



**TOWN AND VILLAGE OF ATHENS
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

VOLUME I

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Summary

The Town and Village of Athens undertook a project to update their 2007 Joint Comprehensive Plan. This new plan, the 2020 Athens Town/Village Comprehensive Plan (“the Plan”), reflects the issues, trends, and needs of the current community. It is based on data, analysis, and public input conveyed to a volunteer Town/Village Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, (“Committee”). This Plan should be considered as a collective community vision that provides a roadmap to guide future projects, programs, and decision-making. Implementation of this Plan will help the Town and Village attain its community vision and support programs and projects that benefit the community.

This Plan answers three basic questions: what is going on in Athens now; where does Athens want to be in the future; and how can that future state be reached? Volume 2, associated with this Plan, has all the background information that answers the question about current conditions. The vision and goal statements speak of the future desires of the Town and Village while the strategies and actions steps outline the strategies and actions that could be implemented over time to help Athens attain those goals.

Community input was very important to development of this Plan. Although developed in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic, a great deal of public input was still collected from a town-wide survey, a joint Town/Village Board workshop, input from the Committee, and public hearings. A series of maps were updated to help the community visualize its many resources and up-to-date census data was evaluated to help understand trends that are affecting the Town.

This Plan includes a variety of recommendations and outlines steps the Town and Village Boards could take to implement them. The Town and Village Boards are the entities with full authority to appoint committees or otherwise begin implementation on any of the recommended projects. They choose when and how to implement the projects. The included Action Plan can serve as a checklist that the Town and Village Boards can use to organize, prioritize, and implement potential projects.

Athens 2020 Vision Statement

The Town and Village of Athens has established an aspirational vision for its future (see page 23 for the full statement). In summary, Athens hopes for itself is to be a diverse, vibrant, family-friendly, welcoming place that both protects and benefits from its assets. These assets include being a small, rural and Hudson River waterfront community with historic character. They desire safe and quiet neighborhoods, well-maintained homes affordable to all, with adaptive re-use of old structures. Walkable neighborhoods in the Village, along with easy access to public infrastructure, services, and facilities such as parks, library, and businesses, create a unique quality of life for residents and visitors.

Athens takes pride in the waterfront and it is hoped it will be used for a variety of outdoor recreational activities, small business enterprises, and cultural activities. The Village’s historic downtown is desired to remain the hub of business activity. Commercial areas in the Town outside of the Village are well-planned and designed to be economically consistent with the

area but also protective of our historic, environmental, character, aesthetic, and other community goals.

Athens desires to be environmentally sustainable, resilient to a changing climate, and protective of its natural resources- especially those related to the Hudson River estuary. Protecting forestlands, farmed rural areas, and lands with scenic views are important and the community seeks to maintain access to fresh, healthy local foods and agricultural products. Athens has long-term programs to ensure it is resilient in the face of changing climate. Athens has clean air, water, and other natural resources and works to protect the Hudson River estuary.

Athens vision includes having respected, well-run, and coordinated municipal governments that are transparent, efficient, and collaborative. Water, sewer, broadband, sidewalks, roads, and other infrastructures fully support both existing and future residential and commercial uses. Finally, Athens recognizes the important role all our landowners, homeowners and residents play in the community and envisions high levels of volunteerism by these groups supporting all aspects of Athens.

Athens Recommended Strategies and Priority Projects

Recommended projects address the following topics (see pages 18-45 for details):

- Economic Development
- Open Space, Environmental, Natural Resources, and Scenic Views
- Agriculture
- Transportation, Parking, and Pedestrian
- Historic, Cultural, and Recreational Resources
- Housing
- Municipal and Community Resources

Priority projects include (see pages 49-53 for details)

- Develop joint Town/Village Business Development and Assistance Program.
- Update and implement the Village's Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan.
- Identify abandoned or underused commercial properties and develop efforts to encourage adaptive reuse and façade restoration of these properties.
- For all economic development programs, proactively reach out to the diverse population in the Town and Village and ensure opportunities are available to under-represented populations.
- Work with homeowners and landlords (including absentee) to enhance code enforcement to improve the use and appearance of buildings throughout the Town and Village.
- Construct new or improve existing sidewalks in the Village.
- Build on existing capital improvement planning.
- Upgrade the public water supply system in the Village, the stormwater system, and make necessary improvements to the two sewer treatment plants.
- Form and recruit volunteers to serve on the committees recommended in this plan including the Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee.
- Limit duplication of services and costs of providing such services by consolidating municipal services.
- Improve communication and collaboration between the Town and Village and between the local governments and residents/landowners.

Introduction

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

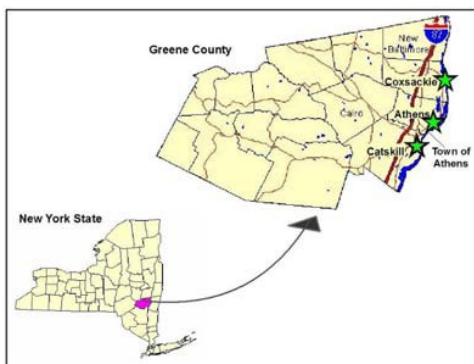
New York State law grants municipalities the authority to prepare and adopt comprehensive plans.¹ As defined by State law, a comprehensive plan is a document that identifies goals, objectives, principles, and policies for the immediate and long-range protection, enhancement, growth, and development of a community. Previously 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 establish land use policy for the community. This allows for the future development of regulatory measures such as 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.

About the Town and Village of Athens

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 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

¹ Town Law §272-a and Village Law §7-722

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.

The Planning Process

Like all communities, for the Town and Village of Athens to remain socially and economically sustainable, they 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 in 2007 and agreed to continue working together to update that plan through a planning process initiated in 2019. This effort was supported through a grant from the NYS Hudson River Valley Greenway.

Plan Contents

This Comprehensive Plan is comprised of two volumes: Volume I contains an Executive Summary, an Overview of the Planning Process, the Vision Statement and Goals, Recommendations, the Implementation Plan, and updated maps. Volume I also contains Appendix A, the Village of Athens Main Street Revitalization Plan, developed in 2007, which is now included in this updated Plan.

Volume II contains an updated Town and Village Inventory and Profile that offers a more in-depth discussion of the History of Athens, public input received, previous local and county planning efforts, demographic and housing information, municipal resources, transportation resources, physical and environmental features, cultural and historical resources, existing land use and zoning descriptions, and a display of maps associated with those resources².

Summary of Public Participation Process

The foundation of a good comprehensive plan is the incorporation of public input. To develop a plan built upon public consensus on key issues and common goals, having feedback from the Town and Village elected and appointed leaders, business owners, and residents, is imperative.

The Comprehensive Plan was developed by a volunteer committee appointed by the Town and Village Boards. The Committee was aided by their planning consultants from Community Planning & Environmental Associates. As part of the Village of Athens efforts at certification as a NYS Climate Smart Community, the Committee also worked closely with staff from Cornell Cooperative Extension, Columbia/Greene County who assisted the Committee throughout the process to integrate climate smart planning.

The Committee met monthly throughout the process and, early in their work, participated in a workshop to identify what they perceived to be the Town and Village's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT). To gain feedback from local elected and appointed officials, the Committee hosted a joint Town and Village workshop, where Athens' strengths, weaknesses,

² Maps in Volume II reflect natural resources and other features from the 2007 Plan that have not changed since that time.

opportunities, and threats were identified from the local government perspective.

Although a series of focus groups with the aim of reaching out to a variety of stakeholders in a small group format was planned for April 2020, the Covid-19 Pandemic canceled those plans and, instead of focus groups, the Committee embarked on a comprehensive Town/Village survey. The survey was conducted online with paper versions available from the Village Hall. It was designed to explore a variety of issues identified in the Committee and local government SWOT exercises.

A postcard mailing to Town and Village residents, along with social media announcements, email blasts, and newspaper press releases were made to advertise the survey and encourage participation. A total of 497 people participated in the survey (see Volume 2 for those full results).

After completion of the survey, the Committee used that information to draft vision and goal statements, recommend strategies and actions to meet those goals, and create an implementation plan. In November 2020, an online public hearing hosted by the Committee was held pursuant to Town Law 272-a and Village Law 7-722. This was followed by a second public hearing and Town/Village Board review in December of 2020.

Implementing the Plan

Adoption of the 2020 Comprehensive Plan is only the beginning. Simply stating goals and recommendations of this Plan will not produce desired results unless the Town and Village work to implement the concepts and recommendations. Updating land use regulations, making public investment, collaborating, and forming partnerships with adjacent municipalities and the many groups, agencies, and organizations in Athens, are keys to success.

Once the Comprehensive Plan is adopted, the Town and Village Boards should continue to work together to designate a joint 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 work with respective partners on each strategy in the order of importance established by this Plan. (See the Implementation Chapter for more information on putting this plan to work for the Town and Village).

Updating & Amending the Plan

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 annually review the Comprehensive Plan's recommendations and assess what activities have taken place to advance its implementation and make plans to tackle the next steps. At the same time, they should ensure that the priorities are relevant to the changing conditions within the Town and Village. In this way, the Plan meets its intended goal of being a roadmap for the municipalities.

It is recommended that the entire Comprehensive Plan be fully reviewed at least once every five years and then amended where needed. The Plan should be updated or rewritten at least once every ten years.



Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOTs)

Knowing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, (“SWOTs”) facing a community is fundamental to comprehensive planning. This section highlights Athens’ SWOTs, which were created with input from our community. They help frame both the needs and options to secure our future. SWOTs point out what strengths need to be maintained, what weaknesses should be addressed, what opportunities we can take advantage of, and what threats are to be prevented. Strengths are internal resources and capabilities that affect the Town and Village. Weaknesses are internal deficiencies in resources or capabilities that negatively impact Athens. Opportunities are potential projects or programs that could be taken advantage of to improve the quality of life in Athens and threats are external influences coming from outside the community.

The SWOTs provide the foundation for Athens’ vision, goals, and future actions. Each of the following SWOTs reflect a general consensus from the public on what Athens’ significant features and issue are and what the community would like to see in the future. Volume 2 of this Plan offers further details that accounts for all input from the Athens’ community.

Strengths to Be Maintained

Town and Village Strength	Village Strength	Town Strength
Location and Proximity	Character	Rural Character
Sense of Community	Restaurants	Good Roads
Hudson River	Cultural Opportunities	Aesthetics
Sense of Safety	Community Services	
Environment	Walkability	Remaining Farms and Farmland
Historic Character	Commitment to Addressing Climate Change	Sleepy Hollow and Green Lakes
	Historic Character	Route 9W Commercial Corridor

Weaknesses to be Addressed

Town and Village Weakness	Village Weakness	Town Weakness
Lack of Communication, Collaboration, and Community Building Efforts	Derelict Buildings	Lack of Business
Derelict Buildings and Unmaintained Properties	Lack of Businesses and Job Opportunities	Lack of Town Parks
Poor Local Building Code Enforcement	Water and Sewer Infrastructure That Needs Repair	Spotty Broadband Services
Attitudes	Waterfront Needs Vision, Needs Improvement, Needs to Focus on Recreation and Small Businesses	Solar Farms That Use Open Spaces and Farms

Town and Village Weakness	Village Weakness	Town Weakness
Truck Traffic Through Town	Speeding in Village, Lack of Parking	Lack of Police Presence
More Education, Cultural Activities, Recreation Needed	Lack of Affordable Housing	
High Taxes		
Adverse Impacts of Industries		
Limited Access to Local Foods		

Opportunities to take Advantage of

Topic Area	Highlights (See Volume 2 for Additional Details)
Business and Economic Development	Build on assets, enhanced marketing, promote businesses that meet local needs, more walking and biking trails, develop incentives and programs to attract and support businesses, ensure zoning is supportive of small businesses, focus waterfront on small business and recreation, enhanced promotion, balanced development
Community Character	Adaptive reuse of buildings, enhance visual character by dealing with derelict buildings, maintain property affordability, preserve integrity of small town
Environment, Ecosystems, Open Space, and Scenic Beauty	Preserve agriculture and open spaces, scenic view protections, promote energy efficiency, expand pedestrian access to natural areas, implement climate smart initiatives, protect water and air and habitats
Transportation, Communication, and Infrastructure	Broadband throughout Town, repair water and sewer infrastructure, repair and improve sidewalks, enhance street lighting, fix roads, reduce speeding
Historic Character, Recreation, Cultural Resources, and Education	Enhance code enforcement, encourage renovation of old houses, use of tax credits for rehabilitation, provide for more pathways and bike trails, more activities for residents, promote arts and cultural features
Housing	Allow for multi-use buildings for commercial and housing, housing rehabilitation programs, maintain attractive housing, zoning that supports a diversity of housing types
Civic Involvement, Volunteerism, Communication, Local Government, Community Building	Better communication via town meetings, websites, and other tools between residents and local governments, improve collaboration and sharing between Town and Village, encourage more inclusion and volunteerism from a diversity of people in the community, promote transparency in government, additional code enforcement, seek more funding for needed projects

Threats to be Aware of

Outside Factors Perceived to be Threats
Changing demographics, including an aging population and loss of young adults and young families
Climate change
Lack of funding
Natural disasters
Real estate market that influences affordability
Social and cultural divisiveness

Vision

A vision statement describes our community's values and aspirations and offers a shared image of what people want Athens to become over the next 10 to 15 years. The statement is based on extensive community input and addresses all aspects that contribute to the social, cultural, environmental, and economic fabric of the Town and Village.

The future community in Athens is envisioned to be a vibrant and family-friendly place that is warm and welcoming to all. We are full of pride towards our historic, small town, rural, and waterfront character and that character continues to be the foundational features of our unique community. We have a diversity of residents with a wide range of ages, economic, educational, social, and cultural backgrounds united and working together to meet community goals. Both the Town and Village have safe and quiet neighborhoods with well-maintained homes affordable to all. Vacant buildings are maintained and adaptively reused for new uses. Our Village neighborhoods are very walkable with easy access to public infrastructure, services, and facilities such as parks, library, and businesses. Village amenities, together with the lower density, rural, residential areas in the Town, create a unique quality of life for residents and visitors.

The waterfront is focused on a variety of outdoor recreational activities and clean, small business enterprises that keep this treasured place clean and ecologically healthy. Our waterfront, parks, arts, and cultural facilities and events are linked with sidewalks, trails, and bike pathways so all can access and enjoy. The Village's historic downtown remains the hub of small-town business activity. The downtown area has a concentration of stores, restaurants and professional service businesses that provides for a variety of necessary goods, services, restaurants, entertainment venues, and attractions that support our residents. We invite tourism based on arts, entertainment, recreation, and niche businesses in a manner that does not detract from the quality of life for our residents. Commercial areas in the Town outside of the Village are well-planned and designed to be economically consistent with the area but also protective of our historic, environmental, character, aesthetic, and other community goals.

We continue to treasure and protect our forested and farmed rural areas with undisturbed views of the Catskill Mountains, Berkshires and Hudson River Valley, our traditional Village setting, and our hallmark Hudson River

waterfront. Farms exist in the Town to provide for fresh, healthy local foods and agricultural products. Athens has long-term programs to ensure it is resilient in the face of changing climate. Athens has clean air, water, and other natural resources and works to protect the Hudson River estuary.

Residents and businesses are supported by respected, well-run, and coordinated municipal governments in the Town and Village. Athens' local governments are transparent, efficiently use tax dollars for public good, and collaborate to provide high-quality municipal services. Water and sewer infrastructure in the Village is improved to fully support both existing and future residential and commercial uses. High levels of volunteerism by residents, homeowners and landowners support all aspects of Athens. There is a strong sense of community. Effective code enforcement contributes to Athens' beautiful appearance. Affordable housing opportunities exist to enable all ages and incomes to live in Athens. New commercial growth and housing are developed in a manner that preserves these essential features of Athens.



Goals and Recommendations

The goals and recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan, when 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. These could be related to establishing or continuing a policy, procedure, regulations, program, event, or other action.

The goals and recommendations developed in support of the Town and Village of Athens Comprehensive Plan were crafted through the efforts of the Committee along with their planning consultants. They are intended to provide more direction and are based on strategies desired to help the Town and Village attain their vision.

The following section represents up-to-date community goals and recommended strategies. These were developed from community and Steering Committee feedback as well as analysis of new data and maps. For continuity, the 2007 Plan's goals and recommendations were evaluated to identify which ones had already been implemented, which ones remain valid to meet current community needs, and which ones were realistic to attain over the next ten to fifteen years. Strategies that remain relevant were included in this Plan update.



All recommendations below are organized by topic. Strategies that have been identified as being most important and/or most urgent are identified as a priority. In the tables below, an icon easily points out priority strategies. Priority strategies are also presented in the Priority Project/Action Plan section of this document.

The following strategies are recommendations that, when implemented, will help the Town and Village of Athens attain its vision and meet community goals as established in this updated Plan.

Economic Development

In order to succeed, a community must have an attractive quality of life, available building sites, a qualified labor force, financial incentives or resources, utilities, and transportation infrastructure to support both commercial and residential activities. These components are integral for 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. Much 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. The Town and Village have a variety of local tourist attractions which are supported and promoted locally as well as regionally through the area Chambers of Commerce and Greene County. With its proximity to the Hudson River, the city of Hudson, and other local Catskill points of interest, the tourism industry will likely continue to play a role in the local economy.

Perspectives about economic-related challenges have not changed much since the 2007 Plan was developed. For the Village and Town of Athens to remain economically sustainable, it must respond to changing conditions. However, in both the 2007 and again in the 2019/2020 Plans, residents expressed the desire for more retail shopping opportunities and services for everyday needs of residents.



Then and Now

In 2007, residents expressed a general dissatisfaction with the empty storefronts and vacant buildings, 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.

In 2020, residents expressed many of the same perceptions ofn both economic strengths and challenges. Vacant buildings, lack of job opportunities, lack of businesses to meet residential needs, and taxes remain issues today. There is support for mixed use, more commercial uses downtown, and a stronger economy. However, current residents want to see more emphasis on recreation, small businesses, and other uses consistent with the waterfront and no longer support large industrial growth along the waterfront. And, while tourism is recognized as a reality and an economic driver, residents want to maintain the residential quality of life and not be simply a tourist economy. As in 2007, preservation of farmland and open space, promotion of a clean environment, and protection of the natural beauty and scenery of the community were important to underpin all economic development.




The following goals and recommendations have been established to address economic assets and challenges.


GOALS

- A. Nurture a vital business-friendly environment for existing and new business enterprises to expand Athens' tax base.
- B. Help adopt a range of employment opportunities in professional and service sectors, commercial and retail enterprises, agriculture, and light manufacturing.
- C. Foster an economy that supports a diverse population.
- D. Cultivate a viable regional tourism economy and position Athens to benefit from increased tourism in a manner that does not detract from residents' quality of life.
- E. As the Hudson River waterfront remains the community's most valuable resource, protect it and its environment, and transform land uses there from industrial and manufacturing to recreational, cultural, and other environmentally sound small businesses.
- F. Enhance accessibility to the waterfront areas, including Middle Ground Flats (owned by New York State), Cohotate Preserve, The Willows, Green Lake, the Kayak Launch and other areas of the Town and Village.
- G. Support the Village's downtown area as a mixed residential and commercial district that provides a variety of necessary goods, services, restaurant, entertainment venues and attractions for residents and for visitors.
- H. Encourage the continued growth and improvement of a range of retail and commercial services in business locations that are aesthetically consistent with the Town and Village character and in an environmentally sound manner.



RECOMMENDATIONS

#	Location	Recommended Strategy or Action	Agency or Group to Take Lead on Implementation
A-1	Town & Village 	Develop joint Town/Village Business Development and Assistance Program which could take many forms, but the strategy is to have a concerted and coordinated economic development program in the Town and Village. Economic development efforts are best organized through a local economic organization or agency. Consider forming a local development corporation ("Local Development Corporation (LDC") or Business Council to promote, recruit, and support small business development. Another option would be to recreate or develop a new Town/Village Local Development Corporation to spearhead revitalization and funding. These efforts should be coordinated with	Village and Town Businesses, Village and Town Boards, Chamber of Commerce, Local Development Corporation


Goals and Recommendations

#	Location	Recommended Strategy or Action	Agency or Group to Take Lead on Implementation
		surrounding towns and existing business groups such as the Chamber of Commerce to benefit all. Whatever form the organization takes, both the Town and Village boards should appoint a board member liaison to this group to ensure coordination and communication. One program that could be coordinated from an LDC or Council is to offer tax and other incentives to attract small businesses. Other roles for this organization would be to assist with development of business plans for new business and support expansion of existing businesses.	
A-2	Village	Explore creation of a downtown Business Improvement District and/or other mechanisms to form a cohesive business district. One important tool to use in this effort is the Main Street Plan which was developed in 2007. That Plan is now part of this updated Comprehensive Plan as appears in Appendix A. See also the Main Street Approach information box, below.	Village Board, perhaps with new Betterment Committee
A-3	Town & Village	<p>Enhance promotion of events, businesses, and recreational opportunities geared to both tourists and residents. Actions to accomplish this include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to create a unified signage and wayfinding system in Athens. Work with ILOVENY promotions to ensure the Riverfront Park is included. • Build on assets that exist in Athens for this. • Zoning, promotion, and program development for business growth should be developed in a manner that ensures that those assets are not overwhelmed with over-use or over-visitation. • Develop new programs and events that build on waterfront assets such as creating an app that includes an interpretive guide and tour of the waterfront as well as developing a kiosk at the waterfront. 	Village and Town Businesses, Chamber of Commerce, Local Development Corporation, Waterfront Advisory Committee
A-4	<p>Village</p> 	The Waterfront Advisory Committee should work to update, and then establish, new priorities and mechanisms to implement the Village’s existing Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan. Work to improve the waterfront recreational, cultural, and economic-related opportunities. The Village Waterfront Advisory Committee shall pay careful attention to Chapter 233 of the Village Code (Waterfront Consistency Review) to ensure that the policies, purposes and common interests contained in the LWRP are met when reviewing applications for actions within the coastal area.	Waterfront Advisory Committee
A-5	Town	The Town of Athens should consider participating in the New York State Department of State’s Local Waterfront Revitalization Program.	Town Board

Goals and Recommendations

#	Location	Recommended Strategy or Action	Agency or Group to Take Lead on Implementation
A-6	Town & Village 	Review and update land use regulations so they are consistent with this Plan. Amend the allowable use sections of zoning to align permitted businesses with the vision and goals established in this Plan for the waterfront. Promote small businesses and discourage large industries. Of special importance in the Village is to update zoning to eliminate heavy industry, industrial manufacturing and processing, and similar uses that adversely impact noise, odor, traffic, environmental health, and community character. Land uses along the waterfront shall prioritize small and non-industrial businesses that are water-dependent and waterfront-related. Zoning along the waterfront should also allow for mixed use buildings that house both non-industrial commercial and residential uses. All zoning updates targeted to the waterfront should take into consideration and plan for sea level rise. See Box, Page 25, for additional information related to waterfront land uses.	Town Board Village Board Village Planning Board Town Planning Board
A-7	Town	Work to expand high-speed broadband services and other telecommunications. Enhancing broadband infrastructure to promote business growth, encourage work from home (WFH) ability, and support tourism, is a fundamental need.	Town Board
A-8	Town & Village 	Identify abandoned or underused commercial properties and develop efforts to encourage adaptive reuse and façade restoration of these properties. For neglected buildings, work with absentee landlords, owners, and residents to improve the use and appearance of buildings. Consider mechanisms such as requiring ‘boarded-up window fees’ to promote better building maintenance. This action includes the need to enhance building and property code enforcement activities, reviewing fees and penalties, helping residents and landowners learn more about building codes and fees.	New Betterment Committee
A-9	Town & Village	Create an inventory of local businesses in the Town and Village and identify gaps in service and retail needs that can be recruited to the area to fill the needs of residents. Of note is the need expressed by residents for more grocery and restaurant choices.	Village and Town Businesses, Chamber of Commerce, Local Development Corporation
A-10	Town & Village	Continue to pursue and then implement Brownfield Opportunity Area grant programs (BOA) to reuse former industrial locations in the Town and Village. Consider adopting stricter local laws protecting the waterfront area and marinas from pollution.	Village Board Town Board
A-11	Village	Evaluate and restructure the existing Revolving Loan Fund or develop other vehicles to enhance recruitment of new--and support of existing, businesses.	Village Board

Goals and Recommendations

#	Location	Recommended Strategy or Action	Agency or Group to Take Lead on Implementation
A-13	Town & Village 	For all economic development programs, proactively reach out to the diverse population in the Town and Village and ensure opportunities are available to under-represented populations.	Village and Town Board with Business Community and Local Development Corporation and other business groups working on economic development

Waterfront Land Uses in the Village of Athens

To meet waterfront-related goals, and especially recommendation A-6, above, zoning in the Village should be updated. Updates include but are not limited to updating allowable uses and definitions.

Currently, Village Code 250-41 includes the following relevant definitions:

COMMERCIAL USE: Any business whose primary purpose is retail or wholesale trade, any nonprofessional customer service. Commercial use includes retail establishments, offices, professional and personal services, light manufacturing and assembly, branch banks, financial services, health care services, indoor theaters, conference centers, laboratories and associated research facilities whose products or waste products entail no special environmental handling requirements, studios, broadcast facilities (excluding towers), inns, restaurants without drive-through windows, bars, and day-care facilities as a principle use.

INDUSTRIAL USE: Any activity conducted in connection with the manufacture, assembly, disassembly, fabrication, resource recovery, storage or processing of materials or products, all or any part of which is marketed for wholesale or retail purposes.

To address the goals and strategies recommended in this Plan, these definitions could be updated as follows (cross-out and bold illustrates recommended changes). In updating these definitions, the Village Board should consider including a threshold of employees and capital involved in the industrial use definition and adding a definition for 'light manufacturing' so as not to limit desired home-based and small businesses that involve manufacture and assembly of products. New definitions could be:

COMMERCIAL USE: Any business whose primary purpose is retail or wholesale trade, any nonprofessional customer service. Commercial use includes retail establishments, offices, professional and personal services, ~~light manufacturing and assembly~~, branch banks, financial services, health care services, indoor theaters, conference centers, laboratories and associated research facilities whose products or waste products entail no special environmental handling requirements, studios, broadcast facilities (excluding towers), inns, restaurants without drive-through windows, bars, and day-care facilities as a principle use. **Industrial uses and light manufacturing, as defined in this zoning law shall be considered as separate uses and not commercial uses.**

INDUSTRIAL USE: Any activity conducted in connection with the manufacture, assembly, disassembly, fabrication, resource recovery, **debris recovery, or** storage or processing of **residual, finished, or raw** materials or products, all or any part of which is marketed, **transported, or sold** for wholesale or retail purposes. **Industrial uses include those commonly referred to as 'heavy industrial', 'manufacturing', and similar uses that are a high intensity land use needing multiple employees and large capital expenditures to operate and that may be associated with adverse impacts such as but not limited to noise, odor, vibration, air quality, water quality, traffic, or creation of hazardous waste or light pollution.**

LIGHT INDUSTRY OR MANUFACTURING: A use in which a product is manufactured but the manufacturing process and facility have minimal impact on the property where the manufacturing takes place and almost none on adjacent properties or the environment, with qualities including no creation of noise, vibration, light, odor, dust, smoke, or other air pollution noticeable at or beyond the property line; no change to the character of the surrounding neighborhood; and no chemical, metal, or hazardous waste, or potential contamination of surface or groundwater.

More About the Main Street Approach. 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™. In 2007, the Village of Athens developed a Main Street Revitalization Plan. This is appended to this Plan. The Main Street Approach is recommended in both the Village of Athens Main Street Revitalization Plan and this Comprehensive Plan. The National Trust for Historic Preservation offers the following 8 principles that must be combined with the Main Street 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.

d. **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.

e. **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.

- e. **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.
- f. **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.
- g. **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.

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 Hooeberg 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 Hooeberg 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, Murderers 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 the Hudson River shoreline in Athens is considered to be critical wildlife habitat, particularly in the West Flats area in the northeastern portion of the town. The NYS Natural Heritage Program designates several 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

Goals and Recommendations

the Department of State's Coastal Zone Management Program. Other areas containing significant habitat clusters can be found near 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 Coxsackie 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 in both 2007 and 2019/2020 indicates that Town and Village residents highly value Athens' scenic nature and surrounding landscape. People noted the quaint small-town architecture and layout, its Hudson River setting and waterfront, the quantity of green open space, the diversity of natural habitats, and views of the Catskills Mountains and foothills. They also want to ensure the perpetuation of clean water and air.


Since 2007, climate change has become more of an issue worldwide including in Athens. As a result, the Village of Athens has begun participation in the NYS DEC Climate Smart Community Program. The community desires to address sea level rise and ensure long-term resiliency and sustainability.

The following goals and recommendations have been established to address open space, environmental, natural resource, and scenic needs.

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 from pollution 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 and residential buildings.
 - E. Conserve and protect the Hudson River Estuary and its associated natural resources, habitats, and wildlife.
 - F. Provide for programs and policies that support climate resiliency and sustainability.
 - G. Ensure that renewable energy development in the Town is consistent with Town and Village goals as established in this Plan.
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RECOMMENDATIONS

#	Location	Recommended Strategy or Action	Agency or Group to Take Lead on Implementation
B-1	Town & Village	<p>Amend zoning and other regulations in the Town and Village to protect natural resources to the maximum extent and to promote green building and green infrastructure developments. These efforts should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that floodplain laws are up to date to address climate change related flood impacts. • To help absorb water fluctuations and build resilience, create areas along the waterfront that limit vegetation removal or replanting of native vegetation. • Local laws should control erosion on steep slopes. • Amend Town and Village zoning and subdivision laws to prevent negative impacts to identified important visual corridors and scenic locations. Prior to this action, develop a scenic resources inventory in the Town and Village including visual corridors to the Hudson River. • Using the scenic inventory, identify locations that could benefit from selective vegetation management to maintain views of the Hudson River. 	Village Planning Board Town Planning Board, Village Conservation Advisory Council
B-2	Town & Village 	Work with landlords, owners, and residents 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.	Town Board, Village Board
B-3	Village	Maintain and enhance tree canopy in the Village. A Tree Committee in the Village should establish programs to maintain street trees. Street trees play critical roles in creating pleasant streetscapes, shading pedestrian areas and buildings, and providing habitats among other roles. Consider taking part of the Tree City USA program (National Arbor Day Foundation).	Village Conservation Advisory Council or Tree Committee
B-4	Town & Village	Continue to support annual neighborhood and river cleanup programs. Continue the Town Clean Up Day efforts.	Betterment Committee Town Board
B-5	Town & Village	Protect natural resources. For resources such as forests, efficiently utilize them through sustainable actions. This can be accomplished by:	Village Conservation Advisory Council, Town Planning Board, Village Planning Board

Goals and Recommendations

#	Location	Recommended Strategy or Action	Agency or Group to Take Lead on Implementation
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that planning board and zoning board members have necessary tools to identify and evaluate natural resources. • Use data and maps included in the Greene County Natural Resource Inventory (NRI) that include detailed descriptions and maps of all the natural resources county-wide. • Planning boards and ZBA’s should have maps, information, and other tools available and on-hand during project reviews. • The boards should be familiar with other tools to help them confirm or learn about the area’s natural resources through the Greene County GIS mapping and the NYS DEC Hudson Valley Natural Resource Mapper. • Use Greene County SWCD, USDA NRCS, and Cornell Cooperative Extension programs to promote best management and sustainable practices. • Incorporate NYS Model Local Laws to Increase Resiliency wherever applicable in municipal codes, local laws, and planning documents in the Town and Village. • Promote adaptation to climate change, including sea level rise, by incorporating into planning and engagement. • Revise zoning and subdivision laws to incorporate use of green infrastructure, energy efficient building designs, and use of low impact development methods (LID as per Chapter 5 of the NYS DEC Stormwater Manual) to control stormwater. • Develop and implement a local law enacting Town/Village stormwater management and maintenance standards. • Develop map and overlay encompassing infrastructures such as water and sewer pipes, cables, and drainage systems to ensure that all future development takes these locations and features into consideration. 	
B-6	Town & Village	Enhance training and use of SEQR during all project reviews. All boards should be familiar with the use of the NYS DEC EAF Mapper, the NYS DEC SEQR Workbooks, and other online mapping and information resources available from NYS DEC which were designed to enhance environmental reviews at the local level.	Village Conservation Advisory Council, Town Planning Board, Village Planning Board
B-7	Town & Village	Implement strategies to help move Athens towards energy efficiency and use of green development practices. The Village should continue as a Clean Energy	Climate Smart Community Task Force

Goals and Recommendations

#	Location	Recommended Strategy or Action	Agency or Group to Take Lead on Implementation
		Community and the Town should consider participating in the NYSERDA Clean Energy Communities Program.	
B-8	Town	The Town should consider participating in the NYS DEC Climate Smart Community Program.	Climate Smart Community Task Force
B-9	Town & Village	<p>The Town and Village should evaluate and consider participation in the Community Choice Aggregation Program to lower electricity bills for all (NYSERDA).</p> <p>Evaluate opportunities for use of small scale or community scale solar facilities to generate electricity for use in and around the Village.</p> <p>Use solar panels to support municipal electrical needs. These facilities may be particularly useful at park and recreation facilities.</p>	Climate Smart Community Task Force
B-10	Village	The Village should implement the NYS DEC Climate Smart strategies.	Village Conservation Advisory Council, Climate Smart Community Task Force
B-11	Town & Village	Review local land use regulations to maximize environmental performance of new development and to minimize adverse impacts related to noise, odor, and air pollution. Work with the Greene County Soil and Water Conservation District to limit pesticides and salt runoff.	Village Conservation Advisory Council
B-12	Town & Village	Work to reduce waste by developing composting and other waste reduction programs.	CAC
B-13	Town & Village	The Town and Village should develop a policy directing solar development which should be based upon community input. If such policy includes allowance of large solar facilities, enact a solar farm local law to control large solar facilities (< 20 MW can be controlled locally) so that they are sited properly, appropriately screened, and sited to minimize loss of the remaining productive farmland and open spaces in Town.	Town Planning Board, Village Planning Board
B-14	Town & Village	Review local land use regulations to maximize environmental performance of new development and to minimize adverse impacts related to noise, odor, and air pollution.	Town Planning Board, Village Planning Board, Conservation Advisory Council
B-15	Town & Village	Become familiar and work with Greene County to implement strategies and actions from the Greene County Open Space Plan.	Community Preservation Plan Task Force (or Conservation Advisory Council)
B-16	Village	To improve the beauty of the waterfront, continue to work with governing bodies to remove abandoned barges in the River	Village Board

Agriculture

The Town of Athens contains a New York State certified Agricultural District. 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's primary purpose (see the Current Town Zoning District Map) is to protect agriculture by setting a low density for residential development and establishing restrictions on uses that would negatively impact agriculture.

Issues related to agriculture include a fragmentation and loss 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. Farmers have continually faced a very challenging farm economy and many of the former beef and dairy farms are no longer able to continue operations.

However, there is large 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. In the age of COVID, local food security and access to local foods has taken on much more importance and awareness among residents.

The following goals and recommendations have been established to address agriculture in Athens.

GOALS

- A. Promote local foods, agriculturally related businesses, and niche farming, and opportunities for and access to local food production and food processing.
 - B. Protect and enhance existing productive 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.
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RECOMMENDATIONS

#	Location	Recommended Strategy or Action	Agency or Group to Take Lead on Implementation
C-1	Town	The Planning Board should meet all agricultural district review requirement of New York State Agriculture and Markets (NYS AML 25-aa) for projects in a NY Agricultural District. This includes use of the Data Statement, Disclosure Notice, and review of impact on farms.	Town Planning Board, Village Planning Board
C-2	Town & Village	Encourage programs to increase opportunities for sale of local ag products and increase community awareness of farming in Athens. This can be accomplished by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of agri-tourism opportunities • Development of a buy-local program • Support development of regional dairy and other farm processing facilities in the Town • Support development of a local farmers' market to increase availability of local foods. • Ensure that any tourist promotion materials presented by businesses and business groups go beyond the Village of Athens to include promotion of farmlands, farms, and local agricultural products in the Town. 	Farm Community, Business Community
C-3	Town & Village	Properly assess taxation of agricultural structures and properties.	Town Assessor
C-4	Town	Explore additional incentives for agriculture and encourage participation in existing programs such as the NY Ag District Program.	Farm Community
C-5	Town	To protect important farmlands and open spaces, support landowners who wish to place conservation easements on their properties. Further, consider development of a Community Preservation Plan to create a new revenue source that applies only to transfers of land ownership. A Community Preservation Plan must be consistent with the Hudson Valley Community Preservation Act, a law adopted by NYS in 2007 and amended in 2019, that enables local governments to create this funding source. Through this tool, critical open spaces can be preserved over time.	Community Preservation Plan Task Force (or Conservation Advisory Council)
C-6	Town	Seek to include an Agricultural Member on the Planning Board as authorized by NYS Town Law 271. This will help ensure that the agricultural perspective is considered during project review.	Town Board
C-7	Town	Make all Planning Board, ZBA and other members of the public aware of Town Section 99-3 (Right-to-Farm Declaration).	Town Planning Board

Transportation, Parking 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 motor vehicles.

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. This highway is the major vehicular connection to New York City, upstate New York, and interstate travel for cars and trucks in New York State. 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.

Planning process 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 and, most notably, senior citizens. These issues were similar in 2007 as well as again in 2019/2020.


According to all public input for this Plan, updating trails, bike paths and safe biking opportunities - along with significant improvements to the sidewalk system in the Village, were critical. Most residents surveyed also see a strong need for streetscape enhancements and some feel there is a need for more parking in the Village. Some residents also perceive problems relating to traffic volume and speed in specific areas throughout the Town and Village.

The following goals and recommendations have been established to address transportation, parking, and pedestrian needs.

GOALS

- A. Foster a safe and efficient transportation network that addresses existing and future needs of the community. Controlling speeding and truck traffic will increase safety, especially in the Village.
- B. Improve the accessibility to businesses located on Second and Water Streets and other activities in the Village through better signage, parking, sidewalks, and streetscapes.
- C. Maintain and enhance the character and safety of existing streets and sidewalks to promote walkability.
- D. Expand safe and connected sidewalks, bike trails and pathways in appropriate areas throughout the Town and Village.

RECOMMENDATIONS

#	Location	Recommended Strategy or Action	Agency or Group to Take Lead on Implementation
D-1	Town	<p>Enhance road maintenance by developing a Road Maintenance Plan. This could be part of a long-range capital improvement plan (see Municipal Services Strategies below). This Plan can outline both best management and maintenance practices and future capital needs related to implementing those practices. As part of this effort, improvements to streetscapes and use of streets by all forms of transportation should be considered. The Plan should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving the streetscape of Route 385. • Studying traffic and pedestrian conditions and identifying and implementing safety improvements. • Establishing a Traffic Safety Committee. • Working regionally with NYS DOT, the County, and local highway departments to improve safety and lower traffic speeds along Route 385, Second Street, Union Street and Vernon Street in the Village. • Using traffic calming methods such as curb extensions, visual changes, maintenance of street trees, pedestrian refuge islands, chicanes, and other road engineering solutions to increase traffic and pedestrian safety. • Mapping underground infrastructure so those locations are known when future road work is conducted. 	Town and Village Highway Department, Town Board, Village Board
D-2	Village	<p>Develop a Complete Streets Plan for the Village to provide for streets that accommodate vehicles, pedestrians, bikers, and the handicapped. Enhance biking opportunities by planning for bike lanes, bike parking racks, and other bike-safety improvements in all locations and especially on Route 385. Improve streetscapes on Second and Water Streets. Partner with other agencies and organizations to gain sources of funding for this project.</p>	Village Board with Betterment Committee
D-3	<p>Town & Village</p> 	<p>Sidewalks are an important part of the community. They are one of the most highly valued features, especially in the Village. As part of the Complete Streets Program, construct new or improve existing sidewalks in the Village. Work with NYS DOT to improve sidewalks along Route 385.</p> <p>To assist in this project, the Village could establish a sidewalk fund or include sidewalk maintenance in their capital improvement plan to ensure monies are available long-term for maintenance of this vital public infrastructure.</p>	Village Board

Goals and Recommendations

#	Location	Recommended Strategy or Action	Agency or Group to Take Lead on Implementation
		For new development ensure that zoning law requires sidewalk construction and placement standards for new development.	
D-4	Town & Village	Create pedestrian and bicycle routes to connect important locations in and about Athens including sidewalks, bike trails, and paths along public roads and byways. Of special importance would be to develop more Riverfront pedestrian links. Seek grant funds (via NYS DOT or NYS DOS Local Waterfront Revitalization Program) to attain easements or title to create riverfront pedestrian trails that link with the downtown area.	Conservation Advisory Council
D-5	Town & Village	Develop a village-wide parking management plan designed to optimize use of available or new spaces to meet Village needs. Such a plan should inventory all available spaces and explore alternatives such as shared parking lots and spaces that could be available for future parking. The parking plan should also address road surfaces and maintenance of parking lots to allow for long-term reduction of stormwater runoff through methods such as allowing for or requiring pervious surfaces. As a result of this plan, review and amend zoning where necessary to establish those parking lot construction and maintenance standards. Further, work with developers to minimize traffic impacts and implement traffic access management techniques such as shared ingress/egress points and minimizing curb cuts.	Business Community, Village Board, Village Planning Board, Town Planning Board
D-6	Town & Village	Encourage enhanced use of the local bus service and of the Hudson River for new or expanded transportation modes and to increase public transportation options. Work with other River towns to explore River modes of transportation.	Village Board, Town Board
D-7	Town & Village	During project review, planning boards should ensure that new development minimizes traffic impacts and implements traffic and access management methods. On high-use streets and roads, planning boards should ask for traffic impact analysis studies whenever a project is projected to have 100 cars or more utilizing the roadway per day.	Town Planning Board, Village Planning Board
D-8	Village	Update waterfront and River infrastructure to accommodate additional River traffic for daily and recreational boat use.	Waterfront Advisory Committee Village Board

Historic, Cultural and Recreational Resources

Many 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. 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), the Zion Lutheran Church (Village), and the Haight Gantley House (Village). The Stewart House B&B, the Athens Opera House, the Jan Van Loon House (which is undergoing 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 (Isaac Hallenbeck, proprietor) on Route 9W, the Native American encampment area, located 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, historically important cemeteries, the Athens Community Center, Athens Museum, Athens Cultural Center, and the D. R. Evarts 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.

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 Fourth Street Boat Launch. Important community recreational facilities include the following: NYS Boat Launch at Murderer's Creek, Athens Recreation Association (Community Pool), Cohotate Preserve and Brandow Point, and the EJ Arthur Elementary School playground.

Community members highly value the historic, cultural, and recreational resources, and the resulting character in Athens and that the overriding sentiment is that these features add significantly to the quality of life in the Town and Village. These perceptions have not changed since the original Plan in 2007. 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 and Recommendations

The following goals and recommendations have been established to address historic, cultural, and recreational needs.


GOALS

- A. Enhance the use of and access to the Hudson River and its waterfront as a centerpiece for recreational, social, cultural, and economic activities in Athens. Limit new industrial uses there.
- B. Preserve the historic character of Athens while promoting new and affordable uses.
- C. Preserve and enhance historic residential and commercial structures and promote the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of vacant structures.
- D. Ensure that Athens has high-quality, aesthetically pleasing, and safe pathways for walking, cycling and other outdoor activities.
- E. Diversify and enhance year-round recreational activities for all ages including indoor and outdoor sports, and other similar activities.
- F. Diversify and enhance year-round cultural activities for all ages including art exhibits, concerts, redevelopment of the Athens Museum, and historic home tours.
- G. Promote connections between part-time, new and long-term residents along with visitors to bridge culture gaps, foster a diverse and accepting community, and expand housing and economic opportunities.
- H. Promote interest and involvement by residents in local cultural resources.


RECOMMENDATIONS

#	Location	Recommended Strategy or Action	Agency or Group to Take Lead on Implementation
E-1	Town & Village	Planning and Zoning Boards should use the State Historic Preservation Office for technical advice during project review.	Town Planning Board, Village Planning Board
E-2	Town & Village	Athens building inventory is one of its greatest assets. To ensure this remains so, establish additional local incentives for historic preservation such as property tax rebates, façade improvement programs, etc. This is very important given the perception that historic preservation increases building rehabilitation costs. This perception leads to some owners choosing to abandon or stop maintenance. Consider new mechanisms for funding assistance. Review and update the current Village Historic Revolving Loan Fund criteria to enhance its use and effectiveness.	Town Board, Village Board, New Historic Commission, Village Planning Board

Goals and Recommendations

#	Location	Recommended Strategy or Action	Agency or Group to Take Lead on Implementation
		<p>Seek grants and other sources of funding that will allow landowners to focus on rehabilitation and re-use of buildings.</p> <p>Adaptive reuse of existing and historic buildings in the Village can be further supported with zoning that allows mixed-use (commercial and residential), conversion to residential, use of townhomes or condominiums, and affordable apartment living opportunities.</p>	
E-3	Village	<p>Provide more information to residents about National/State Historic District and local zoning districts. This should include information about what it means to be in such a district-- especially the benefits, expectations, and assistance that may be available. This can be placed on the Village website or other social media. Ensure that owners are aware of locations of National Register eligible properties. Of equal importance is to help owners understand the rehabilitation expectations. Consider developing an illustrated 'design guideline' to help people visually understand historic design and architectural features as well as the options for attaining those features during a building rehabilitation. To further enhance understanding and promotion of historic structures, consider development of a historic marker program.</p>	New Historic Commission
E-4	Village & Town	<p>In the Village, review historic district boundaries and evaluate the need and desire for expanding this to other locations. Further explore the desire and benefits to creating a historic district transitional area to buffer full historic district areas. At the Town level, consider doing a full historic survey to identify historic resources. Fully use the GIS database for mapping and use of this information.</p>	New Historic Commission
E-5	<p>Town & Village</p> 	<p>Work with landlords and owners to improve use and appearance of historic buildings. Enhance code enforcement activities to address vacant and derelict buildings. More attention required for enforcement efforts and fines on those ignoring local building and preservation codes. This also will require strong enforcement of building and property maintenance codes and ongoing work with owners to help them understand rules and enforcement policies.</p>	Historic Commission, Village Board, Code Enforcement Officer
E-7	Village	<p>Apply for Certified Local Government Status with SHPO to gain technical expertise related to historic preservation and other grant options.</p>	Village Board

Goals and Recommendations

#	Location	Recommended Strategy or Action	Agency or Group to Take Lead on Implementation
E-8	Town & Village 	Build on existing capital improvement planning that identifies capital projects addressing all building, infrastructure, and recreation needs-- along with providing for long-term costs and budgets.	Town Board, Village Board
E-9	Town	Elevate the understanding and awareness of the Flint Mine National Historic District in Town.	New Historic Commission
E-10	Village	Develop a façade restoration program in the Washington and Second Street area. Secure development grants focusing on rehabilitation and reuse of existing buildings.	New Historic Commission
E-11	Town & Village	<p>Improve the waterfront by creating interpretive guides/tours, developing a unified theme and message about the Hudson and Athens, expanding historic walking tours, developing a comprehensive signage system with adjacent river towns, redesigning the walking path map, and continuing and expanding events at the waterfront.</p> <p>Complete the Waterfront Revitalization Project and implement other existing LWRP recommendations. These include working to expand uses at Riverfront Park, including helping establish bike and kayak rentals, and creating and maintaining vistas to the river. A priority project should be to work with NYS to upgrade and repair the State Boat Launch.</p> <p>Other important actions would be working to enhance Middle Ground Flats, located in the Hudson across from Athens, for outdoor recreation activities improving walking opportunities at Four Mile Point Preserve, and working to remove/rehabilitate abandoned barges.</p>	Waterfront Advisory Committee
E-12	Town & Village	Establish a Town/Village Recreation Committee to develop recreational programs for all age groups. This committee should work with, among others, the Youth Recreation Committee to help develop a community-wide recreational strategic plan. Consider forming a multi-town Pathways Committee to identify and develop bike/hike trails. Seek new pathways to bring pedestrians from all parts of the Town to the waterfront and downtown area. These efforts should coordinate with the School District, find partnerships between the Town and Village and landowners, etc.	Town and Village Recreation Committee
E-13	Town & Village	Enhance cultural resources by increased marketing. Work with community groups to promote events at the Athens Cultural Center, Riverfront Park, and	All groups

Goals and Recommendations

#	Location	Recommended Strategy or Action	Agency or Group to Take Lead on Implementation
		<p>other locations in Village and Town. Work with the local schools and summer youth programs to develop enrichment programs. Seek new events and ways to expand cultural and recreational activities year-round.</p> <p>Create new methods to inform residents about all cultural, historical, and recreational opportunities in Athens. A promotional campaign to build involvement in, visitation of, and pride in these unique resources can be developed. Consider using technology to accomplish this such as mobile apps to guide walking tours or visits to certain locations, up-to-date websites linked with the multitude of other tourist related websites, and signage and banners.</p>	
E-14	Town	<p>Green Lake is an asset heavily used for recreation. Work with other government partners to create more recreational opportunities at this location. Creation of additional trails, activities, and lake-related recreation events, along with possible parking at an adjacent county-owned parcel, could enhance the recreational value of this location.</p>	Town and Village Recreation Committee
E-15	Town & Village	<p>Make the Athens Museum contents more accessible and useable to all.</p>	Town Board

Housing

The availability of good quality housing is vital to the future economic growth and stability of the Town and Village of Athens. There is a growing concern about housing affordability in the community. Recent introduction of short-term rentals in Athens is perceived by some to have both removed housing opportunities and increased housing prices due to competition.

Current research has determined that homeownership is not affordable in the Village or Town (see Volume II). A common analysis tool to determine the affordability of ownership of 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 indicated a significant increase in the price of homes in both the Village and the Town of Athens. In 2000, the affordability index was 2.17 and 2.2, Town and Village, respectively. By 2005, the affordability ratio was 3.31 for the Village of Athens and 3.62 for the Town of Athens. Recent data suggests affordability has worsened since then. In 2018, 210 households in the Town and 60 in the Village had an affordability ratio of > 4. Residents 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. Many of the housing issues overlap with the need for improved code enforcement. The following Goals and Recommendations have been developed to address the future needs for housing:

The following goals and recommendations have been established to address housing needs.

GOALS

- A. Promote a mix of quality housing options in both the Town and Village of the style and 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.
 - D. Allow for home occupations and other uses such as short-term rentals in residential structures that are consistent with and preserve neighborhoods and neighborhood character.
-

RECOMMENDATIONS

#	Location	Recommended Strategy or Action	Agency or Group to Take Lead on Implementation
F-1	Town & Village 	Strongly enforce building and property maintenance codes to ensure Athens' housing stock is accessible, safe, of high quality, and contribute positively to neighborhood property values. A key housing strategy is to improve the appearance of vacant and dilapidated buildings to improve both housing options and appeal.	Town and Village Enforcement Officers
F-2	Town & Village	Seek funding to develop home rehabilitation programs to improve sub-standard housing. Utilize programs to help residents and owners maintain their homes such as leverage grants, tax credits, community intervention, and low-cost supervised loans. The existing Village Revolving Loan fund will continue to be an important mechanism to accomplish this action.	Village Board, Town Board
F-3	Town & Village	Require developers of large housing projects to provide at least 10% of the units as low or moderately- priced units and provide density bonuses in return. This would be established via zoning law amendments.	Town Planning Board, Village Planning Board
F-4	Town & Village	Create mechanisms via zoning amendments to promote development of more senior housing such as providing density bonuses and ensuring that zoning allows and provides reasonable standards for this development.	Town Planning Board, Village Planning Board
F-5	Town & Village	Review Planned Unit Development (PUD) requirements in zoning to require residential PUDs to have a mix of housing types geared for different income levels.	Town Planning Board, Village Planning Board
F-6	Town & Village	Continue zoning practices that promote construction and siting of new housing that reflects Athens' community character.	Town Planning Board, Village Planning Board

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

By far, keeping Athens a safe place to live, updating water and sewer facilities in the Village, and addressing dilapidated and vacant buildings were considered 'very important' municipal needs.

Topics related to safety, building rehabilitation, and infrastructure improvements were identified as important issues. Some people are in favor of consolidating Town and Village services as well. More code enforcement and helping residential and commercial owners make basic upgrades to buildings are key.

The following are Goals and Recommendations for the future needs of municipal services and infrastructure identified as important throughout the planning process.

The following goals and recommendations have been established to address municipal and community resource needs.




GOALS

- A. Enhance code enforcement activities in the Town and Village.
- B. Update water, sewer, and stormwater infrastructure.
- C. Support provision of high-speed internet to all locations in Town as a necessary infrastructure for work, school, the economy, and recreation.
- D. Provide for public infrastructure and services, including recycling and composting, designed to meet the needs of current and future residents.
- E. Promote public safety.
- F. Promote transparency, communication, and collaboration between and among both Town and Village governments as well as with residents. Establish methods of communication that uses social media and email.
- G. Plan for and communicate about the community hazard mitigation and disaster preparedness.


Goals and Recommendations

- H. Foster an environment that sees community building, volunteerism and community aid as integral to the success and well-being of Athens.


RECOMMENDATIONS

#	Location	Recommended Strategy or Action	Agency or Group to Take Lead on Implementation
G-1	Village 	Upgrade the public water supply system in the Village and make necessary improvements to the stormwater management system and two sewer treatment plants. These critical infrastructures should be upgraded to meet both current and future needs. Study and consider expansion of public water to commercial properties at 9W/Schoharie Turnpike intersection.	Town Board, Village Board
G-2	Town & Village 	Promote opportunities for building community and increasing volunteerism and community aid within the Town and Village. Involve residents and recruit volunteers to serve on the committees recommended in this Plan. Of critical importance is the Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee which will need to take on the leadership and coordination roles required to implement this Plan. The committee should also regularly review this Plan’s goals and recommendations to ensure that they are relevant to the changing conditions in the Town and Village going forward. Other new committees to implement the recommended actions in this Plan might include a Betterment Committee, Climate Smart Community Task Force, Community Preservation Plan Task Force, Recreation Committee, and Historic Committee, Welcome Wagon, etc..	Town Board, Village Board
G-3	Town & Village	Ensure that all planning process in the Town and Village empowers residents to contribute community- focused solutions to challenges.	Village Board, Town Board
G-4	Town & Village	Invest resources in individuals and organizations that work to provide services to underserved groups within the community (i.e., food/meals/activities for seniors, food pantry, youth programming, after-school and general childcare, local schools, and library).	Town Board, Village Board, All Groups and Agencies
G-5	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 other NYS programs that may be available from agencies such as the NYS Comptroller and the NYS Department of State to assist in this effort. Some mechanisms to accomplish this include:	Town Board, Village Board

Goals and Recommendations

#	Location	Recommended Strategy or Action	Agency or Group to Take Lead on Implementation
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have planning boards share project information about project reviews and SEQR to consider inter-municipal impacts of development proposals. For some projects being reviewed, inter-municipal review is required. For others where it is not required, make it a policy of the Town and Village to consider inter-municipal impacts of development proposals on the environment including historic and aesthetic resources. • Consider joint planning and/or zoning boards of appeals. • Consider sharing code enforcement personnel to expand enforcement capability. • Develop mechanisms to create strong links between the Town and Village websites. • Continue to share-- and expand ways to share, administrative functions such as accounting (staff, payroll processing, software), procurement, tax collection and assessments, and records management. Consider forming a health insurance cooperative for municipal staff. • Continue to share highway equipment and crews and other general operations. • Continue to share justice court. • Share ad hoc committees (e.g., recreation, cultural events, the implementation of this Plan, etc.) • Continue to share a municipal building to facilitate efficiency for citizens and communication between the two municipalities. • Consider having a shared Town/Village Conservation Advisory Council (CAC) 	
G-6	<p>Town & Village</p> 	<p>Improve communication and collaboration between the Town and Village and between the local governments and residents/landowners. The existing Communication and Social Media Committee at the Village level could play an important role in this. This should use technology by effectively utilizing email newsletters/notices, a unified community calendar, and keeping municipal websites up-to-date and relevant. Consider having one Athens website that has different pages for the Village and the Town. This not only encourages sharing and transparency but may control costs as well for upkeep of the website. Use social media more effectively to inform and involve the Athens community.</p>	<p>Town Board, Village Board, Communications and Social Media Committee</p>

Goals and Recommendations

#	Location	Recommended Strategy or Action	Agency or Group to Take Lead on Implementation
		To build community and enhance communication, effective working relationships, and unity, hold a joint Town/Village town hall meeting (in person or online or both) several times a year.	
G-7	Town & Village	Enhance community spirit and involvement by improving engagement with and volunteerism in local government and community activities. This is especially important as many of the tasks needing to be implemented require volunteers to serve on ad hoc committees. To accomplish this, the Town and Village needs to establish clearly articulated goals and time frames for volunteer activity, limit requests so that the 'ask' is not overwhelming, prioritize the needs for volunteers, regularly publicize and show appreciation for volunteer efforts, and provide any training that may be needed to get the tasks-at-hand accomplished.	Town Board, Village Board
G-8	Town & Village	Economic programs or organizations created to enhance the economy in Athens should seek to guarantee inclusion of, and benefits for, the diverse populations in Athens, with special attention placed on representation across income levels, gender identity, race, and sexual orientation. All programs should reach out to those populations that may not typically or comfortably engage in municipal efforts.	Town Board, Village Board
G-9	Town & Village	Work with Greene County and other Hudson River towns to coordinate regional programs and issues.	Town Board, Village Board
G-10	Town & Village	Continue to invest in, support and evolve fire, police, and emergency medical services to meet current and future needs.	Town Board, Village Board
G-11	Town & Village	Make public spaces accessible to all	Town Board, Village Board
G-12	Town & Village	Continue to leverage external resources and funding to achieve the goals and strategies outlined in this Plan.	Town Board, Village Board
G-13	Town & Village 	Review fees and penalties and improve services related to code enforcement. Create opportunities for residents and property owners to learn more about building codes, fees, and penalties via website and other mechanisms.	Town Board, Village Board

Implementation Plan

Priority Actions and Implementation Steps

This section outlines an action plan to implement the Comprehensive Plan’s recommendations. 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:

A. Inform the Public About the Plan

After adoption, the Town and Village boards should ensure that copies of this Plan are available at the Village and Town Halls, in the local library, and on the municipal websites.

B. Inform Local Boards and Committees

The Town and Village should ensure that this Plan is widely distributed to members of all boards and committees working on behalf of the municipality including Planning Boards, ZBA’s, Conservation Advisory Council, etc.

C. Provide Maps in Digital and Printed Format

The Town and Village should provide for a full set of maps included in this Plan in both digital form and large-scale printed maps for use by the Planning Board(s), Building Inspector, Town Board, Village Board, Town Clerk, Conservation Advisory Council and other future boards and committees where these resources are required or beneficial.. The maps should be readily available for reference and for decision-making. Ensure that the maps are all available online and are maintained over time on the website as changes are made. The Town and Village may want to coordinate and have one set printed and framed for use in the Town Hall or in a map file for use by both planning boards or others, as needed.

D. Create a Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee

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 for implementing this Plan, they will need assistance from various boards, agencies, and organizations for specific strategies recommended in the Plan. As outlined in the above recommendations (G-2), many of the strategies recommended in this Plan will be more successfully implemented when the expertise and interest of volunteers, businesses, and organizations are involved. It is recommended that the Boards jointly appoint a committee that includes interested residents, stakeholders, and representatives of both elected and appointed boards. The Boards should call upon other partners as required...

The Town and Village Boards should direct the Implementation Committee (and others working on related projects) to prioritize projects, set realistic expectations, identify short-term and long-term actions, identify funds needed, create specific but realistic tasks, establish time frames that include an end-date for completion to guide volunteers, and support their efforts with funding or provide direction for finding funding, if needed.

E. Form Additional Committees

Additional committees are recommended in this Plan to work with the Implementation Committee. New committees that could aid in implementation include:

- Local Development Corporation
- Betterment Committee
- Community Preservation Plan Task Force
- Historic Commission
- Town and Village Recreation Committee
- Welcome Wagon

F. Set Annual Implementation Goals and Priorities and Hold Annual Community Meetings

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

At the above-mentioned annual meeting(s), or shortly after, the Town and Village Boards should review the status of implementation of the various components of the Plan. They should ask for reports from the various groups and committees working on implementation so that Board members continue to understand concerns and issues that have arisen during the past year that may need to be addressed in updates to the Plan, local laws or regulatory actions, or other programs.

G. Keep the Comprehensive Plan Current

The Town and Village Boards should update this Plan every ten years. New York State law authorizes municipalities to adopt a comprehensive plan and also states that the “Town (Village) Board shall provide, as a component of such proposed comprehensive plan, the maximum intervals at which the adopted plan shall be reviewed.”

It is recommended that the entire Comprehensive Plan be fully reviewed at least once every five years and then amended where needed. The Plan should be updated or rewritten at least once every ten years.

H. Promote Training of Elected and Appointed Officials

Establish programs for the Zoning Board of Appeals, Planning, Town and Village boards, and the 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.

I. Keep in Close Contact with Planning Boards and ZBA’s

The Village and the Town should establish an annual meeting between their Boards, Planning Board, and Zoning Board of Appeals to discuss issues, problems, and solutions related to land-use and other topics detailed in this Plan.

Local and Regional Coordination and Implementation Partners

This Plan outlines many actions the Town and Village of Athens can take over the next 10 to 15 years to meet its vision and goals. It is critical that the local governments work closely with others to solve problems. This includes organizations, agencies, and individuals within the Town and Village, and also with those in the broader region. It will be critical to forge strong partnerships to implement each step of this Plan. These partners include the following:

- Area businesses and employers including Chambers of Commerce
- Area cultural venues, artists, and museums
- Greene County Planning and Development
- Civic Association(s)
- Historical societies
- New York State DEC and other State agencies
- Athens Library
- Rotary, Lions and similar groups
- Existing Town and Village agencies and Boards including:
 - Assessor(s)
 - Building Departments/Code Enforcement
 - Climate Smart Community Task Force
 - Communications and Social Media Committee
 - Conservation Advisory Committee
 - Highway Departments
 - Planning Boards
 - Police Department
 - Waterfront Advisory Committee
 - ZBA's
- Town, Village and County historian
- Community-based non-profit organizations
- Regional entities in both New York including the Capital District Regional Economic Development Council and the Hudson River Valley Greenway

Priority Projects in Athens

This Plan calls for a variety of policy decisions, program initiations, regulatory changes, coordination with regional organizations and agencies, and, ultimately, securing funding. The following chart is a compilation of the high priority and medium priority actions identified in this Comprehensive Plan. These are listed in the order presented in this plan.

This chart also identifies the type of action and a page reference for that strategy from Volume I. The action table does not list each strategy contained in Volume I of the Plan. Instead, it is a compilation of the major actions deemed important and urgent. The table below also includes a “check when completed” column to serve as an implementation checklist for all involved in bringing this plan to a reality.

Key to Priority Actions

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.

Location	Priority Strategies. These strategies include the highest priority actions, as well as those identified as priority but not urgent, and are listed in the order presented in the Recommendations sections.	Reference in Plan	Type of Project	Check When Completed
Highest Priority Actions				
Town & Village	Develop joint Town/Village Business Development and Assistance Program.	A-1	Program	
Village	Update and then establish new priorities and mechanisms to implement the Village’s Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan.	A-4	Capital Improvement, Program, Regulatory	
Town & Village	Review and update land-use regulations to be consistent with this Plan.	A-6	Regulatory	
Town & Village	Identify abandoned or underused commercial properties and develop efforts to encourage adaptive reuse and façade or other restoration of these properties.	A-8	Program	
Town & Village	For all economic development programs, proactively reach out to the diverse population in the Town and Village and ensure opportunities are available to under-represented populations.	A-13	Policy	
Town & Village	Work with absentee landlords and owners to improve the use and appearance of buildings throughout the Town and Village. Enhance code enforcement activities to address vacant and derelict buildings. Create opportunities for residents and property owners to learn more about building codes, fees, and penalties via website and other mechanisms. Review fees and penalties and improve code enforcement. codes	B-2, E-5, F-1, and G-13	Policy, Program, Regulatory	
Town & Village	Construct new, or improve existing, sidewalks in the Village.	D-3 and others	Capital Improvement	
Town & Village	Build on existing capital improvement planning that identifies capital projects addressing all building, infrastructure and recreation needs along with long-term costs and budgets.	E-8	Capital Improvement	

Location	Priority Strategies. These strategies include the highest priority actions, as well as those identified as priority but not urgent, and are listed in the order presented in the Recommendations sections.	Reference in Plan	Type of Project	Check When Completed
Village	Upgrade the public water supply system in the Village, the stormwater system, and make necessary improvements to the two sewer treatment plants.	G-1	Capital Improvement	
Town & Village	Form and recruit volunteers to serve on the committees recommended in this Plan including the Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee.	G-2	Program	
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 other NYS programs (State Comptroller, Department of State, to assist in this effort.	G-5	Policy, Program	
Town & Village	Improve communication and collaboration between the Town and Village and between the local governments and residents, homeowners, and landowners.	G-6	Program	
Important Projects				
Village	Explore creation of a downtown Business Improvement District and/or other mechanisms to form a cohesive business district.	A-2	Program, Regulatory	
Town & Village	Enhance broadband infrastructure to promote business growth, enhance work from home (WFH) ability, and support tourism	A-7	Capital Improvement	
Town	Participate in the New York State Department of State’s Local Waterfront Revitalization Program.	A-12	Policy, Program but could lead to capital improvement and regulatory	
Town & Village	Amend zoning and other regulations in the Town and Village to protect natural resources to the maximum extent and to promote green building and green infrastructure developments.	B-1	Regulatory	

Location	Priority Strategies. These strategies include the highest priority actions, as well as those identified as priority but not urgent, and are listed in the order presented in the Recommendations sections.	Reference in Plan	Type of Project	Check When Completed
Town	To protect important farmlands and open spaces, support landowners who wish to place conservation easements on their properties. Further, consider development a Community Preservation Plan to create a new revenue source that applies only to transfers of land ownership.	C-5	Program	
Town	Enhance road maintenance by developing a Road Maintenance Plan.	D-1	Program, Capital Improvement	
Village	Develop a Complete Streets Plan for the Village to provide for streets that accommodate vehicles, pedestrians, bikers, and those who are handicapped.	D-2	Program, Capital Improvement	
Town & Village	Create pedestrian routes to connect important locations, including sidewalks, bike trails, and paths. Seek grant funds (via NYS DOT or NYS DOS Local Waterfront Revitalization Program) to attain easements or title to create Riverfront pedestrian trails that link with the downtown area.	D-4	Capital Improvement	
Village	Continue to seek additional public parking in the Village by developing a village-wide parking management plan.	D-5	Program, Capital Improvement, regulatory	
Town & Village	Establish additional local incentives for historic preservation such as property tax rebates, façade improvement programs, etc.	E-2	Policy, Program	
Village	In the Village Zoning Law, allow for many opportunities for adaptive reuse of historic buildings including mixed-use (commercial and residential), conversion to residential, use of townhomes or condominiums, and affordable apartment living opportunities.	E-6	Regulatory	
Town & Village	Enhance cultural resources by increased marketing.	E-13	Program	

Location	Priority Strategies. These strategies include the highest priority actions, as well as those identified as priority but not urgent, and are listed in the order presented in the Recommendations sections.	Reference in Plan	Type of Project	Check When Completed
Town & Village	Make the Athens Museum contents more accessible to the public.	E-15	Program, Capital Improvement	
Town & Village	Seek to guarantee inclusion of and benefits for the diverse population in Athens.	All topics and strategies	Policy	
Town & Village	Continue to invest and support fire, police and emergency medical services and work to enhance them	G-10	Policy, Capital Improvement, Program	

Map List

The following Geographic Information System (GIS) maps have been created to accompany this Comprehensive Plan.

2020 Comprehensive Plan Maps (See Volume 2 for all maps)

Updated maps for the 2020 Plan Include:

- Aerial Photograph, Village
- Aerial Photograph, Town
- Agricultural Zoning Districts and Areas Permitting Agriculture
- Agricultural Zoning Districts, New York State Certified Agricultural Districts, and Current Parcels in Agricultural Use
- Prime Farmland Soils, Soils of Statewide Significance, and Current Parcels in Agricultural Use.
- Historic Buildings and Districts
- Property Class by Tax Parcel Town
- Property Class by Tax Parcel Village
- Zoning Districts Town
- Zoning Districts Village

Maps from the 2007 Include:

- Environmental Constraints
- Surrounding Area
- Geology
- Topography
- Steep Slopes
- Water, Wetlands, Wet Soils
- Flood Hazards
- Coastal Zone
- Habitat Overlays and Predictions
- Scenic Areas of Statewide Significance
- Build-Out Analysis (Town and Village) (Series)
- Main Street Study Maps (Series)
- 9W Corridor Study Maps (Series)
- Water and Sewer Infrastructure (as of 2007)
- Municipally Owned Properties (as of 2007)

Appendix A. 2007 Village of Athens Main Street Revitalization Study

Although developed in 2007, this Main Street Revitalization Study contains many excellent recommendations still relevant today. The 2007 Main Street Revitalization Study grew from an earlier attempt at developing a Main Street Plan. In 2002, the Village developed a draft summarizing the Village's history, demographics, data collection and public opinion however no goals or recommendations were formulated, and that plan was not adopted. However, the 2007 Main Street Revitalization Study was part of the 2007 Comprehensive Plan effort and was adopted along with the other documents. Although some of the demographic information is now dated, the 2007 Main Street Plan remains relevant in its goals and recommendations and is included in this updated 2020 Plan so that it remains at the forefront of planning efforts to implement in the Village.

The 2007 Main Street Revitalization Plan is hereby incorporated into this Comprehensive Plan in its entirety and shall be considered an integral component of the adopted Plan.