

**Draft**  
**Town of Gallatin**  
**Comprehensive**  
**Plan**

**Part I: Vision, Goals and**  
**Strategies**

**This Plan Updates the 2007 Version**  
**Draft October 2022**

# Draft 2022 Town of Gallatin Updated Comprehensive Plan

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The Comprehensive Plan Review Committee appreciates the input received from the public through open house events, online surveys, and public meetings.

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## **Introduction**

### **What is a Comprehensive Plan?**

This Plan outlines the goals, objectives, standards, and policies for the Town of Gallatin. It represents a significant planning process undertaken to update the previous Plan adopted in 2007. The comprehensive plan role, in large part, is to provide the Town with a roadmap for future decision making. It considers multiple planning areas including land use, transportation, the environment, recreation, open space, infrastructure, historic resources, and housing and details other topics of importance to Gallatin today.

Gallatin is authorized to develop and adopt this plan by New York State Town Law Section 272-a. Once a comprehensive plan is adopted, there are several benefits and implications. These include:

1. All government agencies involved in planning capital projects in Gallatin must first consider this plan. This gives the Town a much larger stake in what other agencies are doing in Town.
2. The plan is an important document that can help Gallatin be successful in obtaining grant funding. It tells the granting agency that Gallatin has completed a comprehensive planning process to identify its needs and implement programs to meet those needs.
3. The comprehensive plan is a tool that the Town Board, Planning Board and even private citizens can use to make informed decisions. The background data included in the plan includes a full profile and inventory of resources in the Town. This data, along with the maps, can be important tools to be used in the decision-making process. The Vision, Goals, and Strategies detail what the Town of Gallatin desires for itself in the future.
4. All land use regulations must be in accordance with a comprehensive plan, according to New York State law. The comprehensive plan is not a law in itself and is not adopted as a local law. However, all land use laws of the Town of Gallatin must be consistent with this plan. This plan provides the policy basis for regulations in the future. Once a plan is adopted, all land use laws should be reviewed and updated as needed so that they are in accordance with this plan.

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Paraphrasing from a July 2006 article published by the New York State Planning Federation: A comprehensive plan is not a detailed instruction manual that tells exactly what to do or what will happen. The plan provides guideposts to observe as the community implements the plan, but it does not provide details of the implementation process. The Town Board will direct the future work to implement this plan. A comprehensive plan must leave flexibility for those in the future that will be doing the implementation of the plan.

### The Planning Process

The 2007 Plan updated a 1991 version, and this Plan updates the 2007 version in recognition that the Plan needs to be reflective of current community needs. Where the information from 2007 is still valid, it has been retained in this update.

The Town of Gallatin received a grant to support development of this updated plan from the Hudson River Valley Greenway in 2019 and planning efforts began in January 2020. At that time, a volunteer committee (The Committee) was tasked by the Town Board with drafting an updated comprehensive plan, and consultants from Community Planning & Environmental Associates were hired to help facilitate and provide technical support. Three months after the Committee began work, the Covid-19 Pandemic caused the Town Board to pause the process. It was re-started in August 2021.

The Committee conducted a planning process that was oriented to answer the following three questions:

1. What are the current conditions, needs, and public perceptions in the Town of Gallatin? Part II (Appendices) of this Plan includes the information collected and analyzed used to answer this question. All data collected from the public is highlighted in Part I, and full details are included in Part II.
2. Where does the Town of Gallatin want to be in the future? The vision statement and goal statements were drafted based on public input to answer this question.
3. How will the Town of Gallatin reach that future state? The section entitled *Recommended Goals and Strategies* outlines the answers to this question.

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The Committee, with assistance from its planning consultant, met regularly and developed a planning process that included the following steps:

1. Regular meetings of the Committee.
2. Joint Meeting of Committee, Town Board, Planning Board, ZBA, CAC, Town staff (September 2021)
3. In-person open house at Taghkanic State Park, followed by an online opportunity for those not able to attend in-person (October 2021)
4. Background studies and mapping (August 2021 through March 2022)
5. Development and implementation of a town-wide survey (March to April 2022)
6. Development of Vision and Goal statements (May 2022)
7. Updating of Part II of Plan (May through June 2022)
8. Development of strategies (July through September 2022)
9. Public hearing hosted by the Committee on Draft Plan (November 2022)
10. Changes to Draft as needed based on public hearing.
11. Submittal of Draft Plan from the Committee to Town Board (DATE)
12. Adoption Process by Town Board initiated (DATE)
  - a. Referral of Plan to the Columbia County Planning Board
  - b. Public Hearing hosted by the Town Board (Second Hearing)
  - c. Edits to Draft Plan as needed
  - c. State Environmental Quality Review process by Town Board
  - d. Adoption of plan by resolution of Board

## Implementing the Plan

In order to meet the vision and goals of Gallatin, this Comprehensive Plan needs to be implemented. This plan offers the Town many options and guidelines that can help Gallatin in the future by recommending standards, programs, and policies. After adoption by the Town Board, various priority projects will begin to be considered and implemented by the Town Board as outlined in the Priority Actions Section of this Plan (Part I)<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Note that as part of implementation, the Town Board may enact new or amend existing laws. Those would all have their own adoption process including public hearing(s), review by the county planning Board, and an environmental review.

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In order to assist the Town Board in implementing this plan, the following steps should be taken:

- A. On an annual basis, the Town Board should accomplish or assign an ad hoc committee to undertake priority tasks as outlined in this Plan, and review progress that has already been made.
- B. It is recommended that the Town Board assign the task of updating zoning and other land use laws to be consistent with this Plan as its first implementation step after adoption of this plan.
- C. The whole plan should be reviewed and updated as necessary every five to seven years.
- D. In its normal course of business, the Town Board should pay careful attention to grant opportunities that may be useful to implement aspects of the plan and aggressively work to attain those funds.

## General Comparison of 2007 Plan to 2022 Plan

The following table compares the 2007 plan to this update.

2007 Plan	2022 Plan
Public input included citizen survey done in 2005, Planning and Visioning Workshop in 2005, Presentation of Survey Results and Goals to Public, 2005, two years of open meetings where public participated.	Public input included citizen survey, planning and visioning open house (in-person and online), Joint meeting of the Town Board, Planning Board, ZBA, CAC, and others, Public Hearings
Demographic trends through 2000.	Demographic trends through 2022.
Existing Conditions (Physical, Public Utilities, Community Services, Transportation, Land Use, Fiscal) Updated and Expanded.	Existing Conditions (Physical, Public Utilities, Community Services, Transportation, Land Use, Fiscal) Updated and Expanded.
All new color maps created in Geographic Information System for analysis and ease to use: (Topography, Steep slopes, Watersheds, Bedrock Geology, Surficial Geology, Water Features, Soils: Depth to Bedrock, Soils: Depth to Water Table, Soils: Flood and Ponding Frequency, Soils: Drainage, Soils: Septic Limitations, Property Class, Farmland, Protected Land, Historic Places, Aerial Photo	All previous maps were updated, and new maps included in 2022

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2007 Plan	2022 Plan
2004, Fire Districts, School Districts, Zoning Districts, Sub watersheds, Water Constraints). This gives Town much more ability to understand and plan for physical features.	
Includes a Build-Out Analysis which is a tool that Gallatin can use to understand the housing development potential created and allowed by current zoning in Town. This tool illustrates what could happen if all developable land were developed.	No additional build-out analysis was conducted as part of the 2022 update because there were not significant changes in the community since 2007 to warrant an update of this particular planning tool.
Includes analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) in Gallatin, and is an important part of the plan.	A new SWOT was developed from all public input and re-analysis of the current conditions in Gallatin.
Clearly articulated vision statement to guide the Town long-term.	Updated vision statement to reflect current community needs.
Updated Goal Statements that confirm the same desired direction for Gallatin and are very similar to those in the 1991 plan.	Updated goal statements (Goals to Attain Gallatin’s Vision) to reflect current community needs.
Includes definition of rural character. This is important since “rural character” is a central focus of the plan.	Retained this definition as it still reflects community input.
Planning policies established and organized in a more useful manner as a) regulatory tools and methods (54 strategies), b) capital improvements and investments (6 strategies), and c) policy development and programs (27 strategies). The plan eliminated those strategies from the 1991 plan that had already been implemented and included or expanded those that were still relevant. The 2007 plan offers much more detail and direction for the Town is not prescriptive in its requirements. These strategies incorporate state-of-the art planning, land use, and environmental tools to help Gallatin attain its vision.	Many of the recommendations in the 2007 plan related to land use regulations were implemented in 2012. This Plan includes new strategies, actions and policies recommended to meet current needs of Gallatin.
Plan is available digitally for posting on websites or viewing on computers.	Plan and its maps and other background information and survey information (Part II) are all available on the Town website.
All maps are available digitally for posting on websites or viewing on computers.	All maps are available on the Town website.



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## Highlights of Public Input

This planning process included input from the public through several opportunities. These included input through the Comprehensive Plan Review Committee; a joint meeting of the Town Board, Planning Board, ZBA, and other town elected and appointed officials; an online open house and an in-person open house, and a town-wide public survey. As required by New York State Town Law, two public hearings were also held prior to adoption of this Plan. See Part II, Appendix 2 for full results of all public input efforts.

The joint meeting and open house were opportunities to begin to learn what the community feels are appropriate vision, goals and strategies for the Town of Gallatin. Those efforts contributed to the development of a town-wide survey. The survey, which is highlighted below (and detailed in Part II, Appendix 2) offered all residents and landowners in Town the opportunity to participate and to provide their opinions on the range of topics initially identified from the joint meeting and open houses.



*Figure 1: The open house held at Taghkanic State Park in October, 2021.*

### Public Survey (From May 2022)

**Note that the full survey questions can be found in Part II of this Plan. The full set of results can be found on the Town Website at [www.gallatin-ny.org](http://www.gallatin-ny.org)**

#### About the Participants

- There were 218 respondents
- 98% own their home.
- The majority of respondents are long-term residents – living in Gallatin > 20 years. However, there were people who are newcomers (16% < 5 years) and those who have been here in-between, so the survey represents new and established residents.
- 61% are full time residents; 34% are part time, and 5% are landowners but not residents.
- The survey represented most age groups but was weighted towards older residents aged 65+ (51%). There were no participants < 24 years of age, and only 5 that were aged between 25 and 35 years.
- Most participants do not have children living at home with them (86%).
- Most participants do not have a home-based business (76%) but 52 people, or 24% did have home-based businesses.

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## About the Town

### Three words or phrases that describe the positive features of Gallatin:

- First Phrases: Rural, Quiet, Beautiful/natural beauty, nature, scenic, open spaces, unspoiled
- Second Phrases: Quiet, Rural, Friendly, Beautiful, community, peaceful, farms, people neighbors, nature proximity
- Third Phrases: Friendly, rural, farms, town, community, peaceful, people, nature, beautiful, small, scenic

### Three things needing improvement in the Town of Gallatin:

- First Phrases: roads/road repair/road maintenance, cell phone, affordable housing, internet, community events, zoning, more recreation
- Second Phrases: Roads, taxes, businesses, internet, zoning, services, housing, farms
- Third Phrases: Roads, taxes, signage, more shopping, affordable housing, references to addressing climate change, take active role in solving town problems, having the town being more open and responsive to residents, and community resiliency.

### Other Thoughts for Inclusion in the Vision Statement:

Many people commented that the vision statement was good and little, or no change was needed – that was the prevalent comment. Some commented that it was too aspirational and not realistic. Many statements were about environmental protection and sustainability, and use of solar.

## About Specific Topics Explored in Survey

Agriculture: A vast majority of participants feel that loss of farms and farmland over time. Also, that promoting sustainable agricultural practices and a wide variety of farms and ag-related businesses in Town, as well as promoting products from Gallatin farms by finding a farmers market location are important (all > 80% of participants).



Comments related to this include: the need to promote agriculture and related businesses, promoting sustainability and responsible agriculture, regenerative agriculture, use of Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs) or other small farms, use of

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farmers markets or other outlets for farm products, community compost. Several people discussed concerns related to pesticide and chemical use on farms.

Community and Aging: All of the community and age-related topics explored in the survey were also important to the vast majority of participants. Lack of cell phone service and the need to recruit more volunteers for EMT and firefighters were considered important by over 77% of participants. Close to that in importance were: find a location for a farmers' market (71%), senior citizens feel isolated (71%), enhance education and information about town assets, history and community resources (64%), enhancing other volunteer opportunities in the community (63%), and lack of easy and effective Town-wide communication about Gallatin issues, events and activities (63%). The only other community and age-related topics not considered to be important by more than 50% of the participants were creating regular events and activities for Town residents (48%) and facilitating new senior housing opportunities (47%). Comments addressed the need for communication, better internet, better medical services, support for seniors, tax burdens on seniors, transportation.

Environment/Climate-Related: All topics explored in this survey question were identified as important by the vast majority of participants – some in the 90% range. There is strong consensus on the importance of the environment based on this response. Developing and locating a community solar facility that would benefit the residents of Gallatin was determined to be important by 51% and establishing a real property transfer tax to fund open space protection was determined to be important by 44% of participants. Other than those two, all other topics were well above 60% of participants indicating they were important. Several comments about solar and the need to balance them against habitat and other environmental needs were mentioned, and others were against solar. There was a diversity of ideas and opinions expressed by about 50 people that offered other ideas and thoughts on the environment.

Affordable Housing: The most important of the choices in this question was to seek funding for programs that support senior housing needs (61%), followed by updating zoning to promote a variety of housing for all ages and incomes (55%). The other categories had more people feel they were important than not important, but there were fewer numbers of participants. There were several comments included about difficulties with the code enforcement process. Short Term Rentals were mentioned frequently in the comments, with some people feeling they were acceptable, and others feeling like there is need for registration or other regulations for them. Many comments were that there was senior housing available in other places, and that it was not desired in Gallatin, while others felt it was imperative to address affordable housing needs. There seems to be a recognition of the need for senior and affordable housing, but it was not universally important or important to be addressed in Gallatin.

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Small Business/Home Based Business: Participants felt it was important to continue to develop a directory of local businesses (65%), to update zoning to offer more flexibility (61%) and to allow for more innovative businesses and ag/eco-tourism (59%), to explore and understand both beneficial and adverse impacts of short-term rentals (59%) and develop regulations of short-term rentals (68%). Other business-related topics were not as important and had far less support including: lack of established commercial zone in Town (32%), develop a town-wide branding for local businesses (37%), create a buy local campaign (47%), and develop a strategic marketing plan for town businesses (42%). Some of the comments related to how a commercial zone really does not fit in Gallatin, the need to encourage home businesses, and having friendly zoning. There was a mix of opinions on short term rentals.

Recreation: Participants felt that providing Empire passes to all residents to Lake Taghkanic was important (76%), and lack of bike/hike trails was important (54%). At the same time, creating bike trails and more recreational spaces was important to about 48% of participants. This response does seem at odds with some of the other statements made elsewhere in the survey where people asked for more recreational opportunities. Comments included a variety of ideas on other recreational opportunities that could be explored such as creating recreational space for youth, more fishing access to the Roe Jan, a dog park, and fitness classes.

### Looking towards the Future

An open-ended question was asked about what the most important issues were that Gallatin should address. There were 152 answers (out of 212 total participants). The following list was developed from those responses along with the number of times that topic was mentioned among the participant's answers.

- Protect the environment and natural resources, biodiversity, habitats, etc. and address climate change and its impacts on the environment (45 mentions)
- Preserve rural, small-town character and way of life, rural lifestyles, small town feel, etc. (23 mentions)
- Lower taxes, tax relief, assessment reforms needed (15 mentions)
- Manage growth to maintain all assets of Gallatin, including environment and character (14 mentions)
- Promote agriculture, farmers, promote regenerative ag (12 mentions)
- More recreational opportunities – mostly oriented to trails, paths and biking (10 mentions)
- Increase communication between and among town and residents (10 mentions)
- Support and provide affordable housing (10 mentions)
- Improve and maintain roads, especially address private road issues (10 mentions)

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- Increase transportation and other support services for seniors and disabled (10 mentions)
- Provide better internet and cell service (9 mentions)
- Support and find ways to increase home-based businesses and small businesses (9 mentions)
- Develop a farmers' market and other opportunities to buy local (7 mentions)
- Solar development (4 mentions)
- Short-term rentals (2 mentions to allow 2 mentions to stop or control)
- Provide space for community interaction/development (3 mentions)
- Build stronger sense of community (2 mentions)

### Gallatin Town Hall and Town Services

This question explored what features and functions could be served by the Town Hall improvement project. The top responses were for a warming and cooling center for residents during extreme weather events (70%), followed by an office for the Aging Senior Community services (65%), and opportunities for all residents to gather for other recreational, educational, and social activities (64%). There was less support (25%) for the Town Hall to be used for opportunities for residents to use the community space for private functions. 48 additional comments were added with other ideas of how the Town Hall could be used, along with caveats related to whether people would use it, tax implications, etc. The next question was open ended, and many promising ideas were proposed such as having some business services inside like coffee and Wi-Fi, food bank services, environmental education, history, farmers market, green energy/resilient building enhancements.

Town Services were felt to be very good (25%), adequate (36%), or needing improvement (15%). Several people commented on the need to improve roads, which was the most commented upon service.

Most people prefer to hear about information about Gallatin via Email or the Town website. Text, mail, newspaper and social media were not preferred. Social media was especially not preferred (10%).

Some ideas were generated for new committees including those for recreation, improving internet, starting a farmers' market, and climate smart activities.



## **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats Analysis**

This Comprehensive Plan is based upon current conditions in Gallatin and an analysis of the Town’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT). The SWOT provides a foundation for identifying elements of the Town to be maintained (strengths), challenges to address (weaknesses), actions for the future (opportunities), and for understanding the larger issues felt to ‘threaten’ the Town (threats). The items included in the SWOT were identified through town meetings, public open house efforts, a town-wide survey, and a detailed analysis of Gallatin’s demographic, economic, environmental, and cultural profiles. This detailed information is presented in Part II.

Strengths are resources or capabilities that will help the town fulfill its vision; weaknesses are deficiencies in resources or capabilities that will hinder Gallatin in fulfilling its vision; opportunities are factors or situations that can affect the town favorably and can help us meet our goals. Threats or challenges are factors or situations that can affect Gallatin negatively and prevent the Town from reaching its goals.

The SWOT analysis provides many valuable clues about potential effective strategies, since every successful strategy builds on strengths and takes advantage of opportunities, while it overcomes or minimizes the effects of weaknesses and threats. These elements, both positive and negative, have a powerful impact on community development.

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The following table outlines Gallatin’s identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Many of the elements contained in the updated SWOT are the same as found in the 2007 planning effort. Both are listed below.

### 2007 SWOT Results (To Understand Gallatin in 2007)

<b>Strengths (2007)</b>	<b>Weaknesses (2007)</b>	<b>Opportunities (2007)</b>	<b>Threats (2007)</b>
Rural character	Town split into 3 school districts and no central post office leads to lack of cohesion	Enhance recreational facilities and programs	Few protections in place to protect rural character and natural resources.
Forestlands and natural resources	Lack of a sense of community	Support ridgeline and other measures to protect the environment, rural character and scenic beauty	Increasing levels of growth
Wildlife habitats	Lack of properties listed on national register of historic places	Many scenic areas exist to be inventoried and protected	Lack of cohesion in community
Low crime rates	Few community-wide events	Historic sites exist that could be used to help build community	Few planning tools to address needs
Open spaces	Lack of youth recreation activities	Opportunities to educate residents on available public services	Loss of agriculture
High environmental quality	Lack of commercial development places entire tax burden on residents.	Opportunities to enhance public services and communication with residents	Higher taxes
Clean air	Environmental conditions that may make use of septic systems problematic or expensive	Support exists to fund open spaces, farmland protection, scenic lands and sensitive environmental sites	Sprawled style of development
Low density of development so far	Lack of volunteers for emergency services	Desire to increase public access to lake and open spaces	Loss of rural character and open spaces
Private	Increased growth pressures	More services for seniors	Outside influences

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<b>Strengths (2007)</b>	<b>Weaknesses (2007)</b>	<b>Opportunities (2007)</b>	<b>Threats (2007)</b>
Friendly neighbors	Lack of lake access		Potential to have to hire staff for public emergency services has deep tax implications
Good schools	Lack of garbage pickup		Housing is not affordable to many
Beautiful landscape	Lack of services for senior citizens		Few local jobs – people travel far
Interesting history	Lack of high-speed internet service		Loss of farmers and farmland
State Park facilities	Lack of trails for hiking and biking		Increase in second home market may put more demands on emergency services but can have fewer opportunities to recruit volunteers to serve.
Lack of commercial development	Lack of enforcement of regulations		Growth influences outside of Gallatin
Lack of sewer and water services	Trash along roads		Lack of support for affordable housing options
Adequate police protection	Increasing levels of traffic and traffic speeds		Housing growth can negatively impact schools and school taxes
New Town hall			
Low population growth			
Population stable			
Low unemployment rate			
People taking advantage of home occupations			
High quality of life			
Good roads and road maintenance			



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## 2022 SWOT Results

### Strengths

#### Most Common Features Identified as Positive Strengths of the Town

- **Rural/rural atmosphere**
- **Beauty, landscape beauty**
- **Natural world, wildlife, mature forests**
- **Scenic**
- **Open spaces**
- **Peaceful**
- **Agriculture**
- **Friendly people, part of the community**

#### Other Positive Features

- Broadband access
- close proximity to restaurants and entertainment
- Farming/agricultural activities
- Flexibility in our zoning to accommodate needs
- Forestry
- Great little town
- Great Place for Small home Business
- Historical Buildings
- Home Values
- Increased opportunity to participate and volunteer
- Intimacy
- Location and accessibility to urban areas
- low taxes
- Low key/Under the radar
- Mix of people old and new, city and country
- nature on unbuilt land
- Open spaces
- Privacy
- Quiet
- Town Roads and road maintenance
- Roe-Jan
- scale
- Variety of landscapes

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## Weaknesses

### Most Common Features Identified as a Weakness in Gallatin

- **Roads, road maintenance**
- **Lack of cell phone services**
- **Lack of affordable housing**
- **Taxes**
- **Restrictive zoning**
- **Loss of farms**
- **Responsiveness to community**
- **Climate Change Impacts on Town**

### Other Weaknesses

- Abandoned properties
- Aging community, seniors isolated
- Attention focuses out of our community – sense of community is elsewhere
- Community outreach is tough, lack of Mailed Newsletter and Monthly Emails
- Huge economic divide in Town: Different town names on zip codes; significant differences in town and town dynamics – perpetuates the split in our community and leads to lack of cohesive community. No neutral turf – hard to find one place that everyone from all corners of town feels comfortable with.
- Difficulty finding a means to communicate with everyone in town
- Local food is not affordable for some Gallatin Residents
- Impossible to find housing for farm workers
- Inability for seniors to stay in community for lack of senior housing, services or financial reasons
- Increased traffic on small roads
- Lack of a place, lack of a locus for our community, lack of a village feeling
- Lack of close shopping
- Lack of convenience
- Lack of diversity
- Lack of Farms and Farmland (partially due to topography and geography)
- Lack of folks in town to run road crew.
- Lack of sidewalks
- Loss of volunteer firefighters
- No established Commercial Zone (also seen as a benefit)
- No work/live housing
- Noise complaints related to short term rental (STR)
- Oddly shaped lots and road frontage requirements

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- Response time for emergency services and power outages is bad
- Risk of habitat fragmentation with land development
- Seniors dying alone in their homes
- Seniors without computers are hard to reach
- Short term rentals perceived as taking housing away from community
- Tearing down of ancillary buildings
- Town is divided into 3 different school districts
- Traffic on small roads / impacted by Airbnb and tourists
- Transportation for seniors and people who do not drive is non-existent
- Travel – no direct way to get here to there

### Opportunities

#### Agriculture:

- Promote sustainable agricultural practices
- Promote a wide variety of farms and ag-related businesses in town
- Promote products from Gallatin farms by finding a farmers market location
- Promote sustainability and responsible agriculture, regenerative agriculture, hydroponic farms, use of CSAs or other small farming
- Support small, local farms
- Increasing agri-tourism including farm stays, and farm to table opportunities

#### Community and Aging:

- Involve more residents and their talents to volunteer for the town; find a volunteer marketing person
- Bring people together to serve the underserved.
- Need to build bridges to create community through our actions
- Make improvements to cell services and broadband
- Find ways to bridge different sections of the community
- Develop programs to support seniors
- Develop educational materials and programs to increased understanding of the town's assets including historic, community and environmental
- Improve communication to residents

#### Environment/Climate-Related:

- Encourage protection of all streams
- Protect open spaces and habitat connectivity and contiguous forest areas
- Mitigate climate change impacts on the Town and our residents
- Minimize potential wildlife habitat disturbances with land development

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- Encourage protection of all streams, including Roe Jan tributaries that have no local protections.
- Encourage protection of currently unprotected wetlands
- Implement regulations of solar facilities
- Enhance education and information about Town natural resources
- Protect open spaces, habitat connectivity and connected forest areas

### Affordable Housing:

- Seek funding for programs that support senior housing needs
- Update zoning to promote a variety of housing for all ages and incomes
- Develop regulations for short-term rentals that also preserve housing opportunities for those that need long term rentals

### Small Business/Home Based Business:

- Continue to develop a directory of local businesses
- Update zoning to allow for more innovative businesses and ag/eco-tourism; allow a variety of small businesses by ensuring zoning that is more flexible to permit shared workspaces, live/work uses, etc.
- Explore and understand both beneficial and adverse impacts of short-term rentals and develop regulations of short-term rentals

### Recreation:

- Provide Empire passes to all residents to Lake Taghkanic
- Develop new bike/hike trails
- Create regular town events
- Create space for recreation

## **Threats**

- Aging community
- Becoming suburban and large developments that lead the way to more developers eyeing parcels in town
- Climate Change - tree loss, agricultural, power loss, road washouts, invasive species, reduction of the bird population
- Continued segregation of different demographics in Town
- Failing schools - parent/kids opting out and homeschooling or going private
- Growth using open space and agricultural lands; lack of preservation of farmland
- Higher school taxes - fewer kids in the districts means higher cost to the taxpayers
- Ignorance of country life
- Increase in cost of labor, housing and feed to make a farm profitable

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- Lack of families with children
- Lack of people who want to serve as firefighters, teachers, etc.
- Large solar field development
- Near enough to NYC with changing technology trends means NYC is depopulating and the exodus is going to be to here
- No commercial district
- Skyrocketing property values



## Gallatin's Vision for the Future

Based on current public input and analysis of trends, needs, and conditions in Gallatin, this Plan establishes the following vision for the Town:

### The future Gallatin can be envisioned as:

From Signal Rock to the Roeliff Jansen Kill and Lake Taghkanic State Park, Gallatin is distinguished as a community with unique natural beauty and rural character. Its historical settlement patterns of hamlets, farms, and pristine woodlands are major and important features of our landscape. The Gallatin community is deeply invested in maintaining its open spaces, active agriculture, scenic views, habitats for wildlife, and protecting its water resources. The town has been designated a Clean Energy Community and strives to be a model for sustainability, regenerative agriculture, and climate resilience policy, while cherishing and preserving our historic character and natural features.

Gallatin is a welcoming town made up of people of all ages and income levels and recognizes the value of a diverse population as a benefit to our growth, future, and community. While quality small-town public services and recreational opportunities exist within a framework of fiscal responsibility, Gallatin encourages the development of affordable housing and is accommodating to low impact development consistent with our rural character and environment. In addition, the town looks forward to meeting the technological challenges in support of our growing population of home-based workers and businesses.

Our Town Government is open and diligent in its efforts to be responsive to the needs of all its residents and encourages the town's distinctive identity of volunteerism and community spirit as it endeavors to live up to its motto "Gallatin – a great little town."

## **Goals to Attain Gallatin's Vision**

Goals are broad statements that express an ideal future state desired by the Town and contained in a comprehensive plan. The following goals were developed directly from the current input received from the public.

Goal 1: To preserve Gallatin's rural character and scenic beauty and maintain its natural environment and wildlife habitats by fostering community stewardship of the land and ensuring low density, climate smart, and low impact future development.

Goal 2: To ensure that farming remains an integral part of Gallatin by protecting and supporting existing farms while also encouraging new forms of sustainable and regenerative farming.

Goal 3: To ensure that Gallatin remains a community that is open to diversity and accessible to all ages and income levels by supporting the development of affordable housing and relevant social services.

Goal 4: To foster Gallatin's community pride and generous neighborly spirit by developing more substantial modes of community connection, both by investing in digital technology and outreach as well as by supporting local events and places for gathering and sharing information.

Goal 5: To support the development in Gallatin of small ag-related and low impact businesses that serve local and county residents while also embracing the diverse working types/styles that are not traditional such as remote work and/or e-commerce occupations within homes, as well as the flexible live/workspaces needed by Gallatin's artists, craftspeople, and domestic vendors.

Goal 6: To ensure that Gallatin continues to develop the quality of its public services as well as its responsive and inclusive governance of all its stakeholders.

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Goal 7: To ensure that the historic and locally significant resources of Gallatin are preserved in the spirit of embracing change while maintaining the community's values.

Goal 8: To further develop ample recreation opportunities for Gallatin's residents through local and state (Lake Taghkanic State Park) initiatives, public-private partnerships, The Columbia Land Conservancy, and the shared value of agreements with adjacent towns.

### Gallatin's Rural Character Defined

One of Gallatin's most important assets is its "rural character." Maintenance of its rural character has been and continues to be a foundational policy of the Town of Gallatin. One important role this Comprehensive Plan plays is to define Gallatin's rural character.

As first established in 2007, the following elements continue to describe rural character today:

- Gallatin is valued for its peaceful and quiet quality of life.
- Its natural landscape is visually beautiful and further described by residents as bucolic, rural, and pastoral.
- It is further described as a place for country living, small, with high quality natural resources, historic resources, and charm.
- Wooded hills, streams, and open spaces further define the Town.
- Visually Gallatin conveys an agricultural community having low density, mostly single-family homes placed along the area's curving, winding and scenic roads.
- Residents understand and value the Town's agricultural heritage.
- Its lack of commercial development is identified as part of its character.
- Its character also is derived by its location in Columbia County, its access to major highways, and its neighborly citizens.
- While there are some concentrations of population and structures along the Roe Jan in the eastern part of the Town including the hamlet of Gallatinville, and in the western part at the hamlet of Elizaville, development in the Town is neither urban nor suburban.
- Some homes and farms are tucked away and not visible from the main roadways.



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- Features of the landscape include areas of steep rocky slopes that are mostly wooded, the Roeliff Jansen Kill basin, and areas of more gentle slopes showing features of past and present agricultural activity such as fields, pastures, hedgerows, stone walls, fences, barns and silos, along with woodlands.
- Large, wooded areas provide privacy and wildlife habitat.
- In all areas, the sense of open space, the natural landscape and vegetation predominate over the built environment. Because of the physical nature of the landscape, wildlife abounds. Citizens appreciate access to clean waterways including Lake Taghkanic and the Roeliff Jansen Kill for the beauty and recreational opportunities they offer. Protection of natural surface water flows, groundwater and surface water recharge and discharge areas are important to the residents.
- Gallatin is a town of diverse economic backgrounds and provides opportunities to both live and work in a rural setting. The Town's commercial establishments are home businesses or operations appropriate to the rural landscape.
- Citizens enjoy a sense of privacy while maintaining good relations with their neighbors.
- While the Town provides excellent municipal services, these services are not extensive.





All these elements when considered together contribute to the “rural character” of Gallatin.



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### Hudson River Greenway Criteria Met by This Plan

As a Hudson River Greenway community, the Town of Gallatin has agreed to work towards addressing the broader Hudson River Greenway Principles. The following chart outlines how this Plan supports those specific Greenway Principles:

Comprehensive Plan Goal that Supports Greenway Principles		Greenway Principles Supported by the Plan				
Goal Number from 2022 Plan	Topic of Gallatin's 2022 Goal	Regional Planning	Natural and Cultural Resource Protection	Enhance Public Access to Hudson River	Enhance Economic Development	Heritage & Environm. Education
Goal 1	Rural Character and Environment Preserved					
Goal 2	Agriculture Preserved					
Goal 4	Community Connection and Awareness					
Goal 5	Economic Growth					
Goal 7	Historic and Cultural Resources					
Goal 8	Recreational Opportunities			 *		

\* Access is not to the Hudson River directly.

### Recommended Strategies and Actions

Strategies are a set of actions to be undertaken to accomplish each goal contained in this comprehensive plan. Based on the public input and analysis of data (See Part II of the Plan: Appendices), Gallatin characterized the current conditions of the Town as well as the future characteristics desired by the residents and landowners. The following strategies and actions are recommended to assist Gallatin attain the above vision and goals. This section provides two types of strategies and actions: Programmatic Actions, that range from events, committee work, programs, capital projects, grant programs, and non-regulatory activities; and Regulatory Actions, that involve the creation of new or updating of existing land use regulations or other local laws.

The Town should implement these strategies and actions over the next 10 years. At five-year intervals, the Town should re-evaluate the plan and update it as necessary based on conditions in the Town at the time.

**Goal 1: To preserve Gallatin’s rural character and scenic beauty and maintain its natural environment and wildlife habitats by fostering community stewardship of the land and ensuring low density, climate smart, and low impact future development.**

#### Programmatic Actions

1. Gallatin adopted a resolution in October 2022 to become a Climate Smart Community. At that time, the Town also adopted a resolution authorizing development of a vulnerability assessment and climate adaptation plan (See Part II for Resolutions). The Climate Smart Community program (CSC) is a New York State effort that helps local governments take action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to a changing climate. Some of the programs offered include climate smart community grants, rebates for zero-emission vehicles and infrastructure, technical assistance and partners with the NYSERDA Clean Energy Community program (see 2, below).

The following Ten CSC Pledge Elements were adopted in the Town resolution:

1. Build a climate-smart community.
2. Inventory emissions, set goals, and plan for climate action.
3. Decrease energy use.
4. Shift to clean, renewable energy.
5. Use climate-smart materials management.
6. Implement climate-smart land use.

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7. Enhance community resilience to climate change.
8. Support a green innovation economy.
9. Inform and inspire the public.
10. Engage in an evolving process of climate action.

Certified communities are the foremost leaders in the state; they have gone beyond the CSC pledge by completing and documenting a suite of actions that mitigate and adapt to climate change at the local level.

The Town has already met some NYS Climate Smart Communities requirements by incorporating sustainability into this Plan. This is evidenced through the following actions:

- i. **Public Outreach and Engagement:** This plan included a diverse public engagement process to reach all aspects of the community. This included a joint town official/elected official workshop, a community open house, an online open house, and a town-wide survey. Outreach included use of email, websites, and social media.
- ii. **Baseline Assessment:** Part 2 of this plan thoroughly analyzes existing conditions for land use, economics, housing, energy, transportation and natural, cultural and historic resources. A comprehensive set of maps has been developed and included in this Plan to support that baseline assessment.
- iii. **Develop Goals:** Through public input and analysis by the Comprehensive Plan Committee, a town-wide vision and set of goals have been developed. Both the Vision Statement and Goal 1 specifically include the need and desire on the Town's part to address climate change. Our goals are consistent with the NYS Climate Smart Community program in that they address the three "E's" of sustainability: Environment (Goal 1), Economy (Goal 5), and Equity (Goals 3, 4 and 6).
- iv. **Identify and Evaluate Strategies and Actions:** This Plan outlines dozens of strategies and actions designed to help Gallatin become more sustainable and resilient in the face of climate change.
- v. **Integration:** This Plan has been adopted pursuant to Town Law 272-a which included two public hearings, County Planning Board review, Town Board review, and adoption locally. Comments from the public have been fully

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integrated into this Plan. The Action Plan section outlines priorities and implementation responsibilities. As the Town moves towards achieving its climate smart status, Gallatin’s Climate Smart Community Task Force should be assigned the task to coordinate implementation responsibilities.

- b. Through this comprehensive planning process, this Plan addresses many of the required and optional Sustainability Elements included in the Climate Smart Community program. The table below represents the required and optional sustainability elements contained in the Climate Smart program:

<b>Required Climate Smart Community Element</b>
Support alternative modes of transportation (including strategies for bicycles, pedestrians, public transit, and electric vehicles)
Promote smart growth principles in land-use policies
Conserve natural areas (including strategies to designate open space and protect it from development)
Promote a healthy and safe community
Foster equity (including strategies for housing, schools, transportation, recreation, food, and environmental exposures)
<b>Optional Climate Smart Community Elements</b>
Foster green economic development
Foster the efficient use of natural resources (e.g., water conservation)
Promote the development of (or the conservation of) local food systems
Protect drinking water sources from pollution
Promote adaptation to climate change (including strategies related to land use and public education and engagement)

Now that the Town has pledged to become a climate smart community, Gallatin should create a climate smart community effort to be spearheaded by a town Climate Smart Community task force.

- Gallatin has also joined the Clean Energy Community Program, sponsored by New York State. NYSERDA’s program. This program helps municipalities take actions that focus on clean energy solutions for the reduction of greenhouse gases. They offer resources and

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funding to help Towns successfully implement and achieve clean energy goals. Like the Climate Smart Community program, there are a variety of elements and actions that Towns can earn points (and funding) for implementing.

Gallatin has already taken actions towards becoming a clean energy community including adopting a unified solar permit, energy code enforcement training, and benchmarking. The Community Solar Initiative is well underway. The town should consider adopting the NY Stretch Energy Code. This code is slated to become state law and adopting it before that time currently has grant funding associated with such an action. Code and complete electric vehicle community campaigns. These actions all support a decrease in fossil fuels and promote a green economy.

3. The Town should continue to develop a Climate Adaptation Plan and Vulnerability Assessment with Cornell Cooperative Extension. That can be added to this Comprehensive Plan as an addendum once complete.
4. Develop a full Natural Resource Inventory (NRI), to be spearheaded by the Town's Conservation Advisory Council. Seek grant from NYS DEC to obtain funding to support development of this document. An NRI compiles and describes important, naturally occurring resources in the Town, as well as cultural resources such as historic, scenic and recreation. The inventory should provide a full set of information as foundational for land use and zoning planning and local decision-making.
  - a. This comprehensive plan has many maps and information in Part II which should be used as a significant part of the NRI. Additional information should be added to it, such as data from the NYS DEC (the Hudson Valley Estuary Program), verification of field conditions including wetlands and other on-site conditions.
  - b. As new or revised data becomes available, the Town should amend their NRI to keep it current. When the NRI is completed, it should be formally adopted into this Comprehensive Plan as an appendix.
  - c. Further, once it is completed, the NRI should be used to develop additional long and short-term recommendations designed to protect, enhance, and celebrate those resources in Gallatin.
  - d. Many habitats exist for rare aquatic animals, known rare plants, and rare terrestrial animals. Use the mapped data available from the Hudson Valley Natural Resource Mapper (<https://gisservices.dec.ny.gov/gis/hvnrn/>) to identify those locations.

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- e. When the NRI is complete, consider developing an ArcGIS Story Map as an onsite tool that can be used to help people access maps and highlights of the NRI information. A Story Map combines text, interactive maps, and other content online.
  - f. The NRI data can be used for site plan review and evaluation, including SEQRA, prior to new development permits.
  - g. Gallatin has adopted the Columbia County NRI and the NY State DEC Habitat Summary, Natural Areas and Wildlife in Your Community, A Habitat Summary Prepared for the Town of Gallatin. These resources along with the maps created as part of this Comprehensive Plan should be made easily accessible on the Town's website directly. The Town should also maintain large scale paper copies that are available to be viewed and used by the public, boards, and committees at the Town Hall.
5. A scenic resource inventory may be included in the NRI with and develop recommendations to protect those resources.
6. Consider establishing critical environmental areas (CEA). A CEA is a specific geographic area identified by the Town as having exceptional or unique natural characteristics and is used primarily to raise awareness of the resource. CEA's may be best established after the NRI is complete in order to fully map and describe the resource. A CEA is taken into consideration during a site-specific environmental review under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQR).
- a. One recommended overlay is the core forest area. For regulatory strategies related to forest areas, see #13, below. Establishment of the Forest Core Overlay as described below would allow the Town Planning Board to ensure the maximum protection of those habitats when development is proposed.
  - b. An additional CEA could be designated for the 200 to 500-foot buffer along the Roeliff Jansen and its tributaries. These are important high-quality wildlife and coldwater habitats, known to support rare animals, American eel, and trout spawning.
7. The Town's Conservation Advisory Committee (CAC) is in place to provide important information and advice on natural resources. Their role should be to help develop educational programs to help Town residents understand the natural assets in the community and why they are important. The CAC can play a pivotal role in development of an NRI (see Recommendation #3, above) above. A further role that could be played by the CAC is to serve as an advisory committee to the Planning

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Board and ZBA. They can provide an environmental perspective on land use proposals, and other issues in the Town. The Planning Board and ZBA should be encouraged to call upon the CAC during project review to gain more insight into the site-specific environmental conditions. Some communities request site visits by their CAC to provide that information to the Planning Board. Others (like Ancram) have elevated the role of the CAC by including in the zoning and other land use laws for an opportunity for the CAC to offer an advisory opinion on development proposals before the Planning Board or ZBA.

8. Consider establishment of a real estate property transfer tax to build funding for purchase of open spaces and farmlands through easements or purchases.
9. Create EV charging infrastructure (at town garage and town hall) for residents that choose to purchase electric vehicles; should the Town also choose to purchase an electric vehicle in the future, this infrastructure would support municipal operations as well.
10. Town should consider an Electric Vehicle Educational Community Campaign.
11. Town should prioritize increased bike use and invest in bike trails and friendly and safe road shoulders for cyclist and pedestrians. Work with County and State officials and utilities to provide safe roads, walkways and other upgrades. See Bicycle Columbia County New York at <http://www.bikecoco.com/rides.html> as a resource for bike routes.

### Regulatory Actions

12. Strengthen the Watercourse Protection Overlay District (WCPOD) to protect more streams and tributaries in the Town by extending the overlay district and included specific development requirements designed to protect riparian areas, streamside vegetation, flood zones from disturbances that could increase erosion, sedimentation, other forms of pollution, or decrease terrestrial and aquatic wildlife. Use the Water Constraints Map (Part II) and mapped data available from the Hudson Valley Natural Resource Mapper to identify those locations that could be included in an expanded WCPOD (<https://gisservices.dec.ny.gov/gis/hvnm/>).
- a. Consider development standards such as enhanced reviews of certain projects in that overlay, setbacks, or prohibition of certain activities that risk loss of these important natural resource areas.



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- b. The WCPOD should include a buffer that is established to protect more tributaries and streams on at least all Class C streams in Gallatin.
- c. Riparian buffers are lands that border streams, rivers, reservoirs, ponds, lakes, wetlands, and other water bodies. Forested riparian buffers are essential for healthy streams. They are the most cost-effective way to protect these resources and provide additional ecosystem functions. Stream buffers can:
  - Filter excess nutrients, sediment, and pesticides from runoff;
  - Improve the safety and reliability of the water supply;
  - Reduce water treatment costs;
  - Stabilize stream banks;
  - Reduce flooding;
  - Maintain ideal water temperature for aquatic animals;
  - Protect native plant species and provide habitat for wildlife;
  - Absorb and store carbon from the air;
  - Add organic matter essential for bottom dwelling organisms; and
  - Help conserve scenic and recreation areas.

Note that zoning should include an exception for small parcels where the WCPOD buffer distances result in an unbuildable parcel. The WCPOD should protect all streams that have migratory fish runs and known important coldwater stream habitats (Roeliff Jansen and its tributaries and Fall Kill), stream-side wetlands and flood zones, Class C(t) streams, and those that are currently considered impaired or partially impaired by NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC).

13. Consider establishment of a Forest Core Protection Overlay District (FCPOD). Gallatin is home to some of the top forested areas in the Hudson Valley (in the 93.3 percentile of forest patch scores). Its forested lands are considered 'core' forests, which are large, unfragmented forests. It also has many acres of important edge forests (forest within the 100-meter boundary between core forests and non-forested land cover). The forested area of Gallatin is considered a Linkage Forest Zone – which are intact forest connections between forest matrix blocks that allow animals and plants to move or disperse across the landscape. Forest Linkage Zones are known to be important as the climate warms because they will allow plants and animals to move north and higher in elevation. The forest in Gallatin links the Mount Washington/Mount Riga matrix forest to the northeast and the Shaupeneak matrix forest to the southwest.

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A FCPOD could establish additional review, development standards, or mitigation measures that would further protect the inherent values of the unfragmented forests in Gallatin. Potential development standards within the FCPOD could be:

- Use of an expedited site plan review for residential development that does not go through subdivision to allow for additional opportunity beyond a building permit to ensure proper siting of homes and other disturbed areas away from sensitive areas and in locations that would limit or avoid fragmentation. This would allow for enhanced environmental review for projects by requiring additional biological site assessments. As part of their SEQRA authority, the Town can require more in-depth, yet locally appropriate, surveys or assessments to identify the sensitive habitats and wildlife that might be lost or displaced by the new construction. The results can be used to create development that avoids impact on sensitive wildlife or identifies the impacts that can be mitigated. The zoning and subdivision laws should state standards for site-specific evaluation, so the same information is collected for every project. By creating standards, the planning board knows they have the information they need to determine impacts, that the information is collected properly, and that the results are comparable between studies. This also gradually builds up a database that can be used as part of an ongoing natural-resource inventory (see Recommendation #3, above). Having consistent guidelines creates a fair process, where all applicants are treated the same and they know what to expect.
- Allowance for the Planning Board to review and place building envelopes on a lot as part of a subdivision to ensure for proper siting of future homes to be built.
- Increasing lot size and/or decreasing density requirements to lower the number of homes that could be built. Note however, that a change in lot size or density alone will not be adequate to conserve natural areas unless it is combined with other techniques.
- Attach landscape preservation requirements to development in that area.
- Update permitted uses allowed in the FCPOD to ensure that future land uses are consistent with the environment and the Town's desire to protect that environment.

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- Require (mandatory) major subdivisions that may be proposed in the FCPOD to be designed as a conservation subdivision (See also Recommendation # 14, below) with a portion of the lot preserved.
- Update zoning to provide criteria for the Planning Board to evaluate along with SEQR so as to determine the impact any development would have on ecosystems, the availability of alternative sites for such development, and how the development fits in with the comprehensive plan for the area.
- Require habitat restoration techniques, limit tree and vegetation removal, use of natural landscaping, and buffer requirements.

For areas outside the recommended Forest Core Overlay (See Recommendation 12 above), the zoning should be updated to ensure site specific natural resource data is provided by applicants for subdivision, site plan and special use permits so that the Planning Board can adequately evaluate and mitigate any potential environmental impacts on these critical resources.

14. Consider evaluating cumulative Impacts when warranted. New York State law allows the environmental impact of more than one project to be considered at the same time. A small project may not have a negative impact on habitat alone, but when considered in the context of nearby or related projects, the negative impact may be significant. If the Planning Board finds that there are cumulative adverse impacts from related projects and those projects have similar impacts on the local environment, the Board may decide to require a cumulative impact analysis.
15. Consider updating the conservation subdivision sections in Gallatin’s subdivision and zoning laws to provide additional detail on the conservation design process for subdivisions. Currently, the section in both laws lack the usual and recommended detail needed to make full use of the conservation subdivision design or review process. This is also called ‘conservation density subdivision’ and that is a misnomer. Currently both zoning and subdivision have a ‘conservation density subdivision and a residential cluster subdivision. There is confusion as to the difference, and neither are adequate to accommodate major subdivisions designed through a conservation methodology. Both laws should consolidate into one set of regulations and should be changed to Conservation Subdivision. This should be clearly articulated as a density-neutral technique (it is a design technique, and the site and zoning district dictates how much density there is capacity for). Further, consider requiring all major subdivisions proposed in Gallatin to be designed as a conservation subdivision

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with a portion of land as open space (the current percentage ranges from 40% to 60% depending on the zoning district). Apply the conservation subdivision requirement not by acreage, as the zoning currently establishes, but by the number of lots to be created: all major subdivisions over 5 lots should be required to use the conservation subdivision standards.

16. Work with NYS DEC to update Local Law 2 of 1984 (Flood Damage Prevention Law) to ensure that it includes up-to-date requirements related to FEMA, flood insurance, and best practices related to management of floodplains.
17. Develop additional wetland protections in Gallatin in addition to those already regulated by NYS DEC and federal wetlands (regulated by the US Army Corps of Engineers), including vernal pools. Zoning should have updated definitions for all wetland types. Subdivision, site plan and special use permit processes should include language to ensure consideration of wetlands and wetland protections during project review. The CAC should facilitate education and stewardship activities with both homeowners and developers.
18. Review zoning and update as needed to ensure that effective stormwater management control is provided during land disturbances. Town should consider strengthening stormwater pollution prevention regulations.
19. Consider updating zoning to allow for the review and siting of residential building envelopes during minor subdivision reviews by the Planning Board. A building envelope is the area disturbed for house site and driveway. Minor subdivision review should include evaluation of siting of disturbed areas and not just boundary lines, and the Planning Board should have the explicit authority to do so to protect natural resources and continue to promote rural character. Siting of building envelopes in a major subdivision is what is accomplished via the conservation subdivision technique, but that is not useful for minor subdivisions. In Gallatin, where most of the development is through minor subdivision activity, fine tuning placement of the building envelope can minimize or mitigate adverse environmental impacts.
20. Consider updating subdivision and zoning laws to establish rural design and siting guidelines to help landowners design, and the Planning Board review development proposals to enhance consistency with the goal of maintaining rural community character. Rural development guidelines include, but are not limited to elements such as minimizing clearing, retaining hedgerows and other rural landscape

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elements, strategic location of buildings (to the edges of fields, for instance), not fragmenting forested areas, etc.

21. Consider allowing for the use of shared driveways. In some circumstances, shared driveways can be effective at minimizing curb cuts onto Town, County, and State roads, reducing habitat impacts and use of impervious surfaces. They must be planned carefully and follow New York State rules that govern shared real property. While not useful in all situations, allowing for shared driveways in some situations may add design flexibility for major subdivisions. (The New York State Real Estate Finance Bureau must review offering plans to ensure compliance with Attorney General's regulations, as well as Article 23-A of the New York General Business Law (the "Martin Act") and other applicable laws whenever real property is shared in some manner.)
22. Review and update the commercial building design standards established in the site plan review section of the zoning law to make sure these address the design review elements needed to ensure that new commercial buildings are consistent in scale and intensity and character with Gallatin. Current guidelines may be sufficient, but a lack of detail may lead to difficulty applying such guidelines. The Town should consider augmenting what is currently in place with illustrations or photographs as that would help convey the intent.
23. Consider amending zoning and subdivision laws to give the Planning Board authority to require a fiscal impact analysis as part of its review of development applications. In this way the Board can obtain more factual information about a proposal's impact on roads or other public services to enhance their decision-making.
24. Consider expanding the existing conservation overlay district to cover other significant habitats and locations in Gallatin. Further, while zoning establishes the conservation overlay, it does not offer review procedures, development expectations or standards, or guidelines for development in that overlay. This could be further articulated so that all parties understand the development rules and expectations in the conservation overlay. Note that the ridgeline protection overlay district (RPOD) has a detailed set of expectations and procedures. This same level of detail should be provided for both the WCPOD and COD.
25. Update the zoning section on lighting to require use of Dark Sky compliant light fixtures to control light pollution. Current language gives the Planning Board authority to require it but does not set that expectation. For rural areas, use of Dark

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Sky compliant fixtures and plans is important to maintain rural night skies. Consider also adding a site plan review element that the Planning Board may require a lighting plan to be part of a commercial site plan review so that they can fully evaluate potential light and glare impacts.

Goal 2: To ensure that farming remains an integral part of Gallatin by protecting and supporting existing farms while also encouraging new forms of sustainable and regenerative farming.

### Programmatic Actions

1. Create an agricultural advisory committee. This committee could take on the following tasks, similar to the Conservation Advisory Council, but oriented to agriculture to:
  - Explore the feasibility of and potential location for establishing a farmers' market in Town.
  - Facilitate educational programs on sustainable agricultural techniques and promote Gallatin as a place for new farm entrepreneurs to come to. Note that there was a great deal of interest among community members in sustainable agriculture, but from the municipal perspective, the Town cannot dictate what type of farming takes place when the farm is located in a New York State Agricultural District (See Farmland Map in Part 2). Although the Town could have other requirements for farms outside the NYS Agricultural District, that is not advisable. But there could be efforts to educate about sustainable agricultural practices to help new or future landowners understand what this is and how it could be beneficial.

### Regulatory Actions

2. Update zoning to define farmworker and farmworker housing and explicitly create rules that allow for farm worker housing on farms in NYS Ag Districts that includes housing for family members provided they are working on the farm. (Note that NYS Agricultural and Markets regulations define farmworker housing to cover employees, but not explicitly family members that are on the farm, which tends to result in complications for farm families). The current definition for 'agriculture' refers to farm housing for employees, and this does not reflect the needs many small farms have for housing family members that are working the farm.

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3. Zoning allowed uses and definitions can be expanded to make sure they include a variety of agricultural-related terms and uses. Currently zoning allows for farms and ‘agriculture’ but this wide definition may also lead to confusion as to whether ag tourism, direct sales, CSAs, hydroponics and other types of agriculture are allowed. It would benefit the farm community to allow for these agricultural uses with an expedited site plan review, and to allow for direct sales and multiple farm-related businesses on the property. The zoning would benefit from an expansion of farm-related definitions and uses. At the same time, these changes should include language that mirrors NYS Ag and Markets guidance on direct sales on farms and agri-tourism regulations. This would allow Gallatin to clarify uses for farm direct sales, tasting rooms, farm stays, etc.
4. Consider updating the zoning to add a section on solar and wind facilities used to provide electrical needs for a farm. Such facilities that provide no more than 110% of a farm’s electrical needs are considered a farm building, similar to a barn or a silo, and the zoning would benefit by adding these as specific, allowed uses with definitions. Further, the zoning should be expanded to regulate utility-scale commercial facilities and include language that works to balance farmland with solar energy needs. There are currently no development standards for renewable energy on farms, commercial/utility scale renewable energy ‘farms or use of battery storage facilities.
5. Update both zoning and subdivision laws so that the Planning Board (and ZBA) has information from applicants sufficient to fully evaluate how a proposed development project may impact farms in the area. Zoning would benefit from details on review criteria specific to agriculture.
6. Implement a full local right-to-farm law to support farming. Update the “Right to Undertake Agricultural Practices” statement currently in zoning because it infers that someone in town will determine ‘reasonableness of the time, place and methodology of such farm operation, due weight and consideration shall be given to both traditional customs and procedures in the farming industry as well as to advances resulting from increased knowledge and improved technologies.” This is not a sufficient right to farm statement, and the Town has no authority to regulate accepted agricultural practices when a farm is located in a New York State Agricultural District. The current statement implies the Town will get involved in determining types of farm practices that are acceptable, and this is not particularly farm friendly.

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7. As per the Use Table, no slaughterhouse is allowed in Gallatin, but this is not defined so it is unclear if this means a commercial, non-farm slaughterhouse, or one on a farm designed for animals produced on the farm (which would be allowed as per NYS AML 25-aa).
8. Consider updating farm market rules currently in the zoning. Farm markets are defined as places where local produce is sold, owned and operated by a farm. Zoning currently establishes a maximum size of building for a farm market, along with requiring a minimum lot size and other development standards. These would not be consistent with NYS guidance on direct sales of farm products, especially on farms in the NYS Agricultural District. Farms should benefit from being able to sell their produce and products on their farm property. Use NYS guidance on direct sales to update this section.

Goal 3: To ensure that Gallatin remains a community that is open to diversity and accessible to all ages and income levels by supporting the development of affordable housing and relevant social services.

### Programmatic Actions

1. The Town should consider developing a comprehensive housing strategy for working families. In order to accomplish this, the Town will need to assess housing needs, understand the market, foster collaboration with other agencies such as the Columbia Partnership, Hudson River Housing, Inc, and others, proactively plan for future growth, build support for programs that support affordability, insist on excellent design, and promote a mix of incomes in Town.
2. Partner with private organizations to provide direct and indirect forms of support to incentivize quality achievable housing provision. There are regulatory incentives (see below) and funding incentives. Funding incentives that could be explored include tax incentives and provision of other public funding.
3. Identify land, preferably in the hamlet zoning district, which is desirable for development of appropriately scaled, below-market rate housing units. Work with partners from housing organizations and the housing development community to develop achievable housing in that location. It would be a benefit for Gallatin to have location(s) identified that are suitable for higher density of housing. Consider establishment of an Achievable Housing Overlay District for this.



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4. Support vulnerable members of the community during extreme weather events by providing a cooling and warming center at the rebuilt town hall.

### Regulatory Actions

5. Add a density bonus section in zoning to incentivize provision of below-market housing or senior housing.
6. Consider amending zoning to add live/work housing arrangements as well as tiny houses (as permanent single-family structures), clustered cottages, and other affordable housing opportunities.
7. Currently, accessory dwelling units and Senior Citizen housing (both of which are housing types that are often more affordable) are not allowed in the Hamlet at all. Reconsider this as the hamlet would be a more logical place for such a development.
8. Consider amending zoning to allow for multi-family dwellings in the Hamlet District that are over 4 units in size as a special use permit. Currently these are prohibited except as in a Floating Commercial Industrial District (FCID).
9. Consider requiring major subdivisions to have a percentage of housing units deed-restricted to be below-market rate units. This is called inclusionary zoning and can be a way to ensure that new developments have an affordable housing component.
10. Currently accessory dwelling units (ADU) are allowed, one per property, in all zoning districts except the hamlet. When developing short term rental regulations, consider prohibiting accessory dwelling units from being used as short-term rental units so that there are long-term rental opportunities.
11. Consider expanding the hamlet area in zoning to allow for more focused growth there.
12. Update zoning to reduce road frontage requirements, especially in the hamlet. Rules that allow for shallower front setbacks, which allow for higher lot coverage in the hamlet, with lower minimum lot widths and lot frontage have more opportunities to be affordable lots. Such lots would be more consistent with hamlet character too.
13. Review zoning and establish regulations related to short term rentals that allow residents the ability to rent their properties for additional income. As part of that

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review, consider the public input on this topic from this Plan's survey (See Appendix 2), and consider their impact on housing and the quality of life in Gallatin, whether short term rentals should be allowed in multi-family dwellings.

14. Zoning currently allows Elder Cottage Housing Opportunity (ECHO) as temporary accessory dwelling units, but it is restricted to use for family members. This type of regulation has proven to be problematic for enforcement and now, many people need more affordable places to live. Relook at the ECHO definition and determine if they differ from other types of ADUs. The current standards for ECHO units are excellent, but the zoning may be limiting.
15. Alternate care housing facilities are allowed as Special Use in the Hamlet. By definition, these are group homes operated by New York State. Zoning has a very large and detailed set of rules for these homes. Given that they are fully regulated by NYS, and those rules treat these facilities as a single-family house, many of the standards included here would not be consistent with state programs. Continue to allow for such facilities but treat them like any other single-family home.
16. Adopt the NYS Building Code Appendix Q rules for Tiny House. Define Tiny House pursuant to State regulations (no less than 400 square feet) and allow for these as a permanently fixed, single-family home.
17. Consider updating zoning to allow for use of averaging lot sizes for minor subdivisions. This allows flexibility to create a variety of lot sizes provided the average size equals the minimum lot size as required in the zoning. For example, a 20-acre lot requiring 5-acre minimum lot size could have 4 new lots created. Instead of requiring them all to be 5 acres, average lot size could allow for three 2-acre lots and one 14-acre lot – different lot sizes that average 5 acres.

Goal 4: To foster Gallatin's community pride and generous neighborly spirit by developing more substantial modes of community connection, both by investing in digital technology and outreach as well as by supporting local events and places for gathering and sharing information.

### Programmatic Actions

1. One of the major comments made from the public is the need to increase responsiveness to the community from elected and appointed officials, and to find ways to coordinate disparate sections of town and demographics. To accomplish this, the Town can consider:
  - Regular bi-monthly newsletters.

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- Email Blasts about Town business and activities.
  - Establish an ad hoc working group such as a “Community Communication Committee” to develop additional ways to enhance communication between the Town and residents, and between residents. Encourage youth involvement in this effort.
  - Enhance use and advertisement of Town website at [www.gallatin-ny.org](http://www.gallatin-ny.org) .
  - Continue for Town Board hosting annual or bi-annual “Town Meeting” to discuss issues, strengths, weaknesses, and ways to move forward together.
  - Plan for Town events, such as a Town picnic.
2. Develop a summary brochure or executive summary of this plan after adoption. This should highlight the vision and goals and identify priority projects the Town will be undertaking to implement the plan. This should be made widely available at public locations, on the Town website and/or mail to all households.
  3. Develop a policy related to the role and use of the Town Hall/Community Center.
  4. Develop a robust volunteer engagement strategy. This will increase volunteer retention, keeps volunteers actively engaged, creates cooperation and expands effectiveness. Such programs need consistent communication, recognition, and specific tasks and timeframes for volunteer efforts. Having short ‘job’ descriptions can help recruit volunteers to necessary boards, and they must outline time and expertise expectations. Publicly recognize local people for community involvement and enhancement projects. The need for firefighters and other emergency volunteers is especially important in Gallatin, and the Town should work closely with the Fire Department to enhance outreach for volunteers in the community.

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Goal 5: To support the development in Gallatin of small ag-related and low impact businesses that serve local and county residents while also embracing the diverse working types/styles that are not traditional such as remote work and/or e-commerce occupations within homes, as well as the flexible live/workspaces needed by Gallatin's artists, craftspeople, and domestic vendors.

### Programmatic Actions

1. Continue to develop and make widely known and available, a directory of local businesses. Work with local business owners to keep this up to date.

### Regulatory Actions

One important role the Town can have in promoting a diversity of small, home-based, ag-related, and low impact businesses is to ensure that the Town's zoning allows for such activities. To address this, consider updates to the zoning law to:

2. Review Use Table to ensure that all desired business uses are allowed. A wide variety of commercial uses are already allowed in Gallatin – most requiring a special use permit. Allow for more flexibility in use but more control in siting and design to control the impacts of more intensive uses. The community desires to allow for innovative businesses and eco-tourism that can build on Gallatin's strengths in a way that does not diminish the attributes of the Town.
3. Home occupations are already permitted in all districts. Major home occupations are allowed in all districts with a special use permit. Current regulations would allow a variety of remote work and e-commerce, but the Use Table and Section 5.17 (Home Occupations) should be reviewed and updated to ensure that today's remote work and e-commerce occupations are allowed. To ensure that Gallatin remains attractive for remote workers and small home-based entrepreneurs, re-evaluate Home Occupation rules. Currently, regulations are established to set allowable square footage, number of employees, and number of visitors/customers allowed. Consider adjusting these to allow for more flexibility to attract new home occupations. Similarly, revisit the list of prohibited home occupations and consider allowing additional types of home occupations to operate in Gallatin.
4. Consider removing the FCID (Floating Commercial Industrial District) from the zoning and review the Use Table and add more uses that are desirable in Gallatin in its place. The FCID is a perceived as a cumbersome process and not an efficient way to manage or review proposed commercial uses. Instead, consider an expanded Use Table that clearly identifies uses and their review process requirements to be more efficient and small-business friendly.

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5. Review the use table to identify certain uses that might be reviewed and permitted with site plan review only, and not a special use permit. This might be a way to minimize the review and regulatory process for certain desired uses.
6. Update zoning to address Special Event Facilities. These include properties used for weddings, parties, and other special events. They are often desired uses in a rural community and could benefit the area and other small businesses. But they can also adversely impact a community so should be carefully sited and regulated. Current zoning does not address this.
7. Update zoning to address Short Term Rentals. These include owner-occupied and non-owner-occupied dwellings and accessory dwellings. Short term rentals are often beneficial to provide small scale lodging and for added income for residents. They also can be impacting through noise, nuisances, changes in neighborhood or community character, and can highly influence housing affordability and availability. The Town should update zoning to allow for short term rentals but with controls. Zoning that allows for short term rentals, but controls them in a way that minimizes adverse impacts could include:
  - Permit via Planning Board review;
  - Have a registration fee;
  - Require inspections, especially related to water/septic system capacity;
  - Establish noise level restrictions;
  - Limit use of short-term rental properties for commercial events such as weddings;
  - Limit short term rentals to structures that are owner-occupied during the rental period or owned by a resident (currently, major efforts are underway for corporations to own homes for the sole purpose of converting to rentals);
  - Limit number of days/year rental property can operate;
  - Limit number of guests (like current bed and breakfast uses are limited to 5 bedrooms and 10 guests); and

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- Have a complaint process and impose penalty fees for violations.
8. Consider defining and allowing for the adaptive reuse of existing buildings for new purposes. Zoning should specifically allow conversion of buildings to new uses as a specially permitted use, rather than promote demolition of existing buildings.

Goal 6: To ensure that Gallatin continues to develop the quality of its public services as well as its responsive and inclusive governance of all its stakeholders.

### Programmatic Actions

1. Develop and fund a five-year Road Maintenance Plan from the Highway Department.
2. Work with Columbia County and adjacent towns to identify and evaluate alternative transportation options for seniors and the disabled. Advocate for county-wide services.
3. Work to institute an organized and more aggressive grant program to help fund priority projects in Town. Become grant ready. To become grant-ready, the Town should prepare the following:
  - Annually create a list of projects that need funding.
  - Create a scope of work and budget for each priority project.
  - Create a narrative for each project that articulates the need and goal of the project as well as its consistency with the Regional Economic Development Council's plan.
  - Ensure the Town is registered and able to participate in New York State grant requests.
4. Pursue more grants to fund initiatives recommended in this plan.
5. Continue to support expansion of cell service and broadband services.

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### Regulatory Actions

6. Amend new street specifications for new roads in the subdivision law that are consistent with the design and maintenance of rural, low-volume roads. Alternatively, consider establishing a Town Highway Standards law that outlines street and driveway standards.
7. Update the Town's subdivision law to evaluate current requirements for construction of new streets. Update/amend as needed to be consistent with rural road development standards.
8. Site plan review, special use permits, and subdivision regulations should be updated to specifically authorize the Planning Board to require the preparation of traffic studies to analyze the impact of larger development projects throughout the Town. This new section should outline the traffic impact study expectations for data and studies to be submitted.
9. The Town should ensure that all impacts and public service needs resulting from a development are fully mitigated (including schools, roads, parks, recreation, infrastructure, etc.) and any costs associated with that mitigation be borne by the developer.

Goal 7: To ensure that the historic and locally significant resources of Gallatin are preserved in the spirit of embracing change while maintaining the community's values.

### Programmatic Actions

1. As a Greenway Community, the Town should work towards implementing this plan to meet the Hudson River Greenway Criteria.
2. The Town should undertake an inventory of historic sites and resources in conjunction with the Town Historian to determine their significance. Add this information to the GIS database created for this plan and more fully create a Historic Inventory Map.
3. Expand the role of the Town Historian to include providing assistance to landowners who seek to have their properties listed on the state or national historic district.
4. Expand use of historic markers in Town. Work with the NY Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation to obtain markers for historical sites. Add all

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markers to the historic inventory map. Ensure that existing markers are in good repair.

5. Create a modest space for curated exhibitions by the Town Historian.
6. The Town can sponsor an oral history program where those who are knowledgeable about Town's history, places, stories, items, etc. come together to discuss it and the conversation is recorded permanently as a permanent archive.

Goal 8: To further develop ample recreation opportunities for Gallatin's residents through local and state (Taghkanic State Park) initiatives, public-private partnerships, The Columbia Land Conservancy, and the shared value of agreements with adjacent towns.

### Programmatic Actions

1. Identify opportunities to expand new walking/biking trails, especially to connect to nearby trail systems.
2. Continue to provide town residents with Taghkanic State Park Empire passes.
3. Involve youth in the community to identify their recreation needs and desires.
4. Work with the Columbia County Land Conservancy, Dutchess Land Conservancy and other land trusts to promote public access of preserved properties where feasible.
5. To address vacant and un-maintained properties, commit to enforce the NYS Building Code - Property Maintenance provisions.
6. Consider working with Columbia County and adjacent communities to develop a Zombie Property program pursuant to the New York State 2016 "Zombie Law" (also known as the Abandoned Property Neighborhood Relief Act). Zombie homes are those that have a mortgage delinquency or are in the foreclosure process. Under the State law, banks that hold delinquent mortgages or mortgages in foreclosure are required to maintain the properties and comply with exterior housing code and property maintenance requirements. If they do not keep up the property, they can be hit with a penalty of \$500 per day per house. This program could help people stay in their homes and prevent vacant properties from deteriorating.



## **Implementation Plan**

### **Key First Implementation Steps**

#### **A. Inform the Public About the Plan**

After adoption, the Town Board should ensure that copies of this plan are available at the Town Hall, and on the municipal website. This should include both Part I and Part II, all survey results, and maps.

#### **B. Inform Local Boards and Committees About the Plan**

The Town should ensure that this Plan is widely distributed to members of all boards and committees working on behalf of the municipality including Town Board, Planning Board, ZBA, CAC, Town Clerk, and Building Inspector.

#### **C. Provide Maps in Digital and Printed Format**

The Town should provide for a full set of maps included in this Plan in both digital form and large-scale printed maps including those in the Gallatin Significant Habitats Study (See Part 2, Appendix 4st) for use by the Planning Board(s), Building Inspector, Town Board, Town Clerk, CAC and other future boards and committees. The maps should be readily available for reference and for decision making. Consider taking the digital maps one step further and creating the ArcGIS Story Map as recommended above in Goal 1, Strategy #3 (e).

#### **D. Set Annual Implementation Goals and Priorities**

The Town Board should review implementation goals and set priorities on an annual basis and provide direction as to their expectations. An annual work plan should be developed to guide committee efforts as they assist the Town Board in implementation. All committees should submit an annual report on their progress to the Board and indicate issues, challenges, and potential funding needs. The Boards should report this progress back to the community through an annual Town/Village Hall meeting.

#### **E. Assign Implementation Tasks**

The Town Board will oversee all aspects of implementation of this Plan and will direct work to be done in the future. However, they cannot and should not implement all strategies by themselves. Many of the strategies recommended in this Plan will be more successfully implemented when the expertise and interest of others are involved. The Board should call upon other partners when needed. For example, the Planning Board can embark on drafting regulatory updates, and the CSC Task Force can embark on natural resource protection strategies and work on the climate smart community actions.

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Although all implementations will be at the direction of the Town Board, an important first step to begin work on this Plan would be to assign specific priority tasks to appropriate committees or boards. The Town Board should direct, as a first task, each implementation entity to prioritize implementation projects, set realistic expectations, identify short-term and long-term actions, create specific but realistic tasks, establish time frames that include an end-date for completion to and identify if their efforts will require additional funding.

### **Ongoing Tasks to Keep the Comprehensive Plan Current**

- A. The Town Board should update this Plan at least every ten years. New York State Town Law 272-a, which authorizes the Town to adopt a comprehensive plan, also states that the “Town Board shall provide, as a component of such proposed comprehensive plan, the maximum intervals at which the adopted plan shall be reviewed.” It is recommended that the Town conduct this review and update the plan as needed every ten years to ensure that it remains a useful document to continue to guide decision making in Gallatin.
- B. Further, the Town should review the list of priority actions being implemented on an annual basis to determine the status of efforts, as well as to identify other actions that should be implemented next. The Town should regularly evaluate and report to the community on implementation progress and adjust the plan as necessary based on the current events in Gallatin. At its annual reorganization meeting, or shortly after, the Town Board should review the status of implementation of the various components of the Plan; and ask for reports from the various groups and committees working on implementation so that Board members continue to understand concerns and issues that have arisen during the past year that may need to be addressed in updates to the Plan, local laws or regulatory action, or other programs. The Town Board review should be focused on reviewing this action plan, identifying goals reached, retiring completed ones from the action list, and adding new ones.

### **Regional Coordination and Implementation Partners**

This Plan outlines many actions the Town of Gallatin can take over the next 10 years to meet its vision and goals. While the Town Board is the ‘owner’ of this Plan, they should not do all the implementation alone. It is critical that the local government work closely with others to solve problems. This includes organizations, agencies, and individuals within the Town, but also with those in the region. It will be critical to forge strong partnerships to implement each step of this Plan. These partners include the following:

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- Area businesses and employers
- Area cultural venues
- Columbia County Planning Department
- Civic Association(s)
- Historic societies
- New York State DEC and other State agencies
- Community groups
- Town agencies (Planning Board, Building Inspector, Highway, New Committees)
- Community-based non-profit organizations that serve Gallatin residents

### Priority Actions

In addition to the initial steps discussed above, the Town Board can use the table presented below to help guide implementation efforts. This table provides a summary of actions recommended in this Plan and identifies several priority actions that the community could begin work on soon after adoption of the Plan.

### Action Table 1: Priority Strategies to Implement

**About Table 1:** In addition to the basic implementation steps outlined above, this table summarizes priority strategies and actions discussed in this Plan. These are actions that the Town should undertake within the first two years after adoption of the Plan. Implementation of these actions will result in many early successes that will promote the vision and goals of the Town.

#### Key to Table:

Type (of Action):      CI= Capital Improvement; R= Regulation; P= Program or Project

Strategy Description	Stakeholders and Implementation Partners	Type of Action
Update Zoning	Town Board, Planning Board	R
Become a Climate Smart Community	Town Board, CSC Task Force	P
Develop a full NRI	CAC	P
Create an Agricultural Advisory Committee	Town Board	P

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Strategy Description	Stakeholders and Implementation Partners	Type of Action
Address Housing Affordability	Planning Board ( zoning changes and project reviews), Town Board (partner with private agencies and organizations)	R, P
Institute an On-going Town-Wide Public Engagement Program to Enhance Community Participation and Education	Town Board	P
Develop a Five-Year Road Maintenance Plan	Town Board and Highway Superintendent	P