



# **THE VILLAGE OF MENANDS**

---

## **COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2020**

Prepared for the Village of Menands by the Chazen Companies



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

---

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMMITTEE

Mayor Meg Grenier

Maureen Long

Bill Nevins

Aileen Nicoll

Nancy Ruppert

Jerry Ruppert

Brandon Stabler

Kerry Wroblewski

Prepared with assistance from the Chazen Companies.

With early assistance from the University at Albany Masters in Regional Planning Program with funding and technical support from the Hudson River Valley Greenway.



# Table of **CONTENTS**

---

- 01** Introduction
- 02** Background
- 04** Future Vision
- 05** Planning Process
- 07** Plan Recommendations
- 09** Land Use and Zoning
- 18** Transportation
- 20** Business Retention and Attraction
- 22** Infrastructure
- 25** Education
- 27** Community Services
- 28** Sustainability and Resilience
- 29** Parks and Open Space
- 31** Housing
- 32** Quality of Life
- 34** Plan Implementation

## **APPENDICES**

---

- A** Inventory and Analysis
- B** Public Engagement
- C** Presentations
- D** Maps



# INTRODUCTION: THE URBAN SUBURBAN VILLAGE

The Village of Menands is a small (3.4 square mile) bedroom community on the northern border of the City of Albany bounded by Interstate 787 and the Hudson River to the east, the Town of Colonie to the west, and the City of Watervliet to the north. In the middle of a growing urban region, the Village of Menands has maintained a tight-knit, small-town character holding true to its official motto, “the Urban Suburban Village.” For the last 40 years the Village’s population has hovered around 4,000. Please see appendix A “Inventory and Analysis” for an in-depth demographic profile of the Village.

Visitors and travelers encounter Menands via Broadway (NYS Route 32) a north-south road paralleling Interstate 787. This former industrial corridor, with large areas that are now underutilized, belies the fact that Menands is primarily a series of well-kept neighborhoods on the hillsides above the Hudson River.

Over the past decade, the Capital District and the cities of Albany, Troy, and Schenectady have experienced a modest, but hopeful, revitalization. There is a growing interest in transforming underutilized industrial sites into residences and businesses, and the Village of Menands has ample opportunity in the Broadway Corridor.

In an effort to reclaim the Broadway Corridor, the Village has taken part in a series of planning efforts over the past two decades. These efforts have resulted in various ad hoc projects, including updated zoning regulations, a series of roadway improvements along Broadway, a tree inventory, and design guidelines. However, until recently, the Village hasn't taken a holistic look at the entire community or prepared a Comprehensive Plan.

Without such a plan, the Village’s ability to strategically implement select goals and secure grant funding has been stymied by the lack of a clearly articulated long range vision. Municipalities depend on the NYS Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) process and other grant opportunities to gain access to funding from state agencies like Empire State Development, Department of State, and the Department of Environmental Conservation. However, without a community plan, municipalities are at a serious disadvantage. This document will serve as a policy document and also as a vehicle to capture grant funding to implement the vision outlined within.

# BACKGROUND

## WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

A comprehensive plan serves as an inventory of community assets, articulates residents' vision for the future, and provides a strategy towards achieving goals and recommendations. A comprehensive plan also serves as a useful benchmark of where the community is at the time of its adoption, cataloguing assets, the makeup of the population, employment patterns, critical infrastructure, transportation systems, and environmental conditions. A Comprehensive Plan is a living document, reflecting the issues and ambitions of a community at one point in time. To maintain relevancy, a Comprehensive Plan should be revisited and revised on a regular basis and completely overhauled as needed.

## ABOUT MENANDS

Menands was first settled in the 1800s and incorporated in 1924. The cities of Watervliet to the north and Albany to the south were developed intensively, but Menands remained lightly populated and was used primarily for horticultural and agricultural purposes. As the region continued to develop, Menands' location near major water transportation routes (the Erie Canal and Hudson River), the railway,

and the turnpike (which preceded Interstate 787 as the main north-south thoroughfare), combined with the availability of open land along what is now the Broadway Corridor, made the Village an attractive place for industry.

Before the construction of Interstate 787 in the early 1970s, the Village of Menands enjoyed access to the Hudson River, which has historically served as an important transportation route.

While the hillsides above the Broadway Corridor were settled as a lower density bedroom community, much like Loudonville and Colonie to the west, the Broadway Corridor prospered with manufacturing and light industrial businesses.



*Louis Menand*



*Community members volunteering at a tree planting event*

Various entertainment venues, including a baseball stadium and amusement park, were found along the Broadway Corridor, as well. However, like so many other places across the northeast, changes in transportation technology and manufacturing processes have resulted in a deindustrialization in the community and the region.

The Broadway Corridor hit a low point in the 1980s as a result of the dual impacts of suburbanization and deindustrialization. However, the Village has always managed to retain its reputation as a desirable bedroom community with a high quality of life. For a more complete history of the Village, please see Appendix A.



## MENANDS TODAY

The Village of Menands is at a critical point. How can ensure a high quality of life and small town feel while allowing for new growth and revitalization? Menands retains a commercial presence along the Broadway Corridor, but the Village primarily serves as a bedroom community for the City of Albany. The Menands public school is top rated in the region, and the Village's residents generally earn more and have above average educational attainment levels. The Village's population is nearly the same as it was in 1980, and much of the upland areas in the western portion of the Village are developed, mature and desirable, single-family suburban neighborhoods.

Over the past few decades, new residential growth in the Village has primarily been constrained to the portion of the Village along Wards Lane that has been designated for multi-family development. Residents are attracted to higher quality rentals in locations that offer a short commute to Albany, are safe, and have a quality school district. One effort of this plan is to balance what residents cherish about Menands with the forces of change. Recognizing that agents of change are internal (local laws and policies) and external (national economic trends, state and federal transportation priorities, etc.), this plan intends to focus the Village's efforts towards maintaining and improving the Village's high quality of life.

---

# VILLAGE VISION

---

To move forward, a community must know where it wants to go. As part of the comprehensive planning process, the Comprehensive Plan Committee (hereafter, 'Committee') developed a vision statement, a forward looking, aspirational statement of intent. The vision statement reflects the values and priorities of residents and what they would like the Village to look like in the next 10 to 20 years. It serves as the foundation upon which the Comprehensive Plan is built and organizes the plan's recommendations.

## *A robust public participation process informed the following future Vision for Menands:*

- The Village of Menands has a recognizable center, or 'downtown.'
- Civic institutions, like parks, the library, the school, and recreational facilities, are well-maintained and important parts of the community.
- Municipal policies and decisions are inclusive of views from homeowners, renters, and business owners, regardless of where they live in the Village.
- There is a strong sense of place reinforced by walkability, civic pride, and well-maintained properties.
- In the middle of a growing region, the Village has maintained its 'small town feel,' while still being open for business.
- New development has resulted in increased availability of services and amenities for residents, improving the Village's quality of life.

This vision statement can serve to orient Village residents and leaders as they develop policies and make decisions about the Village's future. Checking actions against the vision statement can help the Village stay on track to realizing their desired state. When confronted with difficult or contentious decisions, the Village Board should ask themselves, "how does the proposed action support or detract from our vision for the community?"

# PLANNING PROCESS

Planning is an iterative process. In order to reach a consensus on the goals and vision of the community, residents must be engaged in the planning process from start to finish. There also needs to be a review of public input and analysis in order to evaluate the eventual recommendations of the plan. The Village of Menands followed a planning process that maintained public engagement over the course of three years. Beginning in 2017, the Village began working with a resident Committee and the University at Albany Masters in Regional Planning Program Studio Class (hereafter, "Studio") to develop the foundations of a plan. In 2019, the Village hired a planning firm and transitioned from the preliminary inventory and analysis to more focused stakeholder outreach and strategy development. Using the information prepared by the Studio, the Committee continued their work over the course of an additional year.

The following section outlines the key planning and public participation components that provided the basis of the plans recommendations.

## COMMUNITY PROFILE

The Studio developed a robust demographic and physical profile for the Village using a combination of state and federal data sources, GIS mapping, and site visits. The community profile provides the baseline data required to inform the

strategies and recommendations of this plan.

## PREVIOUS PLAN EVALUATION

The Village of Menands has taken part in a variety of planning initiatives over the course of the past two decades, most of which have focused on the Broadway Corridor. At the very beginning of the planning process, the Village's existing plans were reviewed for relevancy. Recommendations from each of the plans were placed in a scoring matrix, and members of the Village Board and the Committee evaluated whether each recommendation was relevant, completed, or incomplete. This matrix provided valuable information about existing plans and the Village's attitude towards each plan's relevancy. Many of the previous recommendations regarding Broadway beautification were deemed relevant by the Committee.

**See Appendix A for "Plan Assessment Matrix for the Village of Menands."**

## COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Committee worked with planning consultants and the Studio throughout the entire planning process. The Committee included elected officials, representatives from Menands School, business owners, long-time residents, and engaged citizens. At each step of the planning process the Committee served as a critical sounding board for new ideas



*Resident and Studio Member at an Open House*

and information. The Committee members also served as ambassadors of the planning process.

## STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Early in the planning process, the Village nominated over 25 individual business owners, residents, and other engaged community members to participate in stakeholder interviews. The Studio developed a series of open-ended questions to ask during in-person, telephone, and email exchanges. The stakeholder interviews were useful for gathering candid insights from a cross-section of the community. The information gathered through this process guided the early research and analysis of the plan's development.

**See Appendix A for "Inventory and Analysis."**



## FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS

The public workshops, stakeholder interviews, and community survey conducted during the early stages of the planning process yielded valuable information about community issues. To dig deeper into the most pressing topics identified by the community through these various public engagement techniques, the Committee convened three focus groups: transportation, infrastructure, and developers. A focus group is a collection of individuals that have a specialized interest or knowledge of a topic area. The meetings were used to gain perspective, generate ideas, and start a dialogue between participants. Information gathered during the focus group meetings was crucial to understanding some of the biggest influences impacting the Village.

## COMMUNITY SURVEY

In 2018, a survey was distributed (in print and digitally) throughout the community. This survey was used to solicit feedback from residents about their needs, priorities, and ideas. The survey allowed planners to evaluate responses by factors such as age and tenancy. The survey received a total of 330 responses, representing nearly 10% of the population. The collected information was invaluable to the planning process.

**See Appendix B, Section 1 for the "Report on Community Survey Analysis for Comprehensive Plan."**

## MEDIA OUTREACH

The Village of Menands added a Comprehensive Plan page to their existing website to explain what a comprehensive plan is and to keep residents up to date on all relevant materials that were developed during the process. Relevant past plans were linked to the website as well. The website served as a useful communication tool and increased transparency in the planning process. The project team also worked with local media outlets to publicize events and explain the planning process to the general public.

## OPEN HOUSES

To engage a wide range of community members in an interactive manner, multiple public open houses were held. Community members were invited to various locations throughout the Village to interact with members of the Committee and the Studio. These events provided residents an opportunity to not only provide input, but to ask questions about the process and have open ended conversations.

## BUILDOUT ANALYSIS

A buildout scenario was developed for the Village of Menands to identify the Village's development potential under existing zoning and land use regulations, in consideration of environmental and regulatory constraints. The analysis allowed the Committee to consider the consistency between the current regulatory environment and the community's vision for the

future. The buildout analysis helped the Committee develop a Future Land Use Map (see "Land Use and Zoning Recommendations") and redevelopment concepts for the Broadway Corridor.

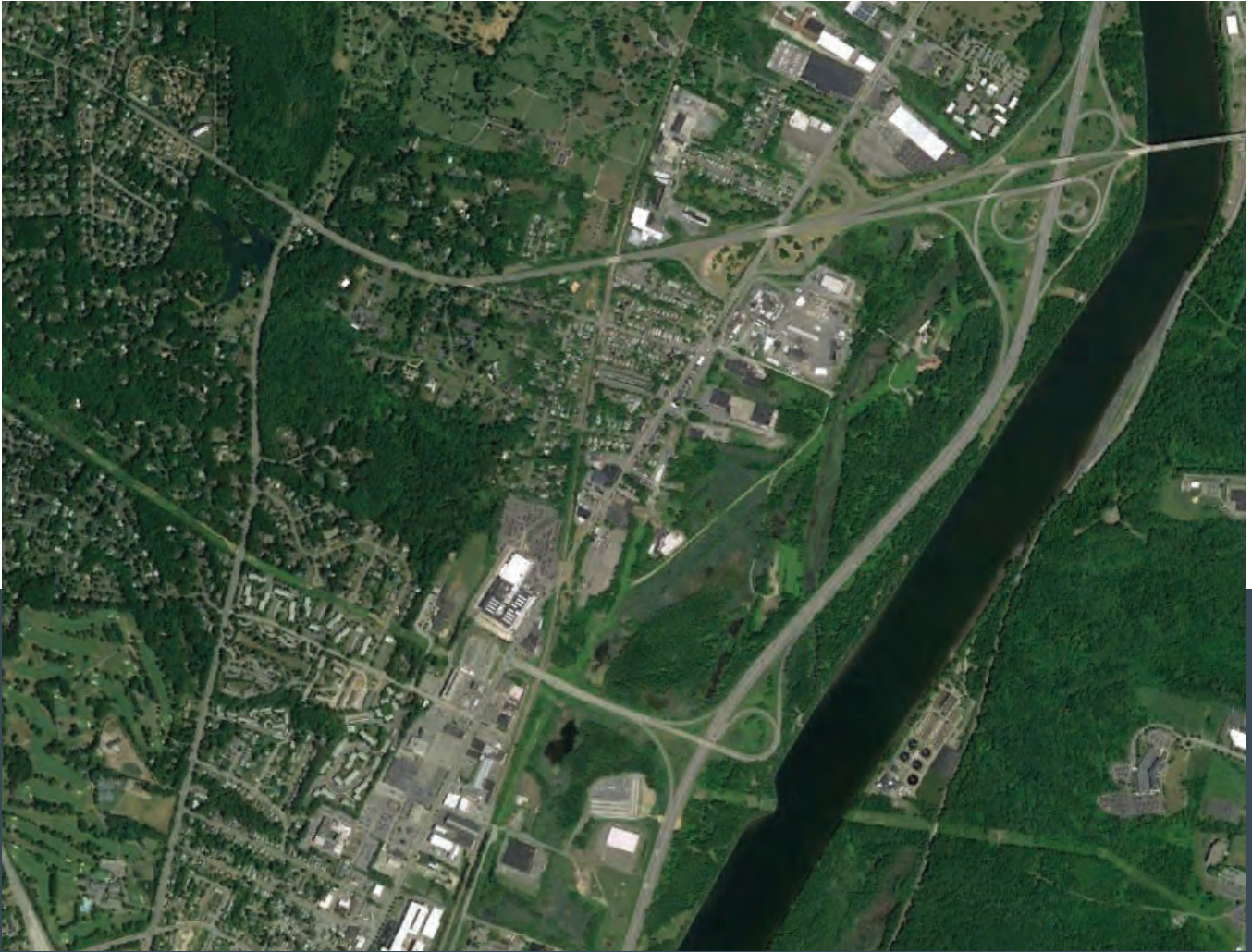
## PUBLIC WORKSHOP

Following the development of a vision statement, the buildout analysis, and focus group meetings, a public workshop was held to re-engage residents and provide updates on the planning process. At this event some of the key findings from the earlier stages of the planning process were reiterated, and the vision statement was reviewed for consistency with residents' interests. Upon the completion of the final public workshop, the Committee jumped into the final stage of the planning process- developing recommendations to achieve the Village's vision.

The appendices contained at the end of this document provide a detailed accounting of the planning process and the public input that went into it.

# PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

---



*The following section outlines the recommended programs, policies, and strategies that will further the Village's vision.*



Over the course of a three-year planning process, hundreds of individuals contributed their ideas and knowledge to develop the Comprehensive Plan. Review of demographic, economic, and land use data provided a solid base upon which the Village was able to refine their vision and identify programs, policies, and strategies that will further the vision.

**The Comprehensive Plan recommendations are categorized into the following topic areas:**

- **Land Use and Zoning**
- **Transportation**
- **Business Retention and Attraction**
- **Infrastructure**
- **Education**
- **Community Services**
- **Sustainability and Resiliency**
- **Parks and Open Space**
- **Housing**
- **Quality of Life**

# Land Use and Zoning Recommendations

New York State is a “Home Rule” state, which means that each municipality is empowered to regulate land use within its boundaries. It was the threat of annexation by the City of Albany in the mid-20th century that prompted the Village to incorporate as a municipality in order to maintain autonomy and a level of government that is appropriate for the small scale of the Village.

In the 1970s, the Village prepared zoning regulations to control the type, size, location, and intensity of residences and businesses. Today, the Village enforces the zoning ordinance, subdivision regulations, and a building code. In 2013, the Village updated portions of the zoning ordinance to promote infill development in the Broadway corridor.

However, the Village did not reexamine their subdivision regulations. When first written, the Village had more available land for subdivision, and the regulations allowed for minimal oversight by the Village Board of Trustees. Today, much of the upland portion of the Village consists of mature neighborhoods, and the existing conditions represent the resident's desired neighborhood character.

## FUTURE LAND USE MAP

A Future Land Use map is a central element of the Comprehensive Plan, it outlines the types and locations of land uses throughout the Village and serves as a roadmap for local boards as they consider new development. The following Future Land Use map was developed with careful consideration of existing conditions and residents’ input. While a future land use map can often serve as the basis for new zoning districts and regulations, it is not a zoning map. Instead a Future Land Use map outlines, in general terms, the different areas of the Village and the density, type, and situation of development in each one. The following district descriptions and map provide the overall intent for land use in the Village. The policies and programs that the Village should pursue in order to realize the Future Land Use plan follow.

## Future Land Use Map Districts:

**Village Center:** This area surrounds the existing Village Hall and includes the police station, the library, and the municipal gazebo. This area contains long-standing neighborhoods and some businesses and is intended for infill development, including mixed-use development in a walkable, Village setting.

**Menands North:** This area contains the site of the previous Price Chopper, as well as various light industrial and office buildings. This section of the Village is divided from the remainder of the Village by the Route 378 interchange. Due to this district's access to transportation and its amount of developable land, there is a high potential for infill development.

**Menands South:** This area contains the largest swaths of vacant and underutilized land in the Broadway Corridor, including the site of the former Mid-City Plaza. There are opportunities to develop portions of lots facing Broadway, leverage ongoing transportation improvements, and take advantage of the district's proximity to the growing "Warehouse District" in north Albany.

**Higher Density Housing:** This area is where most multi-family housing has been developed over the past 50 years. High population densities in this area could support additional amenities and transportation improvements.

**Medium Density Housing:** These areas were developed before auto-oriented suburbanization was the dominant form of development. These areas are walkable and near services and amenities.

**Lower Density Housing:** These areas host much of the single-family housing stock in the community.

The buildout analysis showed that if landowners desired, many of the existing parcels in these areas could be further subdivided for increased development. It is recommended that the zoning in these areas be updated to reflect the built densities.

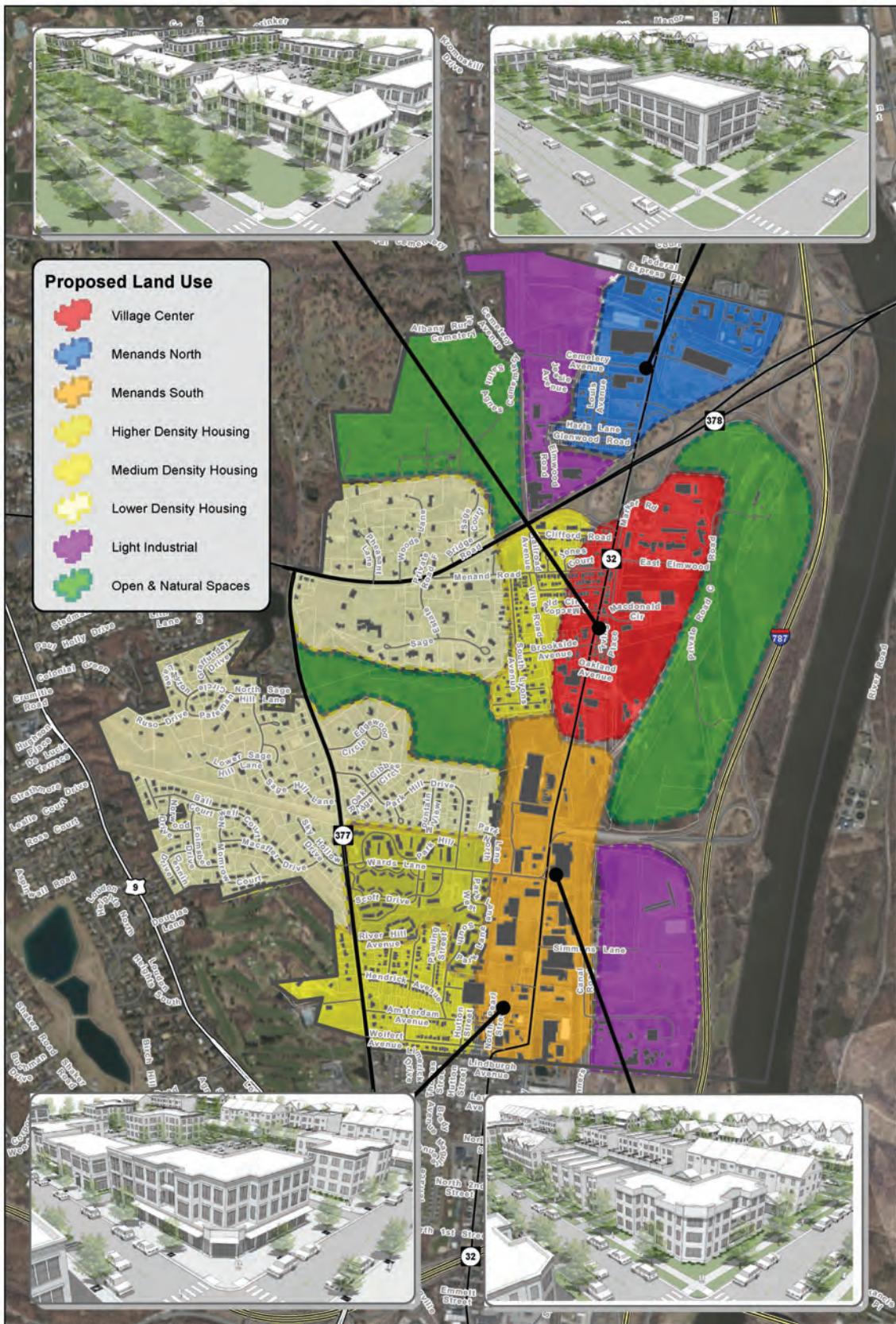
**Light Industrial:** These areas of the Village have limited on-street presence, but they are buffered from existing residential development and have relatively good access to truck and rail transport. Careful consideration of wetlands and flood zones will be required.

**Open and Natural Spaces:** These portions of the Village are prone to flooding and/or are in wetlands. Due to their status as undevelopable, these areas are valuable as natural flood control areas or areas for recreation. The NYSDEC has conservatively projected that the Hudson River will rise by about 60 inches by the year 2100. This significant projected increase should be monitored carefully and development decisions should be weighed against such possibilities. Some development potential may exist if there is access and limited impacts on natural resources.

## **BROADWAY CORRIDOR REDEVELOPMENT CONCEPTS**

The three primary redevelopment areas of the Village are along the Broadway Corridor. To further articulate the community vision outlined in the Future Land Use map for the Broadway Corridor, a series of concept drawings illustrating the street and building layouts were prepared. The Broadway Corridor Redevelopment Concepts follow the Future Land Use map.

# Future Land Use Map

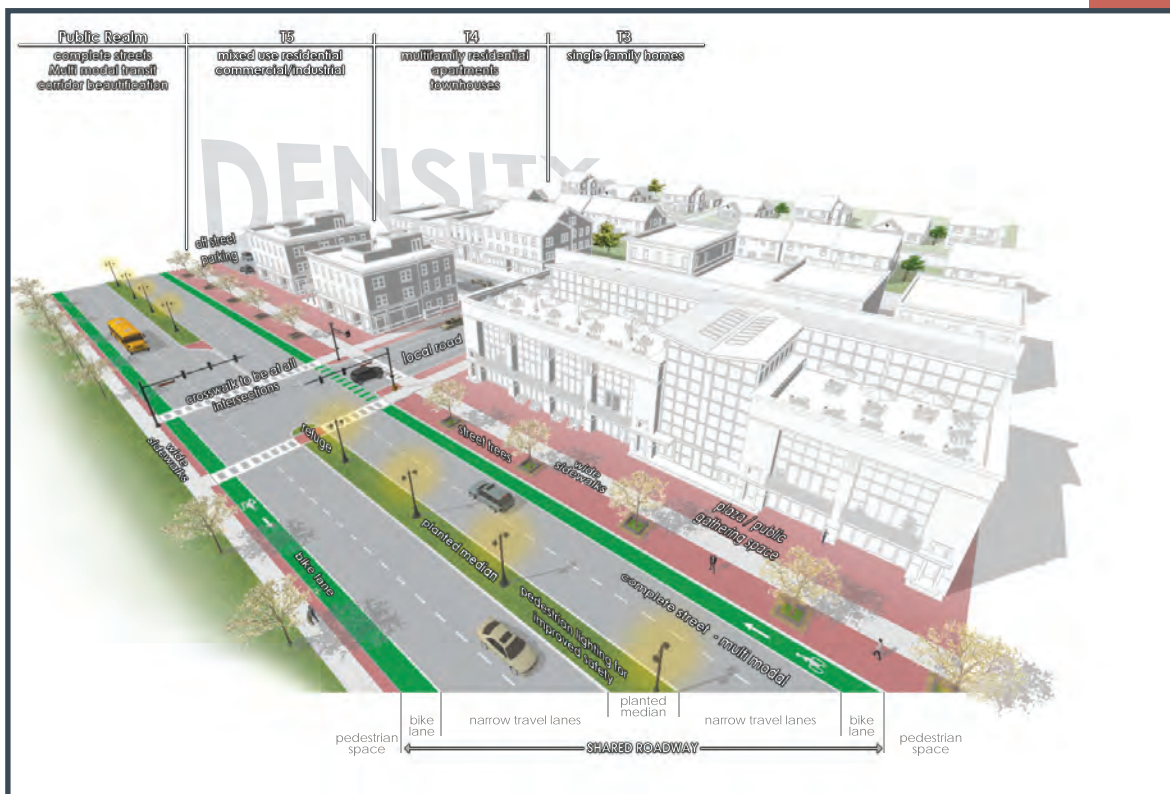


## MENANDS SOUTH DISTRICT

The Menands South District comprises the southern end of Broadway (from the Village's southern terminus, north to its railroad crossing) and contains the largest sections of vacant and underutilized land in the Broadway Corridor.

The vision for this district is to allow mixed-use residential/commercial/industrial development along Broadway, with buildings rising to a maximum of three stories and creating a consistent streetwall fronting a plaza/public gathering space along Broadway. This building placement will provide a sense of enclosure, frame the public space, and help offset the physical and visual dominance of the roadway. In conjunction with the proposed

building typology, it is recommended that "Road Diet" measures be implemented along the Broadway Corridor. To improve the pedestrian experience, it is recommended that the corridor be improved with wide sidewalks and plazas/public gathering spaces, planted medians to provide pedestrian refuge, high visibility crosswalks, pedestrian lighting for improved safety, and street trees to improve the streetscape aesthetic and provide cooling. It is further recommended that the vehicle travel lanes be narrowed to accommodate bike lanes in each direction and slow down the speed of travel.



## VILLAGE CENTER

The Village Center district surrounds the existing Village Hall and includes the police station, library, and municipal gazebo. It extends along Broadway, from the thoroughfare's railroad crossing to the south to the Route 378 interchange to the north.

The vision for this district is to establish a recognizable Village Center around the existing Village offices. In terms of buildings, mixed-use residential/commercial development should be pursued along the corridor, with buildings rising two to three stories, creating a consistent streetwall along Broadway. At the interface of the building facades and the public sidewalk, it is envisioned that ground floor retailers and restaurants would provide seating and gathering spaces.

Along this segment of the Broadway Corridor, which is narrower than the segment that traverses the Menands South District, it is recommended that the vehicle travel lanes be narrowed and that they served as shared bike lanes, as well. On-street parking should be allowed along this portion of Broadway to serve the needs of existing and future uses, including the Village offices. The pedestrian realm should be improved with wide sidewalks, bike racks, street trees to improve the streetscape aesthetic and provide cooling, pedestrian lighting for improved safety, and high visibility crosswalks at all intersections.





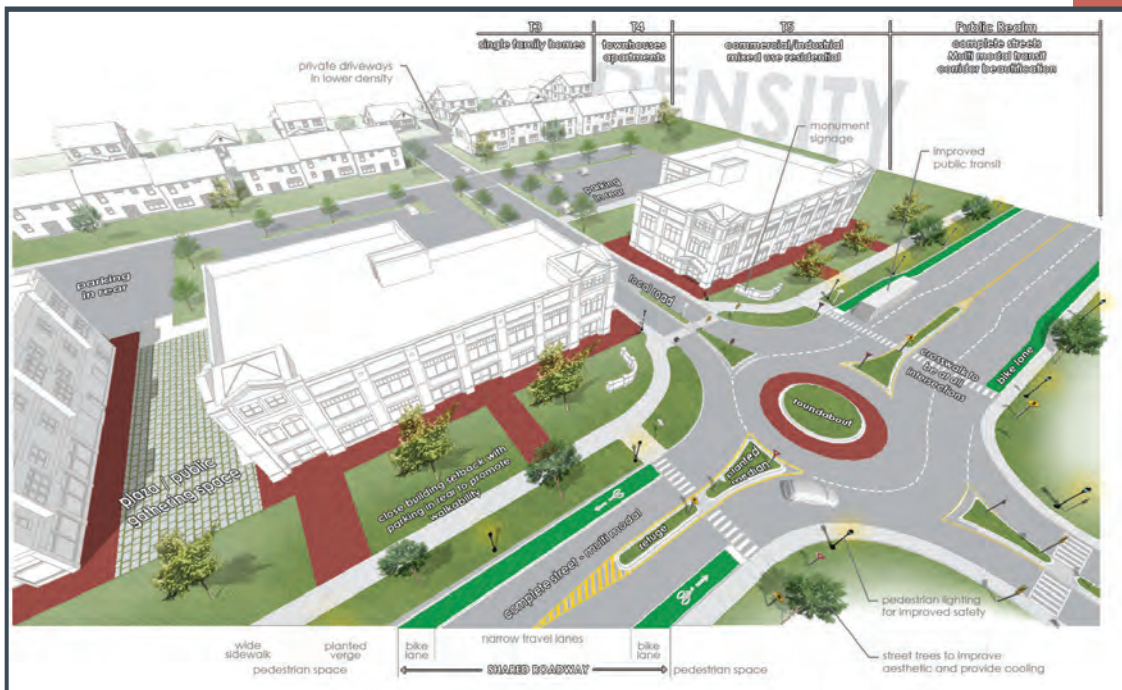
## MENANDS NORTH DISTRICT

The Menands North District contains the site of the previous Price Chopper, in addition to various light industrial and office buildings. This portion of Broadway is divided from the remainder of the Village by the Route 378 interchange, which forms the southern border of the district.

The vision for the Menands North District is to allow three-story mixed-use residential/commercial/industrial development along Broadway, with buildings set back from the street. It is envisioned that the front yards be improved with landscaping, and parking be located in the rear of the lots to promote walkability. Along this segment of the Broadway Corridor, it is envisioned that new buildings would be detached, allowing opportunities to provide plazas and public

gathering spaces in side yards, bringing much needed green space to the district.

Similar to the Menands South District, it is recommended that on-street parking be prohibited on this segment of the Broadway Corridor and that the following Complete Streets measures be implemented: narrow vehicle travel lanes, provide high visibility crosswalks at all intersections, create separated bike lanes in each direction, and provide pedestrian refuge areas and planted medians, where space permits.



In addition to the Future Land Use map and Broadway Redevelopment Concepts, the following recommendations outline the land use and zoning policies and projects that the Village should pursue.

### **I. Update zoning regulations for consistency with the Comprehensive Plan**

- The Comprehensive Plan represents the Village's vision for the future. Land use regulations are the most powerful tool the Village can wield to implement that vision. In 2013, the Village incorporated a hybrid Form Based Code (FBC) in select portions of the Village, but the new districts were not properly integrated into the zoning ordinance as a whole. The existing FBC is difficult to administer and confuses local officials and potential developers. The Village should overhaul their zoning regulations and consider including provisions for transit supportive development and adaptive reuse. A major element of the zoning update should be to work with Village staff and boards to ensure that any new regulation is able to be easily administered.

### **II. Increase efficiency of the development review process**

- Establish a "one-stop-shop" for applicants at Village Hall to ensure that, from the first point of contact, potential developers are guided through the planning process by a Village representative.
- Develop a step-by-step outline of the development review process and publish it on the Village website. This will help applicants understand the development review process even before they submit an application.
- Implement online permitting where applicants can submit materials online and community members can view pending applications.
- When applications are submitted, notify all departments that will at some point be involved with the approval process (i.e. emergency services, school district, Department of Public Works, neighborhood groups, etc.) so that all issues are considered from early stages of application review, thereby expediting the overall project approval process.

### **III. Establish a Planning Board**

- Currently, development in the Village is overseen by the Board of Trustees and the Zoning Board of Appeals. Forming a Planning Board appointed by the Board of Trustees would allow for a dedicated group of citizens to evaluate development proposals for consistency with the Comprehensive Plan and long-range community goals. In municipalities with more developed land use regulations, the Planning Board is responsible for reviewing special use permits and site plans. An additional benefit of a Planning Board independent from the Board of Trustees is that many long-range planning decisions would be isolated from the day to day politics of governance. Unlike the Board of Trustees, a Planning Board consists of appointed members who take their positions on a staggered basis. This prevents elected officials from having undue immediate impact on the Planning Board and affords the Planning Board an air of impartiality.

### **IV. Update residential zoning in western portions of Village to reflect established development patterns**

- The results of the buildout analysis (included as Appendix A) show the potential for considerable development in the upland areas of the Village. While there is certainly some room for expansion and additional housing units, if all available lots were developed to their maximum potential, the neighborhoods would be dramatically different from the Village's vision for the future. The Village should consider increasing the minimum lot size in this western portion of the Village to limit the redevelopment potential.

### **V. As zoning is updated, host a roundtable with community leaders so that they understand how their institutions interact with the development process**

- Residents of Menands desire more retail, dining, and services in the Village. However, these types of establishments favor areas with larger populations.

Achieving that population in the Village has impacts on a variety of community services, including, but not limited to, the Fire Department, Police Department, and the school district. Opening a dialogue with these groups will help build an understanding of the dynamics between development and community services holistically.

#### **VI. Prepare updated design guidelines for select areas in conjunction with new zoning and ensure that applicants and reviewing boards are familiar with the criteria for developments**

- The Village of Menands developed design guidelines to improve the quality of projects in the Broadway Corridor. The existing design guidelines offer instructions on lighting, pedestrian circulation, parking placement, signage, materials, etc. The Village should update the design guidelines in tandem with the zoning regulation updates and ensure that the guidelines have a well-defined place in project review. This could mean officially adopting updated design guidelines and integrating them in the zoning, as opposed to their current place in a standalone document.

#### **VII. Evaluate minimum parking requirements**

- Menands zoning regulations mandate a minimum number of parking spaces for each particular use. In many instances, this results in the overprovision of parking. From a user perspective this is not an issue. For developers, surface parking drives up the cost of a project considerably. Other municipalities have successfully developed

alternatives to minimum parking requirements, including techniques like shared parking or the total elimination of parking minimums in areas targeted for infill development.

#### **VIII. Update subdivision regulations**

- Subdivision regulations provide a set of rules for how properties in the Village can be divided for development. Subdivision regulations attempt to ensure that new development will be accompanied by adequate services and facilities (i.e. infrastructure, emergency access, and open space). Currently, development projects that subdivide a lot into fewer than four parcels are not subject to subdivision regulations. This is problematic because there are fewer large lots available to develop, and new development is occurring on a one or two lot basis. As the buildout analysis revealed, if existing lots were to be divided and sold, a significant amount of development could occur. However, these smaller subdivisions would not be required to consider whether adequate facilities are in place as they would not be required to go through official subdivision review. The Village should revisit their existing subdivision regulations, particularly with regards to the minimum number of parcels that trigger official review.

#### **IX. Evaluate existing Village of Menands Code for extraneous laws and regulations**

- Menands was incorporated as a municipality almost 100 years ago. Over the past century, the



Village has adopted local laws as new situations arose. There are many laws on the books that are no longer relevant or are contradictory to newer laws. For example, Menands current code contains things like “Chapter 150 Sunday Activities,” which regulates the time at which baseball games can be played, and “Chapter 88 Fire Limits,” a 1934 law prohibiting wooden structures within 150 feet of roadways. Over the past decade, many municipalities have digitized their local laws and, in doing so, they have revealed that old laws are often layered on top of old ones instead of being neatly integrated into the body of local laws. The Village should recodify all their local laws to eliminate redundant, outdated, and contradictory rules. This work could involve the Village Council, the Government Law Center, New York State Department of State (NYS DOS), and E-Code.

#### **X. Work with National Grid to improve the aesthetics of the substation located at the Exit 6 offramp with increased buffering and screening**

- Over 14,000 cars pass by the power substation at Exit 6 every day. For many, this is the first impression of the Village. The Village should work

with National Grid to find a creative solution to screening this unsightly infrastructure. This may include solutions such as vegetative screening, berms, public art, or attractive fencing.

#### **XI. Coordinate with the City of Albany to monitor development trends along North Pearl Street and Broadway**

- Menands' small town feel belies the fact that it is surrounded by a dynamic and growing region. The Village should maintain dialogue with the City of Albany, the Town of Colonie, the City of Watervliet, and Albany County to stay abreast of development trends.
- Just 10 years ago, North Albany's “Warehouse District” was a collection of underutilized factories and warehouses. Now, there is a critical mass of dining and entertainment options that have turned the district into a destination. This has occurred just over the border from Menands and could present opportunities or challenges for the Village. The Village should open a dialogue with the City of Albany's Planning Department, beyond the 239m referral process.

# Transportation Recommendations

Easy access to transportation is an important Village asset and has served to attract businesses and residents. Connections to the interstate and railways support business, and easy access to downtown Albany allows residents to enjoy a small-town feel while having access to big city benefits like entertainment and jobs. For decades, the Village has pursued the goal of increasing the visual appeal of the Broadway Corridor. As the most prominent transportation route in the Village, it is what most people experience of Menands. The corridor's current state may result in negative perceptions of the Village that misrepresent the true character of the Village, including its quaint, well-kept residential neighborhoods that transition to leafy suburbs as one heads west from Broadway.

## **I. Leverage state and federal investments in the transportation system & work with NYSDOT**

- The Broadway Corridor is undergoing a series of transportation improvements that will increase residents transportation options and potentially beautify the Village and attract businesses. The Village should explore the zoning techniques of Transit Oriented Development (TOD) and Transit Supportive Development to spur complementary commercial and residential development when considering rezoning. TOD and Transit Supportive Development seek to exploit factors like increased densities resulting from a reduction of surface parking, increased concentrations of commuters, and the attractiveness of transit sites for housing residents of all ages and abilities, to name but a few. The Village should explore participation in the Capital District Transportation Committee (CDTC) Linkage program, which specifically targets innovative projects linking land use and transportation.

## **II. Upgrade and expand sidewalk and pedestrian network**

- Access to safe and comfortable walking routes is of great importance to Menands residents. As such, the Village should prioritize sidewalk installation along Wards Lane and Broadway, particularly in

areas of higher population density. Residents of the multiple apartments along Wards Lane are underserved by pedestrian facilities to connect them to the public transportation available along Broadway. Once the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is operational, there will be an increased need to provide a safe passage between residences and these transit facilities.

- Develop a sidewalk improvement plan on a three-to five-year basis. The CDTC developed a sidewalk inventory for the Village. Using this digital data as a foundation, the Village can develop a more robust inventory of needed improvements and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance measures. In other municipalities across the country, there have been instances of activist lawsuits targeting crumbling sidewalks. Menands should take a proactive approach to managing their sidewalk network to avoid any potential lawsuits while simultaneously improving mobility options for residents of all ages and abilities. Planning for enhanced ADA accessibility is also referred to as an "ADA Transition Plan."

## **III. Develop complementary connections to the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail along municipal roadways that provide neighborhoods with safe and convenient access to the regional trail network**

- As the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) and CDTC work to improve the regional multi-use trail network, the Village should seek ways to develop complementary local connections to the network. The Mohawk-Hudson Hike-Bike Trail will be part of the Empire State Trail that, once completed, will stretch from New York City to Canada. By allowing access to and from this trail throughout the Village, residents will have new and improved recreational opportunities, and the Village can tap into additional economic potential generated by out-of-town trail users who will have more direct access to Village businesses.

#### **IV. Engage with CDTC, Capital District Transportation Authority (CTA), and Office of General Services (OGS) about integrating existing park and ride facilities into existing CDTA system, as opposed to current practice of contracting with independent transit operators**

- Large areas of surface parking in the southern portion of the Village are used for park and ride facilities, primarily for state workers bound for Empire State Plaza. The park and ride facilities are not operated by CDTA, which results in redundant service and even competition between bus lines. Since these facilities occupy such a large portion of the Village, the Village should work with OGS and the CDTA to make sure that the space is used effectively and all transit operations are minimally disruptive.

#### **V. Reconfigure the intersection in front of the Capital District Regional Market so that there is a convenient, safe, and obvious entrance**

- The current roadway configuration leading into the Capital District Regional Market is confusing. Improving this intersection with signage, pedestrian facilities, and possibly an alternative entrance could make the Farmers Market a more attractive place to shop and do business.

#### **VI. Officially adopt a Complete Streets policy so that transportation projects include consideration for all users (i.e. pedestrians, cyclists, mass transit), in addition to automobiles**

- The Village Board should adopt a Complete Streets ordinance to ensure that, during the municipal decision-making process, the needs of all types of transportation are at least considered. Beyond simply adopting an ordinance that requires this consideration, the next step is to incorporate Complete Streets concepts into the Village roadway design standards. Roadway design standards determine how Village roads are built and maintained. Local roadway design standards can also apply to Planned Development Districts and subdivisions. Full commitment to Complete Streets will most likely increase the responsibilities of the

DPW and potentially require an increase in their budget. They should be consulted throughout the adoption process.

#### **VII. Develop a comprehensive and detailed concept plan for the Broadway Corridor, and pursue funding from NYSDOT**

- NYSDOT developed a Road Diet plan for the southern portion of the Broadway Corridor, which continues south into the City of Albany. To the north, the Village has implemented additional Road Diet measures. The Village should work to extend these Road Diet plans to the north through the Village Center and the Menands North Districts.

#### **VIII. Work with CDTA and CDTC to relocate a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) stop closer to the area around the municipal offices**

- The two BRT stops in the Village are intended to be park and ride facilities located away from the Village Center. As the Village establishes a discernable center, they should work with the CDTA to consider relocating a BRT stop to this area. This will be a service to residents and could support the creation of additional businesses in this portion of the Village.



*BusPlus Bus Rapid Transit Stop in the City of Albany*

# Business Retention and Attraction Recommendations

Residents have expressed a strong desire for new shops, services, and amenities in the Village. Menands' central location and the availability of space along the Broadway Corridor are marketable assets. "Retail follows rooftops," so to entice retailers like grocery stores, the Village will need a larger population. Menands touts itself as a "business friendly government" and has a Department of Economic Partnerships. The Village should continue to work with the development community to communicate its vision to investors and the development community. The following recommendations are intended to help the Village achieve their vision to retain and attract businesses.

## I. Continue to promote Menands as a good place to do business

- Develop a portfolio of available properties and distribute them to the development community, including information on zoning, leasable square footage, nearby amenities, and available infrastructure. This list of "shovel ready" sites should be readily available on the Village website.
- This may include identifying preferred locations for cafes, restaurants, and bars. When marketing to potential businesses, highlight the number of workers that are commuting into the Village daily to better attract dining options.
- Menands holds semi-annual "Business Breakfasts," which have been effective at communicating the Village's progress and development trends. The Village should continue holding Business Breakfasts, and explore complementary events that will expand attendance.
- The Village should host periodic "Developers Forums" by inviting a select group of developers to the Village for an informational session about the Comprehensive Plan and guided tour of targeted redevelopment sites.

## II. Encourage the establishment of Village of Menands Chamber of Commerce

- The Village of Menands is a member of the Albany-Colonie Chamber of Commerce and the Colonie

Chamber of Commerce. However, developing a Menands Chamber of Commerce will allow local business owners to tackle issues that relate directly to the Village. A Business Association may be able to fulfil this role, as well. If politically feasible, consider working with local businesses to establish a Business Improvement District (BID).

- Work with existing businesses to understand their issues. This is particularly important in the Menands South District, where existing industrial businesses could potentially conflict with residential development.

## III. Diligently document, track, and review all properties receiving 425-a and 425-b tax exemptions

- Local tax exemption programs are helpful tools for achieving economic development goals, but they can increase the tax bills of non-exempt taxpayers and reduce the ability of the Village to raise enough revenue for services. Careful and transparent administration of tax exemption programs will help ensure that these tools are used responsibly. This includes ensuring proper documentation and periodically reviewing tax exemption decisions to ensure that the properties are still eligible.

## IV. Develop a façade improvement program to assist business owners in cosmetic improvements to their storefronts

- Façade improvement programs are incentive programs created to encourage property owners and businesses to improve the exterior appearance of their buildings and storefronts. The City of Albany instituted such a program along with the Capitalize Albany Corporation and the Albany Community Development Agency. The Village should pursue the creation of a similar program for the Broadway Corridor, to improve this corridor that is often visitor's first and/or only impression of Menands.

## **V. Engage with the New York State Department of State (NYS DOS) to participate in the Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) program**

- The Village of Menands contains various underutilized properties, particularly along the Broadway Corridor. Brownfields are properties that are vacant or underutilized because of real or perceived environmental contamination. The BOA process allows local governments and other stakeholders to work together to better understand the condition of brownfield properties and to develop a strategy to

bring the properties back into productive use. Since many sites along the Broadway Corridor were used for industrial purposes nearly 100 years ago, potential investors may have the perception that such sites could contain environmental issues (e.g. toxic chemicals, fuel storage tanks, asbestos, etc.). Participating in the BOA process would allow the Village to take the first step in exploring how to make potentially contaminated sites redevelopable.



# Infrastructure Recommendations

Infrastructure is a critical community asset. The Village of Menand's infrastructure serves primarily residential uses west of Broadway and more intensive commercial and industrial uses along the Broadway Corridor. Most of the Village is still using the original underground infrastructure installed over 75 years ago. Recent breaks in the Village's water and sanitary sewer system, especially in the southern portion of the Village, indicate that the systems are approaching the end of their useful lives. It is likely that the Village will increasingly need to respond to emergency repairs until the aging infrastructure is comprehensively repaired or replaced. If the Village is to achieve its vision for infill development and the adaptive reuse of underutilized buildings and vacant sites, there must be adequate infrastructure in place to support this growth. The interrelationship between the community's vision for sustainable growth and investment in requisite infrastructure improvements cannot be overemphasized.

## I. Develop a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

- A CIP is a tool that is used to coordinate the location, timing, and financing of capital improvements over a multi-year period. A CIP will provide the Village with a well-considered approach to investing in infrastructure and other capital improvements, like land acquisition, major equipment purchases, and municipal construction. Generally, a CIP includes a listing of the capital projects, equipment, and major studies, a ranking of projects, a financing plan, a timetable for the construction or completion of the project, a project justification, and a classification, itemization, and explanation for the project expenditures. A CIP will be very important for the Village to attract development in the Broadway Corridor and to make informed decisions about what type of infrastructure to invest in.
- To assist in the development of a CIP, the Village should continue to utilize Geographic Information System (GIS) technology to inventory existing infrastructure and necessary repairs. The Village has successfully deployed this technology for inventorying manholes and street trees.



## **II. Identify sources of Inflow and Infiltration (I&I) and make necessary repairs and replacements of existing aging sewer system.**

- Sanitary sewer metering data suggests significant I&I intrusion in the Village's sanitary sewer system. I&I is groundwater or surface water that enters a sanitary sewer system through pipe cracks, breaks, and faulty manhole joints. The I&I results in increased treatment costs to the Village as the Village pays Albany County for every gallon of water sent to the wastewater treatment plant, regardless if it is stormwater or wastewater. Replacing or repairing aging sanitary sewer infrastructure is a priority for the Village.

## **III. Consider expanding the capacity of the trunk line to the Albany County Wastewater Treatment Plant**

- The Village of Menands transmits wastewater via a trunk line to the Albany County Wastewater Treatment Plant. The trunk line could reach capacity if new development occurs and I&I issues are not addressed. The recommendation to address I&I to the sewer system may reduce the flow to Albany County's facility and eliminate the need for additional trunk line capacity. However, as the Broadway Corridor is redeveloped and more users are added, the condition of the trunk line will need to be evaluated (condition and capacity) to ensure that there are no unanticipated interruptions in service.

## **IV. Carefully track the rates and number of users that are connected to the Village's sanitary sewer system**

- The Village of Menands allows some residential areas in the Town of Colonie to utilize Village maintained sewer lines to send sewage to the Albany County Wastewater Treatment Plant on Broadway. The Village of Menands needs to review the terms of this arraignment and track the number of users on the system to ensure that the costs of operating and maintaining the sewer system are not disproportionately borne by Village taxpayers.

## **V. Increase water system efficiency and upgrade distribution throughout the Village**

- The Village's most recent Annual Drinking Water

Quality Report for 2018 shows that 44.3% of all water from the source in Troy is lost in the transmission and distribution system. This inefficiency burdens Village ratepayers and taxpayers. There are water main breaks on a regular basis. These emergency (as opposed to scheduled) repairs cost a significant amount of money. In addition to being inconvenient and expensive, they can pose a serious risk to firefighting operations. Recent pipe breaks in the water and sanitary sewer system throughout the Village, especially in the southern portion of the Village, indicate that the systems are approaching the end of their useful lives. The Village will continue to need to respond to emergency repairs until the aging infrastructure is repaired or replaced.

## **VI. Install water meters at beginning of private roads and modern meters at residences and business to help evaluate system performance**

- The Village has had a difficult time identifying the most problematic areas of the water system. Additional meters would help evaluate the system.

## **VII. Continue to explore alternative or additional municipal water supply**

- The Village provides water to users via a transmission line that crosses the Hudson River from the City of Troy's Tomhannock Reservoir. The waterline is buried under the bed of the river, but this way of transmission is vulnerable to interruptions and offers no redundancy should interruptions occur. While there have been no problems with the water source to date, there is significant risk associated with depending on a single water source on the other side of the Hudson River. The Village is currently in the process of determining an alternative source of water that would improve system reliability. One potential solution would be to source water from the City of Watervliet.

## **VIII. Upgrade and repair the Village's existing pump stations and holding tanks**

- The Village of Menands is in the Hudson River Valley, and the land of the Village generally slopes downwards from east to west losing about 250' of elevation along the way. This physical layout

requires that the Village use a series of pump stations to push water uphill and holding tanks to store the water. The pump stations and concrete holding tanks need repair and will need to be upgraded soon. This includes a concrete water tank at the top of the system that has had a series of slow leaks.

### **IX. Reevaluate municipal water rate schedule**

- Menands residents pay a semi-annual water fee that assumes a minimum usage. Most users do not use the minimum amount of water that they are paying for. The Village should evaluate the billing structure to ensure that all users are paying a fee that is proportionate to their usage but also large enough to cover the costs of maintenance and repairs.

### **X. Begin strategic full depth repaving of local roads**

- The Village of Menands is responsible for nearly 24 miles of local roads. Many roads (or their subbase) were built using old techniques and are not as long lasting as modern roadway designs. As such, there are many roads that would benefit from full-depth reconstruction. Budget constraints have limited the Village to asphalt surface treatments. The downside of only addressing the top layer of asphalt is that despite the low initial cost, additional repairs will be required at a shorter interval than if a full repaving was performed. As part of the CIP the Village should start identifying the roadways that would benefit the most from complete overhauls. This will also be an opportunity for the Village to incorporate Complete Streets improvements.

### **XI. Evaluate, repair, and upgrade the Stormwater Management System**

- Stormwater management systems are used to contain surface water generated by heavy rains and snowmelt that would otherwise run across roadways, into storm drains, and potentially damage sewer systems and natural waterways. The Village of Menands encounters frequent flooding caused by excess stormwater. Flooding in the Broadway Corridor disrupts road transportation and threatens businesses and homes. There is limited knowledge of how stormwater moves throughout the Village, as well as the condition

of various physical elements of the stormwater management system. The Village should apply for grant funding to study how stormwater moves through the Village and to assess the condition of existing stormwater infrastructure. Additionally, the Village should continue to explore ways to encourage public and private development projects to incorporate enhanced stormwater management techniques like green infrastructure.

### **XII. Work with NYSDOT and energy providers to bury overhead wires along Broadway Corridor**

- Overhead utility wires are dually problematic in the Broadway Corridor: low wires impede mobility and access for construction vehicles needed to redevelop the vacant sites along the corridor and also detract from the visual appeal of the corridor. Coordination between utility providers and the Village will be required if overhead wires are to be buried in an expeditious manner. The process for burying underground utilities is lengthy and expensive, which is why the Village should start conversations with utility providers sooner rather than later. This is particularly important for development projects that require a short interval between beginning construction and tenant occupancy. The time required by a protracted negotiation with utility providers is often far longer than a developer will bear. The cost of burying wires is typically borne by the adjacent property owners in the form of additional fees.

### **XIII. Explore techniques to reduce redundant infrastructure in the south end of the Village**

- In the southern portion of the Village, some of the roadways were constructed using concrete slabs as a base. Concrete slab provided durable roadways surface, however as opposed to asphalt (which is generally used in modern applications) concrete complicates the alteration or repair of buried infrastructure. In the southern portion of the Village, there are water and sewer pipes on both sides of the road, which results in redundancies and inefficiencies. Modern infrastructure layout would allow for one main line, as opposed to the two necessitated by a concrete road sub-base.

## Education Recommendations

The Menands School is an important community institution and source of great local pride. Schools are also valuable means of attracting potential residents. The Village should work closely with the school district to ensure that the district maintains its excellent reputation.

The Menands School recently embarked on a major capital improvement initiative, which resulted in expanded facilities at the existing Menands School. Stakeholders noted that, during the planning process a discrepancy was discovered between the population projection methods followed by the New York State Education Department (NYSED) and the actual population dynamics in Menands. NYSED's dated population growth formula does not take into account the subtleties of growth inducing forces like zoning changes. Because more than 60% of Menands' population lives in rental housing, there is a high degree of population turnover as annual rental leases are renewed. This can result in uncertainty about class sizes, which can complicate staffing decisions and educational space utilization. For example, if 25 families with two children each

move into the district the school will be faced with 50 new students. Some residents have expressed concern that new development in the community could result in overcapacity at the school, the need to bus local pupils to adjacent schools, or even trigger district consolidation and that this important community institution will be lost.

Preventing growth for the sake of maintaining the school district is not feasible, especially if residents' desire for increased amenities and services (e.g., a grocery store, restaurants, and retail) are to be realized. New services will generally require new residents.

Careful coordination between the Village government and Menands School will be required to prevent population growth from outpacing school capacity. The timeframe of the school's capital improvement planning is on a multi-year horizon, while residential development can occur much faster (hence the need for careful coordination). The Village will need to communicate about pending residential developments so that the school's capital improvement planning can account for new growth.





**I. Develop a plan for eventual school expansion**

- The Village of Menands’ population is anticipated increase if state and regional trends continue. The school and the Village should maintain a close dialogue so that the school district is prepared for school enrollment increases associated with new development.
- Menands School has more than enough land at the existing campus to expand their facilities. If planned appropriately, school expansions can come on line just as the population of students and tax-payers reaches a critical mass so that existing residents are not unduly burdened by the costs of school improvements.

**II. Open a dialogue with property management companies and apartment complexes to track the types and numbers units being rented and developed**

- There are several large apartment complexes along Wards Lane that have hundreds of units each. The Village and the school should open a dialogue with the property management companies to track the number and mix of tenants. This could help the school plan for fluctuations in enrollment numbers.

**III. Market Menands School and the various high school options available to Menands residents to attract and retain residents**

- Menands School is top rated by the Albany Business Review year after year. Schools are a major determining factor in a family’s decision to locate somewhere, and Menands can leverage the excellence of their school to attract residents.

***"A small public school district that never centralized with other schools, Menands Union Free School District has been in existence for over 140 years and continues to be a focal point of our village community."  
~ Menands School District***





## Community Services Recommendations

Menands small size allows the Village to provide services (e.g. fire and police) to its residents in a responsive manner. But, as a small community with a limited budget, the Village of Menands needs to continuously explore ways to deliver services effectively and efficiently. Ensuring that the Fire and Police Departments remain viable is a matter of public safety and community pride.

### **I. The Village will need to continue to work with surrounding municipalities and County government to explore joint training opportunities, bulk procurement options, etc.**

- As a small municipality, Menands will need to work with neighboring communities to identify partnerships. Purchasing cooperatives provide a mechanism to achieve cost reduction for equipment procurement. Strategic alliances with

neighboring municipalities for training or the use of specialized equipment can help the Village retain its own emergency services while saving money.

### **II. Consider Mitigation Fees for the purchase of new fire equipment as new and larger buildings are redeveloped or built**

- The Village will need to ensure that the existing emergency service providers have the appropriate equipment to service any new developments, particularly in areas of the Broadway Corridor where large existing buildings may be repurposed for residential use. For example, if a large five story building is proposed, the Village will need a ladder truck capable of reaching the upper floors.

# Sustainability and Resiliency Recommendations

Menands faces challenges from flooding caused by stormwater runoff and potentially the Hudson River. The Village of Menands has miles of shoreline along the Hudson and, with the river anticipated to rise significantly by the year 2100, flooding risks are also expected to increase. The Village should strive to ensure that the residences, transportation systems, infrastructure, and businesses are designed to withstand future flooding events caused by either increasingly intense storm events or a rising Hudson River.

## I. Carefully evaluate the preferred types of development in the flood prone areas along the eastern portion of the Village

- Large areas of the Village are in areas highly likely to flood, and the Village has a Flood Damage Prevention Law to ensure that new development in flood zones is less damage prone. These regulations should continue to be developed and enhanced to improve resiliency and stay abreast of innovative best practices. As zoning regulations are updated, the Village should work to smoothly integrate flood resiliency considerations, as opposed to having a standalone document.

## II. Explore green infrastructure options to mitigate flooding risks along the Broadway Corridor

- Flooding is a persistent problem in the Broadway Corridor, and the Village will need to continue to explore innovative green infrastructure techniques to prevent disruptions caused by flooding. The Albany Stormwater Coalition, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

(NYSDEC), and the Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDRPC) can be tapped to provide information about best practices and funding opportunities. Green infrastructure can result in considerable cost savings over conventional 'gray' infrastructure.

## III. Secure funding from NYSDEC Climate Smart Community (CSC) Program to implement adaptation measures that will make the Village less flood prone

- The Village should explore utilizing existing wetlands and flood prone areas along the eastern side of Menands as massive green infrastructure elements. This can include actions like rightsizing culverts to facilitate the flow of water and finding ways to increase the natural resiliency of wetland areas. The CSC program has specific funding streams to undertake these projects. The Village should partner with the CDRPC, which is tasked with connecting communities with this program.

## IV. Participate in CSC program to leverage grant funding for efficiency projects that limit greenhouse gas emissions and result in municipal cost savings

- In addition to the above-mentioned adaptation initiative, the CSC program provides resources to municipalities seeking to explore ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Menands does not need to participate in this project purely for altruistic reasons. Municipalities participating in the CSC program realize considerable cost savings via municipal energy audits, energy efficiency upgrades, and municipal fleet upgrades. Other municipalities have realized considerable savings by actions as simple as converting street lights from incandescent bulbs to LED. In other cases, municipalities have tackled larger issues, like municipal composting and biogas projects.



*On right, green infrastructure in planted median to capture stormwater runoff*

# Parks and Open Space Recommendations

Parks and open space are huge amenities for existing residents and can serve to attract new residents and are crucial to the quality of life in the Village. The Village should continue to improve existing facilities and develop new parks. Community input shows strong support for community amenities like a dog park, community garden, and additional picnic areas.



*Ganser-Smith Memorial Park*

## I. Ensure that all neighborhoods have sufficient access to parks and open space

- The Village should continue to improve Ganser-Smith Memorial Park, Polk Switzer Park, Sage Estates, and the portion of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail that traverses the Village. Improvements to park entrances and wayfinding will encourage residents to utilize these greenspaces.
- With the exception of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail, existing community parks are all on the western side of Broadway, but if new residents and developers are to be attracted to Broadway, an adequate amount of green space will need to be provided to make the corridor more appealing. Pocket parks, as well as larger green spaces, will need to be introduced along the predominantly industrial corridor. The Village should start exploring where potential parks could be established, and, as new development occurs, recreation fees could be used to offset the acquisition and improvement of parkland.

## II. Explore ongoing support for regional trails (maintenance of connections to Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail)

- State and federal funding is being utilized to connect Menands to the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail, but there is not a dedicated funding stream for routine maintenance (plowing, removing obstructions, etc.). The Village should develop the in-house capacity and equipment to maintain multi-use trails. Staff and leadership should consider coordinating with other municipalities that have existing multi-use trail maintenance programs to learn about their techniques.

## III. Utilize new access point to Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail to establish picnic area/passive recreation space along bike trail

- Residents of Menands have limited access to the Hudson River, despite having over two miles of river shoreline. While Menands will have improved riverfront connections via the planned multi-use trail from the Riverview Center area, the Village should advocate to NYSDOT to establish a trailside park where residents could relax and enjoy views of the Hudson River.

## IV. Evaluate feasibility of a community pool or ice rink

- Residents indicated a strong desire for additional community recreation facilities. The Village should explore the feasibility of establishing a facility that could meet both recreational and community needs.

## V. Utilize space between Broadway and the Hudson River as potential recreation/outdoor recreation area. Leverage the existing undevelopable wetlands as community amenity (See also "Sustainability & Resiliency Recommendations")

- The "Menands Nature Area Feasibility Study" (2008), prepared with funding from the NYSDOT Quality Communities Program, outlines a plan to utilize



wetlands and natural areas between Broadway and Interstate 787 for recreation and education. The plan calls for a series of trails and educational amenities in the 150-acre area behind the Capital District Regional Market.

## **VI. Continue to integrate trails and parks planning**

- The Village should take a comprehensive approach to parks planning and perform an overall examination of needs, much like the recommended CIP for municipal infrastructure. Additionally, when considering park improvements, access to the parks from the surrounding neighborhoods should also be considered. This could include bike and pedestrian facilities.

## **VII. Legitimize trail connection by Village One Apartments and Schuyler Flatts Park**

- Village One Apartments (on the northern edge of the Village) is a densely populated multi-family residential development, with a greater proportion of residents that do not have access to private automobiles, instead relying on public transportation, walking, and biking to get around. While Village One is adjacent to Schuyler Flatts Park and the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail, which are a huge amenity to residents, currently the spur trail leading to the apartments is unpaved and not fully connected. The Village should consider facilitating an arrangement so that there is a safe connection between the apartments and the parks.

## **VIII. Upgrade and repair the infrastructure in Ganser-Smith Memorial Park so that it can continue to facilitate community activities**

- Ganser-Smith Memorial Park is in need of serious septic repairs. The Village should pursue grant funding or allocate budget to make these necessary repairs.

## **IX. Coordinate with City of Watervliet and Town of Colonie to develop trail connections and enhance open space**

- The Town of Colonie and City of Watervliet are each pursuing bike and pedestrian plans. The Town of Colonie launched the “Pathways Plan” in 2019, and

the City of Watervliet is actively improving their on-street portion of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail. The Village of Menands should explore ways to connect to surrounding municipalities’ trail networks so that Menands residents have access to a wider range of recreational and practical transportation options.

- Schuyler Flatts Cultural Park, while not in the Village of Menands, it still an amenity for Village residents. The Village should explore opportunities to support improvements to this park, even if only as simple as a letter of support for grant applications or assistance with upkeep on the southern edge of the facility.

## **X. Continue to develop a robust tree inventory and urban forestry management plan**

- Trees provide environmental, social and even economic benefits to a community. Recognizing this, the Village of Menands has used mobile GIS devices to create a robust tree inventory. With the right management plan, this inventory will allow the Village to determine planting cycles, address invasive species, and perform routine maintenance in a strategic manner. The Village should continue to participate in the NYSDEC’s Urban and Community Forestry program.



*Schuyler Flatts Park*

# Housing Recommendations

As a bedroom community, quality housing is a defining characteristic of the Village. There is a larger quantity of multi-family units in the Village, but the primary housing type by land use is detached single-family dwellings. The highest concentration of multi-family housing is clustered in the area around Wards Lane.

Regionally there has been an explosion of one-bedroom and studio apartments catering to young professionals and downsizing Baby Boomers. According to developers, the demand for larger, multi-bedroom apartments has been lackluster. Most new single-family housing in the region is being developed elsewhere in the region where easy highway access and greenfield sites allow for large subdivisions.

The adaptive reuse of existing urban structures like warehouses and factories has been a successful model for many regional housing developers. On the southern edge of the Village, a vacant brick structure was converted into The Lofts at Albany International, a multi-family development with over 100 luxury apartments this is an excellent example of an adaptive reuse project.

Throughout the planning process, the Committee has debated the need to balance the regional trend towards larger apartment buildings with the desire to maintain a small-town feel. Reuse of sites along the Broadway Corridor is attractive to the Village because it would reactivate the area, but even a few hundred new residents can feel like a lot in a Village with a population of approximately 4,000.

## **I. Encourage development and retention of single-family homes**

- While there is limited space for single-family housing, residents have indicated a desire to develop more single-family homes. This type of housing should be encouraged in existing single-family neighborhoods where it will not be out of character with some of the larger commercial and industrial properties found along the Broadway Corridor.
- The Village should monitor the stability of existing

single-family neighborhoods. Diligent enforcement building and property codes and communication with neighborhood groups will help the Village retain their single-family neighborhoods.

## **II. Develop multi-family housing (including market rate housing for young professionals and downsizing Baby Boomers) in the Broadway Corridor in such a way that preserves community character**

- Most new apartments in the Capital District are studios or one-bedrooms. As indicated by the Committee, this type of housing is less likely to have an impact on the school district and should be encouraged until the Village establishes a long-term plan for synchronizing population growth with school expansion.

## **III. Work with not-for-profit housing providers to develop housing for mixed-age and mixed-income populations in walkable locations with access to transit and adequate public facilities**

- Providing housing for a wide range of lifestyles and incomes will allow the Village of Menands to support a diverse population. As the population ages and housing becomes more expensive overall, there will be a need for housing that is physically and economically accessible. National and regional trends indicate that the market, if left alone, will not necessarily provide housing products for the entire population. Fortunately, there are many not-for-profit organizations that can navigate the complexities of federal and state tax benefits to provide quality housing for people of all incomes and abilities. If the Village takes a proactive approach to identifying local housing needs and connecting preferred not-for-profit housing developers with available sites, it is more likely that the Village will be able to provide for residents at all life stages. This includes housing that is affordable to young families, as well as seniors on fixed incomes. The Broadway Corridor is an excellent location for this type of housing.

# Quality of Life Recommendations

The Village should strive to provide a high quality of life to all residents regardless of age, ability, or income. This includes access to open space, fresh healthy food, arts and cultural programming, services for an aging population, and community-building activities. Residents are proud of the ‘small town feel’ of the Village, and Menands should continue to foster that feeling as the community grows. Included in these Quality of Life recommendations are strategies to improve food access in the Village, in addition to these recommendations the Village should also pursue the options outlined in the "Improving Local Food Accessibility within the Village of Menands," a technical assistance report prepared by the Capital District Regional Planning Commission.

## **I. Establish a recognizable Village Center around the existing Village offices and Fire Department or at the location of the Mid-City Shopping Center. Each location presents opportunities**

- The residents of Menands have a strong desire for an identifiable community center. In the past, Menands drew residents from the surrounding region with the Al-Tro Park, then the Mid-City Park and Hawkins Stadium. Today, the Village lacks an identifiable center. By utilizing time honored urban design techniques, the Village can foster a ‘sense of place.’ Continuing to develop attractive signage, establishing gateways to define separate districts, fostering walkability, and providing community spaces will contribute to Menands’ Village identity.

## **II. Continue to explore opportunities to attract a grocery store to the Village**

- Due to recent grocery store closures, residents of Menands do not have any local grocery shopping options in the Village. Residents are required to travel to a different municipality to buy food. In 2019, a resident committee was formed to address the issue of a lack of a grocery store. The group quickly realized that attracting a conventional grocery store to the Village is a complicated and challenging effort requiring sustained effort. The Village enlisted the help of the CDRPC to study and bring attention to the issue in 2019. The CDRPC's

work is ongoing, but the need for a grocery store persists. The Village should continue to develop an attraction strategy. This includes identifying and marketing potential sites, offering incentives, and continuing to engage with community stakeholders.

## **III. Establish a long-term location for a farmers market**

- Farmers markets provide access to healthy food, attract visitors, and offer a place for residents to gather and socialize. As opposed to a conventional grocery store, a farmers market can be far easier for a municipality help establish.
- The Village should re-establish dialogue with the Capital District Regional Market and explore the possibility of a public-private partnership that would allow the Village and Capital District Regional Market to leverage grant opportunities for facility improvements.
- The Village should identify preferred sites in the Village for an indoor-outdoor farmers market that could also include space for educational and community programming. This could include a vacant storefront, a municipally owned plot of land, or even a parking lot.

## **IV. Work with Capital Roots to identify appropriate locations for community gardens**

- Capital Roots provides technical assistance to communities interested in establishing community gardens. Generally, these areas need to be vacant and municipally owned and have access to a water source. Community gardens are also an excellent way to bring diverse populations together. Engaging existing neighborhood groups and members of the rental community will be crucial to the success of this effort. In the City of Hudson, NY, a community garden established on a cast off piece of land has blossomed into a melting pot for residents who come from all over the world.

## **V. Maintain the integrity of the Village’s existing historic districts (Menand Park Historic District,**

### **Sage Estates, Albany Rural/St. Agnes Cemetery) and evaluate other neighborhoods for inclusion**

- The Village could become a Certified Local Government and take better advantage of state grant funding programs targeting historic sites and districts. The Village can also work directly with neighborhood associations and facilitate historic preservation workshops so that owners of historic homes can gain a greater appreciation of their properties and connect with other historic homeowners.

### **VI. Celebrate the Village's history with interpretative signage along walking and bike routes and in the Village Center, and improved linkages to Albany Rural Cemetery to help build a "sense of place"**

- Signage can both orient and inform. The Village recently launched a signage program that highlights residents who have served in the armed forces. This project has been well received, and the Village should continue to develop additional signage programs. Digital imaging and printing technologies are becoming more affordable, requiring only a modest budget for such efforts.
- There are various state programs and agencies that can provide technical and financial support for things like heritage tourism and interpretation. The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, the Hudson River Valley Greenway, and the Office of

Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation all have grant programs that the Village could utilize to celebrate the Village's unique history.

### **VII. Establish community space for education, events, or other programming**

- Programming community spaces with art displays, events, markets, etc. is an excellent way to build community. The Village has various outdoor parks that allow for public gathering in warmer weather, but there are fewer places to gather in bad weather or in the winter months. The Village should explore locations for a community space that can be programmed for a variety of purposes.
- The newly located Town Hall provides excellent space for housing various offices and departments, but it lacks a space suitable for a larger public meeting. Establishing a multi-purpose community space would address this need.

### **VIII. Consider the needs of an aging population, especially accessibility within the physical environment and medical facilities**

- Demographers are forecasting a "Silver Tsunami" as Baby Boomers shift from late working age to full retirement. There will be a massive demand for age-friendly services and facilities that the Village will need to cater to in order to ensure that long-term residents can remain productive members of the community into old age.



# PLAN IMPLEMENTATION



*The purpose of a Comprehensive Plan is to establish a community vision and identify the actions necessary to pursue that vision.*

*Many of the recommendations outlined in the Comprehensive Plan will take years to fully realize. They will also require grant funding. Pursuing regional, state, and federal grants requires patience and a keen awareness of timing. The grant cycle can work on a semi-annual, yearly, or even decade long cycle. There are also sequencing issues to consider. For example, there are many grants that require municipalities to take part in the initial program in order to apply for funding in subsequent years. In addition, new Village Board members and volunteers replace old ones. Maintaining a realistic expectation for how much work can be done over time is critical to the plan's success.*

## STEP 1: ORGANIZE

The first step of implementing the plan involves reconvening the Comprehensive Plan Committee to assist with the development of an Implementation Committee. The Village Board should officially appoint the Implementation Committee and task them with developing an organizational strategy and meeting schedule. It is recommended that the proposed Implementation Committee be composed of citizens, business representatives, community organizations, and elected officials that can stay engaged with the Village's future beyond the routine functions of government. Holding Implementation Committee meetings as a separate function from the Village Board of Trustees meetings will allow for a more open dialogue in a format more suited to tackling community development issues. An additional benefit of an appointed Implementation Committee is that members do not necessarily turn-over with every election cycle, which allows for the continuity required to pursue long range plans and projects.

## STEP 2: PRIORITIZE

The Implementation Committee will need to work with the Village Board (and possibly the proposed Planning Board) to evaluate the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan and assign a priority level to each. Recommendations can be assigned priority on the basis of feasibility (i.e. low cost and within local capacity vs. high cost and highly technical knowledge required) and timing (i.e. short, medium, or long term). The Implementation Committee should also periodically revisit and adjust

priorities according to changing conditions or the availability of grant funding.

## STEP 3: DEVELOP AND LEVERAGE PARTNER- SHIPS

Compared to the surrounding municipalities of Colonie (pop. 83,591), Albany (pop. 98,251), and Watervliet (10,131), Menands is a small community. As such, there is limited budget for full-time professional staff to address municipal issues. Partnering with other municipalities and regional entities could help Menands take advantage of grant programs, share technical expertise, and exchange ideas. The Village will need to ensure their representation at meetings of regional groups and stay abreast of opportunities to partner on projects and grant applications. The following organizations have objectives and missions that may dovetail with the Village's vision for the future:

- Capital District Transportation Committee (CDTC)
- Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDRPC)
- Capital Roots
- Albany County
- Town of Colonie

- Hudson River Valley Greenway (HRVG)
- Capital Region Chamber of Commerce
- Capital Region Economic Development Council (CREDC)
- University at Albany's Masters in Regional Planning program
- The Capital District Regional Market

## STEP 4: PURSUE FUNDING

As a smaller community, the Village as a limited amount of funding to pursue all of the recommendations of this plan. However, certain grant programs require smaller cash matches, while some grants can be matched using local volunteer efforts or even funding from a different source (i.e. matching a state grant with a federal grant). See "Funding Sources" for a detailed overview of some of the grant opportunities available to the Village.

## FUNDING SOURCES

Grant funding from state agencies is the most reliable source of funding available to New York State municipalities. The CFA process opens every spring, and applications are due at the end of July. To take



advantage of grant opportunities via the CFA process, the Village will need to be appropriately prepared to start drafting applications, reaching out to elected officials for letters of support, and passing resolutions in support of projects.

The following section provides an overview of some of the grant programs that the Village could pursue.



- Priority Project Funding with the CREDC:** With a Comprehensive Plan, Menands will be well-positioned to take a more active role in petitioning for their projects on a regional scale. As part of the CFA process, Regional Economic Development Councils (REDCs) may identify priority projects that align with their respective economic development plan. If the REDC identifies a project as a priority for the region, there is a greater likelihood of receiving funding. There is a separate priority project application that is included in the CFA process.
- NYSDOS Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP):** NYSDOS’s LWRP, funded under Title 11 of the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), provides matching grants on a competitive basis to eligible villages, towns, cities, and counties located along New York’s coasts or designated inland waterways for planning, design, and construction projects to revitalize communities and waterfronts. Grant categories include preparing or updating an LWRP; preparing an LWRP

Component, including a watershed management plan; updating an LWRP to mitigate future physical climate risks; implementing an LWRP or a completed LWRP Component; and improving public waterfront access for canal communities. This program helps communities breathe new life into their waterfronts and underused assets in ways that ensure successful and sustainable revitalization.

- New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP):** The EPF Grants Program provides matching grants on a competitive basis for the acquisition, planning, and development of parks, historic properties, and heritage areas located within the physical boundaries of the State of New York. The Parks grant is for the acquisition, development, and planning of parks and recreational facilities to preserve, rehabilitate, or restore lands, waters, or structures for park, recreation, or conservation purposes and for structural assessments and/

or planning for such projects. The Historic Preservation grant is for the acquisition, improvement, protection, preservation, rehabilitation, or restoration of properties listed on the State or National Register of Historic Places and for structural assessments and/ or planning for such projects.

- Empire State Development (ESD):** ESD has several grant programs that together make available \$150 million of capital grant funding for the Regional Economic Development Council Initiative. Capital grant funding is available for capital-based economic development projects intended to create or retain jobs; prevent, reduce, or eliminate unemployment and underemployment; and/or increase business or economic activity in a community or region.
- NYSDOS BOA:** NYSDOS’s BOA Program provides communities with guidance, expertise, and financial assistance (up to 90 percent of the total eligible project costs) to complete BOA Nomination Plans, which are revitalization strategies

for neighborhoods or areas affected by brownfields or economic distress.

- **NYSDOS Local Government Efficiency (LGE) Grants:** The LGE Grant program assists local leaders in identifying best practices and implementation actions focused on reducing municipal expenditures, limiting the growth in property taxes, and increasing efficiencies in service delivery. Projects can include local government reorganization, functional or service delivery consolidation, cooperative service agreements, and the establishment of regional service delivery mechanisms.
- **New York Main Street (NYMS) Program:** The NYMS program is administered by the Office of Community Renewal (OCR) under the direction of the Housing Trust Fund Corporation (HTFC). NYMS funds are awarded to units of local government and not-for-profit organizations that are committed to revitalizing historic downtowns, mixed-use neighborhood commercial districts, and village centers. NYMS grants are available for technical assistance projects or targeted improvements, such as facade renovations, interior commercial and residential building renovations, and streetscape enhancement projects.
- **CDTC Linkage Program:** CDTC's Linkage Program provides integrated land use and transportation planning assistance to communities within the four counties of

Albany, Rensselaer, Schenectady, and Saratoga. The program implements the planning principles of CDTC's New Visions 2040 regional transportation plan, which states that the region's quality of life, mobility, and economic vitality are dependent upon improved local land use planning and better integration of land use and transportation decisions.

- **Dormitory Authority (DASNY) State and Municipal (SAM) Capital Program:** DASNY administers SAM Grants awarded by the Senate Finance Committee, the Assembly Ways and Means Committee, and the Executive. This flexible funding is used for a variety of capital projects.
- **Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC) Green Innovation Grant Program (GIGP):** GIGP provides grants on a competitive basis to projects that improve water quality and implement green stormwater infrastructure in New York State. GIGP is administered by the New York State EFC. Grants cover a minimum of 40% and up to a maximum of 90% of the eligible project costs, as estimated in the application. A match from state or local sources for the balance is required.
- **Hudson River Valley Greenway (HRVG) Community Grants, Conservancy Trail Grants, and National Heritage Area Grants:** HRVG is a state agency that assists with the development of voluntary regional strategies for preserving scenic, historic, cultural and recreational resources while encouraging compatible economic development and maintaining a

tradition of home rule for land use decision making. HRVG grant programs are released at various times throughout the year, independent from the CFA process. These grants are less competitive than CFA grant programs due to eligibility requirements based on proximity to the Hudson River and key cultural and historic sites. The Village of Menands could explore funding through the Conservancy Trail Grants program in order to strengthen connections to Mohawk-Hudson Hike Bike Trail and between existing community assets like parks, schools, and cultural attractions (e.g. Albany Rural Cemetery).

- **New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM):** NYSDAM provides a variety of grants and technical assistance to municipalities, not-for-profits, farmers, and food markets to support and encourage the viability of agriculture in New York State. Many of their grant programs focus on connecting producers to consumers and supporting educational outreach. The Village should consider pursuing funding from NYSDAM programs to support the CDRPC report, "Improving Local Food Accessibility within the Village of Menands." Grants are accessed via the "Grants Gateway" as opposed to the CFA portal and have different application cycles.





