

**TOWN AND VILLAGE OF ATHENS**

**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

**VOLUME I**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, INTRODUCTION,  
GOALS & RECOMMENDATIONS, AND  
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

**FINAL DRAFT**

**JULY 31, 2007**

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Laberge Group

Laberge Group Project Number 25060

# Acknowledgments

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The Town and Village of Athens *Community Comprehensive Plan Committee* would like to recognize and thank the many people and organizations whose assistance has made the completion of this Comprehensive Plan a reality. The development of the Town and Village of Athens Comprehensive Plan was partially financed by grants obtained through the Hudson River Valley Greenway, NYS Quality Communities Program, Greene County IDA, Athens Community Foundation, NYS DEC Hudson River Estuary Program, Catskill-Olana Mitigation Fund, a member item from Senator Seward, and other State, Federal, Local and private funding sources. The *Athens Community Comprehensive Plan Committee* would specifically like to thank the following:

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New York State Quality Communities Program Grant



**Acknowledgements**

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Greene County Department of Planning & Economic Development

Mary Howard

Greene County Soil and Water Conservation District

Rene Van Schaack, Executive Director

Abbe Martin, Conservation Planner

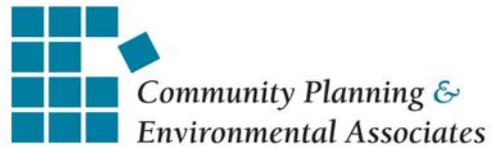
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# Table of Contents

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Acknowledgments.....	i
Table of Contents.....	iv
Executive Summary.....	vi
Introduction.....	vi
The Planning Process.....	vii
Vision Statement.....	vii
Plan Contents.....	viii
Summary of the Inventory and Profile.....	ix
Summary of Public Participation Process.....	x
Introduction to Planning.....	1
What is a Comprehensive Plan?.....	1
Implementing the Plan.....	1
Updating & Amending the Plan.....	2
Goals and Recommendations.....	3
Development of Goals and Recommendations.....	3
Vision Statement.....	3
Goals and Recommendations.....	4
Economic Development.....	4
Open Space, Environmental, Natural Resources and Scenic Views.....	15
Agriculture.....	26
Transportation and Pedestrian.....	33
Historic, Cultural and Recreational Resources.....	40
Housing.....	51
Municipal and Community Resources.....	56
Implementation Plan.....	65

Priority Action Plan ..... 65

Key to Priority..... 66

Key to Type of Action ..... 67

Map List..... 79

    Comprehensive Plan Maps ..... 79

    Build-Out Analysis Maps ..... 80

    9W Corridor Study Maps..... 80

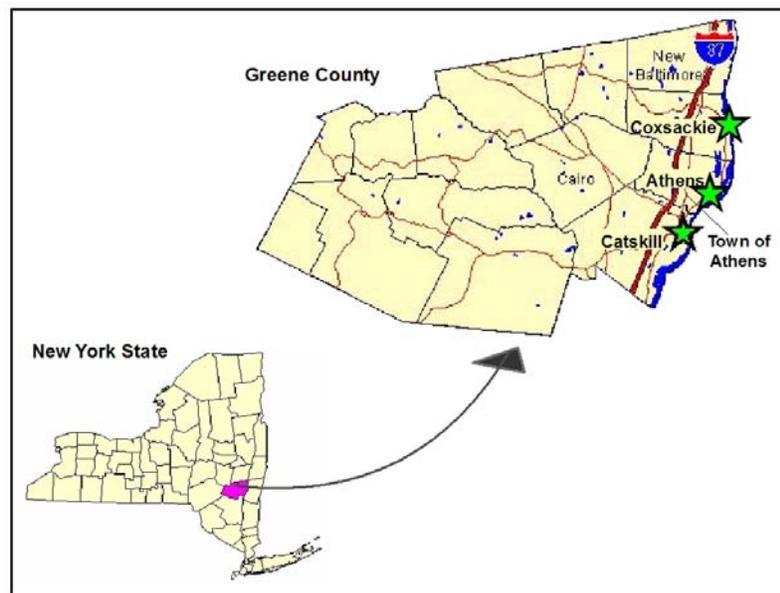
# Executive Summary

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## Introduction

The Village and Town of Athens are situated along the Hudson River's western shoreline, approximately 30 miles south of the City of Albany in Greene County. The Village and Town are located across the river from the City of Hudson and are about 100 miles north of New York City.

According to an historical account written in "Athens: 1776-1976 Its People and Industry", the Village and Town of Athens have a rich history that dates back to the pre-Colonial Era and is linked to the Hudson River. Athens is a community along the Hudson River which has retained much of its architectural and



historical integrity since its settlement in 1706. It reflects over 250 years of development and change, from farmland to a prosperous shipbuilding center and railroad terminus, to a tranquil residential and commercial community. Athens is also typical of numerous Hudson River communities which prospered in the 19th century due to the resources of the Hudson River. As history and the Hudson River are very valuable to Athens residents, the Town and Village continue to focus attention on waterfront revitalization and historic preservation.

Over the past few decades, Athens has been experiencing steady commercial and industrial growth along Route 9W, Schoharie Turnpike and State Route 385; and significant residential growth is occurring around Sleepy Hollow Lake and other areas

throughout the Town and Village. The majority of the Town's western area remains mostly rural and residential in nature, with a large amount of undeveloped land that either remains in agricultural production or has grown over to secondary forest. Many Athens residents enjoy a rural lifestyle, while commuting to work in the Albany area or other easily accessible regions.

## **The Planning Process**

Like all communities, in order for the Town and Village of Athens to remain socially and economically sustainable, it must respond to changing conditions. The Town and Village of Athens, which share common interests in the future development and preservation of their respective communities, cooperatively chose to develop a Comprehensive Plan. As part of the comprehensive planning process, the Town and Village developed the following joint Vision Statement which is a synopsis of the visionary thoughts provided by all the concerned citizens who took part in the public participation process of the Comprehensive Plan:

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### ***Vision Statement***

*Athens is a vibrant and family-friendly place that is warm and inviting. Our residents include a wide range of age groups of different economic, educational, and social backgrounds which support a broad range of cultural, social, and recreational activities. Our safe & quiet neighborhoods have a small town atmosphere that consist of well designed and maintained homes that reflect our unique local history. Our rural, forested areas are rich in wildlife and afford undisturbed views of the Catskill Mountains, Berkshires and Hudson River Valley.*

*The clean and ecologically healthy Hudson River waterfront provides excellent access to the public for a variety of outdoor recreational activities and business enterprises. The charming village waterfront is linked to a convenient historic downtown shopping area. This mixed residential and commercial district provides a variety of necessary goods, services, entertainment venues, and attractions for local and regional patrons.*

*Athens has a balance of economic opportunities, including employment in professional & service sectors, commercial enterprises, farms, and light*

*manufacturing. Furthermore, to encourage commerce, it has a well-designed transportation network that facilitates travel and the transportation of goods within the town and to nearby cities.*

*Homeowners, apartment dwellers, and businesses are supported by respected, well-run, and coordinated municipal governments. Proactive planning and infrastructure development have helped to attract small & medium sized businesses, while preserving the qualities that make Athens unique. Commercial growth and the expansion of housing stock for working and professional individuals and families and for senior citizens are accomplished in a manner which preserves working farms, open spaces, scenic vistas, and small town character.*

The joint Comprehensive Plan is an example of inter-municipal cooperation and consensus building among varying interest groups to create strategic goals and an implementation plan for these two municipalities. A variety of tools were used to gather public opinion and support throughout the planning process. The Plan incorporates the knowledge and skills of a citizen advisory committee, planning consultants, and special interest groups to identify the local assets and liabilities, and establish goals and strategies for revitalization. This effort has led to a feeling of community ownership of the Comprehensive Plan and the creation of realistic goals and recommendations that can be implemented through policy changes, new program creation or expansion, organizational changes, grant acquisition, regulatory updates, and other alternatives and actions that will guide the Town and Village toward a successful future.

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### ***Plan Contents***

The Comprehensive Plan is comprised of three volumes: Volume I contains an Executive Summary; an Overview of the Planning Process; a Summary of the Inventory and Profile; a Summary of the Public Participation Process; the Vision Statement, Goals and Recommendations; and the Implementation Plan.

Volume II contains the detailed Town and Village Inventory and Profile which offers a more in-depth discussion of the History of Athens; the Public Participation Process; Previous Planning Efforts; County Planning Efforts; Demographics; Housing Resources; Municipal Resources; Economic and Industrial Resources; Transportation Resources; Physical and Environmental Features; Cultural and Historical Resources; Existing Land

Use and Zoning, and a display of thematic maps used throughout the planning process to illustrate the various sections of the Plan.

Volume III – Supplementary Reports, contains the complete Community Image Survey Report; the Athens Build-out Analysis; the Route 9W Study; the Draft Main Street Revitalization Strategy and the Draft Open Space Plan, which are both in progress and are expected to be completed in the summer of 2007.

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### ***Summary of the Inventory and Profile***

The following is summary of the content of the Inventory and Profile. Please see Volume II of this Comprehensive Plan for further details.

Volume II, the Inventory and Profile of the Comprehensive Plan contains an abundance of information about the existing conditions in the Town and Village of Athens, its unique characteristics, trends or issues that will affect its future as well as community values and a shared vision for its development. The Inventory and Profile was drafted under the direct guidance the *Athens Community Comprehensive Plan Committee (ACCP)*, ) a joint committee with five (5) appointed members from the Town and five (5) appointed members from the Village of Athens which was created with the intent of representing a large cross section of the community. In addition to the Committee’s input there was significant outreach to municipal officials and active efforts to ‘interview’ members of the community though telephone surveys and public participation workshops and meetings. The Inventory and Profile also incorporates facts and ideas from previous community planning efforts as well as regional and relevant state plans or programs.

The Inventory and Profile includes: a detailed description of the broad community outreach program that was intended to incorporate varying levels of public participation throughout the planning process; a detailed demographic, market and housing analysis which provides information about the people who live within the Town and Village of Athens; comparisons of the demographic features of the two involved communities to neighboring communities, Greene County and the State of New York, to provide a level of context that is required to understand the existing socio-economic conditions within the communities. The Inventory and Profile provides an overview of the local municipal resources, such as emergency services, education, municipal properties, utilities, historical properties and cultural events; a summary of the economic sectors, the local and regional tourist attractions, and a discussion on the existing economic development organizations, the services they provide, and the current efforts to boost the economy of

the area. The Inventory and Profile also includes an overview of the local and regional transportation resources, including the existing road network and alternative transportation options and a detailed description of the physical and environmental conditions, including, but not limited to, the topography, water features, soils, coastal areas, scenic views and habitats. Finally, this Volume, summarizes the local zoning codes and existing land use of the Town and Village.

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### ***Summary of Public Participation Process***

The foundation of a good Comprehensive Plan is the incorporation of public input early and often throughout the Plan's development. In order to develop a plan built upon public consensus on key issues and common goals, receiving feedback from the Town and Village elected and appointed leaders, business owners, and residents is imperative.

A two-part public outreach and participation process occurred over a two- year period. The first approach focused on obtaining input from the Town and Village elected officials, appointed boards and Town and Village staff. With the intent to ensure representation from each community, the Town Board and Village Board appointed the *Athens Community Comprehensive Plan Committee*, which was comprised of representatives from the Town and Village. The individuals appointed to the *Committee* are not only members of elected and appointed boards, but are residents and business owners that bring a wide range of experiences to the *Committee* and have local knowledge of the key issues concerning residents of Town and Village.

The second approach was targeted toward receiving feedback from the general public. Several public workshops were held to solicit the opinions of residents at large. Participants were encouraged to express their opinions on a wide variety of community issues and characteristics, which helped formulate the vision for the future. Stakeholder interviews were also conducted of Town and Village staff members, and representatives of other local organizations or special interest groups. In order to provide another opportunity for all residents and property owners to give feedback for this planning process, the *Committee* also conducted a Community Survey.

Listed below are events that took place over a 2-year period beginning in the summer of 2005 and ending in the spring of 2007 for the development and adoption of the Comprehensive Plan:

- Appointment of the Athens Community Comprehensive Plan Committee.

- Comprehensive Plan Committee Orientation Meetings.
- Review of the comprehensive planning process.
- Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis.
- Stakeholder Interviews
- Visioning Workshop.
- Community Image Survey Workshop.
- Community Survey.
- Buildout Analysis
- Draft Route 9W Corridor Study
- Draft Main Street Study
- Review of Draft Inventory and Profile.
- Open House
- Develop draft Goals and Recommendations.
- Review of draft Goals and Recommendations
- Review of Draft Plan by the Committee.
- Solicit public input and forward Draft Plan to Greene County Department of Planning and Economic Development for review.
- Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee Public Hearing.
- Town and Village Board Public Hearings.
- State, Environmental, Quality, Review Act (SEQR) Determination.

# Introduction to Planning

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## What is a Comprehensive Plan?

New York State law grants municipalities the authority to prepare and adopt comprehensive plans.<sup>1</sup> As defined by law, a comprehensive plan is a document that identifies goals, objectives, principles, and policies for the immediate and long-range protection, enhancement, growth, and development of a community. Also known as a master plan, a comprehensive plan provides guidance to municipal leaders, government agencies, community organizations, local businesses, and residents, and helps to ensure that the community's needs are met, both now and in the future.

Long-term in nature (with generally a 10-year outlook), comprehensive plans concentrate on drafting land use policy, developing regulatory measures, identifying zoning changes, and creating local laws that, over time, will foster the community's growth in a manner consistent with residents' preferred vision. A well-developed comprehensive plan is a community's blueprint for the future.

The comprehensive plan, as a tool of planning, is a means to promote the health, safety, and welfare of the people. An adopted comprehensive plan indicates that both community leaders and citizens accept the plan as the guide to future decision-making and development. New York's zoning enabling statutes (the state statutes which give cities, towns and villages the power to enact local zoning laws) all require that zoning laws be adopted in accordance with a comprehensive plan. The comprehensive plan provides the backbone for the local zoning law. <sup>2</sup>

## Implementing the Plan

The adoption of the Comprehensive Plan is only the beginning. The mere statements of goals and recommendations of this plan will not produce the desired results unless the Town and Village implement the concepts through land use regulations, public

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<sup>1</sup> Town Law §272-a and Village Law §7-722

<sup>2</sup> Zoning and The Comprehensive Plan, James A. Coon Local Government Technical Series, December, 1999, Town Law §263, Village Law §7-704

investment and cooperation, and/or the formation of partnerships with adjacent municipalities.

Once the Comprehensive Plan is adopted, the Town and Village Boards should each designate an Implementation Committee to review the goals and recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan, and make recommendations for immediate actions that should be pursued by the Town and Village. The Committee should have members that represent the existing Planning Boards, Zoning Board of Appeals and *Athens Community Comprehensive Plan Committee (ACCP)*. This Implementation Committee should first be charged with implementing the recommended changes to the Zoning Codes/Ordinances, in order to bring these regulations in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan. Upon completion of their review, the Implementation Committee should present their recommendations to the Town and Village Boards for consideration and adoption. The Town and Village Boards must follow the legal requirements set forth in Town Law §263, Village Law §7-704 - §7-708 and General Municipal Law §239-m when making changes to the Zoning Code/Ordinance. The Implementation Committee should also be charged with the implementation of the other recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan. The Committee should work on each strategy in the order of importance established by the Plan within the next section; however, it is likely that priorities may change with the availability of funding sources for particular projects.

## **Updating & Amending the Plan**

In order for the Comprehensive Plan to be an effective tool in guiding the desires of the Town and Village residents, it must be reviewed on a regular basis. Ideas and attitudes change over time. Five years from now, a problem that may have been at the forefront of the public mind may be resolved and something else may take its place. Therefore, it is recommended that the Town and Village Boards and Planning Boards, or other designated special board, annually review the Comprehensive Plan's recommendations to ensure that they are relevant to the changing conditions within the Town and Village. It is recommended that the entire Comprehensive Plan be reviewed at least once every five years, and be amended where needed. The Plan should be updated or re-written at least once every ten years.

# Goals and Recommendations

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## Development of Goals and Recommendations

The Goals and Recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan, once implemented, are intended to guide the future development of the Town and Village. To best understand the intent of these elements, it might be helpful to know the differences that exist between goals and recommendations.

A **goal** is a general statement of a future condition that is considered desirable for the community; it is an end towards which actions are aimed.

A **recommendation** is a specific proposal to do something that relates directly to accomplishing the goal.

The goals and recommendations developed in support of the Town and Village of Athens Comprehensive Plan were all crafted through the efforts of plan consultants working closely with the community. Much effort was put into the public participation process conducted in support of the planning process. This involved several public workshops, stakeholder interviews, a series of committee meetings, and a residential survey.

Culling all the feedback from these efforts, an attempt was made to identify goals and recommendations that best reflect the community's concerns and desires. With the feedback received through public and committee meetings, the goals were finalized and further tailored to better reflect the communities' desired vision of the future. Final modifications were made to reflect feedback received.

## Vision Statement

As part of the comprehensive planning process, the Town and Village developed the following joint Vision Statement which is a synopsis of the visionary thoughts provided by all the concerned citizens who took part in the public participation process of the Comprehensive Plan:

*Athens is a vibrant and family-friendly place that is warm and inviting. Our residents include a wide range of age groups of different economic, educational, and social backgrounds which support a broad range of cultural, social, and recreational activities. Our safe & quiet neighborhoods have a small town atmosphere that consist of well designed and maintained homes that reflect our unique local history. Our rural, forested areas are rich in wildlife and afford undisturbed views of the Catskill Mountains, Berkshires and Hudson River Valley.*

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*Athens has a balance of economic opportunities, including employment in professional & service sectors, commercial enterprises, farms, and light manufacturing. Furthermore, to encourage commerce, it has a well-designed transportation network that facilitates travel and the transportation of goods within the town and to nearby cities.*

*Homeowners, apartment dwellers, and businesses are supported by respected, well-run, and coordinated municipal governments. Proactive planning and infrastructure development have helped to attract small & medium sized businesses, while preserving the qualities that make Athens unique. Commercial growth and the expansion of housing stock for working and professional individuals and families and for senior citizens are accomplished in a manner which preserves working farms, open spaces, scenic vistas, and small town character.*

## **Goals and Recommendations**

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### ***Economic Development***

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An important factor in understanding economic development and devising strategies for growth is identifying the resource areas. These include: the available workforce and workforce development, quality of life factors, and business and community resources and infrastructure. In order to succeed a community must have an attractive quality of life, along with available building sites, a qualified labor force, financial incentives or resources, utilities and transportation infrastructure. These components are integral to business attraction and retention.

The Town and Village of Athens have a variety of local economic development resources available to existing and new business owners. The majority of the Village is serviced by public water and sewer and is conveniently linked to the state highway system. The main water line runs through the Town and Village along Schoharie Turnpike, from its source at Hollister Lake, offering an opportunity for future extension of the drinking water system. Further, the Town has an Industrial Park with gas and rail access.

The location along the Hudson River waterfront as well as its historic buildings and layout, add to Athens' continued potential for a mix of residential and business uses. New York State has recently authorized a new Empire Zone in Greene County which encompasses 167 acres of land within the Town of Athens. The Town and Village are also blessed with a variety of local tourist attractions which are supported and promoted locally as well as regionally through the area chambers of commerce and the Greene County Tourism Promotion Department. With its proximity across the river from the City of Hudson and its high percentage of seasonal residences, the tourism industry will likely continue to play a large role in the local economy.

In addition to local economic development resources, the Town and Village of Athens also have a variety of regional resources to assist existing and new business owners. The Greene County Department of Planning and Economic Development (GCDPED) and the Greene County Industrial Development Agency (IDA) administer a number of programs that together have the ability to promote and generate economic opportunities. Economic Development assistance is also available through the Greene County Chamber of Commerce, the Coxsackie Area Chamber of Commerce and the GreeneBusiness Partnership. A detailed listing of these programs taken from the GCDPED web site can be found in the Appendix.

In order for the Village and Town of Athens to remain economically sustainable, it must respond to changing conditions. The Village and Town are both projected to gain population between 2005 and 2010, with large percentages of the populations falling between the ages of 35 and 54. This projected population growth could have a positive economic impact, as according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, consumers between the ages of 35-44 and 45-54 are in their peak earning years, and spend the most dollars of all other age groups. Projections also predict an increase in the median household income for Village and Town residents by 2010.

Throughout the public outreach process, residents expressed the desire for more retail shopping opportunities and services for every day needs. Residents also expressed a general dissatisfaction with the empty storefronts on Second Street, lack of local job opportunities and high taxes. The results of the residential survey showed that a vast majority of residents supported the conversion of empty buildings to commercial space, the expansion of economic development activities, the creation of an industrial park, additional commercial development, more local job availability, more locally-owned and operated businesses, and high-tech and light industrial businesses. Residents also expressed that it was important to create economic development strategies to preserve farming as a part of the local economy. Preservation of farming leads to the enhancement of local quality of life by controlling land development and preserving open space and the natural beauty of the community. In addition farming as an industry has been proven to have less demand on municipal services, thus keeping tax rates lower throughout the community.

The Town and Village together have a skilled work force in the areas of education, health, and social services, public administration, manufacturing and retail trade, however many residents currently commute to other towns and cities for work, and often bring their business to other towns and cities along the way. The Greene County Department of Planning and Economic Development is currently developing a comprehensive economic development plan for the County. Early stages of the planning process have identified industry opportunities for the Town and Village of Athens as well as facility requirements and issues concerning competition with the Albany area.

The following Goals and Recommendations have been formulated to address these and other challenges. Specific recommendations for the economic development of the 9W Corridor are included in the Route 9W Corridor Recommendations section.

### GOALS

- A. Foster a vital business-friendly environment for existing and new business enterprises to expand Athens' tax base.
- B. Foster a range of employment opportunities in professional & service sectors, commercial and retail enterprises, agriculture and light manufacturing.

- C. Foster a viable regional tourism economy and position Athens to benefit from increased tourism.
- D. Protect and carefully develop the Hudson River waterfront, as it remains the community's most valuable resource.
- E. Link the Village waterfront to a convenient historic downtown shopping area.
- F. Encourage the downtown shopping area to become a mixed residential and commercial district that provides a variety of necessary goods, services, entertainment venues and attractions for local and regional patrons.
- G. Encourage the continued growth and improvement of a range of retail & commercial services contained in aesthetically pleasing structures along Route 9-W primarily to serve the needs of residents.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### *Local and Regional Cooperation, Planning, Programming*

1. Create or appoint a joint Town/Village Local Development Corporation (LDC) to spearhead revitalization and funding. A Local Development Corporation is a legal entity/organization directed by a board of directors and/or members, for the purpose of creating new jobs and income growth. This is one of many tools used by communities, counties and regions throughout New York State to foster economic development. Creating a 501 (c) (3) public benefit corporation will allow some flexibility in pursuing and using economic development funds provided by the State.
2. Work with the proposed joint Town/Village LDC, or the GreeneBusiness Partnership to recruit new businesses to fill empty commercial structures and to attract and retain employment opportunities. Create and maintain a vacant land and building inventory to easily identify potential redevelopment sites. In the short term, businesses should be recruited that the local market can support, such as a grocery store, small convenience store, casual restaurant/deli, dry cleaner or bakery. As the revitalization efforts gain momentum, recruit businesses that need the support of the regional market such as specialty gift shops, antique stores, fine dining restaurants, gv pubs, bed and breakfast's, and entertainment facilities to support the tourism market.

3. Appoint a Joint Village/Town economic development liaison to stay abreast of economic development programs, attend meetings, participate in community events, and communicate Village and Town positions on key issues with existing economic development and tourism agencies such as the Greene County Chamber of Commerce and the Greene County Tourism Promotion Department.
4. Develop a joint town/village Business Assistance Program. The program could include a revolving loan fund that is designed and directed to new and existing businesses either located in or considering an Athens location. Revolving loan funding uses include, but are not limited to: relocation and start up expenses; purchase of equipment or inventory; the engagement of professional technical assistance, leasehold improvements; and working capital. The funding could also be used to assist with capital improvements, façade and sign enhancements, business expansion and second and third story rehabilitation.
5. Work with Greene County Department of Planning and Economic Development and adjacent towns and villages to coordinate the “Historic River Towns Inter-municipal Growth Plan and the Greene County Comprehensive Economic Development Plan. These current and future planning processes will facilitate the formation of mutual goals, coordinated efforts for economic development, and follow-through on implementation strategies.

***Empire Zone Benefits***

1. Support local businesses in accessing Empire Zone benefits to create new and/or retain existing jobs:
  - a. Update the Town of Athens Zoning Ordinance to be more specific and to allow for a more “shovel ready” development review process in the designated Empire Zone areas.
  - b. Work with the County to ensure that the Town zoning districts are consistent with the types of businesses that will be utilizing the Empire Zone.
  - c. Add a specific list of allowable uses to the table of “District Objectives and Land Use Controls” within the Zoning Ordinance, and list which uses will require site plan review or special permits.
  - d. Update Section 180-26 of the Town Zoning law to detail what kind of uses require special permits, which board oversees the review process, what the procedure is for attaining a special permit, and what standards are to be used.

Where practical, eliminate the need for certain business uses to apply for special use permits within the Empire Zone.

- e. Update the Performance Standards, Section 180-14.
  - f. Consider developing a Generic Environmental Impact Statement for the Empire Zone.
2. The Town and Village should cooperate with Greene County IDA, Greene County Planning and Economic Development Department and private property owners to provide public water and sewer to the new Empire Zone properties on Schoharie Turnpike.

### ***Infrastructure Expansion***

1. The Town and Village Boards and Planning Boards should work together to study and consider the future extension of public water service to the commercial properties at the intersection of Route 9W and Schoharie Turnpike. Public water services should be contained within this “commercial node”, and not extended north along the entire length of 9W. This concept is intended to avoid the creation of a continuous commercial strip along 9W. Future public water extensions could be aimed south of the intersection of Schoharie Turnpike and 9W to the “commercial node” at the intersection of 9W and Leeds-Athens Road. Expansions south of Leeds Athens Road, as well as east and west along Leeds Athens Road should be discouraged.
2. Investigate opportunities to expand municipal telecommunications and utility infrastructure, such as DSL, high speed Internet, and/or cable access connections.

### ***Design Guidelines and Zoning Code Improvements***

1. Develop architectural design, building form, subdivision regulations and signage guidelines to foster new commercial, residential, and mixed-use development that retains small town, historic and natural character of the Town and Village. These standards and sketches can serve as a guide toward achieving an acceptable urban pattern through building styles and typologies. The design standards should be applicable to all proposed activities, including signage and franchise/chain businesses. The Town and Village should utilize the results of the Community Image Survey to establish these guidelines or standards.

2. Improve the overall aesthetics of the Town and Village by addressing issues such as vacant or dilapidated buildings, broken or boarded up windows, unscreened dumpsters, junk cars and general rubbish, uninviting fencing and building facades, cluttered sidewalks, and unattractive signs with enhanced local codes and code enforcement. Identify and work with absentee landlords to improve the use and appearance of residential, commercial, or mixed-use buildings throughout the Town and Village.
3. Review and update the “use tables” of the Town and Village zoning codes to ensure that they allow for the desired commercial uses in specific districts. Further, review use tables and zoning so that the town and village regulations are coordinated and not in conflict with each other.

### ***Village Downtown Improvements***

1. Initiate a Main Street Program with the support from the National Trust’s National Main Street Center, Main Street Approach to Downtown Revitalization©. The Main Street Approach to Downtown Revitalization™ is a comprehensive strategy that can be tailored to different communities and is based on a Four Point Approach™. The following excerpt is from The Professional’s Guide to the Main Street Approach, National Trust’s National Main Street Center, 2000. The National Trust for Historic Preservation also offers the following 8 principles that must be combined with the Main Street Four Point Approach™:

#### **Four Point Approach™**

- a. **Organization:** Building a consensus and cooperation among the many groups and individuals that play roles in the community. Many individuals and organizations have a stake in the economic viability of the community, including: bankers, property owners, government officials, merchants, residents, professionals, chamber of commerce representatives, local industries, civic groups, historical societies, schools, consumers, real estate agents and local media.
- b. **Economic Restructuring:** Strengthening the existing local economic base, while diversifying it. Activities include helping existing businesses expand, recruiting new businesses to provide a balanced mix, converting un-used space into productive property and sharpening the competitiveness of local

merchants. By strengthening the local economy, the community will be able to support the ongoing use of historic commercial buildings, and preserve unique community assets.

- c. **Design:** Improving the community aesthetic by enhancing the physical appearance of public and private buildings, streetlights, window displays, storefronts, parking areas, signs, sidewalks, public open spaces, promotional materials, and all other elements that convey a visual message about the local business environment and what it has to offer.
- d. **Promotion:** Marketing the community's unique characteristics to shoppers, investors, new businesses, tourists, and others. Effective promotion creates a positive image of the community. Promotion of retail activities, special events and ongoing programs can rekindle community pride.

### **Eight Principles of the Main Street Approach™**

- a. **Comprehensive:** A single project cannot revitalize a business district. For instance, design improvements alone will not stabilize or expand your economy. Effective marketing, organization, and solid economic development strategies are all necessary components of successful downtown revitalization.
- b. **Incremental:** Small projects and simple activities enable those involved to see things happening. Small projects enable those involved to develop the skills and confidence needed to be successful at more complex, larger projects.
- c. **Identify and Capitalize on Existing Assets:** Every community is unique and has special qualities that set it apart from all others. Local leaders should focus on a unique asset like a distinctive building or feature, and turn it into an opportunity.
- d. **Implementation Oriented:** Frequent visible changes and activities create confidence in the program and encourage greater levels of participation in the revitalization efforts.

- e. **Quality:** From storefront design, to promotional campaigns, to special events, quality must be emphasized in every aspect of the revitalization program.
  - f. **Self-Help:** Local leaders must have the desire and will to make the project successful. Grant programs can help fund pieces of the work, planners and consultants can provide guidance, but without community involvement and commitment, the revitalization effort will not be successful.
  - g. **Public-Private Partnerships:** Public and private sectors have a vital interest in the economic health and physical viability of downtown. An effective partnership is one that recognizes the strengths and weaknesses of the other partner.
  - h. **Changing Attitudes:** Changing community attitudes and habits are essential to bring about downtown revitalization. Public perceptions must be shifted in order to support and sustain the economic revitalization effort.
2. Explore the creation of a Downtown Business Improvement District. BIDs are funded by a special assessment paid by property owners within a designated area and are overseen by a committee of property owners. BIDs deliver supplemental services such as maintenance, public safety and visitor services, marketing and promotional programs, capital improvements and beautification in a designated area.
  3. Improve public parking areas in the Village. Analyze residential and commercial streets, off-street parking conditions and develop a plan for solving the associated parking problems. Potential solutions include establishing municipal parking, delineating existing on-street parking spaces with striping, enforcing parking regulations, and/or creating designated spaces for renters through a permit system.
  4. Continue to apply for grant assistance through federal, state, county, local and philanthropic organizations. Focus on making financial assistance available to existing and new businesses to rehabilitate and re-use existing commercial buildings.
  5. Establish a “Curtains on Main Street” program to hang curtains in the windows of temporarily vacant buildings.

6. Improve the overall streetscape of Second Street and Water Street by gradually replacing DOT highway-style lighting with replica vintage lighting to improve aesthetics and better light the sidewalks. Replace traffic lights with mast arm poles, improve curbing and sidewalks and where feasible, add landscaping and street furniture.
7. Encourage business owners to install building mounted lighting for the pedestrian area, such as gooseneck lighting and under-awning lighting to illuminate business signs and store window displays.

***Riverfront Improvements***

1. Take advantage of the Hudson River as an asset of the Town and Village. Continue to implement the goals of the Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan and the Athens Waterfront Revitalization Project to improve the Riverfront Park, the 4<sup>th</sup> Street Boat Launch, the Hudson-Athens Lighthouse and other riverfront properties. These improvements would attract tourists to the Town and Village, provide access to the river and promote recreational activities. Riverfront improvements that were recommended from these plans, that are either currently underway, or have yet been implemented include the following:
  - a. Riverfront Park
    1. Dredging of the ferry slip to restore depth and development of heavy duty mooring for use by tour boats.
    2. Improvements of the “Central Plaza” area at the foot of Second Street.
    3. Construction of a small structure to house restrooms and possible ticket office.
    4. Rearrange and define street parking areas to provide additional capacity.
    5. Placement of various architectural details such as railings, lighting, and surface treatments.
    6. The establishment of a boat tour operation or additional ferry trips running between Hudson & Athens, and the Hudson-Athens Lighthouse and/or other river destinations.
  - b. 4<sup>th</sup> Street Boat Launch
    1. Development of a safe launching/landing area for canoes and kayaks.
    2. Development of a small kiosk to direct visitors to nearby businesses and attractions/

3. Aesthetic improvements including improvements to the streetscape, utility relocation, and improvements to the adjoining private buildings and the old slip.
  4. Landscaping, benches and planters.
  5. Development of limited parking spots (12-13), which can be used for paddlers.
2. Display a kiosk in the Athens Riverfront Park and the 4<sup>th</sup> Street Boat Launch with a map of historic sites in the village and information on dining, shopping events and opportunities for paddlers, street festivals and other interesting attractions in the community. The kiosk could include information on the Village of Athens Walking Tour (map and pamphlet developed for the Bicentennial celebration), Athens Cultural Center, Athens Museum, Athens Street Festival, Middle Ground Flats, Brandow Point, Stockport Conservation Area and the Hudson River Regional Festival among other attractions.
  3. Continue efforts to remove or rehabilitate the abandoned barges along the riverfront that are presenting safety, aesthetic and environmental concerns.
  4. Utilize Middleground Flats for camping, picnicking, hiking/nature trails, bird-watching, and fishing. The number of camping sites should be limited to avoid environmental damage to the island.

### ***Tourism and Promotion***

1. Continue to participate in regional events, programs and services that already exist and appeal to tourists. The Great Hudson River Paddle is but one regional festival that involves many communities throughout the region. It is important for the Town and Village to continue to participate in such events to secure its place in a regional economy.
2. Continue to support and promote a variety of local cultural and recreational events in the Town and Village. Examples include: street festivals, river festivals, block parties, craft fairs, wine tastings, ice festivals, town/village-wide garage sales, book fairs, holiday celebrations, parades, and walking tours to attract tourists throughout the year and inspire community spirit and pride.

3. Work with the Greene Business Partnership to encourage existing manufacturing businesses to expand their products and services. For example, local businesses could open their doors for tours of their facilities during festival days, or create a small display detailing the history of their company in Athens.
4. Work with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Greene County, Greene County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board, Greene County Department of Planning & Economic Development and Greene County Tourism to seek grant opportunities for local farmers in order to strengthen the local agricultural economy. Local farmers can benefit from involvement in a regional agri-tourism, eco and/or recreational tourism market, as well as expanded farmers markets and Community Supported Agriculture Programs (CSAs or Co-ops).
5. Create Village and Town web sites for the promotion of existing and forthcoming programs, development initiatives and community events. Be sure to provide links to Chamber of Commerce, Greene County and school district websites.
6. Develop a more recognizable signage program throughout the Village and Town. Signs and kiosks should lead visitors to shopping areas and other attractions. A recognizable theme of banners for all of the seasons could also be displayed on the existing utility poles to dress up the area.
7. Enhance the community gateways or “welcome” signs, with additional landscaping, lighting, and thematic signage. Gateways can be tied to an established theme and can include signs, sculptures, or ornamental historic objects.

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***Open Space, Environmental, Natural Resources and Scenic Views***

Athens stretches between the Hudson River shoreline and the first line of hills of the Helderberg Escarpment and is characterized by a generally rolling, rural landscape. The town has three distinct topographic zones: a flat terrace along the Hudson (containing the Village / Route 385), the Kalkberg Hills (in the vicinity of Route 9W), and the Hoogeborg Hills (in the vicinity of the NYS Thruway west to the town border). A series of steep slopes (over 15%) running north-south can be found and are more predominant in the central to western portion of Athens. There is a narrow band of steep slopes along the Kalkberg Hills, some areas scattered through the Hoogeborg Hills and along stream edges and banks in the terrace area in the eastern portion of town.

Athens has a notable amount of green space particularly along the Hudson, which has many areas of protected or preserved forests, wetlands, and tidal flats. The entire Hudson shoreline north from Cohotate Preserve to the Cossackie border (except areas near the Village) is an extensive wetland complex that includes tidal pools and areas of emergent and submerged aquatic vegetation. Other wetland areas include a regulated wetlands complex north of Green Lake Park as well as along Corlaer Creek and Murderer's Creek. There are federally designated floodplain areas along the entire Hudson shoreline, Murderer's Creek below the dam, and Potic Creek. Sleepy Hollow Lake is on NY State's list of impaired water bodies due to silt and sedimentation from stream bank erosion. Other important community open spaces and preserves include the Green Lake boat launch, Buttermilk Falls, Brandow Point (under development), Middle Ground Flats, and the Vosburgh Swamp area wetlands and tidal flats.

Much of Athens' Hudson River shoreline is considered to be critical wildlife habitats, particularly in the West Flats area in the northeastern portion of the town. The NYS Natural Heritage Program designates a number of the significant ecological communities found along the Athens shoreline as 'imperiled' in New York. These habitats are also given priority under the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation's Hudson River Estuary Management Program and the Department of State's Coastal Zone Management Program. Other areas containing significant habitat clusters can be found in the vicinity of Potic Mountain and the Hans Vosen Kill.

State Route 385 is a State Scenic Byway for 3.5 miles of its length south of the Village of Cossackie border. It was originally designated as a scenic road under a program of the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and later transferred to the NYS Department of Transportation. A portion of the Town and Village is included in a Scenic Area of Statewide Significance under the New York Coastal Zone program. Some official protection exists for scenic resources, but only in the village. Some parts of Athens have environmental limitations to intense development such as lower water capacities, shallow or clay soils, and significant ecological communities.

Feedback from the community indicates that town and village residents value Athens scenic nature and surrounding landscape. In particular, people noted the quaint small-town architecture and layout, its Hudson River setting, the absence of a rail road along the banks of the River, the quantity of green open space, the diversity of natural habitats, and views of the Catskills Mountains and foothills.

Specific scenic locations valued by the community include the following: High Hill Road at Schoharie Turnpike with scenic views of Coxsackie, Athens, the Hudson River, the City of Hudson, and the Berkshire Mountains; and Sandy Plains Road at High Hill Road with views of the Cauterskill Creek, the Helderberg Escarpment (Hooageberg Hills), and Windham Mountain. Residents also identified scenic views along Howard Hall, Vosenkill and Cross roads in the town.

## GOALS

- A. Assess, protect and enhance the environment to sustain the quality of natural resources, the rural landscape, and diversity of wildlife habitats.
- B. Protect and maintain air and water quality and establish effective storm water management practices.
- C. Preserve scenic views of the rural environment, the Hudson River, views of the Catskill and Berkshire Mountains, open spaces and other important physical features in Athens.
- D. Promote environmentally sound energy efficient commercial & residential buildings.
- E. Conserve and protect the Hudson River Estuary and its associated natural resources, habitats and wildlife.
- F. Develop an effective science-based, locally driven strategy for the assessment, prioritization and management of Athens' natural resources by participating with neighboring municipalities and establishing partnerships with existing natural resource programs.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### ***Water Quality Related Recommendations***

1. Develop and implement a town/village stormwater management and maintenance plan that incorporates state and federal requirements. Consider adoption of most

recent version of NY State sample local law established for compliance with state regulation of municipal separate storm water systems (MS4s) or incorporate these standards for local development. Ensure local codes and standards empower decision-makers in the zoning, subdivision, and site plan review process to encourage use of pervious surfaces and natural drainage design features including the setting aside of adequate undeveloped space to absorb surface runoff from lots or development sites. Ensure local code enforcement officers are trained in current state requirements for Pollution Prevention Plans required for development of over one acre.

2. Encourage groundwater recharge and reduce runoff velocity by limiting the rapid growth of impervious surface coverage within the Town and Village. Require shared access roads and parking lots in commercial areas, ensure parking standards in town/village codes are appropriate to the village/rural character of the community and not copied from more suburban examples, ensure parking codes include (and encourage) standards for pervious surface lot treatments and design that allows for more natural drainage patterns as well as permeable landscaped islands. Encourage wetland protection, restoration and mitigation to maintain or enhance natural stormwater.
3. Identify local aquifer resources (watersheds like Potic Mountain & recharge zones e.g.) and provide for adequate development densities, protections and buffers in the zoning code. In these areas consider establishing standards for sediment and oil traps for large parking lots.
4. Ensure that key hydrologic resources such as the Hudson River shoreline (particularly areas with emergent or submerged aquatic vegetation or other wetlands), the east/south branch of Murderers Creek, the Corlaer Kill, the Hans Vosen Kill and their associated wetlands and watersheds are well protected and buffered or performance standards established in local law.
5. Maintain partnerships with the DEC Hudson River Estuary Program.
6. Seek federal and state funding for protection and conservation efforts within the Hudson River Estuary.
7. Hollister Lake is another important water resource in Athens and serves as the Village of Athens water supply. The Town and Village should work cooperatively to create a

source water protection area (overlay zone) around Hollister Lake to protect drinking water quality. This area should coincide with the natural watershed of the lake. Within this source water protection overlay area, standards should be established to control development, manure spreading, septic systems and other sources of non-point pollution from reaching the lake.

8. Extend the 100' and 50' stream buffer requirements that currently exist for the Agriculture and Open Space Districts to streams in the Ru district. This will give the same kind of stream protection to all locations in town. Within these setback areas, work with landowners to encourage maintenance of natural vegetation. During the subdivision process, incorporate watercourse protection by using vegetative borders and buffers.
9. Consider a watershed overlay approach to protecting Black Lake and Green Lake. Within this watershed overlay, development standards should be established to protect water quality from erosion, sedimentation, and non-point sources of pollution. Standards could include setbacks, use of erosion and sediment control procedures, density limitations, or other mechanisms. (See recommendations, above on Hollister Lake.)
10. Encourage local agricultural producers to work with Greene County Soil & Water Conservation District to obtain technical assistance and grants to implement best management practices that limit runoff of water, pesticides, fertilizers, and animal wastes into water bodies.
11. Work with the Sleepy Hollow Lake Association to promote a watershed and shoreline protection strategy. Continue to work with the Association to encourage control of invasive plants and animals using high pressure steam washing or cleaning technology.
12. The Town and Village Planning Boards and Zoning Boards of Appeals should carefully consider development projects proposed within 100-year floodplains. To the maximum extent practicable, zoning and subdivision laws should attempt to require that new structures are built out of the designated floodplain.
13. Establish steep slope regulations for development on slopes greater than 15% to control erosion and sedimentation.

*Natural Resource Related Strategies*

1. Support the Greene County Soil and Water Conservation District in its effort to develop a natural resource inventory/overview of Athens and map the sensitive/critical/rare/unique habitats. This information should be used as an important piece of information to be evaluated during project review processes. Consider incorporating natural resource inventory data on the town and village's official maps. The Town and Village should work to mitigate any potential negative impacts of development on important wildlife habitats.
2. Ensure town and Village planning, zoning, subdivision, and site plan documents reference these natural resource inventories and resources and other locations of community concern. During the review process, the town and/or village should place conditions and/or incentives that shape development proposals in ways that protect or minimize harm to these resources.
3. Identify threatened or diminishing habitat types in the community and seek to protect them through voluntary acquisition of title or development rights on prime parcels.
4. Identify districts or locales within the town demonstrating exemplary 'rural landscape' qualities and seek to protect them through voluntary acquisition of title or development rights on prime parcels.
5. Ensure members of the planning/zoning boards and other key community officials have sufficient materials, maps, and resources to appreciate significant community natural resources. Arrange presentations/talks for these decision-makers by local and regional experts to ensure their understanding and awareness of important resources and current threats or challenges is up to date. Encourage members of Town and Village Planning Boards to participate in available trainings (e.g. Hudsonia's Biodiversity Assessment Training) that may provide boards with increased knowledge regarding natural resources and current methods used to assess and protect resources.
6. Consider forming a standing ad-hoc inter-municipal natural resource committee for the Athens area that would involve locally interested and expert residents as well as representatives from key organizations such as Greene County Planning, Greene County Soil & Water Conservation District, Hudson River Estuary Management Program / NY State DEC, and the NY State Department of State Coastal Zone

Management Program. The committee could meet at regular intervals (semi-annually e.g.) to review and suggest funding opportunities or priorities for grant applications dealing with habitat protection. This process could also act as a mechanism for periodic review and modification of priority rankings of locations/resources in need of protection. As an alternative, or in addition, consider appointing a joint town/village Conservation Advisory Committee, as authorized by New York State under General Municipal Law.

7. Provide information on, and encourage landowner participation in, conservation programs that provide technical assistance and/or financial assistance or incentives to help landowners with conservation efforts on private property. Such programs may include, but are not limited to Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP), Wetland Reserve Program (WRP), Grassland Reserve Program (GRP), Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP).
8. Incorporate environmental protection requirements into siting and design of development projects. Encourage the use of design/construction standards that minimize the impact on natural resources including viewsheds, habitats and wildlife (e.g. historical, energy efficient, downward lighting).
9. Encourage development of conservation plans for all major development projects to provide habitat and wetland protection on adjacent or nearby continuous lands that provide similar habitat to the area being developed. Encourage developers to coordinate with organizations such as the Greene County Soil and Water District, Greene Land Trust, or similar organizations to ensure long-term protection and management of habitat and conservation lands.
10. Consider establishing local regulations regarding introduction and transport of non-native invasive species (e.g. using clean fill on all development sites; clean vessels between uses in different navigable waterways).

***Scenic Resource Recommendations***

1. Develop a scenic resources inventory that identifies existing and potential scenic views and places needing improvement. Use the LWRP scenic recommendations to aid in establishing local development standards that serve to protect the important / valued view sheds, landscape features, viewpoints, and scenic districts in the community. Process input from experts and community residents to identify

additional resources and help prioritize/rank sites and views. Consider establishing conservation, ridgeline protection, and other overlay zones to protect scenic and other environmental resources.

2. Identify important visual corridors to the Hudson River as part of the scenic resources inventory and ensure that new development/redevelopment does not further restrict existing views from the business district, important public gathering places, and public road corridors. Ensure the zoning laws do not allow building encroachment or blocking of these main visual corridors. Protect scenic views further by:
  - a. Requiring a Visual Assessment Addendum to SEQR during the development review process for projects located within the identified scenic viewsheds.
  - b. Encouraging developers to carefully place structures and roads to maintain views or viewing opportunities during the subdivision or other review process. Use the information from this plan as the basis for identifying scenic locations.
  - c. Promote opening up public vistas of the river in appropriate ways.
  - d. Establish design/construction standards that will help to maintain rural character and minimize the impact of development on viewsheds.
  - e. Evaluate the Black Rock area south of the Village and determine ways to manage the vegetation growth to re-open vistas to the River.
3. Consider establishing an annual fund to build matching funds for leveraging state and federal monies available for voluntary acquisition of development rights on parcels with value for scenic preservation.
4. Seek planning and acquisition funding through Hudson River Foundation's Catskill-Olana Scenic Mitigation Fund.
5. Ensure that new development is sensitive to identified community scenic values through a planning review process that clearly identifies and describes the significance of these resources as well as codes and ordinances that empower local officials to ensure their protection during review and approval processes.
6. Consider streetscape improvements to the Route 385 corridor including streetscape plantings, general design, maintenance of scenic views, control of commercial signage, establish building setback requirements and protect tree lines adjacent to the road, and visual barriers to certain uses, such as the auto salvage yard, etc.

7. In order to protect the scenic qualities of roads, control excessive signage.

***Environmental Recommendations***

1. Expand existing development standards in the Town zoning code designed to protect the environment (Section 180-25). This section needs to provide the Town with more specific expectations and performance standards than currently exist. The standards included in this section set the general tone but give little specific direction to the Planning Board on how to accomplish those standards.
2. Consider establishing outdoor burn, noise, and nuisance odor laws in the Town and review the Villages existing burn law.
3. Ensure that the zoning codes have strict performance standards for the operation and maintenance of auto and scrap junkyards and autobody repair shops, including adequate visual screening from public roads, public lands, and adjacent residences and businesses. Enhance language and enforcement of junk car laws.
4. Continue efforts to remove or up-grade barges near Peckham's in the Hudson River.
5. Encourage property developers in Athens to take advantage of NY State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) staff technical expertise on energy efficiency and green construction.
6. Work with NYSERDA Energy Efficiency Services program to explore ways town/village buildings may be improved for energy efficiency.
7. Ensure local building and zoning code enforcement officers are trained or familiar with NY State Green Building Codes and standards as well as the NY State Green Building Tax Credit. Make local residents, businesses, and residents aware of NY State's Green Building Tax Credit program.
8. Work with NYSERDA staff and Greene County Industrial Development Authority to help establish performance criteria in local codes appropriate to Athens.
9. Reference the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design program certification standards and NYS Green Building standards in the local building and zoning codes.

10. Work with the Greene County Planning and Economic Development Department and NYSERDA to establish a local outreach program to home and business owners to improve energy efficiency at their current location.
11. Consider adding a local property tax credit or footprint or floor-to-area ratio bonus in the zoning codes for buildings that meet highest ‘green’ and/or efficiency standards.
12. Develop a Local Waterfront Revitalization Program for the Town of Athens (incorporating the existing Village plan) with a focus on habitat preservation, including use of land for agricultural purposes, especially in the area of the town’s northern shoreline. Implement the recommendations of the Village LWRP.
13. Seek to limit future waterfront construction to existing developed sites, using redevelopment/rehabilitation of existing structures and increased density / infill development to accommodate new projects as the downtown economy expands.
14. Encourage proper authorities to establish and enforce local ‘no wake’ or speed zones around sensitive shoreline vegetation habitat (to help protect submerged aquatic vegetation) with the cooperation and input of NY State DEC, the Greene County Sheriff, and local marina operators.
15. Pass strict local ordinances for the operation and maintenance of marina businesses, focusing on rules relating to regular handling and use of fuel, oil, and waste to minimize small, frequent escape of contaminants into the estuary.

***Open Space Recommendations***

1. Update the cluster zoning ordinance for the Town and establish cluster zoning in the Village. Both municipalities should consider offering developers density ‘bonuses’ to new developments that preserve large blocks of open space and both should include provisions for creation of conservation subdivisions. Density bonuses could be issued when a development preserves at least 50% of the parcel as permanently undeveloped land. Both clustered and conservation subdivision developments offer flexibility to the landowner and can result in more compact development pattern that preserve open space and minimizes habitat fragmentation.

2. Section 180-26 of the Town zoning (Special Use Permits) should be expanded to ensure that open space and environmental issues are addressed during the review process.
3. Initiate a local conservation easement program to protect important open space lands.
4. In the Town, the current Open Space District (OS) is located between I-87 and Route 9W (West/East) and Leeds Athens Road and Schoharie Turnpike (South/North). This area includes several large DEC-regulated wetlands, steep slopes, and a significant stream corridor. The environmental features being protected by the OS district extend beyond the district boundaries however. To the North and South, the land is zoned as Ru. To adequately protect the important lands along streams and wetlands currently outside of the current Open Space District, develop a stream corridor overlay district and extend the Open Space District as shown on the Conceptual Zoning Districts map.
5. The majority of the Town controls density of development by establishing a minimum lot size of between 60,000 square feet and 90,000 square feet, depending on presence of public services. These are appropriate minimum lot size for more urban areas that have public water and sewer infrastructure and are not appropriate to meet the low density goals of a rural area. These densities will probably not result in protection of open spaces or the environment in the long-term. This is illustrated in the build out analysis (See Volume III) which indicates that the level of development allowed in the Ru zone has the potential to result in a large population increase and with it, a decreased chance that the goals established in this plan can be met. It is recommended that the Town de-emphasize use of controlling density through a minimum lot size and use a density measurement instead (number of dwellings allowed per acre). For example, the zoning could establish a density of 1 dwelling per 3 (or 5 or more) acres with a minimum lot size of 60,000 to 90,000 square feet. Separation of lot size from density allows more opportunities for protection of open spaces and critical environmental features and at the same time allows for smaller lot sizes that may be more affordable.
6. Initiate a Town and Village sponsored purchase of development rights program. This work should be coordinated with the Greene Land Trust and other area land trusts. Funds for this program could come from grants, public tax dollars, dedicated funds, or from a real property transfer tax. When authorized by the state, proceed with the real estate property transfer tax to gain funding for open space conservation. Target

areas to be riverfront properties, priority farmlands, forest lands, scenic locations, floodplains, significant habitats, and historic locations.

7. For minor subdivisions, amend the Town subdivision regulations to require consideration of rural siting standards. These standards include, but are not limited to keeping stone walls as they may exist, not placing new structures in the middle of former farm fields, carefully placing structures away from critical environmental features, reuse where possible of farm roads, and not interfering with adjacent agricultural or woodland operations.
8. Consider amending zoning in both the Town and Village to offer incentives in the form of a density bonus to development projects that provide community amenities such as preserved open space, public access to recreational lands or waterbodies, affordable housing opportunities, senior housing, etc.
9. Establish inter-municipal agreements with neighboring communities to protect natural resources and open spaces that cross municipal boundaries.
10. Update the definition sections and purpose statements of all land use laws in Athens to be consistent with this plan.
11. Enhance use of SEQR for environmental review. All actions that require SEQR should be carefully reviewed by the Planning or Zoning Board for potential negative environmental impacts and they should work to mitigate those impacts. Reviewing boards should use the Geographic Information System (GIS) maps provided by this plan to clearly understand the environmental resources on any particular parcel. The Town and Village should ensure that planning and zoning board of appeals members receive training to effectively use and administer SEQR.

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### ***Agriculture***

The Town of Athens contains 1,659 acres (11.5% of the total land base in Athens) of designated New York State certified Agricultural Districts or 3.5% of the total acreage designated in Greene County. The local district is distributed throughout most areas of the town and is somewhat unconnected. There is no portion of the NYS Agricultural District in the Village although several major parcels are currently in agricultural use

there. In general, Athens agricultural soils are mixed, with richer soils located near the creeks and waterways and poorer soils located in the hilly areas.

In addition to the New York State Agricultural District, the Town of Athens has a local zoning district oriented towards agriculture. That zone (See the Current Town Zoning District Map) has as its primary purpose to protect agriculture by setting a low density for residential development and establishing restrictions on uses that would negatively impact agriculture.

The Town's farmers engage in a variety of farming activities. These include truck farming, dairy farming, pasturing, flowers, vegetables, and growing hay. Several smaller farms also grow organic products, including poultry and produce. There is a vineyard which produces wine grapes along the riverfront. One farm has a retail location on Route 9W, which is supported by several greenhouses.

Issues related to agriculture include a fragmentation of agricultural lands (both due to development as well as to environmental conditions), limited prime agricultural soils, and a generally depressed agricultural economy in Greene County. However, there has been an increase in the amount of land devoted to agriculture county-wide in recent years. There is support within the Town and Village for local farms and farmers, and residents would like to encourage farms, local food production, agri-business related efforts, and continued presence of actively farmed lands in their landscape.

### GOALS

- A. Integrate the needs of agriculture in the development of any economic development plan by promoting agriculturally-related businesses and niche farming.
- B. Protect and enhance existing productive farmlands or potentially productive farmlands and working landscapes.
- C. Ensure that Athens is a "farm friendly" town and promote community awareness of the importance of agriculture.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. To encourage the means to preserve agricultural lands and practices, work with Greene County to facilitate implementation of the Greene County Agricultural Development and Farmland Protection Plan in Athens. This is especially important

in order to expand farm businesses such as new retail outlets, develop local products, find local markets, and develop farm-based tourism.

2. Greene County has a Right-To-Farm Law (Local Law 2: 2002). The Town and Village should utilize and support this law locally to ensure that area farms are not negatively impacted due to nuisance issues brought by non-farmers. Athens should evaluate this County law and determine if it is adequate for the Town and Village or if a local Right-to Farm law should be developed.
3. Town and Village zoning should require buffers between farmland and new, non-farm uses. New development should not cause undue impact upon existing farms. New development should provide for its own buffer zone and/or landscape plantings for screening when necessary.
4. Town zoning should be amended to be more farm friendly and create more opportunities for a variety of agricultural activities. This should include but is not limited to creation of agricultural definitions for agriculture, farms, farmland, farm stand, forestry and agri-business as well as organic and niche farming operations. There are currently no definitions related to agriculture included in the zoning. Zoning should not require set acreages to be a valid agricultural use since some of these operations can be quite small. Zoning should allow flexibility in regulations to accommodate agricultural businesses. In the Town and Village, zoning should specifically allow farmers markets, farm stands, bed and breakfasts and other agri-tourism uses, processing facilities, u-pick farms, Christmas trees, and other marketing or retain facilities. These businesses are not likely to be successful if they are required to meet signage, parking, and standards applied to non-farm commercial operations. These uses should be permitted by right in the Ru and other appropriate zones as well as wherever the NYS Agricultural District exists. Farm businesses should be allowed temporary signs, parking near pick-your-own fields, etc. Zoning should also allow other agricultural enterprises like feed mills, farm suppliers, farm marketing buildings, forestry and other agricultural processing facilities.
5. The Town and Village of Athens should ensure that they are properly assessing agricultural structures. Provide assessors with depreciation schedules to enable more accurate valuations of farm properties. Ensure that local assessors have opportunities for training on assessment of agricultural structures. Ensure that landowners are aware of and utilize the agricultural tax assessment programs for agricultural and forest lands.

6. Evaluate Town zoning regulations and institute amendments, standards, and practices which will work to preserve agriculture as an important land use in Athens. Some of the steps that should be taken, and methods that could be used include:
  - a. Evaluating the suitability of the existing Town Agricultural Zoning District and make amendments to ensure that this zone covers the locations where agriculture is currently or potentially could take place. Consider expanding this zone to include those lands that are actively farmed. See the Agriculture and Farmland Map that illustrates those locations.
  - b. Amend zoning to enhance clustering and use of conservation subdivisions at the town level. Both these lot layout techniques are valuable tools to protect open spaces and agricultural lands during development. Use of clustering and conservation subdivisions should be mandatory for all major subdivisions throughout the Town, and the Planning Board should have the authority to require these methods in other cases if such a layout would preserve agricultural soils and operations.
  - c. In cooperation with the Village, the Town zoning code should encourage growth near the adjacent Village and other development clusters within the Town.
  - d. Consider changing the way Athens regulates the density of residential development. Currently, the Town requires a minimum lot size. However, use of a minimum lot size to regulate density has been shown to simply “spread” residential units throughout the landscape and has been shown to be not effective in preserving lands suitable for agriculture. Creation of small lots tends to also fragment farms and erodes the “critical mass” needed for efficient and profitable farming. Zoning should establish a density, as measured in the number of dwellings allowed per acre for each zoning district. A minimum lot size of ½ acre could be established as well in each zone to ensure that all well and septic requirements are met. Advantages of separating out lot size from density includes easier ability to create open spaces; offering more flexibility to landowners to create smaller lots if desired; and opportunities for creation of smaller lots that would be more affordable. Use of density instead of minimum lot sizes also means that each parcel of land is eligible for a set number of lots that could be created. This prevents constant subdividing and re-subdividing. For example, if a 100 acre parcel were in a zone that required 1 dwelling per 3 acres, the entire

- parcel would be eligible for about 33 lots. A landowner could subdivide 10 lots in one year, but the next year would only be able to subdivide an additional 23 lots.
- e. Specifically reduce the allowable density of development in the Ru District. It is recommend that there be a density of no more then 1 dwelling per 3 acres with a ½ acre minimum lot size. The 90,000 square feet minimum lot size (without water and sewer) is too high to adequately protect rural character and farming. (See also recommendations for housing and open space related to density, minimum lot sizes, etc.)
  - f. Consider use of agricultural overlay zones to further protect priority and critical farmlands.
  - g. Establish creative residential subdivision design requirements in addition to clustering and conservation layouts that could help future homes to co-exist with active farmland. Utilize other rural siting standards including, but not limited to: preserve stone walls, hedgerows, and other rural landscape elements; prevent placement of new house sites in the middle of a field; place buildings and access roads in tree lines and edges of fields to avoid construction in open fields; reuse farm roads where possible; use shared driveways and other similar roads and driveways to reduce impervious surfaces and fragmentation of potential farmable areas; and minimize clearing of vegetation and trees.
7. The Village should add a “Domestic Farm Animal” section to regulate farm animals housed on property within the Village.
  8. Explore mechanisms for allowing the Town to review intensive, confined animal operations.
  9. Maintain agriculture parcel maps for use by the Planning Board so that they can adequately review projects and determine impacts of new development on agriculture.
  10. Develop a “Lease of Development Rights” program. This is where the landowner receives a tax abatement of local real property taxes in return for voluntary participation in a term-easement program.

11. Explore and encourage additional tax incentives for agriculture and forestry, especially for smaller and start-up farms that might not meet the State-required acreage of income levels that dictate eligibility for a State agricultural assessment.
12. Consider development of a local purchase of development rights program. As an alternative to a purchase program, Athens can consider a transfer of development rights program (where development density is transferred from a location that should remain as agriculture, forestry or open space to an area more suitable for denser development such as in or near the Village). Either program would be advantageous to the long term maintenance of lands available for farming. See also the housing section for more discussion on these options.
13. Work with Greene County to assist Athens increase participation in the Section 485-b tax abatement program for business investments. This could encourage development of additional agri-businesses.
14. Encourage farmers to initiate recreational leasing of their lands as a means of supplementing farm incomes. The Town could work as a partner with these farm operations to help resolve insurance and liability issues.
15. In order to represent agriculture in Athens, the Town should increase participation of farmers on the Planning Board by appointing agricultural members under the authority of State Town Law Section 271(11).
16. The Town should work with the Village of Athens to create annexation and infrastructure expansion policies so as to encourage development of water and sewer infrastructure within the village or town areas adjacent to the Village, rather than in agricultural or other important open space areas.
17. The Planning Board in both the Town and Village should receive information and training on New York State Agriculture and Markets Law 25-aa requirements for reviewing projects that may have impact on farms in or adjacent to New York Agricultural Districts located in Athens. The Town and Village should provide for compatible forms of development in these areas.
18. Encourage farm landowner participation in the New York State Agricultural Districts program by identifying properties that should be included in the district,

- and working with landowners to accomplish this. There are some active farmlands in Athens that are not part of this state program.
19. Zoning and subdivision laws should be amended to require use of the Agricultural Data Statement (as detailed in NYS Agriculture and Markets Law) so that land buyers and home builders are legally noticed that they are locating within an agricultural area.
  20. Encourage formation of an entity to promote the sale of produce locally and regionally. The goal of this program should be to create local outlets for local farm products. This effort would need collaboration with adjacent communities as well. As a sub-program, consider assisting local farmers set up “CSA’s” or Community Supported Agriculture programs.
  21. Initiate programs to increase community awareness of farming as a viable economic enterprise and a way of preserving open space.
  22. Develop an “agri-tourism” map of local farms to promote tourism and further appreciation and understanding of area agriculture.
  23. Institute a buy-local program.
  24. Promote regional marketing of agriculture products either by ag-tourism or regional shipment of products.
  25. Support development of regional dairy and other farm processing facilities.
  26. Analyze agricultural land use patterns and soils to identify priority farms and farmlands to target farmland protection measures toward.
  27. Involve the farming community and landowners who rent land to farmers in a committee to assist the Town and Village to implement these strategies.
  28. Work with Greene County Cooperative Extension to expand agricultural opportunities in Athens.

## *Transportation and Pedestrian*

The general goal of a transportation system is to facilitate the efficient movement of people, goods and services. The Town and Village of Athens are dependent upon the functionality of the surface transportation system, which includes roads, bridges, sidewalks, trails and the railroad to maintain economic well-being and quality of life. A well-planned and designed surface transportation system should be visually and environmentally friendly as well as safe and accommodating to pedestrians, bicyclists and automobiles.

As described in the Inventory and Profile, the transportation network within the Town and Village of Athens is comprised of Federal, State, County and Local roads. The New York State Thruway (Interstate 87) traverses the Town in a north-south direction and access to Thruway for Village and Town residents is either at Interchange 21 or 21B. The major non-interstate transportation corridors that carry commercial, commuter and local traffic are US Route 9W and NYS Route 385. Other roads such as County Roads (CR) 28, 49, 49A, 53, 57, 74 and Town/Village roads such as Union Street and Flats Road also carry thousands of vehicles and passengers on a daily basis. These roads connect the Town and Village with neighboring communities and employment centers located throughout the region.

Transportation and traffic related issues in the Town and Village have increased over the years, especially along US Route 9W, NYS Route 385, and Schoharie Turnpike (CR 28). During the development of the Comprehensive Plan, several meetings were held with the public, where workshop participants expressed concern regarding speed limit adherence, pedestrian and bicycle access and safety, parking, sidewalk and roadway conditions, truck traffic, and public transportation services for residents, senior citizens in particular.

According to the Residential Survey, a majority of residents are willing to continue spending about the same tax dollars on maintaining and expanding the sidewalk system and have a strong to intermediate interest in the bike paths, hiking and walking trails. A majority of residents surveyed also see a strong need for streetscape enhancements and more parking in the Village. Some residents also perceive problems relating to traffic volume and speed in specific areas throughout the Town and Village. In addition, the pedestrian network is fragmented, as sidewalks are often too narrow, made of different materials, not always maintained, or simply unavailable in certain locations.

The following Goals and Recommendations have been formulated to address issues relating to overall functionality of the transportation system. Many specific recommendations for the 9W Corridor are included in the Route 9W Corridor Recommendations section.

**GOALS**

- A. Foster a safe and efficient transportation network that encompasses modes of transportation other than the automobile to satisfy existing and future needs of the community.
- B. Improve the accessibility of businesses located on Second and Water Streets through signage, parking and automobile & pedestrian circulation improvements.
- C. Maintain and enhance the character of existing residential streets to promote safe, efficient and un-congested circulation of pedestrian and vehicular traffic.
- D. Provide and maintain a safe and contiguous system of sidewalks, bike trails and pathways in appropriate areas throughout the Town and Village.
- E. Improve and maintain the integrity and capacity of existing state and local roads through access management.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

***Cooperation, Planning, Programming***

1. Develop a Capital Improvement Plan for the Town and Village that identifies all capital programs and outlines funding, staff, and equipment needs for the maintenance of the transportation system as well as time tables for conducting the work.
2. Establish a *Traffic Safety Committee* that would include transportation professionals, public safety representatives, resident(s) and board member(s). The purpose of this committee would be to address traffic complaints and also to prioritize future transportation projects based upon needs and available funding.

3. Work with the County Planning and Highway Departments to identify county maintained routes in the Town/Village which are not safe for pedestrians and automobile traffic and encourage upgrades as part of routine maintenance, rehabilitation, replacement, and redesign.
4. Study the traffic conditions and the related pedestrian circulation and safety issues in areas that are experiencing high levels of traffic. As part of this study, appropriate locations for crosswalks should be identified. Consider installing textured or painted crosswalks and pathways in areas used by pedestrians and cyclists. Install signs of notice for motorists that they must slow down/stop for pedestrians, and work with local and state police to enforce this rule. Some critical areas of concern identified at public meetings include:
  - a. Second and Third Street intersections with NYS Route 385
  - b. Market Street and N. Washington Street
  - c. Schoharie Turnpike
  - d. Vernon Street and Second Street
  - e. N. Vernon and Market Street

***Traffic and Access Management***

1. Work with developers on proposed projects to ensure that new roads are consistent with Town and Village goals regarding connectivity and accessibility and rural/village character. At the Town level, new road standards should be reviewed to ensure that they are consistent with the existing low volume rural roads. The Town Highway Staff should participate in the Cornell Local Roads training programs and Town roads should be built, and maintained as per low volume rural road standards as established by the Cornell Roads program.
2. Encourage new commercial and higher density residential development in high traffic areas to share driveways, or ingress/egress points in order to decrease vehicle and pedestrian hazards. Protect the integrity of pedestrian pathways by working with the County and DOT to limit the number of curb cuts along county and state routes.
3. As a part of Site Plan Review, consider requiring a Traffic Impact Analysis for development proposals that will add additional traffic to the surrounding local streets.

4. Enforce the speed limits and consider reducing the speed zones during school hours, especially on Vernon Street, Second Street, Market Street and Union Street. Improve sidewalks and crossing areas for the safety of children walking to E. J. Arthur Elementary School. Consider the use of flashing signs “slow” or “watch for children” during schools hours or other traffic calming measures. Utilize the NYSDOT manual for traffic calming as needed and incorporate into local road standards.
  
5. Work with New York State DOT to reduce the speed on Route 385. Consider developing a Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan for Route 385, a NYS designated Scenic Byway. This plan should address the promotion, enhancement and protection of scenic, natural, coastal, historical, cultural and recreational resources along Route 385, and among other things, ensure that the Town and Village are not divided from the waterfront by this major roadway. Creation of the plan is fundable through the NYS DOT, and adoption of the plan will lead to further funding opportunities for improvements along Route 385.

***Pedestrian and Bicycle Pathways***

1. Construct new sidewalks or maintain and improve existing sidewalks in the Village and in densely developed areas of Town. Areas to be considered for sidewalk construction or reconstruction should have existing uses, development patterns, and traffic patterns supportive of sidewalks. Concentrate construction of new sidewalks on Village streets where they currently do not exist and in areas where safety improvements are needed for children that walk to school. Town/Village residents whom attended public meetings suggested the following areas for sidewalk construction or reconstruction. These areas are not the only areas in need of attention, nor are they listed in order of importance.
  - a. North Vernon Street
  - b. Third Street
  - c. Schoharie Turnpike
  - d. Water Street
  - e. Second Street
  - f. Warren Street
  - g. Brick Row
  - h. State Route 385 between Wheat St and Goodrich St
  - i. Limestreet area

2. The Town and Village should create “priority pedestrian routes”. Sidewalks on these priority routes should be wide and have streetscape/landscape elements to help establish a perception of a unified waterfront greenspace (use of a textured sidewalk surface such as in Cocksackie Village would add to the distinct identity and character of this ‘main’ pedestrian corridor). These routes include, but are not limited to:
  - a. A north-south corridor beginning at the Triangle Park along Washington Street through the Village all the way to Rainey Park/Field.
  - b. A waterfront loop parallel to the main north-south corridor linking the Riverfront Park and the 4<sup>th</sup> Street Boat Launch to Ding’s Marina and other business/recreation sites along Water Street.
3. Establish a sidewalk fund for the Village to support regular ongoing maintenance and orderly expansion of the sidewalk network. This fund should be proportional to the size of the sidewalk network and the estimated annual need for basic repairs. Major construction or rehabilitation projects can be addressed through DOT’s regular roadway project funds available to municipal projects such as the Transportation Improvement Program or Marchiselli Funds. Major projects can also be funded through semi-regular sources such as the NY State Transportation Bond Act’s Multi-Modal Program (projects funded at discretion of either the Governor’s office, the NY Assembly, or the NY Senate).
4. Refine community sidewalk standards to ensure new development maintains and connects to the community sidewalk network where appropriate. Consider adding sidewalk standards appropriate to the context of the adjacent housing density and commercial mix. For example a wider sidewalk with more aesthetic features would be appropriate in the commercial center for a few blocks in each direction from Second Street and Washington Street intersection as well as along the waterfront. A slightly less wide or landscaped facility would be appropriate along the extended portions of the main corridors (Second St. and Washington St. ). Standard sidewalk dimensions would be appropriate at other locations throughout the Village. It is recommended that sidewalk standards include a grassy planting strip of a minimum of three feet to allow planting of street trees between the sidewalk and the roadway. At the Town level, sidewalks may not be desirable in all rural subdivisions, but may be necessary in new hamlets or major subdivisions.

5. During winter months, enforce the existing property codes that require property-owners to shovel their own sidewalks in the Village.
6. Encourage private developers to install sidewalks and trails as part of new development projects within the areas identified as being supportive of sidewalks in the Town and Village. At the Town level, dense, clustered developments would be appropriate locations for the Planning Board to recommend new sidewalks.
7. Continue to maintain, enhance and expand the system of walking trails, bike trails and crosswalks that connect the schools, residential, and commercial areas of the Town and Village. Create a map of bicycle and pedestrian pathways and install bike racks where appropriate.
8. Enhance the existing network of Village alleyways for pedestrian and bicycle safety. Repair surfaces, install lighting where practicable, and name the alleyways.
9. State and county roads with higher traffic levels (where there is no on-street parking) should have striped shoulders (minimum 2' width) for cyclists (and pedestrians where no sidewalk is warranted). This type of facility is especially needed on east-west county routes that link outlying hamlet, residential, and recreational areas of the Town with the Village center and the waterfront.
10. As new development is phased in adjacent to existing development on infill parcels, new roads should provide connections between communities and subdivisions. As conservation subdivisions or clustered developments are built, incorporate preserved open space with linked trails and paths.
11. The Town and Village should explore the feasibility of obtaining title or easements to the White Elephant Line rail bed from private land owners to extend of the riverfront pedestrian corridor to the Village of Coxsackie. As trails and pathways are developed, ensure that adequate parking at trail heads exist.
12. Athens should seek grants to study potential pathways between Brandow Point and 4<sup>th</sup> Street Boat Launch / Electric Launch Company sites, working with NY State Department of Transportation, Scenic Hudson, and Greene County Soil & Water Conservation District.

### ***Other Transportation Means***

1. Encourage the use of the Hudson River as a part of the transportation system. Work to establishment a boat tour operation or additional ferry trips running between Hudson & Athens, the Hudson-Athens Lighthouse and other river community locations.
2. Work with Greene County to increase availability of county-subsidized transportation for residents, especially senior citizens, to provide access to shopping areas and health care facilities.
3. In addition to bus shuttle service expansion, support and encourage the formation of a volunteer driving service to take senior citizens to get groceries and health care services.
4. Ensure that the existing county bus service is as inviting and accessible as possible by providing signage designating the ‘primary’ bus stop location in Athens as well as providing a bench and some landscaping. Benches can be paid for fully or in part as ‘naming’ opportunities for donations by local businesses and individuals and/or through BID assessments.
5. Work with Coxsackie, Catskill, and Greene County to improve the existing county bus service to ensure its regularity or that it serves key locations. To cover added costs, the partners should approach their representatives in the NY State Assembly and Senate to identify ways that the recently passed Transportation Bond Act multi-modal funds can enhance or expand the bus service.

### ***Public Parking***

1. Improve public parking areas in the Village. Analyze residential and commercial streets, off-street parking conditions and develop a plan for solving the associated parking problems. Potential solutions include establishing a municipal parking area, delineating existing on-street parking spaces with stripping, adding parking meters, enforcing parking regulations, and/or creating designated spaces for renters through a permit system. The Village should work with the local business community to provide employee parking that is not on the street in front of the businesses. Identify prime on-street parking in the business district and make these parking spaces time

limited (1 hour maximum e.g.) or metered to discourage employees or downtown residents from monopolizing these spots.

2. Considered underutilized lots or portions of lots for long term off street parking for business patrons, employees, and downtown residents. Title to these lots or easements on portions of these lots could be obtained by the Village or a BID organization and developed for public parking use. Potential parcels might include the area one block north of the corner of Second and N. Washington Streets, the southwest corner of Second and Warren Streets, or the north side of Second Street opposite 1st Alley.

### ***Lighting, Landscaping and Aesthetics***

1. In the Village, establish a program to replace the existing highway-style lighting with luminaries that compliment the historic heritage of the Village.
2. Provide additional park-like features (trees, grass, flowers) to create a feeling of a continuous greenspace along Second Street between N. Warren Street and Riverfront Park.
3. Keep roadways clear of trash by enforcing litter regulations, educating the public and organizing an annual or semi - annual roadside clean up day.

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### ***Historic, Cultural and Recreational Resources***

Many historical structures and landscapes throughout the Town and Village of Athens are significant historic resources. The Village has retained much of its architectural and historical integrity since establishment by Dutch settlers in 1706. It reflects over 250 years of development and change, from farmland to a prosperous shipbuilding center and railroad terminus, to a tranquil residential and commercial community. Athens is somewhat typical of numerous Hudson River communities which prospered in the 19th century due to the resources of the Hudson River, but which have remained largely unchanged since.

Athens has many historic sites and locations including the West Athens Hill Site (Town), Newkirk Homestead (Town), Hudson/Athens Lighthouse (Village), Stranahan-DelVecchio House (Village), Albertus Van Loon House (Village), and the Zion Lutheran Church (Village), and the Haight Gantley House. The Stewart House B&B, the Athens

Opera House, the Jan Van Loon House (which is intended for restoration as an interpretive center), the Black Rock Native American flint quarry, the Northup House site on Route 385, and the former ice storage house (now a marina), are also identified as locally significant historic properties. The Athens Lower Village Historic District and Brick Row Historic District in the village are also on the National and State Registers. In the town the site of the Black Horse Inn (prop. Isaac Hallenbeck) on Route 9W, the Native American encampment area off Route 9W and north of the Leeds-Athens turnpike were indicated as additional historic sites with local significance.

Major cultural resources in Athens include numerous places of worship, cemeteries, the Athens Community Center, Athens Museum, Athens Cultural Center, and the D. R. Evert Library. The Village hosts the Athens Street Festival in July, attracting about 10,000 people to the downtown. The Village also hosts Friday night music festivals during the summer at Riverfront Park drawing about 100 people each night.

Important community parks include the following: Riverfront Park, Athens Village Green (Little League Field and playscape), Union Street Park, Triangle Park, Isabelle Rainey Park, and the 4<sup>th</sup> Street Boat Launch (proposed). Important community recreational facilities include the following: NYS Boat Launch at Murderer's Creek, Athens Recreation Association (Community Pool), Cohatate Preserve and Brandow Point (Greene County Soil and Water Conservation District property), and the EJ Arthur Elementary School playground.

Three public school districts serve the Town and Village of Athens. Most residents live within the Cossackie-Athens Central School District and the Catskill Central School District. A small area at the southwestern tip of the Town is located within the large, rural Cairo-Durham Central School District. Questar III BOCES and Columbia-Greene Community College are other educational facilities available to Athens residents. The Edward J. Arthur Elementary located in the village, is the only school within the Town of Athens and serves the K-4 grade levels.

Community members highly value the historic, cultural and recreational resources and the resulting character in Athens, and feel that these features add significantly to the quality of life in the Town and Village. People also recognize the positive influence these resources have on the economic prosperity of the community and they desire to maintain and enhance them. While Athens has already put in place several tools to protect historic resources and promote cultural and recreational opportunities, there is more that can be done to attain the goals and vision of the community as follows.

## GOALS

- A. Enhance the use of and access to the Hudson River and its waterfront as a centerpiece for recreational, social, cultural and educational activities in Athens.
- B. Preserve and enhance historic residential and commercial structures and the small town character of Athens.
- C. Ensure that Athens has high quality, aesthetically pleasing and safe pathways for walking, cycling and other outdoor activities.
- D. Diversify and enhance year-round recreational activities for all ages including, indoor & outdoor sports and other recreational activities.
- E. Diversify and enhance year-round cultural activities for all ages including, art exhibits, concerts, redevelopment of the Athens Museum, and historic home tours. Build partnerships with existing natural resource programs.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### ***Waterfront Related Recommendations***

1. Increase waterfront awareness by developing a community interpretive guide with maps, a 'walking tour' for main historic and waterfront sites, and resources for public distribution in both pamphlet and web page form. The tour should focus on the exemplary resources and sites of highest quality rather than be a comprehensive list. Obtain high-quality and scenic photographs of historic sites, waterfront views, and wildlife for these materials and enlist local volunteers, sponsor a photo contest, or consider hiring a professional to develop them. Use the text and graphics obtained as elements for interpretive signage at key waterfront locations like Riverfront Park.
2. Coordinate and cooperate with Greene County Soil & Water Conservation District and other conservation organizations to develop a unified theme and message among the various preserves and access sites along Athens' shoreline. Seek development

and implementation funding for guide and signage from Hudson River Foundation and Hudson River Greenway.

3. Sponsor active waterfront nature and/or history programs. Work with the Hudson River Estuary Program, Greene County Soil & Water Conservation District, Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, Greene County Historical Society and other local or regional environmental organizations to provide experts for public nature programs at times convenient for family participation.
4. Expand community historic resource walking tours to include waterfront natural resources, parks, and historic resources. Consider reaching out to local scout troops or school groups (e.g., Coxsackie-Athens Central School, Columbia-Greene CC) to participate or assist in programs. Encourage local teachers to incorporate town waterfront locations into classes and activities especially those that would involve parent/student participation.
5. Work with adjacent towns, Greene County, and NY State Department of Transportation to implement comprehensive roadway signage system identifying turns/routes to Athens waterfront sites from major roadways (Route 385, Route 23, Route 9W). Seek coordination and funding through the Hudson River Valley Greenway Scenic Byways Initiative.
6. Continue Friday social/cultural concerts at Riverfront Park. Consider adding local youth school bands and/or teen-oriented music to the performance mix. Seek funding from NY State Council on the Arts for expanded music performances or fine arts related programming at Riverfront Park.
7. Consider adding regular/occasional family-oriented programs for weekday evenings or weekends at Riverfront Park (such as interpretive programs mentioned above or movies).
8. More aggressively advertise the New York State Hudson River Greenway Water Trail that passes through Athens. Points already mapped on this trail include the Athens Riverfront Park, the NYS Boat Launch, and the Athens Fourth Street Slip. These locations should be focal points for outdoor recreational and economic opportunities in Athens and the region. Take advantage of the Hudson River Paddle event that stops in Athens each year.

9. Continue support for Athens Street Festival.
10. Prioritize completion of the Waterfront Revitalization Project using Bond Act and Catskill-Olana Mitigation Fund grants. (The waterfront revitalization project was initiated in 1998 through a feasibility study completed by Greene County Soil and Water Conservation District – and is considered a very high priority by the LWRP. This is a riverfront park improvement project.) See the Economic Development section for details on improvements to riverfront park and boat launch.
11. Ensure that Rainey Field/Park is openly accessible and has some facilities (i.e. picnic tables and benches) for passive enjoyment when there are no games on the ball field.
12. Ensure that LWRP scenic resource recommendations are incorporated into local zoning code. Consider establishing a scenic overlay zone to ensure critical resources are considered and protected with new development.
13. Include the protection of important wetland habitats near Vosburgh Swamp and along the shallows and wooded bluffs south of Brandow Point in the zoning code as important resources to be protected.
14. Athens should seek state and private funding to obtain title to or easements for scenic waterfront parcels for additional riverfront pedestrian links.
15. The Town and Village should ensure that all LWRP recreation goals and strategies are implemented and incorporated.
16. Expand uses at the Riverfront Park. See recommendations in the Economic Development section for details on recommended improvements to Riverfront Park.
17. Encourage establishment of kayak and bike rentals at Riverfront Park and other riverfront locations.
18. Encourage a marina to provide access to the Hudson River.
19. Consider establishing swimming access for the public.

20. Encourage programs that promote maintenance of existing vista's and creation of new vista's to the river and mountains. Work with landowners to encourage on a voluntary basis, opening up vistas from these locations.

***Cultural Resource Recommendations***

1. Provide background materials and encourage local press to spotlight community sites and resources in occasional articles or as part of an ongoing series.
2. Ensure that main Town/Village resources are identified in Greene County tourist promotion materials and regional/state websites are linked to community 'resource' web pages. Check I Love NY website to ensure Riverfront Park, the state boat launch, and the historic resources are listed in the searchable guide (currently only the Hudson-Athens lighthouse is listed).
3. Continue a working relationship between the town/village, the non-profit manager of the Athens Cultural Center, and the Greene County Council on the Arts to explore ways to leverage local and regional expertise and state arts funding to enhance or expand community arts programming such as the summer concert series or performances at the Athens Cultural Center, Riverfront Park and/or Community Center. Consider providing tax support for the cultural center. Encourage local historians to volunteer to host programs for these groups.
4. Encourage local schools to strengthen coordination with Athens Cultural Center and Greene County Council on the Arts for joint cultural/arts enrichment program opportunities.
5. Encourage summer youth program and local schools to incorporate town/village cultural sites and events into their activities. Request involvement of and in coordination with the Athens Cultural Center.
6. Reach out to Greene County Soil and Water Conservation Service, Hudson River Estuary Management Program, Scenic Hudson and Hudson River Sloop Clearwater regarding speakers and natural heritage programs for the general public as well as summer youth program targeted toward locations such as Riverfront Park, Athens Cultural Center, Brandow Point, Athens boat launch, Green Lake, Buttermilk Falls, and Cohotate Preserve.

***Historic Resources Recommendations***

1. Establish local incentives for historic preservation. Consider property tax rebate incentives to encourage private property owners to carry out stabilization, rehabilitation, and improvements to historic structures. Other incentives can include an historic landowner recognition program (awards, certificates, plaques, etc.) or use of façade easement programs (The Town or Village can hold a historic easement on a structure to ensure that the historic qualities are preserved permanently.) Additionally, strengthen and enforce historic district regulations to ensure continued integrity of village historic resources.
2. Target vacant or underutilized ‘anchor’ buildings in the Village for rehabilitation to ongoing, active use with special marketing, outreach to prospective tenants, and special incentives.
3. Inform/update current owners, residents, and local real estate firms/agents of historic property incentives, funding, low interest loan resources and rules and regulations that pertain to local historic districts that exist at the state and federal level via newsletters, direct mailings, brochures, web site and other means.
4. Develop a façade restoration plan targeted toward the few blocks at and around the main village crossroads of Washington Street and Second Street. Seek funding for technical assistance funding to develop the plan from Governor’s Office for Small Cities, NY State Office of Historic Preservation, the New York Preservation League or the County Main Street Revitalization Program.
5. Encourage adaptive reuse of historic buildings. This can, for example, be accomplished through the Village of Athens Revolving Restoration Loan Fund to assist owners in improving historic properties, building façade improvement grants and tax incentives. (Please see the economic development recommendations for more information). Zoning should specifically allow conversion of buildings to new uses as a specially permitted use, rather than promote demolition of existing buildings. See recommendations on funding to expand the Revolving Restoration Loan Fund.
6. Continue plans to rehabilitate and convert the Jan Van Loon house into an interpretive center.

7. Pass and enforce commercial building design and layout standards for all commercial zoning districts at the town and village level. Elevate the role of historical character in the Site Plan review by specifically requiring that the Planning Board or Zoning Board of Appeals review proposals for their compatibility with the historical character of the neighborhood. Design standards should be established as follows:
  - a. In the Village, commercial structures should be of the same scale, design, and layout of existing buildings and should be consistent with the small town nature of the village. Some of these design standards could include, but not be limited to limiting curb cuts and driveways, requiring shared access drives or parking lots for certain areas, limiting the width of pavement along a property, encouraging shallow setbacks, parking to the rear or side, having consistent architecture, signs and lights that are consistent with a traditional village, and requiring sidewalks.
  - b. In the Town, commercial structures in the Highway Commercial District should also be consistent with a rural town. Some of these design standards should be similar to the above stated standards for the village. Large structures having facades over 80 feet in length should be required to incorporate a façade break to break up the visual features of the building. Light industrial uses should have ample landscaping and screening from the road and meet performance standards for noise, vibration, odor, smoke, etc.
8. Amend the local historic district law to enhance proper maintenance of structures within the district. Review the Village historic district regulations and amend to provide more specific historic preservation guidelines appropriate for Athens. Illustrations and standards that more clearly identify the architectural, layout, or design features that are consistent with the historic district would make the Planning Board most effective in its review and will benefit the applicant by clarifying expectations ahead of time.
9. Map and clearly identify the historic districts in the Village as well as to define and map the “Historic District Transitional Area”. Zoning refers to this transition area and requires the Planning Board to review applications in this area, but it is not mapped or identified in the zoning.
10. Amend all zoning purpose statements (both Town and Village) to place more emphasis on protecting and enhancing the historic, small town, and waterfront character of the village.

11. Initiate a program to address substandard building conditions within Athens. Seek funding mechanisms to help property owners refurbish and renovate historic structures both within and outside the historic district. This program could include tax incentives as well.
12. Encourage community activities that promote historic preservation such as annual awards for home improvement (house, tours, etc.).
13. Enhance public education programs related to Athens' history and historic areas.
14. Fully develop a Geographic Information System (GIS) map showing historic and cultural places in the Town and Village. The inventory should include all historical markers, cemeteries, and other historical and cultural sites.
15. At the town level, consider making this inventory a full historical survey. This would identify all properties that may be eligible to be placed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places.
16. For publicly funded projects that come before either of the Planning Boards, ZBA or Town/Village Boards, ensure that the Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau of the State Historic Preservation Office is involved in project review. Through its review, the Bureau identifies historic resources involved in public projects and assists with developing preservation approaches. This review process ensures that historic preservation is considered in the planning of publicly funded projects.
17. Understand the applicable laws that can help Athens protect historic resources. These include Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 which directs federal agencies to consider historic resources in their project planning. New York State has a parallel law for state agencies in Section 14.09 of the State Preservation Act of 1980.
18. The Village should consider applying for Certified Local Government Status. This federally funded program can assist in historic preservation efforts. In order to become certified, the Village should review its historic district zoning regulations and consider amending them to meet the Certified Local Government standards.

19. Ensure that the Town Planning Board understands the requirements of the Flint Mine National Historic District and that development proposals protect the assets of this historic district.
  
20. Roads, sidewalks, and other transportation resources play an important role in preserving the historic character of the Town and Village. Numerous recommendations are made related to these topics in the Transportation section but have equal value in attaining the historic and cultural goals as well.

***Recreational Resource Recommendations***

1. Establish a Town and Village recreation committee that includes teens in order to develop age appropriate programming.
  
2. Consider forming a Pathways Committee that would be a joint effort between the Town and Village and all neighboring communities to identify and implement new bike/hike opportunities. The role of this committee would be to identify potential locations for trails, seek funding on behalf of the communities, and facilitate trail development programs.
  
3. Athens topography does not present many sites where a pathway could be suitable, though the old rail bed of the White Elephant Line would be ideal if purchased for public use. Another potential location would be in a corridor running roughly parallel to Route 9W, but only if sufficient right of way was reserved for the path and adjacent greenspace and plantings to ensure that it remained a visually inviting corridor (or as linear park compatible with adjacent development) and not simply an extra-wide sidewalk. Explore feasibility of expanding the hiking trails on or near utility line easements and connecting the Cohatate Preserve and Brandow Point with trails. Transportation Enhancements funding is available sporadically (about every three years) both for corridor acquisition and capital development costs. Corridor acquisition may also be funded through NYS Environmental Protection Fund or Bond Act grants.
  
4. Town and Village should consider ways that a shared use pathway might better connect the Sleepy Hollow residential development with the heart of the Village (potentially through Union Street Park).

5. Maintain the Athens Recreation Association (community pool) and find ways to make it more inviting and accessible recreational facility. Athens should consider allocating funds or encourage fundraising to establish a local match for application for NYS Environmental Quality Bond Act funds under the parks category to effect some basic improvements to ensure that the pool remains a viable and inviting facility for the community's families and youth.
6. The relative lack of heated recreational facilities for the general public puts increased importance on the Athens Community Center gym during winter months. Special attention to encouraging or facilitating activity or exercise programs targeted toward youth and adults would help address their recreational and activity needs. If occasional 'open hours' for teens and/or adults for pickup basketball or other indoor exercise is not in place, the town and village should consider setting aside such slots in the facility schedule.
7. The recreation committee should develop a town-wide recreational strategic plan. This plan should also inventory recreational facilities in neighboring towns and work to enhance existing programs and facilities rather than duplicating services where feasible.
8. Both the Town and Village municipal budget should allocate funding for recreation capital improvements and activities.
9. Add recreation to the recommended 5-year Capital Improvement Plan to identify and address recreation and facility needs for current and increased populations, especially the Community Center. Establish a per lot recreation fee to be assessed for every lot subdivided within the town. These funds are dedicated to providing recreational programming for Town and Village residents.
10. Continue the services of a grant writer to aggressively pursue and take advantage of all private, state, county and federal aid that may be available to accomplish the strategies outlined in this plan.
11. Coordinate activities with the school district to benefit the entire community. Work with the school districts serving the town. Promote cooperation between the town and village and the school districts in innovative ways such as joint planning and land acquisition for recreation and/or facilities cost-sharing. Encourage increased municipal use of existing school facilities during non-school hours.

12. Consider innovative ways to create new partnerships between private landowners and the Town and Village for recreational use. For example, develop land use agreements with willing landowners to allow for public use on their property. Other examples include:
  - a. User groups or the Town of Athens could consider making lease payments to landowners on a per acre basis for recreational uses of woodlands and pasturelands.
  - b. Help landowners understand their options, benefits and implications of providing public access on their lands for recreation. Provide information on the New York Recreation Use Statute that indemnifies landowners from liability.
  - c. Rural road standards for new town roads could be modified, where appropriate, to provide adequate paved shoulders as part of the typical required cross section, where needed. This would help accommodate bikes and other pedestrian uses.
13. Create new open spaces and parkland via dedications made during the existing subdivision process, or through land or easement purchases through payment-in-lieu of land dedication.
14. During subdivision and/or site plan reviews for any nursing, retirement or other type of senior housing facility, ensure that small, passive-use parks and gardens with walkways are included in the site plans.
15. When land is preserved as a result of a clustered or conservation subdivision design, work to link these protected lands with trails and greenways pursuant to the towns plan for paths and trails. Use the Town's Geographic Information System (GIS) maps to assist in this endeavor.
16. Work with the Greene Land Trust and other conservation organizations to accomplish the strategies outlined in this section.

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## *Housing*

The availability of good quality housing is vital to the future economic growth and stability of the Town and Village of Athens. According to research and supporting

documentation provided in the Inventory and Profile of this Plan, over the past decade there has been a significant increase in housing construction in the Town and Village and projections show a continuation of this growth trend. Rental housing remains affordable in the Town and Village, however the purchase of a home has become less affordable for the average household over the past decade.

According to the US Census, between 1990 and 2000, the Town and Village witnessed an increase in construction of new homes of 17.4% and 12.6 % respectively. Population projections obtained from ESRI Business Information Solutions forecast further housing growth between 2000 and 2010, with an estimated growth of approximately 15.0% for both the Town and the Village.

The cost of rental housing in the Village and Town appears to be affordable as was determined by calculating the “rental index.” Affordable rental housing is generally considered to be no more than 30% of a household’s monthly income. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC), the Fair Market Rent (FMR) for a two-bedroom apartment in Greene County in 2005 was estimated to be \$630. According to the 2000 Census, the average monthly rental rate in the Town of Athens was \$433, while in the Village of Athens it was \$392. Based on the median household income for Town (\$39,728), and the median household income for Village (\$36,655), Town households are estimated to be able to reasonably afford \$993 for rent while Village residents can afford \$916. Therefore, rental housing is affordable. One problem identified by public workshop participants was that some of the rental units throughout the Town and Village suffer from severe neglect or lack of investment due to absentee landlords. In general, this neglect can result in the spiral effect of the lowering of surrounding property values, which allows for more properties to be acquired by absentee owners, which leads to more neglect and sometimes abandonment of properties.

In 2005, the estimated household income for Town residents was \$45,504, while the estimated household income for Village residents was \$47,966.<sup>3</sup> This translates to a monthly income of \$3,792 for the Town and \$3,997 for the Village. Therefore, Town households are estimated to be able to reasonably afford \$1,137 for rent while Village residents can afford \$1,199. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC), the Fair Market Rent (FMR) for a two-bedroom apartment in Greene County in 2005 was estimated to be \$630. Therefore, rental costs in the Town and Village of Athens still appear to be affordable.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> ESRI Business Information Solutions, Inc.

<sup>4</sup> Estimates for 2005 average monthly rental rates are available only at the County level.

Research has determined that home-ownership is not affordable in the Village or Town. A common analysis tool to determine the affordability of ownership housing units is to compare the median value of single-family ownership units with median household income. Nationally, a ratio of 2 or less is considered “affordable”. Housing cost estimates for 2005 indicate a significant increase in the price of homes in both the Village and the Town of Athens, which has resulted in a diminished affordability. According to 2005 housing value estimates, the median housing value for the Village doubled between 2000 and 2005, and the median housing value for the Town increased by 88%. The affordability ratio in 2005 was 3.31 for the Village of Athens and 3.62 for the Town of Athens. Residents that participated in the public workshops also pinpointed this lack of moderate and affordable housing as a weakness for the community.

The results of the Residential Survey identified a wide variety of issues regarding housing. According to the survey results, residents believe that affordable housing opportunities are needed in the community, especially for senior citizens. The survey did not however show strong support for increased spending of tax dollars for any housing programs. Residents did not wish to see the development of more rental housing in the Town or Village, but would like to see future development of more moderately priced single-family housing units, town homes and condominiums to encourage home-ownership opportunities.

Many of the issues overlap with the need for improved codes, ordinances, and code enforcement, which is addressed under Land Use and Zoning. The following Goals and Recommendations have been developed in order to address the future needs for housing:

### GOALS

- A. Promote a mix of quality housing options at price ranges that are accessible to all ages and income levels.
- B. Preserve and enhance Athens’ existing residential neighborhoods by promoting the rehabilitation and maintenance of historic structures that reflect the area’s unique local history.
- C. Promote the construction of new housing stock that reflects the area’s unique local history and is in harmony with existing structures.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Encourage affordable housing for people of average incomes. For subdivisions of 10 or more units or other large housing and mixed-use developments, the Town and Village should require developers to provide at least 10% affordable housing units in their plans. Positive incentives, such as density bonuses in areas suitable for more dense development can be used for encouragement.
2. Encourage the development of additional senior (55+) housing opportunities in the Village. Development is recommended in areas adjacent to resources and services that can easily be accessed by senior adults, e.g. public transportation, retail shops, library, community center. This housing should include both affordable units as well as market-rate units, to allow existing residents to downsize. Further market analysis should be conducted to identify other appropriate uses, including assisted living facilities or cooperative housing development. Density bonuses in areas suitable for senior housing can be used for encouragement. Village Zoning should be updated to properly define “senior housing” and “assisted living facilities” and other related definitions. The Zoning should permit these uses by Site Plan Review, and Special Use Permit, in the RL, RR, RM and CR Districts.
3. Encourage the use of Planned Unit Districts (PUD) in the Town to allow a mix of residential housing types clustered in areas that have, or have the potential to have water, sewer, recreation areas and roads. The Town should update Article IV of the Zoning Ordinance accordingly.
4. Develop Residential Planned Unit Development (RPUD) regulations for the Village. The RPUD should have a minimum area of 5 acres, and should allow for a variety of housing types, including but not limited to, duplexes, condominiums, townhouses, senior housing and assisted living facilities. The RPUD should not allow commercial uses, as the Village should encourage these types of uses to remain in the downtown area. The RPUD should require that the development be designed in a “traditional” way, that links into the existing grid system and provides appropriate landscaping, sidewalks and paths to link the new neighborhood to the downtown commercial and waterfront area. The RPUD should refer to architectural design, building form, and signage guidelines that retain the historic character of the Village. The Village should

utilize the results of the Community Image Survey to establish these guidelines or standards.

5. The Town and Village should encourage the use of Cluster Development and Conservation Subdivision techniques for new single-family home developments to preserve open space and sensitive natural areas. These techniques, when applied properly, can also allow denser growth to support affordable use of infrastructure and lower development costs. Developers should be encouraged to link the new cluster development to existing road networks, sidewalks and paths of other surrounding neighborhoods.
6. Town and Village Zoning should define and allow by special use permit accessory and/or in-law apartments to provide alternative housing opportunities for the citizens of the community.
7. Where feasible, the Town and Village should encourage developers to link new housing developments with existing residential and commercial areas by installing access roads, sidewalks and trails, thereby creating walkable and connected neighborhoods.
8. New housing units in or near existing residential neighborhoods should blend with the existing neighborhoods and have the same or similar setback distances from the main road and should reflect the historical heritage of the area.
9. Consider the adoption of a Residential Occupancy Permit (ROP) regulation. A ROP regulation enables the Town and Village to regularly inspect multiple-family and two-family housing units. This regulation can also require that the property is current on all local taxes before an ROP can be issued. The intent of such legislation is to guard against unsafe living conditions for building inhabitants while improving the quality of life for all community residents. The development of a Rental Unit Owner Registry can also assist the Town/Village Code Enforcement Officers when they need to contact absentee landowners.
10. Strongly enforce existing building codes. Develop, expand and enforce current codes regarding noise, trash and junk vehicle removal, and other violations of the building code. Establish procedures for enforcement, and increase education opportunities for the code enforcement officer.

11. Develop and implement clean up programs for neighborhoods.
12. Seek funding from federal and state sources to rehabilitate sub-standard housing, facilitate home-ownership and restore historic homes.
13. The Town and Village should consider establishing a system of recognition for homeowners and business owners who preserve and restore historic structures.
14. Continue to support the Village of Athens Walking Tour as a way to educate the public about historic homes, buildings and sites within the Village.
15. Implement or codify the Village Historic District regulations to protect local historic structures and sites and provide protection against potential impacts, such as physical modifications or demolition of historic structures. Strengthen the regulations by using the results of the Community Image Survey to develop improved architectural design, building form guidelines for new structures within the Historic District. These standards and sketches can serve as a guide toward achieving an acceptable urban pattern through building styles and typologies that reflect the local heritage. Inform residents about the provisions of the Historic District and explain the benefits of the regulations to the community.
16. Develop a structural resources inventory to help the Town and Village Planning Boards understand the important preservation features of individual historic sites and structures when making land use decisions.
17. Apply for funding to establish a Homeownership Assistance Program. This can be used for down - payment assistance, a grant to buy down the interest rate, or for rehabilitation assistance.

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### ***Municipal and Community Resources***

Municipal and community resources include many aspects of community life that are either administered by a local government, provided through local municipal service districts, or made possible by not-for-profit organizations and/or volunteer organizations. Services provided at the municipal level in the Town and Village of Athens include road maintenance, snow removal, parks maintenance, storm-water management and drainage, library services and the provision of public sewers and drinking water. Fire protection and emergency medical services are provided by municipal fire districts that utilize

mostly volunteers, while police protection is provided by the Village Police Department, the Greene County Sheriff's Department and the State Police.

In addition to quality municipal services, the quality of the public school system is also very important to the Town and Village of Athens, to satisfy the needs of the community, and to help define the character of Athens as a good place to live. Residents of the Town and Village have a variety of public and private educational resources available to them including three school districts, private secondary schools, a BOCES program and a nearby community college.

Throughout the public outreach process, residents expressed an overall satisfaction with the available municipal services, however a vast majority of residents support the consolidation of Town and Village services as a cost savings measure. Through the residential survey it was revealed that the majority of respondents feel that the Town and Village should rely more on County services, and that the Village and Town government offices should remain housed within the same building and that efforts should be made to renovate the existing building. Residents supported the continued efforts to expand the capacity of the drinking water system, to bring the public sewer system up to code, but wish to keep taxes stable by encouraging smart commercial and residential growth patterns. Residents also expressed the need to maintain and continue to expand upon the current programs and resources for youth and senior citizens and to strengthen and enforce existing codes and regulations.

The following are Goals and Recommendations for the future needs of municipal services and infrastructure identified as important throughout the planning process. Many specific recommendations for the 9W Corridor are included in the Route 9W Corridor Recommendations section.

## GOALS

- A. Promote public infrastructure and services designed to meet the needs of current and future residents.
- B. Promote public protection and fire safety infrastructure to ensure that the community remains a safe place to live.

- C. Foster proactive municipal planning and infrastructure development strategies to encourage commercial development as long as it is accomplished in a manner which preserves working farms, open spaces, scenic vistas, and small town character.
  
- D. Promote the community's educational resources as a vital contributor to Athens' continued viability.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Where feasible, consolidate municipal services and/or cooperate with other government agencies to limit the duplication of services and the costs of providing such services. The Shared Municipal Services Initiative is a new program created by New York State to provide financial assistance to municipalities interested in investigating opportunities to work together. Conduct a feasibility analysis and needs assessment to determine the benefits of full or partial consolidation of Town and Village functions or operations.
  
2. According to the Community Survey, 92% of the public indicated that they want a joint village/town municipal building and 77% of the public support renovating the existing Town and Village of Athens municipal building/community center to better meet the needs of both the Town and Village government offices.
  
3. Continue to share the municipal facility in the existing Community Center and apply for funding through the DOS Shared Municipal Services Incentive Grant Program to assist the Town & Village in paying for the rehabilitation of the shared office space, conference room, courtroom, storage space, and parking areas of the Community Center. The grant application could also include improvements to the Athens Museum on the 2nd floor.
  
4. Consider ways to improve communication between the Town and Village Planning Boards to ensure that both municipalities are considering the inter-municipal impacts of development proposals and that decisions are made with the consideration of mutual concerns.
  
5. Apply for funding through the DOS Shared Municipal Services Incentive Grant Program for the purchase of shared equipment for the Town and Village Highway

and Public Works departments. Seek funding for the rehabilitation of the Village Public Works facility.

6. Conduct a feasibility analysis and needs assessment to determine whether it makes sense economically, operationally, and administratively to consolidate the two municipal highway departments in to one. Utilize the New York State Comptroller's Cooperation and Consolidation Consulting Services (3CS) program to assist in this feasibility study. This program offers municipalities consulting services to conduct studies and audits to examine the service improvements and cost savings that can be gained through cooperation or consolidation.
7. Continue the program of upgrades to the public water supply system to maintain a safe and sufficient water source that can be effectively distributed throughout the Village.
8. Continue the program for improvements to the two sewer treatment plants in the Village to comply with NYS DEC requirements and expand the plant(s) capacity so that additional properties may hook into the system.
9. The Village should create annexation and infrastructure (water and sewer) expansion policies that are in concert with the open space and agricultural land preservation policies set forth within this plan. Expansion of water and sewer should be focused primarily in the Village, however, the Village should coordinate with the Town to consider expansion of public water limited to the Empire Zone and commercial nodes along Route 9W.
10. Consider the adoption of a Capital Improvements Program (CIP) to better plan for all capital projects in the Town and Village. This planning should include budgeting, physical, real estate, staffing and equipment needs related to sidewalks, roads, water and sewer, parks facilities, etc. A CIP is a management and fiscal planning tool communities use for financing and constructing needed public improvements and facilities. Properly designed, a CIP enables a community to identify its capital needs, rank them by priority, coordinate their scheduling, and determine the best method of paying for them.
11. Develop and implement a Town/Village storm water management and maintenance plan. Ensure that the Planning Boards, ZBAs, and Building Inspectors follow stormwater control requirements of New York State and the Federal government. If

not already required, consider adoption of most recent version of NY State sample local law established for compliance with state regulation of Municipal Separate Storm Water Systems (MS4s) and incorporate these standards into local regulations.

12. Work with developers to continue the extension and expansion of the grid street system or new connector roads in the Village as new development occurs in the future.
13. Continue to support and invest the necessary resources to the municipal Fire, Police, and Emergency Medical Service squads in order to maintain a high level of public safety and security. Enact a local law at the Town and Village level to take advantage of the NYS tax incentives for emergency service volunteers.
14. Investigate opportunities to expand municipal telecommunications and utility infrastructure, such as DSL, high speed Internet, and/or cable access connections.
15. Create Village and Town web sites for the promotion of existing and forthcoming programs, development initiatives and community events. Be sure to provide links to Chamber of Commerce, Greene County and school district websites.
16. Identify easy methods to publicize Town and Village events. Local residents can be kept informed of local happenings via a bulletin board located in a prominent spot and a website. The website can be used to post timely information on local community happenings and/or events calendar.
17. Expand the Athens Youth Commission summer recreation programs and the after school programs for community children and teens and coordinate with the programs offered through the school districts.
18. Increase communication and cooperation amongst Village, Town, County and School District officials. Create a steering committee comprised of Village, Town, County and School District representatives to address issues of joint concern.
19. Continue to build upon unique community characteristics to develop common themes. Celebrate these themes through annual festivals, parades, and/or events. Promote and encourage volunteerism with a recognition program (awards, certificates, plaques, etc.). Potential funding is available through the Greene County Council on the Arts.

20. Appoint a citizen committee to be responsible for organizing community enhancement and Clean-up Days and for coming up with new ways to engage the public in community activities and programs.
21. Review and update the Town and Village Zoning codes to ensure that zoning districts boundaries are clearly defined and delineated on a map, and where feasible, based on parcel boundaries or permanent features such as roads and water bodies. The Town and Village zoning codes should, where feasible, recognize, accommodate and reinforce adjacent municipal zoning designations.
22. Review and update Town and Village Zoning codes to ensure consistency between the local regulations and NYS laws related to administration and procedures.
23. Review and update the Town and Village Zoning codes to ensure that all terms and definitions are appropriately defined and explained, and the intent and vision identified through the Comprehensive Planning process is clearly articulated. The following changes should be made to the zoning district boundaries and bulk requirements of the Town and Village zoning regulations:
  - a. Along the waterfront in the Village, expand the allowable uses in the Industrial District to allow for more commercially oriented businesses. Strict design standards should be adhered to in these waterfront areas.
  - b. In the Village, extend the C District south of Third Street along Route 385. Strict design guidelines consistent with the LWRP and NYS Scenic Byway policies should be implemented along this corridor via the use of an overlay district to the south and north of the CR District within the Village.
  - c. In the Village RL District, consider changing the minimum lot size to  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre if served by public water and sewer, 1.5 acres if served by only public water, and 3 acres if not served by public water or sewer.
  - d. In the Town, work with the County to ensure that the Town zoning districts are consistent with the types of businesses that will be utilizing the Empire Zone. Determine appropriate allowable uses within this district and update the zoning to include a detailed list of allowable uses that are also specifically defined in the definitions section.
  - e. Update the Town Zoning, Section 180-26, to clarify the special use permit regulations. Provide detail on the procedure for obtaining a special use permit, what standards are to be used and which board oversees the review process.

- Ensure that all uses requiring special use and site plan approval are listed in the table of “District Objectives and Land Use Controls”.
- f. The Town and Village should coordinate the commercial uses allowable in their respective commercial, industrial and mixed-use districts, so as to discourage competition between Town and Village.
  - g. Reduce the allowable density of development in the Town’s Ru Zoning District. The 90,000 square feet minimum lot size (without water and sewer) is too high to adequately protect rural character and farming.
  - h. Consider adopting an Overlay District for Route 385 in the Town and Village. This district would include additional design standards for landscaping, lighting, signage, sidewalks and pathways, and require new development to share driveways, or ingress/egress points in order to decrease vehicle and pedestrian hazards along this roadway.
24. Incorporate the detailed suggestions and technical recommendations of the Village Planning Board which were suggested during the zoning code review of 1997 – 2001 so long as the suggestions are in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan and are not contradictory with the overall Vision, Goals, and other Recommendations of the Plan.
25. Consider developing a Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan for the portions of Route 385 that pass through the Town and Village. This plan should address the promotion, enhancement and protection of scenic, natural, coastal, historical, cultural and recreational resources along Route 385, and among other things, ensure that the Town and Village are not divided from the waterfront by this major roadway. Creation of the plan is fundable through the NYS DOT, and adoption of the plan will lead to further funding opportunities for improvements along Route 385.
26. Strengthen the Town and Village Site Plan Review regulations so that all physical geography and existing environmental conditions are taken into consideration when evaluating new development proposals. In order to promote new development that is consistent with the goals of the Comprehensive Plan, the Site Plan Review Process should assist in conveying design and form preferences to potential applicants. The Site Plan Review requirements could provide information to applicants on how the Town and Village want new development to look and relate to existing development. Site Plan Review should require that proposed commercial projects be designed:
- a. In an architectural manner and using materials consistent with Town/Village intent;

- b. To include pedestrian and bicycle facilities wherever appropriate;
  - c. To facilitate access management through coordinated access points and/or access roads and interconnection of parking lots;
  - d. To screen unsightly equipment, commercial vehicles, and dumpsters from public right-of-ways;
  - e. To provide a landscaped buffer between adjacent residential, commercial and industrial developments;
  - f. To provide/maintain adequate green space and plantings;
  - g. To provide new roads as connective thoroughways extending from existing road networks whenever possible; and
  - h. To address other potential environmental impacts, such as noise, lighting, and additional traffic volumes as may be appropriate.
27. Review and revise the Town and Village existing Subdivision Regulations, as may be appropriate, to ensure that natural and historic resources are preserved. Resources that should be preserved may include, but are not limited to, water bodies, wetlands, forestlands, and other unique historic features. In addition, the Subdivision Regulations should provide applicants guidance on any desired pedestrian and cyclist access features, local road and driveway design, preferred development form and character, and parks, recreation and open space requirements and/or mitigation.
28. Develop subdivision, site plan review, variance, and special use permit applications and checklists for the Town and Village Planning Boards to use during project review.
29. Ensure that the Planning Boards and ZBAs use the Geographic Information System (GIS) maps (on paper or on computer) developed for this Comprehensive Plan to better understand the resources at each site as they are reviewing development proposals.
30. Once the Comprehensive Plan is adopted, the Village and Town Boards should designate an Implementation Committee to review the goals and recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan, and make recommendations for actions that should be pursued. The Committee should have members that represent the existing Planning Boards, Zoning Boards of Appeals and Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee. This Implementation Committee should first be charged with implementing the recommended changes to the Zoning codes and maps, in order to bring these regulations in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan. The Village and Town

Boards must follow the legal requirements set forth in NYS Village Law §7-704 - §7-708, NYS Town Law §263 - §265, and General Municipal Law §239-m when making changes to the zoning regulations. The Implementation Committee should also be charged with the implementation of the other goals and recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan. The Committee should work on each strategy in the order of importance. Priorities may change with time and the availability of funding sources for particular projects.

31. The Village and Town Boards and Planning Boards, or other designated special board, should annually review the Comprehensive Plan's goals and recommendations to ensure that they are relevant to the changing conditions within the Town and Village. It is recommended that the entire Comprehensive Plan be reviewed at least once every five years, and be amended where needed. The Plan should be updated or re-written at least once every ten years.
  
32. The Town and Village Assessors should work closely with Greene County Department of Real Property and the with Greene County Department of Planning and Economic Development to re-classify certain properties within the Village and Town and make sure that all shared database and Geographic Information System (GIS) files are kept up-to-date and current.

# Implementation Plan

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## Priority Action Plan

This section outlines an action plan to implement the Comprehensive Plan's recommendations. Leadership from the Town and Village Boards is critical and both have responsibilities in putting this plan into action. Although the Town and Village Boards have the ultimate responsibility in implementing this plan, they will need assistance from various boards, agencies, and organizations for specific strategies recommended in the plan. So that the ideas presented in this Plan can become a reality, it is recommended that the Town and Village Boards commit to the following immediately after adoption:

1. Adopt a resolution setting up a Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee made up of members from both the Town and Village Boards and representatives from both Planning Boards, Zoning Boards, and the joint Comprehensive Plan Committee as well as members of the public. The role of this Implementation Committee would be to:
  - a. Coordinate implementation activities.
  - b. Communicate regularly with both Boards about implementation activities and needs.
  - c. Identify funding needs to implement various strategies and work with town officials in obtaining necessary funds through grants and other means.
  - d. Make an annual report to the Town and Village Boards about implementation activities and upcoming needs.
  - e. Communicate regularly with the public so that everyone is informed of implementation progress.
2. Use the Priority Action Schedule below, as a checklist of implementation activities and establish time frames and expectations for implementation.
3. Evaluate implementation activities on an annual basis and establish expectations for each year's worth of implementation work.

4. Re-evaluate the Plan every five years to ensure that it stays current and relevant to conditions in Athens.
5. Establish programs for the Zoning Board of Appeals, Planning, Town, and Village boards, and building inspector that provide on-going training in new land use techniques, SEQRA, and legal procedures. Establish minimum education training requirements to meet at a minimum, the New York State requirements.
6. Enhance public participation by ensuring that citizens have electronic access to town documents (e.g., Comprehensive Plan, zoning regulations). All applications and related documents would be available for access on the Town web site.
7. To aid the development review process, the Town and Village should develop guides, checklists, illustrations, and other educational materials to be given out to all those who seek a zoning, subdivision, or building permit. Through the building inspector and sketch plan phases of review, the Town and Village should make every effort to clearly outline Athens' expectations for development and help applicants understand the land use planning techniques being utilized in the town.
8. Provide all board members with the copies of the Comprehensive Plan.
9. Maintain, update, and utilize the maps created through the Geographic Information System (GIS) for this Comprehensive Plan at all Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals meetings and also make these available to landowners and the public, preferably via a web site.
10. The Village and the Town should establish an annual meeting between the Board, Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals to discuss issues, problems, and solutions related to land use and other topics detailed in this Plan.

### **Key to Priority**

This plan calls for a variety of policy decisions, program initiation, regulatory changes, coordination with regional organizations and agencies, and securing funding. The following schedule is a compilation of all the actions identified in Volume 1 of the Town and Village of Athens Comprehensive Plan. It also identifies the type of action and a page reference for Volume I. The action table does not list each and every strategy contained in Volume I of the Plan. Instead, it is a compilation of the major actions

suggested in the Plan and represents a prioritization of major categories of work to be accomplished in Athens. **This Action Plan should not be a substitute for the details contained in the rest of Volume I.**

The priorities listed in the table below are based on the average ranking given to each strategy by the Comprehensive Planning Committee. The rankings represent a combination of importance (key priority to implement) and timing for implementation (certain strategies are easier to accomplish or quicker to accomplish than others). Each Committee member ranked each strategy, and the final ranking shown in the table below represents an average of rankings given to each strategy. For those strategies specific to either the Town or the Village, the average was taken from Committee representatives from either the Town or the Village, respectively. The priority should be interpreted as follows:

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**1 YEAR      TWO YEARS      LONG TERM      ONGOING**

Where:

- 1= Strategy should be implemented in first year after plan adoption
- 2= Strategy should be implemented within two years after plan adoption
- 3= Strategy should be implemented within five years after plan adoption
- O=Strategy needs to be implemented on an on-going basis by the Town and/or Village

### **Key to Type of Action**

Each strategy represents a specific type of action that the Town and/or Village can take. These types of actions are:

**Capital Improvement:** Any action that results in an investment and improvement in a property, structures, equipment, staff or other similar items.

**Policy:** Any action that results in establishment of a set policy that will govern the actions of the Town and/or Village.

**Program:** Any action that results in establishment of a plan, activity, committee, proposal, or similar items.

**Regulatory:** Any action that results in the development of new or amendment of existing land use related laws in the Town and/or Village. This typically refers to zoning, site plan review, or subdivision laws.

<b>Strategies for Both Town and Village</b>				
<i>Location</i>	<i>Strategies/Action</i>	<i>Type of Action</i>	<i>Volume   Page #</i>	<i>Priority</i>
Town & Village	Update zoning use tables so that they allow desired uses and prohibit undesired uses.	Regulatory	8-10	1.00
Town & Village	Amend zoning and other regulations in the Town and Village to protect natural resources.	Regulatory	20-21	1.00
Town & Village	Develop scenic resources inventory including visual corridors to the Hudson River. Amend Town and Village zoning and subdivision laws to prevent negative impacts to important visual corridors and scenic location through enhanced review procedures and development standards. Work with absentee landlords to improve the use and appearance of buildings throughout the Town and Village. Plan for streetscape improvements along Route 385, including, but not limited to creating visual barriers to certain uses such as the auto salvage yard. Enhance enforcement of junk car laws in the Town and develop new performance standards in Village laws to control negative visual impacts of auto and scrap junk yards and auto body repair shops.	Regulatory	21-23	1.00
Town & Village	Amend all zoning purpose statements to place more emphasis on protecting and enhancing the historic, small town and waterfront character.	Regulatory	47	1.00
Town & Village	Improve communication between Town and Village Planning Boards in order to consider inter-municipal impacts of development proposals.	Program and Policy	58	1.00

<b>Strategies for Both Town and Village</b>				
<i>Location</i>	<i>Strategies/Action</i>	<i>Type of Action</i>	<i>Volume   Page #</i>	<i>Priority</i>
Town & Village	Improve housing conditions by use of a Residential Occupancy Permit for inspection and maintenance of multi-family housing units. Strongly enforce building codes, develop neighborhood clean-up programs, seek funding to rehabilitate sub-standards housing, and initiate home-ownership programs.	Program Enforcement	55-56	1.00
Town & Village	Update and enhance the cluster zoning section in Town and establish use of clustering in the Village to protect open spaces.	Regulatory	24	1.10
Town & Village	Zoning in the Town and Village should define and allow accessory apartments, in-law apartments, and other such uses as alternative housing opportunities. Zoning should also ensure that all these housing types blend with existing neighborhoods.	Regulatory	55-56	1.10
Town & Village	Review and update Town and Village laws to ensure consistency between this Plan. This includes updating purpose statements, administration sections to be consistent with State regulations, changing district boundaries, changing allowable lot sizes, and dimensions, updating special use permit regulations, developing a commercial overlay district along Route 385 in the Village to enhance commercial development, incorporating zoning code revisions suggested by the Village Planning Board, and other zoning related strategies as recommended in Plan to meet the goals of the Town and Village.	Regulatory	61-62	1.10
Town & Village	Strengthen the site plan review process in both the Town and Village to better evaluate physical, environmental, historic, and aesthetic concerns of new development. The plan suggests a variety of specific changes needed in this area.	Regulatory	62-63	1.10

<b>Strategies for Both Town and Village</b>				
<i>Location</i>	<i>Strategies/Action</i>	<i>Type of Action</i>	<i>Volume   Page #</i>	<i>Priority</i>
Town & Village	Review Town and Village subdivision regulations to enhance protection of natural and historic resources.	Regulatory	63	1.10
Town & Village	Create an Implementation Committee to help the Town and Village put this Plan to work and implement the strategies included in it.	Program	63-64	1.10
Town & Village	Amend zoning with more specific expectations and environmental performance standards for development and consider establishing outdoor burn, noise, and nuisance odor laws.	Regulatory	23-24	1.22
Town & Village	Planning and Zoning Boards should use the Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau of the State Historic Preservation Office for advice during project review.	Program and Policy	48	1.29
Town & Village	Pass and enforce commercial building design and layout standards and elevate role of historical character in site plan review at both the Town and Village levels.	Regulatory	47	1.30
Town & Village	Require developers of large housing projects to provide 10% of the units as moderately-priced units and provide density bonuses in return.	Regulatory	54	1.30
Town & Village	Encourage use of cluster and conservation design subdivisions to simultaneously provide open space, traditional neighborhoods, and more opportunities for moderately-priced housing.	Regulatory	55	1.30
Town & Village	Develop architectural design, building form, subdivision, and signage regulations to ensure that new development is consistent with the character of the Town and Village. This should include lighting, landscaping and aesthetic improvements.	Regulatory	9 and 40, 47	1.33
Town & Village	Adopt a Capital Improvement Plan to better plan for all capital projects in the Town and Village.	Capital Improvement and Program	59	1.33

<b>Strategies for Both Town and Village</b>				
<i>Location</i>	<i>Strategies/Action</i>	<i>Type of Action</i>	<i>Volume   Page #</i>	<i>Priority</i>
Town & Village	Limit duplication of services and costs of providing such services by consolidating municipal services. Use the Shared Municipal Services Initiative and Grants, and the NYS Comptroller's Cooperation and Consolidation Consulting Services to assist in this effort.	Program and Policy	58-59	1.38
Town & Village	Extend 100' and 50' stream buffers to the Ru district.	Regulatory	19	1.40
Town & Village	Appoint joint Town/Village economic development liaison.	Program	8	1.40
Town & Village	Allow for use of Planned Unit Districts to allow for a mix of housing types in both Town and Village.	Regulatory	54-55	1.40
Town & Village	Enact a right-to-farm law.	Regulatory	28	1.40
Town & Village	Require buffers between new non-farm development and existing farmlands.	Regulatory	28	1.40
Town & Village	Protect natural resources by ensuring that planning board and zoning board members have necessary tools to identify and evaluate natural resources,	Program and Policy	20-21	1.44
Town & Village	Enhance training and use of SEQR during all project reviews.	Program	26	1.50
Town & Village	Planning Boards should meet all agricultural district review requirement of New York State Agriculture and Markets for projects in a NY Agricultural District. This includes use of the Data Statement, Disclosure Notice, and review of impacts on farms.	Program and Policy	31-32	1.50
Town & Village	Work to expand cable, internet, and other telecommunications.	Program and Capital Improvement	9 and 60	1.57
Town & Village	Create a source water protection overlay zone around Hollister Lake to protect drinking water quality.	Regulatory	18-19	1.60
Town & Village	Create a joint Town/Village Local Development Corporation to spearhead revitalization and funding.	Program	7	1.60

<b>Strategies for Both Town and Village</b>				
<i>Location</i>	<i>Strategies/Action</i>	<i>Type of Action</i>	<i>Volume   Page #</i>	<i>Priority</i>
Town & Village	Create mechanisms to promote development of more senior housing such as providing density bonuses and ensuring that zoning allows and provides reasonable standards for this development.	Program and Regulatory	54	1.60
Town & Village	Establish local incentives for historic preservation such as property tax rebates, façade improvement programs, etc.	Program	46	1.67
Town & Village	Add a domestic farm animal section to the Village zoning and a review requirement for intensive, confined animal operations at the Town level.	Regulatory	30	1.78
Town & Village	Study and consider expansion of public water to commercial properties at 9W/Schoharie Turnpike intersection.	Capital Improvement	9	1.89
Town & Village	Encourage programs to increase opportunities for sale of local ag products; increase community awareness of farming in Athens; develop agri-tourism opportunities; develop a buy-local program; and support development of regional dairy and other farm processing facilities.	Program	31-32	1.89
Town & Village	Include in a Capital Improvement Plan to identify and address recreation needs.	Program and Capital Improvement	50	2.00
Town & Village	Properly assess agricultural structures.	Program	28	2.00
Town & Village	Improve the waterfront by creating an interpretive guide/tour, develop a unified theme and message about the Hudson and Athens, expand historic walking tours, develop a comprehensive signage system with adjacent river towns, continue and expand events at the waterfront, complete the Waterfront Revitalization Project and implement other LWRP recommendations, expand uses at Riverfront Park, establish bike and kayak rentals, and create and maintain vistas to the River.	Program and Capital Improvement	42-44	2.00

<b>Strategies for Both Town and Village</b>				
<i>Location</i>	<i>Strategies/Action</i>	<i>Type of Action</i>	<i>Volume   Page #</i>	<i>Priority</i>
Town & Village	Work with Greene County and other Hudson River towns to coordinate regional programs and issues.	Program	8	2.00
Town & Village	Work with Greene County SWCD to complete a natural resource inventory of Athens.	Program	20	2.10
Town & Village	Develop joint/Town Village Business Assistance Program	Program	8	2.11
Town & Village	Seek funds to obtain title to or easements for scenic waterfront land to be used for more riverfront pedestrian links.	Program and Capital Improvement	44	2.13
Town & Village	Improve the streetscape of Route 385.	Program and Capital Improvement	22	2.20
Town & Village	Establish a Town/Village recreation committee to develop recreational programs. This group should help develop a town-wide recreational strategic plan. Consider forming a multi-town Pathways Committee to identify and implement bike/hike trails. These efforts should coordinate efforts with the school district, find partnerships between the Town and Village and landowners, etc.	Program	49-50	2.20
Town & Village	Develop and implement a Town/Village stormwater management and maintenance plan.	Program and Regulatory	17-18	2.29
Town & Village	Implement strategies to help move Athens towards energy efficiency and use of green development practices.	Program and Policy	23-24	2.33
Town & Village	Create new recreational lands and green links as parcels are developed as allowed under the subdivision law. Work to link lands protected in a clustered or conservation subdivision together for recreational purposes. Work with Greene Land Trust to assist in this effort.	Capital Improvement	50-51	2.33
Town & Village	Establish intermunicipal agreements to protect natural resources and open spaces that cross municipal boundaries.	Program and Regulatory	26	2.40

<b>Strategies for Both Town and Village</b>				
<i>Location</i>	<i>Strategies/Action</i>	<i>Type of Action</i>	<i>Volume   Page #</i>	<i>Priority</i>
Town & Village	Establish a Traffic Safety Committee; study traffic and pedestrian conditions; identify and implement safety improvements.	Program, Capital Improvements and Regulatory	34-35	2.44
Town & Village	Construct new or improve existing sidewalk in the Village and work towards constructing sidewalks in densely populated areas in Town. Develop a sidewalk fund for this purpose and establish sidewalk construction and placement standards.	Capital Improvement	36-37	2.50
Town & Village	Create pedestrian routes to connect important locations, including sidewalks, bike trails, and paths. For example, explore feasibility of using the old White Elephant Line rail bed for this purpose.	Capital Improvement	37-38	2.60

<b>Town Only Strategies</b>				
<i>Location</i>	<i>Strategies/Action</i>	<i>Type of Action</i>	<i>Plan Page #</i>	<i>Priority</i>
Town	Amend zoning to require new structures to be built out of all floodplain areas and establish steep slope regulations to control erosion.	Regulatory	19	1.00
Town	Amend zoning and subdivision to protect open spaces via special use permit standards, extending the Open Space District in the Town, establishing different development densities for residential lots, using rural siting standards, using density bonuses as incentives to protect open spaces.	Regulatory	25-26	1.00

<b>Town Only Strategies</b>				
<i>Location</i>	<i>Strategies/Action</i>	<i>Type of Action</i>	<i>Plan Page #</i>	<i>Priority</i>
Town	Create opportunities for agriculture and be more farm friendly. Amend zoning to remove barriers to agricultural development and uses. Other zoning related strategies include expanding the Town Agriculture Zone to cover locations where agriculture is taking place; protect farmlands with mandatory clustering or conservation subdivision design for major subdivisions; direct growth towards the Village and other development clusters in Town; reduce the allowable density in the Ru District to 1 dwelling per 3 acres and a 1.2 acre minimum lot size; consider use of an agricultural overlay zone; use rural siting standards to preserve farmlands and rural character (hedgerows, fields, stone walls, etc.).	Regulatory	28-30	1.00
Town	Help businesses access Empire Zone Benefits.	Program	8-9	1.33
Town	Work with Greene County to facilitate adoption of Greene County Agricultural Development and Farmland Protection Plan in Athens.	Program	27-28	1.33
Town	Consider establishing a Black Lake and Green Lake watershed overlay to address erosion, sedimentation, and pollution. Work with Sleepy Hollow Lake Association to promote a watershed and shoreline protection strategy	Regulatory and Program	19	1.75
Town	Explore additional incentives for agriculture and encourage participation in existing programs such as the NY Ag District Program.	Program	30-31	2.00
Town	At town level, consider doing a full historic survey. Fully use the GIS database for mapping and using this information.	Program	48	2.25
Town	Develop a Purchase or Lease of Development Rights Program and offer tax abatement incentives in return for voluntary participation in this easement program. Explore additional incentives for agriculture.	Program and Capital Improvement	30	2.50
Town	Elevate the understanding and awareness of the Flint Mine National Historic District in Town.	Program and Policy	49	2.67

<b>Town Only Strategies</b>				
<i>Location</i>	<i>Strategies/Action</i>	<i>Type of Action</i>	<i>Plan Page #</i>	<i>Priority</i>
Town	Develop local waterfront revitalization plan for the Town of Athens that incorporates goals and strategies of this plan.	Program	24	3.00
Town	Seek ways to protect exemplary rural landscapes through voluntary donation of land or development rights.	Program and Capital Improvement	20	3.00

<b>Village Only Strategies</b>				
<i>Location</i>	<i>Strategies/Action</i>	<i>Type of Action</i>	<i>Plan Page #</i>	<i>Priority</i>
Village	Strengthen and enforce local historic district regulations. Create a historic district transitional area in the Village. When the local law is enhanced, consider applying for Certified Local Government status to tap into funding and technical assistance related to historic preservation	Regulatory and Program	46-49, 56	1.20
Village	Continue upgrades to the public water supply system in the Village and continue improvements to the two sewer treatment plants. The Village should create an annexation and infrastructure expansion policy.	Capital Improvement and Policy	59	1.33
Village	Work to rehabilitate and adaptively re-use underutilized buildings in the Village. Educate owners about the incentives, loans, funding, rules, and programs available to promote historic preservation.	Program and Policy	46-47	1.60
Village	Initiate a Main Street revitalization program	Program	10-12	1.67
Village	Improve public parking areas in Village.	Capital Improvement and Program	39-40	1.67
Village	Develop a façade restoration program in the Washington and Second Street area.	Program	46-47	1.83
Village	Improve streetscapes on Second and Water Streets.	Capital Improvement	13	1.83
Village	Develop kiosks at the Riverfront Park, remove/rehabilitate abandoned barges, work to enhance Middleground Flats for outdoor recreation activities.	Capital Improvement and Program	14	2.33
Village	Explore creation of a downtown Business Improvement District.	Program and Regulatory	12	2.50

<b>Ongoing Strategies</b>			
<i>Location</i>	<i>Strategies/Action</i>	<i>Type of Action</i>	<i>Plan Page #</i>
Town & Village	Work with landlords to improve use and appearance of buildings.	Program	10
Town & Village	Enhance tourism and promote the area via events, business expansion, enhancing the local agricultural economy, use of websites, and enhancing signs.	Program and Capital Improvement	15
Town & Village	Work with developers to minimize traffic impacts and implement traffic access management techniques such as shared ingress/egress points and minimizing curb cuts.	Program and Regulatory	35
Town & Village	Encourage other transportation means such as the Hudson River and enhanced public transportation.	Program	39
Town & Village	Enhance cultural resources by increased marketing, work with community groups to promote events at the Athens Cultural Center, Riverfront Park and other locations in Town, work with the local schools and summer youth programs to develop enrichment programs.	Program	45
Town & Village	Continue to invest and support fire, police and emergency medical services and work to enhance them	Capital Improvement and Program	60
Town & Village	Regularly review this Plan's goals and recommendations to ensure that they are relevant to the changing conditions in the Town and Village.	Program	64
Village	Secure development grants focusing on rehabilitation and re-use of existing buildings.	Program	12
Village	Implement the Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan.	Program	13-14

# Map List

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The following Geographic Information System (GIS) maps have been created to accompany the Comprehensive Plan and other Supplementary Reports found in Volume III.

## Comprehensive Plan Maps

- 1-Surrounding Area
- 2-General Base Map
- 3-Aerial Photographs 2001
- 4-Current Town Zoning Districts
- 5-Current Village Zoning Districts
- 6-Property Class
- 7a-Future Land Use-Conceptual Zoning, Town
- 7b-Future Land Use-Conceptual Zoning, Village
- 7c-Future Land Use-Conceptual Zoning, Village Waterfront
- 7d-Future Land Use-Conceptual Zoning, Town Overlays
- 7e-Future Land Use-Conceptual Zoning, Village Overlays
- 8-Municipally Owned Properties
- 9-Historic Sites
- 10-Recreation and Tourism
- 11-Public Water Sewer
- 12-Fire Districts
- 13-School Districts
- 14-Topography
- 15-Bedrock Geology
- 16-Steep Slopes
- 17-Habitat Overlays
- 18-Habitat Predictions
- 19-Water, Wetlands, Wet Soils
- 20-Flood Hazards
- 21-Coastal Zone
- 22-Environmental Constraints
- 23-Agriculture and Farmland

24-Empire Zone

### **Build-Out Analysis Maps**

BO3a-Fully Build Parcels, Town  
BO3b-Fully Build Parcels, Village  
BO5a-Environmental Constraints, Town  
BO5b-Environmental Constraints, Village  
BO7a-Buildable Area, Town  
BO7b-Buildable Area, Village  
BO9a-Build-out Results, Town  
BO9b-Build-out Results, Village

### **9W Corridor Study Maps**

CS1-Route 9W Corridor Regional Location  
CS2-Route 9W Corridor Aerial Photographs  
CS3-Route 9W Corridor Property Class  
CS4-Route 9W Corridor Current Zoning  
CS5-Route 9W Corridor Environmental Constraints  
CS6-Route 9W Corridor Conceptual Zoning