

**Section F Narrative, FEAF Part I.**

*Instructions for Section F from FEAF: Attach any additional information which may be needed to clarify your project. If you have identified any adverse impacts which could be associated with your proposal, please describe those impacts plus any measures which you propose to avoid or minimize them.*

**Environmental Setting:** The action covers all land areas within the Town of Gallatin. All physical, historical, agricultural, and natural resources are fully described and mapped in the Gallatin Comprehensive Plan Appendix. The plan identifies and recognizes a variety of environmental features in the Town including:

- Wetlands (Federal and State regulated), including eight different wetland types identified as significant habitats.
- Surface water bodies.
- Designated floodways with 100-year and 500-year floodplains.
- Principal Aquifer.
- Significant natural communities including Inland Poor Fen and Hemlock-Norther Hardwood Forest. The entire Taconic Ridge area is an important area and recognized as a critical Biodiversity area.
- Plant and animal species listed by the Federal or State government including the American Eel, eastern box turtle, eastern pond mussel, New England cottontail, southern swamp buttercup, and wood turtle. The Town also contains a forest linkage zone, and floodplain forests.
- New York State designated Agricultural District including productive agricultural soils
- Historic resources listed on the National and State Register of Historic Places including 10 locations.
- Protected Lands, fee simple or easements through the Columbia Land Conservancy and the Dutchess Land Conservancy.

**Description of Action:** The Town of Gallatin has developed, and desires to adopt an updated comprehensive plan to guide future growth, development and community enhancement programming. The proposed action is to adopt a plan that updates a previous comprehensive plan. It is a written document that describes and details the current conditions and resources of the Town and establishes the goals, principles, polices, strategies and recommended actions for the immediate and long-range protection, enhancement, growth and development of the Town.

The plan has been developed pursuant to State Town Law (272-a). Its role will be as a roadmap or blueprint for the community to follow in order to help focus future development, growth and enhancement activities in a manner consistent with the needs and desires of the community. It is designed to guide not only the physical, environmental and economic development of the Town, but also addresses social and cultural resources and needs.

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The Plan was based on extensive public input and analysis of current conditions. It offers a comprehensive inventory and profile of Town's assets, and outlines actions that can be taken in the future to help Gallatin attain the goals and vision expressed by citizens. The Plan is based on significant public input, research, analysis of data collected in and about the Town.

**Summary of Plan:** The Plan includes the following elements:

- A profile and inventory of resources, land uses, demographics, cultural and historic features, and a full description of the Town and Village's environmental resources (Appendix);
- Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing the Town and Village (SWOT);
- Long-term goals for the Town (Vision and Goals);
- Recommended Strategies (Strategies);
- Short and Long-term Implementation Priorities (Action Plan);
- Maps (Maps in Appendix);
- Other appendices detailing public input results, and other background information and resources for the Town.
- Reference Appendix (includes full documents of all sources and research cited among other information useful for implementation of the Plan.)

The Plan recognizes the unique environmental features of Gallatin and seeks to protect and enhance them to ensure a clean environment, high quality of life for its residents, and to maintain small town and rural character. However, the communities also recognize these are the very same resources that form an important focus for future economic growth, opportunities for its citizens, and quality of life. The Plan notes where a strategy is directed to a specific location.

The Plan establishes the following goals:

Goal 1: To preserve Gallatin's rural, peaceful and quiet 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

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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.

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.

A highlight of the policies and strategies are provided as follows:

**Preserve Rural Character and the Environment:** Continue implementing its Climate Smart Community planning activities and the Green Energy Community Program, develop a full Natural Resource Inventory, establish critical environmental areas to protect unique resources, encourage the Town's CAC to provide important information and educational programs to help Town residents understand the natural resources in Town, consider a real estate transfer tax to fund protection of open space lands, start an electric vehicle educational community campaign, invest in bike trails and road improvements for biking, strengthen the existing watercourse protection overlay district, establish a Forest Core Protection Overlay District, evaluate cumulative impacts during SEQR, update the existing regulations for conservation subdivision to increase effectiveness, update the local flood damage prevention law, expand the existing conservation overlay district, develop additional wetland and stormwater runoff protections, and other zoning and subdivision updates to promote rural design, siting, and maintenance of rural character.

**Protect Agriculture and Farming Opportunities:** Create an agricultural advisory committee, update zoning to enhanced allowance for farmworker housing, expand allowable agricultural uses in Town, update how solar regulations are implemented related to farm operations, implement a local right to farm law, and promoting farm markets.

**Enhancing Diversity and Affordability:** Develop a comprehensive housing strategy, identify lands (in Hamlet) desirable for appropriately scaled, below-market rate housing units, incentivize provision of below-market and senior housing, expand types of housing allowed, implement inclusionary zoning to promote provision of more affordable housing, expand hamlet to allow for more focused growth there, regulate short term rentals so that they don't interfere with provision of long-term rental opportunities, and other zoning changes that can allow for more housing options.

**Enhance Sense of Community and Communication:** Implement methods to increase communication and community involvement, and develop a robust volunteer engagement strategy.

**Promote Small Ag-Related and Low Impact Businesses Consistent With the Rural Character of Town:** create a directory of local businesses, update the zoning's use table to reflect community goals, remove

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the FCID district and add more uses to the Use Table desirable in Gallatin, address short term rentals, and other zoning changes to promote adaptive reuse of existing buildings for small business development.

**Enhance Public Services:** Develop a five-year road maintenance plan, identify alternative transportation options, conduct more grant writing to fund programs, continue to expand broadband, subdivision and zoning changes to address potential traffic impacts, new street construction to be consistent with rural roads, and full mitigation of all adverse impacts on community services.

**Preserve historic and locally significant historic resources:** create an inventory of historic places and add that information to the Towns GIS database, expand use of historic markers in Town, create a space for curated exhibits and an oral history of the Town, and review demolition permits for documentation on historic structures.

**Enhance Recreation:** Identify opportunities for new walking/biking trails and promote public access of preserved parcels where feasible.

As can be seen above, many environmentally oriented recommendations are included in this Plan. The recurring theme of the Plan is to promote and maintain rural character and the environment. The Plan anticipates new growth and development in a way that builds the economy and offers more opportunities for people of all walks of life, but in a manner that celebrates and protects the character, environment, values, and resources of the community for the future. Policies emphasize the goal of protecting environmental resources even when future growth and change occurs.

**Potential Impacts:** The action of adopting in and of itself does not adversely affect the environment. The Town recognizes that with growth and development, changes will occur in the community and to the landscape. However, the essence of this Plan is to ensure for smart and balanced growth done in a manner that minimizes or eliminates adverse impacts and that can co-exist with the environmental resources locally, as well as regionally and beyond. The following is a summary of environmentally oriented recommendations included in the Plan<sup>1</sup> and discusses potential adverse and beneficial impacts.

**Summary:**

The Plan, when implemented, will guide future growth in a manner that eliminates or mitigates adverse impacts. It is essentially a smart-growth plan based upon environmental protection and best management principles. The Plan has a 10 to 15-year outlook. Implementation of its recommended projects and programs will take time, but when completed will allow for responsible growth consistent with the environment and character so valued by Gallatin residents. The proposed Comprehensive Plan establishes policies and criteria that will govern new land uses and clearly establishes the important role environmental protection has in the Town .

Adoption of the Plan will help the Town reduce or mitigate environmental impacts. Implementation of its recommendations will allow for effective land use regulations, careful and comprehensive

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<sup>1</sup> Not all recommended strategies are detailed in this list. This list focuses on those that are related to the topics analyzed via SEQR. See Plan for the full set of recommendations.

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development project reviews, and transformative recognition of the importance of the Town's environmental resources. The Town views the Plan as a tool to ensure resiliency, sustainability and protection of Gallatin's environment.