

TOWN OF GERMANTOWN



COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

VOLUME 1: THE PLAN

Comprehensive Plan Committee
April 2007 Draft

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*Volume 2 of the Town of Germantown Comprehensive Plan
contains appendices to the plan.*

1. Introduction and Purpose of Plan

PLANNING PROCESS

The process of developing a new comprehensive plan for Germantown began in January 2005, as the Town Board came to recognize the importance of preserving traditional aspects of life in Germantown while managing changes in ways that would benefit the community as a whole. Then-supervisor Alan Liepschutz called for volunteers to form a Comprehensive Plan Committee, which began research in such areas as Town history, land use, natural resources, housing, economy, infrastructure and transportation.

In October of that year the committee sponsored a community workshop to receive direction from the people of Germantown. Over 100 residents expressed their thoughts and opinions about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats currently bearing on the town and offered ideas for future solutions and initiatives. Then, in January 2006, the committee mailed out a survey to 820 households in Germantown. It contained 25 questions on topics identified at the community workshop. The response – 374 surveys, or 46%, returned – was unusually high and provided the committee with more detailed expressions of what the people of Germantown want for the future of their town.



These outreach efforts to involve as many members of the community in the planning process as possible, along with further public meetings in the spring of 2007 to present a completed draft of the plan to the community for more comment, have been of the greatest importance to the planning committee. Exceptional participation in these events verified the interest of townspeople in the project, and strong agreement on many topics occurred among the Town's diverse population. Before presenting its final draft to the Town Board to be considered for adoption, the committee also held workshops on its contents with the Town Board, the Planning Board and the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Well designed for its time, the Germantown Master Plan Review of 1989 identified many of the same concerns that the present committee has heard. But times have changed, new issues have arisen, and a new comprehensive plan must address the Town's needs in the 21st century as well as its continuing issues. Not only are updated master plans desirable for a town, they are also now required in New York State under a 1995 state law.



PLAN PURPOSE

A comprehensive plan is a public document that belongs to the community as a whole. It is a statement of a community's goals and a conceptual road map for how to achieve them. The Town of Germantown Comprehensive Plan establishes a sound foundation to serve as a reliable guide to Town leaders and decision makers in discharging their responsibilities as stewards for the Town.

As a framework for decisions and actions

that will affect the public, this comprehensive plan reflects the expressed needs, desires and will of the Town's collective majority. Consistent use of the plan will assure that change, when necessary, occurs in ways that are orderly and objective, that conserve irreplaceable resources and that consider the consequences of present actions on future generations of citizens.

The reasons for adopting a comprehensive plan are many. It is the legal basis for a community's land-use regulations, which must, by law, be "in accordance" with the plan. As implemented in a town's zoning code, a comprehensive plan and the values and priorities it articulates must be recognized and considered by all local, county, state and federal agencies and other organizations and institutions as to their plans and actions that impact upon the town. Because it describes a town in detail and lays out detailed recommendations for its future, a comprehensive plan also allows a community to more effectively market and attract the kinds of development it prefers and to compete successfully for grants, loans and other kinds of public and private assistance for desired projects. It can be used to promote regional cooperation with nearby communities with similar goals and objectives and to seek common solutions to common problems.

KEEPING THE PLAN UP-TO-DATE

A comprehensive plan is not a static entity but a flexible document that provides the opportunity for a continuous process of evaluation of progress over time and as change occurs. The Town of Germantown should assess and update its comprehensive plan every five years to assure its continued effectiveness in the future.

2. Central Findings

“Let’s keep our wonderful, quiet, rural town just that.”

INTRODUCTION

The single most important factor in determining a town’s character is the uses to which it devotes the land within its borders. As time passes, the interests, concerns and wishes of townspeople change, shape and reshape the look of the land and the uses made of it. Germantown is no exception. Earlier generations may have taken for granted that Germantown was a rural community, but its current citizens have become acutely aware of the need to take steps to preserve and enhance the Town’s traditional character while meeting the challenge of changing times.

In statements made at a community planning workshop, in responses to a community survey, and in numerous meetings, e-mails and conversations, the people of Germantown have clearly said what kind of future they want for their Town. Their values and priorities may be summarized as follows:

- 1) Maintain the rural character of Germantown.
- 2) Preserve Germantown’s natural resources.
- 3) Encourage controlled business and residential development.
- 4) Promote efficient and responsive local government.

1) Maintain the rural character of Germantown.

In terms of square mileage, Germantown is the second smallest town in Columbia County. Because of this, the Town’s population density exceeds New York State’s definition of “rural” as encompassing 150 residents or less per square mile. But viewing the Town from its state, county and town roads reveals a landscape and townscape of an undeniably rural nature. Large open fields and woods surround widely scattered homes. There are working farms and no large apartment or condominium developments. Even the village core, with its post office, few businesses, and denser housing has the feel of a rural center; Germantown residents “come in from the country” to its small “downtown” area. Along State Route 9G, Germantown’s major north-south highway, there are more homes than commercial enterprises, and always present to the west of the highway are the Hudson River and, beyond it, the Catskill Mountains, natural features of great beauty and importance to Germantown’s history and character.



The 25-question survey circulated by the Comprehensive Plan Committee achieved a 46% rate of return from the 820 households it was sent to, a response far exceeding the 15% normally considered good. Ninety-seven percent of those who responded rated “Germantown’s rural character” as important, and when asked to rate twenty-two different aspects of the Town, 95% named “Maintaining open spaces” as important. Forty-six percent answered Yes when asked if they would support increased Town spending to preserve open space and farmland if it meant increased taxes. Recognizing these indications of Germantowners’ determination to give direction to their Town, the Comprehensive Plan Committee has considered its primary task the recommending of ways to protect and preserve, in the context of present and future changes, Germantown’s rural character.

2) Preserve Germantown’s natural resources.



Germantown is rich in open fields, rolling hills, wetlands, forests, streams and low-lands. For hundreds of years, these natural features and their soils supported the Town’s principal industry – farming. Orchards, vineyards, pastures, fields in garden and silage crops supplied the local population and maintained the local economy. In the second half of the twentieth century, however, farming activities began to decrease as the Town became more and more a residential community. But

there are still large farms in Germantown, and in recent years there has been an upsurge of activity in the area of specialty farming that takes advantage of increasing consumer interest in unprocessed and locally produced foods. In addition, Germantown has joined with Livingston and Clermont in a Keep Farming project that will help sustain agriculture as a significant local activity.

But the varied landscapes of Germantown, rich as they are, overlie a subsurface geology that is remarkably poor in one important resource – water. A recent study by the New York Rural Water Association has revealed that there is no known aquifer underlying the Town. Residents have long relied on individual wells, more productive in some places than in others, for their water supply, and it is clear that the only source for those wells is groundwater. Geologic formations suggest a possible aquifer in northern Germantown, but its distance from the village center would make it, if it exists, of little practical use as the source of a public water system, if one were ever proposed. This lack of a deep water supply to the Town, along with the vulnerability of its groundwater to contamination because of its closeness to the surface of the land, will impose serious constraints on future residential and commercial developments. Protecting its existing water supply must be a key element in any regulations that the Town adopts to preserve its natural resources.

3. Encourage controlled business and residential development.

Participants in the October 2005 community workshop chose Community Character, including “a viable village center with locally owned businesses,” as Germantown’s second most important strength (after its rural character) and Business Diversification as the Town’s most important opportunity for the future. Seventy-one to 81% of respondents to the community survey identified “encourage home-based businesses,” “preserve open space in new business developments,” and “develop design guidelines for commercial districts” as priorities.

The two short blocks along Main Street from the post office to Church Avenue in Germantown constitute the village center and have traditionally been – and should continue to be – the principal site of the Town’s retail and service businesses. The compactness of this area, which also includes residences, provides a valuable degree of “walkability” to the Town center. The recent establishment of a public sewer district reaching out from the center provides an opportunity for new housing still in the village, and beyond the center, where housing is less dense, there are possibilities for meeting housing needs through alternate housing arrangements like accessory apartments and other shared living solutions and for environmentally appropriate developments. In the community survey, more than half of the respondents called for the Town to use zoning regulations to encourage a greater diversity of housing in the Town.

Business development, job creation, and housing development are intricately related. The recent shift in demographics toward Germantown’s being more and more a residential town, combined with an increase in second-home buying in the township, has already provided new employment for local contractors and others in the building trades. Collaboration with Columbia County agencies and with administrations in neighboring towns will increase the chances of successful business initiatives and housing solutions within the Town of Germantown.

4. Promote efficient and responsive local government.

As in other small towns in Columbia County and elsewhere in New York State, government in Germantown is administered essentially by a Town Board, which includes the Town Supervisor, and by a limited number of other boards and committees. With the exception of the Highway Supervisor, a few Highway Department employees and an executive assistant to the Supervisor, Town positions are part-time and salaries, including that of the Supervisor, are low. Members of boards and committees are community volunteers.

In the past, this governance structure has by and large proved adequate to the needs of the Town. But changing demographics and both new opportunities and more complex local issues now call for revised and improved Town services and personnel to solve current problems and meet future challenges. As indicated at the October 2005 community workshop and in responses to the community survey, the people of Germantown recognize that the character of the Town is changing and that the interests of all its residents, whether full-time or part-time, newly arrived or present for generations, need to be reconciled and acknowledged for the greater good of the community.

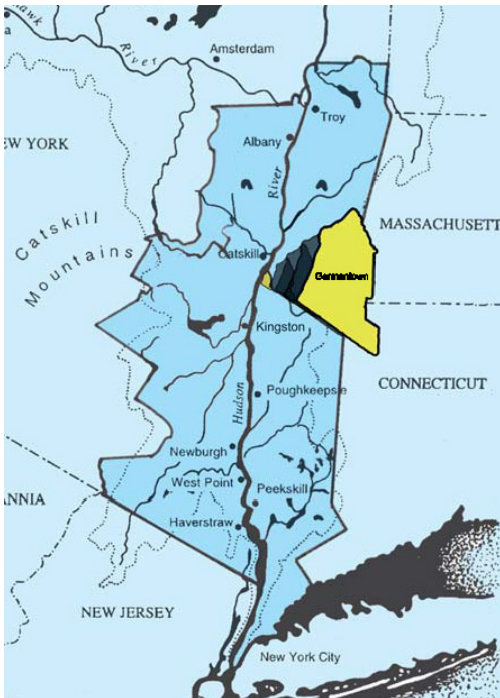
SUMMARY

“Everything is land use,” a member of the Comprehensive Plan Committee remarked at one of its meetings. As noted at the beginning of these central findings, it is equally true that land use is everything. And when goals, concepts, requirements and recommendations about land use, as well as about development and town governance, are made practical in the real world of town planning, the principal tool for doing so is zoning. To that end, the committee recommends that the Town Board, as its highest priority on adopting this comprehensive plan, appoint a Zoning Committee to revise and update the Town’s zoning and subdivision ordinances in order to protect and enhance the Town’s natural beauty, rural character and prosperity, as so clearly mandated by its citizens. A concept of “thoughtful growth” emerged from the October 2005 community workshop. It is an idea that can provide a guiding vision for the Town’s future.

3. Regional Context and Local History

“I think the idea here is to expand somewhat and improve tastefully but keep the character of Germantown. It is such a beautiful place to live with wonderful, friendly people.”

REGIONAL SETTING



Germantown is situated on the east bank of the Hudson River in the southwestern part of Columbia County. It is bounded on the west by the Hudson River, on the south and east by the town of Clermont, and on the north by the town of Livingston. Centered in the historic and scenic Hudson Valley, Germantown commands beautiful views of the northern Catskill Mountains range. The Town is located approximately 100 miles north of New York City and 35 miles south of Albany.

Increasing commercial and business activity to the north in the Albany region – particularly in the rapidly developing digital technology field – is creating housing needs that could turn towns like Germantown into commuter destinations. This is already happening in areas of northern Columbia County. To the south, gentrification of rural communities, rapid first- and second-home residential expansion and unregulated

commercial sprawl already seen in some parts of Dutchess County will likely continue moving up the Hudson River and, in time, reach Germantown. In the not too distant future, the Town risks being caught in a development squeeze unless steps are taken to control it.

A HISTORY OF GERMANTOWN

Germantown was originally part of the Livingston Manor, a large tract of lands granted by the British crown to Robert Livingston in the late 17th century and operated on a tenant-farmer basis. In 1710, by order of Queen Anne, Robert Hunter, the Royal Governor of New York Province, purchased 6,000 acres from Livingston. This land, which now comprises the majority of present-day Germantown, was purchased to provide a settlement for Palatine immigrants who had fled hardship in and around the Palatinate, a principality along the Rhine River in southwest Germany.

A group of about 1,100 to 1,400 Palatines arrived within the next year and set up rudimentary settlements, collectively called “East Camp,” on the east bank of the Hudson River. The settlers were to produce naval stores (tar and turpentine) for the British Navy, but the local pine trees were inadequate and the project quickly failed. Most of the Palatine settlers relocated elsewhere, but 63 families remained, settling in four small hamlets —Annesbury, Queensbury, Hayesbury and Hunterstown. Many descendants of those families still live in Germantown.

Title to the land was granted by the Royal Governor of New York Province to the 63 families, but the government of Germantown was generally under the jurisdiction of the Livingston Manor until 1775, when Columbia County was divided into “districts” and Germantown became an independent entity. On March 7, 1788, the District of Germantown officially became a Township. A portion of Clermont was later added to make a total of approximately 8,000 acres.

The area remained a German-speaking community for many years, and even the schools did not use English until 1813, when a public-school system was established. The community was largely farming in nature, producing almost everything the community needed. Crops of the day were wheat, rye, corn and potatoes. Dairy products and vegetables were also staples. Orchards and vineyards gradually replaced these crops as the community became less self-supporting and specialization emerged with transport to New York City markets first by sail and after 1850 by rail. The building of roads and the use of horses and, later, automobiles and trucks contributed materially to this change.

The Germantown of today still retains many of the characteristics of its rural past with fruit culture still a presence. However, the obvious advantage of the area for residential purposes has resulted in a gradual change of Germantown into primarily a rural-residential community.

HISTORIC RESOURCES



In 2010 Germantown will mark the 300th anniversary of its founding. Even in the face of three centuries of progress, there are still many historic features in the Town that reflect its origins and historical development and that merit preservation. In 1976 a Historic Features Inventory was completed for the Town by a local historian. The inventory provides historical and architectural descriptions as well as locational information and map references for a variety of historic structures and sites (see Volume 2, Appendices). The inventory has not been updated to reflect additions or demolitions since 1976.

Historic Settlements. Evidence of Germantown’s history as an agricultural community still persists in its current land-use patterns: small, dense settlements along the Hudson River, large unbuilt tracts in the eastern and southern parts of the Town and the presence throughout the Town of old, frequently abandoned orchards and open fields. Characteristics of Germantown’s earliest settlements are still recognizable by road and land-use patterns, by the density of settlement, and by the architecture of homes and outbuildings.

ANNESBURY. Today's North Germantown, the area along Northern Boulevard, Anchorage Road and Camp Creek Road, features many historic homes and fine views of the Hudson River and Catskill Mountains. The Ernest R. Lasher Memorial Park, which provides Hudson River access, is located on the site of the old Anchorage, an important landing place throughout Germantown's history.

QUEENSBURY. The vicinity of Sharp's Landing, Maple Avenue and Route 9G was an active 18th-century trading center in Germantown. The neighborhood was home to the old Reformed Church and First Lutheran Church. The Parsonage is a significant surviving building.

HAYESBURY. The crossroads where Main Street crosses State Route 9G is mostly devoid of historical character today, but it once featured a hotel, a mill, a blacksmith shop, a post office and other commercial and residential buildings. The area west of Route 9G – Lower Main Street and Young America Road – still has many attractive homes dating from the 19th and early 20th centuries. At the river there is now a disused cold storage facility and the site of what was once a busy railroad station.

EAST CAMP / HUNTERSTOWN / CHEVIOT. At the southwestern corner of Germantown, this earliest settlement is generally known today as Cheviot. The ferry landing to West Camp across the Hudson River was located here, as was the Town's first railroad station. An old schoolhouse has been converted into a private residence, and the nearby cemetery has Palatine gravestones with German inscriptions.

VILLAGE CENTER. Germantown's village center is located on County Route 8 (Main Street) considerably east of the Hudson River and Route 9G. A village was established here in the first half of the 19th century. Although several buildings were destroyed by fire in 1923, the area retains an attractive collection of late 19th and early 20th century commercial buildings and residences that give it a charming small-town character. The Central House on Main Street at Church Avenue was an important hotel and tavern from the 1860s onward. Fallen into derelict condition, it is now under renovation. Surrounding the village center, along Main Street, Church Avenue and Maple Avenue, are many fine homes dating from the 19th and 20th centuries. Several are significant because of their age or architectural merit, and others are simply fine examples of vernacular domestic architecture.

The Parsonage. The Town's oldest building, the Parsonage, built in 1746, is a fine example of a vernacular residential building erected by 18th-century settlers in New York. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, it is owned by the Town and is a repository of archival material and museum artifacts that document the history of Germantown. Still possessed of its architectural integrity and situated in a rural setting, the Parsonage is an important representative of the early settlement of Columbia County.



Historic homes. Much of Germantown's housing stock is old, vintage or antique. According to the 2000 Census, 47% of Germantown's homes were built before 1940. The Town's older homes and their relation to other features (e.g., closeness to the road, barns and outbuildings, mature trees) contribute significantly to the rural character and attractiveness of the area. A drive along any of Germantown's roads will present many examples of old country homes, some of them of great age or significant architecture. Many of the Town's historic homes are well preserved; a few are in need of repair.



A prime example of the Town's historic homes is the Rockefeller Home, a two-storey building located on County Route 8 east of the village. The oldest part was built in 1755 by Simeon Rockefeller, an ancestor of John D. Rockefeller, and served in its early days as a tavern. In the first decade of the 19th century, the building's size was doubled and a colonnaded double porch added to the facade. The Rockefeller Home may have been the site of Germantown's first town meeting.

Churches. Germantown is home to four churches, each of which has been an important institution in the community for many years.

- Reformed Church of Germantown, Church Avenue, is a beautiful Carpenter Gothic building erected in 1880. The church was established in Germantown in 1728.
- Church of the Resurrection Catholic Church, Church Avenue; building was erected in 1924.
- United Methodist Church, Camp Creek Road; its history in Germantown dates from the 1840s or earlier.
- Christ Lutheran Church, Church Avenue, Viewmont; the Lutheran denomination arrived in Germantown with the Palatines in 1710. This classic country church building was dedicated in 1868.

Cemeteries. Germantown's cemeteries are not only sacred sites, they also provide a historical record of Germantown's inhabitants over the past three centuries. Several graveyards are associated with and located near current churches; both the United Methodist Church and Christ Lutheran Church have adjacent cemeteries. Valley View cemetery on Hover Avenue is an annex of the Methodist Church cemetery. The Reformed Church cemetery is located on a beautiful site on Route 8 at the church's former location. The East Camp cemetery in Cheviot is the Town's oldest, with gravestones dating back to the Palatine period.

Historic Designations and Site Markers. Germantown is included in the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area, established by Congress in 1996, a 165-mile-long district stretching from Westchester County northward to Saratoga. The National Heritage Area was established to educate the public and preserve the rich history of the area. Its website (www.hudsonrivervalley.org).

com) promotes heritage tourism in the Hudson Valley. A small portion of southern Germantown is also included in the New York State-designated “Estates District Scenic Area of Statewide Significance.” Cheviot and Roundtop Roads mark the northern boundary of this district.

The Hudson River National Historic Landmark District, designated by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior in 1990, abuts Germantown on its southern boundary and stretches southward to Hyde Park. Hudson River Heritage, a not-for-profit membership organization, acts as the steward for the district and may be helpful in obtaining historic-district status for initial Palatine settlement areas. As noted above, one individual property, the Parsonage, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. There are nine historic-site markers in Germantown, put in place by the New York State Marker Program in the 1930s. Unfortunately, most of them mark sites of buildings that are no longer standing, and a few bear factual inaccuracies as revealed by subsequent historical research.

FUTURE ISSUES

Development pressures may jeopardize preservation of what remains of Germantown’s historic fabric. Large farm parcels may be subdivided for housing developments, and old and historic houses may be altered or replaced by new construction. Archaeological remnants of Germantown’s earliest history may be disturbed or destroyed by future building and development activities.

The Town would benefit from the updating of its 1976 Historic Features Inventory, as it could then determine whether the establishment of a historic/architectural review process would be appropriate. Such a process could create standards for the review of proposed demolitions, removals and major exterior alterations to designated historic or architecturally significant structures and sites. The Town might also want to consider whether historical context should be a consideration in the review of proposed developments that are next to historic sites and structures.

GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

■ GOALS:

- To favor the preservation of existing housing stock and commercial buildings through rehabilitation and reuse instead of encouraging new building and development.
- To ensure that new developments adjacent to historic properties are respectful of the character and context of the historic properties.

■ **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. Amend zoning and subdivision standards to:
 - a) require an assessment of historic and archaeological assets as part of the review process for development proposals in the Town's historic areas, and
 - b) adopt design standards for historically significant districts (such as the village center) and for significant properties.
2. Encourage a private/public partnership (e.g., an historical society or "Friends of" organization) to provide better resources to preserve the historic Parsonage building and the Town's historical archives and artifact collections and to broaden public awareness and appreciation of Germantown's history.
3. Coordinate historic-preservation activities with neighboring organizations that have related missions (e.g., Hudson River Heritage, Hudson Valley Vernacular Architecture and others).
4. Perform an updated, detailed historic-resource inventory for the Town in collaboration with Hudson River Heritage's ongoing work in Germantown.
5. Support extension of the Hudson River Historic District to include the Germantown waterfront.

4. The People of Germantown

“Germantown seems to be becoming a retirement community. I want to see more people here raising their families and providing a future for our young people.”

POPULATION GROWTH

In 2000 Germantown had a population of 2,018 according to U.S. Census data. During the 1960s and 1970s, the Town experienced modest growth that then leveled off during the 1980s and 1990s. On average, the population has grown at a rate of 8.5% per decade since 1960 (see Table 1).

Table 1: Germantown’s Population Growth

Year	Population	% Change
1960	1,504	
1970	1,782	18.5%
1980	1,922	7.9%
1990	2,010	4.6%
2000	2,018	0.4%
1960-2000		8.5%

Source: U.S. Census

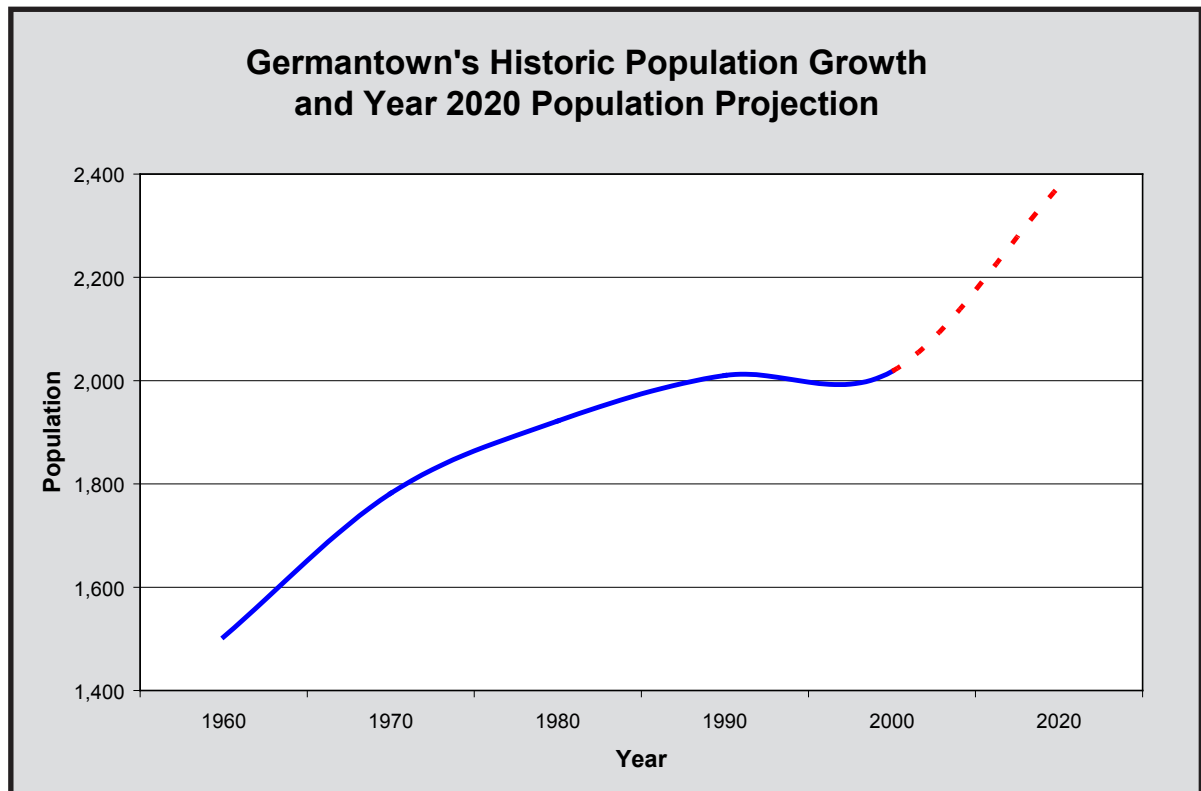
Census figures alone, however, cannot present a complete picture of Germantown’s population, partly because the data are already six years out-of-date but also because they do not reliably account for the Town’s part-time residents, or “weekenders,” since the Census counts only permanent inhabitants. Like other towns in the mid-Hudson Valley, Germantown has become an attractive second-home destination for New York City residents. Although U.S. Census data indicate that 9.6% of the housing units in the Town are for seasonal, recreational or occasional purposes, 12.8% of the respondents to the Town’s community survey identified themselves as weekend residents.

Nor do Census statistics tell the whole story about Germantown’s likely population growth in coming years. Although the Town’s population did not significantly increase during the 1990s, current indicators suggest that population growth may again be on the rise. Building permits for new single-family homes have increased dramatically since 2000 (see *Housing*, Chapter 7). Rapid development in neighboring counties, particularly in Dutchess County to the south, is likely to put additional development pressure on Germantown as growing numbers of metropolitan New York households move northward. Proximity to New York City and a growing appreciation of the scenic beauty of the Hudson Valley will contribute significantly to the area’s future growth.

Both the high rate of growth of 18.5% in the 1960s and the low rate of 0.4% in the 1990s may be anomalies, but taking the average growth rate of 8.5% for the decades between 1960 and 2000, a reasonable projection of the Town’s population in 2020 can be made. This calculation results in

a 2020 estimate of 2,376 full-time residents, an increase of 368 over the 2000 population. This is a conservative figure because it relies on Census data alone, which do not include part-time, or weekend, residents, for whom no reliable population statistics exist. Nevertheless, this population projection can help the Town estimate future needs for buildable land as well as for community facilities and services.

FIGURE 1:

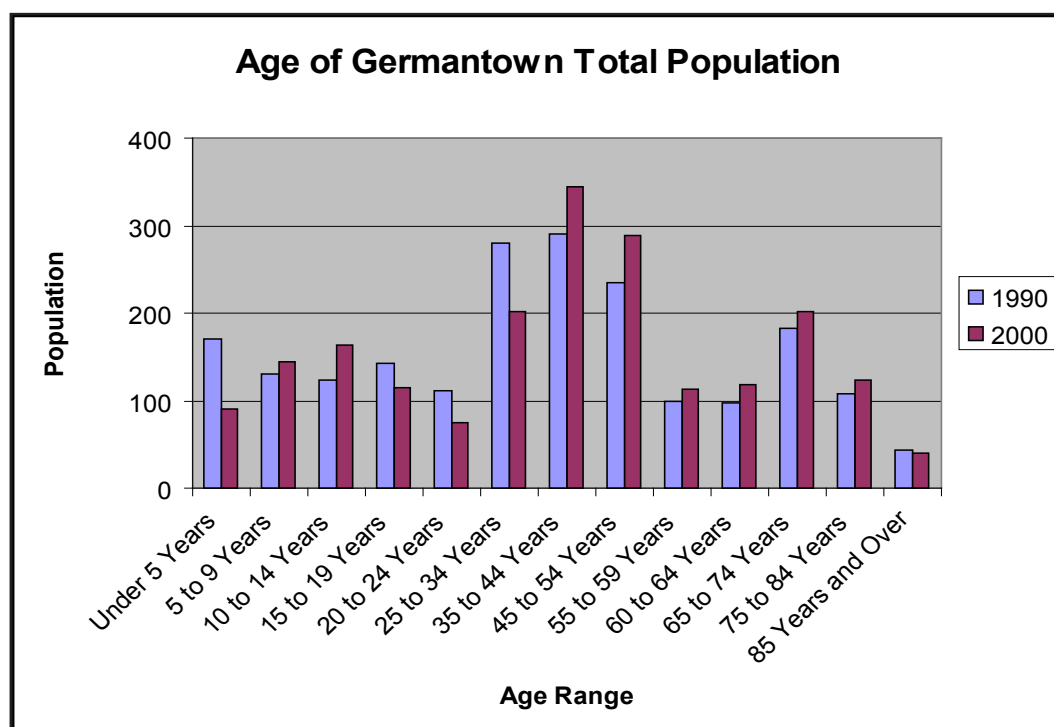


POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

The character of each community is as unique as the individuals that comprise it. The age, social and household characteristics of communities can vary significantly from one place to another, although similarities between communities may also exist. In general, the characteristics of Germantown's population closely align with those of Columbia County. However, Germantown's population is racially more homogeneous than the populations of Columbia County or New York State. Overwhelmingly, Town residents are white (97%), with Hispanic and African-American groups making up 1.3% and 1.1%, respectively. But as in the broader American society, women are in the majority in Germantown, making up 51.4% of the population.

The median age of Germantown residents is 41.8 years, a little older than that of Columbia County and New York State. Not quite one-quarter of the Town's residents are children, over three-quarters are adults, and 18% are senior citizens. Like much of the nation, the population of Germantown is aging. In the decade between 1990 and 2000, the percentage of residents 45 years and older increased from 38% to 43.8% (see Figure 2).

FIGURE 2:



Germantown's population is generally well educated. The percentage of Town residents who have completed high school (81.6%) is comparable to that for the County (81.0%) and the State (79.1%). And while the percentage who have earned a college or graduate degree (22.9%) is even with the County average (22.6%), it is below the State average (27.4%). Germantown has a similar proportion of veterans (15.6%) to the County but a higher proportion than the State (9.5%). And 20% of the Town's residents have a disability, a percentage comparable to County and State averages (see Table 2).

The great majority of Germantown residents was born in the United States; only 5% were foreign born, a figure similar to the County figure (4.4%) but lower than the State average (20.4%). Similarly, very few Germantown residents speak a language other than English at home (see Table 2).

Table 2: Social Characteristics (2000)

	Germantown	Columbia County	New York State
High school graduate or higher (age 25+)	81.6%	81.0%	79.1%
Bachelors degree or higher (age 25+)	22.9%	22.6%	27.4%
Civilian veterans (age 18+)	15.6%	15.1%	9.5%
Disability status (age 5+)	20.0%	18.8%	20.6%
Speak a language other than English at home (age 5+)	6.5%	6.7%	28.0%
Foreign born	5.0%	4.4%	20.4%

Source: U.S. Census



Families predominate in Germantown. Of the 831 households in the town in 2000, 65.8% were families, with 53.7% including married couples, female heads of household at 7.5% and residences with children under 18 years at 30.1%. By contrast, single people living alone made up 28.8% of households, while 32.7% of all households included an individual 65 years or over. Germantown households are similar to those within the County, except that there are fewer female household heads in Germantown and more households with individuals 65 and over (see Table 3).

Table 3: Households by Type (2000)

	Germantown	Columbia County	New York State
TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS	831	24,796	7,056,860
Family households	65.8%	66.9%	65.7%
Married-couple family	53.7%	52.2%	46.6%
Female householder, no husband present	7.5%	10.3%	14.7%
Nonfamily households	34.2%	33.1%	34.3%
Householder living alone	28.8%	27.1%	28.1%
Households with individuals under 18 years	30.1%	32.2%	35.0%
Households with individuals 65 years and over	32.7%	28.3%	25.0%
Average household size	2.41	2.43	2.61
Average family size	2.95	2.95	3.22

Source: U.S. Census

To summarize, Germantown's population is similar in many ways to Columbia County's, except that it is somewhat older. An older population has different service needs — for example, for housing and transportation — from those of a younger population. In response to a question in the community survey, 67.5% of those who responded said it was important for Germantown to have new senior housing.

5. Current, Adjacent and Regional Land Use

“This is a beautiful small town. I would like to see the small town atmosphere remain intact.”

CURRENT LAND USE

Over the last thirty years the principal use of land in Germantown has shifted dramatically from agricultural to residential. There are still many open fields and woodlands in the Town, but the fields are now less dedicated to farming, and the woodlands and open spaces are increasingly used for residential development. Current land uses are shown on the Current Land Use map.

With a footprint of approximately 7,500 acres, Germantown’s small size and its population density are factors to be considered when planning for its future. A brief summary of the recent history of land use in Germantown appears in Table 4. Although the main categories of use have remained the same from 1973 to 2004, new categories have been added over the years and old ones eliminated. Different numbers for acreages have also been given in different documents or by different agencies, but for the purposes of this chapter, total acreage in Germantown will be taken from the 2004 tax assessment roll as 7,499.77 acres.

Table 4: Acreage in Germantown by Major Categories

	1973	1988	2004
Agricultural	2,593 (35%)	1,412.23	1,130.49 (15%)
Residential	400 (5%)	3,029.77	4,520.72 (60%)
Vacant		1,985.65	1,555.28 (21%)
Forest, Brushland	4,877 (65%)		
Wild, Forested, Parks, Conservation Land		18.10	10.30
Recreation & Entertainment		16.26	38.68
Public Services	29		86.49
Community Services			73.64
Commercial/Industrial	33	100.52	84.17
TOTALS	7,932	6,562.53	7,499.77

Sources: 2004 Germantown tax assessment roll & the 1973 and 1989 Germantown Comprehensive Plans

The most dramatic changes are the decrease of acreage in agriculture and the increase in residential use. Changes in assessment practices over the period, such as counting some large residential-agricultural properties as residential, may account for a portion of these changes, but the trend in land use from farming to residential is unmistakable. Some of the 4,877 acres in “Forest, Brushland” in 1973 presumably found their way into the “Vacant” category in 1988 and 2004, while lesser acreages in the latter years were assessed as “Wild, Forested, Parks, Conservation Land.” The increase in land used for “Recreation & Entertainment,” “Public Services,” and “Community Services” in 2004 further reflects the transformation of Germantown from a farming to a rural residential community.

As might be expected from Germantown’s history of development since the early 18th century, parcels of land close to the Hudson River, whether currently in residential, commercial, or agricultural use, are smaller and create patterns of greater density than those in the rest of the Town. Small lot sizes also predominate along the Town’s older roads and in the village center. In general, parcels east from the river to the Town’s eastern and northern borders with Livingston and Clermont become progressively larger and begin to include open lands as well as more extensive farms.



Germantown is not yet under the pressures of large residential development being experienced by other Columbia and Dutchess County towns, but small subdivisions have become more and more frequently approved in Germantown. In the words of a member of the Planning Board, “the Town is not being gobbled up by sharks, it’s being nibbled away by guppies.”

Current commercial activities are scattered throughout the Town, but there are four points of concentration: the intersection of State Route 9G and County Route 8; Main Street at the village center; the west side of Palatine Park Road; and a strip along Route 9G in North Germantown. Taconic Farms, an agribusiness raising livestock for medical research, is the largest employer in Germantown. Home businesses round out the commercial activities in Germantown.

ADJACENT LAND USE

A knowledge of land use and zoning in neighboring communities can be helpful in pursuing consistent and coordinated planning and zoning at the edges of a town. The majority of land in Clermont, to the east and south of Germantown, is zoned two-acre residential/agricultural, with a strip along the Hudson River in low-density five-acre zoning. Similarly, all the zoning in Livingston, on Germantown’s northeast border, is two-acre residential/agricultural, except for a small conservation area -- again along the Hudson River -- of seven-acre zoning.

REGIONAL LAND USE

As communities change and grow over time, all new building, development or demolition combine and create regional consequences. New York State is a “home rule” state, meaning the over 1,500 units of local government can develop comprehensive plans and adopt zoning, subdivision and site-plan regulations independently. The fragmented nature of the home-rule system presents specific challenges to regional cooperation and contributes to a lack of coordination and to policies that drive sprawl. This fragmentation often exacerbates regional economic inequities, hampers economic development efforts and drives up costs for the taxpayer. In the Hudson River Valley it also threatens the natural and cultural resources that make the area a great place to live.

In rural communities like Germantown, many issues are regional. Habitats, watersheds, farmland protection, scenic vistas, highway networks, waste management, schools and affordable housing all have regional implications. These issues, along with many others, should be addressed with regional coordination.

While communities are not required to cooperate regionally, they are empowered to do so by numerous New York State laws and statutes. Local governments are empowered to provide any service or perform any function jointly that they may otherwise perform separately. For example, communities may join together to create consolidated zoning boards, create intermunicipal comprehensive plans and/or land-use regulations and even create intermunicipal overlay districts for the purpose of protecting, enhancing or developing community resources that encompass two or more municipalities. Germantown is currently involved in a regional Keep Farming initiative that is described in Chapter 6.



Germantown’s location in the Hudson River Valley means that it is part of the Hudson River Valley Greenway and National Heritage Area, two special-purpose regional designations for the valley that bring technical resources and guidance, small grants and other benefits to area communities. The Greenway has a draft Trail Vision Plan for the valley that proposes a trail section in Germantown between Route 9G and the Hudson River in North Germantown. The Greenway also offers “Greenway Guides” that visually present tools and techniques that allow growth to occur while maintaining community character. Finally, the Greenway encourages communities within a county to participate in a regional “Compact” that can provide a variety of community benefits, including preferential consideration for state grants.

FUTURE ISSUES

The small-lot zoning of most of Clermont and Livingston is in contrast to the planned larger-lot protective designations of significant areas of land within Germantown that lie adjacent to those towns (see Chapter 6, Natural Resources and Agriculture). This proximity may result in single farms that lie in two towns having widely divergent zoning.

It is important that state, county and local governments and agencies work together to address regional issues and that localities approach local land-use decisions with a regional perspective. With this in mind, Germantown should consider countywide regional and statewide plans such as the NYS Open Space Plan and the Hudson River Estuary Management Plan and should coordinate with various regional and county economic-development and environmental-protection agencies when making local land-use decisions. The Town should also explore opportunities for creating new regional partnerships.

GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

■ GOALS:

- To promote regional coordination and intermunicipal cooperation.
- To preserve a traditional balance between land uses while accommodating necessary development.

■ RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Inform adjacent municipalities of proposed and adopted planning and zoning at the Town's boundaries.
2. Establish mechanisms for local and regional partnerships such as the Hudson River Valley Greenway Compact process.
3. Focus development more efficiently in and around traditional centers and avoid overdevelopment of the rural surroundings.
4. Foster an interconnected regional system of open-space corridors to offer recreational opportunities and protect environmentally sensitive areas.
5. Provide a stronger emphasis on walkable communities while supporting landuse and siteplan decisions that reduce traffic impacts.



6. Natural Resources and Agriculture

“Cherish Germantown’s unique vistas.”

“Preserve Germantown’s rural, agricultural character and limit development that would impinge on it and create pollution (water, air appearance, noise,...)”

“The rural nature of Germantown with its woodlands, wetlands, and diminishing agriculture needs to be preserved.”

INTRODUCTION

Germantown is fortunate to have an attractive village center as well as Hudson River frontage, open farmland, forest cover and superb Catskill Mountain views. This diversity is a strong part of the Town’s appeal and contributes to the “rural character” that townspeople have praised throughout the comprehensive planning process. Yet much of our undeveloped physical base has constraints against building or would be very vulnerable to the impacts of development. We have serious water-supply issues as well as a predominance of soils that are unsuitable for septic systems. Many former agricultural fields, once tiled and drained, are now wet meadows supporting diverse plant and animal life. Land-use capabilities and constraints largely determine the uses to which land can and should reasonably be put and therefore are a fundamental basis for good planning and zoning. As development pressures increase around Germantown, it is essential to understand the carrying capacity of our land and to protect our limited natural resources for both current residents and generations to come.

This chapter addresses the Town’s natural resources – its slopes and topography, soils, geology, waterbodies and wetlands, groundwater resources, open-space and agricultural resources and farming. The Site Development Constraints map illustrates the extent of the Town’s unbuildable and developmentally constrained land areas, while the Agriculture and Open Space map shows the Town’s farmlands, forest lands and other open spaces. The Scenic and Cultural Resources map shows the Town’s scenic byways, vistas and viewsheds (*see Maps*).

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

Slopes and Topography. Although much of Germantown has gently rolling topography, the Town is bisected by a central elevated spine that defines its two major watersheds. Water flows west/northwest via streams and creeks to the Hudson River and also indirectly to the Hudson via waters feeding north/northeast to the Roeliff Jansen Kill. The watershed divide travels roughly southward along Hover Avenue and Hilltop Road, passing the Town’s high point at 332 feet above sea level, down Viewmont Road, turning southeast to Old Saw Mill Road, and then eastward to a ridge lying west of South Road.

The western half of Town lies predominantly at elevations ranging from 100 to 200 feet above sea level. Most of the eastern portion lies above 200 feet, and while this includes some significant slopes, there also are large, fairly level areas to the northeast and southeast where the Town's regulated wetlands are found. The lowest elevations, near sea level, are along the Hudson River.

A slope analysis of the Town confirms the gentle topography that we see, with elevation differences of less than 5% — that is, varying less than one vertical foot for every 20 feet of ground. Steep slopes, defined as exceeding 15% (a one-foot rise in less than seven feet) are found mostly in association with the major waterways — the Hudson River, Roeliff-Jansen Kill, and Camp Kill — as well as along the watershed divide.

Soils. Of the 57 soil types found in Germantown, 30 or so tend to be poorly drained. Soils with the highest infiltration capacities are found in a broad swath along the Hudson River, with a few isolated, small pockets elsewhere. Most of the Town having soils with slow or very slow infiltration capacities and high runoff rates largely due to the preponderance of clay. More than one-quarter of the town has all hydric, or wet, soils. The presence of hydric soils is one of the conditions used to define wetlands. Soils that are wet or infiltrate slowly tend to be unsuitable for on-lot septic systems.

Sixty percent of the other soil types found in Germantown are highly rocky types, often with thin soils and/or located on steep slopes. The large areas of forest cover in town tend to share these conditions. The Surficial Geology map (*see Volume 2, Appendices, Groundwater Protection Plan*) shows broad areas — perhaps one-half the Town — with soils consistent with shallow bedrock.

There is not a great deal of land classified as “prime agricultural” in Germantown, although there are many soils suitable for and used for agriculture, especially if drained. Many of these and other less suitable soils can be and are used for pasture and hay in dry seasons. The best agricultural soils are found north of County Rte. 8 and east of Hover Avenue.

Geology. The three dominant landform types found in Germantown are plains, a pattern of north-south ridges and what are called “dissected valleys.” The plains are remainders of Glacial Lake Albany, which was formed by receding glaciers and covered a large area. The Town's widespread silt and clay soils remain from what were deep-water areas of the Lake, whereas silt and sand soils remain from shallower areas. The north-south ridges are the result of plate tectonic movements millions of years ago that realigned many different eras of rock into the layered mix of limestone, siltstone, shale and other rock that are found today. These ridges usually feature exposed bedrock, although some deep soils can be found at higher elevations in the eastern part of the Town. The dissected valleys, including the Roeliff-Jansen Kill and other stream corridors, were formed by erosion through glacial matter.

Waterbodies, Wetlands and Floodplains. Germantown contains a web of streams and small tributaries that flow ultimately into the Hudson River via its two watersheds (*see Hydrography map in Maps*). The Roeliff-Jansen Kill, a major trout stream, forms the northern and much of the eastern border of the Town. Germantown has numerous ponds, many or all of which may be man made, including the Town swimming lake in Palatine Park.

The Town's New York State regulated wetlands are an area east of Hilltop Road, a few areas to the south in the Old Saw Mill and Viewmont Roads, and two marsh areas on the Hudson River, including the mouth of the Roeliff Jansen Kill. There are other large areas of wetlands in Town that are smaller than the 12.4-acre threshold for regulation under the Freshwater Wetlands Act (Article 24 of the New York State Environmental Conservation Law). Some of these could be subject to federal jurisdiction by the Army Corps of Engineers under Section 404 of the federal Clean Water Act. Proposed activities in designated wetlands areas require review and permitting by one or both of these agencies.

Germantown's wetlands perform a number of important functions such as cleansing the water that flows through them and thus improving water quality. They carry and slow down excess water from heavy rains and snow melt. Therefore filling wetlands can increase flooding. Wetlands help prevent erosion and remove sediments and can also be helpful in recharging groundwater, especially when groundwater is the primary water source, as in Germantown. They are an important source of biodiversity as they provide habitat for many fish and wildlife species and many native plants. They are also valuable for providing open space where they are protected.



Floodplains are low-lying areas adjacent to streams that may be inundated during storm events or by snow meltoffs. They can also serve as important aquifer recharge areas for groundwater resources. Floodplains consist of the floodway, which is primarily the waterway channel, together with the flood fringe, the area adjacent to the floodway. One hundred-year floodplains are those areas that have a 1% chance of being inundated in any given year. These areas have been mapped in the Town as part of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) National Flood Insurance Program.

In Germantown, the mapped 100-year floodplain extends minimally along the Hudson River and also along the Roeliff Jansen Kill. Development and fill in the floodplain exposes people and properties to on-site flood hazards and also increases the volume and velocity of downstream flooding. FEMA offers low-cost flood insurance to landowners in communities that restrict development and fill in floodplains, with the lowest costs extended to communities offering the greatest protection.

Groundwater Resources. The New York Rural Water Association (NYRWA) has contributed to this comprehensive plan with the development of a Groundwater Protection Plan. The plan is based upon data from the United States Geological Survey and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, as well as from geologic maps, the Columbia County

Soil Survey, other sources and fieldwork. These data were used to generate a variety of composite maps for the Town. The full Groundwater Protection Plan is included as an appendix in Volume 2 of this document.

A chief objective of NYRWA's report was to identify Germantown's aquifers, particularly as a potential source for a municipal water supply. The report defines an aquifer as "a body of rock or sediment that yields significant quantities of water." The quantities sufficient for a municipal water supply in Germantown would be in the range of 86,000 gallons per day based upon the 2000 Census population report. There is a potential aquifer consisting of unconsolidated material found in the north end of Town along the Roeliff Jansen Kill and the Hudson River. Natural conditions there indicate that it might be capable of high yields, although there are no current data available to verify this possibility. Furthermore, water quality there is likely to be compromised by surface water introducing organisms and pollutants and would have to be filtered for domestic use.

The NYWRA study finds that Germantown's domestic water supply, as well as its water bodies – streams, ponds and wetlands – all rely upon groundwater as their source. Groundwater is underground water found in voids and cracks in rock and soil. In Germantown, bedrock is the primary water source for all wells. But the Town's commonly wet, heavy clay soils are a major limiting factor in water availability as they limit the infiltration of rainwater that replenishes the groundwater. Thus the apparent abundance of water throughout the Town disguises the underlying lack of this resource.

Air Quality. The quality of air in Germantown was not factually known at the time of the writing of this comprehensive plan. An air monitor on the roof of the school was removed by the NY State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) in the mid-1990s and not replaced.

Two cement factories, Glens Falls Lehigh Cement (GFLC) and St. Lawrence Cement (SLC) Catskill, are located directly across the Hudson River from Germantown. Both are permitted by the DEC to operate 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Recent Toxic Release Inventory reports from the federal Environmental Protection Agency indicated that the SLC factory emitted five times more toxic pollutants in 2003 than it did in 2000. Specific areas in Germantown were cited as being well above the national average in terms of exposure to toxic emissions. Of particular concern are the dangers from PM 2.5, sooty chemical particles no larger than 2.5 microns in size, that are believed to cause thousands of premature illnesses and deaths in the United States annually from cardiovascular and respiratory diseases and some cancers.

In light of these facts and that 84% of respondents to the community survey said air quality was very important to them, Germantown residents have recently begun to advocate pressing appropriate state officials and representatives have an air monitor re-installed in Germantown.

Open Space. Although most people would say they know "open space" when they see it, it is difficult to arrive at an exact definition of it in the context of a rural community like Germantown. One method might be to distinguish "built" from "unbuilt" lands, with unbuilt lands defined as open space. These would include working landscapes such as farms with planted fields, pastureland, orchards, and vineyards, all of which exist in Germantown; natural landscapes such as ponds,

wetlands, streambeds, forests, and steep slopes; and cultural landscapes such as sites that command scenic views as well as recreational sites like athletic playing fields, playgrounds and campsites. All these areas would clearly satisfy most people's ideas of open space.

The Town's working farm landscapes are described in the following Agricultural Lands and Farming section, while natural landscapes are largely described in this chapter's sections on Slopes and Topography and Waterbodies, Wetlands and Floodplains. Recreational sites are described in Chapter 9, Community Facilities and Services. Significant forest cover exists in parts of the Town.

Germantown possesses a number of remarkable scenic views and vistas, including several scenic roads with sweeping views of the Hudson River and the Catskill Mountains such as Hilltop Road, Northern Boulevard, Roundtop Road and Hog Trough Road and others identified on the Scenic and Cultural Resources map (*see Maps*). There is one New York State designated scenic-byway segment in Town, which runs along Woods Road from the south almost to its intersection with Route 9G. Three other road segments in Town have been rated in a process undertaken by the Hudson River Valley Greenway together with Columbia County residents as having good potential for designation as scenic byways. They include Route 9G north of Woods Road, County Route 8 west of Route 9G and Anchorage Road from Route 9G Anchorage Landing on the Hudson River.

Finally, most residences in Germantown are sited on lots of two acres or more. Even in the village center, some houses along Main Street are fronted by sizable lawns and backed by open fields, and driving along the Town and county roads that cross and crisscross the township, one sees large areas of unused land in fields or woods surrounding landowners' residences. These lots may technically be "built" land, but, as much as any other aspect of the Town's physical appearance, they create the impression of openness, or of "unused land," that residents may have in mind when they think of open space and refer to Germantown's rural character.

Agricultural Lands and Farming. Fruit and vegetable farming in the Hudson Valley consolidated along the Hudson River in the early 19th century, due in part to favorable microclimates. Aerial mapping of Germantown from 1959 shows a much more vast patchwork of orchards than we see today, although there were a considerable number of abandoned orchards even then. These were interspersed with open cropland and hayfields, much of which has been developed. But the aerials also show that a good deal of our current forest cover grew up on abandoned farm fields.

When Germantown's last comprehensive plan update was conducted in 1989, fruit growing was still important, although the farming that remained was diversifying and, as the plan noted, "residential settlement has supplanted agricultural activity as the primary land usage within the town." The percentage of agricultural land used for farming was had declined from 32.4 percent to 21.5 percent by then. By 2004, the figure was approximately 15%.



However, significant areas of farmland still remain in the Town, primarily in the east and southeast portions, where lands are enrolled in Agricultural District #4 – farmer-initiated areas that provide certain tax and other benefits. These lands are part of larger Agricultural Districts that extend into the adjacent towns of Clermont and Livingston, reflecting the Town’s part in a larger regional farm economy.

As of 2005, there were 1,700 acres in 23 ownerships receiving agricultural tax exemptions under New York law. Most of these were renting their fields to a few full-time farmers. It is estimated that approximately 300 ± additional acres are agricultural lands, active or not, whose owners choose not to take agricultural tax exemptions. Hay and pasture account for the largest uses, followed by corn and fruit growing, mainly apples and pears. There are also a few acres of concord grapes - part of a larger farm outside the town limits - and Christmas trees. There are several parcels noted in the Town with recently-abandoned orchards and fields formerly used for hay, pasture and vegetable crops.

In response to the community survey, 9.9% of respondents -36 individuals - reported being active in some form of farming, animal production or crop or greenhouse production. These do not necessarily represent full-time growers; anecdotal information suggests that there are only two or three full-time farmers in Germantown. But a total of 51.2% of respondents stated that they were working more than 7 acres of land, which is the current minimum for the agricultural assessment program, whereas 48.8% report working on fewer than 7 acres.

Specific activities that survey respondents noted they are involved in include: a logger with a portable sawmill, fruit and vegetable farmers, many (about 1/3) involved with mixed farming, garden crops and livestock operations, and livestock producers growing cattle, hogs, poultry, sheep and goats, as well as goat milk products. There are greenhouse operations, horse farms, a beekeeper, an herb farmer and more. This diversity contrasts with the data from 1988, when 62% of the 45 respondents still represented fruit orchards and 11% were involved with vineyard production.

In late 2006, Germantown residents began to organize in support of agriculture with the help of the Glynwood Center and its Keep Farming program, which is designed to help communities take action to strengthen local farming and the regional food system. The Towns of Clermont, Livingston and Red Hook have joined with Germantown in recognition of the regional nature of farming in support of this initiative. The new Hudson Valley Agri-Business Development Corporation complements this effort as it is intended to develop new agricultural businesses in the County.

FUTURE ISSUES

Germantown’s neighbors are already experiencing development pressure from the suburbanization of Dutchess County. Our physical base makes many areas of Town unsuitable for building due to soil, topography, and water resources, but our current zoning and subdivision regulations provide very little in the way of controls. Any long-term development plan for the Town must consider the limitations of its physical base and natural resources, particularly the difficulty of providing for future water needs.

Throughout the comprehensive planning process, the townspeople have also expressed a strong and unified desire to protect the Town's "rural character" with its natural beauty, "farmland and open spaces, forests and fields." As defined by the survey respondents, Germantown residents value a community that protects its water resources and air quality, maintains open space, forests, wetlands and stream corridors, provides access to its parks and riverfront, and maintains the viability of agriculture and businesses that support farming. One-third of respondents - the largest single response - said that maintaining rural character, particularly farmland, and controlling growth are the most important issues facing Germantown. When asked to rank the importance of a variety of issues, 96% indicated Germantown's rural character was very (79%) or somewhat (17%) important, and 94% stated maintaining open space was either very or somewhat important.

Furthermore, there is hard evidence that working landscapes and other open space lands make important fiscal contributions to the community that significantly exceed the service demands these lands generate. In 2001 the American Farmland Trust summarized 83 studies of the cost of community services and found that residential uses cost communities an average of \$1.15 in community services for every \$1.00 in tax revenues collected. In contrast, farm and open space lands cost communities only \$.36 in services for every \$1.00 in tax revenues collected. These findings show, that while residential development does increase the tax base, the increase is not enough to cover public service costs to the new development. The findings also demonstrate that farm and open space land uses should be considered similar in value to commercial development with respect to the large net revenues they generate for communities.

Water Resources. The Town's extensive wetlands, waterbodies, stream corridors and groundwater resources provide a variety of highly valuable benefits to the community. Of survey respondents, 78% support expanding protection of the Town's wetlands, 83% supported expanding protection of its stream corridors and 84% wanted to see greater protection of Germantown's aquifers and groundwater resources. As future development could adversely impact the quantity and quality of the Town's water resources, it is important to develop and adopt new land-use regulations that will reduce these impacts as much as possible. In addition, the Town's floodplain regulations should be evaluated to determine if they could be made more protective, thereby enabling Town residents to have access to low-cost flood insurance. Finally, because most of the Town's steep slopes lie along major waterways, the protection of these slopes can help to protect water quality. For additional discussion of water-supply issues, see Chapter 9, Community Facilities and Services.

Open Space. While Germantown has a designated New York State scenic byway, this designation, in and of itself, does not extend any protection to this road. However, the Town can apply for State funding to develop a management plan and implementing measures that would provide protection and management guidelines for it. In addition, the Town can evaluate whether it would like to designate the three potential byway road segments as scenic byways under the New York State Hudson River Valley Scenic Byways project. Finally, the Town may wish to extend recognition and possibly protection to other identified scenic resources in the Town, such as scenic vistas from many of its roads.

Climate Change. Virtually all scientists agree that the earth's climate is now negatively affected by an increase in atmospheric greenhouse gases that will become more severe over time. In our community, in our lifetimes, we may anticipate rising temperatures, more intense storms and flooding and an impact on farming and future development. The challenge is global, but local efforts are possible and necessary to help sustain an environmentally healthy quality of life in Germantown.

Agriculture. It is tempting to doubt the long-term viability of small-scale agricultural activities standing up to development pressures and land values. But an inventory of farms and farmers only begins to suggest the scope of agriculture's influence within any community. Many land-use preservationists agree that the best way to maintain open space is to preserve the working landscape, especially farming landscapes. And they make the case that the value of agriculture is much greater than numbers and acres alone can suggest. More than \$3.6 billion in farm products were sold from New York farms in 2004, and those farms spent close to \$2.8 billion dollars more to produce those goods. And, as noted above, many studies show that farmland offers communities a net gain in value, as their tax revenues outpace the cost to a community for infrastructure, schools and other services. There's no question that farming has lost ground over recent decades, but agriculture is still an important economic sector in New York State.

At 18% of total land area, Columbia County has the largest land base in agriculture among Hudson Valley counties, and this base has increased slightly during the recent period, due in part to an expanded definition of agriculture to encompass horse farms and hunting preserves. A study by the The Glynwood Center published in 2005 found that losing a critical mass of agriculture to development increases the challenges to continued farming, while land and tax costs increase and income erodes. Hudson Valley farmland market value declined by 14% for the five years ending in 2003, whereas farming costs increased 25% on average. This situation argues for taking a regional approach to farmland and open-space preservation.

It is beyond the scope of this planning process to undertake the wide-ranging assessment that is needed, but a strong case can be made for seeing agriculture as an integral and far-ranging piece of the Germantown community, and its significance as an economic development sector. In addition to direct income generation, support businesses from equipment and feed vendors to food markets are part of this equation. Agriculture is also an important part of natural resource and open space protection efforts, and is a scenic resource that appeals to a wide cross-section of the populace. Once a community embraces agriculture for all of its benefits, there is a chance to take action to protect and preserve it.



The Town's involvement in the Keep Farming program is a tremendous opportunity to build a regional effort to strengthen agriculture and is consistent with Germantown's community survey results. The Town should continue to support such efforts and should build on the program by working with the Hudson Valley Agri-Business Development Corporation on other initiatives.

FUTURE PLANNING

Germantown is unusual in that it has exceptionally limited groundwater availability while at the same time possessing extensive wetlands and hydric soils that make large areas of the Town particularly vulnerable to groundwater contamination. The Town also has a number of other important natural features worthy of protection, including its remaining agricultural base, designated and potential future scenic byways and viewsheds, woodland, floodplains, steep slopes and Hudson riverfront. Many resources in the Town overlap one another. The Town's extensive natural resource constraints argue for an effective planning strategy that will protect these resources while allowing development that is consistent with the limited carrying capacity of the Town.

Two new designations are proposed for the rural and resource areas of the Town — Agricultural Resource and Environmental Resource. The Agricultural Resource designation is intended to include lands within the Town's Agricultural District as well as extensive overlapping areas of wetlands, streams, hydric soils and soils that are vulnerable to contamination. These areas include many of the Town's largest parcels and should be planned to significantly limit residential and other development that could conflict with adjacent agriculture or adversely impact water resources.

The Environmental Resource designation is intended to include primarily contiguous areas of large-lot lands with any combination of the following resources: forest cover, wetlands, streams, hydric soils, soils vulnerable to contamination, floodplain, Hudson riverfront, steep slopes, designated and proposed scenic byways and rare-animal habitat. In most instances, included lands include multiple such resources. These areas should be planned to limit residential and other development that could adversely impact natural and other resources.

Both the Agricultural Resource and Environmental Resource designations are intended to promote the use of conservation-design subdivisions, which can permanently protect important areas of open-space resources while allowing limited, carefully sited residences. It is proposed that major subdivisions involving five or more lots in either designation be required to use conservation-design standards. Conservation-design standards use a density standard rather than a minimum lot size to allow the same number of dwellings as the underlying zoning but with maximum flexibility in sizing and siting the dwellings. For instance, an area designated Environmental Resource with a five-acre minimum lot size would ordinarily allow one dwelling per five acres. If a major subdivision were proposed on a 50-acre property, conservation-design standards could potentially permit ten dwellings on one-acre lots grouped in one area so that the remaining 40 acres of the site would be protected for open-space values. The open space could be used for farming, for the recreational needs of the residential development or for public purposes, as the landowner desires.

GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

■ GOALS:

- To ensure protection of natural and agricultural resources through Town regulatory procedures, including zoning, site-plan review and subdivision regulations.
- To institute measures to promote, protect and preserve working farms and landscapes in the Town.
- To adopt methods to identify, evaluate and protect open-space areas.
- To ensure that the quality of air is not hazardous to public health or the environment.

■ RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Amend zoning and subdivision standards to:
 - a) adopt wetlands and waterbodies standards to protect water resources, including stream corridors,
 - b) ensure that the types and densities of allowed development in areas with limited groundwater supplies do not exceed capacity,
 - c) adopt siting standards for all new developments to protect environmentally sensitive lands, including slopes and ridges, forested corridors, open space and farmland, wetlands and waterbodies, important habitat and scenic resources,
 - d) ensure that the types and densities of development allowed in and adjacent to Town Agricultural Districts minimize potential adverse impacts to agricultural lands while enhancing opportunities for increased on-farm income, and
 - e) preserve valuable open space by using conservation-design subdivisions to site housing in more rural parts of the Town in environmentally sensitive ways.
2. Adopt a plan with specific goals and a timeline for the Town to reduce energy use and solid waste production by:
 - a) obtaining an energy audit of Town facilities to determine where energy savings can be realized and
 - b) evaluating energy-saving and nonpolluting alternatives for purchases and capital improvements, including building according to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards.
3. Develop GIS (Geographic Information Systems) capability within Town government as a planning tool.
4. Apply for funding to develop a management plan for the designated scenic-byways road segment in the Town and pursue designation of additional road segments as scenic byways.
5. Develop a long-range plan for preservation and protection of agricultural, open-space and natural-resource areas, to include the evaluation of areas for protection, the identification of suitable land-use tools, programs and funding sources and a public-education and outreach program.
6. Support the Town's involvement in the Keep Farming program and similar efforts to promote connections between farming and the community.
7. Evaluate the need for a local "Right to Farm" ordinance, new zoning provisions for farm and farmworker housing, new on-farm business options and other farm-friendly provisions.
8. Work regionally with those concerned to obtain air monitoring equipment, to develop and implement a monitoring program and to hold accountable those responsible for ensuring appropriate air quality in the area.

7. Housing

“I would like to see local people being able to afford living in this area. I am supportive of affordable homes and the development towards jobs as long as it isn’t at the expense of our present rural environment.”

INTRODUCTION

The above quote aptly summarizes the desire that Germantown remain rural while also looking cautiously toward the future. Housing is a fundamental human need, and although Germantown’s population growth over the past decades and its need for new housing have been moderate, that scenario is changing. The small size of the Town, coupled with the townspeople’s often expressed desire to maintain its rural character, clearly suggests a need for rigorous planning strategies that provide for housing growth, including affordable housing opportunities, without destroying the landscape so highly valued by the Town’s residents.

This chapter describes the current mix of housing and recent residential building trends. It then addresses housing occupancy and tenure, housing costs and affordability and housing conditions.

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

Housing Mix. In 2000 almost three-quarters of the 984 total housing units in Germantown consisted of single-family dwellings. Multi-family units and duplexes comprised slightly less than 20% of the other housing units and mobile homes just about 6%. Germantown had a higher percentage of single-family dwellings and a lower percentage of mobile homes than is true for Columbia County (see Table 5).



Table 5: Housing Type

	Germantown		Columbia County		New York State	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
Single Family	687 (76.9%)	732 (74.4%)	19,761 (67.8%)	21,224 (70.3%)	2,914,975 (40.3%)	3,198,486 (41.7%)
Duplex	24 (2.7%)	80 (8.1%)	2,910 (10%)	2,264 (7.5%)	1,125,093 (15.6%)	836,907 (10.9%)
Multi Family	104 (11.6%)	109 (11.1%)	3,254 (11.2%)	3,369 (11.2%)	2,888,714 (40%)	3,070,630 (39.8%)
Mobile Home	61 (6.8%)	63 (6.4%)	2,752 (9.4%)	2,809 (9.3%)	192,733 (2.7%)	207,378 (2.7%)
Total Housing Units	894 (100%)	984 (100%)	29139 (100%)	30,207 (100%)	7,226,891 (100%)	7,679,307 (100%)

Source: U.S. Census

Changes in the mix of housing over time show the types of dwellings for which there are demand and need. Between 1990 and 2000, the percentage of single-family houses decreased very slightly while the percentage of duplexes increased significantly. The percentage of multi-family and mobile homes stayed about the same during this period. In the five years since the 2000 Census, however, the number of permits for the construction of new single-family homes has increased dramatically over the previous five years. The average cost of construction was on the rise as well, more than doubling between 1996 and 2005 (see Table 6).

Table 6: Single Family Home New Construction Building Permits

Year	# of Permits	Average Cost
1996	2	\$105,000
1997	4	\$97,500
1998	5	\$136,000
1999	3	\$216,700
2000	8	\$300,000
2001	10	\$165,000
2002	9	\$171,500
2003	18	\$198,000
2004	8	\$202,100
2005	11	\$275,000

Source: www.city-data.com/city/Germantown-New-York.html

Housing Occupancy and Tenure. As noted in Chapter 4, The People of Germantown, well over half the Town's households are families, and the average household size is 2.41 persons. This somewhat low average household size reflects an increase in the number of residents living alone or as couples without children. Although the median age in Germantown is about 42, almost one-third of the population is 65 or over.

Housing occupancy rates indicate the percentage of homes and rentals that are actually occupied and the percentage that are vacant and available for sale or rent. Germantown and, even more so, Columbia County, have housing vacancy rates well above that for New York State. This reflects the significant number of homes that are occupied only on a part-time basis by so-called "weekenders," who are not captured in the 2000 Census. While Germantown's vacancy rate is officially 15.5%, 9.6% of this figure reflects this part-time use. (Source: U.S. Census.)

Vacancy rates of between 2% and 5% as applied to full-time dwellings are considered acceptable. Higher rates than these indicate a lack of demand for housing in the area, and lower rates indicate a tight market and inadequate numbers of available homes. Germantown's homeowner vacancy rate of 2.1% and rental vacancy rate of 5.1% are within the acceptable range.

Germantown has a higher percentage of residents who were living in their homes prior to 1995 than is true for the county or state and a lower percentage of new household occupants since 1995. This indicates a stable population in the past, but that pattern has begun to slowly change. As shown in Table 6 above, 64 new dwelling permits were issued between 2001 and 2005; it is not known how many of these permits were sought by long-term residents or were issued to newcomers to the community. Additionally, during the same period, 283 previously built homes were sold, presumably to new residents, and 113 houses were transferred for the token sum of \$1, presumably between relatives.

Housing Values/Costs. Germantown's median home value as of the 2000 Census was \$123,000, somewhat higher than that for the county. The Town also has a higher proportion of houses valued at \$150,000 or more than does the county (see Table 7).

Table 7: Value of Owner-Occupied Housing in Germantown (2000)

	Germantown	Columbia County	New York State
Owner-occupied units	427	12,024	2,689,728
Value: Less than \$50,000	1.4%	2.5%	5.6%
\$50,000 to \$99,000	28.3%	38.4%	26.6%
\$100,000 to \$149,000	35.8%	33.7%	18.3%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	17.1%	13.4%	17.4%
\$200,000 to \$299,999	11.9%	8.7%	18.7%
\$300,000 or more	5.4%	3.3%	13.5%
Median	\$123,000	\$111,800	\$148,700

Source: U.S. Census

What has changed dramatically since 2000 is the average sales price of a house in Germantown, which has risen to \$187,432, according to the Columbia County Department of Real Property, increasing by one-third over the last six years. According to the local tax assessor, sales in Germantown in this period have primarily been to people from New York City.

Housing Affordability. Affordable housing is important to the economic and social health of a community because it helps assure that residents and their families have access to housing that fits their budgets. New York State communities also have a legal responsibility to provide a range of types, densities and costs of housing to adequately meet regional housing needs.

In the Germantown Community Survey, 31% of the respondents said that “moderate income” housing was very important to them, while 47% said it was somewhat important. Moderate-income housing is that which is affordable to median-income households. It is reasonable to assume that, like the national trend, the \$42,000 median household income for 2000 in the Town has not risen significantly in recent years.

Affordable housing is defined by the federal government as housing costs of no more than 30% of a household’s annual income. In 1999 over one-third of Germantown’s homeowners paid less than 15% of their monthly income on housing costs, a percentage that compared favorably with costs for the county and the state. Just under one-third paid between 15% and 24%. In all, nearly 70% of homeowners in Germantown spent less than 25% of their monthly income on housing. At the same time, 22.7% of homeowners spent 30% or more of their income on housing, which may be more than they can comfortably afford. The proportion of similarly stretched household budgets in the county is about the same, while it is higher for the state as a whole (see Table 8).

Table 8: Selected Monthly Owner Costs as a Percentage of Household Income (1999)

	Germantown	Columbia County	New York State
Less than 15 percent	36.8%	35.7%	31.5%
15 to 19 percent	16.4%	16.8%	17.1%
20 to 24 percent	15.2%	15.4%	14.2%
25 to 29 percent	8.9%	9.2%	10.0%
30 to 34 percent	7.5%	5.8%	6.7%
35 percent or more	15.2%	16.2%	19.6%
Not computed	0.0%	0.8%	0.7%

Source: U.S. Census

In the rental market at the time of the 2000 census, slightly over 60% of Germantown residents who rented rather than owned their living accommodations paid less than 30% of their income on housing. Another 28% spent 30% or more, a figure that is somewhat lower than for the county or the state. More recent figures about rental costs are not available at this time. It is reasonable, however, to assume that rents have escalated in the past five years; in all probability more renters are currently paying more than 30% of their income on housing (see Table 9).

Table 9: Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income (1999)

	Germantown	Columbia County	New York State
Less than 15 percent	10.4%	15.9%	19.1%
15 to 19 percent	19.3%	13.5%	12.8%
20 to 24 percent	19.8%	15.2%	11.4%
25 to 29 percent	10.9%	9.7%	9.8%
30 to 34 percent	6.4%	7.0%	7.1%
35 percent or higher	21.8%	27.7%	33.4%
Not Computed	11.4%	10.9%	6.3%

Source: U.S. Census

A good housing mix provides for maximum choice in housing at different stages in peoples' lives. This comprehensive plan acknowledges in particular the growing increase in the aging population of Germantown with its special housing needs. Respondents to the community survey identified a range of specific housing options that are either very or somewhat important to them, including:

- Rental units (67%)
- Senior housing (68%)
- Assisted living/nursing homes (55%)
- In-law apartments (59%)

There is a variety of ways in which the above and other affordable-housing options can be accommodated through changes to local planning and zoning as well as through other initiatives.



Housing Condition/Appearance. The housing subcommittee of the Comprehensive Plan Committee conducted an informal drive-by survey on all roads in the Town, noting approximate age, type and condition of the housing that was visible. It appeared that most of the homes, no matter the age, size or apparent value, were well maintained. Housing in the most derelict condition tended to be along Route 9G, although there were other properties elsewhere that also appeared neglected. Rental units appeared to be generally less well maintained, and some were in poor condition. Concern about the appearance of poorly maintained housing and exterior grounds with accumulations of “junk” and debris was expressed by 92% of respondents to the community survey and is discussed in more detail in Chapter 9, Community Facilities and Services.

FUTURE ISSUES

Data confirm that the Town currently has a healthy mix of housing as to type and even as to value, while the population has remained basically stable. However, this balance and socioeconomic diversity may be hard to maintain in the future. In the past six years change has been steadily occurring. Fueled largely by an influx of people from elsewhere, many of whom live here part-time, there has been an increase in both the volume and cost of new construction and in the sales of

certain kinds of previously owned homes. Should current housing trends continue without careful planning, such growth will result in housing sprawl that will have a serious impact on already limited water resources, safe management of wastewater, preservation of open space as well as the availability of affordable land and housing.

FUTURE PLANNING

Careful planning can protect against sprawl and mitigate these problems by directing future housing development into areas where adequate water and sewer infrastructure exist or could be made available. Careful planning can also encourage a broader range of housing options to maintain diversity and maximize choice through residents' various stages of life.

The Town currently has a Village Residential zone that is limited to a small area in the village center along Main Street and on Lower Main Street west of Route 9G; there is very little remaining developable acreage in this zone. This comprehensive plan proposes that the designation for that zone be expanded in both areas to allow for additional residential development that can take advantage of public sewer availability. More housing opportunities, subject to design review standards, would be allowed as well in the Village Commercial zone described in Chapter 8. Also proposed is the continuing option for rural residential development, although at somewhat lower densities than has been allowed in the past and with siting and other standards to protect or preserve natural resources.

GOAL AND RECOMMENDATIONS

■ GOAL:

- To ensure that future housing development occurs in ways that will meet the diverse needs of the residents of the community, protect the environment and natural resources and promote the integration of neighborhoods into a cohesive community.

■ RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Amend zoning and subdivision standards to:
 - a) provide for more moderate-cost housing opportunities in the village center such as homes on smaller lots and duplexes,
 - b) allow alternate housing arrangements such as accessory apartments and other shared living arrangements or temporary housing for relatives,
 - c) direct future housing into appropriate areas of the Town, based on sewer and water capabilities, existing development patterns, development constraints and natural-resource considerations,
 - d) preserve valuable open space by using conservation-design subdivisions (see Chapter 6, "Future Planning" section), and
 - e) adopt design review standards or guidelines for new multi-family housing.
2. Work regionally with other communities on large alternate-living projects requiring broad support and major funding.
3. Create a Housing Committee to gather information and establish a database to provide assistance to income-eligible families about affordable-housing options and resources available from county, state and federal governments and banking institutions.

8. Local Economy and Commercial Development

“Help and allow our businesses that exist expand and (don’t) try to stop them when they offer so much to our community. Give the people of Germantown and small businesses jobs right here at home.”

“Have some control over 9G corridor through town. Focus growth in hamlet, commercial and residential (areas). Cooperative planning with nearby towns.”

“Need to improve the character of the village which means sprucing up the buildings and environment. Any expansion of current businesses or bringing in of new ones.”

INTRODUCTION

Access to employment and commercial goods and services is critical to the economic vitality of Germantown. The challenge for the Town is to encourage commercial growth that serves community needs and adds to the tax base while maintaining the Town’s rural character. Germantown already enjoys a relatively healthy tax status. However, the revenues that support its fiscal well-being do not come directly from significant commercial taxation. Rather, the Town’s sound fiscal condition is partly due to other revenue streams but more importantly to the concurrence of healthy real estate values, a low population density, and a rural economy that does not make sizable demands on the Town’s infrastructure and services.

This chapter reviews local economic trends and conditions including employment, resident income status and current business ventures. Results from both a Townwide business survey and the community survey show a clear direction envisioned by the Town’s residents for future commerce, indicating the types and scale of businesses that would be in harmony with Germantown’s natural resources and rural character. Commercial expansion can be achieved without resort to large or sprawling commercial or industrial enterprises.

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

Employment. In 2000 the U.S. Census reported that 60.3% of the Germantown’s population over the age of 16 was employed, which is slightly higher than for Columbia County and New York State. The unemployment rate for the Town was a low 2.4%, below that for both county and state (see Table 10).

Table 10: Employment

	Germantown	Columbia County	New York State
Population 16 Years & Over	1,603	49,953	14,805,912
In Labor Force	62.7%	62.0%	61.1%
Civilian Labor Force	62.7%	61.9%	60.9%
Employed	60.3%	59.2%	56.6%
Unemployed	2.4%	2.7%	4.3%
Armed Forces	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%
Not In Labor Force	37.3%	28.0%	38.9%

Source: U.S. Census

Germantown residents work in a wide variety of sectors with nearly a quarter employed in the education and health and social service sectors, nearly 10% in construction, over 9% in retail trade and over 8% in manufacturing. Relative to Columbia County, a significantly higher proportion of Germantown residents works in the extractive industries – agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting and mining – and in transportation, warehousing and utilities. Underrepresented sectors in Germantown as compared with the county include public administration and wholesale trade (see Table 11).

Table 11: Economic Sectors

	Germantown	Columbia County	New York State
Agriculture, forestry, fishing & hunting, and mining	6.1%	3.1%	0.6%
Construction	9.6%	8.7%	5.2%
Manufacturing	8.4%	10.4%	10.0%
Information	2.6%	3.0%	4.1%
Transportation and warehousing, utilities	4.7%	2.7%	5.5%
Wholesale Trade	1.1%	4.6%	3.4%
Retail Trade	9.4%	10.7%	10.5%
Finance, insurance, real estate and rental and leasing	4.3%	5.0%	8.8%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	6.8%	6.6%	7.3%
Educational, health and social services	23.9%	24.5%	24.3%
Other Services (except public administration)	8.1%	4.8%	5.1%

Public Administration	4.2%	7.8%	5.2%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative and waste-management services	10.7%	8.0%	10.1%

Source: U.S. Census

More than two-thirds of employed residents of the Town are private wage and salary workers, similar to the percentage for the county. Germantown residents are more likely to be self-employed and less likely to be government workers than is true for Columbia County workers. These findings are consistent with the rural nature of the Town (see Table 12).

Table 12: Class of Worker (2000)

	Germantown	Columbia County	New York State
Employed civilian population 16 years and over	947	29,587	8,382,988
Private wage and salary workers	70.9%	69.5%	76.8%
Government workers	14.4%	19.3%	17.0%
Self-employed workers in own not incorporated business	14.6%	10.8%	6.0%
Unpaid family workers	0.1%	0.4%	0.2%

Source: U.S. Census

Income. In 1999 the median household income in Germantown was \$42,195, slightly higher than that for Columbia County but slightly lower than that for New York State. Just over half of Germantown households earned between \$25,000 and \$74,999 in 1999 (see Table 13).

Table 13: Household Income

	Germantown	Columbia County	New York State
Households	838	24,852	7,060,595
Less than \$10,000	6.3%	7.5%	11.5%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	6.6%	6.2%	6.4%
\$15,000 to \$24,000	14.0%	13.4%	11.7%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	13.2%	14.1%	11.4%
\$35,000 to \$49,000	18.4%	17.7%	14.8%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	19.1%	21.0%	18.4%
\$75,000 to \$99,000	9.9%	9.5%	10.6%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	9.2%	6.4%	9.1%
\$150,000 to \$199,000	1.1%	2.0%	2.9%
\$200,000 or more	2.3%	2.1%	3.3%
Median Household income	\$42,195	\$41,915	\$43,393

Source: U.S. Census

Table 14 shows poverty levels in 1999, which are low in Germantown as compared to the State and slightly lower than the levels for the County. Even so, 28 Germantown families (5%) live below the poverty line.

Table 14: Poverty Status (1999)

	Germantown	Columbia County	New York State
Families below poverty level	5.0%	6.4%	11.5%
With related children under 18 yrs	9.3%	10.6%	16.9%
With related children under 5 yrs	16.2%	15.8%	20.2%
Individuals below poverty level	7.9%	9.0%	14.6%
18 Years and over	7.0%	8.0%	12.8%
65 years and older	5.7%	6.8%	11.3%

Commercial and Industrial Land Uses. Current commercial activities are scattered throughout the Town, but there are four points of concentration: the intersection of Route 9G and County Route 8; Main Street at the village center; the west side of Palatine Park Road; and a strip along Route 9G in North Germantown. These locations offer a mix of service and retail businesses. While commercial uses in three of these areas have a “highway commercial” feel, those commercial and other uses in the village center are characterized by small-scale, traditional patterns of development.



There are currently no areas zoned industrial in Town. In 1998 Local Law #1 of that year added Section 15, Floating Zones for Planned Business Projects, to the Town of Germantown’s Zoning Ordinance, enabling applicants to apply for industrial and other business development of property at virtually any location in the Town. So far, no applications have been approved.

At present there are three long-term and important community-based employers in Germantown: Taconic Farms, Germantown Telephone Company (GTC) and the

Germantown Central School District. Taconic Farms, which raises laboratory animals, has 425 employees, of whom about 100 live in Germantown. While Taconic Farms has grown significantly in recent years, it considers Germantown to be “tapped out” in terms of utilities and labor force and does not plan to increase production in Germantown. The Germantown Telephone Company has 20 employees who work in service, technical, installation and repair areas and says it is difficult to find skilled technicians locally. GTC would support an internship program and more interaction with Columbia Greene Community College.

FUTURE ISSUES

Both the survey data and the community-forum results indicate that Germantown residents favor business activities that are in harmony with the natural resources and rural character of the Town and support the needs of and serve its citizens. These operations help to maintain property values without increasing Town expenses and so contribute more to the Town's economic well-being than large or sprawling commercial or industrial enterprises. The number of residential homes along the 9G corridor and Main Street, by itself, makes Germantown less conducive to large commercial operations than other communities in the Hudson Valley. Focusing commercial activity in the mixed-use environment of the village center and in home-based businesses, with limited, well-designed clustered highway business activity along Route 9G, is consistent with the vision residents have for the Town. Business expansion should also be performed with zoning focused on blending with and maintaining Germantown's historical architecture.

The community survey provided valuable information on the types of new businesses that residents would like to see in the Town. The strongest support went to restaurants/diners/coffee shops, followed by grocery store/farmers market and then lodging, B&Bs and inns.

Commercial Development. Respondents to the community survey indicated they welcome small-scale, locally-owned, service-oriented businesses in designated areas that serve the needs of Germantown's population, travelers and tourists. They oppose fast-food businesses and large shopping outlets or other establishments that invite high automobile or truck traffic and that would serve more regional than local needs. According to the National Trust for Historic Places (NTHP), a typical locally owned business returns about 60% of its profit to the community where it exists. Entrepreneurs own homes in a community, pay local taxes, hire local workers and work with other local businesses. On the other hand, a typical chain store returns only about 20% of its profits to the community and "big box" superstores return only about 5-8% of their profits to the community.

Community-survey respondents want to discourage strip development along the 9G corridor. One alternative to this would be to direct future commercial growth to small mixed-use nodes along the corridor where traditional walking neighborhoods may develop. In surveys and public meetings, Germantown's citizens favored directing commercial development primarily into the Main Street village area. As this is an area in Town with available public sewer capability, the limited expansion of the area in mixed commercial uses makes sense.

Industrial Development. Industrial uses should be of a type and scale appropriate to Germantown. The public has made it clear through surveys and outreach meetings that it does not favor the current Floating Zone concept, which has the potential of locating industrial uses in residential areas and which makes property owners near open land uneasy. At the same time, all parts of Germantown are residential, and no one area of the Town automatically suggests itself for businesses that are typically classified as "industrial" or "light industrial."

Any new business development must be carefully considered and subjected to a rigorous review and site-plan approval process. Germantown residents have told the Comprehensive Plan Committee that new industrial operations must be light industrial, must be sited to not disturb residential

neighborhoods and must not strain the Town's infrastructure, present a danger to its citizens, emit toxic chemicals or noxious fumes, create excessive noise, traffic or light, or otherwise compromise the environment. For example, one definition of "light industrial" in use elsewhere states, "The exterior appearance and impact (noise, fumes and vibrations) of a light-industrial use should not significantly exceed those typically associated with an office use."

Whereas some potential business uses might be constrained by the limited water supply in Germantown, potentially acceptable light-industrial uses such as "high tech" facilities may be appropriate and feasible in areas with good access to transportation routes and other infrastructure. Two such areas are along the 9G corridor – one north of the village center and immediately west of and adjacent to the Taconic Farms facility and another north of the intersection of 9G and Hover Avenue on the east side of the highway. While a thorough analysis of the Town's infrastructure and other resources in order to identify appropriate areas for such business development is beyond the scope of this comprehensive plan, Columbia County's economic development body, the Columbia-Hudson Partnership, can be enlisted to assist the Town in taking a proactive approach to identifying appropriate sites and compatible businesses.

Home Businesses. Working at home can save commuting and child care costs, and give those who might be unable to work outside of the home (such as single parents, the elderly and the disabled) an opportunity to earn a living or supplement an income. Home businesses keep Germantown affordable for some of its long-time residents. Telecommuting through the use of broadband technologies is also a growing trend. Community-survey respondents were strongly in favor of encouraging home-based businesses. In keeping with the Town's rural nature, home businesses should be governed by well-crafted zoning regulations so that they have minimal impact on neighborhoods. Current zoning provisions for home occupations are out-of-date.

Community Appearance. Community-survey respondents were also strongly in favor of design guidelines for commercial areas of the Town. Design guidelines can help maintain the Town's rural character, enhance its natural environment and keep Germantown unique. At a minimum, the Town should use the Hudson River Valley Greenway design guidelines for commercial development when reviewing and approving projects. The Town should also review its existing sign standards to ensure that new commercial signs are harmonious with the Town's rural setting. Distinctive informational and directional signage would also benefit the Town by helping people find the commercial, recreational and other destinations they seek. Finally, a street tree planting program would add to the attractiveness of the village center.

Business Survey Results. Germantown's local businesses were surveyed on their support for various initiatives that Germantown might undertake. The highest-ranking initiatives regarded as very important or somewhat important were: 1) aggressively recruit new businesses (76%); 2) sponsor more local events (74%); 3) improve physical infrastructure such as sidewalks, lighting, seating, signage (71%); and 4) expand business/commercial zone (70%). For the complete survey results, see Volume 2, Appendices.

FUTURE PLANNING

The Town currently has a small area of Village Business zoning in the village center. This comprehensive plan proposes that the designation for this area be changed to Village Commercial. Because the village core has a character all its own, with build-to lines at or near the street and shallow dimensional setbacks, an overlay zone is appropriate for this portion of the underlying Village Commercial designation. The comprehensive plan proposes that the Village Commercial designation be extended west along Main Street and Palatine Park Road to Route 9G. Current zoning for this area is a mix of Highway Commercial, Village Residential and Residential Agricultural. The reasoning for this proposal is two-fold.



First, there are a number of stately older homes along Main Street between 9G and the village center that have good potential for adaptation to office-type commercial uses or conversion to apartments. Allowing these options will encourage homeowners to keep their buildings in good condition and maintain the contribution they make to the character of the community. Second, in undeveloped areas along Palatine Road and Route 9G, community input favors the types of small-scale local businesses that are more typical of Village Commercial uses than Highway Commercial uses. Although there are a few existing Highway Commercial types of uses at the intersection of Main Street and Route 9G that would probably be nonconforming under this designation, they can be grandfathered, and it is felt that it is more critical that the Town assure that future uses in this area promote the desired small-town character. This plan also proposes that the Village Commercial designation allow higher-density residential uses as well as commercial uses in mixed-use settings subject to design review standards. It further recommends that the Highway Commercial designation be limited to an existing commercial area with some room for expansion along Route 9G just north of its intersection with Hover Avenue. For suitable sites for future Light Industrial use, see “Future Issues” above.

GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

■ GOALS:

- To encourage, promote and grow small and low-impact businesses in a responsible and economically feasible fashion and in appropriate locations in keeping with the Town’s rural character.
- To promote commercial, agricultural and light-industrial businesses that strengthen the tax base and offer employment opportunities without adverse impacts on the appearance and environmental quality of the Town.
- To ensure that new commercial and light-industrial buildings are designed in a manner consistent with the desired aesthetic character of Germantown, thereby providing for a visually pleasing community.

■ RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Amend zoning and subdivision standards to:
 - a) encourage mixed-use business and residential development in the village center that takes advantage of available infrastructure and that supports an expanded walkable neighborhood,
 - b) prevent commercial strip development on Route 9G by limiting commercial development to designated and walkable nodes,
 - c) replace the Floating Zones provisions in the Town's Zoning Ordinance with limited designated areas for nonpolluting light-industrial uses, to be determined after thorough analysis with the assistance of the Columbia-Hudson Partnership and other economic-development resources,
 - d) encourage and promote appropriate home-based businesses,
 - e) require site and design review for new and expanded commercial uses,
 - f) rezone land areas as appropriate to Highway Commercial and Village Commercial to better reflect existing and desired types and scale of businesses,
 - g) apply a Village Center overlay to the village core to apply traditional dimensional standards to existing and new development, and
 - h) limit the size, height and placement of business signs in commercial zones.
2. Establish a standing Economic Development Committee to promote the growth of small businesses within the community. These businesses could include small, innovative or cooperative agricultural projects on unused farmland.
3. Develop and install distinctive informational, directional and gateway signage at appropriate locations.
4. Develop and implement a program of street tree planting in the village center.



9. Community Facilities and Services

“The Germantown School District is the most important issue. The School is what people will look at to decide if they wish to move into the area.”

“We need interesting community events and activities that will appeal to the diverse interests of the citizens.”

“Institute a ‘Welcome Wagon’ to inform and assist new residents as well as recruit them for the areas of expertise and bright ideas for Germantown community life.”

INTRODUCTION

One of the basic functions of local government is the provision of key public facilities and services. As communities grow and change, it is important that they periodically evaluate their ability to meet existing and projected future public-service needs so as to continue to provide an adequate level of service. Different segments of the community often need different types and levels of services, such as for varying age groups. Because Germantown is a small community, its public services are currently limited, though they will need to grow as the community grows.

This chapter discusses public facilities and services that are provided to the community mostly by the Town administration, including local government, wastewater management, waste disposal, police, fire and ambulance services, parks and recreation and schools and library. Other topics discussed are water supply and utilities.

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

Local Government. As a town of fewer than 5,000 residents, Germantown is classified as a second-class town by New York State. Like many small towns in the region, government in Germantown has been evolving slowly since the 1920s.

The Town is governed by a supervisor and four Town Board members who are all Town residents elected for four-year terms in elections staggered every two years. Also elected for four-year terms are a highway superintendent, town clerk, tax collector and two Town judges. All are part-time positions. A deputy supervisor is appointed by the supervisor but has no vote.

The Town employs a full-time administrative assistant to the Town Board and three full-time Highway Department personnel. Part-time employees include four police officers, board secretaries,

a sewer manager and a building inspector/code enforcement officer. The Town also employs part-time seasonal workers as needed for the Highway Department and Park programs. The Town contracts for the independent, part-time services of a lawyer, an accountant, a tax assessor, an engineer and a dog warden.

The Town Board meets at regularly scheduled monthly meetings that are open to the public. A quorum must be present to conduct business, and minutes are kept. The supervisor and Town Board members each have one vote. The public can apply to place a topic on the agenda, and there is at least one opportunity for the public to comment at Board meetings. Other meetings and workshops may be scheduled but must be announced and open to the public.

TOWN LAWS AND REGULATIONS. The NY State Municipal Home Rule Law prevails as the primary source of local laws and regulations except where county, other state or federal laws take precedence. Town ordinances, laws and regulations are located in the Town Clerk's office and include:

- Zoning Ordinance – adopted in 1974, with two amendments in 1998
- Land Subdivision Regulations – adopted in 1971
- Sewer Use Law – adopted in 1997, amended in 1998
- Town Ordinances – seven documents from 1965 to 1973
- Local Laws – 28 documents from 1974 to 2000

The Town is a member of the New York Association of Towns, which provides members of town government with expert advice and guidance on various matters. An extremely useful reference guide, available in the town clerk's office, is the Town Law Manual produced in 2000 by the association.

TOWN BUDGET. The supervisor is the chief fiscal officer of the Town and begins the budget process in early September, requesting that all departments and employees review and submit forms reporting current expenses for the year and estimated expenses for the coming year. From these reports and discussion with Town Board members, three tentative budgets are drafted – one for General Funds, another for the Highway Department and a third for the Sewer District. Then preliminary budgets are developed and presented at a noticed public hearing conducted no later than November 15. At that time the public may comment. Final budgets are reconciled and voted on by the Town Board by the end of November. The budgets very strictly guide the spending of Town funds. Unanticipated expenses are restricted and require review and approval of the Town Board at a regular meeting open to the public.

The largest source of income for the Town is from local real property taxes. These are based on the assessment of private property by the Town tax assessor according to NY State requirements. When the Town budgets have been finalized in November, taxes on individual property can be determined. Any shortfall in income to meet budgeted expenses for the coming year must be made up by an increase in property taxes.

Other significant sources of income are mortgage taxes on sales and refinancing of properties and shared state sales tax revenue. Both of these sources of income can fluctuate. The Sewer District generates revenue through sewer taxes and the Highway Department through the sale of chipped wood. Other lesser sources of income include recreation fees, fines, interest, tax penalties, franchise fees, Park fees and concessions, youth donations, building permits, youth aid, senior aid, per capita

aid and a variety of small, miscellaneous fees. There are also categories of income classified as gifts, donations and miscellaneous.

ADMINISTRATIVE BODIES. The Town Board authorizes the following officers and standing boards to carry out administrative functions for the Town. Members of the boards are volunteer residents appointed by the supervisor and approved by the Town Board. All meetings are open to the public for comment. Meetings require a quorum, and minutes are kept that are available to the public.

Building Inspector. The building inspector reviews and processes all building applications, issues building permits, periodically inspects building sites and issues certificates of occupancy. As the code enforcement officer, the inspector receives complaints about violations of the Zoning Ordinance and investigates and initiates sanctions when appropriate.

Dog Warden. The dog warden enforces Town regulations concerning stray dogs.

Planning Board. The Town Board appoints a chairperson and six members to this board, which holds regular monthly meetings. Terms of office run for seven years and are staggered. As of 2007, board members will be required to have four hours of training annually. The Planning Board reviews all land subdivision applications as well as requests for special-use permits prior to these being referred to the Zoning Board of Appeals. The Planning Board can vote on projects to approve, disapprove or approve with modifications. Disputed decisions may be appealed to the New York State Supreme Court.

Zoning Board of Appeals. The Town Board appoints a chairperson and four members to this board, which meets monthly. Board members have staggered terms of five years. As of 2007, ZBA members, like members of the Planning Board, will be required to have four hours of annual training. The ZBA is responsible for acting upon proposed special-exception uses after their review by the Planning Board, for granting area and use variances, and for deciding appeals on the building inspector's interpretation of the Zoning Ordinance and zoning maps. Disputed decisions may be appealed to the NYS Supreme Court.

Board of Assessment Review. This board consists of the town assessor and four other appointed members. Its function is to review any complaints about property assessments. Landowners must file a form detailing their grievance and appear at a hearing. The board then considers the issues, makes a decision and notifies the landowner. Further redress is available through the NYS Supreme Court.

Park Commission. This group consists of an appointed chairperson and volunteer members who have responsibility for oversight of Town parks and park programs. Park activities involve considerable expense, and financial accountability systems are currently somewhat unclear. At the time of writing, the Park Commission has not been actively functioning and has few members, a situation that may jeopardize ongoing park activities and events.

Ethics Board. The intent of this board is to advise the Town Board on issues involving possibly inappropriate or illegal conduct by Town officials or employees. While there are three current members, it appears they have seldom, if ever, been called upon for advice.

Water Supply. As discussed in Chapter 6, Germantown has no municipal water supply. All residents, businesses and public facilities rely upon wells that are supplied by groundwater. Furthermore, the Town's soils and underlying geology are limiting factors in the availability of water. The known median yield for local wells is only four gallons per minute, which is the minimum required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to qualify for loans insured by the Federal Housing Authority. Thus, many existing homes in Germantown would not qualify.

In addition to private residential wells, there are several wells supplying water to the public that, privately owned, are regulated by the NY State Department of Health in cooperation with the Columbia County Department of Health. These serve larger facilities, including Palatine Manor, the school, the mobile-home park and businesses like the convenience stores at the junction of Main Street and Route 9G. Except for these wells, there is little consistent information about well location, type, depth, yield and recovery rates. Information about problems with water quality and quantity is largely anecdotal, although there have been notable problems, such as supply problems in the area of Hilltop Road and water-quality problems in the village center. The latter problems led to the formation of the public sewer district. Residual water-quality problems may remain there but are not documented.

Without a true aquifer, Germantown is particularly vulnerable to water problems. The NYRWA Groundwater Protection Plan has identified a potential aquifer in the northern section of the Town along the Roeliff-Jansen Kill and the Hudson River as well as some locations with potentially high water yields in other areas of the Town that could be sites for municipal wells. These sites would need to be tested to confirm actual yields, and the Town would need to be prepared to purchase a parcel or parcels of sufficient size to provide the required setback distances for wellhead protection. None of these areas is situated near the village center or other places where future growth or development might be most appropriate. Hyde Park and Poughkeepsie use the Hudson River for their municipal water supplies, and while this is an expensive option, it could be considered for Germantown if necessary.

The Town's extensive wetlands and areas with high water tables make existing groundwater resources especially vulnerable to contamination. The Groundwater Protection Plan identifies and maps potential contamination sources as well as especially vulnerable areas of the Town. The known low yields of a large percentage of local wells show how vulnerable the water supply is to severe drought. These are critical issues that require attention and planning, with or without new development in the Town.

Wastewater Management. The preponderance of clay soil in Germantown makes the disposal of wastewater a serious issue as this condition can result in the pollution of groundwater and creeks and streams. Depending on soil type and volume of use, certain areas in the Town are not suitable for development using on-lot septic systems. The Groundwater Protection Plan (see Volume 2, Appendices) includes recommendations for protection of water resources with regard to on-lot septic systems.

In 1998 the Town developed a small municipal sewer system in the village center to address the long-standing problem of contamination of water in this area. The sewer has 100,000 gallons per day (gpd) capacity. The average current use is 30-40,000 gpd, leaving 60-70,000 gpd for future

connections for new development in the area. At a use level of 300 gpd per household, this could potentially supply water to about 200 new homes or businesses, depending on their size and volume of use. Enlargement of the system would be expensive and would require a level of population density to support it financially. The current sewer district is mapped, and there is no planned future sewer service in other areas.

Outside the village center, wastewater must be managed by on-lot septic systems. In the past, residences frequently depended on inadequate treatment methods, and even some homes with septic tanks were without proper leach fields. There is no official documentation on these older systems, and homeowners may themselves have little information.

In recent times the County Department of Health (DOH) has required those seeking to build new structures that will use on-lot septic systems to meet specific standards on the type, placement and other aspects of the system. The DOH then inspects installed systems and issues a certification. For the last 20 years, the DOH and the Town have kept records of septic-system installations.

Facilities serving larger groups of the public that produce 1,000 or more gallons of wastewater per day are under the jurisdiction of the NY State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). They are required to get special SPDES permits with specific requirements, regulations and limits for each facility. They are subject to routine inspections and reporting, the results of which, however, are not shared with the Town.

Waste Disposal and Nuisance Standards. Germantown residents use private waste haulers that offer curb-side recycling pickup of glass, tin, aluminum, plastic, newspapers and cardboard. Germantown also has a recycling transfer station – a Columbia County Convenient Waste Station — located on Palatine Park Road and used by residents and local businesses. The location of the station in the village center, where future mixed commercial and residential development is proposed, could be an issue. There is some use in the Town of “burn barrels” to incinerate waste, a practice that contributes to air pollution.

Concern about the appearance of exterior grounds with accumulations of “junk” and debris was expressed in the community survey by 92% of survey respondents, who felt that such conditions created an unattractive impression of the Town. Poor junk control was also at the top of the list of concerns expressed by the public at the Town’s initial public workshop on the comprehensive plan.

The Town currently has no lighting standards other than some regulations related to signage. This lack can create problem lighting situations causing safety and quality-of-life concerns. Glare from poorly shielded lights hampers visibility, and light trespass infringes on the rights of neighbors to enjoy their property. Light sent unnecessarily upwards also causes sky glow and deprives nearby residents of nighttime darkness and a view of the stars.

With the exception of a barking-dog statute, the Town also has no standards that control unreasonable noise, including noise above a certain threshold or that continues beyond a certain length of time. Of particular concern can be loud noise in the nighttime hours.

Utilities. The Town has 100% landline telephone service coverage provided by the Germantown Telephone Company. A subsidiary, Valstar, provides cable television and Internet service that includes high-speed DSL broadband availability to all residents. Valstar will be upgrading its video facilities and channel lineup to an all-digital offering in 2007. Video services are also available from two satellite-service providers, Dish Network and DirecTV. Many wireless providers in the Hudson Valley whose signals overlay Germantown offer wireless telephone services. On Hilltop Road, Verizon Wireless has established a full wireless cell site. National Grid (formerly Niagara Mohawk) provides electric services to all of Germantown.

Police Service. The Germantown Police Department currently has a staff of four part-time officers who have “variable” hours that equate to approximately 29 hours per month for each officer. The hours currently cover five days a week. Calls to the police in 2005 involved 130 complaints and resulted in 10 criminal arrests, 239 traffic tickets, 348 traffic warnings, 12 parking tickets, and 7 local-law arrests. These figures were up 25% from 2004 and up 75% from 2003. County Sheriff and State Police patrols augment Germantown police patrols. The Town hall houses the police station.

Fire Service. The Germantown Hose Company No. 1 is located on Main St. in the village center and plays a vital role in assuring the safety of Town residents and in the continuing education and training of its volunteer membership. At present, the Fire Company has a roster of 45 volunteer firefighters, 35 of whom are active members and 10 of whom are Explorers, young future firefighters aged between 14 and 16. There is also a Life Membership status for other semi-active members. The active membership is divided into categories of interior and exterior firefighting personnel, as consistent with their training.

On average the call volume to the Hose Company is between 90 and 100 alarms per year. The calls range from 3 to 10 calls a month. In 2005 the company had 91 calls: 10 structure-related fires, 1 vehicle fire, 1 brush fire, 2 medical assists, 21 rescues, 7 hazardous materials, 28 service calls, 10 good-intent and 11 miscellaneous calls. Average initial response time is 2.6 minutes, with average arrival time another 3.5 minutes, both outstanding reaction times.

The current firefighting equipment consists of a 2001 rescue truck containing all operational gear, a 1996 pumper/tanker that holds 3100 gallons of water, a 1991 brush 4-wheel-drive truck with 300 gallons of water, a 1987 pumper that carries 1,000 gallons of water, a 1972 command-center van, an ice/water rescue vehicle containing rescue suits and a Zodiac rescue boat.

The Clermont, Livingston, Greenport and Hudson fire departments provide mutual aid when needed. Any of their firefighting equipment is available to Germantown at the request of the fire chief. Germantown also responds to their requests for assistance.

The majority of the annual budget of the Germantown Fire District for 2006 is being directed to the completion of renovations and construction of a new firehouse. Personal protective gear for the firefighters will be replaced in the coming years. The purchase of a washer/extractor to clean turnout gear and improve its longevity is also planned through a federal grant.

Ambulance Service. At the time of writing, Northern Dutchess Paramedics (NDP), a for-profit business, has been serving Germantown for the last two years. NDP assumed coverage when the not-for-profit Southern Columbia County Ambulance group went out of business for financial reasons. NDP serves the communities of Germantown, Livingston, Clermont, Gallatin and part of Taghkanic in Columbia County and six locations (Rhinebeck, Millerton, Red Hook, Dover, Uniondale and Hyde Park) in Dutchess County. NDP does not have a vehicle dedicated full-time to Germantown, though it tries to have a vehicle in the Town's vicinity during peak hours, which are from 11 AM to 1 PM. Out of those hours, ambulance service would probably come from Red Hook or Rhinebeck.

NDP's vehicles are Ford E350 Type 2 vans with passageways between the driver and passengers, and all vehicles carry cardiac monitors, defibrillators, drug boxes with 60 drugs and medicines, intotracheal autobags, equipment to handle blunt-force injuries and penetrating trauma, further equipment for spinal immobilization and extraction from crash vehicles and different kinds of stretchers.

Trained paramedics and emergency medical technicians staff all vehicles and, like all such personnel, are certified, although not licensed, by the state. Continuing medical education is required of staff to keep them up-to-date. In 2006 the number of calls in Germantown was 122, and the average response time was 8.38 minutes, a time considered slow, which NDP wants to improve.

The company receives a stipend of \$160,000 per year in contributions from the five Columbia County towns, but this sum does not meet the cost of providing care to local patients, many of whom do not have adequate health insurance. The company covers all calls whether the patient has insurance or not.

Parks and Recreation. Park and recreation lands provide important opportunities for residents to enjoy a variety of active and passive recreational pursuits. The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) has established standards and guidelines to assist communities in determining the minimum recommended acreages and facilities for park and recreation use. While it is important to take a variety of factors into consideration, ten acres per 1,000 residents is the commonly accepted minimum standard. The proximity of parkland to concentrations of population is also important.

Germantown has a total of 93 acres in public parkland to serve a current population of just over 2,000 and a projected 2020 population of 2,376. Existing parkland can, therefore, be considered more than adequate to meet the overall current and future recreational needs of the community. In addition, most of the Town's parkland is centrally located and close to populated areas. However, this does not mean that there may not exist site-specific opportunities to enhance public recreational use, as by increasing access to



the Hudson River or providing trails within the Town. In fact, in both the public workshop and the comprehensive plan's community survey, riverfront access and trail development ranked very high as issues the public supports.

There are four areas of public parkland in Germantown, including two boat landings on the Hudson River, a waterfront campsite on the Roeliff Jansen Kill and Palatine Park on Town property along Palatine Park Road. The Town additionally owns two sites along the Hudson waterfront that are not designated as parkland as well as access to a third site. A Park Commission of citizens appointed by the Town Board oversees the use of park facilities.

CHEVIOT PARK. This small boat-launching facility at the end of Cheviot Road on the Hudson River includes a parking lot, boat launch, a small floating dock and a picnic table.

ANCHORAGE LANDING AND ERNEST R. LASHER, JR. MEMORIAL PARK. At the end of Anchorage Road in North Germantown is the Germantown Fishing Access Site, constructed in cooperation with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. It includes a parking lot, a concrete boat-launching ramp and boat docks. The boat ramp and dock are leased by the Town of Germantown from New York State. A small building facing a riverbank lawn houses the park office. This site is designated as a Hudson River Valley Greenway Water Trail site.

PALATINE PARK. This is the largest of Germantown's park and recreation areas, not counting the Germantown Central School playing fields. Palatine Park is considered a community park that serves the park and recreation needs of the Town as a whole. Adjacent to the Town hall on Palatine Park Road are a playground with climbing, sliding, and other equipment for small children; a swimming pond with sand beach and changing rooms, restrooms, and a snack bar; a combined baseball diamond and soccer field; the Youth Activities Building and a covered pavilion with picnic tables. An annual fee is charged to resident households and businesses for use of these facilities.

During the summer months, a day camp, Camp Palatine, is run for the benefit of Germantown children and teenagers as well as those from neighboring towns. Camp activities are planned and overseen by a professional camp director and staff, and trained lifeguards are hired to supervise the swimming pond. Various town groups, such as the Girl and Boy Scout troops and Garden Club, use the Activities Building and pavilion, as do other town committees and organizations for public meetings. For a per-capita fee, private parties like family get-togethers may also use these facilities. The Park Commission holds fund-raising barbecues and plans and executes the largest public event of the year, Germantown's Fourth of July celebration.

TOWN CAMPSITE. A parcel of Town land has been designated for a public campsite along Dale's Bridge Road on the Roeliff Jansen Kill. A site plan has been developed and a parking lot created, and contributing New York State funds have been secured. Realization of the project at the time of writing is still pending.

OTHER TOWN LAND. Other Town land with the potential for use as park and recreation sites include the Van Tassel waterfront, a small point of land just north of Lasher Memorial Park that has been discussed as a possible Water Trail campsite. The ice dock, a second potential park and recreation site, is located between the end of Lower Main Street, and Cheviot has an informal picnic area and

a rocky beach that is convenient for launching large duck blinds and floating docks. Finally, the Town has access rights to a site known as Phillip Rockefeller's Landing.

PRIVATE PARKLAND. In addition to public parkland, there is the private Sportsmen's Association picnic area, located along Dales Bridge Road on the south bank of the Roeliff Jansen Kill. A variety of community events are held there. Another private recreation site is a 150-acre bird sanctuary open to the public on County Route 8 east of the Rockefeller Home. Finally, fisherman and boaters use an abandoned riverside rail siding at the end of Lower Main Street that could be developed into parkland.

TRAILS AND GREENWAYS. Greenways are usually identified as walking trails or open-space corridors but can also include sidewalk systems along tree-lined streets, country roads through farmlands, designated bike routes, and waterways with access points for nonmotorized boats. Even a commercial corridor that is tree-lined and walkable can be part of a greenway. Design principles that emphasize these features are based on traditional settlement patterns embedded in the area's history and landscape.

Trails offer recreational opportunities and promote active lifestyles. Trails can be an integral part of a community or regional transportation system by providing alternative transportation options like walking, biking and other nonmotorized transportation. Communities throughout the Hudson River Valley have been working towards the goal of creating trails within their own communities and exploring options to connect those trails to larger regional trail networks. The Hudson River Valley Greenway trail, made up of riverside and countryside trails, connector trails and the Hudson River Valley Greenway water trail, fosters these regional trail connections. This network includes locally developed publicly and privately owned trails and access points that are open to the public.

Hudson River Valley Greenway trails enable connections between such key community destinations as Hudson River waterfront access points, city or village main streets and downtowns, open spaces, residential areas, historic sites, recreation destinations and the surrounding countryside. Trails that make up the Greenway land-trail system may include, but are not limited to, waterfront esplanades, paved bike paths, sidewalks and shared roadways and simple woods paths.

The Hudson River Greenway water trail is made up of over 70 sites stretching from Waterford in Saratoga County to Battery Park in Manhattan. The goal of the water trail is to establish river access points and paddle-craft launches on both sides of the Hudson River every 10 miles and overnight accommodations every 15 miles. In addition to the water-trail site at Lasher Park in North Germantown, there are several potential campsites and currently used informal access points to the river in Germantown that need to be considered for formal designation.

Schools. In the 1950s the Germantown Central School (GCS) became a regional district school serving Germantown and eventually all or a portion of the nearby towns of Livingston, Clermont, Linlithgo, Elizaville, Ancram and Gallatin in southern Columbia County. With the exception of children living in the Germantown village center, students are bused to school.

GCS serves students from kindergarten through 12th grade. The school is organized into three sections — the full-day kindergarten and lower grades, elementary school and high school. The school



is housed in both new and older buildings, the interiors of which have been recently renovated. It is located in the village center on a sizable campus with playing fields, playground and parking. There is room for expansion in the event that should ever be needed. In the past few years, however, the number of students has been slowly decreasing. For the 2005/06 year there were 648 students in attendance; the projection for the

2006/07 year is for a slight decrease. A greater emphasis on academic subjects and the pressure of testing are resulting in a rising rate of students dropping out of school.

The school is governed at the state level by the Department of Education, at the regional level by the Bureau of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) and at the local level by a district superintendent and two principals. There is also a School Board of local residents elected every four years whose role it is to provide oversight and to review and set policies. Of the school district's 100 employees, 28 live in Germantown or nearby communities.

The school provides vocational training through a BOCES program at Questar in Hudson. Students with acceptable grades are bused to attend classes there during half the day and return to the school to take their academic classes. Students with special needs are included in regular classes and activities whenever possible and get any extra assistance they need, the costs of which are paid by the local school district. Other students are bused to a variety of special schools or programs best suited to their requirements.

Library. The Germantown library is currently located at 50 Palatine Park Road. In 2005 the book circulation was 15,045 and library use was 9,043 people. An annual estimate of 900 children using the library comes from a yearly report submitted to New York State. There is a plan to relocate the library to a new site further west on Palatine Park Road on land purchased by the Town for this purpose. There is \$300,000 in trust for the new library, and fundraising will raise the necessary additional money for the construction of a 3,000 square-foot modular building to replace the current 1,200 square-foot building. The new building will comply with the American Disabilities Act.

FUTURE ISSUES

Local Government. In this era of rapid change and increasingly complex demands and problems, it is essential that Town government assume a proactive leadership role. A commitment of adequate time and energy in training is needed. Such an investment can result in better-informed planning and decision making and would provide a sound basis for the development of improved structure, organization and accountability systems.

Water Supply. It is vital that Town officials educate themselves and Town residents about the very limited water resources in the Town, current and future threats to the supply of water and the risks of contamination, and ensure that this information is integrated into all aspects of planning and zoning in ways that will serve to guide all future development.

The Groundwater Protection Plan (see *Volume 2, Appendices*) sets forth specific detailed recommendations for amending the subdivision regulations and site-plan review requirements, including a requirement and standards for a hydrogeological study to be requested to accompany all major development proposals. (See Section 7.2, “Land Use Regulations” in the groundwater plan as well as its Appendix C, “Proposed Requirements for a Hydrogeological Study.”)

Wastewater Management. It is important that planning for future sewer service be closely coordinated with comprehensive planning and zoning, so that areas planned and zoned for growth and development have access to public sewer service and so that the limited remaining sewer-service availability not be used in areas not planned and zoned for growth. For this reason, a coordinated future sewer-service area should be defined and mapped.

Waste Disposal and Nuisance Standards. In the future, the Town may wish to reevaluate the current location of its recycling transfer facility in light of its location in the village center, where growth and development are planned, and explore potential alternative sites for this use.

NY State law prohibits the open burning of most types of waste, and although local communities may regulate the burning of yard waste and paper, Germantown has no “burn barrel” ordinance. Accumulated junk on property and dilapidated buildings are significant community concerns. Light pollution and noise are additional areas of concern.

Police Service. Police service meets residents’ expectations, but the lack of on-duty time and manpower to ensure enforcement of certain Town codes and regulations is an issue in which the police force may be enlisted.

Fire Service. The Fire Department provides a service to the Town that is much valued. At the time of writing, areas in the new firehouse, paid for by public funding, may be available in the near future for community use.

Ambulance Service. Response time needs improvement, and the Town has not developed a first-responder system that meets state requirements. Issues about adequate financing of the service provided to the five towns in southern Columbia County remain unaddressed and could result in loss of service.

Parks and Recreation. At the time of writing, the Park Commission has few members and is not regularly meeting. As a result, programs and events valued by the public may be in jeopardy. Better communication and reporting to the community by the commission needs to occur, and fiscal accountability needs improvement.

The small public campsite on the parcel of Town land on Dale's Bridge Road, opposite the Sportsman's Association building, needs to be completed. Potential walking and water trails as well as additional waterfront access points could be explored through the creation of a local Trails Committee.

A Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan (LWRP) should be developed with NY State funding to



extend public access and public trails along the Hudson River and to protect, preserve and promote appropriate use of important natural and cultural resources in the area. Once such a plan is adopted, further state funding for its implementation may be pursued.

The Town needs a parkland-reservation ordinance to require reservation of parkland and public space in residential subdivisions, or fees in lieu thereof as allowed by NY State law.

Schools. The trend of fewer young children living in the area needs to be closely monitored in terms of school planning. As respondents to the community survey requested, school officials, Town officials and residents should explore ways to decrease the perceived distance between the school and Germantown residents.

Library. Although the Library has now obtained tax funding to meet operational expenses, progress on building the new library has been slow because of problems with fundraising.

GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

■ GOAL:

- To improve existing Town services and facilities to the greatest extent possible and to develop new services that will be needed to address future needs, as recommended by community residents and as consistent with the comprehensive plan.

■ RECOMMENDATIONS:

Local Government

1. Create a Town Boards Committee to:
 - a) review, revise and develop Town laws, ordinances and regulations to be comprehensive, clear, compatible and compliant with state, county and case law; strengthen authority and enforcement requirements; and codify regulations into a format that is accessible to the public and allows for the easy integration of future changes,
 - b) create job descriptions for Town officials and employees that clarify roles, responsibilities and functions of all personnel and their orientation and training, and
 - c) produce policy and procedure manuals for Town departments, boards, commissions and committees that ensure proper accountability and adequate documentation available to the public.

2. Retain a planning consultant.
3. Increase salaries of part-time Town positions to make them more competitive and increase hours of certain positions to enable staff better to carry out their responsibilities.
4. Actively recruit volunteers for Town boards, committees and commissions from a broader spectrum of residents.
5. Explore grant opportunities to support special Town projects.
6. Improve communication with residents by conducting special workshops, producing a quarterly newsletter, enhancing the Town web site and cable coverage of meetings, and by seeking positive publicity for the Town.

Water Supply

7. Create a standing Water Resources Committee to guide future efforts to protect groundwater quality and supply by:
 - a) proposing zoning and subdivision amendments to regulate the density of development, minimum lot sizes and adequate well spacing according to the availability of groundwater resources, as recommended in the Groundwater Protection Plan, and to ensure that new development not have adverse impacts on water supply to existing wells and on groundwater resources that may supply future public water-supply wells by requiring a groundwater-extraction impact assessment prepared by a qualified hydrogeologist,
 - b) developing a program to protect groundwater from potential contamination, including from development activity not served by the public sewer system,
 - c) exploring the feasibility of a municipal water source through mapping of identified potential areas, working with landowners and conducting testing for water quality and quantity, and
 - d) creating an emergency response plan in the event that water sources fail due to contamination or drought.
8. Revise regulations to require testing for adequate groundwater supply for large development proposals.

Wastewater Management

9. Define and map a future sewer-service area that is consistent with planned growth areas as shown on the Future Land Use map.
10. Coordinate with the Columbia County Department of Health to develop a data base and mapping of all on-lot septic systems and to receive reports of septic-system violations and actions taken to resolve problems.
11. Begin an educational campaign to encourage property owners to regularly clean out septic systems.

Waste Disposal and Nuisance Standards

12. Amend zoning and subdivision standards to:
 - a) adopt provisions concerning dilapidated buildings and neglected exterior grounds and the removal of junk, debris and trash,
 - b) develop active enforcement requirements and inspection schedules concerning violations with fine schedules and sanctions in line with state maximums,
 - c) prohibit “burn barrels,” and
 - d) consider the adoption of lighting standards and a noise ordinance.

13. Initiate an annual Town-sponsored community car and junk pickup day staffed by Town employees and volunteers.
14. Initiate a Townwide program that encourages community businesses, organizations and youth groups to conduct trash pickups, plant flowers and shrubs and undertake other beautification projects to improve the appearance of the Town.

Fire, Police and Ambulance Service

15. Work with the police and fire departments, Northern Dutchess Paramedics and the five Columbia County towns sharing NDP service to ensure that an adequate number of EMS vehicles is stationed permanently within the area, that there is adequate ongoing financial support for the service, and that a first-responder system for the Town is developed.

Parks and Recreation

16. Revitalize the Park Commission by recruiting new volunteer members to ensure continuation of the camp program and other events and the improvement of fiscal accountability and communication with the public.
17. Amend the subdivision ordinance to adopt parkland-reservation standards.
18. Establish a Trails Committee to examine trails and linkage opportunities within Germantown and with county and regional connections.
19. Pursue completion of the campsite project on Dale's Bridge Road.
20. Apply to the NY Department of State for funding to develop and implement a Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan to promote public access to and enhance responsible use of the Hudson River waterfront.
21. Work with railroad agencies and landowners to place a walking trail adjacent to the Hudson River from Cheviot to North Germantown.

School and Library

22. Develop a School and Town Committee to:
 - a) improve communication and coordination on long-term planning issues, including retaining the Germantown Central School in the Town and allowing community use of school facilities and grounds for recreation and adult education after school hours, and
 - b) create new opportunities, such as intern programs with local businesses, for assisting the school, its teachers and students and for utilizing talented residents for special learning projects and tutoring/mentoring programs.
23. Explore options with the Library Board to assist in fundraising for the new library building.

10. Transportation

“Create a more charming and attractive environment at the intersection of 9G and Main Street. Now it seems like a rest area off a highway/thruway.”

INTRODUCTION

A safe and efficient transportation system is important for a healthy community. Planned future land uses can affect traffic patterns and flow, just as planned future road improvements can affect future land uses. Traffic congestion can be minimized by careful attention to transportation alternatives and good land-use planning. This chapter discusses traffic, roads, parking, sidewalks and public transportation within Germantown.

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

Road Classifications. Roads are designed and classified according to function and include arterial roads, collector roads and local roads. Arterials are designed for long-distance, higher-speed through driving, while local roads are designed primarily for access to local residences. Collectors are designed to connect local roads to arterials. Conflicts arise when the functions of roads are mixed, such as when arterials have numerous access driveways that slow down arterial traffic.

Route 9G is the only state highway in Germantown and the Town’s only arterial road. From the Clermont town boundary in the south to the Livingston town boundary at the Roeliff Jansen Kill in the north, Germantown’s section of 9G is 5.4 miles long. There are no anticipated improvements or alterations to 9G in the foreseeable future.

All of Columbia County’s roadways in the Town may be considered collector roads; the county maintains 12 miles of these roads. County Route 8 (Main Street) is a major collector and the primary route through the Town. Other county roads, including Routes 33, 35 and 35A may be considered minor collectors. All other roads in Germantown are local roads.

Traffic Counts. Traffic-count data help determine increases in the use of roads and future needs for road improvements. The following table compares traffic flow on county collectors in 2000 and 2005. The Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) count is taken over a 48-hour period and assumes and includes a 5% truck traffic factor. It should be noted that County Route 8 traffic counts were taken near the Germantown Central School and may be inflated due to school bus and student, parent and staff car traffic.

Table 15: AADT Traffic Counts

Route	2000	2005
County Rt. 33 (Church Avenue)	750	613
County Rt. 35 (Woods Road)	561	745
County Rt. 6 (Loonies Corner)	615	634
County Rt. 35A (Northern Blvd)	124	141
County Rt. 33 (Hover Avenue)	885	1,090
County Rt. 8 (Main Street)	2,437	3,705

In the five-year period, traffic county routes increased substantially along Woods Road (33%), along Hover Avenue (23%) and, most of all, along Main Street (52%). According to NY State Department of Transportation data collected over the past three years, average daily traffic counts on State Route 9G south of County Route 8 totaled 4,190 and north of Route 8 totaled 4,820.

Germantown Highway Department. The Germantown Highway Department currently has a staff of four employees, including the highway superintendent, and in 2006 had an operating budget of \$433,000. The highway superintendent at the time of writing was interviewed and provided the following data. The department currently maintains 26.3 miles of roads, and since the 1989 Master Plan Review, only one road -- Meacher's-Attean Lane off Best Lane -- has been constructed. The department seeks to maintain the width of Town roads at 18 feet as a way of controlling traffic speed. This width is consistent with the recommendations of the National Institute of Home Builders, American Society of Civil Engineers and the Institute of Transportation Engineers, as detailed in a publication, *Residential Streets*, published by the Urban Land Institute. In addition to its effect on controlling speed, the 18-foot width reduces paving and snow removal costs while also contributing to Germantown's rural character. The Town has no available traffic data, nor is there an official engineered road map.

Highway Department improvement plans for the fall of 2006 and spring of 2007 include a complete rehabilitation of East Camp Road from its intersection with Woods Road to the Clermont town line; new pavement will be laid and all culverts replaced. At the end of construction the entire road, some of which is now 14 feet wide, will be 18 feet wide. Additionally the department plans to put a new top on Reuter Road off Church Avenue. There are currently no plans for any further road construction.

Public Transportation. Public transportation options in Columbia County are limited, although a private bus service subsidized by Columbia County and New York State provides transportation for seniors to nearby locations at a minimal cost. Amtrak rail service to Germantown is available at railway stations in Hudson and Rhinecliff.

Table 16 shows how the residents of Germantown travel to work. Only 2.3% of Town and county residents use public transportation, and a higher proportion of Town residents drives alone to work (80.6%) than is true for county residents (75.7%). Town residents are less likely to walk to work than county residents, a difference that could reflect a lack of sidewalks in Germantown and separation between residential areas and places of employment.

Table 16: Commuting to Work (2000)

	Germantown	Columbia County	New York State
Workers 16 Years & Over	947	28,929	8,211,916
Drove alone	80.6%	75.7%	56.3%
Carpooled	10.6%	11.7%	9.2%
Public Transportation	2.3%	2.3%	24.4%
Walked	1.8%	4.1%	6.2%
Other means	0.7%	1.1%	0.8%
Worked at home	4.0%	5.1%	3.0%
Mean Travel Time to Work in Minutes	28.6	26.1	31.7

Source: U.S. Census

The table also shows that the mean travel time to work for Germantown residents is 28.6 minutes, somewhat longer than the average commute for county residents but shorter than that for state residents. Likely work destinations within commuting distance include Hudson, Rhinebeck, Catskill, Kingston, Poughkeepsie and the Capital Region.

Sidewalks and Bike Paths. Sidewalks in Germantown are located primarily in the village center and along Main Street. There has been strong public support for additional sidewalks in Town that would connect residents with the places they work, shop and recreate, making the community more walkable. In 1999 Germantown applied for a federal TEA-21 Transportation Enhancements Program grant entitled the Germantown Paths Project in the amount of \$218,905, with a 20% Town match of \$55,000, for a total of \$273,905 in project funds. The project languished for seven years until the estimated costs far exceeded the original grant. The Town Board decided, therefore, to return the original grant and in 2006 applied for a federal SAFETEA-LU grant for an enhanced project, again offering a 20% Town match. In November 2007 the Town learned that it would receive over \$1,000,000 in grant monies for this project, which calls for:

- The removal, replacement and addition of sidewalks along Main Street (County Route 8) from the village center to Route 9G, including decorative/patterned crosswalks, ornamental light poles, granite curbing and trees;
- The removal and replacement of the existing sidewalks along Church Avenue (County Route 33) and Maple Avenue in the village center;



- Construction of and improvements to the walking trails through Palatine Park, to terminate near the 1746 Parsonage on Maple Avenue;
- Placement of a gazebo at the intersection of Main Street and Palatine Park Road, including a new landscaped seating area; and
- Sidewalks along Palatine Park Road from Main Street to Route 9G.

FUTURE ISSUES

The Town's municipal parking lot across from the post office is currently without signage or lighting and might be better utilized if signage and lighting were provided. The collection of local traffic-count data and the development of an engineered Town road map could help Germantown track increases in traffic flow on its roads over time so that it could effectively plan future road and other transportation improvements.



As traffic volume increases on Germantown's roads, the safety of drivers and pedestrians becomes a growing concern. Traffic accident locations are a good indicator of areas where road improvements may be needed. While accident data from all police agencies are sent to the New York State Department of Transportation, the Germantown data were not made available at the time of the preparation of this plan. To help the Town identify potential problem areas and propose

appropriate solutions, it is recommended that the Germantown police begin to keep records of local traffic accidents.

Another factor that plays into traffic safety is access management and numbers of curb cuts on the Town's more heavily-traveled roads. Shared access and parking in new commercial areas can enhance traffic flow and improve safety, while being more aesthetically-pleasing than traditional individual access drives.

Traffic calming is a term that refers to a variety of measures that can be used to slow traffic and create a safer driving and pedestrian environment. Many communities are beginning to incorporate traffic calming approaches into both transportation and land-use planning. The aforementioned SAFETEA-LU grants are largely intended to go towards traffic calming, pedestrian enhancement and promoting alternative modes of transport.

As Germantown grows, new roads will be created. The Town has an opportunity to identify the configurations these roads will take. It can do this by encouraging interconnected roads, discouraging

cul-de-sacs and considering the adoption of an Official Map. New York law permits the creation of an Official Map to lay out future road networks, drainage ways and parks. When development is proposed, roads, drainage and parkland on the site are protected and either dedicated as part of the subdivision review or, in the case of parkland, purchased by the Town exercising its right of first refusal.

For instance, the Town could lay out a grid pattern of street expansion from the village center, and in other areas planned for development. Currently, development in the village center is one-lot deep with little access to reach interior lots. An Official Map could identify future road access in these areas to interior lots and thereby facilitate a continued expansion of the village center compatible with its existing rural character.

An Official Map presents another opportunity. The Town could use it to identify desired trail corridors as part of a future Town-wide trail network. The most workable place to use the Official Map in this regard might be at the perimeter of the village center growth area, where a greenbelt and trail could be established that would wrap around the village, connecting Palatine Park and the Hudson River. Developers could be asked to dedicate land for trails in exchange for building at higher densities in the village center.

Finally, the Town could enhance its planned paths project by extending the system of sidewalks along Route 9G from Main Street north to Palatine Park Road and along Lower Main Street from 9G to the Hudson River to tie in with a future walking trail along the river to Cheviot. This would provide a linked system of sidewalks and trails connecting commercial, residential and civic uses in the Town. Developers proposing new or expanded commercial development along Route 9G would be required to install sidewalks if they would link to existing sidewalks.

GOAL AND RECOMMENDATIONS

■ GOAL:

- To facilitate smooth traffic flow through appropriate land-use patterns and alternative transportation options.

■ RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Amend zoning and subdivision standards to:
 - a) require new commercial development in the village center and along Route 9G to install sidewalks if linked to an existing sidewalk system,
 - b) revise width and material specifications for driveways, rural lanes and local roads to promote aesthetics and rural character,
 - c) define criteria under which the Town will consider accepting dedicated new Town roads,
 - d) promote shared driveways and parking in commercial areas, and
 - e) promote interconnected roadways and discourage the construction of cul-de-sacs in new residential developments.

2. Create a Sidewalk Plan for the village center that provides pedestrian connections between residential, commercial, community and recreational land uses.
3. Commence the collection of traffic-count data on all Town roads as a benchmark for future analysis.
4. Develop an official Computer Aided Design (CAD) engineered road map for all Town roads.
5. Maintain a police database of all automobile accident and toxic spill information for future reference.
6. Provide signage and lighting for the municipal parking lot.
7. Explore strategies to reduce vehicle traffic speed and implement traffic calming measures that create more compatibility with pedestrians and bicyclists.
8. Extend the current system of sidewalks to better connect existing and planned future commercial, residential and recreational areas of the Town.
9. Encourage Columbia County to establish bike paths on county roads throughout the Town.
10. Adopt an Official Map that identifies future desired road configurations and trail networks.
11. Encourage the development and enhancement of regular bus transportation and link local efforts with any Columbia or Dutchess County programs.

11. Action Strategies

A comprehensive plan is only as effective as its recommendations are actually likely to be put into action. To that end, it is important that clear recommendations be accompanied by timelines for implementation and by identification of the parties responsible for implementation. This chapter is intended to present all of the comprehensive plan's recommendations at one location, by topic, and organized to show timelines and responsible parties.

The plan's timelines are Short-term, Mid-term, Long-term and Ongoing. Short-term recommendations should be implemented within two years, Mid-term recommendations between three and five years and Long-term recommendations beyond five years. Responsible parties include the Town Board, Planning Board, Zoning Committee (assuming one is assigned to propose changes to local land-use regulations for consistency with the new comprehensive plan) and other Town and community bodies.

Topic	Timeline	Responsible Party
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Regional Context and Local History

Amend zoning and subdivision standards to: a) Require an assessment of historic and archaeological assets as part of the review process for development proposals in the Town's historic areas, and b) Adopt design standards for historically significant districts (such as the village center) and for significant properties.	Short-term	Zoning Committee
Encourage a private/public partnership (e.g., an historical society or "Friends of" organization) to provide better resources to preserve the historic Parsonage building and the Town's historical archives and artifact collections and to broaden public awareness and appreciation of Germantown's history.	Ongoing	History Department
Coordinate historic-preservation activities with neighboring organizations that have related missions (e.g., Hudson River Heritage, Hudson Valley Vernacular Architecture and others).	Ongoing	History Department
Perform an updated, detailed historic-resource inventory for the Town in collaboration with Hudson River Heritage's ongoing work in Germantown.	Mid-term	History Department
Support extension of the Hudson River Historic District to include the Germantown waterfront.	Mid-term	Town Board

Current, Adjacent and Regional Land Use

Inform adjacent municipalities of proposed and adopted planning and zoning at the Town's boundaries.	Short-term	Town Board
Establish mechanisms for local and regional partnerships such as the Hudson River Valley Greenway Compact process.	Mid-term	Town Board
Focus development more efficiently in and around traditional centers and avoid overdevelopment of the rural surroundings.	Ongoing	Town Board
Foster an interconnected regional system of open-space corridors to offer recreational opportunities and protect environmentally sensitive areas.	Ongoing	Town Board
Provide a stronger emphasis on walkable communities, while supporting land-use and site-plan decisions that reduce traffic impacts.	Ongoing	Town Board

Natural Resources and Agriculture

<p>Amend zoning and subdivision standards to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) adopt wetlands and waterbodies standards to protect water resources, including stream corridors, b) ensure that the types and densities of allowed development in areas with limited groundwater supplies do not exceed capacity, c) adopt siting standards for all new developments to protect environmentally sensitive lands, including slopes and ridges, forested corridors, open space and farmland, wetlands and waterbodies, important habitat and scenic resources, d) ensure that the types and densities of development allowed in and adjacent to Town Agricultural Districts minimize potential adverse impacts to agricultural lands, while enhancing opportunities for increased on-farm income, and e) preserve valuable open space by using conservation-design subdivisions to site housing in more rural parts of the Town in environmentally sensitive ways. 	Short-term	Zoning Committee
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<p>Adopt a plan with specific goals and timelines for the Town to reduce energy use and solid-waste production by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) obtaining an energy audit of Town facilities to determine where energy savings can be realized and b) evaluating energy-saving and nonpolluting alternatives for purchases and capital improvements, including building according to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards. 	Mid-term	Town Board
Develop GIS (Geographic Information Systems) capability within Town government as a planning tool.	Mid-term	Town Board
Apply for funding to develop a management plan for the designated scenic-byways road segment in the Town and pursue designation of additional road segments as scenic byways.	Mid-term	Planning Board
Develop a long-range plan for preservation and protection of agricultural, open-space and natural-resource areas, to include the evaluation of areas for protection, the identification of suitable land-use tools, programs and funding sources, and a public-education and outreach program.	Mid-term	Town Board
Support the Town's involvement in the Keep Farming program and similar efforts to promote connections between farming and the community.	Short-term	Town Board
Evaluate the need for a local "Right-to-Farm" ordinance, new zoning provisions for farm and farmworker housing, new on-farm business options and other farm-friendly provisions.	Short-term	Zoning Committee
Work regionally with those concerned to obtain air monitoring equipment, to develop and implement a monitoring program and to hold accountable those responsible for ensuring appropriate air quality in the area.	Mid-term	Town Board

Housing

<p>Amend zoning and subdivision standards to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) provide for more moderate-cost housing opportunities in the village center such as homes on smaller lots and duplexes, b) allow alternate housing arrangements such as accessory apartments and other shared living arrangements or temporary housing for relatives, c) direct future housing into appropriate areas of Town, based on sewer and water capabilities, existing development patterns, development constraints and natural-resource considerations, d) preserve valuable open space by using conservation-design subdivisions (see Chapter 6, “Future Planning”), e) adopt design review standards or guidelines for new multi-family housing. 	Short-term	Zoning Committee
Work regionally with other communities on large alternate-living projects requiring broad support and major funding.	Mid-term	Town Board
Create a Housing Committee to gather information and establish a database to provide assistance to income-eligible families about affordable-housing options and resources available from county, state and federal governments and banking institutions.	Short-term	Town Board

Local Economy and Commercial Development

<p>Amend zoning and subdivision standards to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) encourage mixed-use business and residential development in the village center that takes advantage of available infrastructure and that supports an expanded walkable neighborhood, b) prevent commercial strip development on Route 9G by limiting commercial development to designated and walkable nodes, c) replace the industrial Floating Zones provisions in the Town's Zoning Ordinance with limited designated areas for nonpolluting light-industrial uses, to be determined after thorough analysis with the assistance of the Columbia-Hudson Partnership and other economic-development resources, d) encourage and promote appropriate home-based businesses, e) require site and design review for new and expanded commercial uses, f) rezone land areas as appropriate to Highway Commercial and Village Commercial to better reflect existing and desired types and scale of businesses, g) apply a Village Center overlay to the village core to apply traditional dimensional standards to existing and new development, and h) limit the size, height and placement of business signs in commercial zones. 	Short-term	Zoning Committee
<p>Establish a standing Economic Development Committee to promote the growth of small businesses within the community. These businesses could include small, innovative or cooperative agricultural projects on unused farmland.</p>	Short-term	Town Board
<p>Develop distinctive informational, directional and gateway signage and install at appropriate locations.</p>	Mid-term	Highway Department/ Town Board
<p>Develop and implement a program of street tree planting in the village center.</p>	Mid-term	Town Board

Local Government

<p>Create a Town Boards Committee to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) review, revise and develop Town laws, ordinances and regulations to be comprehensive, clear, compatible and compliant with state, county and case law; to strengthen authority and enforcement requirements; and codify regulations into a format that is accessible to the public and allows for the easy integration of future changes, b) create job descriptions for all Town officials and employees that clarify roles, responsibilities and functions of all personnel and their adequate orientation and training, and c) produce policy and procedure manuals for Town departments, boards, commissions and committees that ensure proper accountability and adequate documentation available to the public. 	Short-term	Town Board
	Mid-term	
	Mid-term	
Retain a planning consultant.	Mid-term	Town Board
Increase salaries of part-time positions to be more competitive and increase hours of certain positions to enable staff to better carry out their responsibilities.	Mid-term	Town Board
Actively recruit volunteers for Town boards, committees and commissions from a broad spectrum of residents.	Ongoing	Town Board
Explore grant opportunities to support special Town projects.	Ongoing	Town Board
Improve communication with residents by conducting special workshops, producing a quarterly newsletter, enhancing the Town web site and cable coverage of meetings, and by seeking positive publicity for the Town.	Ongoing	Town Board

Water Supply

Revise regulations to require testing for adequate groundwater supply for large development proposals.	Short-term	Zoning Committee
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Create a standing Water Resources Committee to guide future efforts to protect groundwater quality and supply by: <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) proposing zoning and subdivision amendments to regulate the density of development, minimum lot sizes and adequate well spacing according to the availability of groundwater resources, as recommended in the Groundwater Protection Plan, and to ensure that new development not have adverse impacts on water supply to existing wells and on groundwater resources that may supply future public water-supply wells by requiring a groundwater-extraction impact assessment prepared by a qualified hydrogeologist,b) developing a program to protect groundwater from potential contamination, including from development activity not served by the public sewer system,c) exploring the feasibility of a municipal water source through mapping of identified potential areas, working with landowners and conducting testing for water quality and quantity, andd) creating an emergency response plan in the event that water sources fail due to contamination or drought.	Mid-term	Town Board
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Wastewater Management

Define and map a future sewer-service area that is consistent with planned growth areas as shown on the Future Land Use map.	Short-term	Town Board/ Planning Board
Coordinate with the Columbia County Department of Health to develop a data base and mapping of all on-lot septic systems and to receive reports of septic-system violations and actions taken to resolve problems.	Mid-term	Planning Board
Begin an educational campaign to encourage property owners to regularly clean out septic systems.	Mid-term	Planning Board

Waste Disposal and Nuisance Standards

Amend zoning and subdivision standards to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) adopt provisions concerning dilapidated buildings and neglected exterior grounds and removal of junk, debris and trash, b) develop active enforcement requirements and inspection schedules concerning violations with fine schedules and sanctions in line with state maximums, c) prohibit “burn barrels,” and d) consider the adoption of lighting standards and a noise ordinance. 	Short-term	Zoning Committee
Initiate an annual Town-sponsored community car and junk pickup day staffed by Town employees and volunteers.	Ongoing	Town Board
Initiate an annual Townwide program that encourages community businesses, organizations and youth groups to conduct trash pick-ups, plant flowers and shrubs and undertake other beautification projects to improve the appearance of the Town.	Ongoing	Town Board/ Community groups

Fire, Police and Ambulance Service

Work with the police and fire departments, Northern Dutchess Paramedics and the five Columbia County towns sharing NDP services to ensure that an adequate number of EMS vehicles is stationed permanently within the area, that there is adequate ongoing financial support for the service, and that a first-responder system for the Town is developed.	Mid-term	Town Board
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Parks and Recreation

Revitalize the Park Commission by recruiting new volunteer members to ensure continuation of the camp program and other events and the improvement of fiscal accountability and communication with the public.	Short-term	Town Board
Amend the subdivision ordinance to adopt parkland-reservation standards.	Short-term	Zoning Committee
Establish a Trails Committee to examine trails and linkage opportunities within Germantown and with county and regional connections.	Mid-term	Town Board

Pursue completion of the campsite project on Dale's Bridge Road.	Mid-term	Town Board
Work with railroad agencies and landowners to place a walking trail adjacent to the Hudson River from Cheviot to North Germantown.	Mid-term	Town Board
Apply to the NY Department of State for funding to develop and implement a Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan to promote public access to and enhance responsible use of the Hudson River waterfront.	Mid-term	Planning Board

School and Library

<p>Develop a School and Town Committee to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) improve communication and coordination on long-term planning issues, including retaining the Germantown Central School in the Town and allowing community use of school facilities and grounds after school hours, and b) create new opportunities, such as intern programs with local businesses, for assisting the school, its teachers and students and for utilizing talented residents for special learning projects and tutoring/mentoring programs. 	Ongoing	Town Board
Explore options with the Library Board to assist in fundraising for the new library building.	Short-term	Town Board

Transportation

<p>Amend zoning and subdivision standards to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) require new commercial development in the village center and along Route 9G to install sidewalks if linked to an existing sidewalk system, b) revise width and material specifications for driveways, rural lanes and local roads to promote aesthetics and rural character, c) define criteria under which the Town will consider accepting dedicated new Town roads, d) promote shared driveways and parking in commercial areas, and e) promote interconnected roadways and discourage the construction of cul-de-sacs in new residential developments. 	Short-term	Zoning Committee
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Commence the collection of traffic-count data on all Town roads as a benchmark for future analysis.	Short-term	Highway Department
Develop an official Computer Aided Design (CAD) engineered road map for all Town roads.	Short-term	Town Board
Maintain a police database of all automobile accident and toxic spill information for future reference.	Short-term	Police Department
Provide signage and lighting for the municipal parking lot.	Mid-term	Town Board
Explore strategies to reduce vehicle traffic speed and implement traffic calming measures that create more compatibility with pedestrians and bicyclists.	Mid-term	Planning Board
Encourage the County to establish bike paths on County roads throughout Town.	Mid-term	Town Board
Create a Sidewalk Plan for the village center that provides pedestrian connections between residential, commercial, community and recreational land uses.	Mid-term	Town Board
Adopt an Official Map that identifies future desired road configurations and trail networks.	Mid-term	Town Board/ Planning Board
Encourage the development and enhancement of regular bus transportation and link local efforts with any Columbia or Dutchess County programs.	Mid-term	Town Board

12. Future Land Use

It is not within the mandate, responsibilities or legal ability of the Comprehensive Plan Committee to rewrite the Town's zoning ordinance. The following descriptions of proposed future land-use designations, as reflected on the accompanying Future Land Use map, are intended only as a general guide to updating that ordinance. The Future Land Use map is not a zoning map. The creation of a new zoning map will be the responsibility of a Zoning Committee appointed by the Town Board and, before it becomes official, will have to satisfy all state and Town regulations, including the holding of public hearings. Some of the designations below already exist while others are new. Additional detail on the reasoning behind the proposed designations can be found in the Future Planning sections of chapters 6, 7 and 8. Although the proposed designations would result in the rezoning of significant areas of the Town, details of that zoning would be determined only as part of the zoning update process following the Town's adoption of this comprehensive plan.

Rural Residential. The Rural Residential designation is intended to apply to land areas in the central part of the Town surrounding the village center. These lands show a pattern of scattered residential development and tend to be more parcelized and have fewer significant natural and agricultural resources than other parts of the Town. A two-acre minimum lot size is proposed for this designation. In general, these areas are not intended for public sewer and water service.

Environmental Resource. The Environmental Resource designation is intended to apply to contiguous areas of larger-lot lands characterized by combinations of the following resources: forest cover, wetlands, streams, hydric soils, soils vulnerable to contamination, floodplain, Hudson River waterfront, steep slopes, designated and proposed scenic byways and rare- animal habitat. A five-acre minimum lot size is proposed for this designation, with conservation-design subdivisions required for major subdivisions (see Chapter 6). These areas are not intended for public sewer and water service.

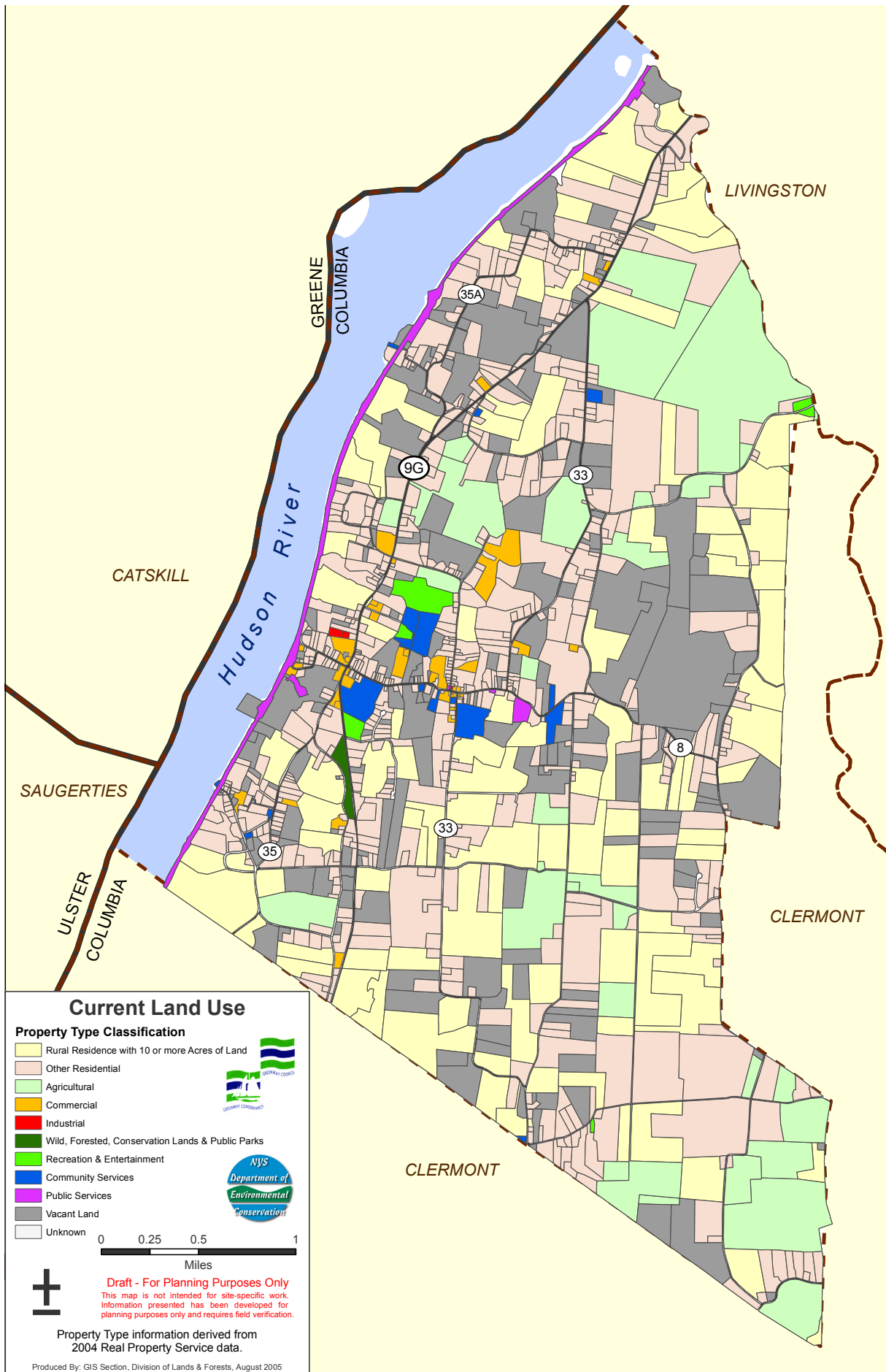
Agricultural Resource. The Agricultural Resource designation is intended to include lands within the Town's Agricultural District as well as extensive overlapping areas of wetlands, streams, hydric soils and soils that are vulnerable to contamination. These lands include many of the Town's largest landholdings. A 10-acre minimum lot size is proposed for this designation, with conservation-design subdivisions required for major subdivisions (see Chapter 6). These areas are not intended for public sewer and water service.

Village Residential. The Village Residential designation applies to existing and planned future residential land in the village center and west of Route 9G to the Hudson River. This designation is intended to permit single-family dwellings and duplexes at traditional village densities. These areas are intended to receive public sewer service. While currently reliant on on-lot wells, if a public water system were developed, this area should receive public water.

Village Commercial. The Village Commercial designation applies to existing and planned future small-scale, locally oriented commercial uses mixed with compatible residential uses. The designation seeks to allow adaptive reuse and conversion of older homes while employing design standards to promote attractive new development. This area is intended for public sewer service. While currently reliant on on-lot wells, if a public water system were developed, this area should receive public water.

Highway Commercial. The Highway Commercial designation is intended to permit a variety of primarily commercial uses that are oriented to automobile traffic and are commonly found along highways. This designation applies to an area of land in existing commercial use, with additional land for expansion, in North Germantown on Route 9G just north of the intersection with Hover Avenue (Route 33). While public sewer and water are not available to this area, an alternative or community sewer or water system could be appropriate.

Light Industrial. The Light Industrial designation is intended to permit nonpolluting light-industrial, high-tech and office-park uses. Two areas of land have been designated for this use along the Route 9G corridor. While public sewer and water are not available to this area, an alternative or community systems could be appropriate.



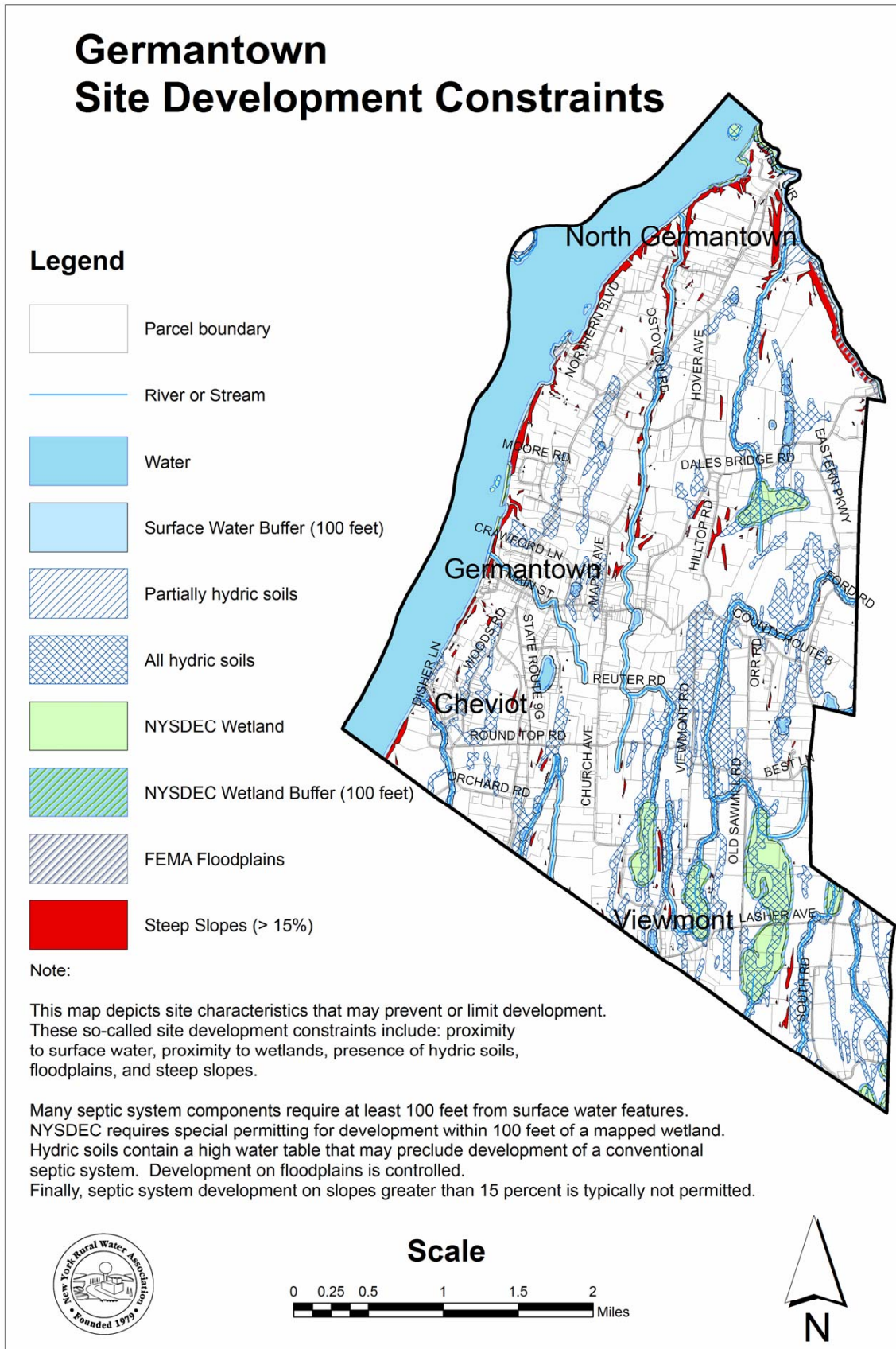


Figure 9. Physical Site Development Constraints.

