

Chapter 3

GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Goals and Recommendations for this Plan seek to implement a vision and desired land use patterns for the Town of Gardiner. They are based on three sources. First, they reflect the updated versions of the similar Goals and Recommendations found in the 2004 Town Comprehensive Plan. Second, they reflect the input from the community, notably through an extensive interview and comment process with Town committees and boards, with civic groups, and from individuals. Third, they incorporate research and analysis done since 2004 for this Plan and by other efforts from Town committees and Ulster County agencies.

The Goals set the general directions for Gardiner in the areas of land use, resource protection, open space, economic development/community development, community infrastructure and services and issues of regional concern. Each set of Goals is followed by Recommendations. The Recommendations present more specific actions or policies the Town should pursue to accomplish the plan goals.

The Goals and Recommendations presented here follow sections on the Goals and Recommendations from the 2004 Town Comprehensive Plan, but have an added section on Agriculture, representing the importance of this land use and economic sector to the Town. As such, Goals and Recommendations are presented on:

- A. Land Use
- B. 1. Resource Protection
2. Open Space
- C. Sustainable (aka Economic & Community) Development
- D. Community Infrastructure & Services
- E. Agriculture

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are an ordered set of Priority Recommendations presented as actions to be taken by the Town as soon as possible. These are more fully described in the later sections presenting a fuller set of Recommendations under the five (5) subject sections noted above. The relevant section is listed at the beginning of each Priority Recommendation.

- **(LAND USE) Review and update the Town Zoning Code and other land use regulations to ensure land use goals are met and there is consistency between this Comprehensive Plan Update and the code and regulations. Also, (AGRICULTURE) Review and update the Town codes for farm and farm business friendliness.**
- **(SUSTAINBLE DEVELOPMENT) Establish a Housing Committee to Complete a Housing Action Plan, and to monitor and report progress of this Action Plan.**

- **(COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES)** Take the next steps to improve and potentially expand sewage treatment services for the central hamlet of Gardiner and its expansion area.
- **(RESOURCE PROTECTION)** Complete a Community Preservation Plan addressing options for a dedicated, fiscally responsible, and sustainable means for financing resource, open space, recreation land, and farmland protection.
- **(COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES)** Continue to Improve Code Monitoring and Enforcement.
- **(SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT)** Codify a commitment to clean up distressed & abandoned properties that can undermine community character and growth potential.
- **(OPEN SPACE)** Continue to implement the Town Open Space Plan.
- **(SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT)** Implement actions in support of the Town's Climate Smart Communities Pledge and recent Climate Smart Communities Certification.
- **(AGRICULTURE)** Continue and strengthen support for farmland preservation working with willing property owners.
- **(LAND USE)** Create a system of incentives to achieve desired land use patterns.
- **(LAND USE)** Incorporate the 2021 Gardiner Natural Resources Inventory (NRI), as a reference and resource tool, into the Town Code to ensure significant resource locations are considered prior to any substantive land use decisions.
- **(SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT)** Complete and implement an Emergency Management / Disaster Preparedness & Resiliency Plan.
- **(SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT)** Complete and implement *Seniors Enrich Gardiner* recommendations.
- **(COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES)** Establish drainage and stormwater district system to help finance and administer maintenance of post-construction improvements.

This Plan Update also recommends that the Comprehensive Plan be formally reviewed, and updated as necessary, a minimum of every ten (10) years. Also, the Town should collaborate on an annual reporting of progress with implementation of this Plan Update and its recommendations. This will be prepared with the input of key Town boards, commissions, and committees (see Community Infrastructure and Services recommendation).

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

This Plan Update also recommends that the Comprehensive Plan be formally reviewed, and updated as necessary, a minimum of every ten (10) years. Also, the Town will collaborate with key partners on an annual reporting of progress with implementation of this Plan Update and its recommendations. This will be prepared with the input of Town boards, commissions, and committees (see Community Infrastructure and Services recommendation).

Additionally, as an essential part of this annual reporting on progress, the Town Board will integrate this planning into the annual budgeting process. This will support both annual reviews toward progress on goals and opportunity for refreshing goals as indicated. Twelve (12) priority recommendations have been initially defined as listed above. The Town expectation is at least first steps and responsible lead entities will be set for each of these priorities within twelve (12) months of adoption of this Plan Update.

The following priority recommendations are highest priority and either have been initiated or will be initiated and substantially completed within twelve (12) months of adoption of this Plan Update. They are:

- Complete a Community Preservation Plan.
The Town Board has retained professional assistance and assigned the Town Open Space Commission to lead completion of this Plan in 2022. Town Board, and Town voter, approval will be required.

- Review, Audit and Update the Town zoning code and land use regulations.
The Town Board as lead has initiated this activity, retained professional assistance, and will work with the Town Planning Board and others to bring forward in 2022 lead recommendations for Town code updates consistent with the adopted Comprehensive Plan.

- Establish a Housing Committee towards completion of a Housing Action Plan and to review potential partnerships with Ulster County and others.
The Town Board as lead will establish the committee, set purpose, and initiate outreach to Ulster County for support.

LAND USE PATTERNS TO BE ACHIEVED BY PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

This Update to the Town of Gardiner Comprehensive Plan presents an updated vision and reaffirms the majority of preferred land use patterns presented in the 2004 Comprehensive Plan. The description of that pattern from the 2004 Plan is excerpted below, edited to reflect 2021 updated conditions and public input.

The Town of Gardiner envisions vibrant hamlets as centers to our principally rural residential community. The natural beauty of Gardiner is rooted in significant agricultural and preserve/parkland uses. Both the form and character of the community derive from these natural resources, as the people who settled here long ago, and do still now, value living and working in the awe-inspiring and rich gifts of nature. This land use pattern is shown in the Land Use Map.

The plan achieves consistency with the Ulster County Comprehensive Plan by recognizing that other principal land use functions (such as higher density residential, and industrial and regional commercial activities) will occur in more intensively developed areas of the County, with two exceptions. In Gardiner, first the hamlets as described below should continue to serve as the primary, logical locations for a mixed and increased density of land uses matched to available public services. Second, the primary commercial/light industrial cluster along Steve's Lane and Osprey Lane (aka Steve's Lane Industrial Park) as well as secondary commercial/light industrial areas and highway commercial areas along NYS Route 208 – all of which match to current zoning districts – should remain the locations for commercial and light industrial uses.

As generations before have used the Town's resources with sense of duty to both the land and the community, so this Town Planning process seeks to maintain, to the maximum extent possible, those attributes of rural and exurban living within an active agricultural and recreational setting, which are most important to Gardiner's community character.

To foster and accommodate growth and meet land use demands, revitalizing and expanding hamlet areas in Gardiner are key ingredients in this plan. Expanded and revitalized central hamlets¹ first in the Gardiner Central hamlet and second at Ireland Corners, will perform important functions in the Town's future. Specifically, they will:

1. Promote open space and resource protection: the central thrust of this plan is to preserve the Town's rural character. Through improved zoning enforcement, strategic land protection, smart land use regulations, incentive zoning, transfer of development rights and other measures, matched to market forces, development can be directed away from environmentally or recreationally important locations and into hamlet areas to receive growth that would ordinarily occupy or fragment large areas of open space.
2. Provide housing diversity: as highlighted by the 2021 Ulster County Housing Action Plan, there is a lack of diversity and a shortage of affordable housing stock, notably rental units. Such housing is needed throughout Town, with the central and outlying hamlets as target locations that can

1 Throughout this document, the general term "hamlets" refers to those areas with existing hamlet mixed-use zones (e.g., the hamlets of Benton Corners, Gardiner, Ireland Corners, the "mountain gateway" at the terminus of Route 299 and Tuthilltown—i.e, the intersection of Route 44/55 and Albany Post Road). The term "central hamlet" refers to the Gardiner hamlet, and the "commercial hamlet" refers to Ireland Corners. The term "outlying hamlets" or "smaller hamlets" refers to the hamlets other than Gardiner and Ireland Corners. ¹

more readily meet demand for diverse and affordable housing, as well as complimentary commercial and public uses.

3. Meet the needs of an aging population: an expanded central hamlet of Gardiner can provide opportunities for an aging population to be able to afford to stay in Gardiner while living within walking distance of important community services. A pedestrian-friendly hamlet made up of accessible mixed-use neighborhoods is the best possible context for a society with an aging population.
4. Maintain community identity: communities are defined from the center outward. A revitalized, central Gardiner hamlet with a vital Ireland Corners set in a rural, agricultural and parkland/recreational setting will define and sustain the community's character.

Smaller historic and contemporary clusters of commercial and some light industrial activities are found at the 5 intersections of the principal traffic corridors (Ireland Corners at Route 44-55 and Route 208; Gardiner Central Hamlet; Tuthilltown at Route 44-55 and Albany Post Road; Benton Corners at Route 44-55 and Bruynswick Road/ County Route 7; Mountain Gateway at Route 44-55 and Rte 299). The total commercial acreage identified is approximately 200 acres. The standard for local shopping areas is 9 acres of commercial property per thousand population.

Virtually all commercial acreage is forecast for local, "neighborhood" shopping requirements. Regional shopping or "destination shopping" (e.g., "big box" retail, outlets, etc.) is not included in the land use plan, consistent with the County plan, and remains in the nearby New Paltz, Modena, and Pine Bush areas. However, this Plan recommends incentivizing introduction of local commercial and community services in demand. Public input mentions pharmacy and a fuller service market as specific needs.

Connectivity to these services remains a high priority, with recommendations to improve central hamlet walking and biking conditions, and to secure increased transportation options to services not in Gardiner. With respect to service distance standards, two areas of the Town are beyond the 2-mile service radius of this type of shopping: the Tillson Lake/ Rutsonville area adjacent to Shawangunk; and the Libertyville area adjacent to New Paltz. There is some existing limited commercial development area in the Town of Shawangunk, at Bruynswyck, which is available to area residents. No commercial service activities fall within the service radius for Libertyville area, however the New Paltz central business district is probably sufficient for those needs.

A. LAND USE GOALS

Goal A-1. Maintain the rural and environmental character of the landscape by preserving significant large parcels of undeveloped land, agricultural land, recreational land, and/or environmentally sensitive land.

Goal A-2. Ensure the vitality of the central hamlet of Gardiner, along with the other outlying hamlets, including connections, not just for vehicles, but also for pedestrians, bicyclists and others in providing mobility options between Gardiner’s hamlets and between the hamlets and the regional transportation system.

Goal A-3. Foster a pattern of complementary neighborhoods and districts that make the most efficient use of services providing to a majority of the population. This includes encouraging higher density and diversity of housing and mixed-uses in or near hamlet areas; with lower densities, farming, and conservation areas outside the hamlet centers.

Goal A-4. Support and enhance land use actions recommended in the State, regional, and County planning efforts to arrive at a well-balanced and economic use of land that meets local and regional needs.

LAND USE RECOMMENDATIONS

Review, audit and update the Town zoning code and other land use regulations to ensure land use goals are met and there is consistency between this Comprehensive Plan Update and the code and regulations.

New York State statute requires that zoning codes, along with any and all land use regulations, are “in accordance” with an adopted Comprehensive Plan. This consistency test between the Plan and the implementing land use regulations is an obligation that Gardiner can meet through a review and audit of its zoning and land use regulations soon after the adoption of this Comprehensive Plan Update. The Town made substantive code updates following the last 2004 Comprehensive Plan adoption. A similar effort may be required now.

The need for specific zoning and land use code updates is also a recommendation from the public outreach and engagement process for this Plan Update. See Appendix A for more on these comments. Code update recommendations receiving the most attention included:

- ✓ Strengthen protection of environmentally sensitive land, including incorporation of the Natural Resources Inventory (NRI) into the zoning code (see recommendations below).
- ✓ Methods to innovate and incentivize affordability and diversity of housing, including but not limited to accessory apartments as of right, tiny house options, and central hamlet expansion.
- ✓ Expanded use of design standards requiring smart design for desired land uses or new land uses such as cannabis dispensaries.
- ✓ Strengthen water resource protection – such as buffers for aquifers, river corridors, and wetlands.
- ✓ Improved outdoor lighting standards with assurances for Dark Sky protection.

- ✓ Inclusion of standards making conservation subdivisions or clustering the norm, not the exception.
- ✓ Improved monitoring and enforcement provisions.
- ✓ Updated road and drainage specifications for new development.
- ✓ Methods to improve property maintenance of vacant or abandoned properties.
- ✓ Policies and designs that require or support travel options (walk, bike, transit) other than sole reliance on vehicles.
- ✓ Provisions to ensure better transitions between zoning districts.
- ✓ Clarification of the use of open space set-asides or payment in lieu of open space in subdivisions.
- ✓ Strengthen and clarify environmental and conservation analysis provisions for land use permit applications.
- ✓ Consistency and strengthening of standards for clearcutting and timber harvesting.
- ✓ Assess need for critical environmental areas (CEAs).
- ✓ Consider adoption of an Official Map showing locations for capital improvements including trails.
- ✓ Provisions for the registration and management of short-term rentals to ensure neighborhood compatibility and safety.

Incorporate the 2021 Gardiner Natural Resources Inventory (NRI), as a required reference and resource tool, into the Town zoning code and land use regulations to ensure significant natural and cultural resource locations are considered prior to any substantive land use decisions, such as rezonings, subdivisions, and site plan approvals.

Early in 2021 the Town of Gardiner, in collaboration with Cornell University and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, and the Hudson River Estuary Program, completed and published an extensive Natural Resources Inventory (NRI). The NRI includes maps and a narrative description of a set of resources unique to the Town, focused on natural resources and including some cultural resource documentation. With adoption of this Plan Update, this NRI has now been adopted as an element of the Town Comprehensive Plan. The NRI should be directly referenced in the Town code to ensure that it is an essential reference for Town officials, and for permit applicants and property owners in the Town.

Consideration should also be given for the Environmental Conservation Commission (ECC) with the Town Planning Board to develop a systemic approach for ECC review and comment using the NRI as a basis for review.

The Town should also implement the effort to make the NRI an accessible, online tool for citizens, property owners, Town officials, and permit applicants.

Create a system of incentives to achieve the desired land use patterns.

Incentive Zoning, according to section 261-b of NYS Town Law, shall mean the system by which specific incentives or bonuses are granted, on condition that specific physical, social, or cultural benefits or amenities would inure to the community. This flexible regulatory tool is now an option in certain Town zoning districts in the use of transfer of development rights (TDR), planned unit development (PUD), as well as traditional neighborhood development (TND). Yet to date only one (Ohioville Acres PDD) of these three (3) options has been used, and in this one case on a limited basis. Incentive zoning also provides for a much more expansive use of zoning permitted uses, dimensional standards and performance or design standards. Through the previously mentioned zoning code audit, the Town should determine which incentive tools best fit Gardiner and are likely to be used in marketplace-driven applications. In particular, resource protection and/or housing diversity needs should be priority in the use of incentive zoning. The recommended Housing Action Committee should assist.

Incentives should also be researched and implemented to help property owners keep intact existing, large land parcels and to help avoid the recurrence of small subdivisions repeatedly affecting the same parent parcel.



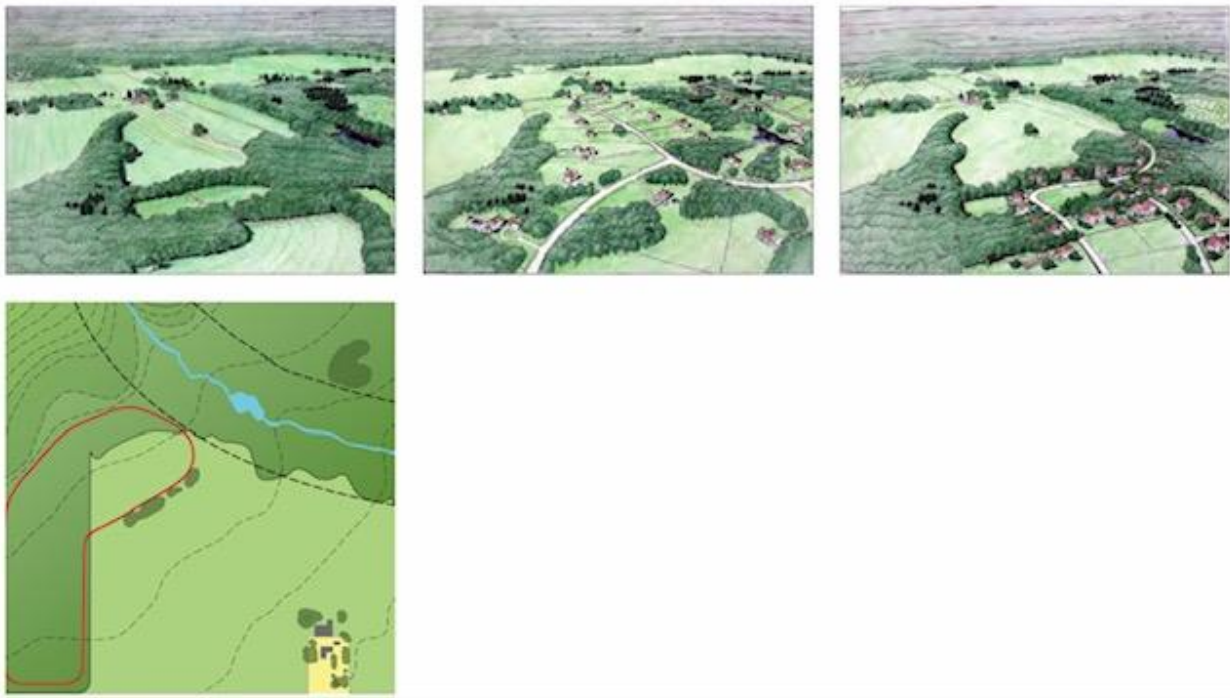
(from: The Community Design Manual, Ulster County, New York 2017, page 78)

Establish cluster development and conservation (aka open space development) subdivision practices as the preferred pattern of development for major subdivisions, and the preferred pattern for some minor subdivisions.

The Town of Gardiner now encourages such subdivisions since the 2008 update of the Zoning Code. The Town should require major subdivisions to be submitted as both conventional and as clustered or conservation subdivisions allowing the Planning Board to determine with applicants what design best achieves the goals of this Comprehensive Plan Update.

Cluster development keeps the underlying density of a parcel intact. However, it allows the individual lots created during subdivision to be smaller than would normally be allowed under a standard subdivision. As such, the house lots comprise only a fraction of the total land area, with the balance dedicated as permanent open space, with rights to ownership of, and access to that open space fully articulated. Conservation subdivision or open space development, as defined in the Town Code, involves a thorough inventory of any important features found on-site worthy of conservation (e.g., wildlife habitats, natural features, sources of open space, historical resources, protection of important views, etc.). The subdivisions are then created in a four-step process: 1. identifying the “conservation areas” containing important features to be conserved; 2. locating house sites away from those conservation areas; 3. delineating streets and trails to connect house sites to each other and to off-site roads and trails; 4. drawing the lot lines to produce a subdivision where the houses are oriented to each other as a neighborhood and where they are located to conserve the most important features on the site of the subdivision.

How to Create Conservation Subdivisions



(from The Community Design Manual, Ulster County, New York 2017, p. 103)

Adopt design guidelines for development, including but not limited to, in the central hamlet, other hamlets, and along corridors such as the Shawangunk Mountain Scenic Byway.

The 2008 updated Town Zoning Code currently includes narrative design standards for most non-residential land uses as well as use of the Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) option available in two (2) zoning districts. Town Zoning Code §220-5 also includes a limited use of guidelines. This use could be greatly expanded.

The use of design standards is an effective tool to ensure land use goals are met, providing predictability for land owners, developers, neighbors, and citizens that if such standards are met, then land development is favorable and permitted. Use of design standards should be expanded to include all uses and all districts. Design standards can be built on the foundation of four (4) readily available and applicable guides. These are The Community Design Manual, prepared by the Ulster County Planning Board (2017), Scenic Resources in the Shawangunk Mountains Region, A Guide for Planning Boards (n.d.), Shawangunk Ridge Conservation and Design Guidebook (The Catskill Center, 1993), and Mid-Hudson Sustainability and Smart Growth Toolkit (Regional Plan Association w Orange County, New York, 2016).

Strengthen environmental and conservation assessment for land use and development permit reviews.

Environmental and conservation assessment is essential, and it is now an obligation prior to many land use decisions. However, more can be done to ensure assessments are done related to potentially sensitive permit types and locations.

The State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) sets that for certain “actions” this assessment must happen. Town of Gardiner code also has various provisions (see Zoning Code §220-16 requirement for SP zoning districts, 220-20 requirement for Open Space Development, 220-31 for rural siting principles including minimizing land disturbance, 220-65 for site plan map requirements, and 188-24 for analysis requirements for subdivisions). This assessment should be more thorough, consistent, and based on core knowledge of the conditions of Town.

Prior recommendations on Town code amendments, and on adoption of the Natural Resources Inventory (NRI), as well as the introduction of an interactive web platform for the NRI, will ensure core conservation knowledge is a guaranteed part of decision making.

The Town will also work to improve the consistency of such assessments by taking steps to gain access to environmental and planning professionals as needed in permit reviews. The Town should also ensure that all review Boards, notably the Planning Board, gain and rely on access to expertise in environmental and conservation analysis to supplement the legal and engineering expertise it now can access.

B. RESOURCE PROTECTION AND OPEN SPACE GOALS

Goal B-1. Protect the quantity and quality of water resources throughout the Town, with particular attention on drinking water sources.

Goal B-2. Preserve open mountains (notably Shawangunk Ridge) and much of the river valleys (notably Walkkill River and Shawangunk Kill) for public enjoyment.

Goal B-3. Establish a framework for a conservation network in the Town, connected to neighboring towns, that focuses on the important resources and findings of the Gardiner Open Space Plan and Natural Resources Inventory (NRI).

Goal B-4. Help maintain the economic viability of agriculture and diversity of income for farmers. Agriculture is a leading economic sector and a primary element of the traditional landscape of the Town.

Goal B-5. Improve and expand public access and outdoor recreation options. This includes trails connected to existing public and conservation lands and to important resources.

1. RESOURCE PROTECTION RECOMMENDATIONS

Complete a Community Preservation Plan addressing dedicated, fiscally responsible, and sustainable means for financing resource, open space, recreation land, and farmland protection.

In 2019 the New York State Legislature amended the Community Preservation Act provisions to include Ulster County and all of its Towns. Recommended here is completion of the required Community Preservation Plan, allowing the Town of Gardiner potential use of the provisions of this Act, and to seek Town Board and then voter approval to establish a real estate transfer tax toward a dedicated means of financing resource, open space, recreation land, and farmland preservation. The Town of Gardiner Open Space Commission (GOSC) should continue to lead this effort, building on the existing inventory, education, resource ranking criteria, and program work already done.

Such a Plan can also prioritize other financing and protection tools, such as grants, gifts, matching sources from government and private entities, as well as smart use of open space set-asides, or payments in lieu of a set-aside, as enabled for land subdivision approvals under New York State statute and as partially addressed in a 2016 Town Local Law. The Community Preservation Plan should also address incentives for keeping intact large, existing tracts of land, particularly if they are contiguous to other large tracts of land or existing conservation lands.



N20 Link resources on and between parcels

Preserving natural resources on individual parcels does not insure the continuity of larger natural systems. Resources must be linked to insure the effectiveness of natural systems such as stormwater and habitat, in addition to visual value. The location and configuration of open spaces on adjacent conservation subdivisions should be coordinated to create a green network of continuous natural corridors.

(from The Community Design Manual, Ulster County, New York, 2017, page 104)

Take measures to identify and protect the drinking water aquifers and recharge areas serving the Town.

The most common resources mentioned in public outreach and engagement during the research for this Plan Update were aquifers, drinking water sources, and the recharge areas of those sources. Residents consistently identified these as the most important resources, and the ones required to support all land uses. Currently, all land uses are supported by groundwater sources predominately serving single users. The Town should work to define locations, as well as quality and quantity of all available groundwater and any surface water sources and their recharge areas. Current and potential impacts to those sources should also be defined – including the predictable effects of climate change. Action will then be taken to protect those sources. Overlay zoning districts provide highly effective methods of protection, as do design standards for all development in proximity of sources. Acquisition of fee-title or conservation easements on lands in aquifer recharge areas, or in proximity to potential shared water sources, can also be a priority.

The Town has initiated research with the New York Rural Water Association Inc. as part of their technical assistance program. This will lead to the identification and delineation of ground water resources, as

well as recommendations for the long-term protection of these resources. This professional assistance, and action to implement forthcoming recommendations, is of highest priority.

Maintain Protection of the Shawangunk Ridge

The Shawangunk Ridge remains the signature landscape feature of the Town of Gardiner and its surrounding region. Significant portions of the Ridge are now conserved well beyond the extent of conservation when the 2004 Comprehensive Plan was adopted. Working in partnership with Palisades Interstate Parks Commission, Mohonk Preserve, the Open Space Institute and others, the Town should continue to prioritize land conservation on the Ridge and along the talus slopes and base of the Ridge wherever possible. The Shawangunk Ridge Protection District and subdistricts added to the Town Zoning Code since 2004 should also be reviewed for effectiveness and for any needed updates or language improvements.

Improve protection of the Shawangunk Kill, Wallkill River, Palmaghatt Kill, and other waterways and associated wetlands in the Town using model river corridor overlay zoning standards.

Another signature set of landscape features of the Town of Gardiner is the central Wallkill River and its tributaries led by the Shawangunk Kill, one of New York State's only designated *Wild, Scenic & Recreational Rivers* outside of the Adirondack Park. These features are also commonly referenced during public outreach and engagement as important as water resources, as ecological and scenic landscape features, and as attractive corridors for shoreline enjoyment and or in-water recreation, notably paddling and fishing.

Watershed-wide land activities, as well as climate change, appears to be contributing to unpredictable water flows as well as episodic water quality impairments, notably in the main channel of the Wallkill River, where harmful algae blooms (HABs) are recurring, likely due to phosphorous loading from land sources.

The 2007 *Wallkill River Watershed Conservation and Management Plan* includes various recommendations that the Town should incorporate into its open space, recreation and parks, and land use code programs. These include implementation of model river corridor overlay zoning standards for protection of these water courses. Such standards would also complement the existing New York State regulations under 6NYCRR Part 666 whereby the State Department of Environmental Conservation regulates through a permit program certain land use activities in the Shawangunk Kill Corridor. An option exists under this program for the Town to assume permitting authority – an option worth assessing to help bring consistency and local determination into overall permitting of development.

Improve opportunities for outdoor recreation and for public access to recreation land and waterways.

Further discussed in the Infrastructure and Services recommendations found below, outdoor recreation is a focus of the Gardiner Parks & Recreation Committee. That Committee has defined a set of proposals for improving and expanding outdoor recreation and parks in the Town which should be

considered an essential element of Town resource and open space actions. This should include consideration of smaller passive neighborhood parks as well as improved public access along waterways. Requisite is to inventory properties and best uses for land parcels owned by the Town or otherwise set-aside for recreation or open space purposes as part of land development and subdivisions.

This Plan Update recommends continued partnership with the Wallkill River Watershed Alliance and others on public access including for a water recreation trail for paddlers. Continued partnership with Palisades Interstate Park Commission is also recommended to resolve the future of Tillson Lake.

This Plan Update also recommends bicycling mobility improvements along the Shawangunk Mountains Scenic Byway.

2. OPEN SPACE RECOMMENDATIONS

Continue to Implement the Town Open Space Plan.

The active Gardiner Open Space Commission has completed important work to maintain systems to prioritize and rank needed land conservation, to inventory conserved lands, and to advance conservation easement programming, all following the recommendations from the 2007 Town Open Space Plan. That Plan is now a fully adopted element of the Town Comprehensive Plan and remains guiding policy. The Open Space Commission should continue its work to advise Town officials and staff on open space priorities, and to help advance the recommendations in this section, notably the research needed to complete a Community Preservation Plan that will lead to options for fiscally responsible financing of open space. They should also continue to inform and educate the public on the importance of these efforts.

The Conservation Planning Areas and Priority Conservation Network concepts and maps from the Town Open Space Plan (see Figure in Chapter 2) remains a foundation for further action on resource and open space protection.

Maintain an inventory of conserved lands, and monitor activities on conserved lands – with oversight and enforcement roles and capacity set.

Over many years the Town of Gardiner has taken direct interest in at least seventeen (17) conservation properties, based on inventory work by the Town of Gardiner Open Space Commission (GOSC). These properties range from Town purchases, gifts, or negotiations with landowners, to land dedications from development permit reviews and approvals. The resource values and documented roles and responsibilities also vary in range, from high value/well documented to much less so.

New York State Town Law §274-a and §277 allows the Town to use an important conservation tool. Through its land use code and approval process, Gardiner can require a land set-aside for parkland, playground or recreational purposes with residential site plan or subdivision approvals, or a payment in lieu of land, should the Town determine lack of suitable land. Gardiner has been smart and has used these tools to gain both land set-asides as well as payments. However, the choice of land set-aside versus payment has been inconsistent, as has the inventorying, monitoring or use of land dedications.

The GOSC, working with the Town Code Enforcement Officer and Town Environmental Conservation Commission, can lead an effort to more consistently and thoroughly inventory, baseline assess, annually monitor, and enforce when needed, the conservation values of lands where the Town has legal or other substantive interests. They can also advise the Town Board and Planning Board, on future decisions with residential site plan and subdivision reviews, as to when and where a land dedication is “suitable”.

The Town should also look to build a modest budget for professional assistance – via outside contract or staff assignment – for conservation land assessment, to annually monitor, and for potential enforcement. Full fee-title or easement gifts and purchases to the Town should include provision for the costs of such work. Through the payment in lieu of suitable land process (sometimes referenced as *recreation fees*) with site plans and subdivisions approval, funds could also be dedicated for these purposes.

Continue cooperative efforts with land stewardship partners including Palisades Interstate Park Commission, Mohonk Preserve, Wallkill Valley Land Trust, Open Space Institute, Wallkill River Watershed Alliance and others.

Effective resource and open space protection efforts require partnership. As an individual Town with the capacities of Gardiner, we can not succeed alone. The Town has actively partnered with various organizations – with leading, recent examples including work on the Shawangunk Mountains Scenic Byway, discussion with Palisades Interstate Parks Commission on the future of Tillson Lake, and stewardship of the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail with the Open Space Institute and Wallkill Valley Land Trust. Partnerships like these should thrive, and the Town recommends Town Committees and Commissions continue this important work wherever possible.

C. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Goal C-1. Encourage the continued growth and enhancement of Gardiner’s central hamlet, outlying hamlets, commercial light industrial, and Ireland Corners highway commercial zones to serve local needs and targeted regional needs.

Goal C-2. Support diverse and equitable employment and housing choices for all residents and workers, and locate employment sources accessible to residents, including options for a green, innovative economy.

Goal C-3. Protect and foster the Town’s heritage through preservation of historic, scenic and ecological areas and landmarks, along with a strong agriculture and outdoor recreation-based economy.

Goal C-4. Provide a diversity of housing opportunities to ensure housing choices for all Town residents.

Goal C-5. Build a Climate Smart Gardiner through actions keyed to the Climate Smart Communities pledge.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Establish a Housing Committee to Complete a Housing Action Plan, and to monitor and report on progress with the Action Plan.

As discussed in the Town Profile chapter of this Plan Update, the Town of Gardiner is aware of the current and growing needs for diverse and affordable housing, serving both the Town residents and future residents attracted to Gardiner or likely to immigrate in. These needs are now more acute with the release of the 2021 Ulster County Housing Action Plan.

Highest priority is the establishment of a Town Housing Action Committee to advise Town leaders on the need and next steps to secure more diverse and affordable housing. That Committee will be empowered to collaborate with Ulster County toward the prompt completion of a Town Housing Action Plan, as outlined in the Ulster County Housing Action Plan. This Committee can be built on the authorization for a “Housing Board” found in the 2008 amendments to the Town Zoning §220-42.

This Housing Action Committee should also lead on research and recommendations for the following:

- ✓ A review/audit of the Town codes to identify and remove barriers to guarantee needed, secure and permanent housing.
- ✓ Options to incentivize additional affordable housing through use of methods including, but not limited to, accessory apartments, *Elder Cottage Housing Opportunities* (ECHO housing), and tiny house options, as well as other methods readily available.

Implement actions in support of the Town’s Climate Smart Communities pledge and recent Climate Smart Communities Certification.

In 2018 the Town of Gardiner officially approved, and begun working on, the *Climate Smart Communities Pledge*. In September 2021 this work led to the Town becoming a New York State Certified Climate Smart Community.

The *Pledge* is:

- 1) *Build a climate-smart community.*
- 2) *Inventory emissions, set goals, plan for climate action.*
- 3) *Decrease energy use.*
- 4) *Shift to clean, renewable energy.*
- 5) *Use climate-smart materials management.*
- 6) *Implement climate-smart land use.*
- 7) *Enhance community resilience to climate change.*
- 8) *Support a green innovation economy.*
- 9) *Inform and inspire the public.*
- 10) *Engage in an evolving process of climate action.*

Using this *Pledge*, this Plan Update affirms the importance of these ten (10) actions and the priority to continue to implement these actions under the guidance of the Climate Smart Gardiner Task Force advising and working with other Town officials, committees, and boards. These actions will help bring significant energy and utility cost savings, reduced operational costs, and reduced environmental impacts. The Climate Smart Gardiner Task Force should set a phase schedule for action.

Codify a commitment to clean up distressed / abandoned properties that undermine community character and growth potential.

A recurring comment during public outreach and engagement for this Plan Update was concern about the negative consequences of distressed, abandoned, or un-maintained properties scattered within the Town. With the aforementioned Zoning Audit, consideration should be given to best options for ensuring that such properties are inventoried. Measures are needed to avoid properties becoming distressed or abandoned, or are promptly improved to help maintain community and neighborhood character, along with overall value. Tools such as use of a vacancy tax, also known as an empty housing penalty, should be considered.

Complete and implement *Seniors Enrich Gardiner* recommendations.

The Town has an active Gardiner Senior Resources Committee (GSRC) that meets to advise the Town on services and other needs for senior residents of the Town. That Committee has made a set of presentations to the Town reviewing the value of senior residents to the Town, as well as comparing services and facilities offered by other Towns and Villages to those offered by Gardiner. Additionally, the research includes a review of the *American Association of Retired Persons* (AARP) Livability Index, further discussed in the earlier Town Profile chapter of this Plan Update.

Titled *Seniors Enrich Gardiner*, this research is attached here in Appendix D. The Plan Update recommends, in coordination with the GSRC, that the Town implement a series of actions to improve services for seniors. These are led by:

- ✓ A dedicated space or community center for seniors.
- ✓ Improvements, notably benches in the central hamlet and along the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail, to accommodate senior walking needs.
- ✓ Partnership with a developer to build dedicated senior / adult housing at an accessible location in or near the central hamlet of Gardiner.

Complete and Implement an Emergency Management/Disaster Preparedness & Resiliency Plan.

Dealing with disaster and emergencies is an essential function of local government. This function is aggravated by various conditions which include increased traffic volumes, growth in land uses (including larger events and outside recreation) and the unpredictability of climate and localized weather events, as the impacts from storms of unpredictable timing and intensity become more frequent.

Consistent with Article 2-B of New York State Executive Law and the New York State Defense Emergency Act, the Town in collaboration with Ulster County and New York State Emergency Management offices has the authority to complete and implement a local Emergency Management Plan. Through volunteer efforts, the Town has a review and outline of such a Plan. This Comprehensive Plan Update recommends that an Emergency Management Plan be completed as a priority for Town operations.

This action should include provision of training and guidance on preparedness for homeowners and neighborhood residents. One tangible request is to recommend all property addressing be done with night visible markings to ease emergency identification.

Traffic Safety Plan.

Traffic safety is a growing livability concern punctuated by a sense of rising traffic volumes, particularly on weekends, and by recent traffic accident incidents. As part of the ongoing Ulster County Road Safety Plan, concerns about traffic safety, including for pedestrians and bicyclists, have highlighted certain locations in the Town of Gardiner. The Town hosts 3 of the 10 road segments and intersections found in Ulster County where crash trends, traffic counts, and roadway characteristics have become priority locations for the Ulster County Transportation Council. These are:

Roadway Segment NYS Route 44/55 at the hairpin curve leading up the Shawangunk Ridge

Intersection NYS Routes 44/55 & County Route 7 (Brunswyck Rd)

Intersection NYS Routes 44/55 & Route 208 (Ireland Corners)

The Town should collaborate with Ulster County Transportation Council and New York State Department of Transportation to analyze these sites and other busy locations, including the central hamlet of Gardiner. This Traffic Safety Plan should identify roadways and intersections with rising traffic volumes

and accident incidents, as well as locations likely to see more volumes with time. Options for mitigating traffic volumes and accidents should then be defined and prioritized for improvements, including securing funding if capital improvements are significant.

This effort will also include consideration of Town road safety, and bicycle and pedestrian safety needs.

Take actions to maximize the benefits of Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Economy while mitigating impacts and costs.

There is tangible evidence that the Town's marketplace economics is shifting to a dominance of tourism and outdoor recreation activities, often complementing the Town's historic, agricultural basis. In Gardiner and nearby, State Parks, private preserves, and trailheads experience recurring overcrowding. Campgrounds and short-term rental properties are expanding. More and more sites offer services specifically targeted to travelers. Property values, as tracked by sales, are also rising as visitors take active interest in living and working in Gardiner.

But there can be real impacts from this strong shift in the local economy. Traffic, noise, over-use and competition for recreation sites, water supply stress, and housing affordability have all been cited as concerns during the recent Public Engagement phase of this Plan Update. Neighbors to some sites also feel they are bearing impacts without much recourse.

Town leadership agrees that there needs to be a better understanding of the benefits and costs for the Town from a strengthening market shift to a tourism and outdoor recreation-based economy. Such understanding could happen through partnership research with New York State Parks, Mohonk Preserve, or SUNY New Paltz. Where there are clear benefits, such as in agri-tourism, Town policies including codes should be reviewed and updated to maximize benefits. Such review and updating should also be a priority for other uses where benefits versus costs are less clear – allowing the Town to help incentivize activities with the strongest benefits while addressing predictable impacts.

D. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES GOALS

An essential function of the Town is to provide a set of needed infrastructure and services to benefit the community. The following presents updated Goals from the 2004 Comprehensive Plan as well as new recommendations based on research and input in 2021.

Goal D-1. Provide sufficient capacity in municipal services, notably sewer system, to allow for sustainable compact development and expansion in the central hamlet of Gardiner.

Goal D-2. Maintain health and safety standards for all land uses, including in areas of seasonal development, whether they remain seasonal or may be converted to year-round residency.

Goal D-3. Provide a diversity of transportation routes and modes throughout the Town, helping to connect the Town to the central hamlet and to improve transportation choices, including those to reduce automobile dependency and associated traffic congestion.

Goal D-4. Support improvements to infrastructure and services that help address resiliency, and reduce energy usage and greenhouse gas emissions.

Goal D-5. Coordinate with all levels of government including neighboring municipalities for efficient, equitable delivery of services.

Goal D-6. Continue to develop a Town parks system and outdoor recreation program for the benefit of Gardiner residents and visitors.

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES RECOMMENDATIONS

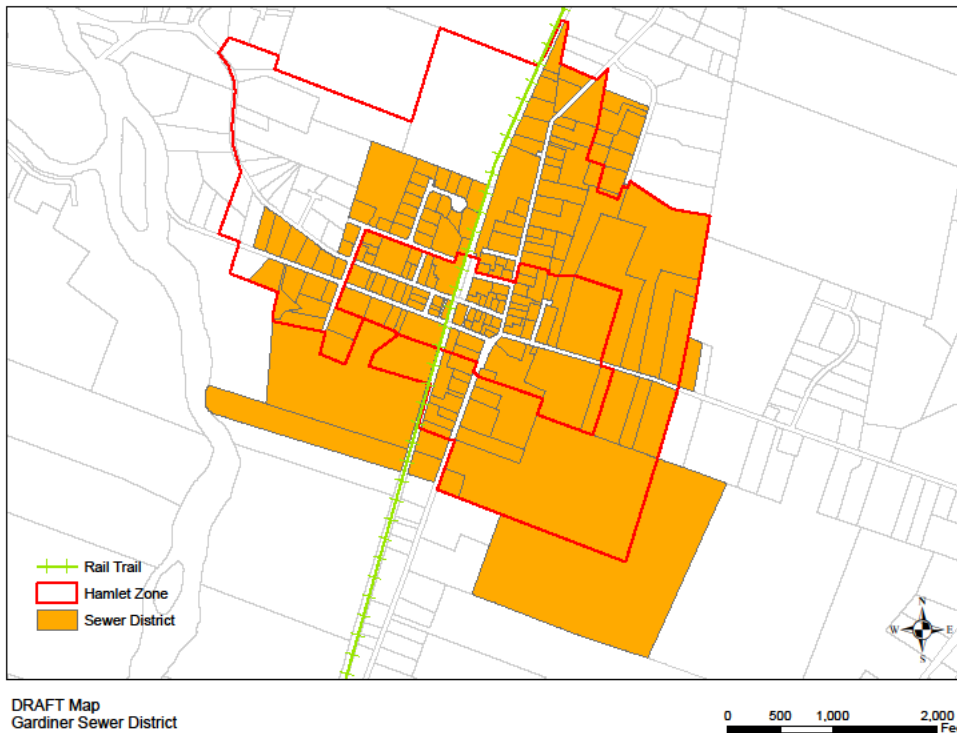
Take the next steps to improve and potentially expand sewage treatment services for the central hamlet of Gardiner and its expansion area.

A foundational concept of this Plan Update, as well as several recommendations, are based on expectation that the central hamlet of Gardiner can include additional density of mixed-land uses and can expand within an adjoining zoning district specifically designed for such hamlet expansion. Most of the hamlet is now served by a central sewage treatment system, known as Town of Gardiner Sewer District 1 (see Map below). This system includes some 346 acres of property and is designed to collect, via gravity and pumping, and treat liquid from septic tanks from some 179 users. These tanks are also pumped on a minimum three (3) years rotating cycle to clean out solid waste. After treatment, liquid discharge is drained to the adjoining Wallkill River, a NYSDEC Class B stream.

While permitted to handle up to 54,000 gallons per day, which is well within the demands of the existing users and some expanded users, the treatment plant has recurrently exceeded 95% of design flow, due to impacts from inflow and infiltration.

Consulting engineers Pitingaro & Doetsch published a study identifying a combination of inflow and infiltration from manholes, collection pipes, and septic tank risers needing repair, as well as some illicit connections. This study addressed an option correcting these problems, as well as a no-action option, and an option for construction of a new, conventional collection and treatment system (see Appendix D).

Capacity needs to be found for any further development within the central hamlet and its expansion district.



Long-term, research water supply sources for the central hamlet of Gardiner and Ireland Corners.

Access to central water and/or sewer services allows for more compact and intensive land uses common to the Town’s hamlet settings. Options for water supply services to the central hamlet and the nearby Ireland Corners neighborhood would foster the type and intensity of mixed-uses envisioned by both the 2004 Comprehensive Plan and this Plan Update. Independent research should examine groundwater availability for such services as well as the impacts from such systems.

Significant professional research has already been done in 1995 (Katherine Beinkafner), 1998 (Russell Urban-Mead, Chazen) and 2001 (Allan Randall) examining groundwater and aquifer conditions. That research is key to identifying the best future options for both protecting existing groundwater resources and securing a drinking water source from Town groundwaters. The Gardiner Environmental Conservation Commission, along with the New York Rural Water Association, is well-positioned to have reviewed this prior research and to advise on next steps.

Also, both primary aqueducts, transferring drinking water from upstate New York sources to New York City, cross through the Town of Gardiner. This reality gives Gardiner a legal ability to use water from the aqueducts, and this option has improved with recent NYC infrastructure work connecting the two aqueducts next to NYS Route 208, near the southern border of the Town. While use of this source

would be complicated and expensive – and requires identification of a backup water supply source, the high quality and accessibility of this source is worth researching as a future option.

Establish a Drainage / Stormwater District system to help finance and administer maintenance of post-construction stormwater practices.

Contemporary development standards require the management of stormwater for new development. Proper long-term management of runoff is essential to sustaining water quality and avoiding erosion. Experience in Gardiner and the surrounding region has demonstrated that while stormwater improvements and features can be effectively constructed as part of permit approvals, problems can occur with longer-term maintenance and financing for these improvements and features. New York State Town Law allows for the formation of special improvement districts. Like sewer or water districts, the same can be established to address stormwater. This Plan recommends research by the Highway Superintendent and Town Engineer and Attorney toward establishment of a protocol and rules for the creation of drainage improvement districts.

Public comment for this Plan Update also reported instances of drainage problems in specific neighborhoods, notably southern portions of the central hamlet of Gardiner, as well as certain locations impacting farm operations (see Agriculture recommendations). Inventory, evaluation and improvement, if needed, of these existing site-specific cases should be completed as a priority. A drainage district approach should be considered. NYSDEC Hudson River Estuary Program currently has funding for such projects.

Update and Adopt a clear policy and protocol for the acceptance of new Town roads versus allowance of private roads serving multiple uses.

The Highway Superintendent and Town Engineer have recommended action to set a clear policy and protocol for the acceptance of new Town roads as well as allowance or restriction of private roads. In both cases, Town code should be reviewed and updated to ensure modern road standards are met for any new roads. Additionally, this protocol should clarify road maintenance responsibilities and financing.

Coordinate with farm property owners to identify, fix and maintain road culverts and drainages impacting farming.

Farm property owners have noted recurring conditions where road culverts and drainage swales effectively serving public roads can impact conditions on adjoining fields and farm operations. Understanding that these conditions are not all on Town roads, it is recommended that the Town Highway Department assist in identifying and mitigating these conditions, including facilitating interaction with County and State contacts when needed.

Continue to Improve Code Monitoring and Enforcement.

One of the leading comments from the public outreach and engagement phase for this Plan Update was the need for improved and consistent code compliance monitoring and enforcement. Individuals and groups interviewed cited various incidences where there appeared to be, on the ground, inconsistent or a lack of compliance and enforcement with both new and existing development. Additionally, code enforcement needs to be coordinated with efforts to assess and monitor conservation lands and easements where some Town ownership or rights exist.

Whether real or perceived or both, a lack of compliance can undermine the community sense of fairness or of the necessity for any additional regulation. The Town is and will continue to make code monitoring and enforcement better. The Town has taken steps to grow the staff capacity for code compliance and enforcement, and to clarify roles and responsibilities. The Town has also recently updated the software used to track permitting. This Plan Update recommends those steps continue.

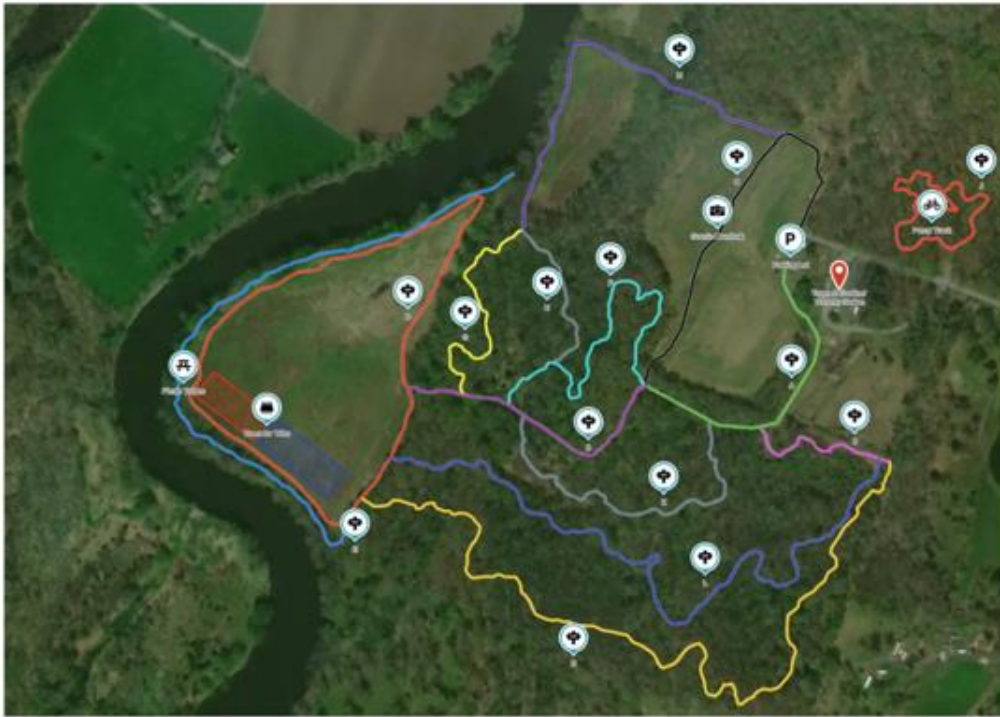
Implement park and trail improvements and expansion led by the Town of Gardiner Parks & Recreation Committee.

New recreation opportunities, facilities, and parks should be added to continue to improve and expand recreational offerings for the community. Parks and recreation facility improvements should consider the ever-evolving needs and interests of the community through community outreach and engagement, and should be upgraded with longevity, sustainability, climate resilience, and aesthetics in mind, with as much forethought for future uses as possible. Whenever possible, long-lasting and sustainable materials should be used. Furthermore, year-round recreational programming should occur, utilizing the amenities of Majestic Park, Gardiner Park, and other recreational areas in the Town.

The Town should assess a phased approach to implementing park and trail improvements and expansion using these park and trail proposals as inspiration (see Map below). Also prioritized are efforts to include improved bike and pedestrian connections between the properties in these proposals and the Walkkill Valley Rail Trail, as well as improved Walkkill River access for paddling, fishing and other water-based recreation.

Trail and park expansion locations can also be an essential element of a Town “official map”.

Trail Map



Examine expanded and efficient use of available Town properties.

The Town is fortunate to own a set of properties for various uses (see Map of Conserved & Publicly Owned Lands, Chapter 1). Some, notably Majestic Park and the Town reach of the longer Wallkill Valley Rail Trail, are dedicated park or recreation lands, while other properties have been used for various purposes. These lands, notably Majestic Park, the lot adjacent to Town Hall, and the lands adjacent to the Transfer Station and Dog Kennel, can sustain additional and expanded uses, notably outdoor recreation. Community gardens are also a desired use.

This Plan Update recommends that the Town complete a Capital Improvement Plan for Town properties. Such a plan should look at the needs for expansion of existing services and facilities, the potential for new uses, notably outdoor recreation, parking and access points to other public lands; and the scheduling and financing of any priority improvements. This Plan should also incorporate outdoor recreation proposals prepared by the Gardiner Parks & Recreation Committee and the Gardiner Trails Alliance. The farm community has also suggested the value of a shared community space at Majestic Park. Possibilities include community farm market or exchange, as well as preparation and events kitchen in the pole barn or elsewhere.

Formalize a process to create connections among and between municipal and volunteer bodies to encourage growth and identify targeted regulatory needs to support desired outcomes. Start with annual reporting and convening, including a review of the progress implementing priority recommendations of this Plan Update.

The Town of Gardiner benefits from the engagement of a broad range of individual volunteers working with staff and volunteer members of officially appointed Town boards, committees, and commissions. This work can be strengthened through coordination and exchange of information and experiences. Building on the annual meeting between the Town Board, the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals, the Environmental Conservation and Open Space Commissions, and the Parks and Recreation Committee, this Plan Update recommends an organized and recurring means of at least annual coordination and interaction.

Such boards, commissions and committees should also submit an annual report to the Town Board. That annual report should include a review of progress implementing priority recommendations of this Plan Update. These annual reports would also be used to complete the five (5) fuller review and update of the Comprehensive Plan.

The Town gains substantially from the volunteer efforts of unofficial, but still very important civic and community-based entities. Coordination should be recurring for the official boards, committees, and commissions of the Town as well as between these official entities and other civic and service groups active in Town.

Gain access to professional grant research, writing, and administration.

The Town recognizes that to implement many of the recommendations in the Plan Update will go beyond volunteer efforts and will require funding. Availability of funding may burden the Town financially and can slow progress without matching sources. Outside funding, notably grants, is available but has become more complex to track and to prepare competitive applications.

Supported by consistent feedback during the public outreach and engagement phase for this Plan Update, the Town needs to establish a working relationship with a professional who can both track and apply for grant funds to support various recommendations found here and in other activities of the Town. The Town also needs support for grant administration and compliance. This professional could be defined through a qualified staff person or through an outside contract.

E. AGRICULTURE GOALS

Agriculture Goals and Recommendations is a new section to this Plan Update, reflecting the historic importance of farming to the Town of Gardiner, and the primary roles agriculture still provides for the Town of Gardiner's economy, landscape, and land uses. Chapter 1 discusses and maps the extent of this on the Town landscape.

Goal E-1. Work in partnership to improve the viability of farms and farm businesses throughout the Town.

Goal E-2. Broaden public support for agriculture through ongoing community education and engagement.

Goal E-3. Help maintain the economic viability of agriculture as a leading economic sector and as a primary element of the Town's landscape and character.

Goal E-4. Support new and next generation of farmers and farm business owners.

Goal E-5. Ensure Town policies and codes remain farm-friendly.

AGRICULTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

Review and Update Town code for farm and farm business friendliness.

Town codes should be reviewed and audited to check that they do not create unintended obstacles to farm and farm-business vitality. For example, modern agricultural practices on active farmland should be as-of-right, or should be limited to simple, clear standards with minimum filing or permit requirements. Complementary uses such as processing and retail sales as well as farm worker housing should be allowed with simple administration. Agri-tourism uses such as seasonal retail or recreation, and on-site events should be permitted with standards to avoid impacts to neighbors from traffic, noise, or lighting. Code provisions should also provide procedures to evaluate and avoid or mitigate impacts on agriculture by new adjoining land uses.

With this review, and under Article 25AA of New York State Agriculture and Markets Law, the Town can consider establishing a right to farm law, complementing the same statewide provisions. By doing so, the Town affirms as policy the importance of agriculture in the Town and makes clear that day-to-day operations involved in farming and farm business (known as sound agricultural practices) are accepted and permitted practices.

Create a process to gain regular, recurring advice from the farm community.

Agriculture remains a primary economic sector of the Town of Gardiner as well as one of the most prominent uses of land. Towns throughout New York State have gained from the active advice of farmers and farm business owners. The Town should set a process for Town officials and primary

boards, notably the Town Board and Planning Board, to gain recurring advice from farm business and farm property owners. This could be a meeting once or twice a year.

One option is the establishment of an Agricultural Advisory Committee, composed of volunteer representatives active in, or familiar with agricultural practices. Such Committee could meet as needed to advise Town officials on any changes to the County agricultural districts. They could review proposed zoning changes and development permit applications in agricultural districts and adjacent to farm operations. They can review and communicate to the Town Board on relevant town, county, state or federal policies directly impacting agriculture. They can meet annually with the Town Board, and report on the conditions for farm and farm-businesses in the Town.

Additionally, this Committee could serve to mediate conflicts which may arise between farm operations and others as per Right to Farm provisions of either New York State or Town of Gardiner, as noted above.

A first, partnership project - collaboration on Town/farm marketing.

As noted earlier, Gardiner has an impressive range of agricultural activities and local products. Indeed there is the theme that in Gardiner you locally source products *From Every Food Group*. Yet many residents and visitors are unaware of this availability of products and experiences.

The Town can support a public/private effort to research and initiate a collaborative, promotional program. This could be styled after the Marlborough Farm Trail. Titled *Meet Me in Marlborough* and organized by that town's Agricultural Alliance, a membership based marketing collaboration that promotes farming history and industry. Coupled with designation by NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets as a New York State Farm Trail (via NYS Agriculture and Market Law Article 23, Section 284) – a farm trail is "...an association of producers that are in close proximity to each other, that well in a cooperative manger a complementary variety of farm and food projects, and that utilize a map, other directional devices, or highway signs to market products and direct patrons...."

See also prior recommendation under Community Infrastructure and Services on expanded use of Town properties for farm market events.

Initiate a public education program to inform residents, notably new residents, about farming practices.

The Town, partnering with civic groups and others, should initiate outreach and education on the values and realities of farming. This can include various efforts, from a Buy Local promotional campaign to simple information online or in print – such as a brochure or rack card introducing the Town's agricultural sector to resident, visitors, and prospective new residents. Buy Local program can be included as a collaboration with realtors to provide new residents with background on local opportunities. Also of benefit would be direct education and training for Town staff and officials on modern agricultural needs.

This outreach could be incorporated into mailing or outreach to new property owners and residents.

Continue and strengthen support for farmland preservation working with willing property owners.

As discussed under Resource Protection/Open Space recommendations, there remains a need to work with willing property owners to further preserve quality farmland. This should be recognized as not just a resource protection tool, but also as a method to retain supportive working landscapes and to assist participating farmland owners in meeting their financial goals.