposed draft recommendations aligned with their priorities. The following list of draft recommendations received higher levels of public support in each respective thematic category:</p> <p><i>Agriculture</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limiting the extension of public water/sewer infrastructure toward rural areas of Town • Promoting/maintaining scenic resources on rural corridors • Supporting farmers’ markets, farm stands, etc. <p><i>Business, Employment, and Fiscal Resources</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage the redevelopment and adaptive reuse of property • Develop design guidelines for signage with illustrative examples 	
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<p>Project Schedule & Engagement Update (Cont'd)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop strategies to attract well-paying, job-creating employers who will be able to provide employment opportunities for Guilderland’s community <p><i>Environment, Climate Change, and Resiliency</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and improve water quality in Watervliet Reservoir and its tributaries • Encourage incentivize climate resiliency through Town practices, procedures, rules, and regulations • Prioritize the preservation of natural resources and animal habitat <p><i>Neighborhoods and Housing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update building design guidelines to promote green building practices that advance the goals of energy efficiency, water conservation, etc. • Consider updating zoning guidelines to require major subdivisions and large developments to incorporate affordable housing options • Expand opportunities for housing types other than single-family in appropriate districts, provided there are design guidelines to ensure compatibility <p>A ‘visual preference board’ showed illustrative examples of the following housing types:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cottage Court • Duplex/2-family • Townhome/3-plex • Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) <p>All four pictured housing types received public support, represented by blue stickers.</p> <p><i>Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Historic Resources</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the need to retain the services of a Town arborist to lead 	
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Project Schedule & Engagement Update (Cont'd)

- tree planting and maintenance in Town-owned parklands, rights-of-way, and open spaces
- Expand sidewalk networks and multi-use trails to link neighborhoods, public transit nodes, parks, open spaces, and regional trail networks
 - Consider forming a Ridgeline Protection Overlay District
 - Create an action plan for the identification, voluntary acquisition, and management of properties that comprise a comprehensive open space preservation system

Transportation and Mobility

- Enhance pedestrian mobility by continuing to expand sidewalk and multi-use trail networks in Town
- Explore options to improve vehicular traffic flow to Guilderland’s public schools, including options for a secondary access route to Farnsworth Middle School
- Partner with regional transportation agencies to address issues in Guilderland including...opportunities to reduce vehicle traffic on Western Ave through development of alternative east-west routes – e.g., toll-free NY Thruway access with an increased number of access points

Open House participants used stickers with themed land-use icons to identify individual priorities on large-scale interactive maps. Highlights of the priorities listed on the maps included:

- Small business/retail on Carman Rd. – e.g., “deli” & “ice cream”
- Recreation in Westmere – e.g., Westlawn Lanes property
- Agricultural land west of routes 158, 146, and 201
- Open space and recreation along the Helderberg Escarpment

<p>Project Schedule & Engagement Update (Cont'd)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for affordable housing – mentions of “tiny homes” • Missing middle housing on Carman Road • Near library on Western Ave = “great place for local businesses” • Noted (x2) desire for small retail on US-20 near Princetown line • Area to the west of Watervliet Reservoir “needs to be preserved” <p>The following steps were taken after the Public Open House event:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The participant guide and station boards were posted to the project website, with an invitation to submit input via the comment portal • Multiple written public comments were received and transmitted to the CPUC for consideration • A written Open House Summary, with pictures of interactive station board input, was transmitted to the CPUC and posted to the project website 	
<p>Draft Comprehensive Plan Update – Document Organization</p>	<p>Ms. Hakes (MJ) showed a slide outlining the proposed organization of the Comprehensive Plan Update document, which would be as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Summary • The Planning Process • Community Profile • Vision & Goals • Agriculture • Business, Employment & Fiscal Resources • Environment, Climate Change & Resiliency • Neighborhoods & Housing • Parks, Recreation, Open Space & Historic Resources • Transportation & Mobility • Future Land Uses • Governance • Implementation 	

<p>Draft Comprehensive Plan Update – Document Organization (Cont’d)</p>	<p>Ms. Hakes then asked for input from the CPUC about the proposed organization. Comments received from CPUC members included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before “Vision & Goals” section, recommend adding a section on “Opportunities & Challenges” • Implementation section should map out steps of implementing recommendations, with prioritization informed by the CPUC • Timeframes and “lead” department/organization should be identified for recommendations • Tools to address recommendations should be identified • Potential funding sources for recommendations should be identified <p>Ms. Hakes suggested that information concerning the Town character could be introduced early (i.e., Executive Summary) in the plan document and integrated throughout.</p>	
<p>Refined Draft Recommendations Discussion</p>	<p>Jesse McCaughey (MJ) provided background information about how the current list of draft recommendations had been assembled:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-person CPUC input during January meeting discussion • Follow-up email communication from CPUC members • Public input via Open House interactive station boards and project website comment portal <p>Mr. McCaughey also touched on the topic of Town Character, which had appeared in much of the feedback during the recent Public Open House. During the refinement of the draft recommendations, the following Town Character elements had been allocated to one or more of the six (6) thematic categories:</p>	<p>CPUC members have been encouraged to submit additional input on goals and recommendations to the planning group prior to the next CPUC meeting.</p>

**Refined Draft
Recommendations
Discussion
(Cont'd)**

- Bringing light commercial, retail, dining to areas that need those services [Land Use]
- Creating neighborhood community centers [Parks/Historic Resources]
- Ensuring adequate but not excessive parking [Transportation]
- Developing building, landscaping, and signage design guidelines [Housing/Business]
- Ensuring new development does not result in adverse impacts...undue burden on infrastructure [Agriculture]
- Hiring a Town arborist to lead tree planting of non-invasive tree species along rights-of-way, etc. [Parks]
- Providing more sidewalks, street lamps, and decorative landscaping along roadways [Transportation]
- Seeking out public/private partnerships with land trusts/business organizations to implement improvements [Open Space/Business]

During an Open Discussion, the CPUC offered the following feedback on the latest iteration of refinements to the list of draft recommendations:

- There is perhaps an opportunity for intermunicipal partnership to hire an arborist shared with one or more municipality
- There may be opportunities for public/private partnerships to increase community gathering places
- Western Turnpike golf course is a possible site for community gathering space
- Brownfields should be mentioned as targets for redevelopment in Town (along with other vacant properties)
- Concern expressed about whether ADUs would be appropriate Town-wide

<p>Refined Draft Recommendations Discussion (Cont'd)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern expressed about excluding any areas from ADU development, provided design guidelines are established and followed • A bridge inventory may be needed • Closed bridges over railroad lines (e.g., at Old State Road) have questionable ownership but represent potential assets for trail development • At-grade rail crossings in Town should be targeted for improvement – not just bridges and culverts • At-grade crossings are an emergency response issue if trains block roadways • Governance section of plan needs to address mechanisms for accountability – who/how/how often plan recommendations get reviewed. 3-5 years mentioned as possible timeline for systematic progress review of plan recommendations 	
<p>Future Land Use Discussion/Exercise</p>	<p>Jaclyn Hakes (MJ) introduced a discussion of future land use by reiterating pertinent public input on topics such as business, housing, recreation, and agriculture.</p> <p>Ms. Hakes listed several questions for the CPUC members to consider when thinking about future land use in Guilderland:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What land uses should be different moving forward and where? • Should there be any changes in future land uses along Route 20? • Where should commercial development take place? What type? • Where should additional residential development take place? What type? • Where should agricultural lands be protected in the Town? • What should occur at the gateways? 	<p>CPUC members have been encouraged to submit additional input on future land uses to the planning group prior to the next CPUC meeting. MJ will distribute public input received on future land uses to the CPUC for review and consideration.</p>

<p>Future Land Use Discussion/Exercise (Cont'd)</p>	<p>A CPUC member commented that infrastructure will be a major factor in determining viable future land uses.</p> <p>CPUC members noted a desire for a walkable “Town center.” Ms. Hakes (MJ) remarked that the term “activity node” is sometimes used to describe a walkable commercial zone such as the one being discussed. The Town Planner identified the intersection of US-20 and Route 155 as an area in Town with significant existing infrastructure for development as a “Town center.” Town Planner Kenneth Kovalchik noted that the development of a Town center would potentially motivate CDTA to increase public transit routes west of Crossgates Mall.</p> <p>CPUC members noted that there had been previous attempts to develop mixed-use projects – e.g., “Glassworks Village” – in the area of Town near the library, but those plans had failed to materialize for various reasons.</p>	
<p>Next Steps</p>	<p>Jaclyn Hakes (MJ) provided an overview of the next steps in the Comprehensive Plan Update process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPUC Homework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Review Refined Recommendations ○ Provide feedback on future land uses • Draft Comprehensive Plan Outline/Document • Next CPUC Meeting – May 14, 2024, at 7:00 p.m. – Guilderland Town Hall 	<p>CPUC Input on recommendations and future land uses to be submitted by March 29</p>

<p>Public Comment</p>	<p>Committee Vice Chair Abbruzzese opened the floor to public comment.</p> <p>The following comments were provided by members of the public present:</p> <p>A member of the public expressed strong support for the recommendation to hire a Town arborist, noting the comprehensive nature of that job and the high levels of support that the community has expressed for this recommendation.</p> <p>Another member of the public praised the quality of the Committee discussion during this meeting but expressed that public participation in the process could be higher.</p> <p>Another member of the public spoke in favor of 2-family dwellings and Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU). This speaker also spoke in favor of using Conservation Easements as a mechanism to lower taxes for property owners who wish to set aside areas of property to remain undeveloped. Lastly, this speaker noted the importance of protecting waterways and water quality, emphasizing the need for effective stream buffers.</p> <p>CPUC Member Wilson mentioned resources that the NYS DEC has for promoting healthy tributaries.</p> <p>Another member of the public spoke of the need for more modestly sized homes for older residents who desire low-maintenance properties. The intersection of Lydius and Gari Lane was proposed as a potentially suitable location for 2-family dwellings for people 55+.</p> <p>Another member of the public spoke in favor of cluster developments for residents ages 55+. Potential areas in Town were proposed: intersection of Spawn/Lone Pine/Carman Rd. This speaker spoke in support of a proposed tiny home development at Fuller Station, noting that</p>	<p>None.</p> <p>None.</p>
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Public Comment (cont.)	<p>the proposed units would be ADA-accessible. Lastly, this speaker urged the CPUC to review the ideas generated by the subcommittees.</p> <p>Committee Vice Chair Abbruzzese asked for any further public comment. Hearing none, Chair Abbruzzese adjourned the meeting.</p>	
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This meeting summary conveys our understanding of the items discussed and agreements reached at this meeting. Please forward any additions, corrections and/or questions to my attention.

Submitted by:

Jesse McCaughey, MJ Engineering and Land Surveying, P.C.

cc: Consultant Team, Comprehensive Plan Update Committee, Town of Guilderland, File

Comprehensive Plan Update Committee (CPUC)

Name	Present
James Abbruzzese	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Dominic Rigosu	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Tara Cristalli	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Richard Brustman	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Caitlin Ferrante	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Cody Betton	✗
Lisa Hart	☑
Stephen Wilson	☑
Elizabeth Lott	☑

Town Representatives & Planning Support

Name	Present
Ken Kovalchik	☑

Consultant Team

Name	Affiliation	Present
Jaclyn Hakes, Project Manager	M.J. Engineering	☑
Jesse McCaughey	M.J. Engineering	☑